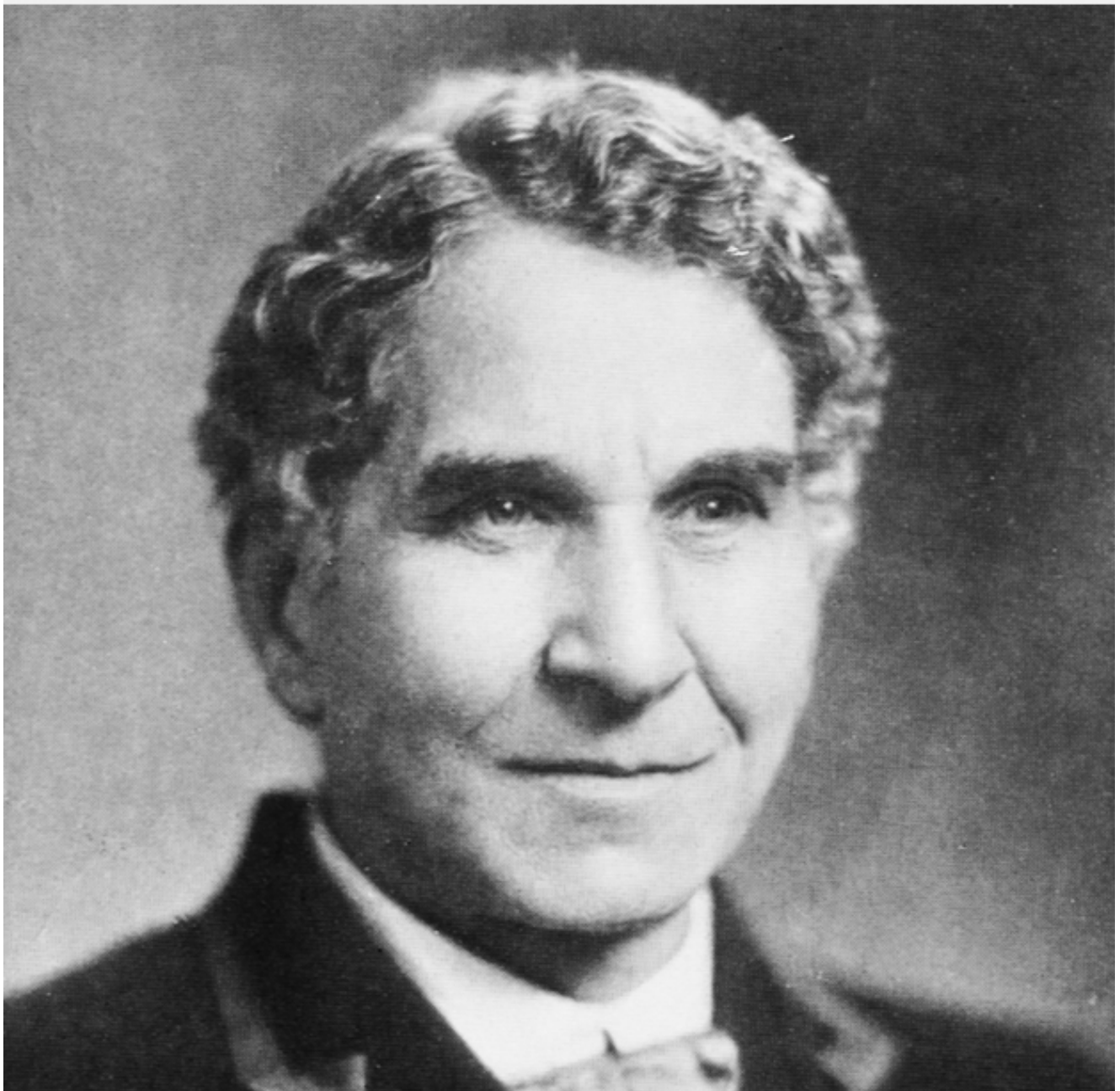




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M. P. SHIEL

(1865-1947)



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M.P. Shiel". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

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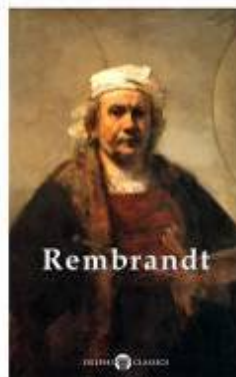
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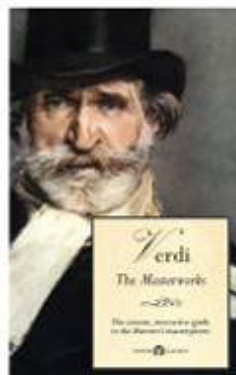
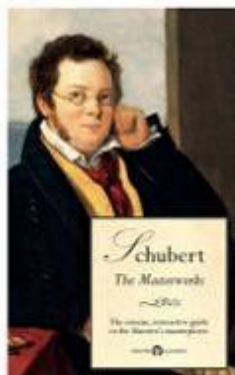
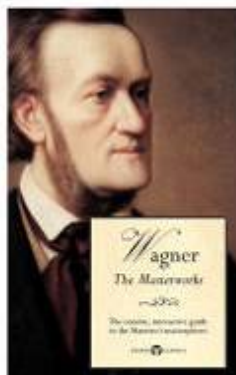
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The Collected Works of
M. P. SHIEL



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Collected Works of M. P. Shiel



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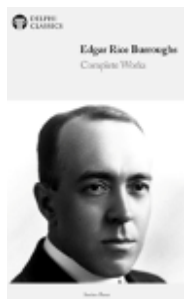
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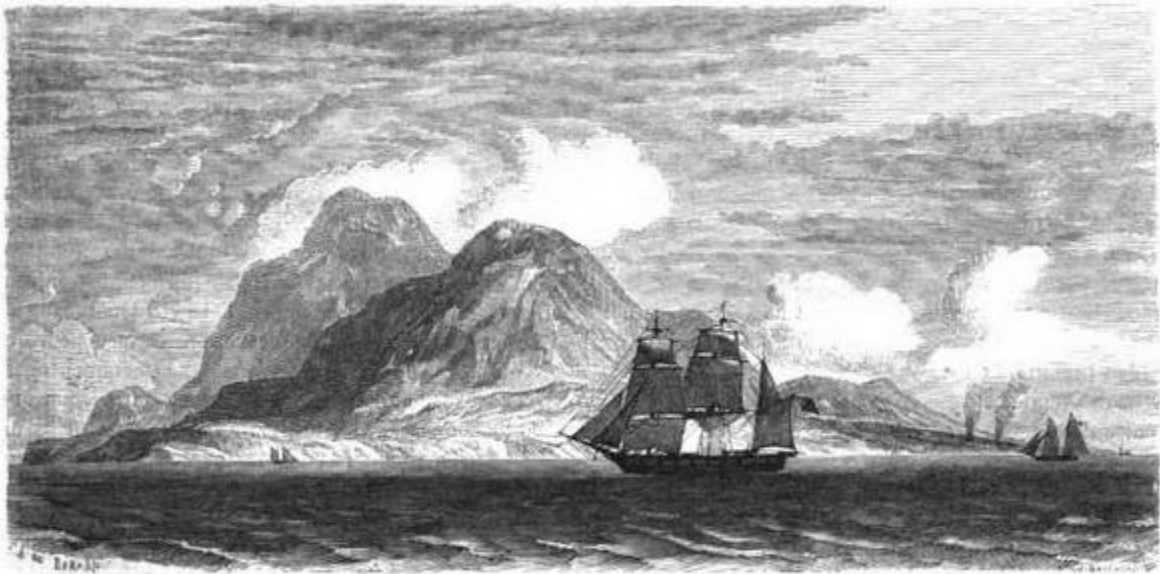
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The Novels



Matthew Phipps Shiell was born on the island of Montserrat in the West Indies in 1865.



Victorian drawing of Montserrat executed five years before the author's birth

The Rajah's Sapphire (1896)

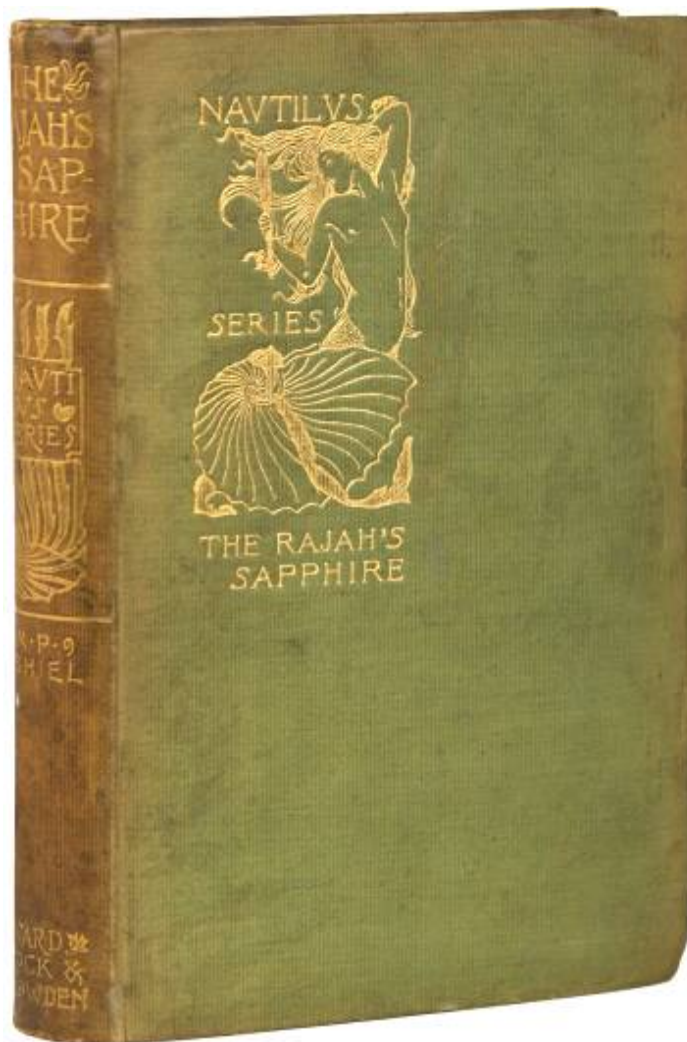


Written in collaboration with W. T. Stead

M. P. Shiel was born and brought up in Montserrat, a British colony with a long history of slavery and exploitation. Shiel's father was an Irish ship-owner, shopkeeper and lay preacher, while his mother was biracial and claimed Andalusian and North African heritage. Young Shiel received a good education in Barbados at the prestigious Harrison College, before he moved to London to pursue his career. His earliest literary works were two collections of short stories, *Prince Zaleski* (1895) and *Shapes in the Fire* (1896); they were minor successes, helping him to establish his reputation as a writer.

The Rajah's Sapphire was Shiel's first novel, published in 1896 by Ward, Lock and Bowden in London. The idea of writing the book began when the journalist and editor, W. T. Stead, approached Shiel in 1893, asking him to write for his new magazine, *The Daily Paper*. It was intended as a spin-off from the successful and prestigious *Review of Reviews* journal. Stead asked Shiel to contribute work for a series that aimed to recount historical events through the medium of fictional stories. It is not known precisely how much Stead contributed to the outline of Shiel's novel, but after only one edition, *The Daily Paper* failed and the novel remained unreleased for another three years.

It is an action adventure story centred on the crossing of paths between Stefan Von Reutlingen, a conscientious German diplomat and the dangerous, grotesquely wealthy and reckless American, Ralph Ralloner.



The first edition

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Shiel as a young man

CHAPTER I.



THE MARKGRAF STEFAN von Reutlingen, that rising son of the corps diplomatique, was not in the best of spirits. He felt as if he lacked part of himself, like an animal whose tail has been decapitated; for, while his handsome, knit body was in close attendance on the Kaiser at the Zeughaus, in Berlin, on the particular Sunday afternoon in question, the most important organ of that same handsome body was away truant in a certain western English county. Now, a frame without a heart is like an egg without salt; and thus it was that the Kaiser frowned more than once during the day to find his brilliant protege insipid to his taste, wearing an absent look, and giving spiritless answers to the spirited questions of his volcanic sovereign.

It was the 27th of January, in this year of grace 1895, and so, of course, the birthday of Wilhelm. Stefan's first task for the day had been to attend in the train of his young master at the Palast-kapelle to hear divine service. The soldier-emperor is nothing if not devout, and the days wound up with wine-libations to Mars are usually begun by him with the payment of his respects to the Nazarene carpenter. Stefan, too, like most sons of noble, old German races, had a tincture of a certain haughty piety in his composition. He rose early, full of the great day and all its details, sighed the name of a certain Ada Macdonald, called down with genuine feeling a blessing on the turbulent head of his young master, and, having ensconced his feet in the fur of a pair of wrought slippers and his back in the fur of a dressing-gown of scarlet velvet, sat down to the white napery and the silver service of a dainty private breakfast.

Fritz, the trusty, his right-hand man, the only living being who could satisfactorily wax the sweeping, diplomatic semi-circles of the young Markgraf's radiant moustache, placed gingerly by his right hand the privileged letters of the morning, and it was the very first of these which the Markgraf opened that sealed the fate of his good spirits for the rest of that day. Stefan had a trick of tapping lightly with his knuckles on the nearest convenient surface in moments of high impatience, and for a full quarter of an hour after reading this letter he gazed vaguely before him, and the table sounded forth a gentle, mechanical tattoo under his tapping hand. The note was short, and ran:

“Dearest, — All is fixed. The ball will be, after all, on the 6th. and you are going to be there. Do not tell me about diplomacy, do not tell me about your too absurd, little Kaiser! If trifles such as these keep you from me at a time when I specially require, and demand, your presence — what am I to think? No, no, you must come. It will be no ball to your Ada if you are not there; I think you appreciate the compliment. And there is danger in your absence, mon ami, at a function such as that. Can you not conceive how poor little me will be nibbled at, fished for, hunted like a stag by the hunters? And how can I save myself? Not mine the fault if the rats prefer Gorgonzola to Cheshire. I did not make the golden vermilion flashings which lure the fishers to linger above my waters. If my hoofs are slender, and the coating of my haunches sleek, I am no more responsible for that than I am for the fact that the hunters persist in preferring sleek and slender quarry. Come, come, and rescue me. And here is some news for you which should spur you: I have had another, my dear; yes, yet another. Think of it! Is this the twenty-ninth or the thirtieth? I forget. I have them all noted down in my diary with the records of my new gowns. And only guess from whom this last comes? Oh, it fills the cup of your Ada's bitterness to the brim! From

whom but from the 'High-flyer.' Know you in the Fatherland the fame and prowess of that knight? The 'High-flyer,' my dear. He went down upon one of his little nervous knees and implored me to be his! Art jealous? Don't! Still, I assure you, he did it very prettily, and I was far from really degoute. The man has a certain charm, though he is undoubtedly madder than any March hare that ever scampered over a hill. He called me the Virgin Mary: said that then, for the first time in his life, he bent the knee before the unsullied soul of a virgin. And when I recommended him to rise from his too-absurd position he seemed to forget all about the matter at once, and coolly commenced to talk of — something else. Not one single word of it all did that man really mean! He is simply the creature of sheer, headlong, momentary impulse, and rather a ruffian into the bargain. And yet I like him — and, oh, he is so rich! He is to be at the ball, if he can remember so small a matter for so long a time as a week.

"I am now staying at Lord Darley's, in Somersetshire; but shall be in London with the St. John-Heygates in two days: we return west together for the ball. I shall meet you in London without fail, remember.

"Yours, yours!

"Ada."

"P.S. — I have, or had, something — a favor — to ask you. Dare I? But no, I am superstitious — and I love you! No, no. And yet I dearly wish it, too."

The Markgraf Stefan's immediate reply to this letter was the tattoo with his knuckles on the table. He frowned, he ran his fingers through his hair, he made slender as his toothpick the ends of his moustache. "And — who —

the devil.” he slowly asked himself, “is the High-flyer?” The one thing he disliked in that perfection, his beloved, was a certain too high respect he had noticed in her for wealth — wealth for wealth’s sake. Ada Macdonald “loved” him, and he was not rich: she did not love the High-flyer, but she loved money, and the High-flyer had what she loved. Small things trouble the lover, and Stefan was an intense member of that sect. “Donner and Blitz!” — he was still old-fashioned Teuton enough to swear by the elements in his hour of oaths— “who — the devil — is the High-flyer?” And with this second repetition of the question, a certain reputation flashed across his memory. “Ralloner, perhaps?” Yes, surely, that must be the man who had received this nickname in England; Ralloner, the incarnate whirlwind, that genius of the hurricane, the typhoon of flesh. The rumor of him had filled Europe, the dollar-compeller, the madcap, the dispenser of palaces, the keeper of zenanas whose inmates were countesses and prima donnas. And this ghoul had been on a knee before his betrothed — a dangerous man, not to be baulked in his impulses! Stefan shivered; he pushed the plate from him. And when Ada had refused him, the High-flyer seemed to forget all about the matter at once. How patent a pretence! Such a man must have meant all he said. Why did he think of going to the ball, where she was to be the brightest, most particular star of all? Fashionable functions of that kind were surely not the kind of places to which a wild spirit like Ralloner devoted his time. The ruse was patent. And to think that he, the Markgraf von Reutlingen, was tied here to Berlin, tied for a month at least, by the exigencies of diplomacy, to the heels of the Kaiser, without hope or respite! He cursed fate, and the Chancellor, and the great lady whose ball was to out-dazzle Solomon and the gems of Golconda; and when, by 11 o’clock, he sat on the blue velvet-cushioned pew immediately

behind his Imperial Majesty in the Palast-kapelle, out of the same mouth proceeded blessings and verdaments.

“To-night — at 10 — in my private room, behind the Ballzimmer,” said the Chancellor in his ear in low, mysterious tones, as the procession of the Court was passing out of the chapel.

He turned, in wonder, to question, but the Minister had already retired a few steps, and was lending ear to some close words of the Emperor.

After a somewhat hurried lunch, Wilhelm, followed by his staff-officers, the chief of the Civil Cabinet, the Chancellor, and the principal Ministers, drove to the Zeughaus to attend the ceremony of giving the password. Berlin was en fete. Huzzas and flags made a double hedge about him as he sailed through the palisade of the jubilant people. As he passed the University a band sent forth from its deep throat the patriotic song, “Heil dir in Siegeskranz.” Stefan, with his back to the horses, in company with some of his superiors in diplomacy, began to give rein to generous enthusiasms, until the sudden curb-bit of the thought of “the High-flyer” ripped his mouth, and instantly he was in the glums again. A salvo of cannon greeted the Emperor at the Zeughaus. The party drew up in the great quadrangle, lined with its glittering array of warriors under arms; then followed the salute and manoeuvrings under the proud eye of the modern Alexander of the Germans; and then, for the first time, an army corps commander stood forth and read, as with the mouth of the trumpet, the famous manifesto of the “Birthday.” After referring to the military victories, which were crowned by the foundation of the German Empire, and thanking the army, the manifesto ordered that for a year the banners and standards which received distinction from the late Emperor William during the war should, on public occasions, be adorned with oak leaves. The guns and batteries engaged in the Franco-German War were to be decorated in the same way. Almost

immediately on the reading of this document, the Imperial cortege moved off to return to the Palace. A mighty cheer burst as from one throat from the quadrangle of the Zeughaus.

It was now late. The scene in the streets was one of medley, luridness, and grandeur. Only seat strutting young Crudity on an old throne; clap a crown upon its head; stick a sceptre into its hand; fill its blatant mouth with high-sounding words about God and kingship; and now call down the mantle of night on a great city, illuminated; jumble the hot populace, empty of comfort and thought, in the streets, and bid them howl and roar the agony of their vacuum in wild huzzas; over all the noise let bands brazen out their jubilees and the tongues of a hundred bells talk; and you have a measure of the scene in Berlin on the evening of Sunday, the 27th of January.

After the highly ceremonial State dinner in the Palace, at which sat the Royal guests of Saxony and Wurtemberg, our own Duke of Coburg, and the Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, the Imperial party adjourned to the brilliant performance at the Royal Opera. Berlin through all its width was a city of feasts. Private houses were decorated. Dinners ministerial, dinners official, club, military, were popping loud with corks; and tongues, venting to heaven his Majesty's health, drunk three times three according to time-honored custom. Wilhelm sat in his box at the opera, the high flush and the pride of life on his brow. He was beating time with his forefinger to an overture — for little Willie is a very great musician, and woe to those who deny it! As he sat thus, Prince Hohenlohe entered the box, and instantly the Kaiser's face changed to gravity, and the two leant their heads together in earnest talk. Both glanced simultaneously at Stefan sitting in the stalls near by, and Stefan, looking up, was certain of this singular glance, and with beating heart wondered what it could mean. He had not passed the age at which one blushes at an Emperor's notice, and he blushed. Till near 10 his

head was in a whirl, and then he slipped from the theatre, crossed two corridors, traversed the Ballzimmer, and tapped at a tapestry-shrouded door. Hohenlohe had anticipated him there. A voice called, "Come in."

He found himself separated from the Prince by a table littered with documents, under a rather vague red light which swung from a vaulted roof. He made his lowest official bow, his high-bred face telling no secrets of the beating of his heart.

Prince Hohenlohe was buried deep in the perusal of official papers. Presently he looked up, and piercing the young man with his eye said —

"Ah! von Reutlingen, so that is you. Allow me to congratulate you. By the way, how old are you?"

"Twenty-five," gasped Stefan.

"Only twenty-five. Hum!"

There was an awkward silence. Stefan resented it.

"I take it, of course," resumed the Prince, "that you are tolerably well acquainted with the minutiae of the Chino-Japanese affair so far?"

"That is so, your Highness."

"And you know the general tenor of the secret proposals made by England to the Powers on that subject some little time since?"

"Certainly, your Highness."

"It was not at the time deemed prudent that Germany should show any undue desire to interfere between the contending parties. But now the Emperor agrees with me in thinking that the time has come—"

"Really!"

"Listen. You owe it to your known tact and knowledge of affairs that you have been selected to undertake a task of the very gravest responsibility. On your acts and words, and even thoughts, will depend tremendous issues.

And I feel certain you will enter on this mission with a due sense of its supreme importance.”

Stefan bowed.

“By the way,” resumed the Prince, “are you already personally acquainted with the Chinese Ambassador in London?”

“Certainly, your Highness.”

“And, of course, with Lords Rosebery and Spencer?”

“Certainly, your Highness.”

“The siege of Wei-hia-wei, as you know, is now proceeding. The idea is that you should reach the seat of action before it falls. That will mean quick work. You are, of course, aware of that. By the way, I forget for the moment, how many guns has the Tien Shen?”

“Six, your Highness.”

“And the Chen-Yuen?”

“Eight.”

“Well, well. You proceed straight to London to arrange preliminaries with the English Government and the Chinese ambassador. Your utmost time in London will be ten days. You will reach England by the Calais-Dover route — I have my own reasons for specifying this route; these you will learn from this packet. All these three packets I commend to your earnest perusal; in them you will find your whole conduct and policy clearly outlined. I dare say you will wish to start early on the morrow, and as you have had a fatiguing day I will now bid you my adieux and convey at the same time an expression of the Kaiser’s approval, confidence, and thanks.”

Stefan, with overflowing bosom, took the Prince’s hand and the documents, bowed, and retired backward like a crab, only with rather more grace and dignity. He walked home on air, thinking in his swimming brain two things. The first, that he was a made man and diplomat; the second, that

if Ada Macdonald did not know before with what a whirlwind swing a happy man can waltz, she would know it for very certain on the great night of the Countess of Yorrick's ball, till she begged for breath and mercy.

As he entered the door of his Residenz, his man Fritz put a telegram into his hand. He knew not why, but for a second he hesitated to open it. A presentiment, a fear seized him, that the gods were jealous, as in their wont, of his perfect happiness. Then he tore it open. It ran:

“Before coming over you must go to Friedrich, the pawnbroker, at 13 Canalstrasse, Bremen, and get for me the Rajah's Sapphire. Don't let any absurd superstition about the luck of the stone prevent you. I must have it for the ball. — Ada.”

He paled under the hall lamp, and slowly drew once more from his pocket Ada's letter of that morning. Looking at the postscript, he read:

“P.S. — I have, or had, something — a favor — to ask you. Dare I? But, no; I am superstitious, and I love you! No, no! And yet I dearly wish it, too!”

“So, this,” he groaned, “was the favor. That cursed stone! This — this — this — was the favor!”

He tottered limp to his bed.

CHAPTER II.



TO GO TO Bremen. Not to go to Bremen? That was the thought which racked him all the night. He had special instructions to proceed at once to Calais; the fate of empires, the lives perhaps of millions, depended on his prompt, his implicit obedience; and, he added to himself, his own advancement, honor; and then he immediately fell to cursing himself for thinking of his own small interests at all when so much else was at stake. To go to Bremen? It could not be. He decided that definitely Bremen meant the North-German Lloyd, and so, a voyage not merely of a few hours to the opposite coast of England, as that from Calais to Dover, but a voyage down the length of the North Sea, down half the length of the English Channel — to Southampton! Then from Southampton the railway journey to London — delay, delay, every where. Lying on the left shoulder he decided sharply and angrily against Bremen. He turned on the right, and the right brought him thoughts of Ada Macdonald; she rose before him, tall, flashing scorn at him from her black diamond eyes, imperious as Queen Boadicea. He knew what fires slept in Ada; and he knew what fires slept in Wilhelm and Hohenlohe, but when it came to a question of real downright fire, he said to himself with a shiver that he would rather a thousand times over be scorched by the fires of Wilhelm than the fires of Ada Macdonald. How could he refuse her — how could he dare? She might not understand his excuses about the exigencies of diplomatic business; she would say that his motive for not doing her bidding was his dread of travelling in company with that vile stone which had proved so fatal to how many others! She would call him a

coward — him! “I must go!” he cried. “I must go, come what will!” This was the decision of right shoulder. He turned again on his left. As a door on its hinges, so he turned on his bed; and in ten minutes left shoulder had brought him to the conclusion that on no possible consideration could he venture, could he dare, could he dream of, going to Bremen. The morning was near, and he fell into a nightmare sleep.

By ten o’clock he was in a private compartment of a train. Fritz sat before him, wondering at his master’s pallor. The train steamed away. It was bound for — Bremen. Stefan spent the hours of the morning in thinking over the details of the awful history of the stone which he was about to take into his possession. It was a great sapphire, massive as a hen’s egg, pure as the bubbling water of a mountain brook, the very playhouse and home of light. The tradition was that since the Indian Prince, Kashmiri Khan, had murdered his father in the sixth century before Christ for the possession of the wondrous jewel it had never been the property of anyone, never even been, in the temporary custody of anyone, without bringing on them disaster of some kind, mischief in some shape; and, as a matter of historical fact, there can be no doubt that Kashmiri Khan himself, immediately after committing the murder, was devoured by a lion as he fled through the jungle: and, it is added, by the somewhat fantastic Indian history books, that the lion consumed the entire body of the man except only the hand in which the jewel was grasped, which hand was found lying on the ground by the servants of the late king two days after. It was taken back to the Palace, and, within three months, the town was invaded, the Palace burned, and the stone carried away to Northern Hindoostan by a band of roving disciples of Zoroaster. The Rajah’s sapphire, during the course of many centuries, passed through a multitude of hands, and always with the same history; the greedy eye blazed over it; the frenzied brain schemed and plotted to possess

it; then came the chuckle of victory; the secret hugging of it, as of the water of life, to the ardent bosom; then, in a day — in an hour — a doubt, a sideward glance of distrust; then disaster, swift, sure, recurrent; then, ah then, the burning lust to be rid of it, the agonised cry — at any cost — at the price of life — to pluck this viper's tooth from the gnawed breast. The same history everywhere.

At the beginning of this century Sir James Macdonald, travelling through Central Hindoostan, came to a State, isolated from the world, in the centre of vast mountains. Here he was the guest of a great Indian potentate, into whose hand the stone had lately passed; the monarch, not at first knowing the history of the jewel, had purchased it at a fabulous price. A week later he chanced to call a meeting of his dewan (council), over which his heir was to preside. At the appointed moment the young man entered the chamber where were congregated the Ministers of State, the jewel glittering, like a constellation of radiance on his forehead. He entered the hall, ascended the steps of the throne, and — dropped dead. Soon after this the old Rajah heard the history of the stone, and the same day received the visit of Sir James Macdonald. Sir James, a man of haughty disposition, and, little careful of observing the customs and prejudices of his host, inflicted, in the course of a day or two, some deadly insult on the Rajah, which, however, the monarch appeared to make light of, and, on receiving an apology, promised to forget. On the third day Sir James departed, but he had not travelled far into the forest when he was overtaken by a hot messenger on horseback, who presented him with the transcendent gem as a token from the Rajah of goodwill and perfect reconciliation. Sir James, in a transport of gratitude, sent back the thing he prized most on earth — a small silver brooch containing a lock of his dead wife's hair. He reached England in perfect safety — to find his credit gone, his character besmirched, and an

only brother dead. It was thus that after nearly a century the sapphire had come to be the property of Ada Macdonald.

During that century it had passed from the hand of one banker to another, one pawn broker to another. The immense value of the stone had, of itself, conferred a distinction on the Macdonald family; they were called “the Macdonalds of the Sapphire,” and hence they had never had the courage to part altogether with it. But the stone had a strange, strong genius for inspiring panic, and hence it was hardly ever to be found in the actual possession of a Macdonald, for by this time its history had come to be known. Even the pawnbrokers had acquired a strange trick of growing tired of its company; hence its career had been a rather migratory one; and hence, too, it was that on this 28th January an express was sweeping the Markgraf Stefan in the direction of No. 13 Canalstrasse, Bremen.

In the evening of the same day he was closeted in a small dark room in a dirty back street of dingy Bremen, with Melchizedek Friedrich, an old, bent German Hebrew, with fish-hook nose, and torrent white beard. Stefan produced documentary evidence of his identity and position, and his connection with the owner of the stone. He showed the telegram.

Friedrich sat bent, muttering guttural Hebrew and Yiddish to his knowing beard. Presently he looked up, shot a keen cunning ray from his eyes into Stefan, and said —

“And so you come for the sapphire, sir?”

“Yes.”

“I cannot part with it.”

“Thank God!” said Stefan to himself, and then added aloud, “You surprise me.”

“The history of this stone I have now learned,” said old Friedrich, leering craftily. “Six months ago it was pledged with me for the merely nominal

sum of 200 gulden, and I claim that at the time I should have been told by the pledger what risks I ran by taking the gem into my house.”

“But that is an absurd claim,” answered Stefan; “it would be laughed at in a court of law.”

“I know that,” said Friedrich, “but on the other hand, you come to me without the legal document, on the production of which alone I am bound to deliver the stone; and I decline to do so unless — ?”

“What?”

“Unless the numerous losses — the very numerous and unaccountable losses,” he repeated, “which I have recently suffered be first made good by you.”

“This is mere superstition,” said Stefan, pleased in his heart at this turn of events— “mere superstition. Miss Macdonald has not instructed me to meet any such preposterous claim, nor am I at all prepared to do so.”

The old man’s hand was visibly trembling. “You will, therefore,” went on Stefan, “greatly oblige me by sending me to-night a written refusal to deliver the stone. And meantime — good evening.”

He walked towards the door.

“Stay, stay,” cried old Friedrich, hobbling after him. “In mercy, stay! Your excellency is hasty; your excellency misunderstood.”

“What now?” asked Stefan.

“The stone is yours; take it. Yehovah help me! Old Friedrich is a poor man; take it dear sir, it is yours.”

That night the Rajah’s sapphire slept on Stefan’s dressing-table — a spirit of evil in the garb of an angel of light.

The next evening he stood looking over the taffrail of the great steamer as she rode by the quay of the Bremerhafen. The Nelf presented the appearance of an ant-nest or a bee-hive. Stewards ran hither and thither, two

great plumed columns of black smoke rose from the chimneys, whistles shrilled, on one side of the ship a chain of boats still lay round her; the air hummed with the adieux and aufwiedersehens of parting friends. Near to where Stefan stood sat a mother, and on her knee a great boy of 14 or 15. He garnered from their talk that the youngster was going to London to be a clerk in his uncle's business, and he calculated that for half an hour the mother had not once ceased to kiss him. He did not know why, but the sight made, him feel with his fingers for the sapphire in his breast-pocket Fritz and he seemed the only persons unoccupied on the swarming ship. Gott behut! Gott behut! rose the cry on every hand. He wondered at the shamelessness of German lovers as he saw a young man and lady passionately welded together in the midst of the press and throng of the after-deck; but none seemed to notice them save him. Again through his ulster he felt the bulge of the stone, and sighed. Forward there was a rattle and clash of chains. The ring of boats began to break up and grow thin. Suddenly there fell a sharp shower of sleet, and through it like a shriek of defiance, the steamer uttered a shrill whistle. There was a shoreward scamper, and the defeat of lingering kisses and hand-wringers was turned into a rout when the heart of the great mammoth of the sea suddenly wakened and began its awful beat. Pulse, pulse! "And mind your bedside prayer every night," said the wet-faced mother, "and — and — Gott Behut!" — Stefan touched Ada Macdonald's stone beneath his ulster. It was too late — the panting seahorse was away.

The Nelf left Bremerhafen at about 5 p.m. For about half an hour she stopped, on her way, at Nordenhamm, then turned her bows over the open sea bound for South Hampton and New York.

The night fell deadly dark. She had not been cuffing and butting at the piled billows of the open Atlantic an hour before the engineers were down

in the depths of the engine room mending broken gear. The gusts drew deeper-mouthed, roaring like hungry lions, and Stefan, summoning his sea-legs on the poop, touched with his forefinger the Rajah's sapphire beneath his ulster.

CHAPTER III.



RALPH RALLONER WAS a person of “no occupation” and “no fixed abode.” He was a vagabond; he was as much without anything in the nature of a character as the outside of an egg is without hair. And yet he was highly respected, too; he was even feared. If he had condescended to put his arm around the neck of you or me, we should have been highly flattered and pleased; we should have gone and straightway told our mother and our pet enemy that good old Ralph Ralloner had put his arm around our neck. The fact is he was a millionaire. “Charity covereth a multitude of sins,” but that is only in heaven, where they have queer ways of looking at things. On earth, where people have got to be practical if you want anything covered, from the roof of your house to your sins, you must have what the Yankees call “the shingles,” or what we call “the tin.”

Ralph was a Yankee, and he had “the shingles” with a vengeance. The shingles roofed in the sins from the rain of the world’s censure — not entirely, for the sins were really quite too huge for that, but to this extent, that they didn’t have the look of sins at all and seemed to be mere unpleasant peculiarities, or, as people called them, “idiosyncrasies.”

For example, Ralloner, the High-flyer, was a great sportsman, and one of the sports which he liked best was that of tandem-driving. And he never drove a tandem but he drove it furiously, so that when he held the reins of his glittering turnout it became, under his hand, not a tandem at all, but a Juggernaut. Everything flew and sprayed before it like the foam from a ship’s bows, or else rolled and writhed under it like the clay under an

advancing plough. Woe to an old tippie, or a blind man, or a woman with child when the High-flyer in all his bravery came Juggernauting along! The report was that in Chicago he had sacrificed ten human lives to the divinity of his tandem. The magistrates were, of course, compelled to fine him, but they did it lovingly; their sympathies were mostly on the side of the tandem. They thought it such a pity to check the enthusiasm of headlong, generous sportsman-like youth! And, besides, as they said, the thing was common enough. In Chicago not a day passes but an electric car rolls over the agony of some crushed human being; the ear has become accustomed to the shriek of death, and the eye to the squirt of the blood of men. Ralloner, bless you! was not the only Juggernaut about. Juggernauts have grown common and multiplied in the earth till they are past counting; and though they do say that there is an Eye which sees and reckons up these things, the fact of the matter is, that though the Eye sees, it is not seen, and so counts for precious little. The ostrich which pokes its head into the bushes knows that the hunter can see its great awkward body, but so long as it can't see the hunter it cares not a button for him; and Chicago, which is the most perfect embodiment of the whole spirit of the world as it exists to-day, is as much like an ostrich in nearly every respect as two little twinkling stars are like each other.

Ralloner was a tandem driver; he was a steeplechase man; horses of his magnificent stud had twice won the Grande Nationale in Paris. His brain was made of burning lava. The two engines of his great and splendid steam yacht had once broken down on the high seas because he would insist on driving the overworked ship twice as fast as any other ship had ever gone. He could not write a letter — hardly even a word. If he attempted to write, the pen made a thick stroke, or else broke to splinters under his hand. The mad fire in him would not permit him to form the letters. His eyes never

rested; they shifted, and shifted, and shifted, like those singular electric eyes one sees in some advertisements at railway stations. What was he looking for? What did he hunt? He did not know. Only the necessity was strong on him to be in motion — to burst the bands of space — to pass like a fiend over the warm entrails of some poor old beggar-woman — to plough his frenzied way through obstacles towards impossible goals. It was the madness which comes of the possession of great wealth — the same which took hold of Nebuchadnezzar, and Nero, and many of the old Roman emperors. Some people call it “Caesarism,” and make of it a special and separate disease. Little Wilhelm, across the water, is perhaps affected in that way. But Ralloner had a particular tendency to this form of frenzy; his enormously rich father had died in an asylum; and in the blood of the High-flyer had taken root diseases of various obscure and insidious kinds.

In figure he was very slight and short, and wore in all weathers loose thin jackets, much too long for him, which sailed out behind, giving him an appearance of eager swiftness even on the rare occasions when he was not over-hurried. A great red scar traversed one side of his forehead and face, and one eye squinted much smaller than the other.

On the evening of the day following that on which he had gone on his little nervous knee before Ada Macdonald, he rushed into the smoking-room of the Hotel Victoria, sat down at one of the small marble tables, and in an almost illegible hand dashed off on a telegraph form the words:

“To Anderson, captain, the Treaty, Solent I. W. — Have Treaty ready day after tomorrow for trip to Norway. Want to do distance at rattling rate. Make water know we’re there. See to everything. — Ralloner.”

He had promised to be at the Yorrick Ball, but had clean forgotten all about it.

“Hullo!” he cried, taking, in the corridor, the hand of Lord Pierrepont without stopping in his headlong walk. “Hullo, Charlie, that you? Like see sea-water boil like kettle? Come ‘long with me, if like; going coast Norway.”

“Stop a bit Where are you dragging me to — ?”

“Come ‘long. Nice little supper — John’s Wood-road. Tandem waiting door. Like see sea-water skip like mad?”

“Skip? I? No, thanks; I am not passionately attached to it even in its more serious moods.”

“Ah, dry land man! Like to see it swirl and sing for mercy. Everything on deck wet, beds in cabin wet, foam hissing past frightened like, like woman with white face; ship nearly done up, groaning like the deuce, begad! Cap’n frightened; down on his knees— ‘For God’s sake ease her, sir!’ That’s kind of man I am.”

“Well, ta-ta; I am going into the smoke room.”

“Not going — John’s Wood? Tandem waiting, know.”

“Not to-night, thank you. Bye-bye.”

CHAPTER IV.



THE NIGHT WAS utterly black. The Nelf was in the middle of the raging German Ocean.

The 370 odd passengers of the great liner were in their berths below. One only kept watch on deck — Stefan von Reutlingen. It was near morning; but it seemed as though morning would never come. There was a coating of ice on the back and front of Stefan's ulster as he now paced, now clung to the railing of the bulwark. The light-colored funnels before him, the characteristic feature of the Nord-deutscher Lloyd boats, were invisible to him in the thick gloom. He heard the throb of the engines, heard the whish of the sea, saw the glare of the engine-room, and looked again and again at the heavens, praying for morning — but for morning.

The third officer, who, with the first was in charge, passed near him in his peregrinations.

"How is she now, Mr. Hollberg?" he asked.

"She goes S.S.W., your excellence."

"No; as to the position and speed I mean?"

"She is about thirty miles from the Hook of Holland and forty from Lowestoft. Her speed is fifteen knots. Don't you think of turning in to-night?"

"Fifteen, eh? That's pretty well for a sea like this, isn't it?"

"Not more than so-so, I think."

"Won't the morning ever come?"

Mr. Hollberg laughed.

“Yes, it will come; It always comes. You are not nervous; I hope?”

“I? No, not nervous. What light is that? You see it away yonder, don’t you, a green light?”

“On the port bows? some steamer. I have noticed her for some little time. She is rapidly approaching us.”

“Does her course lie across ours?”

“Seemingly not quite at right angles.”

“We are showing our lights, of course?”

“Oh, yes, red and blue, as usual.”

The officer moved away. Stefan looked toward the sky as they that watch for the morning. And then his eye fell on the green light, small and clear in the blackness, coming nearer, nearer, mysterious as life, certain as death. He thought of the mother and the boy; and how indecently the two lovers had kissed on the deck.

Below, the 370 slept — mostly slept. Of those that waked some were thinking of Southampton and the things they had to do there, the words to say, and the others spoke in this way to their own minds: “Well, of all the ills which may possibly befall a man in his course through life, the ill of seasickness is certainly the worst!”

* * * * *

The soul of Ralph Ralloner, the High-flyer, danced. It was a death dance, but a dance for all that. Like the fling of the man in the ballad —

Sae wantonly, sae rantingly, sae dantingly gaed he,
He played a tune, and cut a jig beneath the gallows tree!

He stood crouching close to the helmsman, clinging to the railing near him like a barnacle. He had a cloth cap on his head, and on his back the rags

of one of his thin loose jackets which the wind had torn to shreds; the shreds whistled and flapped out behind him like an old flag in a hurricane. He looked like a mad beggar. The winds were shrieking awful music into his inmost ears. The wide lake of foam that whitened and whirled and curdled round the frightened Treaty seemed to yell to him “hurrah! hurrah!” His dark soul danced as the shadows of a shaded light dance, flickering upon a wall on a gusty night. The Treaty was stabbing and butting at the heaped-up waves of the storm, as they came to meet her. A continual rain of spray hissed over her from fore to aft; she, and all aboard her, were as wet as though she sailed beneath the surface of the water. Had it been possible to increase the speed of her toiling engines by the fraction of a point she would have burst into sky-high atoms, or plunged to the bottom of the German Ocean like a piece of lead shot from a cannon. There was no one on deck but Ralloner, the man at the wheel amidships, and the lookout man doing his watch for’ard. This last was clinging to the fore mast, with one leg lashed to it. He was coated with an inch of ice and near to death. The desertion of the decks was Ralloner’s arrangement. He liked to fancy himself alone on the ship in some dim frozen sea of a far-off world, racing for life with some hunting destiny. The captain, after praying him almost with tears to stay the horrid flight of the vessel, had given warning that after this voyage he must leave, the ship, and had retired to his cabin. The hearts, of all were in their mouths. But Ralloner drank in the champagne of the battling elements till his wild eyes flashed a sulphurous light of their own, and he trembled with the impulse to fly, to fly faster than the ship would go, with the flaming forked wings of a demon, madder than the sea, intenser than the cold, swifter than the blast.

“Ship coming right across our course, sir,” chattered the man at the wheel.

“Let come,” he said.

A fiercer squall followed his words, seeming to howl a menace to his ears, battering him against the railing to which he clung. An avalanche of solid sea thundered down upon the two men, half drowning them. To Ralloner it was sweet as the embrace of a lover.

“Great Jericho! we’re getting rather near that ship, sir!” said the wheelman, after three minutes.

“What ship she?”

“Looks a great big monster of a thing; p’raps one of the North-German Lloyd.”

“How we going?”

“Nothe half-west, sir.”

“How she going?”

“‘Bout south-west, seems to me.”

“A’ right I want to hug coast England. Keep her so.”

There was silence for half a minute.

“Shall I prick her off to nothe, sir?” said the man at the wheel.

“No man! No! Keep her nose to it. Let fly, begad!”

“But that ship, sir—”

“Hang ship! Sea-water b’longs to me as well as them, s’pose. Let fly.”

And there was silence for yet another half minute, filled by the trumpets and penny whistles of the wind.

“Oh, I’m agoing to prick this ship off to nothe, sir!” cried the helmsman.

“Going do what!” shrieked Ralloner. “Going do what! Disobey my orders?”

“I’m just going to prick her off to nothe, that’s all,” answered James Ray, a thick-set Cockney seaman; “or we bash smack into that ship, and I’ve got a fam’ly.”

“Hang self and fam’ly! White-livered, ‘long-shore fish’man! Discharge you from this minute — discharge you! Give me wheel!”

Ralloner lurched and rolled across to the wheel and seized on two of the spokes. Ray still persisted. Ralloner planted a blow on his chest with the force of high passion, and just then a deep dive of the Treaty into the sea upset the man’s balance, his hold on the wheel relaxed, and he surged and butted forward. The High-flyer was in possession.

He put his mouth to a speaking-tube communicating with the engine-room, whistled, and cried through it— “See if can’t get her go half a knot faster!”

“Can’t!” came the reply.

“Quarter knot, then.”

“Can’t!”

And the Treaty sped away “nothe” and by west making “sea-water boil like, kettle,” making “sea-water skip like mad.”

The two ships drew near; for so, from the foundations of the world, it was appointed. The binnacle light shone full on the face of Ralloner, as he half stood, half crouched, steering — ragged, wild, a creature of the storm, bent on ruin and overthrow. To the great ship, laden with life, he showed a green light; she to him a blue. They came very near — two cables’ length divided them, but in the dense blackness of the morning looked like ten. “Sea-water b’longs to me as much as to them, s’pose,” said the High-flyer to himself. “I’m as good a man as North German Lloyd, s’pose.”

“That ship, sir!” cried James Ray, crouching near. “That ship!”

Juggernaut, earless, eyeless, was abroad.

* * * * *

“I fancy she’s only a small ship, your excellency, of about 400 or 500 tonnage,” said the third officer to Stefan; “and she sees our light. She is sure to prick off a point when she comes near enough.”

Stefan touched the Rajah’s Sapphire beneath his ulster.

“You notice,” continued the officer, “that she shows her green starboard light, and a white mast-head light. She is approaching about two and a half points off our port bow, and she is steering about north by west; you will see that when we come a couple of cable lengths nearer she will, according to the rule of the road, port her helm to about north, and pass close under our stern.”

The officer moved away bowward, and Stefan, clinging with his now numbed hands to the rail of the poop, leant forward, waiting, his heart strangely beating. Suddenly — as it were in a moment — the Treaty loomed on him, immense, terrible — no longer a light curving and hovering unreal above the water-but a ship, big, tangible, monstrous, the swift unswerving messenger of doom and horror. For a second he all but swooned; in the next, as the huge death swept nearer, he saw — distinctly saw — the face of the man raised high on the bridge where the wheel stood; he saw the face, the great red scar across forehead and jaw, the face of a rabid fiend, played upon in the darkness by the lurid light from the binnacle, and lit, as by a second fire of the lake of brimstone, by the mad hilarity of the insensate eyes.

“Port your helm!” shrieked Stefan, his whole agonised soul yelling in his throat; “port your helm, you devil! don’t you see—”

But at that moment the Treaty had rammed the Nelf. Stefan, leaning wildly over the side, was hurled into the sea by the concussion. Sense failed, and he began to sink.

The bows of the Treaty entered the Nelf just abaft the engine-room, penetrating two sleeping berths, near the mail-room. The ships were not in contact a minute; the poop of the Nelf swung round; the yacht, broken in the bows, recoiled; in a moment she had disappeared into the darkness. And the only man in the liner who, for one single instant, had seen the wild face of Ralph Ralloner was the Markgraf Stefan.

Instantly the Nelf began to settle down sternwards. Her bows rose in air. The captain had rushed up, and flew to the bridge. Then followed a mad stampede of half-naked passengers to the deck.

“Boats out,” sang out the captain; “but don’t lower.”

The sea ran almost mountain high; there was a driving wind from the E.S.E., bitterly cold. A swell rolled over the poop, and two ladies, slipping on the ice of the deck, flew down the inclined plane of the fast sinking stern, and were washed away by the surge. “Everybody on deck; crew to stations,” rang the clarion of the captain’s voice.

At that moment a prolonged shriek swelled from the cabin, in which hundreds of the passengers were still cooped. The berths on the port side had suddenly flooded, many drowning where they stood. A group of men amidships, without orders, took to firing rockets. The Treaty, as if mad with the taste of blood and havoc, was flying away, away to the north. The bows of the Nelf rose up wards like two hands clasped, and raised appealing to heaven. The seamen, wild with panic, but yet quite obedient to orders, rushed forward to loose the boats, but slipped down the iced incline of the deck, and were battered against the masts and hatches, or else fell broken into the engine-rooms.

There were ten boats. The lanyards and gripes of all were frozen; but amidships on the port side the men succeeded in chopping away two. The ship was careening heavily over to the port side, and here the sea broke

furiously over her, half swamping the boats. This, perhaps, was why the captain bellowed forth: "Women and children to the starboard side to be saved first;" but on the starboard side, there were no boats lowered! And the end was near. The German pilot standing close to the poop was suddenly aware of a singular swirling and gurgling sound made by the water. He rushed instantly towards the port bows, and-stumbling over a prostrate lady on the way seized her in his arms, and plunged with her into one of the boats. All this while, through the din and the thousandfold shrieking of the passengers, the engines kept up their throbbing travail, and the Nelf was moving painfully forward with the fore part of her keel above the wash of the swell.

Stefan, at the first shock, had been projected into the water. He was a stout swimmer, but this was of no value to him, for whilst he was being hurled from the ship, he had received a stunning blow across the forehead from a spike, and, at the moment when the waves caught him like a flung ball, he was utterly unconscious. He floated for a minute on the heave of the billows like a washed seaweed, buoyed by his bagged, ulster. Then he began to sink like so much lead. All hope seemed gone for him; no power under heaven, a man or an angel looking at him would have said, could now save him. He began to sink. The jaws of ocean opened expectant to swallow him.

Without pain, without consciousness, he commenced to drown, quiet as a child on its mother's bosom. But the Nelf, having vomited him, turned again to the vomit. The shock of the collision had, in stopping the speed of the liner, thrown him forward; as both ships were moving at great speed at the moment, it had been a great shock, and so it had thrown him far forward. But the engines of the Nelf still continued to work; she therefore moved onward, a prey to the sea-wash on her starboard quarter; and it was thus that as Stefan began to descend to his deep resting-place, she swerved

near him, stooped deeply to port, on which side he lay, and caught him by a hook which projected from her side a little above the line of her coppering near the bow. The hook passed through the neck of Stefan's ulster at two points, and he hung limp, like a rag on a rock, ducking deep into the water with every downward swoop of the vessel, and again rising high into the air.

It was these alternate immersions and breathings of the fresh wind that brought him back to consciousness. His eyes opened; the turmoil and screechings of the deck fell on his ears; he recognised his position. Presently the Nelf dipped and plunged him afresh into the depths. On rising he roared for help. Could they hear him? Was the ship sinking? He did not know. Once more he was sunk into the black and bitter water. "Not thus, not thus will I die, like a hung rat," he groaned. He tugged at the rubber cloth, but it was stout. And then he thought that he had but to loosen a few buttons, and he was free. But even then he recollected that in an inner pocket of the coat lay the Sapphire of the Rajah; and even then his loyalty to Ada Macdonald was proof against any other motive. Only with life would he part with what she prized. All at once, after another dive into the denser gloom of the sea, he remembered that there was a knife in his pocket. He felt for it and drew it forth, but his fingers were frozen hard; he could not open it. Again and again he tried with all his force; then, with a curse, flung it far into the sea. In the next moment he breathed a prayer and resigned himself to die.

The agony and clamor on the deck had now become a high continuous wail.

All this time the lower part of his body had hung in the water, except for instants when the ship swung specially far over to starboard; but the bow now suddenly kicked high up in the air, and he was lifted clean out of the reach of the waves. His whole weight hung by the hook; he heard the cloth

crack; he tore at it with all his force, and tumbled with a splash, free, into the sea. The Nelf, with the upper rim of the stern under the water, forged past him, and he was left alone in the silence and darkness of the ocean.

Immediately afterwards, the ship jerked her bows straight up into the air and shot stern downwards into the depths. Stefan did not see, but he heard the last long wail of unisoned despair from the decks, and he felt, as the ship sank, a gentle sucking sensation round his legs. It was the cajolery of the deep — the fawning lick of the beast before it springs. Some such thought passed through his mind. Ever and anon a yell still reached him; separate, vague with the gurgles of the flood and the rales of death— “the bubbling cry of some strong swimmer.” He was well without the sphere of the ship’s suction; but his strength was going, almost gone, and with every cuff of the swift-succeeding rollers he thought his hour had come. Suddenly he was aware of voices — speaking — floating low in the air around him like tones from another world. With his last breath he gasped a shout; a boat, dim and vast to his failing sight, loaded with people, drifted near; instinct urged him to one last superhuman effort to reach her; hands of men reached out to draw him in, and he tumbled, without consciousness, into the bottom of the cutter.

This was one of the only two boats which had put off from the ship. The other, having a sail, sailed away and soon foundered in the heaving sea. In Stefan’s boat was a mast, but no sail. He lay, with the lady saved by the pilot, half immersed in water. At last the day broke. No sail in sight. The spray from the sea froze on the sides of the boat, while now and again a wave broke over the tiny craft and drenched its occupants. The sea ran hill-high, and the efforts of the officers and men were less directed towards making land in the shortest time than to the urgent need of keeping the boat’s head to the sea. With constant vigilance there was hope, for the spot

where they found themselves is a frequented one — the haunt of the “Blue Fishing Fleet” from the English coast.

Several vessels were sighted at a distance; but all efforts to attract their attention failed, for the boat, if seen at all, must have appeared the merest speck on the sea. At 9 someone drew attention to a ship which appeared to be coming toward them. She was anxiously watched for a long time, and hope burst into flower when she was ascertained in very truth to come nearer. The officers made her out to be a trawler at work. From that moment someone or other of the castaways was constantly waving signals; but it seemed an eternity before they were noticed. By this time it was 12 o’clock. The sea had risen still higher, and the boat could make no headway with the oars.

Stefan stirred in his long swoon; but the lower part of his body seemed already dead. At last some of the men in the smack were seen to go up the rigging a little way and wave their hats. A shout went up from the boat as the smack began to bear down upon them. She was soon within hailing distance, and one of the fishermen shouted something which could not be heard in the boat. In a few minutes a rope was thrown out, and caught as well as the benumbed hands of the men would allow; but it was no easy matter to make fast the rope, so slippery was everything with ice, and boat and smack rose and fell, see-sawing on the waves. At last, however, the rope was secured and the boat pulled round to the side of the smack. But in this effort the rope parted under the tug and stress of the billows. The smack captain at once put the tiller down, let go the jib, and brought her up to the wind; and, having got near enough to the drifting boat, a stouter line was thrown out and made fast. Four of the men were quickly got on board the smack. The lady still lay in coma in the bottom of the boat without boots or dress, but wrapped in a cloak. She, with Stefan, were lifted by those who

still remained in the boat, and received into the smack. When the last man was on board a sea lifted the boat, the rope once more parted, and she drifted away. Hot blankets and rugs brought back something of life to the buffeted seafarers. That night they landed safe in Lowestoft.

CHAPTER V.



NINETY-FIVE HAD BEGUN to win fame in her youth. Nature, as if trying to resemble man, had turned her heart to ice. The great frost had set in in earnest. Groups of shivering, ill-clad men and women were crowding round the water companies, missionaries who came to open up in the middle of the streets wells as of living water; for the famine was sore in the houses, and pitchers, jugs, beer-cans poured forth from the doorways to celebrate the advent of the great Moses of the companies, when he came with his magic wand to strike floods from the rock. The parks flitted and twinkled with flying skaters. In the veins of active and healthy and well-to-do folk ran and caroled the vivid blood. But the poor shivered, and moaned, and starved under the inhumanity of heaven, and the unwisdom and pitilessness of earth.

In a low tap-room in Southampton sat two men before a roaring fire, a small table between them bearing glasses and brandy. The room, but for them, was deserted.

“Now, what you mean, hey?” said Ralph Ralloner to the other. “You know it’s — what they call it?— ‘blackmail,’ hey?”

“Yes, yes, guv’nor, I know all about that. But you know it’s murder, hey?” said James Ray, winking brazen-faced at the other man.

“Murder, if you like. Sea-water belongs everybody, s’pose. Drive my own ship on sea, and you call that murder. Call it what like. Well, how much you want?”

“A cool two thousand, per hannum,” said Hay, bringing down a sledgehammer fist on the table.

“Playing jokes, ain’t you?” cried the High-flyer, looking dangerous.

“If you thinks I’m playing jokes, as you call it, you just keep yer two thousand, and I’ll please myself by walking round to the nearest police station. Murdering four hundred people ain’t no jokes, I can tell ye.”

“And you think I am going pay whole rowsing crew o’ you two thousand a year each, do you? Not if my name’s Ralloner.”

“That’s all fudge,” said Ray. “You know as well as I do not a bloomin’ man of them knows anything about it. The lookout man was washed clean overboard by the collision; the cap’n, expecting to be drowned, was lying drunk below decks; the others felt the shock, but when they saw the jibboom and bows stove in, you know very well you told ’em we had run foul of a wreck. So us two are the only ones as knows anythink about it.”

“Dangerous for you!”

“How so?” asked Ray.

Ralloner whipped a small revolver from an inner pocket and pointed it at the seaman’s head. Had James Ray been a coward, had he so much as winced or winked, he would at that moment have been a dead man. He looked, like a bulldog, straight and stout into the eye of the millionaire, and quite coolly said —

“Why don’t you fire, master? Fire away! And I promise you on my Bible oath that within two months from to-night you swing for it.”

The revolver and the hand that held it dropped. At the word “swing” Ralloner turned as pale as paper. The High-flyer was a coward.

“Didn’t mean shoot you, know,” he stammered. “Only want show you I carry revolver, case of need. Always do — here in this inner pocket Always do — all companies. Brave fellow, Ray — must say that — brave; but I’ll

do for you yet. Dig your grave yet; see if I don't. Two-thousand, hey? What going to do with it, hey?"

"Just you leave that to me. I've got a fam'ly — two little gels and a mate. And there's a special kind o' Highland whisky which I always said, if I was a rich man, I'd be drunk on all day and every day. Every year one o' them two thousand'll go to keep my gels and their mother at the height o' the fashion, and t'other thousand'll vanish on that whisky. Don't you trouble your head 'bout that!"

"Well, look here, s'pose I say yes?"

"Suppose! there ain't no supposing about the matter. You're goin' to say yes — or swing."

Ralloner shuddered.

"All right — say yes. Drive my own ship on sea-water — still, say yes. And, look here, you know my house in London? Grosvenor Place, know. Well, you come there. Come often as you like. Plenty whisky there. And I make friend of you, Ray. Brave fellow — thought I meant shoot you? Ha! ha! Not a bit. You come to my house; one of my friends; bring wife and children. When a man's got money, like me, does what he likes; don't care what people think. You come to my house; introduce you to lords and dukes. Strike hands!"

Their hands met.

The High-flyer was cunning as well as cowardly.

* * * * *

The next afternoon the Markgraf Stefan was tapping at the door of the St. John-Heygates in Hyde Park Gardens.

As he stood, soon after, in the drawing-room alone, in tripped Ada Macdonald, all whiteness, like a new-risen moon, her black eyes two flames

of soft fire, her rich brown face a-tint with the bloom of peaches, and the surging blood of perfect health.

“Ah, pale! pale!” she said, as she held out both her hands to him, and sweetly bore his kiss.

“Pale, am I? I thought by this time I had conquered that weakness.”

“No! Sit down straight away and tell me all about it.” She took his hand. “Ah, my hero! my hero! what a terrible experience it must have been!”

“It is like a dream now that it is over,” he said.

“Tell me about it! Every detail, every point from first to last. I long to hear from your own lips.”

He drew her arm close to his, twining round it, and told her of the collision, and the mystery of his sojourn in the deep, and all the long eternity of the tossing in the boat on the deserted sea, and of his waking up to the bitter-sweet of living, and of the salvation of the trawler.

The dusk fell upon them, and wrapped them round in the dim drawing-room. They were locked together.

“What an ordeal!” she said; “but you say you saw the face of the man who steered the other ship?”

“Yes; I saw him — far more distinctly than I now see you.”

“Then you can describe him to the authorities. I understand that all efforts to trace him have failed, and that large rewards are about to be offered for his arrest. You, my Stefan, can describe him.”

Stefan knit his brows, passing his hand across his hair with a troubled look.

“A most strange thing,” he said, “has happened to me in reference to that man. No! I cannot — I cannot describe him. I tell you I saw the fiend’s face as clearly as the sun — the light of a lamp shone full upon it. But I have ever since been racking my brain in vain to recall his features, his general

appearance. It is just as if the swirl of the sea had washed clean out of my brain the compartment in which the memory of the man was stored. It is one of those mysterious tricks of memory for which there is no accounting. I cannot describe him.”

“If you saw him again perhaps—” suggested Ada.

“Ah! then, perhaps.”

“And you can remember nothing whatever definite about him?”

“Nothing — except this, only, that a great red scar ran zig-zag across his face, as when the lightning shoots across a dark sky.”

Ada broke into a ripple of laughter.

“What are you laughing at?” he asked.

Ada threw back her head, and shook with merriment.

“Tell me, what are—”

“Oh,” she cried, “this is too good! Suppose — suppose it was the — High-flyer!”

Stefan, too, began to laugh.

“What makes you say that?” he asked. “Have you never seen him, then? He has just such a scar as you describe.”

“I wish it were he, as punishment to him for daring to be my rival.”

Her fingers tightened in a pressure round his.

“But in this case I fear I shall miss my revenge; for is not the man called High flyer to be at the Yorricks ball? He must very likely be in England, then.”

“Yes,” said Ada; “I believe he is.”

“And, besides, the man with the scar was, as I told you, actually steering the ship. Now, millionaires hardly steer their own yachts, in a storm, in the dark of the morning, do they?”

“And about the stone?” said Ada suddenly.

“Oh! the stone — here it is.”

“Do you think—”

“What?”

“Do you really think now—”

“Tell me?”

“That the stone had anything to do with the loss of the Nelf?”

“My love — no!”

“Oh, if I thought so, Stefan, I should never forgive myself! And yet it is strange, too.”

“It is a little singular, certainly, but—”

“How it laughs and wantons even in the faint light of the dusk!” she said, toying with the great blue egg in her hand. “It will make of me a flitting bit of sky as I dance with it at the ball.”

Stefan sighed and wondered why.

“But,” cried Ada, glancing like a flash of light to ever fresh themes, “what a frost have we! And the whole world is gone a-skating.”

“Is that so?”

“The very royalties on the lake in Buckingham Palace Gardens. The Princess does it with an exquisite finish, you know; it is one of her manifold accomplishments. Yesterday we were at Hendon — such a scene! But the lady ice-gliders mostly lacked a certain — something — which I cannot define. It is an art which few English women attain to the perfection of gracefulness seen, for example, in the Princess, probably on account of the rarity of very hard winters among us. But I understand that your Ada was rather—”

“Admired? Of course you were! It is your destiny.”

“And would you care to skate now? Yes? I love it. You are not too knocked up? Then I’ll go dress!” and she ran from the room.

She returned furred — not too deeply, but just to the annihilating point of wintry suggestiveness. They descended and entered a cab; dined en famille in a private room at a restaurant; and set forth for the Wimbledon Rink.

The night-lights of the streets had long begun to glow in the wintry air, themselves wearing a frigid look. The parched air burned “frore.” People were dying of it. All you had to do was to lie down in it — and you died. Old Thames, casting back his mind to high old bygone jinks, was hardening his bosom for the roasting of yet another ox; the very gulls that haunted the little icebergs on the river seemed to suffer from cold in the head.

“And have you heard the legend of a British jury?” asked Ada in the cab, flowing with animation. “It is wonderful! The cold is breaking up our free institutions! They met for deliberation over a starved old woman, and almost at once discovered that the room was fireless, unbearable. The only thing that did not shiver among them was the corpse, which had done its shivering — previously. They protested. Even coroners, it seems, are human beings, and the coroner admitted a brumal unease. The upshot was that these seekers of truth disbanded, homewards to their babes, leaving the truth to the company of the cold.”

Then, flitting to another subject, “And, oh! Stefan, just think, a million of them out of work. ‘Workless workers,’ we call them. You perceive the ingenuity of the phrase; it is our very own, and of quite modern invention. But for a nation, by its united wisdom and activities, to invent a million of the actual products; ah, that is not well — not well. Just fancy — quite the largest army in Europe, only waiting for its Napoleon to come along, get into communication with them, collect them, drill them, and lead them upon London; and, hey — presto! in the blinking of a cat’s eye you have a despotism in England, or a socialistic republic — and no more private grandeurs — no big-B balls. — no High-flyers—”

She sighed and laughed at the same time.

“And how would you like these changes?”

“I should rather like the Socialism, I think. You know I am a very bad Radical. And I quite intend to convert you when we—”

“Say it.”

“When we are — No! bad luck!”

“And the despotism?”

“Oh! I think I should like that, too — provided I was the Emperor’s Queen.”

He frowned. He had touched on a discord in his Ada’s nature.

They reached the rink, and in five minutes were among the throng of skating couples. Stefan from of old was a skilled ranger, and Ada had acquired all the arts and graces since her school-girl days in far Pomerania. All was motion. The lights of the rink flashed, multiplied a thousandfold in their hurrying eyes, as they forged, and swerved, and skimmed, in delicious harmony of motion, like gulls that sweep, slanting, over the central ocean, wetting an alternate wing in the brine. Ada was all eyes, pointing out, in whispers, anything specially fine in the figure-skating.

“But look at him!” she said suddenly, jerking her head.

A man had appeared among them, thick cloaked, muffled, his face burled in the collar flaps of a great involving coat; a soft wide-brimmed hat over-shading his forehead.

“Only look at him!” she said again.

She seemed to know something about him, something in his figure. His face she could not see.

“But that is the frenzy of skating!” she whispered to Stefan.

The man threw athwart the ice as if ruin and despair were barking at his heels; he went straight; he did not swerve to right or left; fro and to, to and

fro, from end to end. The skaters watched for his coming, marked his going, fled when he was near, seized their chance to cross when he was far. Some laughed, others scowled, some stood still, amazed, to look. He was like the spirit of swiftness, the demon of unrest.

“What a strange frenzy—” Ada was just saying, crossing his path as he came, when, with incredible speed and force, the blind Juggernaut collided on them. They fell in a mass, sliding far over the ice. Stefan was instantly on his feet again.

“Oh, my love!” he cried. “I shall break the lunatic’s head—”

But looking about he could see no sign of the man. Other skaters had crowded round and blocked his view; and, in fact, the headlong career of Ralloner once broken, the spell of his furious excitement had also been broken, and he had left the rink. Stefan turned to Ada, and took her hand to raise her. A look of agony was on her face.

“My ankle—” was all she could gasp.

“Not sprained? Oh, do not say sprained!” he cried.

“I will try.” she said bravely, biting her lip and struggling to rise. But she fell again. As he lifted her in his arms and bore her away —

“Ada.” he whispered, “have you — have you — that thing — that stone — on you?”

“In my bosom — hidden — for safety,” she sighed, and fainted.

CHAPTER VI.



THE NIGHT OF the great ball had come, and in the middle of the common world uprose fairyland.

“I will go,” Ada Macdonald had said to Stefan, “if my ankle turn to brittle glass under my weight; and I will wear that stone, if it prove my ruin.”

But it was as a penance that she endured it, not as a pleasure. She sat in the centre state drawing-room till at midnight, three trumpeters, attired in white and scarlet with much gold, blew a fanfare on trumpets, and then she painfully, but with an infinite sad pace, hopped on the arm of Stefan in the long procession to the supper-room.

“You will be certain,” she said to him, “on no account to let my misfortune keep you from the full pleasure you may be able to obtain.”

Her words were stiff and formal, spoken from her throat. They were sitting at one of the many little round and oval tables of which the room was full. In the centre of all, at a larger square table, surrounded by her court, sat the hostess, attired as Marie Antoinette, in rich brocade, and wearing the Yorrick family jewels round her neck as a superb collar, a turquoise velvet cap clasped with jewels on her white coiffure, and a bandeau of family jewels under her cap. Her court mantle was fastened at the shoulders with a tiara of diamonds, widened out so as to clasp the cloak from shoulder to shoulder — a presence so really queenly that, on their first entrance, many of the guests greeted her with an obeisance. All the tables were decorated with flowers, some from the South of France — magnificent orchids; while

dishes of strawberries, apricots, grapes and pineapples were in luxurious contrast to the falling snow outside. The room was illuminated with silver candelabra containing wax candles. At every arched door were immense screens of magnificent Beauvais tapestry, while here and there, throughout the room, were huge church-candles in gilded stands, five feet high.

“Who was that girl,” asked Ada, “with whom you danced the last mazurka?”

“The Hon. Lillian Harley. Is she not very, very pretty?”

“Very, very! She was jilted last summer by a guardsman. I hear she is only one remove from a mental imbecile. But perhaps you do not object to that in your partners, provided they are very pretty.”

“You are cross to-night; I can well excuse you. And I left you lonely too long, did I not?”

“Did you? I did not notice.”

Silence fell upon them. They felt as if something, a discrepancy, a cloud, had come between them.

Stefan, to fill an awkward gap, fell to making remarks on the glittering fancy dresses of the guests, all attired in the style of Louis XV. and XVI. He himself wore a rich court dress; the coat of mauve brocade, full skirted and embroidered with gold, the waistcoat of mauve satin embroidered in floral design, knee-breeches of shot mauve and gold, silk stockings, court shoes, powdered hair, lace ruffles, jabot and sword, made up a costume, correct in every particular, of one of Louis XVI.’s courtiers. The whole room glittered like one great sun-illuminated gem, myriad lit.

“There was an old man,” said Ada suddenly, “named Foulon, who said at the beginning of the French Revolution that the people might eat grass when they were hungry. After he was hanged they stuffed his mouth with grass.”

“But apropos of what?” asked Stefan.

“Grass, alas!” she went on, not heeding his question, “was in no way to be got at. The dancing nobles had all the land, and with it the grass. No wonder they danced!”

“You govern your moods badly, Ada.”

“And they danced to the end — only, at the finish it was to a changed tune.”

“But why in heaven’s name all this?” cried Stefan, now thoroughly angry. “Why these irrelevant and unpleasant remarks? Would you not have danced if that ruffian had not sprained your foot?”

“I should, at any rate, not have danced with imbeciles!”

They rose from table, and the guests streamed back to the dancing halls. The suite of rooms led one into the other, so that the vista of magnificent and brilliantly-lighted apartments was superb. Over three thousand wax candles were used, in addition to the electric light, which was made to simulate wax candles. The candles were unshaded, in imitation of the style of the French in the last century.

The great Cedar Drawing-room was used as the central ballroom. It is so called because panelled in cedar, a perfect background for the fine Vandyke family portraits hung around it. The ceiling was white and gold, and there were two large arched windows, in one of which the band was stationed, and they, too, wore a white and gold dress of the period. The room was lighted with five great crystal chandeliers with wax candles, suspended from the ceiling, a high candelabra in each corner of the room, and two smaller ones on each side of the great marble and alabaster mantelpiece. Palms were placed about, and flowers, forming Louis Quinze garlands, were festooned from one point to the other. The principal feature of all was

the unshrouded light — it was day at midnight, but a chaster, holier day — the noon of the fairies.

The cloud had grown thick and threatening between Stefan and Ada.

“By the way,” he said, as they passed out from supper, “how of — what’s his name — Ralloner, the High-flyer? He was to have been here.”

“I am sorry to say he is not,” she answered.

“You — sorry!”

“Yes, even very sorry. He would at least have had patience with a poor cripple.”

“I can hardly guess for whom your reproach is intended,” he said haughtily.

He deposited her on a couch in the shadow of the recess of the great arch window, the fellow to the one in which the band was just finishing the waltz they had played all through the supper.

“But, talking of this man Ralloner,” said Stefan, standing beside her, “do you know, I have had a thought? From his character, as I have heard it, I should not be surprised if he were the man to whom you owe your inability to dance to-night.”

“You mistake the man,” she said. “He is wild — but, at any rate, a gentleman.”

“He! why, you called him a ruffian yourself a few days since!”

“I like him very, very much indeed!”

He bowed low.

“I know your tastes are always excellent.”

“Hence my connection with you,” she said venomously.

He bowed, and added —

“You are very kind.”

“I may tell you, however,” she went on, noticing his pique, and seeking to increase it, “that I quite certainly do not owe my sprain to the gentleman you allude to. Mr. Ralloner, I have heard, on all occasions chooses to wear a thin coat of a peculiar pattern, and has never at any time been known to put on an overcoat. It is his whim, an outcome of his individuality. But the man who collided with me at the rink was, as you saw, closely muffled up.”

“Then I was wrong. But now I must leave you—”

“Oh, certainly!”

“I really mean ‘must!’ you know. You see the Chinese Ambassador yonder talking to the Austro-Hungarian Minister? Does he not look wonderfully out of place at a Louis XVI. function? Well, the ball to-night was a rendezvous between us for a long talk. You know I leave for China in a few days—”

“Oh, pray, no excuses. Go, go. Someone will come and talk to me.”

But, somehow, she sat long solitary in the shade. The wonderful gem she wore shone at her forehead enclosed in a chaplet of gold. It shed all over her a blue shimmering light. The Yorrick ball was an incrustation of jewels, galaxy flashing to galaxy, but among them all was not one that compared in massiveness and limpid glory with the Rajah’s Sapphire. And yet the wearer sat lonely, sad, crippled, washed in her blue bath of light, regretting her presence. She was dressed as the Duchess of Polignac, the friend of Marie Antoinette, in a gown of white satin, the under-skirt full, and embroidered, all round with gold, turquoise, amethyst, topaz, and brilliant jewellery. The upper skirt was caught back with pale blue, similarly embroidered. She wore her hair high and poudree, and, besides the Rajah’s stone, had magnificent diamond and turquoise ornaments. She was loveliness itself to see, and her nightly eyes, flashing scorn and anger, outshone all jewels

whatever. But it was a long hour before a young attache of the French Embassy, noticing her loneliness, came and sat by her.

Stefan, as he moved away, was met by an old friend, Lord Pierrepont, with whom for a moment he stood conversing.

“I hear you are off to China,” said Lord Pierrepont.

“In a few days, as ill luck would have it.”

“A bad ducking that of yours in the North Sea. Whatever made you come by that route?”

“Ill-luck again. The same luck that drove a mad captain to cross my path just in the nick of time.”

“He must be as great a Juggernaut,” said Lord Pierrepont, laughing, “as my friend — what’s his name? — Ralloner.”

“You know him, then?”

“Don’t you? Ah, you should, You nave not seen humanity in its sublimity till you have seen Ralloner. The last I heard from him was a pressing invitation to ‘see sea water boil like kettle, see sea-water skip like mad.’ But I didn’t, as we say, tumble to the idea.”

“Indeed! Where was he going?”

“To Norway. I think he was to touch at Aberdeen, by the way.”

Stefan turned pale.

“By heaven!—” He stopped; then he eagerly asked —

“When — when was that?”

“That was — let me see — about the 29th or 30th Of January.”

Stefan’s heart throbbed. The Nelf had foundered just three or four days later.

“Are you sure?” he asked. “Did he really sail?”

“Yes; I am sure. But for some reason or other, he never completed his voyage, for he is now, I believe, in London. But why so much interest?”

“Oh! nothing, nothing,” said Stefan. But as he turned away to seek the Chinese Ambassador, he said to himself —

“My first business when I return to London to-morrow will be to seek out that man and, at any price — by hook or by crook — to see his face.”

CHAPTER VII.



THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR, who looked like a saffron-flower in the middle of a garden of roses, had taken his seat in the recess of an alcove with Stefan. Here the white glamor of the candle-light came more subdued. At every second, as they talked, the whiz and wind of a waltzing couple swept dose by them.

“You see my position,” Stefan was saying; “I go to China with the avowed object of peace-making. And, of course, if I have your representations of the view taken by the European Powers of the situation, my influence at headquarters in China will be by so much increased.”

“And what is that view, sir?” asked the Ambassador.

“Oh, that you know as well as I. It is that the struggle is a hopeless one for China.”

“That is not my view, however.”

“Quite so, quite so. I only say it is the view of Europe, and it is, further, our view that if Wei-hai-wei falls — as fall it must, sooner or later — the difficulty of keeping the conquerors from the gates of Peking will be enormously increased, and the partition of the Chinese Empire heave in sight.”

“Poh! Poh! but Wei-hai-wei won’t fall.”

“Port Arthur fell.”

“Ah! another matter if it be true. Here you have strong land garrisons, splendid fleet in Wei-hai-wei Harbor, Admiral Ting commanding, great

man, grand man, soon drive the Wojin back to their own country. Don't you believe newspaper talk."

"Still, facts are facts, and the men of the peaked caps are quite certainly no imbeciles. Allow me to recall to you in outline the course of events so far. By a really masterly strategy the Japanese have contrived to hem in the greater part of your fleet in the port, and are now keeping watch at the harbor mouths — as you are aware, there are two — cutting off escape from the entrapped ships. With consummate skill they had already manoeuvred a land force to the neighborhood of Wei-hai-wei, and, when all was ready, drew a cordon of men and guns landward of the place and commenced a cannonade, having, with infinite toil, dragged the siege pieces into position over the wintry roads. Their land batteries thereupon, uniting efforts with the fleet, shelled the Chinese out of every open spot, and have already captured three large forts; nor is the fate of the Island Lin-Kung-Tan, at the mouth of the harbor, any longer in doubt. All this is real fact; and I mean to say that the men who have done it are not very easily driven back."

The Chinese Minister first sighed, then immediately looked at Stefan with a light hearted smile.

"Poh! we think nothing of them over yonder. They are what you call savages; but what terms of peace will you propose in Germany's name?"

"Well, you know," said Stefan, "Count Ito, the Japanese Prime Minister, is on the point of receiving a peace embassy from Peking, and the terms he then dictates will be a basis on which future negotiations may go forward. Of course, if Wei-hai-wei falls, that practically finishes the war, for even if any of the imprisoned Chinese ironclads escape, there is no longer any refuge whither they can betake themselves. Mukden can be seized almost with the trouble of marching upon it, and with the first warmth of spring the united land and sea forces can move on to the end of the Gulf of Pe-chi-li,

and occupy Peking itself. This being so, it is clear that any terms of peace must involve compensation for the prodigious exertions put forth by the victor. Japan will demand, too, the undisturbed protectorate of Corea, the cause of the war; a commercial treaty giving freedom and favor to her goods, payment for the expenses of the war, as well as an indemnity of, say, fifty or sixty millions in money; and Port Arthur and Wei-hai-wei will doubtless be held as security, as well as the Island of Formosa. These, I think, will be the minimum demands of the peaked caps."

"Peaked caps!" laughed the Minister. "He! he! he! Peaked caps!"

But at that moment a Louis XVI liveryman, attired in cream and crimson satin, was seen to dodge his way among the now hushed and fast-hurrying dancers. He bore in his hand a golden plate, and having spied the recess in which the two diplomats conversed, steered his way skilfully towards it, and presented to them the plate. On it were two dispatches — one for Stefan; one for the Ambassador. They tore them open.

"These have come by special train, I am told," said the waiter.

"Wei-hai-wei fallen! Wei-hai-wei fallen!" screamed the Chinaman. "Oh, it can't be true! Don't believe! don't believe!"

"It is too true!" said Stefan. "This of mine is from headquarters in London. I am ordered to hurry instantly to Brindisi to catch the P. and O. boat which has already left England. 'Peace at any price' are my instructions. I must leave instantly."

He hurried straight to Ada Macdonald. She still sat with the young attache, flirting desperately, an ill-humor raging in her, her eyes a-flame with animation.

"Ada — excuse me, please — I am ordered instantly to China. Can you give me five — ?"

"Really? So sorry! Good-bye." She held out her hand with a smile.

“But — we cannot part like — this! — for many months — Ada!”

“Don’t you see I am engaged?” she asked, arching high her black brows.

He took her hand. His eye fell on the sapphire blazing on her lit brow. He was gone. It was the virtual breaking-off of their engagement.

As he stood on the departure platform at Victoria the next day, he saw the placard offering an immense reward for the capture of the ship which had run down the Nelf and for the arrest of her unknown captain; and he thought with bitterness that his chance of seeing the face of Ralloner was gone — perhaps for ever.

CHAPTER VIII.



SOME MONTHS PASSED. At the moment when Stefan von Reutlingen was stepping on board the steamer at Dover, en route for China, Ada Macdonald was lying half-way across a bed in London, sobbing, tearing to pieces her headlong humor at the ball, cursing her childish caprice. Surely some power outside of herself had possessed her! But through all those months pride kept her from writing a line to Stefan; and he, busied with many things in China, waited and waited, I hoping against hope, for a letter, thinking that she would repent and relent, and write him. The first step, he thought, was surely due from her, and he had been careful to leave an address at the St. John-Heygates. But he waited in vain. Fate had come between them.

One night, about a couple of months after the ball, two men stepped from a house in Grosvenor Place. One was drunk — tottering and blind; he leaned heavily on the other, who led and supported him. That special brand of Highland whisky which James Bay loved had lately flowed like a river for him; he had but to stoop and drink freely of that water of life. (Is not brandy, of all things, I an eau de vie across the Channel? Monsieur's views of "life" not being altogether identical with those of St. John.) Ray had freely accepted Ralloner's invitation to visit him often. The two formed excellent companions. Ralloner opened the sluices of the river of life; Ray stooped and drank. They sat together in a small high room of the great mansion, and drank till the cock crew or till Ray slipped in a heap beneath the table. Ray could tell excellent sea stories when he had the use of his tongue. Ralloner liked to sit and hear sea stories.

“Brave f’low, Ray — must say,” he said of ten.

“I likes you, Mis’r Ral’ner, likes you!” hiccoughed Ray. “No hang’d psalm singing ‘bout you.”

One day, after a month, Ray discovered that two thousand a year would be altogether insufficient for his growing needs, and mildly hinted as much. Ralloner looked hard at him for a minute, and then said —

“All right — make it three thousand. That suit you?”

Ray was delighted. That night, as they drank together, he kept repeating —

“Likes you, Mis’r Ral’ner, likes you.” Soon after this Ralloner did a singular thing. A tumble-down house in one of the vilest slums of Whitechapel was for sale, and Ralloner bought it. Through all his life he had hardly ever glanced at a newspaper; quite lately he had taken to rushing through every newspaper he came across, and, in one of these, he had come at last upon what he sought: At No. 11 Fry Alley, Whitechapel, said the paper, a family had died within two days — a whole family — of galloping small pox. The house had been cleaned out by the scourge; it lay empty, condemned, infected — a death-trap. Ralloner read no more papers after this; he made inquiries, dived into the office of an estate agent, saw that the vile property was for sale at any price, and bought it on the spot. He went about with the front door key in his pocket, and sat and heard James Ray say, “I likes you, Mis’r Ral’ner — likes you.”

It was a dark windy night and verging on towards morning. The two men jerked and stumbled a little way from the house in Grosvenor Place, and then, a lucky cab coming within hailing distance, Ralloner plumped Ray into it and followed. He gave the address of the alley in Whitechapel, and told the man to drive like mad.

Ray lay back on the cushions of the cab helpless, paralysed. Presently he woke up for a moment and grunted in his throat, feeling the motion.

“Where ‘m I?”

“Going home.” said Ralloner.

“Home. Ha! Ha! Tha’as goot!” spluttered Ray. “Pass whisky.”

The cab dashed through the city. “Where ‘m I?” asked Ray, waking up again. “Near home,” said Ralloner. The cab drew up at the entrance of an extremely foul and narrow and dark alley. Ralloner dragged out Ray and paid the man. In a few minutes the two stood before the door of No. 11.

“This not my home,” said Ray. “Wha’a’s this?”

“In you tumble,” answered Ralloner.

“No tricks, mas’r, I hope?”

“In you jump. There’s a truckle-bed on second floor.”

He pushed the drunkard in, slammed the door, and locked it. Then turned and walked with the swiftness of an ostrich westward.

When James Ray next passed from that house he was borne in a plain board coffin, and his corruption was already many days old. The name of the mysterious victim of smallpox was unknown, for his face was unrecognisable.

* * * * *

Time passed, and found the High-flyer in agitation. If you are one of those who hunt for “new sensations,” go and murder 400 people and see, how you feel after it. That is very “new” indeed when you are unaccustomed to it. It tends to agitate the mind, and if your mind was in a high state of agitation beforehand, as was the bubbling mind of the High-flyer, then, after the incident of the 400, you get a perfect tornado of agitation, agitation in the frantic spinning-top state — the maelstrom state. As the months went on,

Ralloner was certainly mad. The hereditary diseases in his blood took deeper root. The “Caecarism,” arising from his unlimited wealth, broke all bounds within him. While James Ray lived there had been a fetter on him, and this had acted as a healthy check upon the development of the peculiar kind of insanity which his millions had produced in him. But now he was free. Ray was dead, and his fears of “swinging” were gone; the only eyes whose evidence could convict him of any connection with the collision were shut. The cheek was removed. His free limbs ran, and leapt, and danced. He could defy everything. His little, strange, diseased mind was by nature profoundly superstitious; nobody had been enabled to induce Ralloner to pass under a ladder or sit thirteenth at table. But now, if he spied a ladder in the distance, he made a rush for it and passed under it again and again, till a crowd gathered round him. He began giving small dinners, and always invited twelve others, so that he might be the thirteenth.

“Charlie,” he said to Lord Pierrepont, “I kill superstition out of this world for good and all, see if don’t!”

“That’s right, Ralloner,” said Lord Pierre point; “go for it! kill it! Only what is superstition?”

“What is?” answered the High-flyer. “Why, thirteenth at table, conscience — that’s superstition. No more of that! Don’t leave it a leg to stand on — kill it dead as nail!”

Someone told him of an old palace among the mountains of Bohemia in which it was said no person had ever lived for more than three weeks, because, at the end of that time, a figure clothed in black appeared before him, lifted its veil, and the sight of the horror of that face was such that no mortal could live an hour after beholding it. The High-flyer raced across Europe, purchased the palace for many thousands of pounds, and, with a

heart racked with terrors, slept in the house for just four weeks. He returned to England mad with his triumph. Superstition was dead as nail.

But — how had he forgotten the Rajah's Sapphire? That, that he must have, if it cost him his fortune. Superstition was not quite dead until that had been tried and tested. He had heard the fame of the stone, but had clean forgotten it. Now he remembered with a vengeance. Madness seized strongly upon him. He had just returned from his victory among the mountains of Bohemia. The Rajah's Sapphire! All his labors were useless without the possession of that. And Caesar swore that he would possess it, or burn Rome and the world.

The next day an agent waited upon Ada Macdonald, who was then in London. He made a fabulous offer for the jewel, but did not mention the name of Ralloner. Gladly would Ada have been rid of it, quite apart from her love for money. But family pride restrained her; the sapphire was a Macdonald heirloom. Her answer was that on no possible consideration would she part with the gem.

"I'll have it! I'll have it!" cried Ralloner, when the agent brought him the answer, "if I have to marry the girl for it!" And then he remembered with joy that he had once before, in a mad whim, gone on his knee before her. Good! That was all in his favor. She would take it as a proof that he was really fond of her.

He visited Ada, put on extraordinary society manners, and passionately proposed. She smiled on him, not unkindly, and refused. How she hoped and hoped but for one line from Stefan — one line to help her pride to write for his forgiveness! The line did not come. Caesar, not to be balked, invested the not very strong fortress with all his fiery forces, battering-ram, and catapult, and Ada yielded.

CHAPTER IX.



THE MARKGRAF STEFAN returned to Berlin in about a year to receive high promotion in the diplomatic service, and distinguished compliments from the Emperor William. He was immediately dispatched on a new and important mission to Washington, and having accomplished this, he travelled to New York, and prepared to return to Europe.

It was two days before his intended departure that, as he was leaving the offices of the Consul, that gentleman said to him: "Oh, by the way, I suppose you have not many engagements in this strange city, and there is to be a great social function to-night given by a new married couple, at which you may care to be present. I am au courant at the house, and can invite you. Will you come? It is at No. 215 Fifth Avenue."

Stefan had many matters of business to see to that day, and was rather pressed for time. So he hurriedly said —

"Thank you; I shall be delighted, if I can come;" and at once went out into the street.

Thus it was that when he reached the brilliantly-lit mansion at about 10 o'clock, he remembered that he had forgotten to inquire the name of his newly-wed host and hostess. The alabaster stairs up which he struggled were crowded with decollette ladies burning with the diamonds with which the Americans load their woman-kind, and with black coated gentlemen, all shirt-front and watch-chain. The balustrades of the wide white steps were of porphyry; and pink-shaded lamps threw a halo, as of soft moons, round the palms and tree-ferns of the hall and conservatory. Some of the guests wore

plain evening-dress, but most were in fancy-ball costume. Exclamations, laughter, and waltz-music floated through the air. The crush of fashionable humanity was really alarming. Above, a series of lofty-lit halls opened one into the other, giving a panorama of the assembly from end to end. Heads, heads, half-bare bosoms, black coats every where! The rooms received upon their bright delicate summer hangings and curtains of fine gauze the strange variegated illumination of innumerable Chinese, Moorish, Persian, and Japanese lanterns, some made of perforated tin, cut into ogives like mosque doors, others of colored paper resembling fruits; and great, swift-darting, bluish jets of electric light would, all in a moment, cast pallor over these thousands of other lights and, as it were, the full moon's frosty radiance over faces and bare shoulders, over the whole phantasmagoria of feathers, fabrics, bows, and ribbons, crushing each other in the dance or ranked tier upon tier on the broad staircase. From where Stefan managed to squeeze to a seat under a verandah-like gallery he was able to gaze out upon this sight through a network of green bushes and flowering creepers, which blended with the gay scene and formed a frame for it.

He sat lonely among the greenery for a long time before he was joined by a stranger in the dress of Russian monk. Being alone together they entered into friendly conversation.

"This is surely a very splendid function," said Stefan.

"All the elite of New York society are here. MacAlister himself, I understand."

"Ah! I have heard of him; he is the acknowledged pacemaker and lookout society man in New York, is he not?"

"He is. When he dies nothing will be left worth living for. After him, in fact, the deluge."

“I have for some time,” said Stefan suddenly, “been noticing a peculiar movement in the crowd. It is like the setting in of a current in the sea. They seem to be all moving and pressing in one direction.”

“I can explain that,” said the other, “it has been announced that the host is going to make a speech in the hall at the far end of the suite of rooms, and the crowd is moving forward to that end.”

“A speech!” cried Stefan. “A speech! Is this, then, a ball or a lecture hall?”

“It is very absurd, certainly,” said the stranger; “but our host, as you may know, is no ordinary mortal. He has his little whims, and nobody resents the whims of a millionaire. Besides, in this country, we are never very much opposed to novelties. He has, it seems, some announcement to make to his guests.”

“Of what nature?”

“Ah! that I do not know. Something strange, you may bet.”

“At what hour is the ceremony of the speech to come off?”

“Sharp at midnight, before supper.”

“It is close on that now,” said Stefan. “Shall not we, too, join the procession?”

“Certainly, if you will.”

They rose, passed through the shrubbery, and walked together into the ballroom. The tide of moving humanity was very slow. The rooms behind them were already nearly deserted, and those in front were well thronged with the advancing phalanx of the company. Laughter, too loud to partake of Vere de Vere repose, cries of every cadence, remarks on the novelty of the occasion, rose like a mist of sound above the sea of heads. Fans were flung out, and began to flutter like a hundred butterfly wings. Gradually the press became uncomfortable, and some few of the ladies only saved

themselves from fainting by beating a difficult retreat, and thus momentarily checking the flow of the progressive current. Herded in this way into a compact mass of life, all covered with brilliant jewels, the company presented the appearance, under the myriad lanterns and the occasional blue flash of the electric light, of a wide coruscation of dazzling refulgence.

Stefan found himself at last in the middle of the last hall. At its end was a raised dais, on which stood two thrones of what looked like solid gold. The speaker had already begun, but Stefan had no ears, no eyes for him. His whole wild gaze was fixed with infinite surprise on the woman who sat on one of the thrones. The other was empty, for the speaker had risen and was talking, standing on the dais.

Stefan gazed — his eyes starting from their sockets. There she sat — Ada — his own — in the very dress she had worn at the Yorrick Ball a year before. A dream — and yet no dream. There she sat, lovely as light, glorious as dawn, before him, throned a queen — but the queen of another king. And who was he? He had not long to wait for the answer, for the speaker, lifting his voice to a high falsetto pitch, at that moment compelled him to tear his eyes from the dear dark face they had been resting upon. Stefan looked at the man and saw him holding up to the light, between his finger and thumb, a vast blue jewel, which winked and rayed under the light, like one of the gems from the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem.

“Yes, friends,” cried the speaker in the shrill eager voice of a man frantic with excitement. “Yes, friends — here it is — the Rajah’s Sapphire. This is stone that brings bad luck everybody soon as they touch it. Why don’t it bring bad luck me? Can’t! that’s truth of matter. I get married, have it in my pocket — nothing happens; ring not lost, parson there with white surplice, everything right as beans; cross Atlantic with my wife, have it in my pocket;

there's a chance for stone! nothing happens! — sea-water calm as water in a bath. Stone can't — that's what's the matter! Superstition's dead as nail. Stone's a sham — a sham, tell you! I have digged grave of superstition, I, Ralph Ralloner — not left it leg stand on. And with superstition dead 'n' buried, away goes everything. Some of you p'raps inclined to b'lieve in Bible; well, look up at this stone, this sham—”

But the lecturer got no farther. There was a commotion in the crowd. A man was urging, and forcing, and elbowing his way forward with a pallid face and wild eyes through the serried ranks. It was Stefan. At the moment when he had turned his eyes on Ralloner for the first time, a spasm seemed to convulse his breast. He had staggered, and passed his hand slowly across his brow; and with the action, it seemed as if he had drawn a film away from before the eyes of memory. Once more, with utter distinctness, he saw the lurid-lit face of the man who steered the Treaty into the vitals of the Nelf; and with the sight, reason forsook him, and a horrid impulse to fly at the throat of the fiend and tug and tear at the life in his windpipe possessed him. He dashed forward, wild rage urging him rapidly through the crowd: a buzz arose, a turmoil, stifled cries from all sides; but when Stefan had reached a point of some few paces from the dais, he raised his right arm, pointing with his forefinger straight at Ralloner, and his voice rang out thrilling as a clarion, silencing the tumult of the crowd:

“I charge that man with being the murderer of four hundred people; the wrecker of the Nelf; and the man for whose arrest a reward is now offered throughout Europe.” There was a dead silence. Ralloner had staggered backward. His face worked horribly like the face of a man in a fit; he was trying to speak, but the struggling words stuck rasping in his throat. The Rajah's Sapphire was still in his hand.

Suddenly he stiffened straight with a jerk, and took a step forward. At last words came.

“So,” he hissed, “so I swing, do I? But you die with me, tell you!”

And so saying, he whipped out a revolver, which, as he had once told James Ray, he always carried with him, and pointed it at the head of Stefan. But at the moment when he fired Ada Macdonald had leapt from her seat on the throne, and struck his hand a blow; the shot swerved and entered the breast of a lady, who instantly fell. A yell of rage and execration rose from the whole company. But Ralloner heard it with ears already half dead; for on realising this fresh, crime of his hand, he had turned the weapon against himself. Simultaneously with the crack of the report, and the thud of his fall, there rang forth a solitary scream above the tumult of the shouting company. It came from the throat of Ada. Then she fell fainting on the bosom of Stefan. In the dead hand of Ralloner was still grasped the Rajah’s Sapphire.

* * * * *

Yet a year, and they meet once — Ada and Stefan. It was on board a dainty little steamer that plies her brisk way between Naples and Syracuse. It was only necessary for them to be near in order to flow together again like two dewdrops on the same petal. Ada had saved his life, and he did, not require this proof of her love for him to make him love her. To her he had never wavered, nor, at bottom, had she to him. And now sadness had made her wiser, firmer, clearer. Their coming together was quite simple. They sat in a deserted nook of the cabin as the little vessel neared Naples Harbor. Her hand fell to his; their lips met. And with this there flashed upon her the full realisation of how much more precious is the gold of a little vein of simple love in a human heart than millions of rubies, heaped in a casket of pearl.

“But, darling,” he said, “that stone. We must not keep it. Where is it now?”

“The sapphire? It has been cut up by the jewellers into at least fifty small bits, which are being sold to the London public one by one.”

THE END

The Yellow Danger (1898)

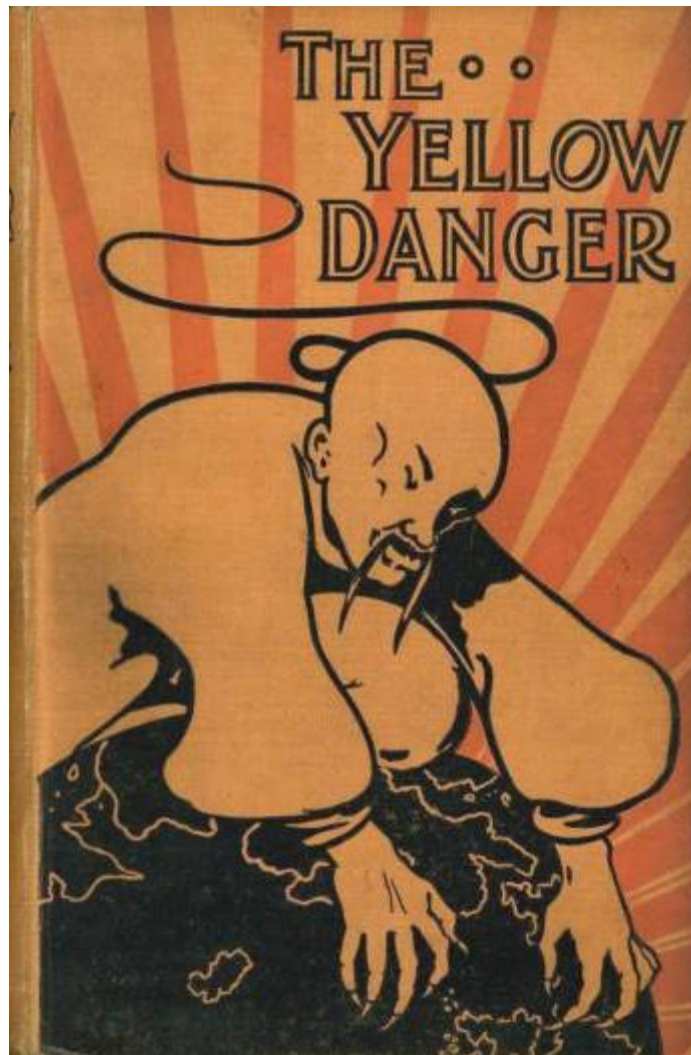


The Yellow Danger was first published in serial form under the title *The Empress of the Earth: The Tale of the Yellow War*, in the magazine *Short Stories* between 5 February and 18 June 1898. Shiel had been contracted to write the novel by Peter Keary at the behest of Sir Cyril Arthur Pearson, the publisher and founder of *The Express* newspaper. The version of the novel that would appear in book form was highly edited and much shorter than the one hundred and fifty thousand word magazine copy. It was released in July 1898 and proved to be a huge commercial success, running to multiple editions during the author's lifetime.

The Yellow Danger is reflective of the late nineteenth century racially prejudiced ideology of the European imperial powers towards China, Japan and other East Asian countries. France, Germany, Russia and Britain were embroiled in an increasingly intensified fight for imperial influence and dominance in China. They feared a formidable Sino-Japanese military alliance might arise, threatening their power. A recurring theme of this period, which would be deemed as racist and xenophobic today, explored the concept of Western white-majority countries being overrun by the racial 'Other'; Shiel was quick to capitalise on the market for such scaremongering literature. In *The Yellow Danger*, he plays upon British fears, reflecting on their declining influence in China, while crafting a narrative that draws on the racist discourse of rampaging hordes, overthrowing and subjugating European countries.

The Yellow Danger was Shiel's most successful book during his lifetime, going through numerous editions, particularly when the Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901 seemed to confirm his fictional portrayal of Chinese hostility to

the West. In truth, Shiel himself considered the novel hackwork and was even embarrassed by its success. Nonetheless, it was an influential work with other prominent authors, most notably with H. G. Wells in *The War in the Air* (1908) and with Jack London in *The Unparalleled Invasion* (1910).



The first edition

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THE
YELLOW DANGER

BY

M. P. SHIEL

AUTHOR OF 'THE MAN-STEALERS,' 'PRINCE ZALESKI,' ETC.

BREVIS ESSE LABORE !

Menius, Horace and Gibbon.

London

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The first edition's title page

CHAPTER I. THE NATIONS AND A MAN



AS ALL THE world knows, the Children's Ball of the Lady Mayoress takes place yearly on the night of 'Twelfth Day,' 6th January. In the year '98 the function was even more successful than usual, owing to Sir Henry Burdett's fine idea that the children should be photographed in support of the Prince of Wales' Hospital Fund. The little Walter Raleighs, Amy Robsarts, flocked in throngs to the photographer's studio adjoining the grand *salon* of the Mansion House; while all that space outside between the Mansion House, the Bank, and the Stock Exchange was a mere mass of waiting, arriving, and departing vehicles.

If anything tended to take a little of their exuberance from this and other New Year jublations, it was a certain cloudiness in the political sky; nothing very terrifying; yet something so real, that nearly every one felt it with disquiet. An Irish member, celebrated for his 'bulls,' was heard to say: 'Take my word for it, there's going to be a sunset in the East.' Men strolled into their clubs, and, with or without a yawn, said: 'Is there going to be a row, then?' Some one might answer: 'Not a bit of it; it'll pass off presently, you'll see.' But another would be sure to add: 'Things are looking black enough, all the same.'

It was just as when, on a clear day at sea, low and jagged edges of disconnected clouds appear inkily on the horizon-edge, and no one is quite certain whether or not they will meet, and overwhelm the sky, and sink the ship.

But the horizon had hardly darkened, when, again, it cleared.

The principal cause of fear had been what had looked uncommonly like a conspiracy of the three great Continental Powers to oust England from predominance in the East. First there was the seizure of Kiao-Chau, the bombastic farewells of the German Royal brothers; then immediately, the aggressive attitude of Russia at Port Arthur; then immediately, the rumour that France had seized Hainan, was sending an expedition to Yun-nan, and had ships in Hoi-How harbour.

All this had the look of concert; for within the last few years it had got to be more and more recognised by the British public that centuries of neighbourhood had fostered among the Continental nations a certain spirit of kinship, in which the Island-Kingdom was no sharer.

In the course of years the Straits of Dover had widened into an ocean. Europe had receded from Britain, and Britain, in her pride, had drawn back from Europe. From the curl of the moustache, to the colour and cut of the evening-dress, to the manner in which women held up their skirts, there was similarity between French and German, between German and Russian and Austrian, and dissimilarity between all these and English.

It is true that the Russian hated the German, and the German the Russian and the French; but their hatred was the hatred of brothers, always ready to combine against the outsider. This had been begun to be suspected, then recognised, by the British nation. Alone and friendless must England tread the wine-press of modern history, solitary in her majesty; and if ever an attempt were made to stop her stately progress, she was prepared to find that her foe was the rest of Europe.

But very soon after the unrest had arisen, it began to subside. France denied the annexation of Hainan; the semiofficial *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, inspired by Wilhelm, painted Germany as the patron of commerce, with an amiable weakness for theatrical displays; Russia was defeated in the

matter of the removal of Mr. MacLeavy Brown, and seemed sufficiently limp after it; while spirits were raised by the probable guarantee of a Chinese loan by the British Government.

But meanwhile, at the children's ball at the Mansion House, events were working in a quite different direction from that of peaceful settlement.

Ada Seward was the presiding deity in the nursery of Mrs. Pattison of Fulham. On the night of the 6th, Dr. and Mrs. Pattison had to be present at a ball in the West End, and Ada on that night was busy; for it was necessary for her, first of all, to convey Master Johnnie Pattison, costumed as Francis I., to the Mansion House; and then to hurry homeward again to take Miss Nellie Pattison to a children's evening with charades in South Kensington.

The fact that it was wet when she reached the Mansion House may have had something to do with her troubles. The landing-place was occupied by some other carriages, and dismounting with her charge, an umbrella over him, she cried to the coachman in a hurried manner through the drizzle:

‘Wait till I come back.’

The man afterwards declared that he understood her to say:

‘Go away, and come back.’

At any rate, when Ada again came forth into the crush to look for the Pattison brougham, it was nowhere to be found.

And now her lips went up in a pout of vexation. ‘What on earth is any one to do now?’ she said. She was pressed for time, and yet at a loss.

The throng of private carriages seemed to have banished all cabs from the region of the Mansion House. She looked and saw none; then into her pocket, and found only sixpence. These two circumstances decided her against the cab. Instead, she ran a few yards, dodging among the carriages, and at the entrance to Poultry, skipped into a moving ‘bus.

She sat in a corner for five minutes, with agonised glances out of the door at the slowly receding clocks. Then some one — a man sitting nearly opposite, whom she had not noticed — addressed her:

‘Why, Miss Ada, is that you?’

‘Oh!’ she cried, ‘Mr. Brabant, is that you? It’s a long time since — how are you?’

‘Well, I’m pretty fair, Miss Ada, as times go, you know. Hope you are the same.’

‘Still in the army?’

‘Oh yes — the Duke of Cambridge’s Own, you know. You living in London now?’

‘Yes — at Fulham.’

Here conversation flagged; and in that minute’s interval, Brabant, with a sudden half-turn to his left, said:

‘Just allow me to introduce you to my friend here — Miss Seward — Dr. Yen How.’

In the light of the ‘bus lamp Ada Seward saw a very small man, dressed in European clothes, yet a man whom she at once took to be Chinese. With a wrinkled grin, he put out his hand and shook hers.

He was a man of remarkable visage. When his hat was off, one saw that he was nearly bald, and that his expanse of brow was majestic. There was something brooding, meditative, in the meaning of his long eyes; and there was a brown, and dark, and specially dirty shade in the yellow tan of his skin.

He was not really a Chinaman — or rather, he was that, and more. He was the son of a Japanese father by a Chinese woman. He combined these antagonistic races in one man. In Dr. Yen How was the East.

He was of noble feudal descent, and at Tokio, but for his Chinese blood, would have been styled Count. Not that the admixture of blood was very visible in his appearance; in China he passed for a Chinese, and in Japan for a Jap.

If ever man was cosmopolitan, that man was Dr. Yen How. No European could be more familiar with the minutiae of Western civilisation. His degree of doctor he had obtained at the University of Heidelberg; for years he had practised as a specialist in the diseases of women and children at San Francisco.

He possessed an income of a thousand tael (about £300) from a tea-farm; but his life had been passed in the practice of the grinding industry of a slave. Nothing equalled his assiduity, his minuteness, his attention to detail. He had once written to the Royal Observatory at the Cape pointing out a trifling error in a long logarithmic calculation of the declension of one of the moons of Jupiter, originating from the observatory.

In the East he could have climbed at once to the very top of the tree — even in the West, had he chosen. But he chose to lie low, remaining unnoticed, studying, observing, making of himself an epitome of the West, as he was an embodiment of the East.

In whatever country he happened to be — and he was never for many years in any one — he was most often to be found in the company of people of the lower classes; and of these he had a very intimate knowledge. So great was his mental breadth, that he was unable to sympathise with either Eastern or Western distinctions of class and rank. He often struck up chance friendships with soldiers and sailors about the capitals of Europe; and these patronised and exhibited him here and there.

Yen How knew that he was being patronised, and submitted to it — and smiled meekly. In reality, he cherished a secret and bitter aversion to the

white race.

He had two defects — his shortness of sight, which caused him to wear spectacles; and his inability, in speaking without effort, to pronounce the word ‘little.’ He still called it ‘lillee.’

On that date of 6th January, when he drove westward with Brabant and Ada Seward, he was perhaps forty years of age, but seemed anything between sixteen and sixty; a hard, omniscient, cosmopolitan little man, tough as oak, dry as chips.

Yet in that head were leavening some big thoughts; and his heart was capable of tremendous passions.

In reality, could one have known it, as he fared onward through the drizzle in the trundling ‘bus, smiling behind his spectacles, he was the most important personage in London, or perhaps in the world.

Dr. Yen How was capable of anything. In him was the Stoic, and the cynic, and the tiger; with a turn of the mind he could become a *savant* or a statesman, or a crossing-sweeper, or a general. He possessed this excellence: a clear brain.

By one of those extraordinary freaks of nature for which there is no accounting, this man wanted to see Ada Seward a second time after parting with her that night.

Brabant, who had known her in her native town of Cheltenham, accompanied her to the gate of the Pattison villa, Yen How with them.

As he was leaving her, the little doctor put his mouth to her ear, and whispered hurriedly:

‘I will wait here to-morrow night at eight for *one lillee kiss*.’

The girl was astounded.

‘Well, the idea!’ she just gasped.

Before she could proclaim her indignation, the two men turned off.

Till he reached his home in Portland Street, Yen How was engaged in one long, continuous, secret smile — a smile at his own expense. This outburst of his in the role of lover was new to him, absolutely. His relations with women hitherto had consisted in the business of curing their sicknesses. By what subtle physiological or psychological affinity this one particular English girl had been able to evoke from this particular dry Chino-Japanese a request for ‘one lillie kiss,’ he was unable to divine. Such an affinity there undoubtedly was; but its origin lay among reasons far too abstruse for the unravelling of Yen.

Yen How smiled that first night, but he presently found that this was no smiling matter.

At eight the next evening he was duly at the Pattison gate; but, alas, no Ada was to be seen. Ada, however, was there, though invisible. She, with the Pattison cook, whom she had brought out to enjoy the fun, was hiding behind a shrubbery, and peering through, shaking with laughter at the futile waiting of the little doctor.

And now Yen How, for the first time in his life, began to suffer on account of a woman.

He loved; and in his love was the concentrated passion of many other men. Melted rock is lava — and he suffered.

He used at night to hang about the house, which was lonely at that hour, waiting. To his patience there was no end — to his resolution to possess her, by fair means or foul, no end.

Even in the matter of love the Eastern is essentially different from the Western. It is impossible for us, in anything, to understand them, so foreign are they. With us love is frequent, a powerful mood; with them the whole man is involved, and love becomes a passion having all the characteristics of ordinary flame.

One night, as he lurked about, he met her returning from some shopping. By this time Yen How had become a standing joke for Ada in the kitchen and the servants' bedroom. He walked to her.

'Ah,' he said with sideward head, and a cajoling smile, 'you are here, then? You will give poor Yen How one lillee kiss?'

The whole idea of courtship possessed by this clownish and unpractised lover consisted in asking for one little kiss. Ada Seward's views of the matter were more elaborate. She despised his strong simplicity.

'Perhaps you are not aware whom it is you are talking to,' she said.

Yen was aware; he could have shut his eyes and drawn an exact picture of her face.

'Ah,' he said, 'not even one lillee—'

'I'll give you one lillee box of soap to wash your face, if you like!' she cried, running and looking back. The house was near; he could not overtake her.

Perhaps it would have been impossible for Miss Seward to utter words more calculated to drive Yen to madness than this reference to 'soap.' If his suit was hopeless, it was now borne in upon him that it was hopeless on account of his race. The girl did not listen to him, and reject him; she rejected him without taking him into consideration at all. It was as though a mule, or a cat, had asked her to be his.

But his persistence did not fail. He flung his other pursuits to the winds, and the Pattison villa became for him the centre of the world. Sometimes he caught bright glimpses of her. Once again he met her in the street, and once again she overwhelmed him with jeers. So passed January, February, and March.

To Yen How, the *bourgeois*, the thought never at all occurred that the girl was below *bourgeois* class. He was a great man, and merely saw in Ada the

eternal woman. Dukes marry duchesses; but the Goethes, the Mahomets, wed cooks and water-carriers. On that very plan was built Yen How.

At the beginning of April he stood one night outside the Pattison gate, when he saw her. It was eleven o'clock; she was coming from the theatre, leaning on the arm of Private Brabant. Brabant, since their meeting in the 'bus, had several times been 'out' with her.

As the two approached, Ada saw the little doctor.

'There's that little Chinaman again, John,' she said, pressing Brabant's arm. 'It's getting too much of a good thing now, isn't it?'

'Confound the little rat,' said Brabant; 'he wants his nut cracked, I should think, doesn't he?'

The doctor tripped up to them, smiling nervously. Before he could speak, Brabant, who had had a glass, said:

'Come, come, Mr. Yen How, get out of this. Can't you see the young lady doesn't want you fooling round her?'

'Well — but — my soldier friend,' said Yen, 'there is no harm done—'

'Come, get out of it!' said Brabant more roughly.

'No, no, you go too fast, you see,' began Yen apologetically.

'Are you going — yes or no?' said Brabant, now flushing angrily.

'Go away, why don't you?' put in Ada.

'Ah! I — I am here to see my lillie girl,' hazarded Yen.

'Oh, don't be a stupid little goose of a Chinaman! Just fancy!' she said.

This was the most unkindest cut of all for Yen. He winced, touched with anger.

'Are you going or not?' said Brabant, an ultimatum in his tone.

'No!' said Yen; then, more decidedly, 'No, no!'

Brabant put out his arm and pushed him on the shoulder.

It was not a violent push, but in an instant the doctor's face was almost black with rage. He had in his hand a stout bamboo stick, which he at once lifted and slashed with terrible force across the soldier's cheek, leaving a bruised weal which Brabant bore with him to the grave.

In retaliation the soldier lifted his large and bony fist, and sent it into the doctor's face. Yen How dropped.

The street was deserted. Not knowing what to do, the girl and the soldier bent over him for five minutes, when, to their surprise, Yen How raised himself slowly, placed his handkerchief against his red and dripping face, and slowly limped away without a single word.

Once he stopped deliberately as he moved off, turned, and looked at them; and in the moonlight they distinctly saw him 'twice shake his forefinger warningly in their direction.

Then he went on his way.

Between that night and the beginning of May he never once stepped outside the house in which he lived. He had resumed his close and far-reaching studies.

At the beginning of May he was on board the *Peninsular*, bound for the East.

By the end of September he was a member of the Japanese Parliament.

In December we find him a leading spirit in the Tsung-li-Yamen, or Chinese Foreign Office, and making voyages between Tokio and Peking.

CHAPTER II. THE HEATHEN CHINEE



YEN HOW WAS nothing if not heathen. He was that first of all.

His intellect was like dry ice. Though often secretly engaged in making *The Guess*, on the whole, he despised all religions — the faiths of the West, the superstitions of the East, he despised them all alike. He was full of light, but without a hint of warmth; and so lacked the religious emotion.

It is not likely that ordinary ethical considerations would much influence the aims of such a man. He was like an avalanche, as cold, and as resistless.

What was Dr. Yen How's aim? Simply told, it was to possess one white woman, ultimately, and after all. He had also the subsidiary aim of doing an ill turn to all the other white women, and men, in the world.

If the earth had opened and swallowed him, then he would have renounced his hope; but for no lesser reason. He went coolly and patiently to work to secure his desire.

But no man, surely, ever employed means so huge to an end so small. A European, perhaps any other man, having once conceived the means, would quickly have forgotten the end in the tremendous interest of the means themselves. But in all that Yen did the face of Ada Seward was always consciously 'before his eyes.' The nature of this man was as simple as the elemental rock.

His career in the East, from the first hour of his return, was meteoric. He rose like a rocket. The order of the day in China, and especially in Japan, was Western modernity; and here was a man who simply breathed Western modernity, and who yet was an Eastern of the Easterns. His skin was more

yellow than the yellow man's, and his brain was more white than the white man's. When the English Inspector-General of Roads and Bridges at Tokio asserted that the Imperial tax in Britain on railway passenger traffic was, he believed, Per cent> Yen How's face wrinkled into a chaos of smiles. 'No — two,' he said quietly; and no one doubted which was right. Yen introduced a new method of protecting bridges during the daily earthquakes of Japan, by means of articulated joists and sleepers. When the Naval Director at Pekin introduced a specification for a new battle-ship to be mounted with two 111-ton guns, Yen proved by statistics (which he quoted from memory) that the tendency of the most modern shipbuilding was rather in the direction of quick-firing guns than of heavy armaments. The 111-ton became 45-ton. He was soon invaluable.

At this time the people of Japan were strongly excited against the freebooting of Russia and Germany in China, and strongly animated in favour of England. England was, in fact, the beau-ideal, the Great Pattern, of Japan. It required no great force of imagination for her to call herself 'the Britain of the East'; this notion at once occurred, of itself, to every one; and, of course, the copyist sympathised with her original rather than with others. With England predominant in China, moreover, there would be an assurance of free trade; and Japan was a trader. So strong was the enthusiasm in favour of England, that the nation was even willing to put its fleet at the disposal of its Big Model in case of need.

The ulterior purposes of Japan, of course, remained in doubt. She was even then building in various parts of the world an additional fleet, which, when finished, would make her a sea Power far in advance of any nation in the whole earth, with the exception of England herself. What in the hour of her manhood, when she had cast her leading-strings, she would do with this

vast force was a disturbing question to many; but, meanwhile, it was clearly her intention to use England as an ally — till the years ripened.

Under the Marquis Ito's Ministry Yen How was offered a post of Under-Secretary, but he refused it. He suggested that he should become Secretary to the Minister as his private servant; and this was arranged. He knew that high public rank in Japan would exclude him from high public rank in

China, if his double personality should become known — and China was the chief field of his labours. Meanwhile, he was drawing large revenues as a mandarin, and lived, for his own purposes, in a style nearly princely.

'Poh!' he said to the Marquis Ito, sipping tea among rugs, 'there are no statesmen now. Statesmen! — there are no such things. Not here — not in Europe. An ordinary man is a man who thinks in days; a statesman proper thinks in thousands of years. The outlook and computations of a statesman should be as much vaster than those of a private person, as a country is vaster than a tea-house. Believe me, there are no statesmen.'

'Come, doctor, why do you say that?' asked the Marquis.

'Look forward five hundred, a thousand years, Marquis, and what do you see?' answered Yen How. 'Is it not this? — the white man and the yellow man in their death-grip, contending for the earth. The white and the yellow — there are no others. The black is the slave of both; the brown does not count. But there are those two; and when the day comes that they stand face to face in dreadful hate, saying, "One or other must quit this earth," shall I tell you which side will win?'

'Which do you think?'

'The white will win, Marquis.'

'Perhaps I differ from you,' said the Marquis Ito.

'Ah! you differ from me. But I am right all the same; and I mean, sooner or later, to prove it to you abundantly, abundantly! The white will win, I tell

you! You great men in Japan are trying to copy them, straining your poor necks to come up with them; but I have passed my life in studying them — and I've got something to tell you; listen to it: you cannot, Marquis, you cannot, you cannot!

‘Our Navy already—’ began the Marquis.

‘Poh! your Navy! Who built it for you? It was they. Your Navy is like a razor in the hands of an ape which has seen its master use it. The brute may or may not cut its own throat with it. And as soon as they build a navy for you, they will build one twice as big for themselves, and twice as good. There is no reason why you should not follow them, and go on following them — only understand that *you cannot catch them*. And this is another thing that you should understand — that the longer you follow them, the farther they get away from you. Their *rate* of progress is continually increasing. Every day that passes over the world gives them an additional advantage over you. To-day their guns can mow you down by hundreds; in a hundred years they will mow you down by thousands; in five hundred years by millions. Can't you see? — you are losing time!’

‘What *do* you mean?’

‘Ah, I mean that there are no longer any statesmen, Marquis. The eye of the statesman ranges far, far into the tracts of the future, doesn't it? But we! Here are we now — we Japanese, we Chinese, we yellow men — playing about in little diplomatic mud-puddles with French, and Russian, and English, and German, as if all that mattered two sen! And all the time we know well, yet seem not to know, that French, and English, and the rest, are equally our foe, and tyrant, and vulture, one not more than the other! That if we do not eat them all now, at once, they all will swallow us whole some day, soon — soon. And to see China fighting with Japan in such a case, and

Japan banging into China — is it not childish enough to make a donkey, or even a Grand Lama, laugh? There are no statesmen any longer, Marquis.’

‘Well, come, I see something in what you are driving at,’ said Ito. ‘We and China are like two birds’ pecking at each other on a bough, when suddenly they are both down the belly of a serpent, which has been calmly watching them. Well, but what are we to do? By your own showing, the birds can do nothing against the serpent.’

‘Did I say that?’ asked Yen, lifting his eyebrows in innocent surprise. ‘Oh, I didn’t mean it! There are many birds, you see, and few serpents. In the world to-day there are 408,000,000 Christians and — mark the figures — 1,004,000,000 non-Christians. I can see that you are startled.’

‘You think that by sheer force of numbers—’

‘Yes, if we had taken our opportunity in time — if we had struck two hundred — a hundred years ago. Even to-day I believe that it is hardly too late, if the yellow race can find a great leader. I am perfectly sure that in a hundred years time it *will* be too late.’

‘Why so?’

‘I have told you. By that time the white man will have something like a magician’s power over all nature. He will say to the mountains and the seas: “Be removed!” — and at his mere whisper they will obey him. We yellow men, too, will have advanced, but they will have vastly outstripped us. We *cannot* follow them, I tell you. The day will come when our mere numbers will no longer be of any importance in baulking and overthrowing them.’

‘You talk of big things, my friend,’ said Ito. ‘Are you serious?’

‘Yes, Marquis, I am serious.’

‘You advocate a League of the yellow races?’

‘I do.’

‘He! he! the idea tickles me; it is so very far from realisation — there are so many obstacles—’

‘No, really — I think not. I believe it is very near to realisation. Events are at this moment in progress at Peking which will *force* it to accomplishment — soon. Suppose I tell you that I, personally, have laid those events in train?’

‘You, doctor? What, are you going to lead us all, then, against Paris and London? He! he!’

‘Perhaps, Marquis.’

‘What, to face the Nordenfeldts, and the Maxims, and the Krupps? The Chinese will run from the first twelve-pounder!’

‘There may not be any twelve-pounders there when they get to Paris and London,’ said Yen How with absolute coolness, yet with an emphasis and an intonation of solemnity in his voice which held the Marquis from answer for a minute.

‘Really, I don’t understand you,’ he said at last.

‘Yet my meaning should be clear.’

‘No — do explain yourself.’

Yen How rose to his feet before he answered.

‘Marquis,’ he said, ‘is it possible you do not see that China has it in her power to turn Europe into an exhausted waste within, say, three months from to-night, without firing a single shot, or spending a single tael?’

CHAPTER III. RUMOURS OF WAR



AS THE YEAR wore on, some of the International difficulties centring round Kiao-Chau, Port Arthur, and Hainan reopened. In England more than all the old unrest revived.

What added to this unrest was the fact that some of the items of the rapidly-succeeding batches of news were quite inexplicable.

From the beginning of the year it had been known that Germany had not made so brilliant a bargain in the acquisition of Kiao-Chau as she had imagined. The territory placed under her 'sovereign rights' had been strictly limited by China, and granted only as a 'lease.' When Prince Henry of Prussia arrived with the *Deutschland* and *Gefion*, he found that there were no 'laurels' to win, and nobody at whom to strike out with his absurd mailed fist.

Moreover, on much the same terms as Germany obtained Kiao-Chau, and, later in the year, Russia obtained Port Arthur, Britain obtained Wei-hai-Wei and Mirs Bay.

What, then, was the surprise of the world, including the Germans themselves, when, in the middle of December, came the news that China had ceded a large additional region to the Kaiser, absolutely without conditions!

There was not a single brain in Europe which could divine the motive of this virtual gift.

At this time Li Hung Chang, recalled to power by the Emperor at the beginning of the year, was still at the head of affairs in Peking. But in the

short space of two months he had acquired the habit of taking no step without the suggestion of the new element in Chinese politics, the far-seeing Oriental European, the much toiling member of the Tsung-li-Yamen, the omniscient Yen How. Already Yen had swung himself into the position of the virtual ruler of China.

Yen How seemed to Li Hung Chang, haunted as the old statesman had always been by the vision of dismemberment and downfall which overhung China, something like an angel of light. Here was another brain which saw as his had all along seen — only far more clearly, and with powers of invention far vaster to avert the catastrophe.

‘Let us be definite,’ Yen had said, in words which old Li long remembered, one night as they smoked together alone on a moonlit veranda. ‘Do let us be honest with ourselves, your Excellency! You agree with me that the yellow man is doomed — if the white man is not; in your heart you think it. Then let us say it in definite words; for as soon as ever we have *said* it, we have gone half-way toward grappling with our fate.’

‘Ah, I have said it often and often,’ answered Li, ‘but to what good?’

‘If you believe that now is the time for action, as I do, you have the matter in your own hand.’

‘How so?’

‘To me it is clearer than the moonlight there. The facts of the situation seem to stare me in the face.’

‘Speak, Yen How.’

‘I will speak, your Excellency. To me it seems that if we could supply a motive to the combined Japanese and Chinese nations to traverse Asia and the Caucasus, and then to overrun the Europe of to-day, there is no power on earth that could permanently check the overwhelming momentum of their progress.’

‘It is nonsense, my son,’ said Li, with a pull at his long pipe.

‘Note this,’ replied Yen—‘I only say that I *believe* — for who can be sure? The white man is strong and stern; his frown is dreadful. I only say that I *believe* — though a host of four hundred millions cannot be mown down in a day, your Excellency. The throats of the Maxims might grow hoarse and burst at this task. Still, perhaps you are right — perhaps I talk nonsense. I did not seriously mean to propose a march against the Maxim thunder. But I have a thought — a thought.

Suppose China and Japan can take away the Maxims *first*, and then march afterwards.’

‘Speak your meaning, Yen How,’ said Li; ‘all is dark to me.’

‘We wish the white races killed,’ answered Yen; ‘well, there are two ways, are there not? We might kill them ourselves — that, you say, is nonsense. The other way is to get, them to kill one another.’

Li’s lips came from his mouth, and the outer corners of his eyes screwed up into an expression of the most exquisite enjoyment.

‘What is left alive of them after their mutual slaughter,’ Yen How went on, ‘*we* can kill. Their lands will be weak with loss of blood, their treasuries will be exhausted — there will be no Maxims there any more.’

At these last words his own eyes, too, wrinkled up into delicious merriment.

‘The trump card is in the hand of China,’ he said.

How the white races were to be made to destroy one another Li never asked, though the conversation lasted far into the night. He knew well. That, at least, was simple.

‘England,’ said Yen as they parted, ‘she is the worst. All the others against *her*.’

A few weeks afterwards the cession of large additional territories in China to Germany was rumoured.

And now followed, in rapid succession, a series of the most startling, the most inexplicable reports.

It seemed as if China, was not waiting for dismemberment from abroad, but was dismembering herself wilfully, with precipitate frenzy.

First came the intelligence that France had been besought by the Chinese Government to assume the Protectorate, without conditions, of Hainan and Yun-nan.

These few lines of telegram threw Europe into a state of fever. It was decided by every one that, if the intelligence was true, no earthly consideration of risk would keep the rapacious hand of the Frenchman from grasping at this plum.

In a week or so it was definitely known that the news was true, and that France had accepted the offer. Rumours of war filled the air. The world was agog, and every spot was an arena for discussion. Only one man was silent — the British Foreign Secretary. The newspapers besought him for a word; he remained wrapped in taciturnity. A deputation of merchants waited upon the Under-Secretary; he answered only with a few strong words of hope.

At this time Yen How's name got into the papers. It was said that this mysterious man, whose dazzling rise in the Celestial Empire was sketched, had recently taken a fresh journey to Tokio. Then a vague telegram, printed in England in small nonpareil type, appeared, stating that the probable object of Yen How's renewed journey was to conclude a secret treaty between China and Japan. But the report was unsubstantiated.

The real bomb was yet to burst into the midst of Europe. It was hurled by the St Petersburg correspondent of the *Daily News*.

China had offered to Russia the protectorate of the Yangtse Valley.

It was now, for the first time, that it entered two or three of the shrewdest heads in Europe that China was deliberately seeking to plunge the world into war by working upon the rapacity and selfish greed of the nations.

One gentleman, living at a country-house in Hampshire, wrote to the *Times* to this effect. But his letter attracted no attention.

Yet, looking back now, it seems strange that the idea did not occur to others. For it must be remembered that the Yangtse Valley had been regarded as peculiarly the sphere of English power. More than this, England had now partly guaranteed a Chinese loan of twelve millions sterling, and it was agreed that the security for this should consist of the land-tax and the unpledged part of the Customs dues. Now, the chief source of both land-tax and Customs dues was the Yangtse Valley.

Yet the next day the Russian *Novosti* published an inspired article, stating that on no account could Russia withdraw from the prominent place into which events had forced her in the East.

The feeling in England was one of horror at the blind and criminal cupidity of the Continental nations. The word 'war' was on every tongue. Twice in one day there were hurried meetings of the Cabinet. Thousands of private letters poured in upon the Foreign Office, urging patience and firmness.

But the hand of the Government was forced in an unexpected manner.

Two items of news followed each other rapidly.

First, that on the 21st day of the 12th moon of the 24th year of Kuang Hsu — that is to say, on the 14th December 1898 — the Yellow Jacket had once more been taken from Li Hung Chang; and that the dominant talents of the man, Yen How, had triumphed over all obstacles, and raised him to the very head of affairs at the Court of Peking.

The next day a telegram from Sir C. M. Macdonald, the British Minister in China, reached the Foreign Office. This was at once made public.

It stated that China professed herself unable to meet the next accruing interest-instalment on the loan, though the Minister had information from Sir Robert Hart, the Controller of the Imperial Maritime Customs, which led him to doubt the avowal of inability.

Whatever else this might mean, it certainly seemed to mean war. The security for China's default, real or pretended, which was due to England, had already been placed under the control of Russia.

In the House of Commons the Under-Secretary stated that there was still a hope of peace — a hope that 'the Empire of Russia would act with that spirit of fairness and magnanimity in this crisis which alone could prove her worthy of her great traditions.' These words were borne at a run by dozens of excited members to interested individuals among the crowd which surrounded the House from Westminster Bridge round to the Aquarium.

London went to sleep with some degree of quietude that night, Mr. Curzon's reply having been published in an eagerly bought-up 10 o'clock edition.

But the next morning, Mr. Goschen being abroad at an early hour, it was suddenly discovered that, by some extraordinary means, Malta was telegraphically isolated from England; and a hurried telegram was at once despatched from the Admiralty to Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, the Flag-Officer in Commission at Portsmouth.

CHAPTER IV. FIRST BLOOD



BEFORE ELEVEN O'CLOCK the *Majestic*, the flag-ship of the Channel Squadron, was leaving Portsmouth harbour behind her at the rate of ten knots. She was under the command of the senior officer in command of the squadron, Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Stephenson, and with her went the little gunboat *Halcyon*.

The mystery underlying the sudden journey of this couple was not difficult to unravel. The truth was, the Government was greatly startled by the event of the morning. The *Majestic* was, in reality, a convoy to the *Halcyon*; the smaller vessel was acting as a despatch-boat to Malta, and the battle-ship was seeing her on her journey till she was deemed to be out of danger of molestation.

It had come to that already.

At the Government offices the words 'treachery' and 'war' had risen to more than one agitated lip. Europe, it was felt, was drifting, drifting — whither?

The task of the *Halcyon* was to warn the Governor of Malta, and to order the mobilisation of the Mediterranean Fleet near the Straits of Gibraltar. It might be necessary at a few hours' notice to block the entrance of the Mediterranean; it might even be necessary to hurl back a foreign invader from the shores of England, and the Channel Squadron was woefully limited in weight of metal.

During the day business in London came practically to a standstill. Wholesale withdrawals of foreign securities were reported from the City.

By 3 p.m. it was generally known that a military *attaché* to the Embassy at Paris had arrived by private yacht with a sealed despatch from Sir E. J. Monson, and had hurried to the Foreign Office.

A day of almost breathless tension reached its climax when, at 9 p.m., Mr. Curzon made the announcement to a full House that peaceful negotiations were still in progress with Russia, but that, late in the afternoon, Germany had made demands of England and China with respect to the recently-ceded territories, with which England, as he might say at once, would certainly be unable to comply.

The next morning, before break of day, England found herself telegraphically disconnected with the Continent.

About this precise hour, the *Majestic*, having her small companion some half a mile or more away on her starboard quarter, was butting her way about S. by W. through a rough Biscay sea. It was a cold and squally morning, still dark, though a chill hint of day now mingled bleakly with the East. The sea was handling both ships rudely, and the *Majestics* ponderous lurching through some six or seven degrees brought the acrid green sea washing about the base of her forward barbette, while from the bows of the *Halcyon* it went hissing aft in a continuous rain of spray.

It was just after five bells in the morning watch, at an hour when the gloomy gray of the morning had lightened a little, that the look-out man of the *Majestic* reported a big ship astern steaming leisurely south about seven miles away. The rate of the *Majestic* was ten knots, that of the stranger about six; but immediately after her coming into sight, a black cloud of redundant smoke revealed the stranger's will to improve her pace.

That she had been lurking about with some object of search was clear. That she was now getting up steam seemed to indicate, if anything, that she had found what she was looking for.

In a few minutes it was made out that she was *La Gloire*, a French battleship of about the weight and armature of the *Majestic*.

La Gloire's cloud of smoke was premature — it occasioned a suspicion of her motives. The first thing which Sir Henry Stephenson did was to order the *Halcyon* by trumpet-call to steam at full speed S.W. a distance of six miles. The *Halcyon*, at all events, had to be kept out of danger.

Yet he could hardly have expressed his reason for giving this order. Was any one at war with any one? He was ignorant of the fact, if so.

He was not long in doubt. *La Gloire*, even while getting up steam, had pricked off her course three points to starboard. It seemed as if she was about to give chase to the *Halcyon*.

‘What! Are we in for a fight then, Captain?’ said the Vice-Admiral with a smile of surprise, and a puckered brow.

‘It almost looks like it, certainly,’ replied Fleet-Captain Hardy.

‘Well, come now, we shall see,’ said the Vice-Admiral.

By this time *La Gloire* had not only hoisted her colours, but had extra colours on masts and stays. The *Majestic* wore the ordinary single ensign.

Captain Hardy had ordered steam for full speed. The next moment the *Majestic* swung round to starboard about six points. She was still ahead of *La Gloire*. At her present course and speed she would interpose between the English gunboat and the French ship.

For quite half an hour the two ships continued to approach each other slowly and obliquely, having started from a separating interval of about five miles. On this course the sea was more aft, and the rolling and sullen plunging of the ships less marked.

On board the *Majestic*, meanwhile, all was bustling action. Decks were cleared, magazines were opened, ammunition and projectiles got out; watertight doors were closed. The dawn lightened to a chill and drear twilight.

The real object of *La Gloire* was to intercept and capture any despatch-boat from the Channel, which might attempt to take intelligence through the Straits. The sending out of the battle-ship with such an object was, however, a breach of international law, and an act of treachery; for no one had declared war against England, though declarations of hostilities were already in the *bureaux* of more than one of the ambassadors at London.

That the despatch-boat should be convoyed, and by a first-class battle-ship, was unexpected. *La Gloire* found herself checkmated. There before her lay her prize; but between her and it was the thunder and lightning of England.

But, though checkmated, she showed no intention of being checked. She kept on her way with rising speed. The two ships, in malign silence, like two red-eyed planets rushing to jarring combat, drew nearer. When their speed had increased to thirteen knots, they were about two miles apart. Decks on both were cleared, collision-mats were ready, preparations were made for rigging torpedo-nets in an emergency. Nearer, in awful silence, they drew, two giants with limbs oiled for battle; and the bleak and raw sea-wind of the dawning made hoarse sounds above their funnels.

But one of the ships was still in doubt whether there was to be fighting, and, if so, why. There was a brief consultation on board the *Majestic*, and then she signalled: 'Are we combatants?' There was no reply.

To this silence the *Majestic* sent aloft the answer: 'Trafalgar.'

And now the baleful silence recommenced. Both commanders had stationed themselves in their conning-towers. On either ship not a soul was to be made out by the glasses save the crews of the quick-firing guns on the hurricane decks, and of the machine-guns on the tops. By five minutes past seven the fleet-engineer of the *Majestic* announced that he had steam enough to drive the vessel at her utmost trial speed.

The strategy of the French commander in riot answering the *Majesties* question was soon apparent, for Sir Henry Stephenson felt himself bound to wait for the first shot, being uncertain how matters stood on shore. And the first shot in modern naval warfare must often mean victory.

The two vessels slowly converged, *La Gloire* on the other's starboard side, steering S. by E.; the *Majestic* on the other's port bow, heading S. by W. Suddenly *La Gloire* sharply altered her course by several points to the eastward, and impetuously bore down upon the *Majestic*.

'Well,' said Sir Henry Stephenson to himself, 'that is uncommonly like an act of hostility. Well, then, Mr. Frenchman—'

Immediately the *Majestic*, too, pricked off eastward, her after-pair of 67-ton guns being kept trained on the enemy as she manoeuvred. The ships were now so well within effective range that the *Majestic's* thin smoke, blown into a wide hovering fog by the east wind, half concealed her movements from *La Gloire*.

For a time it seemed as if the British ship were in retreat, and the French giving chase; then suddenly both ships were hidden from each other. Sir Henry, taking advantage of his windward position, had thrown overboard some twenty casks of smoke-producing tow and naphtha and tar, which at once separated the two ships with a blackness of thick brown reek, mingled near the water with bickering tongues of flame. The commander of *La Gloire*, fearing that in this fog of fume the *Majestic* might suddenly turn about and ram him, at once changed his course south-west, and was immediately the retreating ship. The English admiral had guessed his thought, and when the region of the smoke-making composition was passed, the beam of the *Majestic* was abreast of *La Gloire's* poop.

It was the lieutenant in charge of the fore-barbette of the *Majestic* who first woke the thunder of this winter-morning tragedy.

Simultaneously, with one bang of wrath that shook the *Majestic* herself from stem to stern, both the 67-tonners of this barbette went crashing into *La Gloire's* quarters.

At this moment the ships were not much more than half a mile apart. When the smoke cleared it was at once seen that the whole stern armament of *La Gloire* was in ruins, her after-barbette shattered, the two heavy guns unshipped. One of the shells had penetrated abaft her after-armoured tube and there burst, killing fifty men, and rending into a chaos of debris all it met. From the poop of the French ship rose a wide hurry of white smoke. At the same time a steady bombardment of quick-firing guns was opened from both vessels. In three minutes all unarmoured or unsheltered spots in each ship were cleared of every living thing. Twelve-pounders, six-pounders, three-pounders mingled in swift-cracking uproar, punctuated by the *brut* growl of the Gardners and the more rasping detonation of the Nordenfeldts. All the air was war, and all the intervening sea a commotion of hissing foam.

But now the machine-guns in the tops were silent, their protecting shields had been shot away, and their crews annihilated. One of *La Gloire's* funnels was gone, and the other pierced, while three projectiles from her had burst their way through shields of six-inch nickel steel, and put three of the *Majesties* central battery guns out of action, striking them fairly on the chase. Within three minutes the two ships had belched forth a flaming hail of some twenty-two thousand rounds of shot, riddling all except the most heavily-armoured parts of each other, tearing to shreds all light gun-screens, and turning unarmoured ends and box-batteries into shambles.

Already it seemed improbable that either ship, unless the other were at once destroyed, could come out of this anarchy of thunder and live.

The starboard side of the *Majestic* was still presented to the port of *La Gloire*, but *La Gloire*'s speed had been greatly reduced, owing to injuries to her funnels, and the *Majestic* had forged forward abreast, then somewhat ahead of the other.

Vice-Admiral Stephenson was every moment awaiting the second crash of his after-barbette into the French ship's beam, when *La Gloire*'s two fore-barbette guns sent out their voices simultaneously.

One of the shots glanced against the centre armour-belt of the *Majestic* at the water-line, leapt, struck her fore-armoured tube, and went driving far forward into the sea, where it burst in a high water-lily of spouting foam.

The other wrought terrible havoc. It struck the *Majestic*'s central battery at the height of the deck, burst inside, blew away the chief part of the hurricane deck, and turned all the guns in that battery into a mere heap of twisted and crumpled metal.

But as the British ship staggered at this blow, her bluejackets sent up a cheer, for the next instant the after-barbette in their own ship was talking, too; and a few seconds afterwards it was seen that *La Gloire*'s forecastle was on fire, that she had gone down by the bows, and that her screws, half out of the water, were furiously revolving in a broad mound of wheeling spume.

Was she sinking, then? The British Vice - Admiral expected now to see her strike her flag. But even as he looked, he was undeceived.

Yonder, a hundred yards astern, somewhat to his port side, he saw a sight which might have made even the heart of a Nelson leap. It was a small object, looking like a cubical box; and even as he glanced at it, it disappeared utterly beneath the waves.

He knew this to be one of the ingenuities from the Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée. It was a submarine boat, and the object which he had seen

for a moment was the top of her conning-tower as she rose for an observation of distances and directions.

The submarine boat had been secretly lowered into the water from *La Gloire's* starboard side. Her motor was electric, supplied from storage batteries, and her speed, even at some depth, considerable. Vice-Admiral Stephenson knew that her aim was to pass under his torpedo-nets, carrying an electrically-fired torpedo, to be attached to his already half-ruined ship.

At once he went circling at full speed to starboard, crossing the bows of the now slowly-progressive *La Gloire*, one of whose fore-barbette guns was useless, and the other unready to fire.

At the same time he had rapidly lowered from his port side a second-class torpedo boat which he then carried on deck. By means of hot water from the *Majesties* boilers, she was already under steam, and with careful handling, in spite of the parent ship's now headlong, wheeling flight, she touched the water in safety, and at once went fretting fussily through the billows, a mere cloud of hurrying spray, at a speed of fourteen knots. Like some buzzing bee with deadly sting, she drove straight upon *La Gloire*.

The alarm on the French ship at this hasting ruin resembled panic. Disregarding the movements of the *Majestic*, her commander at once put his helm a-port, and turning upon his small foe the comparatively uninjured armament of his starboard side, poured forth, in one continuous roll of artillery, a bombardment of some twelve thousand pounds per minute. *La Gloire* was now, however, well in the trough of the sea, which flowed in bulky swells from east to west; the greater portion of her huge outburst of fire failed to take effect; and still the puffing thing came near and yet nearer, overwhelmed, but steadfast, drowned, but headlong, tiny, but terrible.

The climax of the fight was near. It had lasted but a few minutes: it had seemed like an eternity in hell.

At about three hundred yards from *La Gloire* the little torpedo-boat launched a Whitehead.

As the oiled and gleaming needle of steel slid swiftly into the water, it passed straight through the body of a great swell, and came instantly out on the other side, making directly for *La Gloire's* quarter; but before it could reach her, the ship manoeuvred slightly to starboard, and the projectile slipped hurriedly under her stern, and exploded harmlessly some distance away.

But even as it did so, another torpedo came shooting through the waves from the little boat.

At the same time the crew of the torpedo-boat were seen to be wildly leaping at random over her sides into the waves. Seen — but dimly seen — for the whole craft from stem to stern, as well as all that region of the water into which she was now plunging on her last voyage, was enveloped in one hissing white cloud of stinging vapour. Two of her men instantly sank scalded to death. A twelve-pounder, shot upwards, had burst into her boiler.

It had not come from *La Gloire*. It had come from the unseen thing which was cruising darkly beneath the sea in search of the *Majestic*.

Immediately the submarine boat rose again, and the man in her conning-tower, looking a moment abroad, saw the *Majestic* — or rather he saw a vast mass of smoke which utterly concealed the *Majestic* and the direction of her bow. All he could note was that she was fearfully and wonderfully near to *La Gloire*; that she was approaching *La Gloire* — rapidly, rapidly — with horrid impetuosity.

He did not hesitate a moment, but, putting his fins into play, instantly sank, and made for a point at which he believed he would intercept the rushing ship.

The mass of smoke which he had seen around the *Majestic* had been intentionally caused by her commander. The Vice-Admiral had ordered every gun which still worked to be discharged, whether they bore upon the French ship or not, and enveloped in the mantle of ascending reek which poured from the hot weapons, he put his helm hard down, suddenly left the evolutionary curve of sixteen points through which he had been circling, and drove straight upon *La Gloire*. He was going to ram.

At that great moment expectation stood in horror. 'Prepare to ram!' went forth the command from the conning-tower, and every man on the *Majestic* fell flat to his face, as though at the sound of the trump of doom. And now, while the clock might tick, and tick again, the men on *La Gloire* became aware of what was coming. Up out of her envelope of vapour suddenly loomed the *Majestic* upon them, near and huge, like a monster rising from the deep. Just then the remaining fore-barbette gun of *La Gloire* was being discharged, and the ships being nearly bow to bow, the shell went forth with disastrous havoc, shattering the thickly armoured fore-barbette of the *Majestic*, battering the conning-tower, destroying the funnels, and shocking the Vice-Admiral into a state of insensibility.

But even as it did so, the crash came. The ram of the *Majestic* touched *La Gloire* on her starboard bow, glanced a little, then with a horrid *z-z-zip-p! z-z-zip-p!* then with a bursting and rending uproar like the cracking asunder of an arsenal, went tearing and smashing a shapeless hole 20 feet in length along her beam. The sea poured into the doomed ship; and at once she lurched bow-ward to starboard.

But the ram of the *Majestic* was not yet clear of *La Gloire*, when the most stupendous hubbub of the whole battle, drowning every other sound, rent the heavens. It was a double detonation, yet the two reports followed so closely one upon the other, that they seemed almost like one.

They were the sounds of two torpedoes.

The 28,000 tons of the two great ships half-leapt from the water, and started apart, shivering to their keels; and two immense pillars of white cloud, which soon were one, rose high, shutting them from each other.

One of these torpedoes had been affixed by the crew of the submarine boat beneath the bow of *La Gloire*, which they had mistaken for the *Majestic*; the other was the second of the two which had been despatched from the *Majesties* torpedo-boat before she had sunk. It had caught on to the keel of *La Gloire* aft, and its explosion had been delayed, perhaps half a minute, till now.

When the smoke cleared a little, the commander of *La Gloire* was seen, with blood-soaked clothes, and haggard face, and eyes staring with horror, standing on the wreck of his after-barbette, frantically hauling down his colours. He sent forth to the wreck which he had made of the *Majestic* this cry of terror —

Au nom de Dieu! — we are sinking — for God's sake ...'

The captain of the *Majestic* at once lowered his only boat which was capable of floating, though half of her port-side, too, was smashed away. The whole crew of the British vessel had hurried to deck, ready, even as they cheered in victory, to aid in the work of rescue.

But as the boat pushed off, men were seen leaping hurriedly from *La Gloire*, in a vain attempt to escape her suction as she went down. She gave them little time. The bursting of the two torpedoes fore and aft had simply turned her into a skeleton of disconnected ruin. She lurched a little aft — up went her bows like two hands laid together in prayer — then her whole length settled evenly lower; she lurched aft again, obliquely, clumsily; then, as if with sudden resolve, she skipped forward, dived her nose briskly into the sea, and disappeared.

Three of her crew of six hundred were saved.

Meantime, the captain of the *Majestic* was signalling to the *Halcyon*, waiting, eager for fight, five miles away:

‘We are sinking — make haste.’

The great ship was settling slowly down by the bows; for the torpedo which had burst beneath the bows of *La Gloire* had wrought great havoc upon the other’s forward bottom also; nor could the pumps produce much impression upon the intruding waters.

The *Halcyon* succeeded in taking off the hundred and fifty-two that were left of her crew, taking also on board the crew of the French submarine boat, who had escaped injury. They hardly stopped to watch the *Majestic* settle slowly down, before the gunboat’s bows were once more turned, to bear her momentous message, toward the Straits.

But if Dr. Yen How had been there to see that battle of the giants, and its result, the corners of his eyes would have wrinkled up into a very web of tickled merriment.

CHAPTER V. HOW ENGLAND TOOK THE NEWS



ON THE MORNING of the duel between *La Gloire* and the *Majestic* it was rumoured at an early hour in the neighbourhood of Fleet Street that China had dismissed Sir Robert Hart from the Controllershship of the Imperial Maritime Customs, and that a Russian was about to be appointed in his stead.

The announcement appeared in the morning papers, and its almost immediate consequence was a rise of threepence per quartern in the price of bread.

But though there were few who were not by this time in a state of excited expectancy, things on their outside wore much their usual appearance. In London the commonplace 'bus and cab went about the streets, and the occasional bicycle, with swift and silent feet, manoeuvred among them. Perhaps from Holborn and the Strand to the City the 'buses were fuller than ordinary, perhaps the cabs moved at a slight increase of pace. The pavements were rather crowded, as much, perhaps, as on a Christmas Eve night, not nearly so much as on a Lord Mayor's Day. In back streets the coalmen cried 'Coal,' and their faces were black with the grime of the ordinary workaday of life.

Yonder, the sun wore his usual broad-faced benignity. He seemed to have no suspicion that on this particular morning his old earth was in her death-throes, and a quite new earth in travail to be born.

It was a bright and sunshiny forenoon, the 16th of March 1899 — eighteen days and nine months before the dawn of the twentieth century.

The *Evening News* it was which, in a premature eleven o'clock fourth edition, applied the match to the latent mine of excitement which smouldered in the minds of the people. It declared in a little thunderbolt of breathless news, five lines of 'pica' type, that the Stock Exchange had been suddenly closed, and that it was rumoured that the Government was appointing private brokers for the transaction of only such business as might be essential.

A step so decisive, as every one saw, could only have for its object the prevention of a financial panic which might be disastrous. And for this prevention there must be a cause not as yet generally known.

Yet such a step should have been expected; for hardly any, except the peace-at-any-price party, any longer hoped that war could be averted — though with whom the war was to be, against what odds, it was not so easy to decide. At any rate, no one could suppose that the cessions of territory by China to the three Powers were spontaneous; it was shrewdly suspected that they were the result of a secret understanding arrived at between them and China at the time when the three had combined to save China from Japan, after the Chino-Japanese war. It had, therefore, the look of a conspiracy to oust England from her share in an empire four-fifths of whose commerce was being carried by British ships; and from end to end of the land the idea that England should submit to such a conspiracy was scouted with indignation.

The severance of telegraphic and telephonic communication, too, between the Continent and England looked like an act of war, whoever was responsible for it. It was reported, and then denied, that three army-corps of 120,000 men were being mobilised toward Brest. It was known that the War Office, the Admiralty, and the Foreign Office were in intensely active inter-communication; that there were frequent and hurried meetings of the

Cabinet. But still, with that silence which precedes the storm, with that subdued excitement which a trifle will cause to burst into passion, England waited, still hoping against hope to be allowed to go on her way in peace.

The public were in blissful ignorance of the fact that the *Majestic* and *La Gloire* had already been lying four or five hours at the bottom of the Atlantic.

Then came the announcement of the *Evening News*, and the pent-up emotion broke suddenly out. In the City, even before this, the streets had become a mere sea, with currents and eddies, of thronging heads. Here the facts of the case were sooner known; when the rumour spread westward, London was awake. All pretence at traffic quickly ceased.

The general tendency and main current of this weltering human ocean was westward in that part of it which was east of Charing Cross, and eastward in that part of it which was west of Charing Cross. The House of Commons, as in all supreme moments of stress and danger, had become the cynosure and the magnet of the nation. Thither the throng pressed.

What was it all about? No one was certain. Was there war — at last? — in very truth? And with whom? No one knew.

For twenty-six years Europe had been practically at peace. The Graeco-Turkish war, the Spanish-American, were not wars — they were the bickering of naughty children. The Franco-German had been grim enough, but it had long since got to be recognised that the next, when it actually came — at last — would hardly resemble it; for the French and German nations had fought, and each still existed an integral nation, in spite of the squabble; but the struggle that was looked forward to when Europe, in the fullness of time, next brought forth her monstrous offspring of war, would, as men knew, be stupendous, worldwide, and final; the combatants would consist of mankind; the whole future of the world would be determined by

it; and in the greatness of that day, war, the destroyer, would itself be destroyed.

This was the logical outcome of the conditions under which Europe, groaning under her weight of armour, waiting, watching, eager to end her foul disease of hatred, had for many years been living.

And now — at last — she was in travail — pang on pang, and shriek on shriek; and her birth-hour was at hand.

But in the London streets the crowd was worthy of the occasion — a crowd without violence, perfectly self-controlled — the meeting of a nation. There was a poor old Chinaman with a sore and swollen foot, on the heel of which he used to limp, begging, about the City and Holborn. By some chance he became involved in the crowd opposite the New Law Courts, where it was very thick; and he was soon at a loss what to do with his big, bandaged foot without boot. At that moment the name of China stank. But the old Canton beggar was no sooner seen to be in difficulties than the press opened before him; he hobbled forward; a murmur spread round him — half jeer, half cheer — and a rain of five or six pennies made him blessed. He hobbled through a lane which instantly closed behind him, thanking the gods for war.

The bells of St. Clement Danes burst out, telling the notes of a slow hymn-tune.

Eastward, in a window of the *Daily News*, there was a big sheet of paper, written over in large, blue-pencil letters with the words: War with Russia.’

Westward, in the facade of the National Liberal Club, there was a square, white space exhibited to the public inscribed with the words in charcoal: ‘War with France and Germany.’

‘I s’y,’ said a work-girl to her lover, ‘there’s a blooming Frenchman a-looking at the placard. Can’t you tell by the squint of him!’

‘Oh, don’t show him to me, or I’ll go straight for him,’ said Bill; ‘a Frenchman mykes me sick.’

But the girl’s remark was passed on; eyes were directed toward monsieur. He turned white, finding himself at the mercy of the crowd. But no harm was done to him; he was only quietly but persistently hustled, till he reached a comparatively empty by-street, dripping with the sweats of fear.

The exhibition of gratuitous notices in windows and at doors was the order of the day. Old habits of Stoic silence seemed for the moment to have disappeared — for the moment was ecstatic. Europe, it was felt, had drifted — drifted from the old moorings — into what new seas and latitudes? At Gatti’s place in the Strand was written up in huge letters: Italy to the Rescue!’ In the shop window of some foreign faddist in Soho appeared these words: ‘Russia is the Natural Ally of England’; and in Holborn, at the First Avenue Hotel, which was richly decorated with British and American flags, these words: ‘One Blood, One Race, One Speech.’

A little street arab in half an hour attained to sudden wealth; he was a newspaper boy, and had in his hand a bundle of three *Stars*. In a moment of inspiration, Harry Tibbies, jammed against one of the lions in Trafalgar Square, nimbly flung and twisted himself on to the pedestal, and held aloft his *Stars*. Thousands of eyes turned upon him. He took from his pocket a match, and deliberately applied the flame to the papers. Pointing to the smoke and flame, he cried in his shrillest Cockney:

‘That’s the *French*. So much for *them*!’

Thereupon he turned and pointed upward to the statue of Nelson. A shout of cheers at once filled the square, while the urchin was bombarded with a hail of pennies, sixpences, shillings, till he could no longer gather them up. When he had been lifted down, and coddled by the laughing crowd, ah old

gentleman got from him his address, and promised to remember him 'if ...' but at 'if' he stopped.

Down by St. Stephen's some cheers were making themselves heard. It was three o'clock — a Thursday. The members were arriving in crawling carriages, one by one.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor stood up, leaning forward in his cab, bowing on each side, like Royalty. One man shouted: 'Strike hard, Tay Pay!' And another: 'Don't spare them!' Mr. O'Connor drove out his large fist, and shook it in fearful menace at the sun.

The round orb of Mr. Chamberlain's eye-glass was all that could be distinctly made out of him, but behind it, his face seemed Rhadamanthine in its sternness, ashen in its pallor. A profound silence fell upon the people as he passed.

Within the House itself the benches were soon crowded, all but the Treasury and front Opposition benches. Prayers were read. So far there was no sign of impatience or emotion. There were 'Questions,' though there was nobody to answer them; there was also a Light Railway Bill for somewhere to be reported, and the House calmly proceeded to the business in hand.

It was a place of stately traditions; the exhibition of emotion had always been foreign to it. Even when the elementary passions of humanity broke through, and swept like whirlwinds within its walls, it had known how to comport itself with a dignity impossible to the other senates of the world.

No one, observing its outward aspect during that half-hour, could have dreamed that the nation it had led so long from greatness to greatness stood on the very brink of swift and final ruin.

The Speaker put the question whether the Railway Bill should be reported. Only two Labour members rose to oppose it. The Speaker said presently:

‘I think the Ayes have it.’

The thing was done. All eyes cast furtive glances in the direction of the spot behind the Speaker’s chair. At that moment the form of Mr. Balfour was seen advancing slowly toward the Ministerial Bench.

Behind him, in a strange topsy-turvydom of party, came Sir William Harcourt talking to Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Asquith whispering to Mr. Curzon. Others followed. Then it was seen with a thrill, born of the certainty now of calamity, that the Prince of Wales had just quietly walked into the Peers’ Gallery, immediately followed by Lords Salisbury, Rosebery, and the Duke of Devonshire. Peering through the gratings of the Ladies’ Gallery were Mrs. Gladstone, the Duchess of York, and others, while the Italian and American ambassadors sat in the places reserved for diplomats.

Below, in the body of the Chamber, was not a sound, except a faint scratching of the pen of the Clerk to the House. Yonder, in the Press Gallery, the alert pressmen held pencil or pen ready, eager to record for ever every word of the momentous utterance which was coming.

In the spirit of the House was deep commotion; on the surface calm.

Mr. Balfour rose to speak.

His face bore traces of some sort of suffering, like that of a man who has passed through the travail of a great ordeal. This was partly due to a want of sleep, occasioned by the stress of the last few days. Under his eyes were the semicircles of fatigue. But, apart from this, the face which he turned absently round the House before he spoke was changed: the *dilettante* politician, the charming literary *amateur*, the *ennuyé* loungeur — these familiar phases of his personality were no longer in evidence. Care sat on his faded cheek, a gravity heavy as the world.

He made a half-turn toward the Speaker, and as he said ‘Sir,’ and paused, his neck stiffened with dignity.

‘Sir,’ he repeated, ‘I need make no apology at the present time for interrupting the ordinary routine of the business of this House. Some adumbration of what I have to say must have already entered the mind of every one present. And yet, perhaps, not even the most far-seeing and the most prophetic of us may have been able to forecast the gravity of the announcement which it is now my duty to make to this House and to the people of Britain.

‘The recent course of affairs in China is known to all of us, and to all the world. It has not been suggested, even by our enemies, that our policy in that country, either originally or recently, was an aggressive one. The enterprise of our citizens, indeed, in the ordinary course of commerce, secured for them the greater part of the foreign trade of the land; but with that strong and large bounty of our race, which resembles nothing so much as the free air of heaven and the breadths of the ocean which it inhabits, we have left it open to every man on the face of the earth to go and do likewise, by engaging in free competition with ourselves. Later on we secured the appointment of an Englishman to the Controllershship of the Imperial Maritime Customs in China; in view of the fact that our trade with China amounted to a sum of ten millions sterling annually, this was a step dictated by ordinary caution. But what has been the consequence to other nations? This: that our nominee has impartially distributed all subordinate posts in his gift to French, German, Russian, and Englishman alike, regardless of nationality, regardful only of merit. Such has been our action in the past. With regard to recent events, we know, and our enemies know, that the Government of this country has, in its holy passion for the maintenance of the peace of the world, submitted to affronts, to wrongs, to insults even, which would, weeks ago, have driven any of the less restrained Ministries of continental empires into a declaration of war.

‘Even on points where undoubtedly many an Englishman would have considered that concession was derogatory to honour, we made concessions. We asked only of Germany that Tientsin should be a free port; of France, that Yun-nan should be open to British enterprise; of Russia, that the valley of the Yangtse river should remain neutral country. Without threats, with no exhibition of heat, we claimed these rights.

‘The reply of France, of Germany, and of Russia has been a declaration of hostilities.

‘Two hours ago their respective Ambassadors placed a notice of war in the hands of the Government.’

The House received this announcement with a perfect stillness, in which horror contended with indignation. Mr. Balfour continued:

‘It is impossible to doubt that this vast combination of power is the result of a wilful and wicked conspiracy, aimed primarily at the British Empire, but aimed, in the end, against the progress and happiness of the human race. It comes upon us, like a bolt from unclouded skies, at an hour when the democracies of the world, recovering from centuries of mutual bloodshed, begin to catch glimpses of the dawn of a better day, and look forward to the yet fairer fruits of the peace which they enjoy. Sir, the declaration of this war is a blasphemy against mankind, and can proceed only from those mysterious powers of evil which seem ever to stand ready to mar the blessedness of the earth. Away now, for many a day, with the fair aspects of our modern life, the quietude of homes, and the untroubled flow of things. With one thought, at least, every Englishman may console himself, as he goes forth to bear his part in this stupendous struggle: “Britain is not to blame.” Not to blame — and yet not all-unprepared, I think, sir, to comport herself with high valour, as of old, in this the greatest crisis of her august history. Nor is it probable that there lives a single Englishman, who, even in

this hour of trial, can doubt that that same Providence which has led our race from small beginnings to the empire of half the earth, will, in its dark purposes, conduct it yet further upon its destiny of triumph and glory.’

Mr. Balfour sat down in the midst of a cheer which burst from every member of the House — English, Scotch, Irish, and Welsh — in a very tempest of loyal passion. The assembly leapt to its feet, and volley on volley of enthusiasm filled the chamber with sound. Exultation, for the moment, took the place of dignity; and there ensued an exaggeration of one of those whirlwind ‘scenes’ which have occurred at intervals. Members bounded across the breadth of the House; in the midst of the tumult, Mr. Burns was seen at the Treasury .. Bench, shaking the hand of Mr. Chamberlain; two Irish members were sobbing in a kind of hysteria to each other; and Mr. Labouchère, forgetting, was shouting to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who happened to catch his eye: ‘Russia must be conquered first, and then France — Russia first!’

During this row and chaos, Sir William Harcourt rose, seeming to wish to speak. A Labour member, who had been talking at the Speaker’s chair, rushed away. ‘Order! Order!’ cried the Speaker, rising. Almost instantly the House resumed its quiet, and sat once more stern and impressive. In five minutes it had spent its exuberance. Now it was the Parliament of Britain again.

It was noticed now, with wonder, that Sir William was at the Treasury Bench instead of on the Opposition side. Mr. Balfour near him, was leaning his head on his hands in a pose of absolute weariness. Sir William said:

‘I am asked, sir, to say a few words by the Leader of the House. It was his intention to add a few brief words to what he has already said; but the mental strain put upon him during the last few days has left him in a state of practical collapse. The right hon. gentleman has asked me to supply his

place. If it should seem strange to any honourable member that the Leader of the Opposition should be asked to supply the place of the Leader of the House, I can only reply that the Opposition now consists of the countries of Russia, France, and Germany; in this country, certainly, there is no longer an Opposition. (Loud cheers.) I believe it to be a fact, sir, that if the rulers of the Continental empires in question had had any kind of conception of the real temper of the nation which they have wantonly and cruelly attacked, they would have paused — they would have hesitated. It is a country hard to conquer, sir — a race hard to quell; at least, it will be a united race and country. Liberal and Radical and Tory shall henceforth lose their titles in the common appellation of Soldier; there shall be no more Orangeman, and no more Parnellite; these shall merge their names in the common name of Patriot. The moment is great; but England is great, too, and equal to the moment. (Prolonged cheering.) I have risen to announce, sir, that the chiefs of the former Opposition have this hour come from a meeting in Downing Street, which we were requested to attend by the Leader of the House with a view to the formation, between us, of a Permanent Committee of Public Safety. I wish also to state that an immediate reduction of the interest on Consols and Government Stock from two and three-quarters to one and a half per cent is proposed; that a tax on non-professional incomes exceeding £1000, considerably in excess of the present rate, has been agreed upon; and that the House will be asked to read three times and report to-day — for it is possible that hostilities have already commenced — a Bill granting to the Government a sum of seventy-five million pounds for war expenses.’

After this, with perfectly business-like calm and grasp of details, the House proceeded to the matter in hand, getting through a mass of work with a celerity which astonished itself. Near six it rose.

An hour previously the Serjeant-at-Arms, attended by a mass of city functionaries, had declared war against the three countries from the steps of the Royal Exchange.

Meanwhile, the news had gone like wild-fire through the country; and everywhere it met with the same indignation, scorn, and hard-headed pride. It was not, as Sir William Harcourt had shrewdly said, a particularly easy task which the nations of Europe had undertaken.

England might break; but it was already clear that she was not fashioned of the kind of steel which could be made to bend.

CHAPTER VI. HARDY



‘INVASION’ WAS THE word which more frequently than any other rose to the lips of Englishmen.

The muster of French, Russian, and German ships in the Northern Seas was eagerly criticised. It was found that their weight of metal was overpoweringly great compared with the small muster of the Channel Squadron. Away out in the China Seas the British fleet had been strengthened; it was cruising in force in the Mediterranean; it was at the Cape, at Australia, at North America, at the West Indies, in the Pacific; it was not in the English Channel.

Under these conditions the war-like activity in Britain itself went on with intensity. Even before the declarations of war the Adjutant-General had issued telegraphic orders all over the country for the calling out of the first-class army reserve, and the mobilisation of the militia and volunteers. With wondrous celerity commercial England turned herself into military England. What conscription did for foreign countries, that the manly mood of the race did for us. The women of England, especially, exhibited a spirit as war-like as the peril of their country was immense; and banishing fears and tears, they put on the sternly-proud brows of those heroic Roman matrons, who laughed when their sons were borne home dead with wounds in front. ‘Go along, boy, and give it ’em ’ot this time!’ said a Clerkenwell mother, handing his musket to her son. ‘And don’t be a-sparing o’ thot sword o’ thoine, Jock,’ was the admonition of a Lancashire wife as her husband, in premature haste, set out, like many another, to flock to the

regimental centre, before receiving the intimation that his presence was requisitioned. ‘And you’ll give them a good taste of what old Devon men are like, won’t you, Steve?’ was the exhortation of a Bideford lass. This was the mood — heroic, nothing less. Night and day the regimental districts and all military centres were hard at work, calling rolls, drafting troops to their regiments, and making all necessary preparations. A sound of trumpets reechoed through the land.

On the night of the announcement in the House of Commons, at about ten o’clock, — suddenly, on the east balcony of Buckingham Palace, the Queen appeared.

It had been supposed that she was still at Windsor, and by what contrivance she came here without attracting attention was unknown; to the crowds, thirsting, as they were, for some outward symbol of the might of England to which they could vent their intolerable emotions of love and loyalty, she appeared like a god-send dropped from Heaven.

One involuntary far-reaching shout of joy, spreading by contagion far up Piccadilly, far along Pall Mall, and re-echoed in thousand-fold acclamations, even by those who could not see her, burst instantly forth. A strong limelight or electric-light arrangement had been contrived, which focussed a powerful beam of white concentrated luminosity around her, and shot in shimmering rays far out and down through the night. Grouped around her was a party of the Royal family. On the right, the Prince of Wales; on her left, Lord Salisbury. In her hand she held aloft an object, the significance of which the crowd for a moment failed to grasp. When it did, the enthusiasm intensified beyond all bounds. It was one of the faded and ragged old flags, brought that afternoon from St. Paul’s, which had served as ensigns in Wellington’s Peninsular campaign.

A scene similarly striking was being witnessed on the esplanade at Southsea at the same hour, where some seven thousand blue-jackets, and the marines from Gosport, were on parade, and were being reviewed by the Princess May. Hither she had hurried after witnessing the scene in the House, and by the side of her sailor-husband, and Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, rode from end to end of the improvised ranks. Prince George addressed the men with a message of confidence from the Queen, and hinted at the awful odds which they would probably soon be called upon to face. He and every one was conscious that he was talking to doomed men.

The Princess dismounted. She had a basket, which she opened, and from it took a strip of blue ribbon. A high flush of ardour mantled her face as she attached it to the bosom of a staff-captain near her. A touch of pathos was added to the ceremony through which she now deftly went by the fact that she wore a loose velvet mantle, the reason for which could not be concealed. To every officer, from fleet-captain and commodore to sub-lieutenant and cadet, she attached the little symbol of affection. So solemn was the rite that even the crowd was silent. It was her salute to the dying.

But even during the progress of this scene, one of a number of picket-boats which had been sent out from Portsmouth during the day was steaming into the harbour, fussy with news.

She and two companions, smart little steam-pinnaces which flitted through water like fish, had, earlier in the day, spied a fleet of *cuirassés*, *canonnières*, *croiseurs*, and *bâtiments de transport* about S. by E. from Newhaven, fifty miles out. They were mostly French, but there were some German also.

The three boats, at intervals of a few minutes, came panting into Portsmouth harbour, like fluttered birds. Each contained five men, and the

fifteen, almost at the same time, stood grouped round the Commander-in-Chief on the Hard.

‘Could you make out what ships they were?’ he asked.

‘We were rather too far off for that, sir,’ answered a sub. near him.

There was silence for half a minute.

It was broken by a voice, which said:

‘The *Amiral Baudin* is among them, sir, the *Hoche*, the *Massena*, the *Kaiser* and the *Deutschland*

Sir Michael Culme - Seymour turned; he looked at the speaker; his eyebrows lifted a little. He did not know him.

Then, after a minute’s deliberation, the Admiral said:

‘How many ships all told?’

‘There are about seventeen battleships, sir,’ answered a midshipman eagerly, ‘about twenty to twenty-three cruisers, and a large fleet of liners — *Messag ries Maritimes* and *Norddeutscher Lloyd* — with an indefinite number of gun and torpedo boats, tenders, and composite small craft. They are making for Bognor, Littlehampton, or perhaps Worthing in a quadruple line of a good twenty or thirty cables’ interval.’

‘There can hardly be *seventeen* battleships,’ said the Admiral musingly. ‘Do *you* confirm that?’

He turned suddenly to the unknown person who had addressed him before — a mere stripling with a face highly flushed with excitement.

‘Well — not quite, sir,’ the young man replied; ‘I decided that there were fourteen battleships, twenty-four cruisers, thirty-eight troopships and liners, and a flotilla of 104 small fry.’

‘You seem pretty certain of your figures?’ the Admiral said, with a smile.

‘Middlingly certain, sir.’

‘May I ask — who are you?’

‘My name is John Hardy, sir.’

‘And your ship?’

‘The *Powerful*, sir.’

‘Then, what on earth are you doing here?’

(The *Powerful* was away out in the Yellow Sea, whither she had been commissioned since the previous year)

‘Looking about, sir,’ replied the young man, dropping his light-blue eyes.

‘But why are you not in China?’

‘I fell ill just as my ship was going to sail, sir,’ and as he said it, he gave one of those peculiar half-secret coughs, so indicative of the consumptive chest.

‘I see. Well — but how came you to be in the *Jupiter’s* picket-boat?’

‘I was on the *Jupiter* as a middy before joining the *Powerful*, sir. Captain MacLeod knows me, and has been kindly pleased to notice me. I am a bird without a roost. I came down from London, hoping for some of the trouble down here. Captain MacLeod allowed me to take—’

‘Ah, that explains it, then. Well, he seems to have done well.’

The Commander-in-Chief bestowed upon him a smile of passing approval, and turned away. In a moment he had forgotten the young seaman; but when, a little later, he was reading a telegram from the chief coastguardsman at Worthing, giving the sighted ships of the enemy, number for number, as Hardy had given them, then he thought once more of John Hardy.

‘Extraordinary genius for facts,’ he murmured.

The Admiral knew that the picket-boats must, in order to avoid being blown out of the water, have reconnoitred the advancing fleet at such a distance as to be themselves invisible, or nearly so, to the enemy. There

could be no doubt that John Hardy's long-lashed, azure-blue eyes possessed the faculty of *seeing*.

It often happened that people who came into contact with this young sailor thought of him a second time at unexpected moments, as the Admiral now did.

In a previous chapter we said that Dr. Yen How, sitting in a London 'bus on a certain night, was '*perhaps*' the most important person in the world. We should have stated the fact with quite absolute decision, if it were not that we were thinking of this particular sub-lieutenant, John Hardy.

They two — the little Chinese doctor, and this consumptive English lad — held in their hands the destinies of the world.

Each had his own idea of the shape which the future of the human race should take; each was determined that it should take the shape which *he* chose, and no other; and each was immensely strong.

It was fated that these two should meet — soon — and more than once.

It was now six o'clock, and the blue-jackets had already passed in a swarm of hurrying boats to their respective ships. As the telegrams arrived from the coastguardsmen on the south-east coast they were transmitted by semaphore to the fleet. The *Magnificent*, under Rear-Admiral John Fellowes, was the flagship of the second-in-command of the Channel Squadron, and now, in the absence of the *Majestic*, became the flagship of the fleet.

At the Horse Guards, meanwhile, Lord Wolseley was receiving and sending message after message, both telephonic and telegraphic, relating to the despatch of troops from Aldershot, Victoria, London Bridge, and Clapham Junction to the South. Every ten minutes a Brighton and South Coast train, packed with over a thousand regulars and volunteers carrying a day's cooked rations, dashed forth from each of these stations. Away in

hasty flight swept the long strings of bristling carriages, the throttle-valves shrieking the dragon-cry of defiance and challenge which England sent out in answer to her foes.

By seven o'clock fifteen thousand men were massed upon Brighton, and an unaccustomed rattle of some ninety limbers sent thrills of very unusual dismay through the placid *bourgeoisie* of London-by-the-Sea. War, so long a word and a myth, had suddenly become a thing, real enough, near enough. Long files of private carriages, taking away mostly women and children, wended northward upon the Brighton road, while a crowd filled the steep street leading to the station, to watch the ever-new batch of arrivals which debarked at all the platforms, up and down alike, and at sidings, the empties being returned along the up and down lines according to convenience. By eight o'clock thirty thousand troops with one hundred and ten guns, under Sir Evelyn Wood, were concentrated, and waiting for the enemy; and all through the night the number was being rapidly increased.

But they waited in vain.

England had been several times invaded by foreigners. The last occasion was in the year 1066, and that occasion Providence designed to be the last for ever. This land had since then nursed a race as superb and firm as the foot with which she spurned the breakers raving round her inviolate shores.

At one bell in the second dog-watch the signal was given from the flag-ship: the Channel Squadron, in a double line ahead, at intervals of six cables, some under forced draught, was to steam down Spithead for the Channel, the *Magnificent*, like the bell-wether of a flock, leading one line, the *Prince George* the other.

At that moment John Hardy climbed from the look-out pinnacle which he had been permitted to command, on to the deck of the *Jupiter*.

His heart misgave him, he shrank within himself, he slunk guiltily. He knew that he had only to be noticed to be turned peremptorily away. He was merely a visitor, a guest — a privileged one, it is true — but an outsider. That he should dream of taking part in the coming fight was preposterous, the more so as every man knew beforehand that all were going to certain death. And he had no shadow of status in any ship present.

But he wanted desperately to see the row, and his mind was one of those dominant ones not very subject to considerations of routine.

Once, when a ‘chief-captain’ of cadets on the *Britannia*, with no further temptation to dissoluteness than his weekly two-and-sixpence of pocket-money, he had been reported to the Admiralty for ‘unsatisfactory conduct’; another such report, and he would have bidden farewell to the British Navy for ever. It was that same gipsy attitude of mind, that sort of devil-may-care lawlessness characteristic of him, which was working in him now, as he stood sulkily there, abaft the after-funnel. He felt like being shut out and banished — and he wanted to see the row. He thought of skedaddling and hiding till the ship was well out from land.

But there was a suspicion of meanness in this contrivance, and even while he hesitated, Captain Angus MacLeod sighted him.

The captain had been an intimate friend of Hardy’s father, and was an executor of the very large real and personal fortune of which the boy was the heir. Hardy now, at the age of nearly nineteen, was an orphan. The family was Hampshire. The country-house in which he had passed his earlier boyhood lies fifteen miles south of Andover.

The captain beckoned. Hardy ran and stood before him on the hurricane-deck with downcast eyes, and cheeks blushing like a girl’s. By nature he was extremely bashful.

‘You here?’ said the captain, with a deep seriousness in his tone.

‘As you see, sir,’ answered John, with a faint attempt at a smile, and a nervous shifting of a leg.

‘You know as well as I do, John,’ said the captain sternly, ‘that this is only a piece of insolence on your part!’

‘If it strikes you in that light, sir — of course: but I should take it very kindly of you if you could see your way to let me be in for the trouble.’

‘In for the trouble? This is a most unprecedented piece of cheek, John Hardy! Be good enough to get ashore, sir. Do you imagine that I am going to have your blood on my hands, then?’

‘Whose blood, sir?’

‘*Your* blood, sir!’

‘My blood is all right, sir,’ said John sulkily.

‘Come, come, are you sane? Can’t you see that we are all going to pretty certain death, boy?’

‘I can’t think that, sir.’

‘Not? Aren’t French and German cannon as good as English, then?’

‘They may be on land, sir; but hardly, I think, on Her Majesty’s seas.’

At these words, ‘Her Majesty’s seas,’ back went the captain’s head in one sudden cry of gleeful laughter. Her Majesty’s seas! Perhaps there was not one living man English enough, and audacious enough, to produce that phrase, save this particular sub-lieutenant standing bashfully there.

But he, on his part, saw nothing extraordinary in the phrase — it slipped from him quite naturally, an offspring of his quietly supercilious habit of mind.

The captain’s face settled soon again to gravity. This was no laughing matter.

‘But we are wasting time, John Hardy,’ he said severely. ‘Will you be good enough, *now*, to leave my ship?’

‘In what, sir?’

‘In — in — what did you come in?’

‘In the picket-boat, sir.’

The captain turned his face from side to side, puzzled and irritated. John, seeing entreaty useless, was adopting tactics.

‘You shan’t stay here, sir — that is certain,’ cried the captain. ‘Somehow or other — you go! Get the dinghy.’

‘Shall I scull her ashore, sir?’

‘Yes.’

‘And who will bring her back, sir?’

‘I don’t care! Take two blue-jackets, then.’

‘Isn’t it rather late, sir?’

‘How?’

‘I fancy the ship is already moving rapidly through the water, sir.’

The captain started.

‘Boy, boy,’ he muttered under his breath. He loved the lad, and had loved his father.

But the captain was just now extremely busy. He tossed his hand and walked away. The strength and tenacity of John Hardy’s will sometimes produced results which had the look of fate and inevitableness.

And so it happened that he was with the Channel Squadron, borne in the *Jupiter*, when it steamed at thirteen knots past Selsey Bill to meet the fleet of the Allies.

CHAPTER VII. IN THE CHANNEL



DR. YEN HOW had his Idea, and John Hardy had his. Nothing in the world is of such supreme importance as an Idea.

Dr. Yen How's Idea was this: that the cupidity and blind greed of the white races could be used by the yellow man as a means to the yellow man's triumph; the white races could be made to exterminate each other preparatory to the sweep, in hundreds of millions, of the yellow man over an exhausted and decimated Europe. Hence the grants by China of territories to Russia, Germany, and France — and the consequent war.

John Hardy's Idea was this: that the new naval warfare admitted of every bit as much constructive plan and shrewd sea-tactics as the old; that the sailor-hero was still possible — the new Drake, the new Richard Grenville, the new Nelson; that it was not (as every one supposed) a mere question of weight of metal, or superiority of gun-fire, now any more than it ever was; that a man born with the sea in his soul, and the sea breeze in his hair, like the old sailor-souls, would still do the trick.

This was his Idea; and he had also this other, subsidiary to that first one — had it more vitally than any other modern Briton — that nothing in the world was of the least importance, except England, and the march of England, and the glory of England.

Perhaps the lad was utterly unconscious that he had these ideas, but he had them; they were there in him, radically and profoundly; and if he was unconscious of them, as he was of his circulation, that was an added proof of their radicalness and profundity.

His nature was as elementary, and simple, and strong, as the nature of Dr. Yen How.

Just as the captain of the *Jupiter* flung his head irritably and turned from him, John Hardy caught the sleeve of a middy who was hurrying past, and said eagerly:

‘I have got permission to see the row after all!’

‘Good biz,’ the middy nodded, as he passed on. ‘I wish you joy!’

And presently he was at the sleeve of a sub., saying:

‘Here I am, you see. I have got permission to look on at the row after all!’

‘It is like your ubiquitous luck, Hardy,’ the other said, and hurried by.

Hardy was usually more taciturn than this; the fact that he went about in this way volunteering his news showed that he was more or less excited, out of himself. He was going to see a fight — a real one this time. To this moment he had no idea what a naval battle was actually like. Summer manoeuvres were a different affair.

His coldly practical nature was illustrated by the fact that the grudging quality of the captain’s permission did not at all lessen his satisfaction; he had got it — that was enough. He looked only at results.

The object of the enemy was to effect a landing at Shoreham, or near it — a quiet spot, less conspicuous than Brighton or Worthing. They hoped by their prompt and sudden arrival, so soon after the declaration of war, to catch the British fleet napping — as, in fact, they partially did — and so to be able to land three *corps d’armée*, consisting of 120,000 men, 360 guns, 30,000 horses, and a fairly adequate commissariat and field-transport *matériel* without the inconvenience of first of all undergoing a naval engagement.

Their sudden presence on the shores of Britain proved that war must have been secretly premeditated and prepared for by them some time before the declaration of hostilities — another indication of that suspicion of treachery which, all through, characterised the action of the Allies in this war. But the excellent telescopes of the coast-guards, and the brisk scouts of the British fleet, served to give a warning which, though late, was not hopelessly so. The enemy, moreover, in their over-confidence, had committed an error in tactics in approaching too near the coast while there was still a little twilight.

Off Bognor the captains and commanders of ships were assembled in the large ward-room of the *Majestic*. Rear-Admiral John Fellowes had signalled half-speed and summoned them to a conference.

The officers sat round, hanging on his words, as the Rear-Admiral began to speak.

‘Of course, gentlemen/ he said, ‘it has been a matter of anxious consideration to me in what formation we are to approach the enemy. What makes our arrangements rather difficult is the fact that we know little of their present disposition. But it seems to me that one thing should be certain — namely, that their troop-ships and liners will be stationed well in the rear, while the whole weight of metal of their ships of war will be put forward to protect their land forces on the liners, etc. They will assume that our first care will be to destroy their land forces in our panic at the idea of invasion, and their whole effort will be bent upon protecting them, and frustrating us.

‘Of course, in thus guessing our objects they are right enough. We wish, naturally, to baulk the attempt at invasion; but I must point out to you that our object, to be wise, *must* be twofold, and that our secondary object is more important than our first. I mean, that from the reports we have received of the number of transports, etc., it is impossible that they can have

with them a land-force of more than 120,000 to 160,000 men, and that, even supposing these effect a landing, the land-forces at present in Britain are possibly quite capable of dealing with them, provided the enemy be not reinforced by fresh increments of invading army-corps in the near future.

‘It must, then, be our business to make such fresh invasions impracticable for some little time by shattering, as far as we can, the enemy’s powers of convoy — that is, their ships of war. For I need not point out to you that the combined countries of France, Russia, and Germany may place several millions of armed men in England, practically as fast as they choose, if only they have ships to bring them over, *and* a convoy to protect them from the battleships and coast-defence ironclads at British stations. And against such forces the land-force of Britain would, of course, be impotent.

‘This, then, is my point of view. We must send back our invaders with such a rip in their battered metal that these particular war-ships shall have had enough of invasion for some little time.

‘In the effort we shall all probably perish, but that, I take it, is not with any of us a matter of salient importance.

‘What I propose is this: that we approach to within five miles of the enemy in our present formation; if they approach us in line abreast, or in a semicircle convex or concave, then we echelon right and left respectively, each battleship fastening on the nearest antagonist as fortune may decide; while gunboats, torpedo-boats, and fast third-class cruisers like the *Pelorus*, will deploy right and left in an attempt to get behind the enemy, where they will do all the damage they can, special attention being given to the destruction of rudders and screws, so as to obviate their ramming-power.

‘If, on the other hand, they confront us in line ahead, then we retain our formation, the first ship attacking the first, the second the second, and so on.

‘My instructions at present cannot, of course, but be general, and much, in any case, must be left to individual initiative — happily so, I think, in the case of British commanders. Further orders will, if necessary, be sent out by trumpet-call, and passed from ship to ship in both files.’

A bow of acquiescence went round the table. The policy was felt to be bad for the immediate present, but wise for the immediate future.

At that moment the flag-lieutenant of the Rear-Admiral entered the room.

‘The enemy’s fleet is reported in sight, sir,’ he said.

‘Ah! what is the hour?’

‘Nearly three bells, sir.’

‘What has been made out?’

‘Only three electric search-lights in a line — probably they are thirteen miles off.’

‘Are preparations well advanced on board?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘And the same, I presume, in all your ships, gentlemen?’

They all expressed assent.

‘Well, then, gentlemen, here, you see, we are in for it— “it” meaning the first really great naval battle of modern times. I dare say that we shall conduct ourselves with credit, fighting as we do in the name of justice and our country. In half an hour, say, we shall be face to face with these people. I recommend that a ration of grog be served out to all bluejackets meantime, and that final preparations be pushed forward. My flag-lieutenant will send up as signal the words “For England.” I think that is all I need say now, except to wish you a very hearty good-bye, and a fine fight, and the aid and favour of Almighty God.’

The officers, having saluted, trooped hurriedly forth with mutual *adieux*, and half-satiric, half-sad *morituri salutamus*, and went away through the gloom each to his own ship.

The snouts of the ponderous bulks of metal were ploughing leisurely through the sea.

Yonder, lit by flash-light on the flag-ship, fluttered the battle-word of the coming combat—'For England.'

But the night now had darkened. A wind freshened from the sou'-west, and drove sombre expeditions of slow cloud over the face of the scurrying and struggling moon. She seemed affrighted at the pregnant silence of this gliding navy — a silence pregnant with a thousand thunders. But the sea was fairly calm, crisped only with short low fringes of foam driven by the wind.

The *Jupiter* was the second ship in the port file — that is to say, on the side nearest the coast as the fleet forged eastwards.

Her captain had been so preoccupied with affairs during the bustle of the afternoon that he had eaten nothing for hours. Almost immediately on reaching his own ship after the conference, he hurriedly descended to his quarters, and sat to swallow some cold mouthfuls.

Happening to lift his eyes as he ate, he saw, sitting on a couch in the apartment, and quietly watching him, his guest, John Hardy. He had forgotten John.

'Well, John,' he said, across a gag of mutton, 'so you have dared, after all. In spite of my orders, eh, sir? Well, I suppose I must make the best of you, as you are here. But you are a foolish lad, you know.'

'It can't be of any consequence, sir,' said John. 'I wanted to see a fight. It is always experience.'

'Yes, yes. But a young man like you. Have you no care for your life, sir?'

‘It can’t be of any consequence, sir.’

“A day less or more,
On sea, or on shore,
We die — does it matter when?”

Is that the sort of sentiment, eh, John?’

‘Something of that sort, sir.’

‘Well, you might do worse, perhaps. But what is the matter with you?
The sweat is rolling down your face.’

‘They have been allowing me to help a little about the ship, sir.’

‘What, with your own hands, sir?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Well, John Hardy — I shall never have another chance of telling you, so let me tell you now, boy — I must say that I regard you as a most worthy specimen of the Navy. Your school and cadet careers were not very brilliant, were they? Rather — ahem — well — we will say nothing of that. But in other respects — you know what I would say, perhaps — I give you my Certificate — that sort of thing. Certainly, you are as bold as a fly, modest, thoroughly English — a little — er — original, perhaps, eh, sir? Like your father, eh, sir? But with the makings of a great sailor in you, John Hardy. Pity you should be throwing yourself away like this.’

John was blushing.

‘You are very kind, sir,’ he just muttered.

‘Do not mention it. The circumstances excuse one, you know, in being quite frank.’

‘Quite so, sir.’

John, all the time, was burning to ask a question. Suddenly he said:

‘Might I ask, sir, what are the proposed tactics for the battle?’

‘Well, John, there’s going to be plenty of fun, apparently, for you to see. The idea is to concentrate all our efforts upon the battleships and big cruisers, so as to render it out of the question, if possible, for this particular fleet again to act as convoy to an invading force.’

‘And the liners and transports, sir?’

* They are to be left severely alone this time.’

* To land their troops on British soil, sir?’

‘Yes, boy — yes — *this* time.’

Suddenly John Hardy leapt to his feet, his hands clenched, his face inflamed.

‘Oh, *sir!*’ he cried.

The captain looked at him in surprise, saying:

‘Well, what’s the matter?’

‘Captain MacLeod, England will never bear such an indignity!’

‘Well, my boy, but war, you understand, is not fun and heroics — it is dead earnest. England will *have* to bear it, I’m afraid.’

‘*She shan’t, by God!*’ cried John Hardy, striking out his right fist, suddenly riven and smitten by the Call of Heaven within him.

Then, immediately, he fell back upon the couch, sobbing bitterly into his two hands.

The captain stood over him, patting his shoulder, murmuring:

‘Poor John! poor John!’

CHAPTER VIII. THE BATTLE



THE FLEETS DREW nearer, vaguely revealed to each other by electric search-lights.

That morning, as early as five o'clock, the French, Russian, and German national anthems had been played, on board the fleet of the Allies at Brest, and the colours saluted. Immediately afterwards the ships steamed out of harbour. The land-troops were already massed on board the transports.

To prevent their movements being watched and reported, they had proceeded at a high speed, never very far from the French coast, till they reached the longitude of Fécamp; then, striking directly northward for Beachy Head, had slackened speed about five o'clock, forty miles from the coast; then, as the twilight gathered, they had deflected their course to about west by north, making in a leisurely way for the neighbourhood of Shoreham. When they first became aware of the approach of the British fleet, they were moving almost directly westward, as the British were moving directly eastward.

The formation of the enemy was in a quadruple line abreast. In the front were fourteen first-class battleships at twelve cables' interval; in the second, cruisers of the three classes; in the third, gunboats, torpedo-boats, and composite gun-vessels; in the fourth, the array of liners and troop-ships bearing the land-forces.

The British Rear-Admiral had rightly surmised what would be the action of the French Contre-Amiral; his primary thought was for the troop-ships. Out from the flagship went a trumpet-call, repeated far over the ocean in a

long line of sonorous and brazen-lunged iteration. Down the files of ships it went braying, a voice that died and instantly rose in vibrant outcry again, commanding all troopers and liners to go pacing backward twelve miles to eastward, and there maintain a hollow square till further notice.

Through the wide region of black smoke which poured forth now over the Channel from the entire allied fleet, flocked the captains of ships to a hurried conference with Contre-Amiral des Vismes de Monthier on the *Amiral Baudin*.

His recommendation was that the allied battleships should form in two double lines, converging inwards toward the British ships, just as the British ships (as could be already surmised) were diverging outward toward the Allies. He said: 'We have fourteen battleships — they, I take it, eight.' (In reality, the British battleships only numbered seven, for the *Majestic* was gone.) 'I propose, then, that the four battleships of our present line now farthest to starboard will form the outer converging line of starboard attack, and the next four the inner converging line, parallel to the outer; thus, toward the coast, two starboard lines of eight allied battleships will have between their broadsides a line of four British battleships — and the contest, I think, should be short.

'In the same way with our port battleships; the three farthest to port will form the outer converging line, the next three the inner — thus two port lines of six allied battleships will have between their broadsides a line of four British battleships, eight to four, and six to four. The contest should not be long, messieurs. I even suggest, as a point of tactics, that, in view of our preponderance, we should make our victory instantaneous by placing a very short interval between the combatant ships — say, a kilometre at the most; for, of course, the shorter the conflict the less our damage — a point of immeasurable importance to us, considering the role we have to fill in

convoying more invading land-forces in the near future. I need not point out, too, that an enemy's ship, hemmed in between two hostile ships, will be the more hampered in ramming, the closer the quarters. But we have little time for talk; cruisers, gunboats, and composite vessels will find their work cut out according to the dispositions of the enemy's less massive flotilla. I can only hope that these recommendations meet with your approval, as I know they do with that of my colleague, Vice-Admiral von Grudenau. Adieu, then, messieurs! This interruption to our progress will, in a quarter of an hour, be overcome. *Vive la France! Vivent — vivent — les Alliés!*

'Vive la France — vivent les Alliés!' repeated the allied commanders round the table, as they raised to their lips wine poured from the carafes; then, saluting, they hurried to their gigs.

And none too soon. They had hardly reached their ships, and turned them to the performance of the prescribed evolutions, when the fleet of England was upon them.

The Contre-Amiral had made a small error in guessing the formation of the British battleships. He had assumed that, their number being small, they approached the allied fleet in two divergent single lines of ships; but the British Rear-Admiral, hoping for some unknown hypothetical* advantage, had, as we have seen, decided to advance in two divergent echelons, or step-shape formations. The error was of little importance, for the Allies would quickly detect the formation, and modify their movements accordingly.

Unfortunately for them the eyes of John Hardy, with their faculty of sight and insight, were abroad over the sea that night.

He had burst into sobs in the captain's quarters of the *Jupiter*. The captain stood over him, patting his shoulder, wondering at the intensity of the lad's pride and patriotism.

But it was neither pride nor patriotism which was then rending the frail frame of Hardy with sobs — it was something far more. To hear irresistibly the Heavenly Call to be up and save the world, and then, at once, to be overwhelmed with the bitter sense of the strong Commonplace, and with the feeling of sheer impotence in the face of it — this is the tragedy of genius.

John sobbed. There had risen in him a sublime strength, an immoderate arrogance, and with it the tingling consciousness that, were he that night the Admiral of the Fleet, he would and could somehow save England from the shame of an invading foot; then, all at once, he remembered that he was by no means the Admiral of the Fleet. So he sobbed.

But his sobs were in the nick of time, for he had the trick of luck. They softened and touched the captain, just at the right instant.

‘Well, John, I must be going,’ he said.

John lifted up his hot face.

‘Where shall I take my place, sir?’ he asked.

‘Your place? I should stay here if I were you.’

‘May I, sir, if it is not asking too much—’

‘What?’

‘Come with you, sir.’

‘Where to?’

‘The conning-tower, sir.’

‘My good fellow!’

‘If it is not asking too much, sir. One must see the fight from somewhere, as one happens to be here.’

‘Well — but — the conning-tower!’

‘I shall make myself small, sir. You won’t talk to me, nor I, of course, to you. A guest chooses his lodging in a case of doubt, you know, sir.’

He was smiling now, and when he smiled his face was wonderfully winning.

The captain hesitated, and was lost. He said:

‘Well, you are an original, John, that’s all I can say — like your poor father before you, boy. Come along, then — come along!’

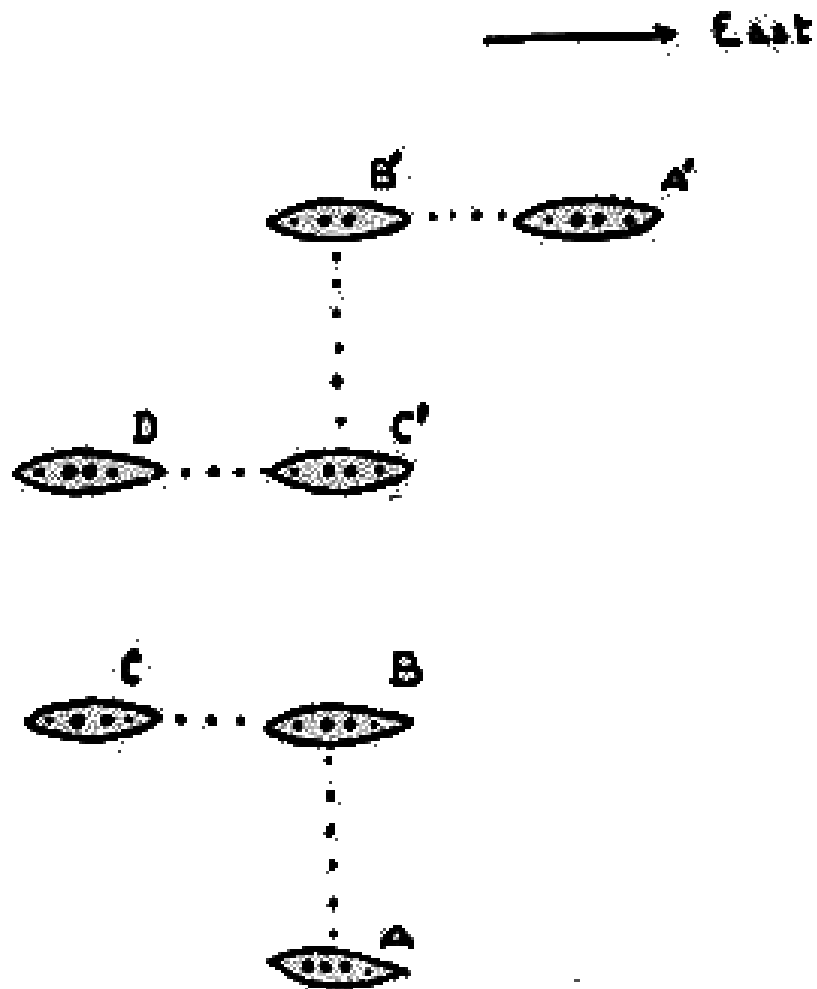
They ran briskly up.

Suddenly the still night was a-sound. The two fleets were about to mingle.

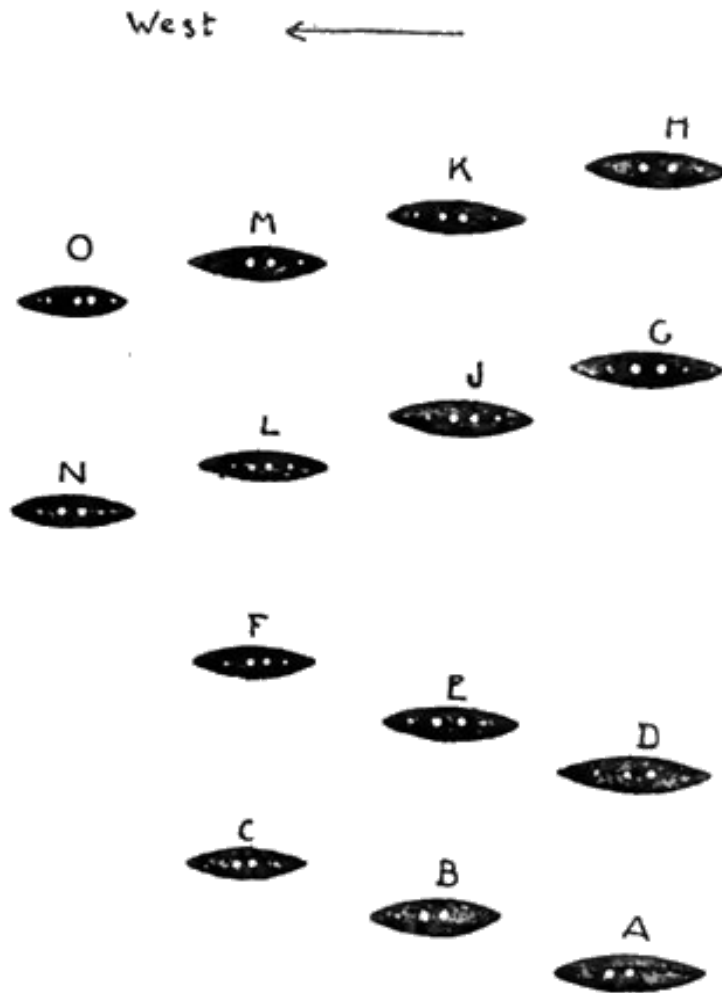
At that moment so great was the disparity of weight, that the wildest hope of patriotism could have predicted nothing but swift destruction to the British; nor was the objective of the British captains victory, but only the disablement, as far as might be, of the enemy.

To explain the appalling ruin and havoc which one pair of seeing sailor-eyes brought upon the entire allied squadron, we must employ diagrams.

The following is the formation in which the seven British battleships approached the enemy, with an interval of about a knot, or nautical mile, between each pair of ships, A being the Rear-Admiral’s ship, the *Magnificent*, A’ the *Prince George* leading the starboard echelon, and B’ the *Jupiter*, bearing Hardy.



The following is the formation in which the allied battleships advanced, about the same interval being preserved among ship-pairs as among British ship-pairs.



The fleets were no sooner on the point of mingling than Hardy, standing now with Captain MacLeod in the conning-tower of the *Jupiter*, was in full possession of their method of advance; and he was no sooner in full possession of it, than he started, his eyes widened, and words burst from him.

‘Sir,’ he cried, the enemy are advancing in two double files. It seems clear to me that they suppose us to be advancing in two single files.’

‘Yes, that is so,’ said the captain, proceeding to give the order in which John had interrupted him.

‘But, sir, sir,’ persisted John.

‘Well, John, well,’ said the captain.

‘It seems to me, sir — really — that if the *Jupiter* and the *Victorious* both put out external lights and lie low, the enemy will *continue* to think that we are in single file instead of in echelon, and then—’

Up leapt the captain’s arms.

‘By gad, you are right, boy!’ he cried, staring hard at Hardy, his head struck into a sudden sideward suspension of silent meditation.

Then, in a flash, he saw it all — the whole inwardness of the boy’s suggestion — the long vista of results — the whole huge drama of the enemy’s disaster.

‘Sir — Captain MacLeod — —’ said John, all eagerness.

‘But to warn the *Victorious* in time?’ mused the captain.

‘Send *me*, sir! Water from the engines — the picket-boat 1 The *Victorious* is only two miles off; I shall be there in three or four minutes.’

‘Well — I say yes. You understand, of course, that you will never come back.’

‘Thank you, captain — good-bye — they are done for, captain, by the Lord-!’

He was gone, rushing.

On board Her Majesty’s ships of war things were done with a certain nimbleness; everything was oiled and easy, and went off with the gliding smoothness of lightning. The *Jupiter* was carrying at her mast-head the bright white steam-light, on her starboard bow the usual green, and on her port bow the usual red light; by the time these were out, and the whole ship plunged into darkness, the little picket-boat was driving her head through two combs of foam, herself in darkness, with Hardy and three blue-jackets, in a direction nearly south.

The picket-boat passed before the ram of the *Repulse* (C'), and in less than two minutes Hardy was at the conning-tower of the *Victorious* (B).

Suddenly the *Victorious*, too, vanished into darkness.

The night was now very gloomy.

There remained a third ship, the *Mars* (D), whose presence it was desirable to conceal for the time being; the concealment was not so necessary, as she was more remote from the advancing fleet, and by the time the significance of her presence in her then position was understood, the mischief might be done.

But Hardy would leave nothing to chance. It was quite out of the question now that, if he attempted to reach the *Mars*, the little picket could live in the shattered sea-surface, into which, surely, in a minute's time all that area of water would be torn by shot and shell. Yet he dared. The little boat, in a very passion of haste, throbbing as though she would throb her little heart out, went panting north-westward toward the *Mars*.

Was he too late? There was a sudden shock and roar from the east, and in the night a dull glare red and morose. He sat, the tiller-ropes in one hand, the other holding a double-glass to his eyes. A gust of wind had blown away his straw hat; the breeze was a-play in his hair.

A British first-class torpedo-boat rushed sounding past him, hasting wrathfully to battle, washed in spray from stem to stern. Close by his starboard bow she dashed like an angry darting fish, leaving the little picket nodding and dipping in a choppy sea which almost swamped her hurried embassy. The next moment a shrapnel-shell burst into light a hundred yards before him. The fight had commenced — Bellona was abroad.

Was he too late? He knew now that to reach the *Mars* he must perish. Certainly, he could never return to the *Jupiter*. But he held on his way. He was full of a great joy. Now he knew verily for what he was born; it was for

this — the mixed and multitudinous roar of cannon sounding over the sea — England's sea — *his* sea! Something in his heart, in his life's blood, and in his very soul's soul, answered to it, was akin to it. Never had he been really glad till this night. He held on his rash and desperate way.

His eyes were alight with battle.

Suddenly he said under his breath: 'Bravo I' The lights of the *Mars* had gone out into darkness. Her captain — Captain Henderson — had noted, first, the extinguishing of the *Jupiter* lights, and had been puzzled; then the going out into darkness of the *Victorious*. He had stood with knit brows for two minutes, and had understood. A few seconds later the *Mars*, too, was invisible.

At once John Hardy put his helm to starboard, running about north-east, to regain the *Jupiter*. He was now hurrying into the very region of the starboard limb of the enemy's fleet, and by the time he neared the *Repulse*, that ship was already engaged with two of the enemy. In another half-minute the sea around these three was a white tempest of thrashed and spurting spray, as when thronging hail flogs stingingly upon a lake, and the sky about them was a vague domed cavern of coppery flame. Never did sailor, in so small a craft, run the gauntlet of a more ticklish peril, passing through a sea crowded with torpedoes, and cracking shells, and balls of fire. But the picket-boat never so much as swerved; straight onward she throbbed, through the region of lurid half-light, at her stern-post the Union Jack; then once more into darkness. John Hardy sprang up the side of the dark *Jupiter* and ran to the conning-tower.

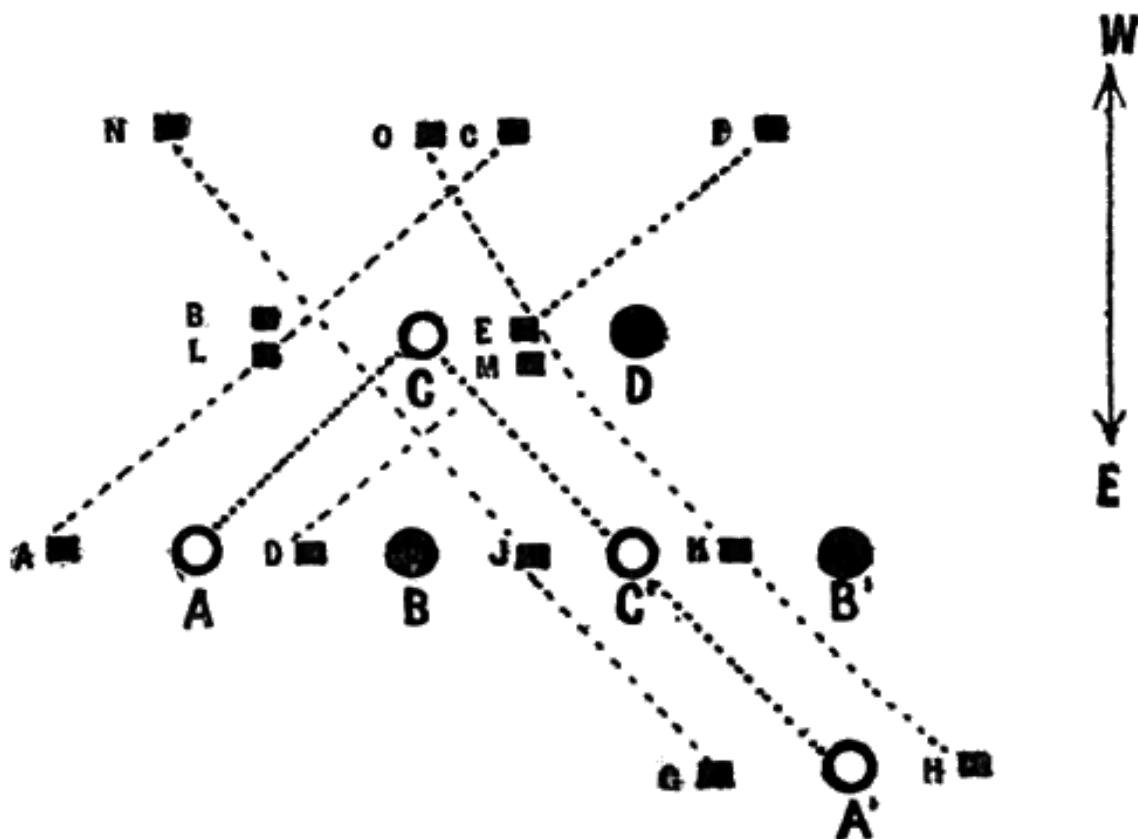
'You have done it, then, John?' cried Captain MacLeod; 'I congratulate you from my soul/

'Thank you, sir. Now, perhaps, I think we may see these fellows banged a little—'

‘We may, John, we may — thanks to you, boy. Wait, wait — let us see.’
It did not take long to see.

In a very few minutes the condition of the battle was this: two French ships, one on each side of her, were battering the *Magnificent* (A) into shambles; two more, one on each side of her, were making a wreck of the *Prince George* (A7); two more were tackling the *Repulse* (C’); the *Jupiter* was not fighting, the *Victorious* was not fighting, the *Mars* was not fighting — the Allies being unconscious at the moment of their presence in their then unsuspected position; one German ship was in collision with a French on the starboard side of the *Resolution* (C); one French ship was ramming another French ship between the *Resolution* and the *Mars* (D); another French ship was blowing a German ship out of the water at a point a long way to the west of the British fleet; and two German ships were cruising about in the same longitude, searching in vain for two enemies which should have been there, and were not.

Thus, of the fourteen allied battleships, six only were engaged in actual conflict with three British vessels, while a fourth British vessel (C) was pouring a tempest of barbette, quick-firing, and machine shot into the ships in collision on her starboard, and watching the sinking of a French ship rammed by a French on her port, side. How this complexity of tragedy overwhelmed the enemy will be readily seen by the following plan, published in every London newspaper the next morning. Black squares and small letters stand for allied ships, circles and capitals for British, the three British which put out their lights being printed black.



It will be seen from the plan that, the lights of the three ships being extinguished, the starboard limb of the allied squadron saw a straight line of British ships — namely, C, C', A', — consisting of the *Resolution*, the *Repulse*, and the *Prince George*. This made them certain of their conjecture that the British were advancing in two single lines, and they accordingly proceeded to port and starboard of these three, in order to attack on both broadsides; but expecting not three, but four, British vessels in each limb, the allied ships *n* and *o* went on south-westward to seek them.

Meanwhile, on their port side also, the allied ships saw a straight line of British ships, namely A, C, consisting of the *Magnificent* and — once again — the *Resolution*. Believing that this limb, too, consisted of four distinct ships, two of which were farther on, and not appreciating the fact that the

same *Resolution* (C) was about to be attacked by two of their starboard fleet, they steamed forward. Two of their ships, *c* and *f*, reached the stations indicated on the plan, surprised to find no enemy; while two others, *l* and *m*, came into contact with two of their own starboard limb, *b* and *e*. Before she could stop her speed, *m* had hopelessly rammed *e*, and the *Resolution* was pouring a murderous hail upon both *b* and *l*, which had similarly collided, *b* at this time being an inert mass floating helplessly with screws shattered by *l*; while yonder to the west, *c* and *o* both searching for the missing enemy, made a sudden discovery, and began to batter each other with shrapnel, before ever guessing at the hopeless error, and the blind delusion, and the harum-scarum of disaster, in which they had been involved by the simple expedient of Hardy.

At this moment — simultaneously — the three darkened ships opened fire; and peaceful merchantmen, heading with slow industry on their diverse ways, heard far and wide over the Channel the cry and rumour of that complex war.

It was a fearful battle. Nearly all the allied ships which were in actual combat with British ships, having taken position in the hope of pouring a double broadside on the British ship, one from each side, now suddenly found themselves in the predicament which they had planned for the British; for, without warning, a dark unsuspected ship opened fire upon them, placing between two fires those who for others had planned two fires.

Thus, the ship *k* was between the fires of the *Jupiter* and the *Repulse*, the ship *j* between the fires of the *Repulse* and the *Victorious*, and the ship *d* between the fires of the *Victorious* and the *Magnificent*. As yet, no colours had been struck, but the *Friedrich Wilhelm* (*b*), whose stern-works had been shattered by the *Duguesclin* (*l*), was a barely-floating ruin, with only one water - tight compartment uninvaded by the waters; the *Prince George* (A')

was just plunging — with screws high in the air, and a shriek from her burst and hissing engines that reached the clouds — to her last resting - place; the *Massena* (*e*), with a strange fatal suddenness, had sunk on being rammed by the *Hoche* (*m*); and almost immediately afterwards the *Hoche* herself cracked in twain amidships, struck by a torpedo intended for the *Massena*, which had been launched by a second-class torpedo-boat lowered in the dark by the *Mars*; while the *Mars* herself, having not yet relighted her lamps, was rammed at her central armour-belt by a second-class British cruiser, the *Charybdis*, the smaller ship sheering away with broken bows to go down by the head three miles away amid a crowd of allied cruisers.

Yonder to westward of the thickest region of battle, the *Amiral Baudin* (*c*), with a single 37-c.m. shell, had annihilated both funnels of the *Brandenburg*, while the *Brandenburg*, before she could detect the ruse by which she was made to destroy her own flagship, had rattled the ribs of the *Amiral Baudin* with a rain of thousands of rounds of machine and quick-firing 10½ and 8-c.m. shot, and had sent a barbette shell shrieking into the bowels of the French ship, where it ripped her armoured deck, and in a nightmare of fury rent the whole central interior of the vessel into debris.

It was shortly after this that even the din of that wide and various warfare received, as it were, an added shock of horror, when a broad sheet of flame was seen to rise and ride in quivering glare toward the sky, and the next moment a bang of thunder where the *Repulse* had been shook the universal sea. A fire had run through her entire length between-decks, and ignited at nearly the same moment every atom of explosive within her into one splendid detonation. She did not burst — she crumbled to fragments. At the same time, at the other end of that line of ships, the *Magnificent* was quietly going down by the poop, where a French submarine-boat had affixed a Whitehead.

In a very few minutes after the actual commencement of hostilities, four of the seven British battleships had disappeared, and nine of the allied fourteen.

Of the intricate and incalculable warfare that was darting in furious wrath in every direction in the shape of the less massive armatures little was salient where all was vast. The enemy was preponderant in number, but deficient in weight of first-class cruisers. The mutual havoc went on rapidly with complex disaster and success. Ships about to disappear rose again, blown high by torpedoes; men on the point of going down in the wheeling suction of some great vessel were arrested in their descent to be mangled by distracted shrapnel, or scalded by some flight of stinging steam; crafts were destroyed and destroyed again, and ten times destroyed again, before they sank in scattered shreds. It was an anarchy and blindness of rage, which rent the already rent, and mutilated the already murdered.

The *Jupiter*, by some favour of her position, was still seaworthy, when Captain MacLeod, a minute after the blowing-up of the *Repulse*, said aloud to himself:

‘Now, I think I might very well ram that ship.’

‘That ship’ meant the French battleship *k* which, now that the *Repulse* has gone, was turning, together with her sister-ship *j*, her whole attention upon the *Jupiter*. Part of the *Jupiter*’s fore-deck had already been ripped, and a fore-barbette gun unshipped.

At once she went wheeling in a sixteen-point curve to starboard, pouring at the same time a broadside upon the enemy. But it was at once seen that the most delicate seamanship would now be required, for not only was the *Jupiter*’s intention detected, but *k* began to manoeuvre to anticipate the attack by herself delivering the ram, while the chase was promptly joined by which had just lodged a finishing shell in the *Victorious* (B).

The three vessels, though one of them was sinking slowly, and all were more or less ruined, were intact in engines and steering-gear, and went careering in swift flight on evolutionary curves whose outcome only the nicest commanding skill could determine. To destroy a funnel of one or both — this was Captain MacLeod's hope. He started a rattle of quick-firing shot as the three vessels wheeled nearer. But there was a racket on board the *Jupiter* — a bursting shell — a clatter of broken plate — a stream of blood poured down John Hardy's face — Captain MacLeod fell limp at his feet.

At that moment, from the conning-towers of *both* the French ships there went forth the command: Prepare to ram.' The *Jupiter* was between them; and her captain was laid low.

But a born sailor now commanded her.

Hardy gave the order to slacken speed. With his eyes on both the hurrying, impending ships he waited thirty, thirty-five seconds; and at the right fraction of a second he ordered: 'Full steam ahead!'

Blood covered his face, and the breeze in his hair gave him an aspect of wildness and disarray; but his brain was cool.

As the poop of the *Jupiter* slipped elusively from between the two advancing rams there arose an outcry on both the French ships. But it was too late. No celerity of hand, no power on earth, could now avert the awful catastrophe. The two bows met, and crashed.

One of the French ships leaned to port, as if fainting in despair, then languidly sank.

Was he really in command? Captain MacLeod lay at his feet. Who knew? Would not his, John Hardy's, commands be obeyed tacitly, if he tacitly assumed the command? And *heat* least, was under no orders from the Rear-Admiral. He ordered three points to starboard, and full speed ahead. The *Jupiter* went hasting at once directly northward.

Hardy was running from the fight.

The first clear necessity seemed to him now to get out of the battle, while the *Jupiter's* engines were still intact.

He suspected, indeed, that she was already sinking. But there was hope. She went ploughing northward. Her position on the outskirts of the battle favoured him.

Of what particular crime was it that he was guilty? He knew well that it was a crime. Was it treason, or piracy, or mutiny, or felony? The place which he occupied should have been filled by the commander of the *Jupiter*, now that her captain was senseless. Hardy knew that — but her commander was under flag-orders. *He* was not.

Three miles to the north he turned the ship's bow from north to north-east; three more miles and he turned it from north-east to east. Now he breathed freely; the *Jupiter* was well beyond effective range of the battling ships.

Her lights had long since been again put out. On she went through the darkness, east by south now, battered and broken in her upper works, but tolerably sound below — and with funnels still whole! and with a ram ploughing through the water at eighteen miles an hour! and absolutely safe now from shot!

John Hardy stood in her battered conning-tower with the wind in his light hair, and the blood on his face, and a slight frown on his brow. And on through the darkness drove the silent battleship.

In little more than half an hour she was upon that hollow square of troopers and liners, which were here just forging through the water till the conclusion of the fight. There were thirty-eight of them, and they contained over 120,000 men.

Suddenly, out of the darkness, the *Jupiter* pounced upon them.

Has the reader seen a thoroughbred, long-snouted fox-terrier, the prize-winner perhaps at some show, let loose in a small room among a hundred hoarded rats? With a gleeful, sudden spring he is among them, as they scamper into a huddled heap at the corners, seeking to hide from the very sight of their little, leering eyes that countenance of wrath. He, for his part, gives one, and only one, swift crack at the bones of the neck, and disdainfully drops the limp vermin, to go on to the next.

It was something in this way that the *Jupiter* dealt with these thirty-eight troopships and liners. One after another they cracked like tea-pots, they snapped like rotten twigs, they sank at a touch. Hardy rammed one on one side of the square, and went straight on and rammed another opposite; but in the rapid passage from opposite to opposite, he had sunk five others with barbette and broadsides of quick-firing guns. The *Jupiter* rushed among them like a fury, dashing through a multitude of complex evolutionary curves, and heaping havoc all around. It was a scene of unparalleled carnage. In a short time the ram of the ship was forging through masses of men and horses struggling in the water; what was left of the sides of the square was shooting forth flames; and the *Jupiter* herself was being swept by tempests of bullets from the land-forces. Without visible result, however. Three only of the transports, sufficiently uninjured by the time they could get speed, escaped. The rest went down.

It was now a question with Hardy whether he could save the *Jupiter* by beaching her. She was already low by the stern, and the coast was miles away. The moment his work was ended, he gave the order to turn her bow directly northward.

He only just failed.

Half a mile out from Brighton, he bent over Captain MacLeod, looked close into his eyes, and put his hand over his heart. The heart beat, but a

splinter had gashed all the chest.

‘Sir, sir, said John, ‘can you not—’

He shook the Captain. A moan came from the prostrate man; his eyes opened.

‘Try to understand,’ said John; ‘you will have to *swim*, or be lost. Can you understand?’

The Captain stared stupidly, but nodded; and John stripped him hurriedly, then himself.

The next moment he gave the order:

‘Hands to leap overboard and make for shore!’

There was nothing resembling a boat any longer left on board the *Jupiter*.

In two minutes three hundred blue-jackets were in the water, and the *Jupiter*, left alone, took in a smooth cascade of sea over her poop.

A blue-jacket on one side of Captain MacLeod, and John on the other, made slow progress forward. Toward ten o’clock they felt bottom; they dragged themselves forward, and fell upon Brighton beach.

CHAPTER IX. JOHN HARDY GIVES AN ORDER



HARDY IN A faint on Brighton sands — Hardy waking on a down bed in Cavendish Square — the transition is rapid, but that is what in fact occurred.

Captain MacLeod, though gashed over the chest, woke to consciousness before John. John had his constant wound *inside* his chest, and gave signs of it in the form of those pathetic, clandestine coughs of his. He woke wheezing with asthma. Besides this, he had a scratch on his brow from a shell-splinter.

No. 11 a Cavendish Square had been the town-residence of Hardy's race for some generations, and here, in solitary state, the young man lived when in London.

London, lately, had seen a good deal of him, though he liked the country when on shore. This new attractiveness of London was concentrated for John in a certain house in Hampstead.

When he opened his eyes, torn by a cough, they met two others bending low over him — old ones, surrounded by wrinkles; anxious ones, full of solicitude. It was half-past eleven o'clock.

'Well, Bobbie,' said John with a smile, and stretched a little.

'I am pleased to see you so much yourself, I am sure, Master John,' said Bobbie; 'how are you feeling now?'

'I, Bobs? Much the same as usual, I suppose. Where on earth am I?'

'You are in Cavendish Square, sir — in your own chamber.'

‘Oh ay — I see that. I remember now, Bobbie. The battle, eh? and the swim, eh? The old *Jupiter* did not do so badly, after all. Did any of the enemy escape? And Captain MacLeod — how is he, Bobbie?’

‘He is said to be doing fairly well, Master John. He has a wound in his chest, which is not serious. He is better off than you, I am thinking. It was he who brought you here, sir.’

‘When?’

‘About four in the morning, sir.’

‘Ah, I fancy I recollect something of it. Well, that’s all right, then, Bobbie.’

‘Ah, Master John, not all right, perhaps! When, when, sir, will you learn to take care of that chest, sir?’

‘Oh, bother the chest, Bobs, boy. A fellow has got to do his duty, I suppose, Bobbie?’

John Hardy’s eyelids lifted as he said this, and he turned upward the pure cerulean azure of his eyes in clear open query upon old ‘Bobbie,’ the aged butler of his father and grandfather.

‘Well, sir — well — if you put it in that way, of course. But still, there is this to be said: it was not, so to speak, your *duty* to go through this; you had not, as one might say, any right to be there—’

‘No, Bobbie, but I *was* there, you see. And being there, it was natural that one should do what little one could for the old country, don’t you think-?’

‘What *little*, sir?’ cried Bobbie. ‘Ah, that is like your way of speaking, sir — like your father before you, Master John! This is a proud day for poor old Bobbie, Master John — forgive me for these tears, sir, the tears come quickly when we are old, Master John — a proud day, and the tiptop hour in the life of your father’s old servant, Master John, making dying easy to him

from this day onwards, sir. It was what I predicted of you, and to-day you have made true your old Bobbie's word before all the world, Master John. England this morning is ringing, sir, with the name of Hardy, ay, and France, too, sir, and Europe and America; and the servants down at the Hall have sent a telegram to poor old Bobbie, sir, all of them in a body, congratulating me on the man you have shown yourself, and it's a proud day, sir — a proud day — for poor old Robert Mason, Master John, is this that you have brought me.'

Robert's flow of words was choked by sobs. John put out his hand, drew him nearer to the bed-side, and laid one arm round the stringy old neck, the boy's affectionate nature overflowing in murmured words.

'I am so glad, Bobbie, if I have made you happy,' he whispered. 'You know I would do anything to do that, wouldn't I? But what is it all about, Bobbie? Have I done anything very extraordinary, then? England was bound to beat those mounseer people, anyway, wasn't she?'

Bobbie disengaged himself hurriedly. He had his proofs with him — chapter and verse. He had been poring all the morning over a score of newspapers, weeping as he only wept over his old Bible. He had brought them. He flaunted them in the face of John.

'Read *those*, if you want to know what you have done! Well, it's a proud day — a proud day — for poor old Bobbie, that's all I can say!' he cried in a weak, broken voice, treading woe-begone about, his face in his hands.

John glanced through three or four of the papers, half sitting up, while Bobbie held ever and again to his lips a glass of egg and milk.

The *Times* concluded an article by saying: 'Assuming that the account to hand derived from the statement of Captain MacLeod be correct, what words of eulogy shall we find in our English tongue to extol and glorify the very young man to whom Britain this day owes her immunity from the

shame of an invading foot. In ancient Rome, the people would have been acutely conscious of their inability to invent any Dignity equal to their sense of obligation to such a deliverer. This young man would have been proclaimed Saviour of his Country, and would have been entrusted with the supreme direction of affairs — naval, military, and political — with the injunction to see to it *ne respublica damnum capiat*. How will England adjust herself to this new-found personality in her midst? We wait with some anxiety to see what shall be done by the Government to the man whom the nation delighteth to honour.’

The *Daily Chronicle* lost itself in allusion and metaphor. It said: ‘What Nelson was to the ship of wood and sails, that, it is already clear, is this young man to the ship of steel and steam. That is to say, he is its genius. He is more still — he is its embodiment. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in one of his essays, points out that occasionally a man is born who is himself, as it were, the Thing in connection with which his activities are employed; thus, Nasmyth was concentrated Iron, Edison is himself Electricity, Rudyard was himself a Lighthouse. We may add, John Hardy is himself a modern Battleship.’

But it was reserved for the *Daily Telegraph* to embody in its ornamented style something of that shudder of delight with which England, through all her breadth, learnt with that morning’s sunrise that she had still a son with a voice hoarse enough to proclaim once more to all the earth her Empire of the Sea. No style could have been too florid to express that day the feelings of the nation; for emotion is, in its very nature, florid; and England was in the grip of an emotion.

The *Telegraph* said: c No one has yet accused this journal of hero-worship; and in speaking as we have spoken of Sub-Lieutenant John Hardy — whom, we confess, we have for the first time heard of half an hour ago

— it is partly the man whom we laud, but above all, it is the great nation that could have produced him. We have at command some special information about Mr. Hardy; and we say with the certainty of knowledge that he is as essentially an English thing as the cliffs of Dover, or the smuts of the Black Country. No other land could have given birth to anything at all resembling him. He is doubly the child of England; for he is the child of the sea also. The sea is part of England. The oceans are not her boundary — they are her continuation. If one were to ask Mr. Hardy, “What is the breadth of England?” he would probably reply, “Her breadth is the distance between the Poles.” Such, at least, is the account we have received on good authority of the temperament of this latest scion of an old Hampshire family of thoroughgoing “sea-dogs”.

‘For the rest, the young gentleman is said to have an ailment of the chest; he has the typical blue eyes of the English tar, and very light wavy hair, which he wears rather long. He is small in stature, and slim. His face is said to be the gravest, saddest, prettiest girl-face in the land, and his disposition in private life is much more than usually mild, soft, and affectionate. Our informant hints at a supposed weakness for the fair sex, and confesses that, at the examination stage of his career, the man who bids fair to become the national hero proved himself far from brilliant.

‘So much we have been able to gather; and this fact also, that from boyhood Hardy has seemed to be deficient in one of the ordinary instincts of humanity — the instinct of Fear. Nothing, so far, has appeared to have had any tendency toward alarming him; to use our informant’s words, “He would remain cool if the earth were bursting to pieces.” Such is the man who has ranged himself on the side of England against the allied nations of the Continent.

‘This is no time of ordinary routines and gradual processes. The moment is ecstatic — the hour is immense with Fate. Let the nation for the nonce fling to the winds its old Shibboleths of Use and Wont, and now, without delay, proceed to garland with its fairest laurels the head which has been its salvation. It is certain that, but for Mr. Hardy, we writing here should be writing with a boom of cannon in our ears. What guerdon is high enough for the man who has averted such a doom? Fleet-Captain — Vice-Admiral — Admiral — these are the honorary titles that occur to us, as in no way commensurate with the reward which England owes, and will insist upon paying, to her deliverer. Nay, we know little of the English people if it do not straightway find something so akin to its own secret temper, something so precisely like its own inner self, in John Hardy, and in the cool rashness of John Hardy, and in his contemptuous way, and in his audacious gallantry, and in his homely, Cromwellian grandeur of mind — that a burst of enthusiasm from the entire nation shall at once proclaim him its chosen and darling. England, as Mr. Matthew Arnold said, is a Nation “in the grand style”; John Hardy, we do not hesitate to say, is a Man “in the grand style.” It will not be surprising if these two, having once come across each other, shall, without delay, strike up a friendship perhaps unparalleled in history. The beginning of such a friendship we to-day announce.’

So the *Telegraph*. The *Standard*, on the other hand, came out with an essay on Blood. ‘A democracy without an aristocracy,’ it said, ‘is like an egg without salt. It was necessary for Sub-Lieutenant Hardy, before he could annihilate the navies of Europe, to have behind him a long line of ancestors whose home was the sea. He is the apex of a pyramid, the rest of which consists of centuries of the ocean-life and ocean-culture of a race. It is Blood that tells.’

The *Morning Post* was the only organ to suggest that the country should insist upon the importance of order, and see to it that, if only formally, the young lieutenant should be court-martialed; while the *Evening News* covered itself with horrid fame by saying: ‘By the Goddess of *Victory*, Nelson has slain his thousands; but by *Jupiter*, Hardy has slain his ten thousands!’

There was no journal which did not join in this chorus which rose to greet John Hardy as he woke on the 17th of March. He was the only person who saw his praises with anything like equanimity.

He glanced through three of the articles, then pushed the heap from him.

‘Well, Bobbie,’ he said, ‘it is decent to see one’s name all about in the prints. But what is it all for?’

‘There is the opinion of England,’ said old Robert, ‘about a son of John Nelson Hardy, sir!’

‘Of England, Bobs?’ said John; ‘don’t you believe that. These writing fellows are not England. England is silent — great and silent. She means more, Bobs, and says less. She will love me, too, for what I have done, perhaps — but different from this talk — in her own silent way—’

He stopped, coughing.

‘Ah, that cough, Master John!’ said Robert.

‘Bother the cough! it is rather bad this morning, though, isn’t it? Do you know what I think I shall do, Bobbie?’

‘Well, sir?’

‘Go to a hot country at once.’

‘A hot — what, sir?’

‘A hot country, Bobs.’

Bobs was alarmed. He at once suspected diplomacy. John was whimsical, and wilful. Bobs knew what it meant when those dry rose-lips

closed tightly.

‘Which country, Master John?’ said the old man tremulously.

He divined horribly that the bird was about to fly from the old cage.

‘Which country, sir?’ he repeated before John answered.

‘I am thinking of China, Bobbie,’ said John.

The old man’s hands met in terror.

‘China, Master John? Oh, don’t, don’t say China, Master John!’

‘I believe that China is a hot country — in the summer, Bobbie?’ said John in innocent query.

‘I know nothing about China, Master John. Certainly, it is no fit place for such as you.’

‘Oh, I don’t see that, Bobbie.’

‘But why China, Master John, if you really think of going anywhere? China, recollect, is at the other end of the world.’

‘But that’s where my ship is, isn’t it, Bobbie?’

- ‘Your ship? What, ships *again*? — and you coughing there like an echo among the Chiltern Hills? Well, well, I suppose it’s no use an old man talking, — who has served your father before you, and your grandfather before him.’

‘Yes, it is, Bobbie; believe me, it is, Bobs! But still — really — you will try and be good, won’t you? I must go, Bobbie.’

‘Well, that sea!’ said Bobbie, a hand over his mouth, shaking the head of contemplative wonderment. He was thinking of that ‘sea-fever’ which, in the history of the house of Hardy, had more than once resulted in domestic tragedy and disaster.

‘Well, that sea!’ he said — f those ships!’

‘No, it isn’t quite that, Bobbie; it isn’t the sea,’ said John. ‘Don’t go blaming the sea. Of course, one is fond of the sea, and all that; but that isn’t

quite the reason now. I feel that I must go, and I must really.'

'Well, but isn't that what I said, Master John? — that it is no use an old man talking? That no one pays any heed to him? no one whom he has watched over, and yearned his heart over, more than any son? Ah—' suddenly the old man fell half over the bed, imploring with tears. 'Listen to me, Master Johnnie, do, now — give up these wild thoughts! What good can come of them? So, from a boy it always was — and did old Bobbie ever lead you wrong? Do, now, don't think of such things — it is the Enemy puts them in your head — drive them away! Here is all England going to make much of you — why not stay with old Bobbie? Don't go, my son! Don't you go! You are not in a fit state, and it is no fit place, among a pack of heathen men, fighting fiends — what good can you do? Stay here with me! Can you suppose that I would tell you wrong? Come, now, comfort old Bobbie's heart — tell me—'

John Hardy rubbed his pink face against the old man's shrivelled cheek.

'It is so hard to say no to you, Bobbie,' he said. 'I hardly think it is right of you to urge me in that way. You see, I have made up my mind, and it is hardly — kind, is it? If one's mind is made up in a certain way, it is beyond one's power to change it, is it not? Go I must, you see.'

The dry rose-leaves were pressed close now, and Bobbie should have noticed them; but he went rashly on.

'Only listen to me, Master John,' he said. 'Hear me out—'

'No — no more,' said John. 'I bid you be silent now. Pass me a sheet of note-paper and a pencil.'

Old Bobbie, mouse-quiet in a moment, hobbled to a desk, and then back.

John scribbled a few words, handed them to the old man, and said:

'It is all right, Bobbie. I am not the least cross, you know. But there are times when one must be allowed to go one's own way, aren't there? Have

that telegram sent off at once, will you? And bring me a good big tumbler of champagne, will you, Bobs?’

The telegram with which Bobs shuffled off contained these words: —

To Selby, Captain of *English Bird* lying at Freshwater. Please have *English Bird* ready to sail by Sunday night at latest. Going coast Spain.
JOHN HARDY.

The *English Bird* was a 74-ton schooner-yacht of Hardy’s own, with an easy speed of ten knots.

CHAPTER X. JOHN HARDY AMONG WOMEN



JOHN HARDY HAD this trouble: he was ‘non-intellectual,’ and his passion had fastened upon a person all intellect.

Had his entry into the Navy depended upon his passing the usual examination as a competitor, he would certainly never have entered it. As it was, he was a ‘service cadet,’ and had received a nomination as the son of an officer of the navy who had performed long and distinguished service. Even so, he had had to pass a test examination; and in this very elementary ordeal he had failed in the subject ‘French.’ Once more he received a nomination, and once more he was given a chance in the examination-hall of the Commissioners of Cannon Row — his very last. All that half-year he was ‘swotting’ like an elephant at the fatal ‘French,’ to the neglect of ‘Composition,’ another of his weak points. During the hot week in June preceding the examination he was a true slave of the lamp; but his strong will this time was at work. With his lucky knack, he scraped through. The number of ‘pass’ marks was 660: he got 662.

Hardy was not a book-man; he had even a secret contempt for book-men and book-learning.

Moreover, as we said before, he got into trouble later on. While in training on board the *Britannia* he had been reported to the Admiralty for ‘unsatisfactory conduct’ and had been ‘warned.’ The ‘unsatisfactory conduct’ consisted in walking arm-in-arm with a girl of the lowest class through the streets of Dartmouth, both the girl and John being pretty far gone in a state of intoxication.

These, then, were his weak points: That he was far from literary; that he was too fond of fermented things; that he was too fond of feminine persons.

Up to the time at which we met him, he still made spelling mistakes in common English words in writing ordinary letters.

In five or six of the ports of Europe there were more than one young woman forgetful of the crinkled hair and angel-eyes of John Hardy. He was, indeed, painfully shy in the presence of women, and was a very clumsy and heavy lover — but he was also very good-looking, and *naïf*: and one thing made up for the other. On the whole, he ‘arrived.’

He loved every woman in the world; and this love was, in general, returned.

But most of all he loved Miss Isabel Jay, known to her friends as ‘Bosey’; and Bosey, apparently, did not love him. Her love was already taken up by something else — a thing which she called ‘Art.’

He went to see her on the day of the telegram to Freshwater. A strip of black plaster concealed the scratch on his forehead. He was in the habit, even on visits of ceremony, of wearing a rough and heavy pea-jacket, such as pilots wear, with brass buttons, and thus attired he went out into the streets, a soft cap on his head.

Could he have been recognised, he would have been lifted on the shoulders of the people, and carried to his destination.

A servant ushered him into a very dainty inner room at Hampstead — a kind of studio-boudoir, in a Greek style, with Corinthian pillars, and flimsy saffron hangings. Miss Jay was rather an heiress, and lived with an old aunt in a stately solitude. There now she sat before an easel, with brush and palette.

She was a lady of many accomplishments: of that unspeakably ‘new’ kind; had written two novels of the ‘problem’ sort; she was a preacher of

land-nationalization; she had painted one knows not how many pictures; she was not yet nineteen; and she was pretty.

She had a substantial body, with a waist quite as large as that of Eve or Venus. She wore her red-gold hair in coil upon coil of *négligé* richness about her head; her eyes were green.

In her large countenance there were intelligence and strong self-assurance. The hard bones of her corset were not more visible through her bodice than the Will of her character in her face.

‘Oh, Mr. Hardy, I am glad!’ she cried. Ah, and I have heard!’

‘About the battle, and so on?’

‘Yes, if “so on” means yourself. How very brave you must be!’

‘Englishmen are that, you know.’

‘Are not a good many great cowards? Men do so live in regions of fantasy! Women are more prosaic — and clearer. Did you ever see an average English girl in the presence of a mouse, Mr. Hardy?’

‘Girls are different,’ said John.

Bosey’s lips tightened. This was the kind of ancient point of view, purely male, to which she had the most touchy antipathy.

‘Oh, different of course,’ she said, ‘in pose of nervous structure, and so on, and so on. But substitute for the mouse the broker’s man, and you get at once a measure of the average Englishman’s courage.’

‘Somebody has been misleading you,’ said John. Englishmen are brave. Foreign people are afraid of things.’

She looked at him with real pity, for his insularity, his unintelligence.

‘But why *misleading* I Can it be that you think an ordinary girl incapable of observing for herself?’

‘I? Why, if you only knew how much I like girls!’

‘Merci!’

‘Ah, now you are sarcastic.’

‘You are too shrewd.’

‘I never know whether you are making fun of me or not.’

‘Well, what does it matter, Mr. John?’

‘But it is not nice to be made fun of by some one whom you like.’

‘Really *like*?’

‘You know!’

‘You are too complimentary.’

‘Like isn’t the word. I think I like you better than any one in the whole world.’

‘Now you are — what is the word? — spooney.’

‘I should be as happy as the Queen if you would only like me back.’

‘Spooney!’

‘You are not making fun?’

‘Don’t be suspicious. You are too penetrating.’

‘Well, what do you say?’

‘To what?’

‘To my liking you so much?’

‘I can only say that it is distinctly spooney.’

‘But do you like me back?’

‘Oh, I! Well, yes, as you ask me. I like you — back. But in my own fashion, you understand; not in that designingly spooney way.’

‘I do not understand you,’ said John. ‘You are not like other girls.’

‘Then logically you should not like me, since you like other girls so very very much.’

‘I do, though. I like you much better than any of the others. You must not go by logic.’

‘Ah, but I am nothing if not logical, Mr. Hardy.’

‘But facts are facts, aren’t they? If logic contradicts a fact, then you must throw the logic overboard to the sharks. I tell you I like you better than any one. That is enough.’

‘Enough for what — for me?’

‘It should be.’

‘But our human nature is more or less complex, I suppose? Do you mean that the mere fact of your caring for me should be enough to lead me to corresponding actions? That is wrong, you know. Listen, Mr. Hardy: we first met — how long ago? — about five weeks, I think — at Lady Sinclair’s, you remember. And since then, how many times? About six, perhaps. Well, I can see that you are used to easy conquests, you know; and at once I detected that you were laying yourself out to be captured by me, if I chose to take the trouble to capture you. But I did not choose! I have other things to think of; and it will be as much as I can possibly do, supposing I live for eighty years in tolerable health of body, to get through the little all I have in mind. I am not going to say that it is out of the question that some day I may not allow myself to be seduced into marriage by some man or other; but, at the moment, it is a thing so remote from the actual strain of my thoughts, that, I assure you, it has quite the look of an impossibility. All the time, mind you, I am secretly alive to the fact that it must be very nice to be petted and kissed by charming lips; but it is not, you see, precisely what I have chosen for myself. You know about ‘scorning delights and living laborious days,’ don’t you? Well, that is my way. So I beg, once and for all, that you will be more sensible with respect to me for the future, Mr. John.’

Bosey delivered this lecture with brush uplifted. She bent and gave a touch to the picture.

As the last words passed her lips, a sigh escaped Hardy, and this sentence, barely whispered:

‘*You* are the mate for me, by the Lord!’

She heard him and cried:

‘Mr. Hardy!’

His lips were pressed together. But as he was the firmest, so he was the most uncouth, of lovers. He said:

‘I am going to China in a day or two. I *should* like to marry you before I go.’

She broke into ripples of evil laughter.

‘Not so soon! Not so soon!’ she cried, angry now.

‘When I come back,’ he said simply.

She looked into his face in unfeigned surprise.

‘Have I not *told* you?’ she cried, almost with alarm. * What do you mean? I am quite a free subject, you know. This is not Turkey; this is not — Peru. Do you mean that because you are to be the national hero, and so on? Oh, but that is in rather queer taste, then! Have I not answered you?’

‘I love you!’

‘I don’t care!’

‘I do!’

‘You do not!’

‘Ah, you don’t know-!’

‘You are to keep away!’

‘I shall have you yet!’

‘*Have* me!’

‘Yes.’

‘Silly boy.’

‘Give me one!’

‘Don’t come—’

‘Just one.’

‘What?’

‘Kiss.’

‘Uh! — silly. Do — go — away. This is *too* absurd!’

She stamped. The dry rose-leaves had brushed her hot cheek. So far had passion led Hardy. Then he started — to this point he had never dared, on his own initiative. A shock of scarlet shyness possessed him.

‘Ah, now I have presumed,’ he said, stammering. ‘Forgive me — I will go—’

‘Well, it is of no consequence, Mr. Hardy,’ she answered, calm already, holding out her hand, ‘but perhaps you had better go.’

‘Well, then — But you understand that I am going to China?’

‘Perfectly. I believe that you will find the Chinese charming artists.’

‘While I am away you will not be marrying some one else?’

‘Not I. You may be confident that I shall remain self-sufficient. Even the new National Darling, you see, cannot tempt me.’

‘But you will think sometimes of a poor sailor.’

‘The newspapers, you know, will remind me of the poor sailor.’

‘Good-bye. I am going.’

‘Then go.’

‘When I come back from China, I shall have you.’

‘You said that before — whatever *having* me may mean: and I said — No.’

‘But I shall.’

“Well, we won’t discuss the matter now. I am sorry for you, you know, because you *look* — *épaté*. But you will soon get over it, and it will do you good. You were overconfident, you know. Will you say good-bye, now?’

‘May I kiss your hand?’

‘Nonsense! you are just like a child.’

‘May I?’

‘Well, if that is any comfort to you—’

He kissed her hand with old-fashioned ceremonial, caught up his cap, and was gone.

Had he been more successful, he would have walked straight home, and to bed, and so made the course of history otherwise.

As it was, he went wandering through a number of streets in a desultory mood, not knowing whither he went.

Night had fallen.

He had a deep radical love for this girl. He said to himself, walking himself tired: * I will have her, I will have her, by the Lord—’

Suddenly his own name caught his eye. He was in front of the Palace Theatre of Varieties.

London was alight. The streets thronged with people. The façades of the Palace were arrayed with galaxies of jets.

There, on a board, the ink still wet, appeared the attraction of the night:

MISS LOTTIE COLLINS

Will Appear To-night

In Her New Patriotic Song,

Entitled:

‘BRAVO, JOHN HARDY!’

The song had been composed, learned, orchestrated, and rehearsed, all in the course of a single day.

He stood looking at the placard, smiling. He felt in his pocket; he had some money. It was about time for the entertainment to begin. He went in.

His mind was, in some of its aspects, as unstable as water. It shifted like phosphorescences in the dark. All forms of pleasure, especially, had great power to deflect and draw him. He could be won from grave to gay by the simplest means. He had not only the soul of a hero but the mind of a baby.

He remembered that one could smoke and drink in music-halls. By heaven! he would make a night of it. If there was blame, the blame was Bousey Jay's.

He never took the dry-land quite seriously. To him it was * shore' — rather a foreign place — a place for 'sprees.'

He put his hand into his pocket again, and looked at what money he had. There was plenty. Now then for Bacchus and Terpsichore; wine, and song, and — Woman?

Nearly all the afternoon, at this very hour, a stream of carriages, containing ecstatic photograph-hunters, Mr. Goschen, Lords of the Admiralty, pressmen rabid for an interview, distinguished persons, were moving toward, and away from, the door of No. 11a Cavendish Square. John Hardy was not at home.

He found himself in one of the 'pit-stalls' during the performance of a ventriloquist. In a few minutes he had provided himself with cigars, and a goodly tumbler of spirit-and-soda-water.

A girl, sitting next to him, touched a companion on the other side of her — a soldier, whose name was John Brabant — and whispered:

'Just look at him; isn't he handsome?'

Her name was Ada Seward. She was the woman who, alone in the world, had been able to melt the ice of Dr. Yen How.

She was a small creature, with skin of a warm yellowish colour, and little quaint Chinese eyes, and light hair with the whitest tinge of red in it; not perhaps pretty, but with some unspeakable attraction of piquancy about her uncommon, saucy little face, which had caused her to receive twelve offers of marriage before she was twenty. Her friends declared that she was the living image of Miss Marie Tempest, the ‘Geisha’ *prima donna*. In figure she was typically English.

She was perishing to speak a word to the sweet pink face by her side, to its delicate aristocratic lines. At last, during a loud song consigning the German nation to perdition, she found her chance.

‘Now, young gentleman,’ she said, ‘that is *my* dress, please; it won’t be fit to look at to-morrow if you throw any more brandy-and-soda over it.’

John gave her the sweetest smile she had ever beheld on mortal lips, and said:

‘Pardon me.’

At the same time, he looked into her face, and liked it.

The waiter had already borne him three whispering glasses of beverage.

‘May I?’ he said; ‘here, waiter — may I order for you and your companion?’

John Brabant bowed low with a hearty ‘Thank you, sir!’

But Ada, who was quite three or four grades higher in the social scale than he, being in his company only owing to old associations, nudged the soldier deprecatingly, objecting to the obligation.

It was too late, however. The offer had been accepted. In a few minutes John Hardy and Ada were talking — Ada laughing, John smiling. Brandy-and-soda became the order of the day. Hardy had soon a good deal more than enough.

The audience was in a queer mood, impatient, intolerant. There was neither an empty seat nor a spare inch of standing-room in the place; but the people's interest was all bent upon one future point in the entertainment — the entrance of Miss Collins — and meanwhile they took not the least pains to conceal their indifference. There was something rowdy in the tone of the assembly.

‘By Jove, I *am* liking you!’

His lips were at her ear.

‘Ah, now, that’s the drink talking, not you.’

‘The drink? Nonsense! I am, really. Are *you* liking me back?’

‘Ah, that would be telling!’

‘You are!’

‘Go away with you! Why, I have only just seen you!’

‘That is of no importance.’

‘Oh, isn’t it, though!’

‘Don’t be a cruel girl. Here, waiter—’

‘Do you know what I think you are — from your ways?’

‘No; tell me.’

‘*You* tell me; let me see if I am right. What are you?’

‘You mean my profession?’

‘Yes.’

‘I am a sailor.’

Had Ada’s ears been more delicately nurtured, she would have detected there, half-drunk though Hardy was, a very slight intonation of imperial arrogance.

‘A sailor? You? Go on! Show me your hands.’

‘Oh, my hands are not very rough, I admit. But still — I am a sailor. You may believe me — in the navy, you know.’

‘I see. Well, do you know I had an idea of something like that? A sailor! Yes, that is what you *are*. You come to the point so soon, don’t you? — like sailors do.’

‘Well, but do you like me back, now?’

‘No, thank you. No sailors for me. They are here today, and gone to-morrow.’

‘That is because they must. You can’t punish them for doing their duty to their country, can you?’

‘The country is one thing, but girls have got to look after themselves, you see.’

‘You are too practical.’

‘I have got to be.’

‘But you will have me for your sweetheart?’

‘Perhaps I will, and perhaps I won’t. It depends.’

Here was an Achievement in Indefiniteness. John Hardy fled from the mental indeterminateness in which the answer left him, by turning to his glass for a drink.

The shifters of the indicating numbers removed the card 7, and put up the card 8; ‘8’ meant Lottie Collins. A murmur of expectancy rumoured through the building. The air grew electric. Every one knew that great things were coming. Already the nerves of the audience were strung high and tense.

‘That is very indefinite.’

‘I can’t help it. Wait and see how we feel to-morrow morning.’

‘Only say now that you like me.’

‘Well, suppose I say — yes. No, no — it’s too stupid!’

‘Sweet of you, Nell! Is your name Nell?’

‘Yes. How on earth did you know? It is my second name. They call me “Ada.”’

‘Ada — what?’

‘Ada Seward.’

‘I shall call you “Nell.” I like that better.’

‘And what is yours?’

‘John.’

Ada was smitten by Coincidence. On each side of her was a ‘John’ — one a soldier, the other a sailor. She was the link which united and disparted Her Majesty’s forces.

‘John — what?’

Here John paused. He was now in a high state of fuddlement, but was capable of remembering that his name was on placards all about the town, and about to be proclaimed by ‘No. 8.’

‘John — what?’ came the question again.

But Miss Collins rescued him. There was the rattle of a drawn-up curtain — an intense ‘Sh-h-h’ swept through the building — and at once there followed a clap and cry of applause as the whole audience leapt to its feet. Miss Collins had bounded on to the stage, bedraperied from head to heel in the Union Jack.

The air was electric. Every heart bounded in every bosom. John Hardy’s right arm had stolen and twined round Ada Seward’s left, his fingers kneading and palpating the soft flesh of her forearm. With his left hand he lifted the glass to his lips. He alone, on the subject of himself, remained careless.

Amid a dead silence the artiste lifted up her arm, and so for a minute stood. Then she gave a sharp, shrewd twist to her wrist, and passionately shouted —

‘Bravo, John Hardy!’

And again the audience leapt to its feet, with howls of rapture, which lasted five minutes.

The boxes were packed with some quite distinguished people.

At last there was quiet. The *artiste* began to sing. The tune was simple and stirring — the words were like raw rum, as crude and as strong:

When the Allied fleet came over, and passed the Straits of Dover,
They thought they’d have it all their little way;
But a knowing little cardy (they call him Johnnie Hardy),
He crashed them his Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-aye.

CHORUS

Oh! isn’t he a jolly little boy?
And *don’t* he know his little way about!
When he handed in his card, and the French saw ‘Johnnie Hard,’
Lord! transformation scene, you bet, and wild, distracted rout!

There’s a little sailor lad, and his eyes are mild and sad,
And you’d think he’d not one blooming word to say!
But holy Moses guard, ye (he’s known as Johnnie Hardy)
When he crashes his Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-aye!

CHORUS

Oh! isn’t he a joy, that jolly sailor-boy?
And *don’t* he know his little way about!
When he winks his little eye, you may just lie down and die,
For his red right hand is thunder, and his eyes shoot lightnings out!

By this time the audience, wrought to a high excitement, had caught the lilt of the tune. When Miss Collins repeated the last chorus, the house vociferated it, utterly drowning her voice in the wheeling tumult which now prevailed. She pretended to retire, loaded with the masses of flowers showered upon her from the boxes; but at once returned at the call of the audience. She sang:

Ah, boldly they came over; and they crossed the Straits of Dover;
But 'Hardy!' was the answer England hurled that day;
And Johnnie winked his eye, and they all lay down to die,
When he crashed them his Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-aye!

CHORUS

So isn't he just bricks, with his little crafty tricks?
And *don't* he know his little way about!
For his head is crisp with curls, he's a devil with the girls,
But ten thousand times a devil when the Dogs of War are out!

Once more she repeated the chorus, the audience taking it clamorously up. Then she tripped from the stage. But the house roared after her with the frenzy of men parting with their last earthly hope. She had now utterly mesmerised and enthralled them. The moment was ecstatic with an electrical tension impossible to describe. They bawled, they yelled, they stood up straining forward with gesticulations, tears pouring down many faces, handkerchiefs waving. At last she reappeared. She had a verse in reserve. She sang: —

Old England is the mother, and each of you a brother,
To this stern brow that bids the world obey;

And now we shan't be tardy (God bless you, little Hardy!)
In crashing more Ta-ra-ras-Boom-de-aye!

CHORUS

So, isn't he a joy, this British sailor-boy?
And *don't* he know his little way about!
He couldn't hurt a fly, but he's tricky, and he's sly,
And he makes the sky to redden, and the roaring deep to spout!

She rendered this last verse with almost distracted verve and heat; and before proceeding to give the chorus a second time, stretched forth her arm, and in a fierce tone of command, cried: 'Stand all!'

The audience sprang upright yelling, the male part of it uncovering. The singing of the last chorus burst forth universally. And there, too, was Hardy, hopelessly drunk now, with an arm round Ada Seward's arm, he, too, standing, he, too — with an empty glass brandished in his left hand — laughing and singing: —

So isn't he a joy, this British sailor-boy?
And *don't* he know his little way about!
He couldn't hurt a fly, but he's tricky, and he's sly,
And he makes the sky to redden, and the roaring deep to spout!

No sooner had Miss Collins disappeared, amid an unparalleled tempest of sound, than the audience scattered. They were capable of no more emotion for that night.

Hardy found himself in the street, leaning on Ada Seward's arm. They were alone. Where the soldier Brabant had vanished to, neither Brabant himself nor any one else knew.

‘Sh’ee cheers for ole Nelson!’ cried John Hardy. ‘Ha! ha! ha! — ole Nelson. Shee cheers, by the Lord—’

‘Come now, be good,’ said Ada. Get into this cab, will you?’

‘Where you live?’

She gave him the Pattison address, and impressed it upon him.

‘Mind, I shall expect to hear from you,’ she said, as she shoved him into the cab, and kissed him.

John, going home in the cab, murmured, with fainting, intoxicated breath:

‘Bosey! Bosey! I shall have you yet, — by the Lord—’

And Ada waited in vain. The next morning he had forgotten her address.

But he remembered — *her name*.

CHAPTER XI. JOHN HARDY AMONG THE NATIONS



THE NEXT DAY John Hardy shut himself up in a fit of sulky moroseness, flatly refusing to see any one. The day after that was Sunday, and on Sunday evening he was at Freshwater.

His yacht was ready to sail.

He had in his breast-pocket letters of credit from the bankers of his solicitors to business houses in Paris, Berlin, Petersburg, Pekin, and Shanghai.

He had also with him a French dictionary, a German dictionary, a Bible, and a very elementary French conversation book.

He had also with him a portrait of Bosey Jay, which he had obtained that morning from Lady Sinclair.

He had also with him a Colt's revolver.

He had also with him a shilling map of Northern China, and four sorts of foreign coin.

As he stepped from the train from Newport at Freshwater, he saw a late Sunday-edition placard announcing that 100,000 English troops were about to embark for Havre for a French invasion; and this made his heart rejoice.

The *English Bird* weighed anchor at 8 p.m. He was under requisition by letter to attend at the Admiralty the next day, but he took not the least notice of it, leaving it to be supposed that he had set out before receiving the requisition. He was a free subject, he said to himself.

Before sunrise on Wednesday morning he arrived at the old town of San Sebastian on the north Spanish coast.

He had taken the precaution to bring no linen marked with his name. He intended to travel as an American citizen, under the name of Petersen. From San Sebastian he sent back the yacht to England, and at once proceeded with a small trunk by train to Bayonne, thence to Bordeaux, and thence by way of Angoulême, Poitiers, and Tours to the French capital. He reached the Gare d'Orléans on the Thursday morning at 9.30, nearly a week after the battle of Shoreham, and proceeded westward to a hotel in the neighbourhood of the Madeleine, reporting himself in the hotel bulletin as having travelled from Spain.

The first thing that happened to him was that he fell in love with that charming courtesan, Paris.

He had been so exceptionally and scrupulously insular, that he had always shrunk from leaving England, except in the ships on which he served. Hence he knew some of the ports of Europe very well, but had never been to Paris. Now was revealed to him the *fille de joie* of the cities of the earth, the pure feminine, as queer, and treacherous, and lovely, and indescribable, as woman. Whoso truly loves woman will not escape her witchery. She is the divine sinner.

Hardy intended to leave Paris at three o'clock; but he put off his departure till the next day; and meantime he got into trouble.

The news of the disaster to the allied fleet had four days since reached France. But the whole thing was incredible; it was not believed, or believed with only half the mind; and for this reason: that the news had come by the roundabout way of the Mackay-Bennet cable — from New York! What lent some colour of truth to the report was the incomprehensible fact that the Contre-Amiral and General de Rosney had sent no despatch-boat to announce the landing of the troops on English soil. Yet the nation refused to

believe the incredible. They waited, with suspended mind, with bated breath, wildly hoping.

In the impossible contingency of their fleet having been defeated, they argued that at least *one* ship would have escaped to bring them the news. But no ship had come: the fleet could not be defeated.

The fact was that *five* ships had escaped — three liners and two battleships. But of the three liners one was towing another at the rate of about half a knot an hour, and the third was just forging through the water against a head wind under sail alone. The two battleships were German, and in sorry plight. One with a broken screw, and one with disabled engines, they were making their slow way north-eastward with a vague outlook toward Bremerhaven in the mind's eye.

Of the British ships not one craft had remained afloat.

However, on the morning of Hardy's arrival in Paris, one of the three liners drifted on to the French coast, near St Valery en Caux, having on board an infantry brigade, and a crew, perishing with hunger, on the verge of frenzy with thirst. By noon Paris knew.

Then there was *brouhaha* and *houlabalu*, or, as we say, 'ructions.'

Paris, in her rages, as in all else, is like a woman. She tears her finery and ribbons to shreds; she foams at the mouth; her hair is 'all over the place/!

Her last exuberance had taken the shape of the Dreyfus riots. Monsieur Zola had been the scapegoat. He had been declared a '*dégénéré*' by the University; had been regarded as a '*cas*' by the *alienistes*; had been hopelessly caricatured; was regarded as a man done for.

He waited. On this Thursday morning he had his revenge.

Under the great statue of France in the Place de la Bastille he stood, and the crowd around him spread far up the avenues leading into the Place. He

was recognised: '*C'est M. Zola!*' And he harangued them.

He had always been known as a very decent orator. And he three times used the word '*trahison*.'

This word 'treason' has a strange glamour for the French mind, carrying with it an extraordinary hint of the blackest infamy.

It was a word which Paris could ill bear at that moment. It simply made the crowd a kennel of rabid dogs. Already in other parts — in the Cité, the Place de la Concorde, la Vilette — excited throngs were rushing riotously about the rues and avenues and boulevards, without the incentive of M. Zola's '*trahison*' And in the midst of M. Zola's crowd, in the deadliest peril, stood John Hardy.

On his forehead was the strip of plaster which covered the scratch received at Shoreham.

By some sure intuition, the French know an Englishman at once; they say of you at a glance, '*Il est anglais*.' And Hardy was very much of an Englishman.

If ever human boy enjoyed himself, it was he at that moment. He loved a row for its own sake, and here was the sweetest of all rows — a French row.

What added a touch of exquisiteness to his enjoyment was his inner knowledge of the cause of the row. These children had dashed themselves like impotent waves against the rock of England, and were now astonished to find that rock was hard, and could shatter them.

John could hardly understand a word of the harangue, though he once heard his own name, but he guessed what it was all about, and he saw it in the distorted faces of the 'people. He stood looking up into the startling eyes of the orator, quietly smiling.

At the first sounds of uproar he had run from his hotel, and followed a crowd eastward. No thought of his danger occurred to him. His attitude of

mind towards the people among whom he found himself was one of quiet and assured dominancy.

M. Zola was about to complete his oration, and the mob to rush with some indefinitely hostile purpose toward the Elysée, when Hardy felt himself touched with a deliberate tap on the shoulder.

He looked round and up.

He was confronted by an extremely foreign-looking person, a middle-aged man to judge by his face, but with a head of quite white long hair, and a splendid white beard and moustache. He wore a gray, broad-brimmed, soft-felt sombrero sort of hat, which drooped on one side like a lady's Gainsborough. But the part of him that attracted attention was his two hands; they were simply two constellations of bulky flashing jewels: on each of the eight fingers being several huge rings, glittering with every variety of luminous stone.

His face was very excited. But he said to Hardy, with perfect polished politeness, lifting his sombrero:

'Ah, monsieur a marché sur mon pied!'

'Je ne comprends,' said John.

'Ah! it is as I thought. Monsieur is, then, English.'

'That is so,' answered John incautiously.

'Ah! English — good. Very-well — all-right. I wished to say that monsieur has marched on my foot.'

John knew that this was a lie. But he made a concession; with a condescending nod and smile he said: *'Merci!'*

He meant to say *'Pardon!'* But *'merci!'* and *'pardon!'* somehow, were very much mixed up in his mind; he often used one instead of the other.

The very-foreign person said with a bow: *'I cannot help to think that the action was intentioned on the part of monsieur.'*

‘Go away, will you?’ said John Hardy.

‘But monsieur has not answered my question.’

‘Yes, I have. Be good enough to go to the devil.’

‘To the-? Very-well — all-right.’ And at once he lifted his voice high, interrupting the orator, crying out:

‘Voila, messieurs — un anglais — de la Marine anglaise—’

John had committed the indiscretion of wearing his mariner pea-jacket, with brass buttons engraved with anchors.

There arose an outcry round him. A commotion spreading wider through the crowd, like circles round a pebble-splash, had him for its centre. M. Zola ceased to hold forth.

They pressed round stifflingly. Hardy began to cough feebly. He pushed back with his elbow a rough-looking, brazen-eyed fellow in an *ouvrier’s* smock. But his effort to free himself was poor in force. In a moment or two his jacket was rent off him, and a cruel fist smote him heavily in the jaw. He saw clearly now that he was on the point of being torn to pieces.

He wondered what he could do; and having calmly measured the situation, and seeing no chance of escape, he broke into a laugh at his own expense, calling out loudly:

‘Cochers! Cochers!’ By *‘cochers!’* he meant to call them ‘pigs.’ In a moment he was on the ground on his back. But whatever force it is which underlies the world had this frail and dauntless lad in its keeping for the time being. He was necessary.

A diversion was caused by a loud pair of lungs, which cried:

‘Mais, messieurs, écoutez-moi, écoutez-moi—’

It was the very-foreign person, who was also vehemently interposing his utmost bodily vigour to the rescue of John.

‘You know me — you know me all — listen to me — I am Edrapol—’

'C'est Edrapol! Edrapol!'

Instantly the rumour spread far, amid *vives*. Edrapol, the duellist, the Bulgarian, the world-renowned master of the pistol and the rapier; it was he.

He explained. The English sailor had committed upon him a personal outrage. He begged — it was his simple right — that the life of the miscreant should be spared to make the *reparation* which was only his, Edrapol's, plain due. The stranger's death was certain either way, but, in short, messieurs, the other way was more neat — more *convenable*.

And so Hardy was, as it were, torn from the rough hands which had seized him. Edrapol's popularity in Paris was paramount. The mob, led by Zola, rushed westwards. Hardy and Edrapol were alone.

The *escrimeur*, bowing, handed his card to Hardy, and requested a return of the favour.

'What for?' said John. 'I have no card.'

'But monsieur will meet me?'

'Where?'

'In the Bois, monsieur.'

'But what for?'

'Why, to fight, monsieur.'

'You don't mean a duel?'

'Why, naturally, monsieur.'

'I see. But an old man like you?'

'Not *too* old, monsieur, perhaps! Does monsieur then hesitate?'

'I do. It is absurd.'

'Monsieur is, of course, sensible to the interpretation which one would naturally put upon any hesitation from his part?'

'No. I am not sensible of it. What interpretation?'

'That monsieur is a coward.'

‘Well, but I am not one, interpret as you please.’

‘Still, monsieur, I say the *natural* interpretation. I am sure you will realise my point of view if you recollect that I have the reputation of being the deadliest swordsman in Europe.’

‘Is that so? Oh, I didn’t know.’

< Now I think monsieur realises my point of view?’

‘I do rather.’

‘And monsieur will now fight?’

‘I don’t mind. What with?’

‘All that will be arranged for us by others, monsieur. If you will give me your name, your address, and the address of a friend to whom I may send a friend of mine—’

‘I have no friend worth mentioning here. Send your friend to me personally.’

He gave his real name and his address, and turned away from the bowing figure before him. He set out for his hotel.

Later in the day he found himself in front of the Chambre des Députés, and dropped in with a stream of the public.

A glance showed a full house — Zola, Papa Sardou, the young novelist, Pierre Louys — and the Parisian pressmen overflowing into the foreign press.

Below, no dull uniformity, as in the House of Commons, but variety, colours, races. There is M. Grenier, the Mussulman deputy, his white Arabian burnous, near the ‘passage of the Left.’ The centre is packed — Republicans and Opportunists — Government - supporters these. The Right is the stronghold of the Clericals and Legitimists. To the Left, the Socialists.

In the centre of the circle, the tribune — a pulpit; and behind the tribune, but towering above it, the throne of the President of the Chamber, M.

Brisson.

M. Brisson wears no wig like our Speaker; but his patriarchal beard is full of awe.

M. Hanotaux, in the Tribune, is explaining that ‘nothing in the actual situation so far is of importance as regards the annihilation of the British Empire in the near future!’

Applause from Centre and Right. Queer sounds from the Left. There is going to be a row.

‘It is a coalition whose very name is Victory.’

‘It has already been defeated!’ yells a voice from the Left. (Huge hubbub; M. Clovis Hugues, the long-haired poet, screaming something ecstatic through the din.)

President Brisson rises. He bids them recollect that France looks to them for an example of calm and sage deliberation. ‘*Délibération calme et sage!*’

Hardy understands the words, because they are like English words, and he throws a gasp of laughter behind his head, crying:

‘By the Lord...!’

M. Hanotaux proceeds, though interrupted. His peroration is a touching appeal to the honour, the glory of France. He descends.

From the Left a cry: ‘Jaurès! Jaurès!’ And the young leader of the Socialists, large, blonde, swings himself up to the Tribune. ‘Hanotaux is an *infâme*. France has been made the tool of Russia and Germany!’ President Brisson calls the speaker to order. But there is deaf obstinacy in the curve of the broad back turned towards the President. He makes M. de Mun, the orator of the Catholics, the object of his bitterest thrusts. M. de Mun retorts. The two men glare. Like a ball flung from hand to hand, so the stinging and witty retort darts quickly to and back between them. The Socialists egg on their man with cries, the Right their man.

A voice from the Right: 'You are the paid spy of the British Rothschilds!' This from M. Carnet, a little fat man, a mere sphere of flesh. 'You are a liar and a coward!' roars M. Jaurès.

There is a struggle on the front right benches. It is Carnet held back by his friends. The air is electrical. The journalists in their Cribs stand and yell their own various views of the world.

Suddenly, from the left, a figure reels through a blind and drunken curve. He dodges the stray members on the floor, wheels, and fetches Carnet a blow.

Ha! sits the wind *so*, then? Hardy chortles, rearing with glee. In the passage leading from the Right to the lobbies there follows a scrimmage, from which a figure darts up the Tribune; Carnet has given Jaurès a blow under the ear.

Then all is chaos. Everybody is rushing everywhere. Wherever any one sees a head, he drives his fist at it, yelling. The whole Chamber rolls and tumbles in a tumult. They are like bits of vegetables wheeling promiscuously in a boiling and bubbling pot. President Brisson puts on his tall hat as a sign that the *séance* is at an end. The *mêlée* forces itself into the lobbies. Outside there is a clash; a sound of pistols. John Hardy has seen — France.

Meantime, all over the city the Garrison of Paris was in the streets, trying to clear them of the rioters. Night fell.

At eight o'clock a gentleman waited upon Hardy from Edrapol. But he could not speak English, and the interview was a fiasco. Hardy sat down and wrote the following letter, which he handed to Edrapol's second: —

Sir,

— This is to let you know that after consideration I have changed my mind about the duel for the present. If you like to think I am afraid of your fine swordsmanship, you can, but that is not really the case. On the contrary, when I tell you my motives, you ought to consider the writing of this letter, if anything, a rather brave and worthy act on my part. The fact is, I am a servant of Her Majesty the Queen, and have already, in my way, been able to do some good for my country. As you know, England wants men just now, and that is why, after consideration, I do not see my way to expose my life wantonly, while things are as they are, for a mere trifle. I am sorry to have to disappoint you, and myself too, in our little duel; but that is how I look at it. However, I make you this promise: that on the day this present war is over I will seek you out, in whatever country you may be, and present myself before you for the purpose of getting through with our little duel; and on that you may rely. I keep your card.

— I remain, sir, your servant,

John Hardy.

The amount of self-suppression, of noble patriotism, which the writing of this simply-worded letter implied for the arrogant spirit of Hardy may be assumed: when it was finished, he gave it, with a curl of the lip, to the ambassador of Edrapol.

The next morning he left Paris, and reached Aix in the evening, whence he proceeded to Berlin. To Berlin the bare news of the disaster had been flashed the day before but it was not until the next morning that more detailed accounts came from the two ruined battleships, now arrived at Bremerhaven. Hardy found the Unter den Linden boulevard quite a Babel with the bawling of the news-vendors; it was rapidly being filled by groups

rushing thither as to the main channel of intelligence from all directions of the city, while the Foreign Office in the Wilhelmstrasse was being besieged by a great crowd clamouring to hear the truth, and spreading away to the Schloss, where, it was said, the Emperor was closeted with his Chancellor and his Chief of the Staff. The humour of the crowd was sullen; but it needed only the appearance of Wilhelm, accompanied by the Empress, on the front balcony of the Schloss, to turn discouragement into elation. Wilhelm suddenly drew his sword and flashed it in the sunlight. Then there was joy. No people cheer like Germans. Demonstration was their *specialité*. They excelled in looking pleased. Their *forte* was to claim the Future with verve and assurance, whether it really belonged to them or not. Hardy was in the midst of the crowd round the Schloss. He saw the flash of Wilhelm's sword. An hour later he was with a throng cheering itself hoarse in front of the Austrian Embassy, opposite the old home of M. Benedetti, so closely associated with the outbreak of Germany's last war. The Austrian Minister had unexpectedly appeared before the people, who now went wild with delight, a large area of the crowd presently starting to sing old Schneckenger's *Wacht am Rhein*. Hardy observed every gesture, and every expression of every face which came within his range of vision, and he said to himself:

‘So much for mein Herr, then.’

He reached Königsberg the next morning, and thence went on to Vilna, Pskov, and St. Petersburg.

Everywhere there was commotion, excitement, crowds, posters, *mobil*.

In the Nevski Prospekt at St. Petersburg, in the Izak Platz, on the ‘English Quay,’ there were throngs, proclamations, printed heads of the Tsar, and every open space was gaudy with banners. The town, however, was fairly quiet, though there were some arrests of Nihilists. The Russians

were the most English of the Continentals, or tended to be, when once their races became homogeneous. They had the ruralness, and something of the Stoicism, the Puritanism, and the nimbleness of the British; with this was mixed a certain Orientalism — a vermilion line in the gray of their character.

At his hotel John found an ostler of the Simbirsk Province, an adventurous and cosmopolitan man, who had been a sailor trading between Hull and Copenhagen for some years. He understood English. He struck up a friendship with John, and told him his history. John offered him 500 roubles if he would undertake to deliver a letter by hand in England, setting out at once. And this offer Ivan accepted.

The letter which John wrote was as follows: —

My dear Bobbie,

— Here I am in St. Petersburg after passing through France and Germany, and just about to set out to get by the Trans-Siberian Railway over all that great continent of Northern Asia to Vladivostok on the other side of the world, and so, please God, to Pekin, and my ship.

Dear Bobbie, this is what I have to tell you, and you can write a letter to the *Times* yourself, so as to let the country know what little I have to say. The French are about to mass four Army Corps in the direction of Havre, and I don't think that for the present we can do much with them there, though later on, when we get our pecker up a bit, I know that ten Frenchmen won't be able to hold out against one Englishman. The German Cock-of-the-walk has telegraphed for the King of Saxony, and Prince Albrecht of Prussia, his Field-Marshal, and for Count Waldersee, Chief of the General Staff. Seven of his twenty Army Corps are mobilising — namely, the 1st, or East

Prussian; the 17th, or West Prussian; the 12th, Kingdom of Saxony; and the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th, belonging to Brandenburg, the Province of Prussian Saxony, Posen, and Silesia respectively. But whether all these are intended to go to help the French, or to defend his own northern coast, or what, I do not know, not knowing much about fighting on *terra firma*.

Well, dear Bobbie, I have seen my full of the people with whom I have been. I saw some splendid fisticuffs in the French House of Commons, and no end of fun; and some very excited people in Germany and Russia. My opinion of the French is, that they are very nice people, the French women especially. But they are *old*, they are no good any more, they have not got any youth and go left in them; you know what they are like, Bobbie? Like *patti (sic) de foie gras*, nice but tainted. They are over-civilised, like an old dowager that's not fit for anything, but to make love-matches. France is no good any more, except for ornament and for tourists to come to. For energy she has got vivacity, and for nerve, verve — like a frivolous old *beau*! The world has nothing to expect from her. They are wonderfully ahead of us in some things — their lower class especially is far far ahead of ours in everything — but they do not move, their legs are heavy with age. The future belongs to *us*. At the rate we are going now, we shall soon have all that France has, and a thousand thousand times more, for we shall have youth and energy and vastness as well. The Germans are a young nation and they have all the enthusiasm of a young nation, and they will go ahead perhaps alright (*sic*). But they have not got anything in reserve, Bobbie. Froth is enthusiastic and young, too, but not very strong. I think the Russians would make mincemeat of the Germans, just as the Germans would of the poor pretty French. But the Russians are raw, new, and not, I don't think, a nation at all. Not one of them is the chosen race, dear Bobbie,

‘the peculiar people?’ If you want to find that, I think you had better look nearer home.

Well, no more at present. I shall expect you to take good care of yourself, mind, while I am away, so that I shall find you hale and hearty when I come back, if I ever do. Don’t be getting up too early in the mornings, now; and don’t forget your bottle of porter regularly every night, as something is wanted at your time of life.

— With love to Bobbie, from his son,
John Hardy.

From this letter it will be seen that John Hardy could not only express his ideas with force and point, though in simple words, but that he possessed a large tract of brain capable of taking in the world, and summing it up, and passing right judgment upon it, ‘as one having authority.’

The letter reached England three weeks later, and could not escape the keen scent of the pressmen. It was published bodily in all the papers, bad spelling and all, the public gloating joyfully over its gentle wisdom, its humour, and its simplicity.

All this time Hardy was travelling, partly by train, and partly by camel caravan, towards his fate in the capital of China.

CHAPTER XII. THE AWAKENING



DR. YEN HOW was seated in a garden of the Imperial City, reading.

He was arrayed in sumptuous robes of the softest, richest silk, embroidered with the tongue-darting Dragon, in token of high rank.

His pigtail reached to his calves; but at present only one inch and a half of it was of the doctor's own hair. The rest was artificial — made of fine black silk. Many dignitaries of even the highest rank in China adopted this convention.

Yen How, a minute or two before, had drawn the chopsticks between his lips as the final ceremony to a dainty feed on rice-birds (just then in season), and the juiciest, tenderest tea. The meal had been held before him by attendants in gorgeous robes, themselves of high rank.

The ice-bound winter of Northern China was over. The sudden, hot spring was here.

By the right hand of Yen How was a stand of ebony arabesqued in walrus-tusk. On it was some of the pigment which the Chinese use for ink, and brushes such as they use for pens; there were also some folios of fine silk-paper; there was a silver gong; and, half falling to the ground, the *North China Daily News*.

In Yen How's hands was an old copy of the *Shanghai Mercury*. Yen How was reading it; and as he read, his eyes went small in a smile. Something amused the doctor.

It was this: Herr von Bülow, the German Foreign Minister, had, a good many months before, made a remark in the Reichstag which was

reproduced later on in the *Mercury*.

Von Bülow had said: 'The Chinese Empire has already lasted 4300 years; it will last another 3000.'

'He did not mean it,' murmured Yen How, 'because he is a fool. But a fool may sometimes say a true thing, without meaning it.'

At the same time he touched on his breast the decoration of the Red Eagle of the First Class which the German Emperor had conferred upon him immediately after the grant by China of the territories to Germany.

Then he went on with his slow, contemplative reading.

We have spoken of the meteoric career of this man in China; we said that he 'rose like a rocket.' But he did not do all this by miracle. A rocket will not rise of itself; it must be impelled by an upward, accountable force.

To what did Yen How owe his supreme authority? — for his authority was now far more absolute than that of any Brother of the Sun and Moon who ever occupied the throne of the Hsu's. He owed it first of all to his Learning; secondly, to his intensity of Racial Instinct; and thirdly, to his audacious Genius.

To his Learning, first of all: for in China every door was open to the learned man. The learned man's learning, however, must be *Chinese*; and here was the miracle of Dr. Yen How's achievements in the State Examination Halls of Canton and Peking: that he who there proved himself more instructed than the pundits in Chinese wisdom, had spent the greater part of his life in acquiring Western scientific views and methods in Heidelberg, Paris, and Edinburgh.

He began at the bottom. He passed through the examination at Canton. The 'Hall' was not a hall at all, but a double row of small sentry-boxes, capable of holding one person only, in which the examinee, provided with food, ink, brushes, and paper, spent two solitary weeks, seeing no one,

answering his questions. He usually came out more like a dead than a living man, and, even for the most erudite, the ordeal was one of fire.

During that fortnight of dark seclusion, Yen How smiled and smiled and smiled again. He was examined on the complex Theology, the fanciful History, the intricate old Law, the amazing Astronomy of the Chinese. In all these subjects, and many more, their Learning consists of an immense range of minute dogmatism, which the whole lifetime of their wise men was spent in acquiring. Yen How's big brain knew all about these subjects — more about them than his examiners. But he differed from them in this: that he alone knew the falseness of the answers which he painted. His eyes were all smiles as he sat there writing about the earth going round the sun in so many seconds, and about the place of Confucius in the third hierarchy of the gods. It was the sweetest fun to him.

When he came from his sentry-box at the end of the two weeks among a number of wan and tottering men, his tough visage showed no sign of fatigue. He smiled always. He knew that he would be First on the list.

And First he was. Later, when the result was announced at the portal of the 'Hall,' he was carried to his home through the streets on the shoulders of the people.

The Chinese populace still cherished the same awe and high reverence for the Learned Man which, in Europe, was cherished in the Middle Ages for what was called 'The Scholar.'

Yen How at once received a summons to appear before the Viceroy of Nanking. He appeared. A choice of two things was put before him: he might either accept a Judgeship in the Province of Kiang-si, or he might go north, and compete in another examination at Peking, where, if he was moderately successful, he would possibly obtain a post in the Inner Court of the Imperial City.

One offer was a certainty; the other hypothetical. But Yen How had not the slightest intention of going to be a Judge in the Province of Kiang-si. He had other aims.

He went to Peking, and very soon underwent the far sterner ordeal in the famous Examination Halls of that city. Again he was easily First on the list — a feat which at once admitted him to high honour in the Imperial Court.

He had gained his *entree*.

Another Chinaman would now have said: 'I have achieved my end.' Yen How said: 'I have made a beginning.'

But the rest was not difficult. In Oriental countries, rises, as well as falls, are rapid. 'Let Haman be hanged, and let Mordecai be put in his place.' The prophet Daniel rose from nothing to the supreme power in a night. Yen How did it in two months.

So great was the necessity for Western methods and Western science, in the Government of China, that the Chinese were actually compelled at that very time to overcome their shuddering racial abhorrence of the white man, and to pay large salaries to white experts, in various departments, to plan and to administer. Germans drilled China's army, Englishmen collected her customs, Frenchmen planned her railways.

It is not possible to estimate the omnipotence which would suddenly fall into the hand of a real Chinaman, who could do all this better than either German, Englishman, or Frenchman. To the Chinese tongue he was sweet as white mice preserved in honey. He became the Emperor of the Emperor.

But then, besides Knowledge and Race, Yen How had something more: he had Genius — the large Eye — the summoning Voice — the enchanter's Wand. The vastness of his outlook — the world-dimensions of his schemes — were simply fascinating. 'Talk, my son, talk,' old Li would say, sitting before Yen How, holding his chin in his hand, his eyes riveted on the

doctor's face; and when Yen ceased, Li would say: 'Talk on, my son, talk on; your words have flavour; and the palate of the ear is led astray by them.' Yen How soon became a sort of dissipation for the aged Minister, like an advanced novel for a very young girl. When Li wanted sensation, he came and sat with his chin in his hand, and listened with delicious musings to Yen. It was at Li's own suggestion that the Yellow Jacket was given to Yen How. It was among the necessities of things, and Li saw it. And at once — *without an hours delay* — the little Heidelberg doctor began to act.

His first care was to bring about a secret treaty between Japan and China.

He had not been idle in Japan. He had taken frequent voyages down the Peiho to Tientsin, and thence to Tokio. Of his insinuations to, and relation with, the Marquis Ito, we have spoken. But Yen How kept his most delicious plum of temptation in reserve till the last. He then showed that however great China became, Japan would always be the mistress of China; when China was the mistress of Europe and Asia, that *meant* that Japan would be the mistress of the world. The treaty was signed. It was his first step.

Yen How saw that the navy of Japan would be necessary to his schemes. Without that, nothing permanent and final could be done.

His next step was to bring about the European war.

He did it so boldly, with such a grand disregard for appearances, with such contemptuous prodigality, that it was a wonder that both his present and ultimate motives were not divined. For it must be remembered that the idea of 'The Yellow Danger' was no new one to European statesmen. Again and again had the more keen-eyed of politicians pointed Eastward, and said to Europe: 'The Yellow Danger! the Yellow Danger!' Only a year or so previously had Lord Charles Beresford, in a speech delivered, we think, at Hull, used words like these: 'The cloud at present may seem only the size of

a man's hand — but it is there; and its seemingly small size is due merely to its remoteness, not to its intrinsic smallness. What appalling fate would be that of Europe, if the yellow races, in their hundreds of millions, organised a westward march, is beyond the imagination of man to conceive.' Again and again had this note of warning been sounded. But the mischief lay in this very fact: that the cloud had appeared of 'the size of a man's hand.' It was too remote. The idea was not yet realised and assimilated by Europe.

Still, as we say, there was nothing at all new in Yen How's idea of over-running Europe, as is proved by the fact that that phrase, 'The Yellow Danger,' had become quite common in every one's ears; what *was* new, was first, his discernment of the fact that the yellow races would probably fail, unless Europe were, to begin with, made ready for them by a great inter-European war; and secondly, the novel means which he took to bring about that war.

No single soul outside China and Japan suspected his *ulterior* motive of over-running Europe when he made the grants of territory — for the cloud, though often pointed out, was 'like a man's hand'; but three people, at least, suspected his *present* motive of bringing about a European war. One was a young student in the Quartier Latin in Paris; another was Sir Charles Dilke, who mentioned it as just a possibility at a dinner at the National Liberal Club; the third was a Hampshire gentleman, who, as we said in a former chapter, wrote a letter to the *Times* during the excitement preceding the war, making this suggestion of China's motive. The letter attracted little attention. This Hampshire gentleman was John Hardy.

His eye had seen!

Yen How's first step was the league with Japan; his second was the European war; his third was the organisation of China.

This last was a great task — it was stupendous. Only a new Confucius could have done it. But Yen How was quite that.

To wake a nation which has been asleep for four thousand years! To lift the arm! — and cry aloud! — and wake them in their myriads with a ‘Rouse ye! rouse ye! the Hour is come! the Day breaketh!’ in a voice like the Trump of Doom!

The little doctor could do it — and did it.

But again, he did not do it by miracle. He knew his way.

The results attained by great Talent do indeed *look* like miracle; but they are not, of course, really so. The man of talent himself knows that he must use definitely precise ways and means, which, if used by any one else in the same manner, produce the same results. Talent is Industry — the capacity of being infinitely interested — of taking infinite pains.

Yen-How had been taking infinite pains from the day when he could first pronounce his name.

All his acts in the rousing and organisation of China were based upon a profound knowledge of the Chinese character. The principal points of this character are an immeasurable Greed, an absolute Contempt for the world outside China, and a fiendish Love of Cruelty.

It is impossible for the vilest European to conceive the dark and hideous instincts of the Chinese race.

The first thing that happened after the outbreak of the war in Europe was a wholesale massacre of Europeans in the East. Wholesale — but not haphazard: for Dr. Yen How was directing it. For the time being, every European became precious in his eyes — he collected them with care — he preserved them scrupulously — and he distributed them with deliberate wisdom. They were conveyed over China from Yun-nan to the villages round the Ming Tombs and from the Yellow Sea to the Tien-Shans. No

district was without its white visitor. Then sounded Yen How's first trumpet-blast to the nation he meant to rouse. It is Morning! the Day breaks! And at once there occurred a memorable Passover-Day through the length and breadth of China — a holiday of gore, an orgy of death, to symbolise the annihilation of the white race all the world over. When it was ended, there was not a white man or woman alive on Chinese soil, except on an island or two; all had perished in the act of undergoing the most loathsome public tortures. This Solemn Feast-day, this Sacrament of Blood, made a lasting impression upon the spirit of the Chinese race, which is sensitive to the suggestiveness of symbols. Yen How had begun well. Certainly, he knew his man.

The killing of the German drill-sergeants of the Chinese Army was left to be performed by the hands of the soldiers whom they had drilled.

The territories granted to the Continental nations were as yet unoccupied by them. The small European garrisons actually in China had been easily overpowered. And Europe was busy at home, fighting against herself. At last China was free to do as she chose.

The attitude of the nation as a whole at this moment resembled that of a sleeping cat, which hears a sound, and pricks her ears.

To say even so much of the Chinese is to say a great deal. For centuries they had lain in deep, stolid slumber, without one prick of the ears. There were still many millions of them who, as Li Hung Chang had said in Europe, had never so much as heard of the Chino-Japanese war.

How to stir up such a people? How to get at them, and fire them, and make them act? Yen How knew.

He must, first of all, now that he had given them a morning Dream of Blood, kick them hard to wake them, bruising their flesh, if necessary: then,

as they rubbed their wide and startled eyes, he would preach to them the Gospels of Greed — and Race — and Cruelty.

Already, by the time John Hardy had reached Vladivostok — just about four weeks after the battle of Shoreham — the kicking process was in full progress. There was a strange stirring, a movement, a new something, in old China. Men said: ‘What is toward? What is to be? Can these dry bones live?’ The Spirit of a Man was abroad in the land — an intense Mind, a vitalising Leaven — kneading, fermenting, energising, creating.

The massacred drill-sergeants were replaced by Japanese officers. But where there had been one German, there appeared now a thousand Japanese.

Yen How’s scheme was nothing less than this: that every Chinaman should be a soldier.

Conscription in China...!

Here was a lesson learned from Europe.

But when we say ‘soldier,’ we mean something different from what is understood by the word among us. We do not mean a man equipped with smokeless powder, and magazine rifles, with Lee-Metfords, and Martinis, and Sniders. We mean only a man having some sort of arms — a club, or a dart, or a match-lock, or a poker — anything which would give him the idea that he had to fight, and which would perhaps delay his death a moment while myriads of others swept over those who had killed him. The Chinese host was to resemble a flight of locusts, covering the entire sky from ‘horizon to p horizon, each member of which was armed with some implement, not so much for the purpose of killing, as for the purpose of protracting his own death, while the rest of the host pressed forward, blighting as they went. His duty was hardly to fight, but to occupy time in dying. For this service none were too old, few too young — and women

were as good as men. Yen How's army would consist of the 400,000,000 which formed the population of China.

The organisation of this war-host he planned principally on the French model.

He divided the whole of China into 240 army-corps regions, each containing about two million inhabitants. This arrangement included Thibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Korea, the heads of which countries he had long since brought into line with his plans.

In each region he quartered the principal elements of the field army-corps with the necessary staff, setting up in each region a large number of recruiting depots, and depots of artillery, transport, supplies of food and forage, with clothing and camp-equipment.

The whole of the troops and organisation for this purpose was put under the command of the General of that particular army-corps and its region. And this General was, in every case, a Japanese.

Each region was divided into two hundred subdivisions, each of the subdivisions furnishing one regiment of infantry of the line, twenty subdivisions forming an infantry brigade command, and forty subdivisions an infantry divisional command. Divisional commands were also entrusted exclusively to Japanese; brigade and regimental commands to the most trustworthy of the Chinese officers of the regular army.

Each corps was furnished with a vast corps-cavalry-brigade, the horses — to use an Irishism — being mules, and the weapon the long spear.

Each regiment was subdivided into three battalions, each battalion into four companies, and each company into twelve squads.

Each squad contained from sixty to sixty-three persons, who were known by numbers, from No. 1 to No. 63.

They contained children over the age of nine, women (except the wives and daughters of mandarins and other upper classes), and old men tottering on the verge of the grave. The priest and pundit classes were exempted also.

The nation was organised into an army.

This was one method which Yen How employed to kick and prick it into wakefulness.

Each army-corps contained, besides its squadrons of cavalry and its eighteen batteries of artillery, six sections of artificers, six artillery parks, thirty companies of pontooners, six telegraph sections, and forty field-bakeries.

But there were no field-hospitals, or hospital orderlies, no ambulances, no medical provision. Yen How could afford men.

One important feature of the army-corps was the provision of armoured carts. They were to serve not only for transport, but for defence in battle, and their shape was contrived with this view, being long and low, with small wheels, and rather ponderous. One had been made, or was to be made, for each 'peloton.'

All this was now in rapid and intense progress. And the world knew nothing of it!

China, north of Tonquin, had telegraphically isolated herself.

In Japan the manufacture of guns, swords, spears, and small-arms was going forward with agonised activity; and these were coming over to China. China's chief manufacturing energies were directed to the making of armoured carts and tents.

But the drilling of China was only one-half of Yen How's method of rousing it. He knew that it was necessary to drive the nation further still. He did this by taxing it.

Let it not be supposed that any part of his motive was a need of money for all this war preparation. The loan raised in the previous year, which should have been spent by China in paying Japan's war-indemnity, was still, except for one instalment, in the pockets of China.

'The loan had not been necessary to China at all! She could have raised sufficient to pay Japan by an issue of Treasury bonds, the purchase of which may be made compulsory in China, if not subscribed to voluntarily.

Or she could have called upon the Viceroy to wring enough out of the mercantile and agricultural classes.

But neither loan, nor bonds, nor Viceroy extortion had been necessary! Japan's mere credit was good for the building of the vessels she needed; and the money, paid over to Japan, would simply have lain in the Bank of England to Japan's credit. As a matter of fact, in the secret treaty between the Marquis Ito and Yen How, the payment of the indemnity was remitted.

From this source alone China was, for the present, rich; but under the guidance of an exact administrative brain like Yen How's she was vastly richer still from quite other sources.

China, in reality, was never a poor country; on the contrary, she was potentially about the richest in the world. Manchuria was an El Dorado of gold. The mineral mines of Kwang-tung, Heilung-Chiang and the Kirin provinces had been the envy of the nations. But the curse of China had been her official class. The heavy *likin* charges, which went, nearly all of it, into the pockets of its collectors, stifled many an industry. The Government income was estimated at two hundred and ten million taels, but only seventy million of this — one-third — was accounted for. On the remainder the mandarins wallowed in fatness.

Yen How's eyes screwed into a smile, and he said: No more of that, my sons!'

The substance of what he said and what he did was this: 'You are to extort, you are to squeeze, and plunder, and grind the people ten times — a hundred times — more than ever before — till they perish like sheep of it. But this time you are going to do it, not for your own benefit, but for *my* benefit, and for the benefit of China. I, Yen How, have said it, and will see to it.'

Within two months from his attainment of the supreme power, he had created a Board, formed on the lines of the Imperial Maritime Customs Board, for a clean-handed collection of the internal revenues. It contained some Chinese officials, but more Japanese.

The immediate effect of this change was an increase — by tens and hundreds — of the revenues which began to pour into the Treasury of Peking.

From the working of the mines, specially organised and superintended by Yen How himself, a great increment of wealth began to flow into the swollen coffers of China.

Yen How was not popular. He was kicking and pricking China into unpleasant wakefulness. But he knew that he had the sweetest oil in store to salve her bruises at the right moment.

All these measures of his would have meant insurrection, revolution, at another time — the introduction of the Japanese element, especially, into the new life of China was distasteful to the people. But now the stern universal military organisation nipped every thought of rebellion in the bud.

To turn a two-legged beast into a man — drill him, straighten his spine, make a soldier of him. He will never be a hopelessly unintelligent animal after that.

Yen How was drilling the Chinese beast, straightening his spine. By the time the beast could look round twice to tear whoever it was that was

disturbing his slumber, lo, he was already turned into a man, with sufficient intelligence to see that there was no resisting this new Power which had him in its grip.

The Chinese, when they saw no help for it, began to fraternise with the now ubiquitous Japanese element. Yen How had foreseen this. They had already, more or less, learned to submit to the domination of white men. And the Jap was much less a foreign devil than the white man. On reflection he was judged to be an improvement. On reflection, Yen How, too, would, in time, be judged to be an improvement.

But, meanwhile, he wore a secret steel plate over his breast.

For the people of China were being terribly oppressed and badgered.

The order of the day was drill, drill, drill — tax, tax, tax — work, work, work — all over the land.

As yet no one knew why all this was — what was in the mind of the gods above. Yen How had not yet begun to preach his three Gospels to the people.

So matters stood when, on the 18th of April, Yen How sat in his garden, reading an old *Shanghai Mercury*.

An attendant opened a door in the courtyard, walked softly towards the great little man, and prostrated himself before him.

‘Speak on,’ said Yen How.

‘A white man has been captured at Moukden, your Excellency, by soldiers of the Liao-Tong division, and sent on to Peking. They have just arrived at the Palace — and await your instructions.’

‘Let him be taken to the Imperial Prison-house for the night,’ said Yen How, ‘and beheaded at sunrise to-morrow.’

He went on reading. The servant made an obeisance, and turned away.

Do not call the man back, Yen How! Let him go and do your bidding, and read you your paper, and be at peace! For this is John Hardy that you have ordered to be slain — and he is as strong as the rocks, and the strong earth, and the sky, and the stars in their courses fight for him!

But Yen How called the man back.

‘Stop!’ he cried.

The attendant returned.

‘What nation is he of?’ asked Yen How.

‘His interpreter says that he is an Englishman, your Excellency.’

‘Let him be brought before me here.’ And Yen How went on reading his paper.

CHAPTER XIII. JOHN AND YEN



JOHN HARDY, HAVING arrived at Vladivostok, had engaged an interpreter, and spent two days in trying to charter a craft for Nagasaki, where he hoped to meet his ship, or hear about her *locale*.

His impatience was fevered; for he heard that no *rencontre* had as yet taken place; but that, within a week, it was expected that the allied French, German and Russian vessels would meet the allied English and Japanese. Such was the report brought by junks from Nagasaki and Fusan, and by caravan from Newchwang and Kin-chow.

An engagement had not occurred, for this simple reason: that the Allies had practically been in hiding from the English; and the reason was this simple one: that they were finding extraordinary difficulties in the matter of coaling, the English and Japanese having, as a matter of fact, created a 'corner' by buying up all the coal in the East; so that from Singapore to Vladivostok the cry had been coal! coal!

Now, however — so said the reports — the French, German and Russian vessels had coal in plenty! Whence this supply had come, no one could conceive. It was a mystery — but a certainty.

The battle, therefore, so long delayed, must come soon.

Hardy's pulses beat faster; and his chagrin was intense when, after anxious search, he found no *compradore* willing or able to secure him a passage to Nagasaki. The East was in suspense, waiting for the future, without interest in the present. It turned a listless ear to Hardy's pleadings.

Nothing remained for it but Port Arthur, where, as he was told, he would be sure to find a willing junk. But the journey was immense. Hardy almost gave up hope of the battle.

But with strong heart he set out. He anticipated no danger. China was not formally at war with England. He did not know that, even in times of settled quietude, no traveller's life was worth a rush in Northern China — as in the case of Sir Harry Parkes.

He had with him quite a little retinue; and he travelled in a palanquin borne between mules.

The northern Chinese were a hard, ferocious, and treacherous race — considerably more so than the southern. They were also larger and stronger men, — rascals tall, and lean, and brawny, their bony toughness being derived from the Tartar blood with which their tribes were infused. Their language, too, was different; above all, their walk. The southerners walked on the flat foot, like Europeans; the northerners swung along on their heels, with a backward slant of the body, like a statue put to lean with its back against a wall.

At Hunshun Hardy stopped for a night at a two-roomed inn; and here it was that, as soon as he was asleep, a consultation occurred between the villagers and his retinue of five.

The next morning he went forward, this time in a spring-less *jinricksha* or mule-cart. He could no longer bear the swinging between the palanquin mules. It had reduced him to a state of weakness; he was now spitting up phlegm streaked with blood.

At every village now they were surrounded by increasing crowds and clamours. But always John's servants spoke some words to the people, which had the effect of restraining them. As he set out afresh, a throng of

those skeleton visages would be there to gape greedily after him; but still, he did set out.

A sickness of the heart — a sickness of the stomach — grew upon him.

Could Man — could Woman — be like this?

Every nerve in his gentle and loving nature rose in shuddering revolt against this race.

He saw the whisperings and confabulations between his men and the mobs, and, with his instinct for truth, suspected treachery. But he was quite helpless.

Everywhere, as he advanced, his eye noted the drilling, drilling, to which the nation was being subjected.

But he was now very sick, and languid, and day by day sat propped against the cart, staring wearily before him, under the growing heat. He was compelled to keep up his strength with sips of the deleterious Chinese spirit *samshu*; and the only food which he could procure for days was the sickening mass of rice and greens which forms the staple Chinese diet.

He descended the river Yalu in a gorgeously painted junk, drawn on each bank by a mule. Here he had some rest, lying on the deck in long dreams of quietude through the starlit nights of a Chinese spring. Never had the heavens and the earth seemed to him so lovely, enthralled in a mystery of peace, as in those vast sheeny nights of his descent of the Yalu. Near Wiju he commenced the land-journey again, on mule-back this time, somewhat recovered in health.

He was given now to understand that he was being guided to Port Arthur. Instead of this, he was being led northward, toward Moukden.

At Moukden was a garrison of the old regular army; and the railway from thence to Tientsin had lately been completed.

At an inn at Moukden he was eating, when a Japanese officer, accompanied by an interpreter, entered the room, and bade Hardy follow him. It was Yen How's decree that any white man found by chance in Northern China should be sent on to Peking.

Hardy was ineffably surprised, first, at finding himself in Moukden, and next at being hustled into a queer, low, dark railway train, in the keeping of half-a-dozen gigantic pigtailed.

'But,' he protested through his interpreter, 'England is not at war with China!'

'No,' said the Japanese with a grin, 'but China is at war with England.'

In the train John's wrists were bound. His interpreter and servants had disappeared.

They reached Tientsin by train, and thence went on to the village of Tung-chow, five miles from Peking, by junk up the Peiho. Just as the sun set they arrived at the mighty walls of Peking, and had only time to rush between the gates, when the ponderous jaws of the city-portals clanged and roared behind them.

Peking! multitudinous, unfathomable city, place of beauty and of horror, of romance, and of infamy! city of vast triple-boulevards, grand as the imagination of an architect, loathsome as the stench of a sewer, city of gauds and colours, vermilion, and emerald, and blue, and of temples, and avenues, of palaces and lakes and forests, immense, a world in itself, resembling in its tone and aspect no other of the cities of man!

Here may the hoariness of our race on the earth, the vast age of the old world, be read even by the blind.

Whoever is a Dreamer, let him bury himself in Peking. The city is itself a dream — an opium-dream.

It was necessary for Hardy to pass through both the Tartar and the Chinese cities before reaching the Imperial City. Each of these three is enclosed within its own massive walls, independently of the great wall of the whole town. The Imperial City was sacred ground. Here resided the Supreme Power, and here also the Legations. The profane foot entered it on pain of death.

They passed through a number of thoroughfares, broad as three or four Holborns laid side by side, and long as vistas; streets thronging with camels, and jingling mules, and the booths of small merchants, and swaying pigtailed; and in an hour reached the Imperial Portal on mule-back.

The leader of the little band produced his brevet, and found admittance. They proceeded slowly through a park, leading their animals now, and after traversing a number of secluded granite streets, and a long marble colonnade, entered the courtyard of a vast, low, white palace.

Hardy, as they halted, leant wearily upon his mule. There was a hollow pain at his chest, and at the back of his shoulders. His lips were dry and cracked.

A door opened in the courtyard, and a soft-footed official came to learn the reason of this intrusion.

A few words were spoken, and he turned away. In a quarter of an hour he was back again; and five minutes afterwards Yen How and John Hardy were face to face.

For quite a minute Yen How continued to read his paper.

Then he lifted his head suddenly, and said to the official:

‘You may go; wait in the vestibule: when I want you I will sound.’

The man went away. Yen How looked at John Hardy, and John Hardy looked at Yen How.

Both were smiling.

Yen How had still under his eye a scar where the fist of the English soldier, John Brabant, had struck him. So he smiled.

Hardy's hands were unbound. This had been done when he reached Tung-chow, where it had been necessary to mount a mule. He had on the usual blue pea-jacket; and under this, in the breast-pocket, his loaded revolver.

In the colloquy which followed, one of these two men spoke an English as perfectly grammatical as that of Tennyson or Macaulay, though with an intensely foreign something in his way of speaking it; the other spoke broken English. It was Yen who used the good, and John the bad, English.

'Who are you, sir?' said Yen How.

'Me Englishman,' said John, 'name John Hardy.'

Yen had heard of the battle of Shoreham, and he never forgot a name. He said:

'Don't talk pigeon English. I can understand you. I have lived some years in England.'

'Oh, veer goot. Me no knowee that. Me talk good English to Chinaman.'

'As you please. What is it you have come to China for?'

'Me sailor. Me come from Russia to Vladivostok to joinee me ship. What for you no letee me join it? Englishman and Chinaman good friends.'

'Since when?'

'For always!'

'You got a sister?'

John was surprised.

'No,' he said.

'A female cousin?'

'Yes. Well—'

'Will you give me your cousin for my wife?'

John grinned.

‘Why, you queer Chinaman...!’ he cried out.

‘Ah, you say no, you see. Englishman and Chinaman are not such very good friends, then.’⁵

The chief fact about John Hardy was that he had eyes which saw a fact. As these last words fell upon his ears, he looked keenly into the placid face before him; and at once he realised that he was in the presence, not so much of a Chinaman, as of a Mind.

And at once the instinct to speak pigeon English left him. Unconsciously he began to speak naturally. This was a great compliment to Dr. Yen How.

‘But look here, Mr. Chinaman,’ he said, ‘what is all this for? Who are you?’

‘Well, since you ask, I am called Yen How.’

John started.

‘Ah, you know my name, I see,’ said Yen How; ‘I know yours, too.’

‘Yes. Very good — I am glad that I find myself with you, since you are who you are. You are acquainted with European ideas, and certainly a man of sense. I wish to throw myself on your benevolence. I find myself in such a silly sort of scrape. I am a poor sailor trying to join my ship. Knowing China as a friendly country, I thought I should have no difficulty in passing through. Yet here I am! What for? Isn’t it very absurd? Please help me to get out of this! If you cannot set me free of your own power, you can at least put me in communication with the British Ambassador.’

Yen How’s eyes went small in a smile.

‘There isn’t any British Ambassador any more,’ he said.

‘How do you mean, sir?’ asked John.

‘It is the Chinese custom to hang thieves by the heels, head downwards,’ replied Yen. ‘The British Ambassador has been hanged by the heels in the

square before the Pekin Temple of Confucius, and died while the people were torturing him with hot irons.'

John Hardy's left eyelid lowered in intense menace.

'That is not really so, Mr. Chinaman?'

'It is, my son.'

'And whose doing was that? Not the Government of China's?'

'It was *my* doing, my son.'

'Yours, Yen How?'

'Mine.'

Now the two men were really in contact. They looked into each other's eyes, searchingly, eye to eye.

'You shocking little devil!' said John Hardy.

'Call me what you like. I will repay your insult by a compliment: you are a brave fellow.'

'You will be strangled like a frog for this, Mr. Chinaman!'

'Whom by? All the Englishmen in China are dead.'

'All?'

'Every one.'

'A massacre?'

'A regular sacrament of death.'

'But the Chinese believe in a God above, I think?'

'Poh! not much.'

'*You* do not?'

'Not I.'

'And the white men of other nations, they were massacred, too?'

'All — all.'

'But with what motive?'

'It would take too long to tell you.'

‘Ah! I know.’

‘You do?’

‘Yes! I know! I know! I had a queer, dim idea long ago. Now I know! I know!’

‘You are shrewd then, as well as brave.’

‘Yes! I know!’

John Hardy was in an ecstasy of discovery. He saw the skies growing black, black over the earth.

‘Well, will you give me your cousin for my wife now?’ asked Yen How, all wrinkles.

John did not answer. His brows were knit. It was only after a minute’s thought that he made two steps forward, and laid his right hand on Yen How’s shoulder, the doctor looking up into his face as he began to speak.

‘Now, look you, Yen How,’ John said, ‘I know now, as I tell you, what your idea is like. Let me put it in plain words: you mean to sweep with this Chinese nation over Europe when our war is over, and Europe is prepared for your coming. I was a fool not to see it quite before — but that is it. And this idea is *yours*, yours only, Yen How: I see that. You have the face of a devil, you toad, you have! Well, I have got an offer to make you — a challenge — if you are man enough to accept it. Get me out of this — put me on board my ship. And I will undertake to fight you, and beat you. I alone, Yen, against you alone. If you beat me, I give you, not my cousin, but the Queen’s daughters for your wives. If I beat you, I squeeze the life out of your throat, you frog. I promise you that I shall breathe not a word of this plan of yours to a living soul — no one shall know from me: and no one shall know from me about the massacre and the drilling of the people. I make you that offer, Yen.’

John Hardy had recognised the great mind in Yen How; now it was Yen How's turn to recognise the same in John Hardy. Here was the full stature of Man, the world-big Thought, the sun-kindled Imagination.

Yen How answered:

'Take your hand from my shoulder, my son.'

'Well, what do you say, Yen?'

'I say that your thought tickles me, boy.'

'Well-?'

'And I say, that if I were to accept your offer, you could go to your ship saying to yourself: "The great Yen How has recognised me as one of the two kings of the world."'

'Still, I wait for your answer.'

'How am I to count upon the silence you promise?'

'Well, you know something of English life. I come of a family of English gentlemen. We never break our word.'

'Well, come, we shall see. Your thought — what shall I say? — tickles me, my son. We shall see — come now. But first — do you know that I gave an order for your beheading? And then I said I would see you. Do you know why? I had a question to ask you.'

'Well?'

'Have you lived in London?'

'Yes — sometimes.'

'Ah, well — there is just a chance, then. Did you ever know a lilee girl called — what's her name? — Ah! Ada Seward.'

Yen How could destroy a world without the quivering of a nerve; but as he uttered this name in a whisper, he slunk, his voice trembled.

Hardy did not answer. The name sounded familiar. He hung his head with knit brow, thinking. Suddenly he blushed. He had remembered — the

music-hall — the drunken night — Lottie Collins — Ada.

Yen saw the blush.

To this man, drunk with his passion, it was inconceivable that any other man could see this girl, and not straightway go mad for love. Men will sometimes get so intoxicated with wine, that the sober state becomes inconceivable to them; and they will say to a sober companion: ‘Oh, you *are* drunk, boy!’

Yen saw the blush, and he noticed now that Hardy’s face was more than usually lovely, even for one of a lovely race. It was a face made to be loved by women.

‘You have seen her?’ He half rose from his seat, and brought his mouth in an intense, secret, cunning whisper close to Hardy’s ear.

‘I have,’ said John.

He had an instinct, even then, that he was running some frightful danger in making this avowal. But he was truthful in a very rigid, rather old-fashioned sense. He had never told a falsehood.

‘You have? — in real truth?’ whispered Yen.

‘I have.’

‘And — kissed her — eh, boy?’

The Chinaman’s face worked. He hissed rather than spoke these words.

John grinned.

‘Why, — you most queer person-!’

He was ready to laugh a puzzled, anxious laugh.

‘You have!’

‘What?’

‘Kissed her — eh, John Hardy?’

‘Of course, I have kissed her.’

‘Then you die!’

‘What, not for kissing Miss Seward?’

‘You die, I say!’

‘It was she who kissed *me*.’

‘You die! you die, you little white devil! you die! you die!’

Up went the fingers of Yen’s right arm, twinkling in ecstatic wrath.

There was no mistaking Yen How. He meant this.

He pounded the gong twice with the hammer.

‘In one half-hour—’ he said, with a furious nod of the head at John.

Hardy, perfectly cool, saw clearly that all hope for himself was lost. But he had no intention of leaving Yen How behind, to work his mischief in the world.

The second sound of the gong had hardly shivered and clanged, when Hardy, with the revolver whipped from his breast-pocket, blew Yen How — passions, schemes, ambitions and all — out of existence.

In intention, that is — in absolute, cool unerringness of aim. The bullet struck Yen precisely over the centre of his heart. But it struck a plate of steel mail, and did not penetrate.

John was about to fire a second shot at Yen’s head, when suddenly the two men were locked in desperate conflict. Yen had flung himself upon John.

Yen’s eye had long before noted the bulge of John’s pea-jacket over the breast. He was half prepared for what had happened.

The struggle was carried on with the entire physical force of the two combatants, the revolver being the aim of both efforts.

John, though below the middle height, was quite an inch or so taller than Yen; and he was able, with his left hand, to seize Yen’s pigtail, and draw it in a single coil tight round Yen’s throat; while Yen enclosed the other’s right

arm and ribs in a grip of iron, squeezing with all his energy, and heaving and slanting his adversary in the effort to effect a throw.

The force of the tough little Chinaman was quite two or three times that of the frail English lad.

This contest of strengths was a foreboding — and a resemblance — of the larger national contest which was impending.

Hardy was comparatively weak. But in his right hand was a revolver, representing the Science of Western Civilisation, which, however, Yen's grip rendered ineffectual; and in his left hand was Yen's pigtail, representing the barbarism, the superstition, the repulsive soul of the East.

Yen's face darkened. A gurgling came from his swollen lips. The rat was being suffocated by its own tail: The West was strangling the East.

Suddenly the revolver went off, and the bullet entered Yen How's left foot. The Science of the West had uttered a cry.

But the West was breathing its last gasps under the stringent ferocious grasp of the East.

The contest was short, and it ended suddenly. A little spout of blood welled and rolled from Hardy's lips; and at once he lost power, and fainted.

Before he could fall to the ground, an attendant had come up, and struck him a blow on the brow with a heavy bamboo. He fell at once flat on his back, his face covered with blood.

Almost immediately Yen How was cool.

'Take him away,' he said. 'He has attempted my life — he must not be killed.'

'The torture, Your Excellency?'

'Yes. But I will direct it myself. Go away.'

He sat again, as the attendant lifted John in his brawny arms. . He commenced once more to read the *Mercury*.

There was a bullet in his foot. But he would not move: the racking pain was sweet to him.

The intensity of the Chinese instinct of Vengeance is a mystery — it is not human — it is not bestial — it may be demonic. To us, at all events, it is incomprehensible.

To them pain is joy, if, at the same time, they can gloat over the knowledge that it is in their power to take a thousandfold vengeance on the causer of the pain. They hug their pangs — they wantonly put off the hour of their revenge — they roll in a secret luxury of malice.

In the matter of Torture, the Chinese have excelled all nations in a devilish cunning. They have investigated the nerves of man, and adapted their plagues to them with a nice and minute ingenuity. And Yen was more ingenious than the most ingenious.

He intended to give his mind to this matter. Meantime, he went on reading.

CHAPTER XIV. THE VANISHED FLEET



IT WAS TWENTY hours before John Hardy, in some absolutely dark place, opened his eyes. At about the same time, the battle at which he had hoped and striven to be present was going forward.

For over a year the question which had been agitating many an English mind was this: Is our weight of metal in Chinese waters enough? Is it commensurate with possible contingencies? Is it not too hopelessly small?

This anxiety had been somewhat allayed by the spectacle of ship after ship of the British navy — the *Barfleur*, the *Bonaventure*, the *Hannibal*, the *Gibraltar* — steaming away in mysterious haste to the East.

On the other hand, they had not steamed away alone: they had followed — they had been followed by — a host of the choicest, mightiest ships of Russia, France, and Germany, all hasting eastward, eastward, as if in the sweep of some law of gravitation, all with the same secret urgency, the same suggestion of mystery, and flurry, and design.

Heavy Russian armaments like the *Vladimir Monomakh* had hurried after French craft like the *Pascal*, and German craft like the *Gefion*. An addition of some 30,000 tons to her Chinese navy was made by Russia alone in her ships, the *Rossiya*, the *Sissoi Veliki*, the *Navarin*.

This Eastern fever had infected even nations not precisely in the running. Away in the sweep of the Chinese Current went battle-ships from Italy, from Austria, from America.

In a few months the seas of the Far East were gravid with the navies of the world.

China herself, by way of pantomime, had been building cruisers at the Vulcan Dockyards at Stettin; and at that very time was promenading the boulevards of the seas, quite like one of the *chic*, with the new. *Hi-Chi*, *Hi-Tien*, and *Hai-Shen*.

The *Hi-Chi* had a speed of twenty-four knots, and was a cruiser carrying an armament as heavy as many vessels twice her displacement.

The fleet of Japan was in prime fighting order, modern, as smart as it was swift and strong. It was worth any two of the fleets in Chinese waters put together.

Was England's weight of metal sufficient? This was the question.

The fact was, that England had ceased to be acutely anxious when it was once known that her weight was greater than that of any two of the European nations combined.

She had added 37,000 tons, in round numbers, to her former Chinese squadron; Russia 36,000; France 11,000. But, all told, she had concentrated 126,700 tons in those waters, whereas Russia's total was only 83,000, and France's 26,000. It followed, therefore, that Britain had a preponderance of some 17,700 tons over these two.

This had seemed enough, considering that some of Russia's terra-cotta coloured ships were»old-fashioned.

It was hardly remembered that there was Germany, too, with a weight of 27,000 tons in Chinese waters. Russia, France, and Germany together had a preponderance over Britain of 10,000 tons.

The fact was sufficiently impressive in itself; but it had not been terrifying, even to those who remembered the possibility of the German element being hostile to the British, when they also remembered the splendid fleet of — Japan.

Here was an additional element of 200,000 tons — all on the side of Britain.

For was not Japan the friend of England? Were not their interests identical? The Britain of the East, and the Britain of the West — how natural that they should stand shoulder to shoulder!

But there was one question, in connection with this queer, outlandish, yellow ally of England, the correct answer to which would have sent as great a shock through England, could she have known it, as she had ever received in her history. The question was this: ‘Where on earth, during the early part of April 1899, did the Allied fleet in Eastern waters get their supplies of coal?’

We have stated that England and Japan, by a clever deal, had, weeks before, effected a corner in all the Welsh and other coal in the East.

Yet on the morning of the 19th of April the whole Allied navy, which some little time before had been almost immobilised for lack of steam-fuel, and had been hiding and dodging, each ship for herself, all about the northern Chinese coasts, now steamed gallantly past Quelpart in search of the British fleet, supposed to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Chemulpo.

They were steering north-west; Nagasaki lay south-east; they were therefore coming from Japan. Could it be that from Japan they had obtained this coal?

And where was the fleet of Japan? For two days Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Seymour had been expecting it, by previous arrangement, to appear off Chemulpo. But as yet it gave no sign.

The Vice-Admiral was not at first precisely anxious; for his only ground of suspicion that anything was wrong in China was the fact, reported to him at Hong-Kong six days before, that all communication between that island

and the mainland had mysteriously ceased. Yen How had left the Englishmen on Hong-Kong alive, having no desire to have every Chinese port shelled by British guns. Hence, when the Vice-Admiral coaled and started northward hurriedly on receipt of a telegram from Tokio stating that the Allied fleet had managed to procure some coal, and were steaming eastward upon Japan, he had no suspicion of the massacre. His reply to Tokio was that he was starting northward at once, and would avoid an engagement, until the junction of the two fleets; and he instructed the Japanese fleet to join him at Chemulpo.

But at Chemulpo he received a shock. There was no white man in the place.

All he could suppose was that there had been a rising in the town, and the white men killed.

But he hardly attached any political importance to the fact. Such things were common in China.

He waited with perfect confidence for the Japanese fleet.

The next morning he received a cable despatched from Nagasaki to Fusan, and brought two hundred miles on mule-back to Chemulpo. It was as follows:

‘The Allied fleets, plentifully supplied with coal, are about to steam eastward in search of you. Japanese fleet will follow.’

‘Steam *eastward!*’, ‘Supplied with coal!’, ‘*Will* follow!’ Certainly, now, if ever man was puzzled, it was the British Commander-in-Chief.

For if the enemy were steaming eastward supplied with coal, that meant Japanese treachery. But if Japan were treacherous, and had joined the Allies, why on earth did she take the pains to warn the British of their advance?

And why ‘*will*’ follow? They should have set out, according to the Vice-Admiral’s instructions, long before. If they had not already set out, they

were treacherous; but if they were treacherous, why did they give this warning of it, instead of taking the advantage of a surprise?

That they were not neutral seemed proved by the fact that they were 'following' at all.

The Vice-Admiral's brow was a heavy cloud of care. He decided that the missive was a hoax, then that that was impossible, then again that it was a hoax.

He sent an expedition of blue-jackets by road to Seoul to see who was there. They returned with the announcement that there were no white men in Seoul.

The secret of Japan's action, though inscrutable, was this: she coaled the Allies in order that they might destroy the British; and she warned the British in order that they might destroy the Allies.

She helped both sides, being the enemy of both.

But this policy was too subtle for the British Commander to divine without an absolute clue.

The absence of white men at Seoul, as well as at Chemulpo, was merely an added shock. It brought no real light to the mind. He waited on, with anxious heart, for the appearance of the Japanese.

Two days he spent in coaling the fleet out of four colliers which had accompanied him from Hong-Kong, and in taking in stores from the store-ships. %At the end of the second day there was still no sign of the yellow ally of England.

The thing was so inexplicable, that even wonderment could find no guess. Japan was a nation among nations, responsible, presumably careful to keep her pledged word. What, then, could have happened?

'What, in God's name, *has* happened?' said the Vice-Admiral to himself twenty times during the course of that terrible and sleepless night.

But he did not neglect the warning of Japan's cable. The next morning, immediately after the saluting of the colours, the fleet steamed from Chemulpo harbour, the flag-ship being the *Barfleur*, one of the only two line-of-battleships present.

The Vice-Admiral, in his ignorance of the real facts of the situation, had no intention of being caught at anchor without sea-room.

So far, no action had taken place in the East. The approaches to Vladivostok harbour, Port Arthur, and Kiao-Chau were crowded with mines, and defended by forts. The Vice-Admiral had preserved his fighting power from injury, till the first naval battle. After that, in the event of victory, he meant to proceed to the hostile ports.

He went cruising south-eastward under half steam. A bright, breezy morning of Spring.

But what now is that, away yonder on the southern horizon? A long streak of gray mist, which has the property of growing swiftly broader and darker. The Japanese fleet at last, surely!

No. It is the fleet of the allied enemy. That is quickly determined by the look-outs.

They numbered twenty-nine, and occupied the whole region of the southern hemi-horizon.

The British ships were thirty-three. Among them, however, was a very large number of smaller-tonnage craft, torpedo-boat destroyers, first-class gun-boats, second and third-class cruisers, despatch vessels, and sloops of war, of varying weight, from about 4000 to as low as 260 tons. But there, too, on the other hand, were the great *Terrible*, and her sister-cruiser (in whose books was the name of John Hardy, absent), the *Powerful*. These had each a tonnage of 14,200. There, too, were the *Revenge* with 14,150 tons, and the *Gibraltar* with 7,700.

The weight of the enemy was greater; but 'it was not much greater; and even so, it was not the custom of Englishmen to count as a deterrent from battle a preponderance of the enemy in physical power. The Vice-Admiral banished from his mind for the time the mystery of the Japanese fleet, and sent forth his commands with a high heart.

Nimble Jack, below decks, belted his trousers with a determined snap, and stripped himself of blouse and shirt, prepared to sink, to fight, to swim, to die, to live.

Already from the conning-towers could be discerned the pea-soup colour of some Russian ships, though both fleets were pouring round the horizon two regions of dark smoke.

The British approached in a very wide wedge, the *Barfleur* leading at the apex of the formation, while the enemy maintained a double line, the whole of the first line being composed of Russian vessels, the heavy *Vladimir Monomakh* occupying the central post.

The barb, so to speak, of the British wedge was as strong as possible. On each side of the *Barfleur*, somewhat astern of her, came the *Powerful* and the *Terrible*. It was the intention of the Vice-Admiral to begin well, and to derive all the moral prestige which this fact might afford. At the moment when the *Vladimir* was two miles from the *Barfleur*, and three from the *Terrible* and the *Powerful* the battle commenced on the British side. All the three British vessels had kept their forward barbets trained upon the *Vladimir*, and they fired simultaneously. The result was just like magic. Before the smoke had cleared, the Russian ship was no longer on the surface of the waters.

An instant afterwards, and the battle was general.

In the fury of warfare which now ensued, let the reader fix his eye upon a middle-sized and comparatively unimportant ship which stands far back in

the starboard limb of the British wedge. She is called the *Iphigenia*; a second-class cruiser; tonnage 3600, horse-power 7000; not very wonderfully armoured, but agile in the water, and capable of showing a clean pair of heels. On board of *her* is — Fate.

Yonder is the *Gefion* engaged with the *Terrible*, and yonder both the *Pascal* and the *Indomptable* with the *Revenge*, and yonder again the *Barfleur* with the *Admiral Nachimov*, and the *Powerful* with the *Jean Bart*. Wide is the war and various. The British wedge has penetrated the fleet of the Allies. The navies of the world are mixed together in a hotch-potch of combat. Either with design or without, the battle, within five minutes from its start, has become a mere *metie* of thunder.

There are instances, on one side and the other, of splendid manoeuvring, of the right thing done at the right moment. But these all are individual, between ship and ship, captain and captain. Neither on the one side nor on the other is there any wide plan, or grand plot, or omnipresent eye. On the whole, it is a question of weight of metal against weight of metal. The great man is not there.

Slowly, in his dark prison, the Chinese Iron is entering into the soul of John Hardy. He is being taught the meaning of Fear, and familiarity with the face of Pain. This, too, was necessary for him.

But see what a mess the *Terrible* is making of the *Gefion* yonder in the very thick of things. Some of the ships are fighting at little more than pistol-shot distance; and the *Terrible* is well within half a knot of the dismantled *Gefion*, when Commander Madden, careering to starboard, trumpets forth through the uproar in a kind of German: ‘Haul down your flag, or I’ll ram!’ And half a minute later down sails the flag of the *Gefion*; and half a minute later still, down dives the *Gefion* herself to her final harbour at the bottom

of the Hwang Hai, which swallows with her all that part of her crew which a pinnacle of the *Terrible* is unable to rescue.

But the *Revenge* has lodged a 12-inch shell in the fore-port magazine of the *Indomitable* in vain. The French ship shudders — then, a little forward of amidships, there is a red belch that spouts high above her mast, and curves outward in a lurid rain far over the sea — then there is a long reverberation of clattering thunder — and the *Indomptable* bursts and sinks. But this row is mingled with another, caused by the ram of the foundering *Pascal* which is working and ravening in the central armour-belt of the *Revenge*. The three vessels disappear from sight within a minute of each other.

There, on the far starboard edge of the British line of battle, the *Iphigenia* — on board of which is Fate — is levelling her whole port battery in one incessant roll of Gardners and Nordenfeldts upon a small approaching second-class torpedo-boat; growling harshly is she, like a hound which bristles and gnashes and snarls, retreating backward, at the sudden apparition of an advancing cobra.

The torpedo-boat lances one of her needles of steel, but it is caught by a wave, tossed upwards in a whiff of spray, and sent flying to starboard, where it explodes under the stern of the French first-class battery-cruiser *Aréthuse*. As the tube of the torpedo-boat sends forth another explosive, the ram of the *Iphigenia* passes into and over her small assailant; the torpedo explodes ten yards away, but tears a hole in the for'ard protective bulkhead of the *Iphigenia*. She commences to settle down by the starboard bow.

But what is this phenomenon which now suddenly appalls every eye — the eyes of friend and of foe; something appalling by its mere novelty, not hitherto seen in sea or land warfare — something in the air — with all the properties and the powers of a spirit of evil?

It is a balloon — narrow, low, and long — French in origin. It can be steered backward and forward even in the teeth of a light wind; and its operators have the power of dropping dynamite shells with a steel casing, containing liquid oxygen and blasting gelatine, upon the hostile ships. It has come sailing with the light breath of the S.W. monsoon from a French ship which has studiously kept far on the outskirts of the battle.

It is not a toy; nor is it sent up as a curiosity for the amusement of the British ships. It becomes stationary high over the *Barfleur*; a black dot is seen to disengage itself from it, and a moment or two afterwards ninety-five British sailors are dead, and the engines of the *Barfleur* are no longer there. Then, sparing of its shells, it moves on in another direction, and then swiftly in another, and another, letting fall each time, like some evil bird, its deadly droppings. Except two, which fall into the sea, every shell destroys a ship. One bullet of a rifle would be sufficient to prove fatal to it, but it is high, its movements are swift and sudden, and when at last it tumbles, pierced, into the sea, the battle is all but over. It has done its work.

This had been the wisdom of France in the times of peace: that she had not despised the ingenious man, and his ingenuities; she had invited the thinker; she had welcomed the dreamer of dreams.

This was the second time since the beginning of the war that the British had come into contact with the Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée, and had shuddered intensely at the contact.

But we are an ocean race! Every cock on his own dunghill — and England on the sea. But for the French balloon, the British would very likely have won the battle by five seaworthy ships, and one unseaworthy. As it was, they won by two seaworthy ships, and one unseaworthy.

The last shot fired was fired by the *Iphigenia* at a German third-class cruiser, which she sank. This was the last but two of the Allied vessels left

afloat; the other two, having some time since struck their flag, were now sinking fast.

Besides the *Iphigenia*, which had engines, funnels, screws, and rudder intact, but had a considerable crank bow-wards, there were afloat of the British craft the *Daphne*, a twin-screw sloop, practically uninjured, and the *Barfleur*, floating a mere log, unable to move. There were fifty-seven men alive in her.

The *Iphigenia* had one boat, and the *Daphne* two, still capable of passing over the water; and these were- soon out, two of them making toward the *Barfleur* to take off her crew, and the third in the direction of one of the still floating two ships of the Allies, for the purpose of rescue.

The sea was oilily smooth; the breeze had died to a mere breath; the sun had climbed to noon.

All was still. Over four buried navies the water swung lazily — as a cradle which one has ceased to rock, of its own motion.

Weirdly sad is that vast and wandering grave of the sailor; and careless is the great heart of the sea.

So intent were all who floated during this quiet noontide in the central ocean upon the humane work of rescue, that no one noticed the swift approach upon them of a growing cloud from the east; and it was only when a shrapnel shell came screaming upon the already shattered *Barfleur*, that the British sailors, to their consternation, discovered that yet another enemy was upon them.

Presently, as though the new arrivals had found an entire fleet to oppose them, the air was full of fire.

Five large cruisers were seen to be steaming at full speed upon the small remnants of the four fleets.

But cruisers of what nation? They carried no flag!

The two vessels of the Allies — small torpedo-boat destroyers — had long since struck their colours. And at once, as a precautionary measure, the three British vessels did the same.

But it made no difference! The rain of fire continued.

Happily, before the boat of the *Iphigenia* reached the *Barfleur*, the *Barfleur* dipped, and sank. So also did one of the Allied ships, and also one of the *Daphne's* boats with her crew. The other of the *Daphne's* boats, and the *Iphigenia's* boat, at once turned to hurry to their ships.

For the moment, the *Iphigenia* was still beyond effective range of the shells of this strange enemy; but one of the screws of the *Daphne* was shattered by a semi-submarine explosion.

At once, as their boats reached them, the two British ships turned tail under forced draught, flying straight westward from this sudden, dread, mysterious foe.

Both were very swift; but the *Daphne* could now only move with half her speed. On board the *Iphigenia* the pumps were at work.

The strange enemy, seeing that there was no longer target for their shot, ceased fire, and slackened speed. Only the swiftest of the cruisers was told off to continue the chase of the fugitives.

She gained upon them both, especially upon the *Daphne*; but a stern chase is a long chase, and it was an hour before the first shell, shattering every gun in the *Daphne's* port central battery, warned her that further flight was useless.

The *Daphne*, as she fled, had again hoisted her ensign, and now again she struck it; and *again* was surrender met by a hail of shot from this extraordinary adversary.

The *Daphne* at once re-hoisted her colours, spun sharply round to port, and bore straight down upon her pursuer.

Her commander was at least determined to sell the life of his ship dearly.

But he was met by such a cataract of shell and shot that he perceived that he must certainly founder before accomplishing the ram which he meditated.

He determined, far off as he was, to risk the launching of his last torpedo.

It proved a happy inspiration.

The little needle of disaster went hasting, in steadfast headlong flight, in spite of swinging wave and baffling spray, straight upon its victim. It fastened upon her beam at the level of her armoured deck, a few inches below the water-line, and burst.

The strange vessel started, and, with a cough that rent her, threw her fragments over the sea. She was the Japanese cruiser *Tschiyoda*.

A minute later, while the *Iphigenia* was still hasting back to the scene of the duel, the *Daphne* sank with all hands.

The *Iphigenia* was now miles out of sight of the four Japanese cruisers. She continued her course eastward, very slowly sinking all the time.

About midnight of the next day she was beached on a sandy bottom not far from Kiao-Chau.

She had on board a hundred and eighty men.

CHAPTER XV. THE SUICIDE OF EUROPE



AT THE TIME of the battle in the Hwang-Hai nearly all Europe was at war.

If any one had imagined that Russia, France, and Germany could declare war against England, and that there the matter would end, he must have been blind to the actual meaning of the then conditions.

Shortly after the defeat of the Allies at Shoreham, a burst of Homeric laughter was caused over England and the Continent by the announcement that the Prince of Monaco (an independent sovereign, possessed of the magnificent army of sixty body-guard carabineers) had declared war against England.

The episode, amusing in itself, was not without significance.

The Prince was not a mere pantomimist. He had been compelled by some intricacy of the actual situation to act as he had acted, and his action only meant that so complex and finely-poised was the machinery of modern European polity, that it was no longer possible for any considerable portion of Europe to be at war without plunging into war the rest of it also.

With the sound of the first cannon a thousand slumbering passions of the people started into life. The hour had struck for the placing upon the stage of a thousand schemes of long-meditated revenge, avarice, and aggression.

Servia rejoiced. Her secret vow to settle the long-standing account with her Bulgarian victors might now be fulfilled. Bulgaria rejoiced. Now at last would she be free of Tsar and of Sultan alike.

Sweden looked round with something of the aggressive enterprise of her old hero, Gustavus Adolphus, wondering if now, at last, she could not

accomplish the deliverance of her Finns from the oppressive hand of Russia.

The Cretans, certain now that the Sultan would have his hands full of matters other than their small selves, girt on the dirk and carbine of massacre. Austria turned her eyes toward Salonica with languishing,' and her right hand crept out to steal.

Roumania dreamed that Russia's only motive for war was to furnish an excuse for *her* destruction, and rushed in arms to her frontiers. Italy had territories still 'unredeemed': and was not this the time to redeem' them?

Denmark had been nipped and curtailed, and her day was come for vengeance; Portugal was alert to stab in the back her British rival in Africa in the hour of his preoccupation.

At Athens, at Belgrade, at Sophia — from London to Batoum — from St. Petersburg to Megalo-Kastro — the sword leapt from its scabbard.

Mobil I

The Sultan pressed his fez tight upon his head, sitting among cushions; and the panic of the sinner in the day of his calamity gripped coldly at this man's heart. He had heard that the main body of the Servian army was moving eastward from its headquarters at Knuzevatz, and were being massed upon Nisch and Vranja, while fresh levies were being made in order to form a strong reserve; and he had hardly heard it, when the further news arrived that a bloody battle between Servian and Bulgarian divisions of infantry had occurred near Vlassina, in which the Bulgarians had been routed.

The messengers of evil followed fast one upon the other, like the messengers of Job.

The same night a considerable Austrian body crossed the Save, and quietly occupied Belgrade.

The next morning Austrian troops bivouacking in the open spaces of the city, and Austrian officers taking *dejeuner* on the boulevards, met the astonished eyes of the waking citizens.

It seemed as if the Golden Horn was in danger of being broken.

For this action was tantamount to an act of hostility against Russia on the part of Austria. Wilkin, a few hours after the occupation of Belgrade, another Austrian brigade, without firing a shot, was installed in Scemendria. The same day telegraphic communication between Constantinople and Odessa was interrupted.

Macedonia was in flames, and a land of *ententes*, — both Anti-Turkish and Anti-Bulgarian, — from end to end. The Vali of Saloniki was assassinated and mutilated in the streets of his city.

The Porte had called out the last class of rediffs; and rediffs from Smyrna and the Tripolitaine, to the number of 70,000, were being massed with a view to the protection of the frontier line. Fifty thousand men, still left around Stamboul, were distributed along the chain of forts from Roumalie Kavak to the Golden Horn. A fleet of Turkish torpedo-boats without torpedoes, and ironclads without ammunition, steamed northward through the Bosphorus. But before they reached the latitude of Midia, a fleet of Russian Black-Sea battle-ships, torpedo-boats, and transports crowded with 90,000 troops from Odessa, had shelled and occupied Bourgas. (Bourgas is in direct railway communication with Constantinople.)

The uncalled-for action of Austria in occupying the two Servian towns was Russia's defence for her occupation of the Bulgarian town.

Events followed one upon another with an ever-increasing frightfulness of rapidity. Developments which at other times would have required weeks for their outcome, now required hours. Europe wheeled in a delirium of haste. The next day half-a-dozen *sotnias* of irresponsible Cossacks pushed

forward across the Galician frontier to Lubica; and without delay Austria declared formal war against Russia.

Here was a topsy-turvydom of things — brought about by the festering greed and the old malice of the nations. Germany was the pledged ally of Austria; Germany was the pledged ally of Russia against England; and Russia and Austria were at war!

Look, too, at those Italian Bersaglieri and Alpini climbing like chamois over the Alps, with batteries borne on nimble-hoofed mules, by the Mont Cenis route. Italy means to get back, now, old Savoy — which is *her* Alsace-Lorraine — and is engaged on the one hand with French dragoons and mountain-chasseurs among the Alps, and, on the other, is shelling with her fleet the batteries that defend the Riviera, preparatory to landing three corps, her 2nd, 4th, and 6th, in the neighbourhood of Nice and Mentone. Yet Germany was the ally of Italy; and Germany was the ally of France; and France and Italy were at war!

Mobil, then, ye sons of men! Set briskly to it — for it is now or never. *Mobil* for your lives!

In England there was no longer a nation: there was only a Militia. The nation had become an army.

After three days of a terrific artillery battle between British ironclads and the Forts de la Floride, de l'Heure, and de Tourneville, an English army under Lord Roberts had occupied, first Havre, and then Harfleur. A series of disastrous battles, between Harfleur and Yvetot, had followed, in which the British, though outnumbered, were generally successful in claiming nominal victories. But they made no decided advance. The hitherto unknown results of modern contrivances were found to make victory almost as fatal as defeat. The very small bullets of the Lee-Metford and Lebel rifles — the enormous rangf of the magazine rifle — the use of smokeless

powder — were discovered to be elements whose effects were, on the whole, ten times greater than had been anticipated. Division after division hurried over from Britain to the support of the Flavre army; and corps after corps of the French massed upon Rouen, upon Harfleur, upon Concordville, and the neighbouring towns to oppose them. It became a question of men.

Five British ships, which were all that was left of the Mediterranean Squadron after a great engagement in the Bay of Algeciras, were reducing Marseilles at the very time when the Italian ships were engaged in an incessant artillery duel with the forts along the Riviera coast. Yet Italy and England were not formally allies.

North and south a dark cloud of tragedy widened over France. In less than six weeks from the commencement of the war her 7th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Corps d'Armée had ceased to exist, in consequence of signal Italian victories in the south; while in the north a steady deluge of British regiments had accounted for seven more of her corps. Toulon, the impregnable, was in the hands of General Ricotti. Havre was a British base.

Already the reserve of the territorial army was being mobilised for probable service.

France was shrinking under the intolerably harsh frown of England. The Joy of the whole earth was about to perish.

England herself, in her tough, silent way, was in the grip of bitter suffering. The Government had established public granaries over the kingdom. But the price of bread was prohibitive. Whole villages perished.

Singular as it now seems, she had had no separate cable connecting her telegraphically with South Africa, which was to a large extent her life. When she was disconnected with the Continent, she found herself disconnected also with her most important colonies. It was necessary to adopt the method of sending a despatch vessel round the Cape in order to

recall the Australian and Pacific Squadrons. The Suez Canal had long since been blown up by the French officials at Port Said.

At the Cape a naval battle had resulted, by some few ships, in a victory for the Allies, in consequence of overwhelming odds. Cape Town and the British seaboard of South Africa had been shelled. Sierra Leone had become French.

But Australia and the seaboard of India were already safe. The enemy needed all their still floating navies nearer home.

On the strongly-fortified German coast England's success had been hardly less than marvelous. A small fleet of British war-ships and troopers had appeared at the entrance of the Kiel Canal, and captured Tronning.

There the two great branches of the Teutonic race measured strengths. England had sent, 100,000 men to fight a nation boasting the most exquisite military organisation the world has ever conceived, and capable of placing in the field an army approaching three millions.

The first result was mere disaster for the invaders, — but not moral defeat. They retained Tronning, and, by a *coup*, the remnants of the scattered army under Sir Evelyn Wood possessed itself of Stralsund. They did it under cover of a bombardment by a British fleet, among the British ships being the three Swedish cruisers *Gota*, *Svea*, and *Vanadis*, which suddenly appeared, and joined in the action.

Nor was this England's last word to Germany.

It can never be that guns and swords alone can rule the world. The nation with the stoutest heart and the hardest brow, she is the mistress.

What happened at Havre, happened at Kiel and Stralsund. England with astonishing, steady pertinacity sent men to fight — only, *here*, the rigour of the thing was greater, the flame hotter.

In all that low-lying tract of land between Wismar, Neu Brandenburg, Anclam, and Stralsund a series of murderous conflicts took place, Wilhelm himself directing the course of the campaign, and the English being entrenched for the most part behind a semicircular line of earthworks stretching east and west, with Stralsund for base.

The three lines of railway, west to Lübeck and Hamburg, east to Stettin, and south to Berlin, were in the hands of the British; and after a day of fearful carnage in the neighbourhood of Neu Brandenburg, in which the German army was routed with a loss of 150,000 men, a successful rush was made for Stettin, which, in the course of a night attack, fell into British hands.

The same night nearly the whole of Berlin was destroyed by fire, a catastrophe attributed to the action of Socialists.

And ever England came to Germany — raw levies, meagre Cockney-born lads, boors from the Downs, Lancashire bodies, persons in kilts: not terrible to look at: terrible to meet in battle.

Their chief characteristic is not that they are brave, and agile, and cool; but that by some unknown national quality of mind they really contrive to do what they try to do. Their results always produce a certain effect of surprise.

Before these nimble invaders the *tapfere Krieger* of the Fatherland slowly receded.

From Thon, that Metz of the East, from Koenigsberg, and Danzig, and the great military depots of the North-east, troops were drafted to repel this obstinate, rock-browed, small, unseasoned foe.

But the more the English poured their levies upon the German sea-board, and the greater the draughts by Wilhelm upon the as yet inactive corps, and the nearer the possibility of a call upon the Teuton shop-keepers and

burghers of the reserve, so the more Socialistic seemed to become the opinions of the German nation.

Socialism — with its absurdities — with its heavenly gospel of salvation for the world — had, for ultimate good, or ultimate ill, got into the blood of the nations during the latter half of the nineteenth century, far more than any one then supposed. Men who most hated the word, thought Socialism, and did not know it. It was bound to come out when the great moment for its birth arrived.

Wilhelm walked on an abyss, and the ground beneath his feet was parchment.

He had no sooner withdrawn a large portion of the Army of the Vistula, than Danzig was sacked and taken by the Swedish fleet.

The most extraordinary phenomenon of this vast and complex war was the success of Sweden everywhere. Within three weeks a division of her gallant little army, consisting of only three corps, had gained a permanent *pied à terre* as far south as Bromberg; she had wrought havoc with the northeastern coast-defences of Germany; and she had turned West Prussia into a depopulated wilderness. Another division of her army, consisting of five corps, had in two great battles on the Banks of Lake Ulea routed two Russian war-hosts, and had pushed on to Helsingfors, which they captured from the land side, and made their headquarters. Intoxicated, they turned their faces across the Gulf of Finland toward Cronstat.

The hands of Russia were full enough.

Immediately upon the outbreak of war with Austria, she had concentrated, as fast as her defective railway-system would allow, great masses of troops, consisting of the 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Army Corps, in the direction of Lemberg. Behind these followed the more remote 13th, 16th, and 17 th Corps.

Including the Corps d'Armée doing unsuccessful battle with the Swedes in Finland, by far the greater part of Russia's vast territorial power was now in the field, three additional army-corps having advanced from Kars to the investment of Erzeroum, where a crushing defeat at the hands of a mixed army of Turks and English awaited them.

The eastern limb of the British Mediterranean fleet had steamed through the Bosphorus, conveying transports to Trebizonde, and then proceeded northwards, with the double object of a search for the Russian Black Sea Squadron, and the bombardment of Odessa and Sebastopol.

Austria had massed her forces into three armies: one in East Galicia, on the Dniester, another on the San with its back on Przemysl, the great bulwark of Middle Galicia, and the third on Cracow, the key of Western Galicia, on the Upper Vistula.

The Great White Tsar was preoccupied. All around his sky were clouds and darkness. That mighty breadth of empire was already rocking to its fall.

The gray and green-coated soldiers of Russia were swarming round her borders, more on the defensive than the offensive. In the first fixed battle with the Austrians, General Gourko, the old Invincible, had been routed with such a horror of widespread massacre that the brain of the aged general was unhinged.

And ever anew — after each orgy of blood — went forth the cry over Europe: *Mobil, Mobil*.

In a skirmish near Karatova between two demi-regiments of Macedonians and Bulgarians, not a single man was left alive.

In fact, Europe was destroying herself. Everywhere, from Land's End to the Caucasus, the grin of a spectre was perceived in the air — the Spectre of Hunger, and grim Scarcity, and raw-boned Want.

England had America to supply her wants; but wants cannot be supplied save by the purchasing power of the party who wants. England's purchasing power had consisted in her commerce, and her commerce was near to death.

America, moreover, in this crisis, had no idea of small profits and quick returns. She had been thrown by the war into a state of financial collapse. And, with the blindness of selfishness, she raised her prices to prohibitive figures.

On paper England remained rich enough. Her consols were taken up eagerly. The chief financiers and bankers of the world filled her war-chest. The security of by far the larger half of investments depended upon her success. As a matter of self-interest the Rothschilds, and Wall Street, and the kings of finance, threw in their lot with her.

But the industry of the world was at a standstill, and there is no wealth not the direct offspring of industry.

Germany, France, Italy, and Russia opened their ports to all comers, adopting the free-trade policy of England — but too late. That, of course, which they were unable to buy was not brought to them to be sold.

Russian wheat, by Imperial command, ceased to be exported. But it would quite certainly have ceased to be exported without the command.

The fields grew rich and oozy with a human sap, the blood of millions. But the hand of industry was palsied to sow the seed.

Mobil, then, ye children of Europe! *Mobil* all ye can! But know that in the end it shall bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.

CHAPTER XVI. THE LOVE WHICH FOO-CHEE BORE TO AH-LIN



FOO-CHEE WAS NO. 13 of the 3rd squad of the 1st company of the 2nd battalion of the nth regiment of the 2nd brigade of the 1st division of the 17th Army Corps of the great army of China.

Every morning and every night he lifted up both his hands, and he blessed the name of Yen How, illustrious, who by his might had changed the old flow and show of things. For why? Because Ah-lin was No. 15 of the same squad of the same company of the same battalion of the same regiment of the same brigade of the same division of the same Army Corps of the great army of China.

Every day, between four and a quarter to six o'clock, the company was drilled on the plain south-east of Pekin, half a mile from the walls. The roll was called before drill, and if any one was absent, he or she was hanged publicly, by the heels, the next morning. So Ah-lin *had* to be there, and Foo-chee saw Ah-lin, and blessed Yen How, illustrious.

Ah-lin was a girl of eighteen, very pretty, with the elongated face which the Chinese adore, and eyes so long, and narrow, and slanting. She was the daughter of a tiny silversmith whose shop was on a fifth floor in a gaudy Pekin main-street.

Her father lived his life in a corner of the single room which was his shop and dwelling. His life was a dream, and his food rice-greens and opium. When he awoke from his paradises, he languidly took up a piece of silver, and looked at it, and put it down again.

Ah-lin's father and mother and herself lived happily upon fifteen *tiaos* per week. The father was exempt from service, because one of his legs was incapable of walking. The mother served in a different company from that of Ah-lin.

But in spite of her poverty, Ah-lin had an elongated face, and peepy little bewitching eyes, and a pigtail of incredible length. Her feet, of course, had not been cramped, and she walked with a fine free swing, slanting a wee bit backward, like the true Northerner that she was.

'Foo-chee,' said Ni-ching-tang, who was the father of Foo-chee, 'take your eyes from Ah-lin, my son. Leave Ah-lin be. She is loved by Sin-wan, and Sin-wan is among the honourable ones in the days which are.'

Ni-ching-tang knew what he was saying; for he was a very subordinate cook in the multitudinous kitchen of Yen How, and Sin-wan was a warder in the Imperial Prisons. Ni-ching-tang and Sin-wan were good nodding acquaintances, as we should say.

That Sin-wan loved Ah-lin there could be no doubt. He had more than once risked his neck in leaving the Imperial precincts at unlawful hours to make signalling gestures before the fifth-floor room of Ah-lin's parents.

But Sin-wan was of middle age, and unduly stout. His neck was thick and hard, and seemed made for hanging. And his countenance was as hideous as Fe's, the joss, as it stands carved out in the ebon idols.

Moreover, Sin-wan was addicted to orgies of the spirit *samshu*, and the impress of these excesses was left on his brutal face.

Ah-lin's eyes, though narrow, could see much; and in her secret meditations in the darkness of the room at night she would think that Foo-chee was pleasant to look at, and Sin-wan was not.

Foo-chee was a young man of twenty, and a seller of Thibet incense-sticks in the next street to Ah-lin's. And these two units, among the tens of

thousands of human beings that swarmed and sweltered around them, felt within them the stirrings of that force which made the world.

Ah-lin had noted the following eye of Foo-chee often, long before the strange drilling commenced; and when she found herself almost next to him in the 3rd squad, she had a presentiment and a tremor. It was the doing of the upper gods.

‘Ah-lin,’ said Ah-lin’s mother, Nan-lin, ‘turn away your eyes from the eyes that turn to you. Foo-chee is pleasant to look at, but Sin-wan is among the honourable ones in the days that are. A child should love her father and her mother above herself, and do all for them.’

But it was the doing of the upper gods, what happened. Ah-lin was near to Foo-chee every day in the new drill; and the drilling straightened Foo-chee’s back, so that his backward slant as he walked was increased, till a woman would have died for him.

But Sin-wan, one night, beckoned to Nan-lin from the street, and Nan-lin sent down Ah-lin, and Sin-wan took Ah-lin by the hand and said:

‘Ah-lin is well formed, both in face and figure. Therefore I, Sin-wan, will marry with Ah-lin.’

At this directness Ah-lin hung her head. It was not difficult to perceive the sequence of cause and effect in this matter — and she was afraid of Sin-wan.

‘Do you say yes, Ah-lin?’ said Sin-wan. ‘If you say yes, I will take you now to a meal in Hing-Chang-Li’s eating-house, with fresh tea to drink.’

‘I say yes,’ replied Ah-lin, ‘but my father and’ mother — to whom all honour — do not wish me to marry now.’

‘That is a lie, Ah-lin. Your father and mother wish you to marry. And you wish to marry, too. But you do not wish to marry with me. You wish to marry with Foo-chee.’

‘Foo-chee?’ — she started— ‘Where did you hear the name of Foo-chee?’

‘Your mother told me his name, Ah-lin.’

‘It is strange. I know no one with such a name.’

‘It is a lie, Ah-lin. His name is written in green and red picture-letters over the booth where he sells incense-sticks. I have seen it, and I have seen *him*.’

‘And what do you say is his name?’

‘Foo-chee.’

‘Well, it may be, Sin-wan. I know nothing of the matter.’

‘Foo-chee shall die, Ah-lin, if you do not marry with me.’

‘Oh! what for? Whom has Foo-chee hurt? He sells his incense-sticks, and hurts no one!’

‘Now I have made you say that you wish to marry with him. For you do not wish me to kill him, Ah-lin.’

‘Kill him, if you wish.’

< I will kill him.’

‘But why so?’

‘Because you will not marry with me.’

‘I did not say I will not marry with you, Sin-wan.’

‘Then you will?’

‘I must.’

‘When, Ah-lin?’

‘When the new drilling is no more.’

‘Oh, that may be never. No. It shall be while this moon is big.’

‘I cannot, Sin-wan — I cannot.’

‘Why not, Ah-lin?’

‘It is my father and mother, — to whom all—’

‘It is that dog’s gall, Foo-chee! Foo-chee shall die, Ah-lin.’

‘Oh, me! I am not feeling happy, Sin-wan!’

‘No, nor am I feeling happy, till you say that it shall be this moon! Nor shall Foo-chee feel happy, when my knife is rankling in his liver! Say it, Ah-lin?’

‘I say it, Sin-wan.’

‘While the moon is big?’

‘Yes, Sin-wan.’

‘Then I will go. And I will come again to-morrow night at this hour.’

‘Did you not say that you would take me to the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li for a meal, with fresh tea?—’

‘I cannot to-night, for I have no time, since I must return now to the Imperial Prison. But to-morrow night — or the night after — you shall feed at the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li.’

So Sin-wan turned on his heels, and walked away on them. And when he arrived at the portals of the Imperial City, he was already late, and his bulging neck was in danger.

The Imperial Prisons stood, in a great quadrangle of marble, fringed with stupendous avenues of long-haired trees of the banyan genus, being surrounded by a moat bridged by a number of marble bridges. The building itself is of marble, and of very great size. A stone’s throw to the south stood the palace of the Austrian Ambassador, embedded in a bower of foliage; to the north, a hundred yards away, and separated from the prison by a lake overgrown with huge lilies and moon-leaved water-growths, stood the shaded palace of Yen How. The Imperial Palace itself was half a mile away by the broad avenue, but there was also a short-cut to it from the palace of Yen How.

It was the quiet hour of the evening-time, and the sumptuous landscape of the Imperial City seemed to faint and doze in a dream of lotus peace.

Leaning over one of the marble bridges that spanned the prison-moat was an old man. It was Ni-ching-tang, the father of Foo-chee. His day's work was over, and he was looking sleepily upon the dark and slumbrous water of the moat.

As he leaned so, Sin-wan approached him, passing to his duties in the prison. Ni-ching-tang would not have heard the tread of the thick-felted slippers; but Sin-wan spoke.

'Give good to you, Ni-ching-tang,' he said. 'Has his Might, the Governor, passed this way yet?'

'No, Sin-wan,' the old man answered, and his eyes smiled; 'fear nothing. He will not know.'

'Know what, Ni-ching-tang?'

'That you are late — again.'

Sin-wan leered.

'It comes of going to seek a little wife,' he said.

'Poh! it is nothing — if you are not seen. But a wife?'

'Ah-lin is her name, and she is the daughter of Lan-sing and Nan-lin, his wife. We will marry this moon. She is well formed, both in face and body.'

'What, with small feet too?'

'No small feet; but well formed in face and body.'

'And she lives where?'

'In the third quarter, and the main street.'

'Why, I have a son who lives near the main street of the third quarter.'

'And what is your son's name, Ni-ching-tang?'

Sin-wan did not notice that Ni-ching-tang paused a second before he answered.

‘My son is called Cheng-lu,’ he said.

Then Sin-wan passed on, and entered the prison.

As he went in, he took from his bosom a small cylinder of ebony, round which clung a roll of silk-paper.

On the paper were six lines of writing, each starting from the top and going down to the bottom. Each line started with a date, and underneath the date came the instructions for that day.

This document had been painted by Yen How, with his own hands.

Yen How had stood over John Hardy, with watch and stethoscope in his hands. John had lain bound on his back on the marble floor.

Yen How had examined him from head to foot. He had felt the texture of his muscles, had palpated the calves of his legs, had held his pulse, watch in hand. He had applied the stethoscope to John’s chest, and heard the wheeze; he had laid it over his heart, and made an estimate of the exact timbre of the beats, systole and diastole, venous and arterial.

When it was over, he knew the precise truth about Hardy’s vitality, its quantity, its intensity, its whole diathesis; he knew just how much mental and physical torture the lad could bear, and for how long, without an actual cessation of life.

He was not in a hurry. He waited — Hardy was well fed and nourished. It was over a week before the torture began.

Now, when Sin-wan opened the door behind which John lay in sleep, Ada Seward would no longer have recognised the pretty boy who had sat beside her in the music-hall, nor Miss Jay the gallant fellow who had made her start in an alarm of self-retention.

Broad streaks of absolute white mingled with his long fair hair. His bony hands clutched and trembled in his sleep like the hands of some aged miser.

At the first faint sound of the key, he sprang with a bound straight to his feet, wide awake. He had learned to be afraid now.

Sin-wan, as he turned the key, muttered something to two men who were now with him. They went away up a narrow stairway into a room above.

He gave a final glance at the directions under Day IV. on the silken scroll, and with studious brow ran over the points on his fingers. This was the fifth scroll of the kind, all covering a space of six days, which Sin-wan had studied.

Having satisfied himself that all was ready, and his instructions well in his head, Sin-wan entered the chamber and closed the door behind him.

The sight of that face had become a pang and a sickness to the soul of Hardy. To all his tortures it was an added torture. It grinned in his nightmares. It was the devil of his hell.

He sank back in a corner, pale as death.

Sin-wan never brought him his food; so that Sin-wan's face was associated in his mind only with agony. Yen How, who knew the mind and its secrets, had willed it so.

The room was not very small, but it was of stone, and damp. However, in one corner was a bed which was nothing less than luxurious, the coverings being of fine, padded silk. Hardy had not suffered from cold; still less from hunger or thirst.

These were tortures far and away too elementary and obvious to occur to such a mind as that of Yen How. The body, by itself, is capable of intense pangs; but never is torture exquisite when it is wholly divorced from the mind.

Yen How's profound knowledge of this fact' was proved when he said to himself:

'One of his tortures shall consist in the daily sight of — a Face.'

Beside the quilted bed, there were in the chamber a table, on which was water and wine: near it, a cushioned chair; and a stool made of a hard greenish-coloured wood, provided with a straight upright back, and cross-pieces in the legs. It could not be moved. It was cramped by iron rivets to the flooring.

The room was lighted by three Chinese lanterns which hung above Hardy's reach, let down through holes in the ceiling a short way.

Sometimes one, or two, or even the three, went out, through some carelessness of the attendants; and even when they all burned, there was not much light. But Hardy's eyes, long accustomed, saw everything.

One of the ingenuities of pain to which he had been subjected consisted in the mere appearance of Sin-wan. Once Sin-wan had entered, leered round, and retired. The next day he entered, leered round, and retired. Was the ordeal over, then? A heavenly hope leapt in Hardy. The next day Sin-wan appeared with a brazier crowded with white-hot wires.

Several times lately Sin-wan had entered, leered round, and retired. With every new entrance now, John hoped that on *this* day no new sword would pierce him. For to-morrow he cared not — only for *this* day his spirit cried to Heaven. But on many a day Heaven turned her ear from him.

He breathed in an agony of Hope, in an Arctic Hell of Fear.

In the course of weeks his great mind had quite collapsed. He was now utterly demoralised and craven.

He knew neither morning nor night. He had lost count of the days and the weeks.

He did not commit suicide, because, at first, the means were not ready at his hand. It is not an easy matter for a man to dash his brains against a wall. Later, when he looked round for the means to kill himself, an intense cowardice seized him. He clung to life — only to life. Just one little spark,

too, of his innate stubbornness lingered. After a torture, he would pray aloud that Heaven would send its swift Messenger upon him; but his obstinate will to live returned, if a day of peace was granted him.

Now, as Sin-wan showed his face, he cringed against the wall with staring eyes of expectancy.

Was this a day of torture? or a day of grace?

What added a touch of intensest horror to the relation between this boy and this man was the fact that they had never exchanged a word. They were as remote and divided as two creatures of different planets. Sin-wan did not know a word of English, nor John of Chinese.

A day of torture, or of grace? He had ceased to care for the morrow; but *to-day* ...

A wild hope stabbed his heart. Sin-wan had no sort of implement about him. He could not torture without an implement. It was a day of — grace, then?

No. The Chinaman walked to the cabinet in a corner where lay some cords. And he lifted them on his forearm, and he came to where John, half-standing, half-falling, cowered.

John had long ceased to make any resistance to the binding process.

During the operation this time he fainted. But terror woke him. He was placed on the high-backed stool, his arms bound behind the back, and his chest, high up to the neck, upon it. Underneath, his shoeless feet were bound to the cross-pieces.

He could not move his head backward, for the chair-back prevented him; forward, he could move it about fifteen degrees, and from side to side about thirty.

What was in store for him? He was wide awake now. With starting eyeballs he waited.

Five minutes passed.

Then Sin-wan produced something.

It was a leather strap, four and a half inches broad, sixteen long. At the ends were clasps.

He put it round Hardy's neck and clasped it. And now Hardy could move his head neither backward, forward, nor sideward.

He sat with elevated chin, staring — a gaze of horror into vacancy. Yet he felt no pain.

He waited five more minutes, and the dim thought that reeled within his brain in a vertigo of woe was this: how long? how long, O Lord?

Five minutes, and then five more: and then he felt — something.

Yet it gave him no pain.

It was a drop of fluid — water, in fact — which had fallen upon his head from above.

He waited half a minute, and it came again 3 and half a minute, and it came again. And so, regularly, every half-minute it came for some ten minutes.

This, of itself, to an ordinary person, would be a misery. But by this time John Hardy was so familiarised with agony that to him it was simply nothing. The slowly-dropping water collected on his head, and was trickling down his face, when he began to wonder, with a species of glad incredulity, whether this could be meant as a new torture.

He could have borne it all the night, and all the day, and thanked God for His clemency.

Suddenly he lanced a horrid shriek.

A drop of *something else* had fallen upon his head, and eaten into his scalp. It was a drop of strong oil of vitriol.

* * * * *

Would the falling of the vitriol continue? or the falling of the water?

The next drop was a drop of water.

But if it had been vitriol, and vitriol thenceforth regularly, Hardy's agonies would have been far less monstrous than, in fact, they were.

In this was manifested the profundity of Yen How, that he knew how exquisitely to intensify the pangs of the body by means of the travail of the soul.

The next drop was water, and the next was water, and the next was water, and the next was — vitriol!

And now John Hardy cried out against Heaven, straining at his cords, and bawling like a bull.

But drop by drop from the ceiling fell the implacable fluid; not so many drops of water, and then a drop of vitriol, but with crafty variations, sometimes two drops of vitriol at a time, and then for minutes not another.

Yen How, however, knew his craft too well to make such an ordeal last very long. Sin-wan had instructions that, as soon as the victim showed signs of madness or collapse, the torture should cease.

Accordingly, when Hardy ceased to cry aloud, and a reddish stream trickled down his chin, his bands were undone, and Sin-wan cast his unconscious body on the bed.

Just about the time that he did so, Ah-lin was standing before the incense-stick booth of Foo-chee.

'It is not that I am bold, Foo-chee,' she said, 'that I come here to speak. But I must say what I have in my mind.'

Here was blessedness, and a wringing of the hands, and an embarrassment of the pleased eyelids, and the favour of the upper gods, for Foo-chee.

‘It is an incense-stick that you desire,’ he said, ‘and your name is Ah-lin, for I know it. And all the incense-sticks which I have are yours. For why? Because we stand and step together each day before sundown in the same company of the drilled — no other reason.’

‘It is a lie, Foo-chee,’ said Ah-lin, ‘there is another reason — though I cannot guess what it can be. But whatever the reason be, you must now throw it quite away. It was not for an incense-stick that I came — though incense-sticks are pleasant, and I have long desired one — but to tell you just that. You must throw it quite away.’

‘And for why?’

‘Because another, who is greater than you, wants just the thing that you want. If you get that thing, he will kill you. In order that he may not kill you, he shall have the thing.’

‘Cruel Ah-lin!

‘No, not I. You say what is not, not knowing, Foo-chee. But he will kill you; therefore he shall have what you desire.’

‘Then I shall kill myself, not having what I desire.’

‘Cruel Foo-chee!’

‘You will, then, feel happy if I live, Ah-lin?’

‘Yes; and therefore I shall make myself feel unhappy by giving to another what you desire, in order that I may feel happy at the same time in knowing that you live.’

‘To feel happy and unhappy at the same time is mixed, Ah-lin.’

‘But it is better, Foo-chee, to feel happy and unhappy through a long lifetime than to feel happy for a little hour, and then die.’

Here was the practicality of the Woman. Foo-chee pondered it. Then he lifted his head and said:

‘There is a riddle somewhere which I cannot solve, Ah-lin. Let us go, instead, to the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li for a meal, with fresh tea. And with you take three of these incense-sticks.’

Ah-lin hesitated, and was lost. Foo-chee drew down the flap over his booth, and carefully adjusted the ring to the staple; then together they walked off on their heels; and their swinging pigtails met and touched, as it were knowingly, behind them.

And at the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li they ate a hearty meal, with a whole *mitin* of fresh tea-leaves.

They were in the sweep of the force which underlies the world. It was the doing of the upper gods.

CHAPTER XVII. THE CHINESE IRON



THE NEXT DAY John Hardy, at the hour of evening, sat in his corner, watching his door with a kind of wild-beast sullenness.

His nerves had an instinct of the hour when Sin-wan was due to appear.

So sick was his soul with misery after the ordeal of the day before, that he had eaten nothing since. His food lay untasted on the table.

He sat sprawling with disjected limbs on the floor, watching the point of Sin-wan's expected entrance through the fierce and sullen corners of his eyes.

He had often had the thought of braining Sin-wan with one of the porcelain platters, or of strangling him with his pigtail, or with one of the ropes used to bind himself. As he sat there the thought now recurred to him. His brain was in that condition in which thoughts are no longer semi-voluntary, but seem to come and go at random of their own motion, like winds through the vacant heaven. He had, however, sufficient reason left to give no entertainment to this thought. His chance, if he ever had it, was long past. He was too hopelessly frail now.

He sat long, expecting. One of his lanterns went out; then another; in half an hour the third. He was in darkness.

Suddenly the lad started as though a sword had pierced him.

He looked eagerly towards the door; and he said to himself, 'No, no.' It was too incredible; he must be mad.

'Mad, mad,' he moaned, his head buried in his two arms, as he rocked himself slowly to and fro, with a regular motion like a pendulum. So he

went on for about half an hour, his face hidden, with sometimes a moan, and sometimes a word. ‘What have I done?’ he said wearily, in the thinnest whine: What have I done — O God, Father, God? ... But now I am mad, mad...

> It had seemed to him, as the third lantern went out and left him in darkness, that, at the edge of the door, there was a long streak of semi-light — *that the door was open I*

He had sense enough to know that the condition of his mind was one far and away removed from a state of ordinary sanity; that his senses were now quite capable of playing him tricks. But when, after a long time, he lifted his head, there, still before his eyes, was the streak of light.

He sprang to his feet, and his pallor of death assumed a hue of even more absolute wanness. Groping limpingly along the walls, he made toward the door. But, on the whole, it was rather to assure himself of the optical delusion which he supposed, than with the expectation of finding the door really open.

But the door was, really, open.

What made his heart go bumping and bounding within his ribs was the look of Providence — the hint of God’s finger — in the fact of the lanterns *all* going out at the very time when the door, by some extraordinary means, had become unfastened.

But though one step meant salvation, and one instant’s delay meant death, yet could he not take the step. The sudden shock of hope — the sudden suspicion of Heaven — all but killed him. He dropped back against the wall, panting, panting, trying with his right hand to force back the violent galloping of his heart.

But the instant that he could move, he moved. With wide mouth and gasping chest, he cautiously pushed back the door, and passed through it.

Toward what? Toward certain capture? It must not be supposed that he was now in a mental condition to give this question even a single thought. He went through the open door precisely in the way in which a wild animal passes through the open door of its cage — instinctively toward liberty. He lived by moments. At *this* moment he was free; to the next lie gave not a thought. He simply walked forward as a stream flows downwards — because it is a law of nature.

He found himself in a long corridor; and yonder, half-way down the corridor, was — a man.

The man's back was toward John; and he was bending down, cleaning a blue-glass lantern.

It was at this sight that the first notion of the impossibility of his ultimate escape occurred to Hardy; and with this appreciation of the impossibility, came also the ravenous Desire, the frenzied Hope. As he slid swiftly back behind the door, and drew it upon himself, he was no longer a mere wild creature of instinct. He looked forward — he reasoned.

He waited, fearing worse than death to stir the door. Then he had a sudden horror which pricked him like a goad to action — if Sin-wan came? It was his hour!

He very slightly pushed back the door, and peeped out. The corridor was empty.

He ran now, with the stealthy feet of a man treading on hot embers. His feet were bare and made no sound. He had on a shirt and trousers. But the shirt was filthy, and the trousers flapped in long rags all down his legs. His hair reached to his shoulders.

At the end of the corridor was a door. He pushed it lightly. It did not move. He forced his shoulder against it. It was locked.

He was as much a prisoner as before, then? Immediately after the first intolerable sinking of the heart he could not believe it. A vague, but real, faith was in him now. The mere fact that he was where he was proved Providence. He believed dimly that God now was willing him to be free, wild as the idea was, far off as the probability might be.

He looked round for some means of escape; and there, in fact, was a tall window in the side of the corridor, slightly open.

He ran to it, and looked down. It opened upon another corridor twenty feet below.

Twenty feet! The distance was infinite.

Underneath his flapping rags one could see the red and livid patchwork of his flesh, where it had been nipped and pinched and burned and pricked and bruised in half a hundred agonies. How could he leap twenty feet? It was as dreadful to him as to an infant. Like the very aged, he was afraid 'of that which is high.'

But as he looked again he saw a short rope hanging over the window-sill by which he could help himself down.

And now, at this sight, it is a wonder that some suspicion of the fact that all these happy chances were only part of another elaborate torture did not enter his head. But his brain was so preoccupied with the idea of *Providence*, that nothing of the sort occurred to him.

With endless pains he managed, with the help of the rope, to reach the lower corridor; and at once, with the same stealthy trepidation, he set out, running in the same direction in which he had so far come.

At the end of this corridor also was a door; and at his push it opened.

Now he was in yet another corridor, at right angles to the first and second. In which direction should he turn? He did not care. He would be

guided right by the Hand that led him. Away to the right he went with tottering gait, treading on embers, hugging the wall.

If only his heart would cease its awful thumping! Surely, surely, through all that vast building, through all Peking, they would hear the echoes of that labouring bosom! So it seemed to him.

His white, wide lips were twisted awry in his effort to take in and expel his noisy breath.

As he ran in this excess of agitation, he suddenly remembered the battle of Shoreham, how he had been cool in the midst of sounding cannon and angry war. Could he not still be so? Was he so much changed? He made a weak effort — a faint self-assertion of the old John Hardy. But in another instant he forgot the effort. It was far from him.

He reached the end of the corridor, and was about to turn to the left, when, there before him, he saw two Chinamen, near to him, talking. They were standing in the middle of the passage which he had to pass.

Had they seen him? Had they not heard the labour of his heart? Apparently not: they remained deep in talk.

Must he lurk till they moved away? Would they not come his way?

Suddenly, behind him, down the length of the corridor in which he stood, he heard a sound. He looked and saw a man approaching him. He was between two dangers.

The man's eyes were bent meditatively upon the ground. He came swinging toward Hardy.

The night had not yet come, though it was near. The corridor in which the two conversed was not dark, but it was much dimmer than that in which John stood. It was necessary for him to move — the third man was coming near.

He stole forward, inch by inch, sideways, with his chest against the wall, and his face twisted round, watching the two talkers. He came near them — he was opposite to them — by a stretched-out arm they could touch him.

Stealthily he crept, slowly as the movement of a glacier; he was past them. And he was no sooner past them than, with incautious haste, eager only to be on — to be on — he sped away. During those instants of slow motion he had passed through all the terrors of the grave.

The two men calmly continued their talk; the third came up and joined them. Hardy went onwards undisturbed.

For quite half an hour he stole forward, all leers and tremors, like a thief in the night, through three halls, over a courtyard, along two more corridors, without anywhere meeting any one.

The slumbrous gloaming deepened. He began to think himself lost in this endless structure, without hope of finding exit.

But at last he saw an oblong of distinctly lesser obscurity; he knew that this must be a door of exit from the prison.

Could it be true? Was he really about to escape into the open day — under the sky, the clouds? He leapt forward. And as he did so, a man stood in the doorway, and leant his back against the door-post.

It was far from light now, but Hardy would have felt the presence of that form and face in the darkest midnight. It was Sin-wan.

John was still in full career to make for the door, when his eyes fell upon this man; and like a shying horse he bolted aside. A door, as he touched the wall, gave way before his pressure. He rushed through, mad to put a world of distance between him and that face. As he hasted forward, in the dark now, he stepped upon nothing, and tumbled headlong down a flight of stone stairs.

He had hardly time to pick himself up when he heard that some one was behind him, descending the stairs, humming a tune. And he knew that it was Sin-wan.

Off he rushed again; and again, in five minutes, there was light. He stood between two walls, about five feet apart, about ten feet long; and at the end of them was a portal, painted green, half open; and beyond the portal, he saw — trees!

He was free! and yet he shuddered. Behind him was Sin-wan, coming, coming; and before him the open gate; but the whole of the space between him and the gate, and between the two walls, was paved with broken glass.

There was not an inch of harmless ground upon which to place his naked feet.

But Sin-wan was behind. Hardy stepped forward, and reached the gate, and passed through it, running.

Every footprint which he left behind now was a footprint of blood.

Still onward, panting heart! The hand with which He leads is surely rough — but still, is *He* not leading?

And now for the bridge of marble ahead, which spans the moat. He reaches it, and starts and stops.

There, in the middle of the bridge, leaning over the parapet, looking at the water, is a man.

This gauntlet also Hardy must run. Crouching against the opposite parapet he crawls forward.

His lust to be free is now a thousand thousand times more intense than ever before. Every danger that he has escaped has added to his terror a deeper terror, to his hope a wilder frenzy. Like a beast he crawls forward on hands and knees, step by step, without a sound.

But as he is exactly opposite the man, the man turns quite round. Hardy leaps to his feet. They are face to face, and eye to eye.

All is over, then. He has been seen.

But no! What mean those groping hands, that hesitating step, as the man turns slowly away? Is he *blind*? Can those eyes see *nothing*? So John Hardy believes. Here, at least, is Providence, and the leading Hand.

Away, once more, towards the palace of Yen How, and then down the long avenues to the portal of the Imperial City. This part of the way he remembers, having passed through it before. Onward, in the shade of the great trees, he limps, leaving behind him his trail of blood. He meets no one. He is under the open sky. Among the leaves sighs the evening wind.

He reaches the great portal, and, strange to say, there is no one there. He passes out. He is in an open space — beyond the Imperial walls — which properly belongs to the ‘Chinese City.’

So far has he escaped. A feeling of absolute security rushes upon him, and with it an overwhelming, speechless gratitude. He drops to his knees; his face turns upward in an ecstatic agony of love to the skies, washed in tears; out stretch his arms in adoration.

But between his eyes and the sky comes a face, and between his stretched-out arms comes a form. He leaps with a shriek to his feet, recognises the face of Yen How, and faints in Yen How’s arms.

The slightest possible smile wrinkled the corners of Yen How’s eyes.

‘Poh!’ he said in English, ‘it is nothing. Why such a cry as that? It is your own fault, boy. You ought to have known that Providence — if there is such a thing — never works in these outright ways. Yen How’s Providence does — but Yen How is a smaller fellow altogether than the Big One above — if He is there at all. Is He there? *Is He there?* Ah! — may be, and may be not. But just now it is Yen How for you, and not He. The man cleaning the

lanterns, and the men talking together, and Sin-wan, and the blind man — they all saw you, you know, boy, because Yen How f put them there to see you. And it is hard to escape from Yen How, whose Ada Seward you have been kissing, and whom you have tried to shoot, lillee English boy. And Yen How is not done with you yet — not yet — not yet. But those English!’ — here he ceased to speak to the unconscious form in his arms, and continued his meditative soliloquy in Chinese — * those English! They are just like devils for fighting! Only 150 or 200 of them, they say, at Kiao-Chau, and six weeks gone, and they not killed off yet. Stupid Japanese ship-captains to let them get away in that fashion. However — ah, lillee English kisser,’ — he addressed John Hardy again ‘ — wouldn’t you like to be with the 200 white men at Kiao-Chau now? I think you might be able to play some tricks with their help, too. But Yen How has you tight — Yen How, the toad, the frog, eh? Stop, though! isn’t there something in your Bible about a plague of frogs in the land of Egypt in the Pharaohs’ time? Yes, surely — yes. Well, now, how would you like a little plague of frogs in your land of England, eh? Ah, well, it is near. It is not far off now...’

At this point a man appeared; Yen How handed him the limp body of Hardy, and walked up and down a long time that night under the shade of the trees of the Imperial avenues.

About this time there were two men outside the Imperial precincts who ought to have been within them. One was Sin-wan, and the other was the father of Foo-chee, Ni-ching-tang.

Ni-ching-tang went to the dwelling of his son Foo-chee, whom he loved, in order that he might see Foo-chee, and receive from him the reverences due to a father. And, lo, Foo-chee was not there; and Foo-chee’s booth was deserted.

Said Ni-ching-tang:

‘Now where can Foo-chee be?’

Sin-wan went to the dwelling of his promised wife, Ah-lin, to see her, and receive from her the reverences due to a husband that is to be. And lo, Ah-lin was not there.

So Sin-wan said:

‘Now where can Ah-lin be?’

Now Ni-ching-tang was shrewd, and Sin-wan was shrewd. So Sin-wan said:

‘Ah-lin is not far from the booth of Foo-chee.’

And Ni-ching-tang said:

‘He who knows how to find Ah-lin is far on the road to the discovery of Foo-chee.’

And Sin-wan set out to go to the booth of Foo-chee, and Ni-ching-tang to go to the dwelling of Ah-lin. And midway between the dwelling of Ah-lin and the booth of Foo-chee these two men met in the street.

It was Ni-ching-tang who spoke.

‘Ho! ho! — late hours — late hours,’ he said (and he half hid his nose behind a sportive hand) — ‘Mate hours, and a merry courting-time—’

Sin-wan was struck dumb. Ni-ching-tang knew that Sin-wan had no right to be out of bounds, but Sin-wan did not know that Ni-ching-tang had no right.

‘A merry courting-time?’ said Sin-wan at last; * but it is not so with me, Ni-ching-tang.’

‘Well, after all, pleasure is pleasant to feel,’ answered Ni-ching-tang, still harping on the same string; ‘and they will not know in the prison, Sin-wan, — for who will tell them?’

‘Pleasure is pleasant to feel, yes,’ said Sin-wan; but it is not pleasure which I am feeling now, Ni-ching-tang.’

‘And why not, Sin-wan?’

‘Because Ah-lin, of whom I told you, is away from her home; and my mind is telling me that she is making some one else feel pleasant instead of me.’

‘Ho! that is bad. And who is that some one, Sin-wan?’

‘He is called Foo-chee.’

‘Soh! And you are now looking for Ah-lin? — I see.’

‘I am looking for Foo-chee.’

‘And for why?’

‘To kill him.’

‘Soh! to kill Foo-chee. Well, that is the only way. But has Foo-chee no brother, no father, who will kill you back again?’

‘I do not know.’

‘With keen tortures?’

‘Poh! I do not think of that.’

‘With dreadful agonies of the brain and the liver, Sin-wan?’

‘No! I do not think of that. He is a brotherless dog, a seller of incense-sticks.’

‘Well — well, do your will, Sin-wan. It is the only way. As for me, I am not feeling happy, too. I have a son, who has an enemy. And I am going to look for my son now, that I may hear from him whether it will be necessary for me to kill his enemy or no.’

‘Well, then, may you do well, Ni-ching-tang.’

‘And you, may you do well, Sin-wan!’

And so they parted. But they neither of them found Ah-lin or Foo-chee that night; for they did not think of looking into the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li, where they two again were that night.

So Sin-wan and Ni-ching-tang hurried back, both of them, to the Imperial precincts, making an inward vow that, on the next night, they would procure more time, and do better.

CHAPTER XVIII. SIN-WAN



THE NEXT EVENING, at about six, John Hardy lay on his back on the bed of his prison.

He was conscious that it was near the hour when Sin-wan appeared.

His feet were so gashed and raw from his run over the glass, that he had not stood since he had been thrown upon the bed. For two days he had eaten nothing, being sick, sick. He was not far from death now.

How long, O Lord? How long? This was the burden of his feeble thought.

But he retained an intense interest in the nature of the added pangs which *this* day had in store for him.

When the key turned, he sprang upright, though, at the effort, the wounds in his feet broke into fresh bleeding.

Sin-wan entered, and at his entrance this time John Hardy's flesh writhed like the flesh of a twisting serpent from his feet to the roots of his hair.

Fire was the instrument of torture at which he felt the deepest horror. And Sin-wan had now with him a brazier, which swung from his fingers by a handle.

In the brazier glowed and flushed the living coals of flame.

He had in his hand no other instrument that John could see. But John, by this time, had begun to learn that when the instruments were at first invisible, then, in general, the agony was the most relentless.

And now, at the sight of the flame, feeling himself too hopelessly feeble to pass through any further hell that day, Hardy, by an impulse, did what he

had never done before. He fell upon his knees, and stretched out his clasped hands in an attitude of meek supplication to the Chinaman.

Sin-wan was a man; he had the limbs and bodily structure of the human being. Who could say if within him, too, some trace of the divine origin of man might not linger, some throe of love, some sob of pity? In John's eyes, as he knelt, cried a world of mute pleading.

But the Chinaman showed no sign of having seen him. He deposited the brazier in a farther corner, took some small metal objects from a fold of his robe, dropped them on the floor, and approached the kneeling form. He proceeded to bind him as before, arms and feet, to the chair. But this time, first of all, he took off John's shirt from the upper part of his body, leaving it to hang downward from the navel.

This done, he went towards the fire, took up two of the six small metal objects which he had dropped, and put them on the fire to heat.

The six objects consisted of four tiny Latin capital-letters in iron; they were the letters A, S, Y, H — the initials of Ada Seward and Yen How; there were also a roll of iron wire and a pair of pincers.

It was the intention of Yen How to print the four letters all over the body of John Hardy — on his breast, on his two arms, on his thighs, on his back; two at a time; two each day.

And the letters of the first day, as Yen How had ordained in compliment to his queen, were to be A and S.

But, as usual, Yen How had no idea of inflicting the mere brutal pang of a burn upon his victim; some mental refinement of pain must mix with the scream of the physical nerves.

Sin-wan took one of the two iron letters from the fire with the pincers, and holding it from him, approached Hardy. The iron emitted a red glow, and seemed to burn into the staring eyesight of the victim.

When his bare chest could feel the radiated heat, his torturer stood, holding the metal steadily still. And so, for a few minutes, remained; then returned and replaced the iron in the fire, without having touched John with it.

And now he climbed and stood upon the table, the roll of wire in his hand. The three lanterns hung from the ceiling by hooks near to open spaces in the boarding of the ceiling, through which the candles were placed in the lanterns. Over one of these hooks Sin-wan threw a length of wire; and over another length of wire. The hooks were near to each other.

With one end of each of the two pieces of wire he made a half-loop; and at once he hurried to the fire, snatched up the red-hot letter A with the pincers, and hung it upon one of the loops; then the S, and hung it upon the other. Their weight was sufficient to make the wires run through their supporting hooks; and they fell upon the marble floor.

Sin-wan now gathered the other two ends of wire and secured them to a point in the wall, having drawn the two letters some inches from the ground. In his hand he held a piece of bamboo, and with this, standing in a line with the wires, he struck first one of the letters, then the other, gently forward.

The two letters began to swing to and fro through the chamber, with uneven motions, one this way, one that. And right in the line of their movement sat John Hardy.

It depended entirely upon the force of the propulsions which Sin-wan imparted to the letters with the bamboo, whether or no they touched the naked chest of the bound victim.

Sometimes they touched, and left behind them, as they swung back, a whiff of smoke. Sometimes they touched twice in succession, one, or both.

Sometimes they were only expected — with shrinking horror, and whistling breath, — and did not touch at all.

It was a monstrous torture — the worst he had yet suffered — this coquetry of pain — these fleeting, incalculable kisses of the hot and dancing letters. For every kiss — a whiff of smoke.

Let us draw a veil over his agonies. His mouth was wide, bawling — his eyes straining from their sockets; and at the tension of every fibre of his soul and body, his hair whitened — his skin grew sere — he lived through many a year — he became an old man.

It was some twenty minutes before the see-saw of the swinging wires ceased. Sin-wan hurriedly left his post, ran toward John, and bound his eyes with a cloth. What happened within the next five minutes John did not know. He strained his ear to detect a sound, though he kept on mechanically bawling in a lower key. But he heard nothing. In reality, Sin-wan was reheating the metals to redness; and his noiselessness had for its motive the fact that he wished to take the victim by surprise.

When the two bits of metal were of a bright glowing red, he passed one limb of the pincers inside the top of the A, and the other limb inside the upper curve of the S, and, holding them so together, at once trotted eagerly and silently upon John.

A beastly scream broke forth, wondrously like the cry of a cat in the extreme of physical anguish. Sin-wan had suddenly clapped the hot pieces upon Hardy's right breast, and held them there. The metal sank, as into a bed of soft luxury, into the wasting flesh, fizzling forth a steaming smoke and reeking stench...

At the exact moment when his spirit fainted, and he lost the sense of pain, Foo-chee and Ah-lin met in one long embrace.

Toward this they had been drawn and swept for days, and now, as the poets say, the two trembling dew-drops had trembled into one.

It was outside the walls of Peking, and all the members of Foo-chee's and Ah-lin's company had swarmed back into the town; for the drilling of the drilled was over. And only these two were left.

And Foo-chee said:

'Ah-lin.'

And Ah-lin said:

'Foo-chee.'

And Foo-chee said:

'I am feeling happy, Ah-lin; for we are here where none can see us, and the moon which is rising there is pleasant to see, though her face is round.'

And Ah-lin said:

'Her face is broad in a laugh of joy, Foo-chee! And do you like a woman with a broad face, Foo-chee, or with a long?'

'I like a woman with a long face, Ah-lin,' said Foo-chee, 'like yours, Ah-lin.'

And Ah-lin replied:

'I am not feeling at all unhappy, Foo-chee.'

And it was then that the two dew-drops trembled into one in a long embrace.

A really long one: for it began a minute before the closing of the gates of Peking, and it lasted a minute after it. And had they had any idea of the real state of affairs, they would have felt like two very shattered and dislocated dew-drops indeed.

It was Ah-lin who woke first from her trance, and she woke from it with a start that made her pigtail wriggle, and she whispered an awful pallid word into the ear of Foo-chee, and together they started towards the gates.

They were shut out, they were hopelessly late. Peking refused them. They must spend the long night without.

Ah-lin had an instinct that this meant death for her beloved, perhaps for herself also.

They stood hand-in-hand, and the upper corners of their slanting eyes went very high indeed.

Still, a whole night hand-in-hand with the beloved is not nothing. They walked away with a happiness troubled, but not destroyed.

An hour later Sin-wan and Ni-ching-tang were ransacking a certain area of Peking, one for his son, the other for Ah-lin and her lover, but separately, unsuspected by each other. As for Sin-wan, his knife was bright and white.

‘Oh, where is Foo-chee?’ said Ni-ching-tang to himself. ‘Is my son dead?’

The suspicion grew upon him, it became a certainty. He hurried back to the Imperial City, and made inquiries for Sin-wan at the prison. Sin-wan, he was told, had obtained a scroll to pass in and out of the sacred precincts at any hour of that night.

So! Sin-wan was abroad then; and if Sin-wan was abroad, then it must be that Foo-chee was dead.

Ni-ching-tang went from the prison straight to the palace of Yen How, and he descended into the vaults wherein was his sleeping-room, and he held the reeking flame of a saucer-lamp of earthenware over a box, and into the depths of the box he dived. He brought up two blue phials and a broken joss-stick; one of the phials contained a poison, and the other a non-poisonous drug; and this last he put into his bosom.

Then he re-clasped the box; and at once he fell upon his knees, bowing his body and folded hands up and down, touching the cold plaster with his

forehead. And from his lips came groans of prayer. And he burnt incense to the gods.

Then he went up again, and out from the Imperial precincts. He, too, was provided that night with a scroll of permit.

Onwards he went, walking very fast. And as he treaded the intricacies of Peking, he was engaged in a strange continuous effort of mind: the effort to recall all the English words he had ever known.

Once, long ago, he had served in the kitchen of an English family in Canton, and had then been quite a master of pigeon English. But now he found his vocabulary wondrously small. On he went, cudgelling his brains, through the dark and swarming vastness of the city.

Ni-ching-tang was a great man, if patience alone can make a man great, for he searched all that night for Sin-wan, and did not find him. So was Sin-wan a great man, if patience can make a man great, for he searched all that night for Foo-chee, and did not find him.

But towards the break of day, as he sat drinking *samshu* in a den, Sin-wan had an idea. He was a drunkard, and could be inspired by drink; nor was he now sober. His idea was that Ah-lin and Foo-chee were not in the city at all, but without it.

He went back once more to the dwelling of Ah-lin to inquire if she had not yet come home. And then, hearing that she had not, he said:

‘Fearing me, they have fled from the city together, and are now at Tung-chow. To Tung-chow, therefore, I will go. For the edge of my knife has the itch this night, till Foo-chee scratch it for me.’

But it happened that while Sin-wan was crying aloud from the street to inquire for Ah-lin, Ni-ching-tang had come to inquire also whether one Ah-lin was there. And as the day was prone to break, Ni-ching-tang, far behind

Sin-wan, was cautiously shadowing him towards the city-gate which leads out upon the Tung-chow road.

Sin-wan waited there twenty minutes, and when the gates opened, he passed swiftly through under the bellies of the crowding camels, the gall of malice and yellow jealousy rankling bitterly in his jaundiced soul.

To kill — to hew, and slice, and stab — a ravening hunger for this red breakfast was upon Sin-wan. He had had a comfortless night, a night of dark thought and impulse, and the hot *samshu* was talking hot things to his head.

And surely the gods were on his side — anxious for nothing that morning were they but how to provide a red breakfast for Sin-wan! See how they draw up the curtains of night for him; and now the day has that very-early-morning grayness for which one can find no adjective to express its utter yawniness; and now, *just as it is light enough*, Something makes Sin-wan turn his head to the left — and he sees.

But poor Ni-ching-tang is struggling frantically among the mules and camels, which press inwards and outwards through the just-opened gateway; and he has got jammed there, and the man is nearly mad in his agonised struggle to be free; for Sin-wan has passed through, and he has lost him.

Foo-chee, interlaced with Ah-lin, was fast asleep, as was also Ah-lin, they half-propped against the outer surface of the wall, between two buttresses, not very far from the gates.

Sin-wan walked up to them, smiling, lest one or the other should be awake, and see him; and the knife-handle was in his palm, and the blade up his wide sleeves. And when he was right over them, and saw how they breathed heavily, and how the confidence of old love was in their careless embrace, he drove the knife first into Ah-lin with a loud breath, and she

sighed, and died. And then, with loud breaths, he drove it several times into Foo-chee, and he sighed, and died. And then into Ah-lin again, and then into Foo-chee again, he drove his knife.

‘Dog’s gall,’ he said, as he turned away, and found himself face to face with Ni-ching-tang.

‘What, Sin-wan, is that you?’ said Ni-ching-tang; ‘oh, *I* can see what you have been after. Ho! ho!’

‘Those are they I told you of,’ said Sin-wan. ‘I have done what I said I would do, Ni-ching-tang.’

‘So I see, Sin-wan! Well, it is the only way — the only way.’

‘As for you, you will tell no one, Ni-ching-tang?’

‘Poh! not I. For why should I? I who have known you these months, and the two dead not at all. Phew! see how they lie — still embraced. Are you sure they are well dead, Sin-wan?’

‘Oh, well dead.’

‘They should be. The man — he has one, two, three, four, five stabs — yes, five — ugly wounds, too. The knife went deep each time. What was his name? — Foo-chee? Ah, well, no more Foo-chee now — no more Foo-chee.’

‘Let us be going, Ni-ching-tang. For watching dead dogs is not pleasant to the corners of the eyeballs.’

‘But/feel pleasure while looking upon them, Sin-wan; and the middle of the eye is not offended by the sight of them embracing together — young things, too. *But you* leer obliquely upon them, Sin-wan, having slain them, through the corners of your eyeballs, and so receive disagreeable feelings from their sight.’

‘Still, let us be going — let us be moving away, Ni-ching-tang.’

‘Well, as you wish it, Sin-wan, let us be moving. But they lie very well together, Foo-chee and Ah-lin — Foo-chee, with his five gashed wounds, and her arm behind his neck. A young man, too, he seems to me — a seller of incense-sticks, I think you said. No more incense-sticks now for Foo-chee — and no more Foo-chee now at all, Sin-wan. Well, well — well, well. It was Foo-chee and Ah-lin; and now it is no Ah-lin any more, and no Foo-chee at all. Five stabs, too, and ugly wounds all. One would have done the work, but he got *five*, well home. Oh, they are well dead, Sin-wan! — have no fear. But Foo-chee has no father, I hope, no brother, to avenge his death, Sin-wan?’

‘I care not.’

‘With horrid tortures, Sin-wan?’

‘Poh! he was a brotherless dog.’

‘Well, if that is so ... But your walk is staggy, and your eye wanders. We will have a morning drink together in a drink-place which I know, and then to the day’s work...’

They re-entered the gates. A reaction had come now upon Sin-wan; his nerves were unstrung from their high tension, and the *samshu* swam stalely in his turgid brain. He followed Ni-ching-tang as a lamb to the slaughter.

Ni-ching-tang led him down into a foul, dark cellar, where drink was placed before them. And into one of the two calabash-cups Ni-ching-tang poured a liquid from a blue phial.

Sin-wan had thrown himself sullenly upon a plank-projection near the black-earthen floor, and Ni-ching-tang handed him the draught.

CHAPTER XIX. 'THE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY'



THE DRAUGHT WAS non-poisonous; but Sin-wan had hardly drunk half the contents of the cup when he fell back, fast asleep.

And now, when no eye but God's could see him, the malice of a fiend worked and twisted in the face of Ni-ching-tang. He took Sin-wan's knife, and he ran the edge of the blade gently, almost playfully, along Sin-wan's throat, and over his face, and round the roots of his pigtail, revelling in his sense of power, wallowing in that sweet lust of cruelty which brings to the Chinaman the same keen delight which bodily forms of enjoyment bring to the Western.

He ran the knife-edge along Sin-wan's skin; but he had not the least intention of hurting him. The pleasure of self-restraint with which he kept his itching fingers from violence was exquisite.

The Chinese theory of vengeance is not, like the Hebrew, 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; it is, 'two eyes for an eye, and thirty-two teeth for a tooth.'

Ni-ching-tang could easily have killed Sin-wan, as he slept there; but, had he done so, he would have despised himself as a weak and bungling boor.

For vengeance to be complete and satisfying, the victim must know *who* it is that is taking vengeance upon him, and *why* he is doing it; and the avenger must know that the victim knows. Under these conditions, the longer the period which the vengeance occupies in its accomplishment, the sweeter the cud of satisfaction which the avenger chews.

Ni-ching-tang intended that, for the murder of his son, Sin-wan should suffer weeks of torture before death. And although it was beyond his power to inflict those tortures with his own hand (as he would have wished), yet he knew that it was easy for him to cause them to be inflicted by hands stronger than his own.

He did not lose much time in the self-indulgence of running the knife-edge over Sin-wan's throat. Presently he put down the knife, and he dived his hand into Sin-wan's bosom. From thence he took out Sin-wan's permit to pass in and out of the Imperial gates, and also an Imperial Mandate ordering the Keeper of the Prison Keys to deliver a certain key to the presenter of the Mandate.

With these two rolls in his own bosom, Ni-ching-tang ascended the narrow earthen steps, and at the entrance above met the keeper of the drink-place yawning his eyes into invisibility against the door. Ni-ching-tang told him that a man, holding position in the Imperial precincts, was asleep below, and did not wish to be roused.

'Let him sleep: he will wake himself,' said Ni-ching-tang.

Then he sallied forth. He twisted at a steady trot among a number of alleys, and stopped at a gaudy bamboo-umbrella booth, where an early-morning merchant was lounging desolately. Ni-ching-tang spoke some hurried words in the merchant's ear, and the merchant nodded, listening, then disappeared down a court, and in three minutes returned, leading a mule by a rope.

Ni-ching-tang scrambled on to the back of the mule, tossed his hand in token of thanks, drove his heels into the outstanding ribs, and went galloping away.

He traversed in this way two lengths of intervening street, and, still galloping, passed through the city gate which he had lately entered with

Sin-wan. He turned the mule's head eastward toward Tung-chow.

Tung-chow, as we have said, is a village about four, or possibly five, miles from Peking. It is, as it were, the 'port' of Peking, for it stands on the Peiho, Peking itself not being a river-city.

At Tung-chow, Ni-ching-tang had a nephew. And this nephew was the owner of three river-boats, two of them fitted with junk-sails, the third a mule-boat, all three traders down the Peiho with Tientsin in millet, rice, and barley. In twenty minutes Ni-ching-tang, at the river-side, was talking to his nephew from the mule's back. And Ni-ching-tang said:

'Which of the three boats are here, Li-kien?'

And Li-kien replied:

'The mule-boat is here, and also the *Taku*, which lies there where you see.'

'The *Taku* has a junk-sail, Li-kien?'

'Yes.'

'Then I will buy the *Taku* from you.'

'I cannot sell the *Taku*, Ni-ching-tang.'

'It is a lie, Li-kien; for you can, and you will. At the waning of the next moon I will pay you for her three hundred taels, which is a good reward, in silver pieces. For your cousin, Foo-chee, is dead — and there will be no more Foo-chee any more now at all, Li-kien; for he has been murdered by five stabs, and ugly wounds all. And it is necessary, in order that his slayer should die with horrid tortures, that you sell me your boat, the *Taku*, without much talking. And now you see that you told a lie in saying that you could not, Li-kien.'

'It was a lie,' admitted Li-kien.

'And the part which *you* shall take in avenging your kinsman,' went on Ni-ching-tang, 'shall be this, Li-kien. You will put on board the *Taku* rice,

and spirit, and water, and fuel, and a rudder-oar, and everything which a man may want for a voyage down the Peiho, and a voyage over the sea, during a week, or more. This you will do. And this also: you will wait here near the *Taku*, all the forenoon if it is to be so, till you see a young man come riding on a mule; he will be wrapped up from head to foot in a great mantle, so that not much of his face, and nothing of his head, shall be seen. His face shall be yellow like a Chinaman's, but give a keen look into his eyes, and you will see that he is no Chinaman, but an English dog. You will put him on board the *Taku*, Li-kien, and you will hoist the sail for him, for he is without strength, and you will send him on his way alone. And, as you send him on his way, burn an incense, that he may go to his journey's end in safety; for, if he be re-captured, Sin-wan, who slew your cousin, will be tortured, but not killed; but, if he escape wholly, then Sin-wan will be killed after he has been horribly tortured.'

Li-kien pondered, and then objected:

'But one man in the *Taku*, he must needs be cast away, unless he be—'

'He *is* a sailor, Li-kien, and do not fear. And be sure you place in the *Taku* a drawing of China, and instruments such as are used by seafaring men as the sign-posts of the ocean. For he can doubtless read such things; and it is necessary for him to arrive at Kiao-Chau, where he will meet with his countrymen, and be slain with them when they are slain: but none will know that it is *he*; and Sin-wan will die. The mule you will keep till I send for it.'

Immediately the old Chinaman turned the mule's head, and galloped back to Peking.

All his movements now were characterised by an intense haste, and yet by a certain calm which did not forsake him. He had much to do, and yet he

did not stop to think of anything; he did not forget anything; everything seemed prearranged.

Within the prison he was unknown, and he had the Imperial stamp, which opens every door, in the form of Sin-wan's papers.

When he presented himself before John Hardy he had in his hands pigments, costume, and everything ready for the necessary disguise.

At a new face Hardy started — for we see the finger of God where it is not, and where it is we see it not. John anticipated now some new torture, to be carried out by a still more subtle agent than Sin-wan.

As for Ni-ching-tang, he spoke not a word, simply doing his will swiftly on the impotent captive. He painted his face, he dressed him. And all the time he was cudgelling his brains to remember all the English words he needed to tell Hardy what he was to do.

He found, however, that there was one fact of the situation which all but balked his plans. Hardy was weaker than Ni-ching-tang had counted upon. If Hardy's mind was in as feeble a state as his body, it seemed certain that Sin-wan would not die.

He took the dazed captive under the arms, supporting him, and half-dragged him forth. And while John Hardy was still wondering to what new experience of pain he was being hurried, he was in the open air. And still Ni-ching-tang spoke no word.

With Ni-ching-tang's own permit, and with Sin-wan's, the two passed beyond the Imperial precincts, Ni-ching-tang lifting after him the lagging steps of Hardy. What was happening to him John could not dream; but yonder, beyond doubt, was the sky, and there the sailing clouds, and under them a breeze of heaven which went wandering gladly towards the sea.

It was not possible that he was free? He did not believe it. In his profound distrust of heaven and of earth, he denied it. He was mad again —

it was a new torture — the most devilish of all.

But when he found himself beyond the gates — and there around him spread the wide plain — and there, tethered to a tree drowsed the waiting mule — and there above him was the vast vault, and the free and wandering airs — what could he think? A strange, low, whimpering sound — as feeble as can be imagined — as thin as the plaintive whine of a very old and senile man — came from his lips, and two forbidden tears rolled down his cheeks.

He was wrapped in a long robe of soiled silk, which covered the hat of straw on his head and descended to his feet, hiding his rags beneath; and on his feet Ni-ching-tang had put felt slippers. Thus attired he was pushed and manoeuvred by the Chinaman to the back of the mule. The rope was put into his hand; and it was then that, for the first time, Ni-ching-tang spoke a word.

Ni-ching-tang had need of his whole English vocabulary to express now all he had to say. For quite half an hour he went on talking, and it was evident that the scheme which he was putting into execution must have been long meditated; for his instructions to Hardy how to secure his safe arrival at Kiao-Chau were as minute as possible. In his uncouth and tentative English he gave some idea of the formation of the harbour; and he also spoke of the position in which the stranded *Iphigenia* lay, pointing out to Hardy that the cruiser would serve as the chief landmark to warn him of his destination. He gave John his own name and that of his nephew. Finally, he handed John a sharp knife with which to commit suicide in case of recapture; and he ended by saying:

‘Am got you anything to question me?’

Yes: John had something to ask. He said:

£ Yes — one question.’

And he waited a minute before’ he asked it.

‘I owe nothing to Yen How, do I, for my present freedom?’

He repeated the question thrice, and no sooner had Ni-ching-tang gathered its meaning, than instantly his head went shaking in a series of vigorous ‘No’s.’

‘No, no, no,’ he went; ‘you no goee believe that, mind! You getee catch — getee catch! Yen How catchee you — sharp — killee you!’

Good; all this, then, was not due to any clemency of Yen How’s. Even *then* — at that moment of feebleness, when he was still hardly beyond his prison-walls — John Hardy shrank from hearing that there existed anything good, or human, or redeeming in the Chinese character. He was desperately and clandestinely unwilling to hear it. Some dim and far-off instinct *even then* told him that it would be necessary for him to go on believing this bad race to be *wholly* bad, *wholly* of hell; and that it was in order that he might so believe it, that the Chinese Iron had been ordained to enter into his soul.

But, with a certain reluctance, he ventured upon yet another question. He said:

‘And you, sir — what is your motive for setting me free? — Mercy? You want poor Englishman goee free? — Or you havee some other reason?’

Ni-ching-tang smiled at this simplicity of the little foreign devil, when the meaning of the question entered his head. He said:

‘Poh! you no troublee head for that. Me havee other reasons. But that nothing for you.’

Good again! he owed nothing to them.

Ni-ching-tang pointed along a road, and the mule moved.

The Chinaman, whose presence in the Imperial precincts was nearly due, stood a while and looked after the drooping figure on the mule’s back. Then he re-entered the city to arrange for the burial of his son.

John occupied two hours in accomplishing the four miles to Tung-chow, and, during this time, thrice fainted from sheer powerlessness.

But on the banks of the Peiho, Li-kien was duly waiting, and the *Taku* was in perfect readiness to receive her strange white master. By the time the alarm had spread through the Imperial precincts that, by the carelessness of his gaoler, the white prisoner had escaped, Hardy was in the middle of the Peiho, already some miles below Tung-chow.

In a wondrously short time, as the boat glided down the river, he began to lift his head, to observe, to reason, to purpose. How large was the world to him! His wan eye turned whitely upward, and dwelt upon the sky; one great sob thronged in his bosom for exit from his choking throat; his face worked.

The boat was a bluff craft with an erection aft, making her there a kind of house-boat, and with stones laid round a slab of iron, for cooking, for'ard. The junk sail could quite easily be hoisted and adjusted by a single man, and gave to the boat, with a fair wind and stream, a speed of some seven knots. In a land where carts are driven over land by means of wind and sail, as in China, the navigation of the seas and rivers is in a condition far from elementary. John found his craft pliant and ready, and the bulge of the upward-tapering lug-sail was fine to his eyes. An exhilaration of mood, ecstatic, high, grew upon him. The day was broad and clear, and busy with breezes. On either hand spread endless flat-lands, already sprouting with the tender green of barley, rice and millet. The river was all but deserted.

There was an aspect, not of earth, but of Paradise, in the bright and balmy world. Henceforth — and he knew it — he would have little to do with joy, and soft emotion, and the throe of genial feeling; for the gentle heart within him was turned to stone, or something resembling stone. But for the present he was too weak in body and mind to resist the charm of the

wide and placid landscape, and the feeling of freedom which it brought. His heart was still not quite a dead thing.

Yet, let us record two facts. First, that John Hardy, from boyhood, had been of an intensely religious nature; that he had had a somewhat crabbed habit of reading methodically one chapter each morning from the Bible; and that his affectionate soul had overflowed in affection for his Maker also. And secondly, let us state, that on this morning of his deliverance he several times resisted and repelled the impulse which rose in him to give thanks to God. He refused. So much had Yen How changed him. The boy had hardened into something more (or something less) than a man.

Midway between Tung-chow and Tientsin, he left the rudder-oar and searched the boat. Li-kien, apparently, had forgotten nothing; there was food and drink in plenty, a pot, a compass of Western make, and a curious instrument, which he assumed to be a contrivance for taking the sun's altitude, but which he could not at once understand.

He made a fire, for which the materials were at hand, put on some rice to boil, and resumed his place at the oar.

Now and again a painted junk passed him, toiling up the river; but he was not even at the pains to hide himself, as Ni-ching-tang had warned him, so sure was he of safety.

At sundown he glided between the central space, then open, of the bridge of boats across the Peiho at Tientsin. At eleven o'clock, under a calm and radiant night, he had Taku on his starboard beam; and soon he was in the open sea of the Gulf of Pechili.

Feeling drowsy, about fifteen miles from land, he shipped his oar, lowered his sail, and went to sleep.

The point of his destination was Kiao-Chau, once German, then very much English.

Here, seven weeks before, one dark midnight, a hundred and eighty English sailors had beached the battered second-class cruiser *Iphigenia*, and landed.

The subsequent adventures of these men, when properly written, would fill volumes. At present we can merely glance at them.

At the moment of landing, the Englishmen were no longer wholly in the dark as to the real state of things in China. The absence of white men both at Chemulpo and Seoul, of which they knew, if not very suggestive in itself, was **very** suggestive when no explanation could be found of the flagless ships which had chased them, except the one that these ships were Japanese.

The possibility, therefore, that they would be massacred on Chinese territory occurred to them; and their object in coming to Kiao-Chau, which was not very remote from the sinking ship, was to throw themselves upon the protection of the Germans, who, as they supposed, occupied the forts of Kiao-Chau.

Previous to this, the Germans had very strongly fortified the harbour and its approaches. Its waters were thick with submarine mines, and two strong forts at each of the claws of land which formed the entrance, together with one on the low-lying island in the basin of the harbour, made the position one of considerable strength.

The harbour is about six miles long, and lies N. by W., and S. by E. Around it, in general, is high ground, save at the north-eastern entrance, where an area of sloping meadow-land rises gradually to the higher levels of the inner *entourage* of the basin. And it was here that the *Iphigenia*, then on the point of sinking, was beached.

Fifty yards away, on the brow of a slope, stood the N.E. fort. Though the night was dark, and rain fell heavily, its outlines could be made out.

The blue-jackets held a sort of informal synod on the sands. There was among them only one staff - officer, a lieutenant called Edwards, who, however, was wounded in the breast, and in a kind of daze. Happily, all the special hands were in evidence except the surgeon, these including the chief engineer, engineer, and assistant engineer, the gunner, the boatswain, the carpenter, with the stokers, and all engine-room hands. Beside these there were a hundred and fifty blue-jackets.

It was decided to make straight for the N.E. fort, and though no one present could talk German, a volunteer committee of ten men, headed by the chief engineer, a Mr. Murray, set off toward the rising ground.

But these were careless watchmen, these Germans!

Where was the sentry, and the challenge, and the soldier's stalk, and the rattle of the butt-end? Nowhere was there a light to be seen through all the dripping and desolate night.

The ten men reached the fort to find it as solitary as a desert. They called, and the hills echoed their voice, and through the open portal the night-bird fled and screamed. They passed within the gateway between the two outer bastions, and into the courtyard, and thence onward through every open door. They saw one dead Chinaman sitting in the embrasure of a window, grinning in old decay. But otherwise there was no sign of any struggle. At all events, there were no Germans there. Only the guns refrained, and some ammunition, and some stores, but not a single small-arm.

What to do now? It only remained to visit the S.W. fort, and the fort on the island. And these they found in the same condition.

The Chinese had gained possession of them by killing the unsuspecting sentries in the middle of the night, and seizing, almost bloodlessly, the rest of the garrison, so to speak, as they slept in their beds. The captive soldiers

were distributed over China for the celebration of Yen How's Sabbath of blood; and the forts had then, for the time: being, been deserted.

There remained no further doubt in the minds of the British blue-jackets as to their own fate. But they were resolved to sell their lives dearly.

The *Iphigenia* had still a steam-pinnace uninjured, and in this they took turns in plying backward and forward between the ship and the island all the night, landing everything in the way of stores, small arms, and ammunition which might prove useful.

The gunner, Shillitoe, counselled the occupation of all the three forts; but Murray and the rest, fearing the result of a division of the little army, gave their voice for a concentration of forces upon the island-fort, on account not only of its disconnection with the mainland, but also of the fact that it appeared to be the most powerful.

This plan was somewhat unfortunate, because the island was uncultivated, and furnished no other food than a scanty supply of wild orris and cassava roots, though there were three springs of rather brackish water. Moreover, at about sunrise, the movements of the pinnace were observed by some peasants on the mainland, and shortly afterwards there was a considerable commotion to the east and north of the bay. Though the work of the pinnace was not half completed, it was seen that no further voyage must be attempted, nor had any effort as yet been made to spike the guns of the other two forts. At about seven, these two opened fire simultaneously upon the island fort.

At this period China was awake, or at least had opened her early-morning eye-lids; she had tasted blood, and every Chinaman was feeling the thrill of that electrical cobweb spreading over the land, of which the brain of Yen How was the centre. The artillery combat which now commenced

between the island-fort and the others was fought not more obstinately on one side than on the other.

But the fixed batteries of the outer posts had not been constructed for inward attack, while the inner had been constructed for outward attack. By noon, the two outer fortresses were in ruins. But the poor *Iphigenia* also, by which the castaways set much store, had been broken by the wanton Chinese almost into nothingness.

Arid now commenced a series of strenuous and adventurous days and nights for these one hundred and eighty men — or rather one hundred and seventy-nine, for on the next day Edwards died. They had hardly any food; it was necessary to get it, and to get it in the teeth of the armed Chinese, directed by Japanese. And they got it.

Each night had its own tale of brilliant sortie, or crafty ruse, or ticklish enterprise, or cautiously-premeditated plan. One by one their numbers lessened — they became a hundred and seventy — a hundred and sixty. But those who remained went on furnishing materials for a new *Odyssey*; in two weeks they were the most exquisitely-trained body of men in the world; every day added to them a new supremacy of discipline and culture; eye, and hand, and brain were in it; they could twist through the grass like snakes; could climb like Alpini; could see in the dark; could shoot like machines; could plan in deliberative council like statesmen. In seven weeks they were a living monument of the adaptability to every possible condition of life of the nimble English race.

But their *Odyssey* lacked Odysseus. It was *Hamlet* without the hero.

To do anything of much greater importance than the procuring of their food, they needed a Leader; and a very decent Leader indeed was on the way to join them.

CHAPTER XX. 'WHAT A FACE!'



DURING THE AFTERNOON of the seventh day from Tung-chow, John Hardy, hugging the coast, arrived in the locality of Kiao-Chau harbour. The solitary helmsman had made a good voyage, being familiar with the ocean-winds and their moods, and having an old comradeship with the brine and spray. However, he had several times got wet, and every few minutes now was shaken by a moist cough, alternated by vomitings due to a constant sickness of the stomach.

He was being wafted along by a gentle breeze, when he spied a portion of a ship's bow above the thin, inaudible fringe of foam which lined the coast afar. And at once, noting his course, he put out farther to sea, and lay to, ten miles from land.

He guessed from the fragmentary look of the wreck that the Chinese had been busy with the English sailors of whom he had been told. At eleven o'clock, he ran in for the harbour. Unfortunately, all he knew about it was its locality. Ni-ching-tang, indeed, had told him that the Englishmen were upon an *island*; but when he entered the basin he saw no island, for in the darkness and distance the contours of the island, which, on the east, is near to the mainland, seemed part of it.

The moon was young, just rising; it was a night of stars; things near were visible, things remote lay in a mystery of shadow.

Hardy ran his bow upon a gravelly bottom near the east entrance, intending to mount the rising ground and search for the island. For what he knew, he might be already on it.

In this way he came to the east fort, now mostly in ruins. He passed through a broken arch, and saw guns lying at random in the court. He examined the battlemented square, and entered what remained of the heavily-armed works. But there was nowhere a human being.

His search was conducted with extreme caution. With the same care he descended to his boat, and made for the opposite side, where he saw a stonework outline against the sky. Here the ascent was steeper; he scrambled up a pebbly footpath, scraped through some scrub, and entered the fortification. There was less marked destruction on this side. He examined bollwerkswahre and glacis, aussenwerk and donjon, and saw no one. Then he entered an inner court, where was a low building with small barred windows: barracks and mess-room. And in three of the windows near the ground he saw light.

On his hands and knees he crept toward one of the openings. As he drew nearer he could hear a sound of laughter, and some one protesting in harsh gibberish. He knew now that he was among Chinese. But he continued to advance, eager to acquire some sort of knowledge of the facts of his situation. He reached the window, lifted his head, and peeped in.

The room which he saw was long and surrounded by beds at regular intervals. On most of these lay Chinamen asleep; three only were intently playing some sort of dice-game at a table on which was a lantern.

As Hardy looked — before he could run — before he could cover his mouth — he was seized by a sudden cough which sounded through the still night and the quiet room.

The three Chinamen sprang up at once, looked in amazement in the direction of the sound, then snatching three rifles, and making a great noise, they rushed toward the door.

Hardy, too, was off, running; but before he could cross the breadth of the yard the three were out of the door. At the moment, he was in the shadow of the buttress of a barbican, and he knew that if he left it to cross the strip of moonlight which lay along the exit from the yard, he must be seen. He stood still, therefore, crouching in the deepest shade.

The three, in a state of great excitement, ran toward the spot which he had left, and finding nothing, scattered about the yard in flurried search within the deep embrasures of arches, and the black shade of turret or buttress. Their eager examination was disorganised, the second again scrutinising a spot which the first had just searched, and the third, perhaps, following suit.

It was all over in the space of certainly not more than a minute. One of the Chinamen rushed to the corner in which Hardy crouched, his hands groping; in a few seconds he was followed by the second; in a few seconds more by the third. And they dropped like a line of little wooden soldiers, upon which one blows obliquely, one after the other, stiffly, at full length. The knife of Ni-ching-tang was no sooner out of the first than it was in the second, and instantly in the third. Before the startled sleepers within had rubbed their eyes, sprung to their feet, and snatched their weapons, he had diminished the population of China by three. It was the first-fruits of his vengeance.

Now, meantime, was his chance to run, and he ran. Thirty Chinese soldiers, however, were after him, and one saw him as he slipped through the exit from the inner to the outer courtyard. This man raised the hue and cry, and it became a question of running, first towards the outer exit, and secondly through the scrub, and down the steep hillside; guns popping all the while, and the Chinamen screaming in an ecstasy of excitement.

Behind the rising ground, on the general level of the mainland, there was camped a half-regiment of the old regular army of China under a Japanese lieutenant; and these, hearing the firing, quickly set off at the double up the gentle incline at the back of the fort.

Hardy was saved from the shots of the thirty on the top of the plateau by doubling and bending among the scrub, but by the time he had plunged and scrambled to the bottom of the steep path, bullets were whistling round him. The night, however, was dim, and the riflemen, as they ran, shot at random.

There lay his boat, her prow just touching and swaying in the gravel. If he could push her off, and gain the shelter of the house-deck, he would be safe. Two of the Chinamen, however, who had not slackened their speed in order to shoot, were upon him; and when he leapt to his bow, and put out the oar to shove off, one of them, and immediately the other, took hold of it. A short struggle ensued. One of the Chinamen, struck by a flying bullet in the nape, relaxed his hold and dropped; at the same time Hardy's power of grasp failed, and the oar slipped from him; but so suddenly that the pulling Chinaman slid on his heels, and fell backward into the surf. Hardy was quick to leap upon him, buried his knife in his bosom, regained the oar, and the next moment had the *Taku* afloat.

He hurried astern, trimmed the sail, and half sheltering himself under the deck, contrived to steer, making farther up the harbour, where he now knew the island must be.

In a minute or two the boat became the aim of the three hundred or more additional rifles, now arrived from the plain. They riddled her hull and sail, but she kept on her way, till there came a boom of big cannon from a quite unexpected quarter, and suddenly the splintered *Taku* dipped her bow, and disappeared in five fathoms of water.

The Chinese, apparently, had no heavy guns mounted ready for use at the fort, for they fired none; but the English had; and when the sentries reported a daring Chinese junk approaching the island, she was fired at; and she promptly sank, riddled by her foes, shattered by her friends.

In all the harbour of Kiao-Chau no Chinese craft had dared for weeks to appear.

Happily the outward bulge of the island was discernible at the moment, and not more than 500 yards distant at its nearest point. Hardy began to swim. The Chinese, astonished at the sinking by the white men of a boat containing a white man, ceased firing, though a wanton shot or two dropped about the swimmer.

Panting hard, he reached the near point of the island, where a sparse growth of thin-trunked plane-trees made a wood to the water's edge. And he had hardly trailed his dripping form out of the surf, when two men, springing from nowhere, had him by the throat, and he was on his back with a pistol at his temple.

Hardy said to himself:

‘They will do well.’

And he added aloud:

‘I am an Englishman.’

There was a scrutiny of his face, a chuckle, a few exclamations, and he was on his feet.

The search-light apparatus of the fort was out of order. Till he spoke, no one on the island had had the faintest suspicion of the truth.

In ten minutes he was in a lighted room, with nearly all the hundred and fifty gathered round him, hands on knees. There were far more questions than answers. Chatter, chatter went the tongue of Jack.

‘But you have not told us, sir, who you are,’ said Murray.

‘My name is John Hardy,’ he replied, ‘and I am come to China in search of my ship, the *Powerful*. Can you give me any news of her whereabouts?’

‘Oh, Lord!’ cried a blue-jacket, named Brassey, ‘just hark at *that! Powerful*, is it? Why, sir, if you’d as much water in your inside to-night as the *Powerful’s* got, it isn’t *Powerfuls* you would be thinking about, I don’t think.’

‘There has been a battle?’

‘That there has, sir.’

‘Who won?’

‘We did.’

‘By how many ships?’

‘The one we came here in, and two the Japs sunk.’

‘The Japs?’

‘Ay.’

‘They sunk some ships?’

‘They did that.’

‘But they were our allies, were they not?’

‘Funny allies at that.’

‘They gave you no warning of their real intentions, I’ll be bound,’ said John Hardy.

‘Not they,’ some one replied, ‘it was bash-into— ’em, take-me-as-you-find-me-boys, and no mistake. They didn’t even carry a flag.’

‘They have broken the law of nations,’ said Hardy, looking on the ground. Then, after a few seconds, as if musing, he added: ‘They have violated the Law of Man.’

And the words, taken in conjunction with the most strange, grave face from which they came, had in them something so solemn, and judicial, and meaningful, that, for a minute or two, silence fell upon the men; and they

looked at his bent form, somehow expecting him to utter something further of singular and momentous.

But he gazed on the ground and said nothing.

Already this gray-haired youth, this venerable stripling, had produced a profound impression upon them.

Somebody on the outskirts of the crowd whispered to somebody else:

‘What a *face* he’s got!’

And the whisper went round. And now it was: ‘Just look at the phiz of him ‘; and now it was: ‘I don’t think he’s all there’; and now it was: ‘Lor! look at his face.’

It was a face in which there was something thrillingly *wild*; the face not merely of a judge and an avenger, but of a judge and an avenger come back from the grave, with just that hint of the Ineffable which makes us shudder.

Yet he sat there simply enough, looking on the ground, with one elbow on his wet knee.

CHAPTER XXI. MURRAY'S DIARY



MR. MURRAY, THE nominal head at the fort — though in reality he was only the first among equals — on opening one of the chests brought from the *Iphigenia* in the pinnace, found a quantity of notepaper, and as there were pens and ink in the fort, he bound it in some brown paper, wisely determining to keep a record of the varied days of this strangely-fated crew.

Under date *8th June* we find as follows: —

8th June. — Last night, near twelve, a strange thing happened. We sank a Chinese boat in the harbour with No. 3 south-bastion six-incher, thinking it an enemy. It proved to have contained an Englishman, named John Hardy, ship *Powerful* (as he says).. He reports himself as from Peking in search of ship. That's about all we can get from him at present. No explanation so far as to how he escaped death in long voyage through China. Something strange about him somewhere, and men pass astonished remarks.

Still two sacks of rice left, last of third being used at dinner to-day. Also two hind legs of camel with quarters, three small sacks roots, two jars Chinese spirit from the millet-farm, and about a pound of tobacco. The sow, Joyce says, is near her confinement, and a day or two should bring us great things from her. Harris, Tom Brown, and Daly complain of diarrhoea, and Machen of violent headache. Otherwise all well. Tom Newton to be buried presently.

9th June. — Tom Newton buried last night at ten. For last message to his wife see under *6th June*. This morning noticed a considerable body of Chinese (guessed 500) march past on brow of hill east of island. Big dust-

cloud ahead, looking like horse-artillery. Brassey says they mean to give us fight. But I disagree. Their game is to starve us out — if they can.

This noon, Council. Resolved: that at midnight thirty hands swim to mainland at different points, taking Sniders in waterproof bags, and ammunition. To meet near lake to N.E., and make a dash for probable mules on tea-farm N. of lake. Long discussion of ways and means. Resolved: first volunteer to be leader. To surprise of all, the stranger, Hardy, volunteered first. Had listened to discussion without a word, turning from speaker to speaker. Is small, and seems weak in chest. Sow doing well.

10th June. — This day cook, to surprise of all, produced pudding made of roots and honey, found, he says, near west stream in valley on island. First we heard of honey here; lads all wild with excitement, and everybody clapping cook on back. Am now smoking last pipe. Tobacco done. Also last of German coffee, and yesterday no more sugar. Lads hope for unlimited supplies of honey, but I rather doubtful. Not the right place even for the wild kind.

Expedition last night very successful. Two mules (all there were on farm), also sack rice (brought over by pinnace), also a skin containing some sort of oil, and no one injured. Joyce says it is good for food, but Brassey denies, and the two came to blows. The men came back speaking well of Hardy, some saying that he means more than he says.

Most of the day spent in washing shirts and sheets by hands. Harris and Brown still bad with diarrhoea, and now also Collins, but Daly better.

He is an original, this man (I mean Hardy). To-day, while washing clothes, great discussion between Brassey and Davis, which nearly came to blows. Says Davis, 'Why, the man is fifty-five,' he says, 'if he's a day.' Brassey answers that he will lay to it that he is a lad of twenty-five, and not a day older. Then other hands join in, one saying this, and another that, and

the lads getting warm. Hardy sitting a good way off, washing sheets. One says: 'Why not ask him, and settle the question?' But no one volunteers to do that. Everybody going to have a look at sow this afternoon, and plenty of bets, c But nothing yet to report.

11th June. — Great excitement this morning, and all Chinese liquor finished. Sow littered with four, and beauties all: one pinky-white, two pinky-white and black, and one pure black. Lads all ready for fun, and everybody determined to make a day of it. Hardy alone drank nothing. Brassey very rowdy, but afterwards got to sleep. One of mules refused to eat roots, and was killed in afternoon. A detachment of lads down by sea-shore cutting down trees for fire-wood with swords, and one hatchet. Not an adze in fort. Very slow business. Hardy recommended blasting, and this tried with success. But fearful anxiety beginning to be felt about powder and shot. Only three rounds of ammunition left to some of big guns, and no possibility apparently of making powder for ourselves. At six o'clock, Council. Resolved: to make a dash in small hours of morning for west fort in order to seize possible stores and ammunition, Hardy leading. Pinnacle to take two detachments of twenty-five each. A desperate piece of business, in my opinion not yet necessary, but proposed by Hardy, who has seen fort, and seconded by lads. Search this afternoon for more honey, but without success. Men walking about with hands in pockets, without tobacco.

12th June. — Lovel, William Brown, and Jackson dead, and not less than thirty Chinese. I with bullet-hole in my left hand, very painful. Result: two barrels of powder, and a green tea-box half full of Lee-Metford magazine-rifle cartridges. Half of us, in retreat, swam across harbour-mouth from west fort to east, Hardy among us. Then along east side of harbour by land, pursued by Chinese, and then, swimming again, to island. The toughest job we have done yet. Our guns, ammunition, and some of our

clothes, meanwhile, in boat with captured things, and we swimming with swords in our teeth.

But the curious thing is this. As we walked toward our fort, the day began to break, and Hardy having on no shirt, we saw all his body in a queer bruised sort of mess, and two letters, quite distinct, an A and an S, looking as if they had been branded into his right breast. He throws no light upon himself, and not one has the pluck to ask him. It is clear that he is a gentleman, and it is 'Sir this' and 'Sir that' from all the lads to him.

13th June. — Says Brassey to me this noon, 'Wasn't there,' says he, 'something about a John Hardy in the battle of Shoreham that that collier from Perim reported at Hong-Kong before we sailed north?' 'Yes,' I said, 'there was.' 'Then this,' says he, 'is the man.' 'There are many John Hardys,' I said. 'But this,' says he, 'is the man.' 'What makes you think that?' I said. 'Everything,' says he. And he was so certain of it, that he partly made me so as well. He has gone whispering it, too, to all the lads, and they are talking it over amongst themselves. Nobody asks Hardy, but before this day is out I mean to put the question straight before him. Gun-cleaning pretty nearly all day, and Walters, who has been down to the water's edge on the east side, reports that Chinese are heaping a lot of stones on edge of cliff, probably with intention of building. Let them build away. The four piggies doing well, and the old girl as pleased as punch. We shall never have the heart to kill them. Not a scrape of baccy, and no more honey.

14th June. — It is to be hoped that this Hardy is not come here to lead us all to the devil, but that is about what I suspect it is going to amount to. Time will show. He has a strong influence over the lads, and is all for wild schemes and adventures. Says he last night, most of us sitting about in the north mess-room, 'But what,' says he suddenly, 'are your ultimate aims?' 'Ultimate aims, sir?' says Brassey. 'You don't mean to live here always, I

suppose?’ says Hardy. ‘It’s enough for us to think of getting food to eat, without looking so far ahead,’ says Martin Hall. ‘Don’t be a fool, Hall,’ says Tom Brown; ‘listen to what the gentleman says.’ ‘I have not *said* anything,’ says Hardy. ‘I merely ask a question, which I leave to your reflection. If you will think it over, I believe you will be wise. And if you cannot find an answer, come to me, and perhaps I may be able to help you.’ He very seldom speaks, this Hardy, and when he does, the lads listen wonderfully to him. For quite five or six minutes, I suppose, not one spoke a word after he had said this. And now they are all saying that he’s got some fine scheme in his head. This afternoon at five, Council. Resolved: that the Chinese preparations for building on cliff be investigated and destroyed, if necessary, between twelve and one to-night. Hardy proposed as an amendment: that an attack be at once made on Chinese village, three miles to S.E., for purpose of getting in large store of provisions in event of contingencies. But his voice overborne by seventy-five to seventy-three votes. This afternoon Day sent to wind octagonal clock in B bastion, and broke mainspring. Have not asked Hardy anything about battle of Shoreham, or marks on chest, but mean to, sooner or later.

15th June. — This day extraordinary scene at Council. It seems that Brassey, with five or six others, came to Hardy about noon, a sort of deputation, telling him that the men had been thinking over his words of two nights before, and were wanting him to summon a Council and say what was on his mind. Hardy says yes, he would, as they wanted it. So about four, Council. Hardy stands up, the lads sprawling all about, on benches, on the floor, looking at him. Hardy has in his hand one of the three Bibles from the *Iphigenia* third chest. Well, everybody waits, wondering now what is coming. Hardy begins to talk, and keeps on talking for half an hour. All about himself first — his family, where he was born, everything;

then about his coming to China to seek *Powerful*, and his capture by the Chinese at Peking. Suddenly off he tears his shirt, and shows wounds and scars all over body; and he points to the gray patches in his head: Chinese torture, he says; some of the men wiped their eyes, so movingly he spoke. Sometimes when his face is animated, I declare he looks like a lad of nineteen, and it is hard not to love this man somehow. Then he went on to speak of the Japs and their treachery to the British ships; then he said that all the white men in China had been massacred by the Chinese; and last of all, out he came with the announcement that the Chinese and Japanese combined are about to attack Europe. Every one held his breath at this, and we were all pretty excited by now. ‘Well, what are we to say of such a race, men?’ says Hardy. ‘Do you not agree with me that the earth would be well rid of such a people?’ ‘Yes!’ we cry; ‘yes! yes!’ we all shout out. ‘As for me,’ he says, ‘I, here and now, before you all, and before Almighty God, devote my entire life henceforth to their destruction; and I invite you all to take that oath with me.’ And so saying, he lifts the Book, and kisses it. The men leapt round him at once. One cries out: ‘You are the John Hardy of the Shoreham battle, aren’t you?’ Hardy says ‘Yes.’ Then Brassey roars out ‘Will you be our leader?’ and every man jack of us cheers this to the echo; and then Hardy hands Book to each of us, and as we kiss it, each of us grips his hand in token of obedience to his orders. And as the last of us grips his hand (that was Paddy Burke), Hardy, turning away from us, goes leaning out of window, and Brassey says a tear was rolling down his cheek which he wanted to hide. I suppose there never was such a scene in the world; it was just as if we were all mesmerised by him, some of us wanting to cry, and I as moved by his influence as the rest. The lads are swearing to follow Hardy through thick and thin.

Expedition last night did nothing, and discovered little. There were merely some piles of stone and two carts, but without mules. In one of the carts a hard-backed land-turtle, which the lads brought back. But their climb up that steep hill as good as useless. From their report it is probable that the regular Chinese force in the neighbourhood is being increased. Happily, perhaps, for us, this is a thinly populated part of the country. Something will have to be done for food, and that soon. It remains to be seen what sort of stuff this Hardy is made of. No one can deny that we got on pretty fairly before he came. Heat fearful to-day, but rain now pouring in torrents outside.

16th June. — At midday-mess Hardy says to lads: ‘Don’t scatter, men. I wish to talk with you at once.’ So immediately after meal, Council. Hardy at head of table, I on right, Brassey on left, Tom Brown, Davis and Joyce sitting near. Says Hardy: ‘You have been good enough,’ he says, ‘to choose me for your leader. I hope to prove myself worthy of your favour, but for the present I prefer to consult with you, rather than to give you orders. Here you are, a splendidly trained set of fellows, and Englishmen — 148 of us. I believe we might be able to do something more for our country and ourselves than killing a few Chinamen now and then. The thing is to know what we want to do, and to set about it in the right way; and, as a rule, the right way is sure to be the simplest way.’ ‘Hear, hear,’ says Brassey, who is a regular champion of Hardy’s, and everybody gives a nod at somebody else. ‘Well, then,’ says Hardy, ‘but no man can work without Tools, and every workman should stick to his own Tool, the carpenter to his chisel, and the blacksmith to his sledge. We, men, are sailors; and the Tool of a sailor is a Ship. What we have got to do, then, is to get a Ship.’

This went straight to the lads — he spoke so sweetly and simply to the understanding of everybody. We cheered, every man, though not a soul

could guess where this ship was to come from, or what we were to do with it when we got it. But the mere fact of his saying it made the thing seem possible.

‘A Ship, then,’ goes on Hardy; ‘any sort of Ship, so long as we’ve got our Tool to work with. And you mustn’t think that I am child enough to propose to you anything that is impossible for you to do. I have studied you carefully since I have been among you, and I know what each of you can do, and what the whole of you together can do, and what you cannot do. As for ships, they are lying round you in plenty, only waiting for you to go and take one.’

Everybody looked at him in surprise at this.

‘Ships, sir!’ says Brassey, ‘whereabouts?’

‘All round the Chinese coasts,’ says Hardy. ‘I told you, didn’t I, that the Chinese have seized and massacred in a body all the Europeans they could find in China. Well, at the time of the massacre, there were, of course, merchant-ships of all nations in every Chinese port, and you may be sure that the Chinese took special care to overpower and secure the sailors on board these ships, lest they should escape home and tell what the Chinese were up to. Meanwhile, the ships themselves remain, probably quite empty, or perhaps with a few Chinese on board in charge. I myself saw five in Tientsin harbour when I sailed down the Peiho to come here, and there did not seem to be anybody on board. So you see we have plenty of ships and to spare.’

‘But,’ said I, ‘how are you to get to them?’

‘In the pinnace,’ says Hardy.

‘The pinnace can’t carry even a quarter of us,’ said I.

‘Then she shall carry half a quarter of us,’ says he; ‘and the rest of you will remain here till we come for you in the ship.’

‘But how are the rest of us to live without the pinnace?’ said I. ‘We can’t carry bags of rice on our backs across the harbour, sir.’

‘I know that very well,’ says he, ‘and that is why I proposed to you the day before yesterday to make a raid on a village, instead of going to search into what the Chinese are building, which does not immediately concern us. What we have to do, in the first place, is to get in a good stock of provisions by means of a series of bold and well-planned raids into the thinly-populated country round, first crushing the small Chinese battalion, if necessary; and when we have enough stores, both for us who go, and you who remain, then, and not before, some of us will set off in the pinnace. That seems to me good sense.’

‘And to me!’ cries Brassey, with a wave of the hand. And to me,’ goes the cry down the benches.

‘But,’ said I, ‘when we have got our ship, what do we do with her — go home?’

‘No — that is not precisely what we swore to do,’ says Hardy. ‘As to what we will do with our ship, I have got a plan which I feel confident you will approve when I lay it before you. But there is a good deal to be done first, and I won’t trouble you with that now. The first thing I want every man to set his mind upon is to bring me into the fort here a live Chinaman with two sound legs. Without that nothing can be done.’

At this our astonishment knew no bounds. A live Chinaman!

‘And may I ask, sir,’ said I, ‘what it is you want a live Chinaman for?’

‘To send him on a message,’ says he. ‘It is the answer which he will bring back which will make our ship of any use to us.’

‘He won’t come back,’ said I.

‘He will,’ says he.

‘Right you are, sir!’ cries Brassey.

‘I will not keep you any longer now,’ says Hardy. ‘But later in the day, I will select a hundred of you to come with me to-night; and I recommend you to look to your swords and your rifles.’

And with that we broke up, every one forming part of a group to discuss our new man. The second mule killed to-day, and two more of our men complaining of bowel trouble. Joyce talking of blowing up tortoise with gunpowder, and saying that they are good food in South Seas. Lads conversing about different brands of tobacco, and smelling keg.

CHAPTER XXII. MURRAY'S DIARY (CONTINUED)



17TH JUNE. — Harvey, Lane, Yates, and Tom Joyce dead. Brassey wounded in leg, Harry Jones in leg, Field in shoulder, Burke in forearm, Mackay in forearm, Wright in groin, and I again in left hand near the old place — my bad luck. One or two wounds look ugly, but the rest not much. Bodies of Harvey, Yates, and Joyce with Chinese, but Lane brought back and died in fort. Burial to-day at 3. Not less than fifty Chinese done for, says Brassey. Result: splendid haul of three camels (one killed in battle, and carcass left behind), seven mules, twelve small animals like sheep, two sacks millet, and five rice. Returning loaded from village met Chinese battalion cutting us off. Made quick charge, and thought they would turn tail, but didn't. Sharp fight. Literally forced our way through them. But our powder getting very low. What shall we do? Lads very well pleased with expedition, and speak well of Hardy. He proposes that one of mules be set aside for drawing one of Chinese carts on top of hill, to bring home haul on next expedition. But mules won't eat roots, have to be fed on rice, and grass on island scanty. Hardy says salted mule-meat, but even so, weather very hot. But will be tried. No live Chinaman to be got. They know how to run, these Chinese. At four, Council. Resolved: to repeat raid this night on village, N.W. by N., six miles off, according to report of Fraser and Brassey. Hardy looking far from well.

[Here follows Murray's account of three fresh raids, too minutely described to be reproduced here, and conducted with varying success. In the last of the three Hardy did not join, being ill.]

21st June. — At last, live Chinaman. Captured at high noon. Five lads, among them Hardy, swam one by one to east side, diving most of time. On cliff some Chinamen pouring stones out of carts for building. Men, hiding in scrub, climb up cliff-side, no very easy matter with weapons and other things in hands. Peep over cliff-edge, and decide which Chinaman it is to be. Then rush out. Chinese off in their mule-carts, and a squad of soldiers, some distance off, give fire, but at random, taken unawares. As marked Chinaman turns to gallop off in mule-cart, Brassey, who has lasso, throws; and lasso falls clean over Chinaman's head, dragging him from cart, which gallops off alone. Splendid feat for Brassey, for Chinaman was not near, and Brassey has wounded leg. Chinaman quickly bound, and hustled down hillside. Pinnace waiting at shore to bring lads and Chinaman, and Chinamen atop still banging away. But no one hurt. Lads say that Hardy gripped Brassey's hand, and gave it a squeeze. This like Hardy's decent way. Chinaman being very kindly treated, by Hardy's orders. A brawny raw-boned brute, and seems not to know what to make of treatment.

22nd June. — To-day at one, Council. Resolved: that sufficient stores now in fort to last all two weeks, and that pinnace starts as soon as Chinaman is sent on message. Resolved: that Chinaman be sent to-morrow, Hardy wishing him to grow accustomed to kind treatment before starting. Hardy has chosen to accompany him on voyage the following: — Brassey, Tom Brown, Fraser, Burke, Knollys, Leaf, Pawsons, John Jones, Maitland, Samuels, Clayton, Rogers, Machen, Gibbs, John Pound, Maunder, Chapman, and Glyn. I remain in charge. Practically no powder will be left when lads set out. To-day overhauling of pinnace, and preparations. Lads found some opium on Chinaman, which they smoked, and some of them still very queer.

23rd June. — To-day great fun, and lads talking of sagacity of Hardy. But no one understands meaning of message. Chinaman brought before Hardy after mid-day meal. Hardy at table, with pen, ink, and paper. We all standing round, Chinaman looking queer. Hardy looks at him and says, 'You talkee English?' Chinaman makes no sign. 'Can you talkee English?' No sign. Up jumps Hardy on a sudden, a razor in his hand, and he seizes hold of Chinaman's pigtail, as if to cut it off. 'Oh, save, savee,' cries Chinaman. 'Very good,' says Hardy, 'you talk English, then.' Hardy had guessed beforehand that he could, because Chinaman, on day of capture, had on European felt hat like those some of Chinese boatmen wear at Shanghai; that was why Hardy singled out this particular Chinaman. Well, Hardy says, 'You poor man?' 'Me very poor,' says Chinaman. 'How much you give for one silk pigtail?' says Hardy. 'Fifty tael,' says Chinaman. 'You got fifty tael to buy one pigtail?' says Hardy. Chinaman looks scared. 'Fifty tael?' says he, 'no, no.' 'All right,' says Hardy, 'me going to cut off your pigtail, and me going to give you letter to carry Pekin. You carry letter well, and bring back true answer soon, me promise to give you back pigtail, and no do you any harm. You understand?' Chinaman trembling like a sail in the wind. But he says 'Yes.' Hardy says 'Very good.' Then he turns round to paper, tears half a sheet, and begins to write, the lads looking over his shoulder. He writes:

'To Ni-ching-tang, Imperial City, Pekin.

'You tell me quick where Japanese navy is, or me very likely get caught, and then me tell Yen How who set me free. If you can write, you write name of place where navy is on this paper, and also name of your nephew at Tung-chow, so that me may be sure the answer comes from you. If you no can write, you tell this man name of place, and name of nephew. Be quick, or me get caught, and tell Yen How about you. — John Hardy.'

When Hardy had finished his letter, he read it aloud to Chinaman, and gave it to Chinaman. He said, 'If you no be back in nine days from now, me burn your pigtail in fire, and you no have pigtail no more.' And with that, up he jumped to his feet, and wrapping pigtail round left hand, with two sweeps of razor he had it off about three inches from the root, leaving just enough for the man to plait it on to again. Chinaman curled and shivered, as though razor was in his flesh, and a fine long pigtail it is, too. Hardy then wrote name of Ni-ching-tang's nephew, by which I am to verify that Chinaman really has been to Ni-ching-tang, and handed paper to me to keep. Nephew's name is Li-kien. If Ni-ching-tang cannot read, Chinaman will deliver message verbally. It is clear that this man Ni-ching-tang has some strong motive for telling real truth to Hardy, but we none of us know what motive is, nor why Hardy is anxious about station of Japanese fleet. However, we have much confidence in his views. Chinaman was let free, and taken to mainland, and much fun we all had. Pinnace now ready, and the nineteen men to start at midnight. Nearest treaty-port, according to map, is Chefoo. And to Chefoo they mean to go. Pinnace loaded with last coal in fort. Compass, sextant, chronometer, stores, and everything we can think of on board. Weather stifling hot, but lads in good spirits.

24th June. — Lads, apparently, got out of harbour all right last night. For us here the game is a waiting one. After to-morrow, by Hardy's orders, a man to be always on the look-out near the east fort during night. If lads get a ship, she will show three lights in a triangle to let us know when she comes. They will send boats ashore to east headland, to take us off, we swimming to east side of harbour, and taking all live stock still left. If Chinaman not come back by the time Hardy returns, nothing to be done, and red light to be shown by sentry to ship. This day killed the sow. The lads yawning, and spoiling for a fight.'

[Six days of the diary follow, containing nothing but trivial details of the life of the fort, and the account of a massing of some two thousand Chinese in the locality. The next entry of importance is on the 1st July.]

1st July. — This day at noon, Chinaman spied on east shore of mainland making signals. Great excitement among lads, who have been dull. Sent two men to fetch Chinaman over, and the fuss that beggar made about coming into water lasted nearly an hour. At last lads managed to bring him over between them. Chinaman handed me Hardy's note to Ni-ching-tang, and underneath in English characters, just legible, the words "Nagasaki" and "Li-kien." It is clear, then, that Chinaman did his work well, and the only thing open to doubt is whether Ni-ching-tang has told the truth in saying that Jap navy is at Nagasaki. Chinaman trembling with eagerness to get back pigtail, doubting apparently that we would keep our word, and the lads having great sport in making him think that we wouldn't. Pigtail produced at last, and lads lashing one another with it all over the place, to Chinaman's agony. Then pigtail given to Chinaman, to his great joy. But I don't think it prudent to let him go free, and am keeping him prisoner for some time yet.

2nd July. — Some lads sent out to scout, report continued massing of Chinese tents on plain to S.W., 500 counted, and we here without the power of firing three rounds of shot. Heaven only grant that Hardy turns up trumps. The men seem to take him with perfect confidence, and the lapse of time makes no difference to them. It is wonderful to me how thoroughly Hardy has got over them. I never saw anything like it. The two hind-quarters of sow completely spoiled owing to heat, and the men all saying it is head cook's fault, and he very sulky.

[On 3rd July there is no entry.]

4July. — Here we are, every man-jack of us, on board a very smart and spanking little German barque called the *Conrad*, a thing of about 400 tons,

and we making straight for Nagasaki, God only knows what for. However, everybody in the best of spirits, and the lads ready for any game. This man Hardy is, in my opinion, as wild a creature as ever drew the breath of life, and yet it would be a lie if I say that I have not every confidence in his leadership, for I have. The *Conrad* is very high out of the water, and is scudding along with a good stiff breeze, the foam singing past the level of her bulwarks, and her deck too steep to walk on without gripping hold of things. She's got nothing in but her ballast, and not too much of that. So away we fly, under all plain sail and courses — a tidy spread of canvas for this light thing — but toward what? I am surprised at the lads: they don't seem to be asking themselves that question. The nineteen who went to Chefoo have got a fine old tale to tell of the capture of the *Conrad*, which they accomplished at about ten at night, without the least trouble. There was nobody aboard of her but an old Chinese woman, and one of those frizzy dogs that the Chinese eat. Not content with the ship and her three boats, Hardy boarded two other ships in the port, and seized three more boats, so that, counting the pinnace, we have got seven boats in all, which is not bad for a little nipper like this. What is troubling me is the thought of provisions; we have not enough to last us another three days at the present rate of going on. The ship is packed with men, and very far from packed with food. It is true, we should be in sight of Nagasaki by sundown tomorrow, if this breeze lasts. But how in the name of Providence we are to get provisions at Nagasaki, even if we are not blown to the devil by some little Japanese gunboat, is what I don't see. It isn't that I mistrust Hardy; there can be no doubt that he has a head-piece, and can lead. But I am a prudent man, and this looks to me like the wildest and maddest voyage that ever was made by any crew which ever put to sea.

5th July, 1 p.m. — Breeze continued good during night and all morning. *Conrad* splendid, and twice did twelve knots. Lads looking out confidently for coast before sunset. Hardy having long private talks with Richardson and Lovel, both of whom have been Eastern traders, and say they know Nagasaki harbour well. Everybody getting pretty excited, and some saying Hardy ought to speak. I with great weight of fear at my heart, which I can't get rid of.

5th July, 6 p.m. — Good for Hardy! I believe it will work! though as wild a thing, I suppose, as ever entered into the brain of a man! This day at five, Council. Resolved: that in the event —

[Here Murray's diary abruptly ends, and is not resumed till some weeks later. But the account which follows is also due to Murray, though given in a different form.]

Some little time after one bell in the second dog-watch on the 5th July, the *Conrad's* crew sighted the blue coast of Kiusiu, they at that time being in a very high-wrought state, on account of the announcements made to them by Hardy in the 'Council' at five, of which Murray speaks. It may be said, by the way, that Murray (a homely well-meaning man, more cautious than enterprising by temperament) fails to give in his diary anything like a fair idea of the enthusiasm with which John Hardy by this time seems to have inspired this crew. As a matter of fact they now followed him blindly, adoring his audacity, believing in his success, entranced by his personality. Hardy was for them a dazzling Angel sent to lead them to vague glories and to indefinite conquests, the precise nature of which did not, for the present, trouble their sailor-brains. When he unfolded his plans at the 'Council' on the 5th, they discussed nothing, but hailed with rapture his proposals, eager to use their magnificent training for him, to do and die for him. Even

Murray was infected. And at eight o'clock they lay-to behind a small island outside Nagasaki harbour, and waited there.

The moon rose. And everybody looked at her. For in all the creation there was nothing half so interesting to this crew this night as the earth's satellite.

She was at her full, and gravid with light. Up she climbed from the East in peerless, cloudy majesty. At midnight she was nearly overhead, and had then wheeled about her a light fleecy cloud, prismic with rainbow hues, like Miss Loie Fuller in her serpentine dance. The night was full of shining, and shining was on the calm water.

The crew of the *Conrad* looked at her, and swore. John Hardy, sitting among the main-sheet ropes behind the wheel, looked questioningly at her, and muttered; but the moon did not hear.

It was better to be out at sea among the brisk breezes and the spray. At one o'clock Hardy gave the order to let go the sheet of the main-jib, and put the helm to lee. The *Conrad* swung round, and went snorting once more to Mother Carey and the central sea.

At ten on the following night she was back at the same spot behind the island, and there she lay-to again. And the sailors watched the moon arise, and saw her climb to her noon, gravid with light, and saw her wheel about her a light cloud *à la* Loie Fuller. And they swore more than ever.

But this time there was no turning back. It was now or never. Their stores were at an end.

John Hardy said to two men leaning over the bulwarks near him:

‘Well, by moonlight, then, lads. It may not turn out to be so bad as we think.’

And at about two o'clock in the morning, six boats put off from the *Conrad* and rowed away. Two contained nineteen men each, one twenty,

one twenty-two, one twenty-three, and one thirty-three. On board the *Conrad* eight men were left.

At this hour the moon was westering far down the steep slope of her setting course, and all the smooth sea was branded with trails of crushed and tremulous silver. The old and drowsing Night, heavy with vigil, was all enkindled now and aglow, instinct with the glamour of the moonbeams absorbed through many a long hour, like an old toper who has imbibed in solitary orgy all the night, and towards morning he rises gorged for bed, drunken, and sighing with surfeit. A flush of pallid gold suffused the fainting air. Yonder, like a lamp which has burned through all the slow period of the dark, and in the small hours it fumes and smoulders red, and gives an odour in the room, so down with troubled visage went the moon. Hardly a breath sighed through the slumbering harbour, and about its dark and silent islets.

The narrow inlet of sea which forms Nagasaki port lies nearly north and south, and is about twelve *go* (three miles) in length. At its mouth it is only a quarter of a mile broad, and though it spreads out within, it is nowhere of very great breadth. All along its length, however, on both sides, the land opens up into numerous bays of some capacity. On the east side the land is mostly flat, and here used to be the 'foreign settlement,' with a water-frontage of some 700 yards, backed by picturesque slopes on which stood the villa-residences of the rich merchants. On the west side, however, where the moon went down, rose wooded mountain and steep crag. The whole is thoroughly sheltered, and affords anchorage for the biggest ships.

The six boats, furrowing their silent, silvery way, entered the harbour-mouth at the north-west, the largest boat (which contained Hardy, Richardson, and Brassey) leading. Any one looking at this little fleet would have said that each of the boats contained no more than two men. The rest

of their crowding crews were stowed away in the bottoms, and lined the sides, lying mostly at full length, and covered with strips of tarpaulin. Under the tarpaulins, too, were lanterns. The cross-seats, except those used by the rowers, had been removed.

The course lay among a number of islets, with the navigation of which Richardson seemed quite familiar. They passed Kami-no-Shima, the site of a disused gun-battery; and they crossed a stretch of sea, all white and encrusted with moon-, light, to Takabok.

From the cliffs of Takabok, two centuries before, thousands of Christians were flung by the Japanese into the sea, because they refused to trample upon the cross. And after two centuries Hardy came to Takabok.

Yonder, a little inland, was the burning light of the Iwo-shima lighthouse, and farther still, the less brilliant beam of the Kage-no-Shima pharos. Farther still lay Pappenberg, and then Nezumi-Shima, which, in old quiet days was so often used as a picnic-place by the white residents of Nagasaki.

One by one the islands receded, and the file of daring boats stole nearer and nearer upon the interior of the harbour, now in shadow, now adventuring swiftly across a patch of sea gloating in the dream of moonshine. And now, behind them is the last island, and before them the open basin, and ponderous in black slumber on the basin — the great navy of Japan.

But where are the eyes of the watchmen, that they cannot pierce those dark coverings, and divine that there, beneath them, is creeping nearer and nearer an insidious death, a strange retribution? The watchmen, if they see, cannot divine. The riddle of destiny is far beyond them. All droops and fawns in slumber, the sea, and the old night, and the moon musing in her far western couch, and the divining of the watchmen.

Only the best-trained crew in the world, led by the best leader, are awake: and they have sworn an oath.

And, suddenly, a miracle of luck is revealed to them. For yonder all the western half of the harbour is seen to be lying in absolute shadow, while the eastern half is still glittering in aspen coruscations of white light. And the main part of the fleet, it is clear, is lying within that western gloom.

The boats, by signal, separate. Each knows its work — each has its instructions.

They are, in general, to aim at the stars, they are to fly at big game, they are to make for battle-ships.

But each has separate recommendations to fulfill. And to every man is given his place, and his work, according to his powers. The company is organised into captains, commanders, lieutenants, as in the big navy at home. Hardy has been minute.

The biggest boat of all, containing thirty-three men, cruises at zigzag for three or four minutes; and then Hardy sees, and decides. He whispers an order; and the boat — the long-boat of some European four-master — turns directly westward, and enters the recess in the coast-wall which lies north of the Tetegami dock. Here the water is hardly ruffled by a ripple; and here the blackness of shadow is complete. Few points of light are visible within that gloom — only the white harbour-lights of a great ship.

Her massive hull is just discernible, disparting the water with its outward-bulging girth. She conveys a suggestion of such ponderousness, that it looks as though no power on earth could ever move that squat mass an inch through the water. She is the bran-new giant of the Japanese navy, the terrible *Hirosaki* and she has a crew of 576 men.

But they sleep, and the thirty-three wake; and yonder to the far eastward, in the broad brand of shimmering and weltering moonshine, is a boat in

which some harbour-police are lolling on their oars, chatting, seeing nothing. And the bull's-eyes of the lighthouses glare steadily, and the watch-lights of the ships glare steadily, and they see nothing.

The oars are muffled, and the boat glides through shadow beneath the poop of the *Hirosaki*, and when a grappling iron steals upward and fixes in a beading of the stern, we may very well say that the British lion is crouching to spring.

Up wriggles Brassey by the pole and gains the cornice, and, immediately afterwards, up wriggles Hardy. And when Hardy gains the cornice, he coughs a little; and Brassey whispers in his ear a long Sh-h-h-h.'

Yonder, eight yards from them, is the officer of the watch, walking to and fro, between the mainmast and the aft twelve-incher.

The two lie on their faces, and are hidden by a ridge of bulwark above the cornice. Within reach is a coil of rope, and Brassey's hand steals between an interspace of the taffrail, and with absolute noiselessness draws forth the coil, makes a knot round one rail, and lowers a rope-end to the boat.

And now the men arrive rapidly. There is plenty of room to receive them. They are like flies climbing an overhanging rampart by a spider's *fil de toile*.

Before the last man is up, three of them have run stooping forward, and the officer drops without a groan. Just then, from for'ard, a man climbs the stair to report to the officer that the lights are duly burning: it is his half-hourly duty.

And as he reaches the topmast rung, the sword of Brassey is in his breast, and he drops.

The upper deck of the *Hirosaki* is a village, nearly five hundred feet long, but an almost deserted village. Just for'ard of the foremost funnel, two

men are talking, one leaning against the foremast, one with his hand resting on a boat-davit; and a moment before the sword pierces him, the latter gives a light laugh at a jest of the other; and the other utters a feeble cry, and dies. The upper deck of the *Hirosaki* is an English village.

They descend to the main-deck, to the fo'cas'les, to the cabins, to the engine-rooms, down to the turtle-back armour-deck at the water-line, and everywhere, with the silence and the thoroughness of the Angel of the Passover, they smite, they slay. As a man cries out, he dies; he opens his eyes, and they are sightless. The ship flows with blood.

At a door for'ard, Hardy lifts a lantern and looks into an apartment in which sleep fifteen men. He shuts the door upon them, secures it, and does not kill. They are the remnant, — the only men left alive, — and he will have need of them.

In the bunkers of the *Hirosaki* are 700 tons of coal. The Englishmen are soon crowding in the engine-room.

Five other ships, besides the *Hirosaki*, are already in their hands. But their work is not over. Massacre for massacre — John Hardy's for Yen How's! Each has his Sabbath, and his Passover-night.

Once more the six boats put off from the six captured ships, each containing from five to nine men, all carefully picked and mixed, according to their special knowledge of ship-work; and these six meet at an agreed spot opposite the patent slip of the Dock Company. Then three of the boats' crews abandon their boats, stepping over into the other three boats, and these three row away, each containing sixteen men.

And each glides beneath the stern of a Japanese warship, and the men climb, and kill, and hurry to the engine-rooms.

Down in smoky disaster and eclipse sets the red moon, and the deep dark which precedes the morning covers the silent tragedy.

Three pistol-shots altogether, two in one ship, one in another, have been fired by the Japanese. These shots represent all the struggle which has taken place.

But the darkness which has supervened, almost as suddenly as the flickering-out of an out-worn lamp, cannot prevent the watches on other ships from perceiving that some of the fleet are pouring out an unaccountable smoke from their funnels. They must be lost in amazement, unless they conclude that the ships have received secret orders from the Admiral to sail. But they look on, and do nothing but look — for the Admiral is with the fleet, borne in the *Hirosaki* and all, they think, is under his eyes.

There is a rattle of chains, and the steam-windlasses are a-clank, and as the first faint hint of day tinges the East, the solid-looking bulk of the *Hirosaki* — moves. And one after another the nine bulks move, wending northwards in file.

Nine — they are few in number, but they represent a good quarter of Japan's weight in war-ships. And with that quarter, Hardy would then and there attack the other three-quarters, were it not that he lacks one thing — men. The crew of a six-inch quick-firer is five; and five men represent the third part of a complete ship's-crew in this sparsely-manned fleet.

But the sound of cannon is good to the ear of Hardy, and in mere self-indulgence, as the *Hirosaki* steams past the island of Takabok, he sends a wire-gun shell among the still slumbering fleet. And the startled hills of Nagasaki awake, and cry aloud with many a voice of surprise, and the shell bursts in the engine-room of a cruiser.

The shot is not answered. There is an amazement so profound as to resemble coma. While it lasts action is impossible.

But the amazement of the Japanese navy at being shelled by their own Admiral-ship was, if possible, surpassed by the crews of the three new Chinese cruisers, the *Hi-Chi Hi-tien*, and *Hai-Shen*, when, three days later, at noon, a fleet of nine Japanese ships proceeded without warning to sink them as they lay at anchor at Shanghai. They made no resistance to this overwhelming assault; they simply sank.

In each of the nine were a few Japanese who, by Hardy's orders, had been spared to do forced labour on the ships.

Being unarmed, they behaved well, and from them was learned the probable station of the three Chinese cruisers.

The 'Hundred and Eighty' (so called) then proceeded southward, and touched at Hong-Kong, intending to take on board whatever men they could find there. But there were no longer any white men at Hong-Kong, though there was coal.

They then turned their bows toward the West, among them being the *Conrad*, with her crew of eight.

CHAPTER XXIII. THE FROWN OF ENGLAND



BY THE END of July, one thing at least had been clearly hinted to the whole of Europe: that if those English could not write music, they could work; if they could not make pretty things, they certainly could fight; if they were not *élégants*, they at least possessed the knack, and the secret, and the sword of the Conqueror.

'La morgue Britannique!' *'la raideur Britannique!'* — it was not, then, after all, a mere insolence of semi-savages, but a pride based on a genuine supremacy of racial value and valour.

The Continental nations were not quick in learning this fact: a lingering unbelief persisted in them; and in learning it, they perished; and in teaching it to them, Britain herself all but perished.

The numerous campaigns had now occupied not quite five months; and at the end of this time Europe was in a state of collapse and exhaustion far exceeding that which existed at the close of the Thirty Years' War.

About a league to the south-west of Liege, in a pine-wood, there stands a small, old-fashioned inn with overhanging gables, whose frontage looks directly upon the brown waters of the Meuse. Here the Emperor Wilhelm, Duke Paul, representing the Romanoffs, and M. Hanotaux met by appointment.

The first was chiefly a soldier, the second chiefly a diplomat, the third chiefly a man of business.

They sat in one of those vast bedrooms of old Belgian inns, on the first floor, grouped near a window which overlooked the river.

The deliberation was conducted, as usual, in French.

‘The situation,’ said M. Hanotaux, ‘has — developed. And developments generally demand new plans. The facts we know: by means of a single *contretemps* to our fleet, France finds herself with two invading armies in her territories, Germany with three, and Russia with three. And in no case has any one of these eight armies been unsuccessful.’

‘The defensive,’ said the Emperor, ‘has always been intensely repugnant to the genius of the German army. It is an army of conquest and aggression. The smallness of its victories in this war has been due to the fact that it fought on German soil.’

Duke Paul and M. Hanotaux smiled at each other with their eyes.

‘But the question is one of means, rather than of causes,’ said M. Hanotaux. ‘Let us face this fact boldly: that our great enemy is aided by the geography of the earth. We should have beaten England — we none of us doubted that we should. But we have not. To me there seems to have been two chief reasons for this failure, which may now be more or less removed: First, the diversions caused by the hostilities entered upon against us by other nations; and secondly, the sea.’

‘But both reasons remain?’ said Duke Paul interrogatively.

‘The sea does,’ broke in Wilhelm, ‘but, candidly, it is my opinion that France should long ago have made peace with Italy, and Russia with Austria.’

‘Your Majesty is perhaps a little sanguine in this view,’ answered M. Hanotaux, ‘for Italy was the aggressor, and perhaps one might say the same of Austria. On the other hand, Germany seems to have no real cause for a bloody war with Sweden and Denmark.’

‘But was not Sweden, then, the aggressor, monsieur, as far as Germany was concerned?’ asked Wilhelm. ‘Did she not wantonly attack my coasts for

no other valid reason than that Germany was the ally of Russia? And since Denmark has joined Sweden in this attack, what would you have? This, be sure, is not a matter for the peace-maker, monsieur, but for the unsparing and implacable sword!’

‘Still,’ said M. Hanotaux, and he stroked his straggling *barbiche de bourgeois*, ‘our conference, conducted in a spirit of unyielding insistence upon rights, will hardly result in good fruit. The fact is, that we each of us have to fight one great, and at least one smaller foe. I have inaugurated this meeting for the purpose of asking in the most definite terms this question: Since the resources of Europe are visibly nearing their end, do we prefer to conquer the great foe or the small? Is it wisdom to persist in both attempts?’

‘I agree with you in principle,’ said Wilhelm.

‘The principle is obvious,’ said Duke Paul.

‘And to me the details also seem obvious,’ said M. Hanotaux quietly. ‘England triumphant over Europe means, of course, the wiping out of the empires of the world — it means a Cockney earth. When I say “a Cockney earth,” I shudder, your Majesty — I shudder, M. le Duc Paul, — and you shudder, too. The thought, you will say, is not pretty (*Ce n’est pas bien jolie ce que fait penser ça!*). And the nations will not permit that? Let us make peace with our brothers, that we may crush the stranger!’

‘A League of Europe?’ said the Duke.

‘A League of Europe,’ answered M. Hanotaux, and bowed.

Wilhelm flushed with enthusiasm, and he said:

‘I agree! — in principle.’

‘The principle is obvious,’ put in the Duke.

‘And the details, I think!’ cried M. Hanotaux.

‘Who will make a beginning?’

‘If we say — Germany.’

‘Not Germany!’ said the Kaiser.

‘Then Russia,’ said M. Hanotaux.

‘Hardly Russia, perhaps,’ mused Duke Paul. ‘The heart of the Tsar is set upon the crushing of Sweden, at least—’

‘Then France!’ exclaimed M. Hanotaux, ‘since you leave to France this glory.’

‘You mean that you will accept the conditions demanded by Italy, monsieur?’

‘Yes, your Majesty!’

‘At once?’

‘No — not precisely — but soon.’

‘When?’

‘After the next great battle.’

‘Whatever the result?’

‘Yes, M. le Duc Paul.’

‘But after the next great battle the southern resources of France will, as I understand it, be at an end,’ said Wilhelm bluntly. ‘You will be compelled to do what you offer to do.’

‘Not “compelled,” perhaps, your Majesty; for the territorial resources of Italy will be practically at an end also. There remains, however, her — Navy. We have need of it.’

As the inwardness of M. Hanotaux’s scheme unfolded with these words, it won the whole interest of his interlocutors. In both the royal and the ducal brains ripened at the same instant this thought: ‘A Second Invasion of England.’

‘I follow you with the closest attention, monsieur,’ said Wilhelm.

‘And I also find your reflections of the profoundest interest, monsieur,’ added the Duke.

‘France,’ proceeded M. Hanotaux, ‘will adopt that line of conduct under the following conditions: first, she will satisfy the claims of Italy on the understanding between her and Italy, that Italy becomes the ally of the Allies; and secondly, France demands that the two Allies follow her example, by generally granting the demands of Sweden, Denmark, and Austria, on the understanding that they also become the allies of the Allies against the common foe of Europe.’

Wilhelm leapt up.

‘The thing is done, monsieur!’ he exclaimed.

‘It is a question of *when*,’ said Duke Paul.

‘Precisely,’ said the Kaiser, ‘it becomes a question of when.’

‘*When* the next great battle between France and Italy has been fought,’ answered M. Hanotaux.

‘No!’ leapt from the mouth of Wilhelm, in a half-suppressed start, and then there was pause. The fact was, that each desired to fight yet one battle with the enemy with whom it was proposed to make terms, in the hope and belief that the victory would be his, and the terms of peace therefore more advantageous for him.

Duke Paul spoke meditatively; and he said:

‘I agree, on the condition that Russia will make no terms with Sweden and Austria until after the next considerable battle with each of these, whether the battle of France with Italy has then occurred or not.’

‘And the conditions of Germany are identical,’ said the Kaiser.

‘Then there is nothing for it but to shake hands on the compact, your Majesty, and M. le Duc Paul. It may be observed, however, that your condition, and mine, ensures a certain and very considerable reduction of the not large territorial forces now at our disposal. Is there no departure possible from this determination?’

There was no departure. The three men spoke on for an hour; and as the darkness gathered, they rode away toward Liège, and took train in different directions.

The agreement, often repeated, was this: five battles, one by France, two by Germany, two by Russia; then, if possible, a European peace and League.

Russia would be prepared to hand over to Austria the doubtful legacy of the still warring Balkan States, and all that stretch of fair land from the Golden Horn to Cape Matapan; and she would yield Finland, with an indemnity, to the victorious arms of Sweden; Germany would buy off Sweden and Denmark; France would yield to Italy the Haute Savoy, Avoie, the Alpes Hautes, Basses, and Maritimes, and Var.

For all this large generosity there was a cause, bitterly near home, awfully pressing. The one thing now that could save Europe from England was the imposition upon England of the necessity to recall her armies to defend her own territory.

For, at last, 100,000 British soldiers occupied all the Seine valley between St. Germain and Argenteuil, and, the headquarters of Lord Roberts and his staff was the Taverne St. Roch near the great *escalier* of St. Germain. A hundred thousand men — a small army when the war began; an immense war-host now. There was no intention of attacking Paris, which required an investing circuit of 125 miles; — but Paris was not France. Normandy already was once more British; the rest of France lay open; and Italy had crossed the Isère.

Germany's plight was hardly less extreme. Her splendid legions had thrown themselves northward in three continuous streams to meet three branches of the same Teutonic race of which she was part. To the west, occupying Schleswig-Holstein and the upper reaches of the Elbe as far as

Domitz, Denmark lay encamped; to the east, Sweden had drawn lines of circumvallation by a ring of earthwork forts and Schumann gun-turrets round Breslau, having captured the Breslau-Posen railway; and midway between these two was that brazen-browed, nimble, ever-intruding enemy, who alone had made possible to the others their victories. Northern Germany, from Hamburg to Tilsit, had been the scene of the most unparalleled series of massacres — carnage after carnage — ever witnessed in history; Royal Saxon Corps, famed in military history, Bismark Cuirassiers, gallant Silesian and West Prussian Corps — paragons of the soldier's hope of attainment — all had been flung, and flung in vain, into the devouring maw of war; still the British came, though in ever-lessening numbers; and still from farther and farther south marched the precious levies of the Fatherland. Seven of the twenty corps of the Imperial host remained; and of these, two Bavarian brigades were marching upon Naumberg, whence a nondescript army of Socialists, Nihilists, and malcontents had issued from its headquarters a manifesto to the nation, announcing the day of Liberty, and inviting support.

As for Russia, she turned a four-fold face south, southwest, north-west, and inward, and everywhere saw doom. The Army of India, having waited in vain for invasion, crossed the Helmund, annihilated at Merv the still - unrecalled remnants of the Russian army of Turkestan, and had now, after a great victory at Novo Tcherkask, reached Kharkov by road, with the Kremlin for its *objectif*. Odessa, Sebastopol, and the Black Sea littoral were British. Of the two divisions of the Austrian army, one had in a single day disappeared; but another quickly sprang in its place; and this, with its sister army, adopting Moltke's principle of marching separately and fighting together, had, after a strenuous campaign, only surpassed for carnage by the great drama of blood transacting itself in Northern Germany, made Poland

an Austrian province, and crossed the sources of the Niemen. Russia was doing doubtful battle in Bulgaria, Turkey, and Asia Minor. The battleships of Sweden were at the mouth of the Neva; and in the heart of Russia itself a deep subterranean muttering, like a presage of universal earthquake and overthrow, was suggested by the mere word 'Nihilist.'

This, in briefest outline, was the situation on the Continent at the moment of the conference in the wood at Likge. The three nations which had primarily been made the tools of Yen How, regretted now their rashness. They had miscalculated the Lion.

But, suddenly — as if it needed only the conference in the wood to bring them luck — their sky cleared. In the darkest hour of their extremity they found a hope, their last.

On two days following, about two weeks after the meeting in the wood, two considerable victories attended the arms of the Allies.

One of these was French: the 14th (or Lyons) Army Corps of 40,000 men met the advancing Italian Army between Bourgoin and the left bank of the Rhone, and though outnumbered by ten thousand, gave to Italy an emphatic, and indeed final, negative to her long-fought attempt at conquest. And at once the Aurillas brigade of the 13th (Clermont-Ferrand) Corps, which was all that was left of it, was ordered southward to cross the Alps and carry the threat of war into the enemy's country, prior to the proposition to Italy of the terms agreed between the Allies.

The second victory was Russian, and was gained in a far more momentous conflict over the magnificent British-Indian troops, which had gallantly won its way from Quetta almost to the walls of Moscow. Upon this battle General Dragomiroff, in a great, final bid for victory, had concentrated almost the whole remaining forces of his master. It was a mixed combat in which Ural, Orenburg and Transcaspian Cossacks fought

with Bengal Lancers, and Turkestan Infantry Brigades with Royal Fusiliers. The battle, from the commencement of which the 90,000 British were greatly outnumbered, was, after five hours' massacre, won by a flanking movement of Don Cossacks. The number of the slain was 160,000.

Great as was the exhaustion in which this dear victory left Russia, the immediate result was a sudden and enormous increase of her prestige. And two things at once happened: first, Sweden, no longer acting in concert with the great arm of England, which was the incentive to her audacity, became anxious to secure by peace her conquests in Northern Russia; and secondly, the Kaiser, knowing that terms would now be offered to Sweden by Russia, became anxious to make terms with Sweden before her hands were freed to direct upon Germany the entire remnant of her forces. In this way it happened that nearly every one of the contending nations were, owing to the results of these two battles, strongly motivated toward peace. Nor could Austria resist the pressure of her allies, Italy and Germany, nor the large amenities of Russia south of the Balkans; and in the many-sided treaty signed at Vienna on the 23rd of August, Denmark, too, compelled by the pressure of events, was one of the signatories.

It was now that the long expected had come at last. Led by the rigour of events, and led by the general tendency of long-maturing sentiment, an exhausted Europe had inaugurated a League — as the first preliminary to a renewal of her life — having for its object the destruction of an exhausted Britain.

For Britain, too, was exhausted; and already had lost semblance to that land of free-handed opulence which her sons remembered with sighs. Bull's girth had thinned.

Yet if photographs at this hour could have been taken of all her people, and the traits of these agglomerated into the expression of a single face, that

face would have been the wild and wan and gaunt visage of a Man, on whose brow brooded a fatal frown of indignation and resolve, not to be softened but by death.

The idea of Europe was to hurl itself in its whole banded strength upon this diminished force. And it would be strange if, this time, the island could withstand the continent.

England's navy had, on the whole, done well. Up to the moment of the new League, she still might be said to command the seas. But with the League, even without the practically intact navy of Italy, her supremacy was gone. *With* the navy of Italy, it was twice and thrice obliterated.

The new Allies, indeed, looked forward with certainty to another great naval battle before they could effect their design; but their ultimate passage to England was practically assured.

And Sweden, flushed with victory, contributed an Army Corps; and Russia, freed from invaders, contributed two; and Germany one; and France one; and Austria three; and Denmark two brigades; and Italy two brigades.

Mobil/

The port of debarkation was fixed at Antwerp, whose neutrality thus suffered willing violation, and in the last days of August 360,000 troops, troop-ships, and war-ships were hasting over sea and land to rendezvous upon Antwerp.

England, warned both from the Continent and America, was not in the dark. On the 5th of September, when the great Armada set sail from the Belgian port, her whole available force in ships of war was massed in Portsmouth Harbour, all but ready to sail.

It was on this very day, towards two in the afternoon, that a singular species of duel was taking place between two men at Worthing. It was war

in extremis, as bitter as, and more breathless in its mad intensity than, the great war going forward around them.

One of these men was called Richardson, and the other Atkins. Atkins was excise, with a salary of thirty shillings; Richardson was municipal, and acquainted with rates. His *locale* was the Town Hall, and he earned forty shillings. Both were fairly active young men of twenty-five.

Apart from their steady and respectable employments, each had a species of less reputable avocation, which, however, he pursued with extreme zeal, and, for some reason or other, was proud of. Richardson said that he was 'on the staff' of the *Evening News*; and Atkins that he was 'on the staff' of the *Sun*.

This only meant that they had agreed to send any local news that might be of interest to those papers.

Now, on this 5th of September, a bit of local news of considerable interest did, in fact, occur. For a strange-looking little craft, which was nothing else than a Maltese *speronare*, had arrived at the pier; and from her had landed a man of uncertain age, who slowly walked up the pier with his eyes on the ground, made his way to Dixon's Commercial Hotel halfway up the Pier Street, and there disappeared. The rest of the *speronares* occupants had at once put to sea again. But it was quite an hour afterwards, before either Atkins or Richardson, being employed on their Jekyll affairs, got the least scent of this Hyde matter.

It was Atkins who, at the dinner-hour, first entered Dixon's commercial-room. In the front of Dixon's was announced a 'Daily-Ordinary,' the two words being separated by a great gap where the word 'Shilling,' now painted out, had once stood.

As Atkins entered the room, he saw the back of the stranger, who was leaving it by a door which led to the bedrooms above, and he started.

The whole interest of his life was instantly centred upon this man; there was something in his appearance, his dress, which aroused the instinct of the reporter. About the man was the brine and odour of the sea.

At this time, a bit of news was to the people of Britain like rain to the desert. Men often spent their very last half-penny in buying a paper, which they knew could tell them little more than they already knew.

We have said that Atkins was interested at sight of the stranger j but this interest became a passion the moment that, approaching a spread side-table, he saw beside a soiled plate a piece of paper; and on the paper a certain name written at the bottom of a promise-to-pay, together with a London address.

It had happened that the stranger had, to begin with, informed Dixon that he was without a copper in his pockets; and Dixon, after some* demur, on the security of a gold ring, an honest face, and a written promise-to-pay, had not only trusted the stranger with a meal and a bed, but had lent him twelve shillings to pay his fare to London that night. The promise-to-pay he had in a moment of bustle left on the table, and Atkins saw it, and turned to run.

And as he turned to run, lo, Richardson was at the door. And Atkins let his flat hand fall upon the paper, and stood leaning with careless grace.

Richardson, on his way to Dixon's, had heard of the arrival of the stranger, and there was a breath of haste at his lips. He said:

‘Hullo! Anything up?’

‘Not as I know of. You heard anything?’

‘No. Seen the article in to-day’s *D. T.*-?’

‘No. Why are you so late to-day? I have had dinner ten minutes—’

‘What, are you off? It’s only—’

‘I’ve got to be. Beastly job on hand — gauging business for Hatley’s. See you to-night at the club—’

Atkins' diplomacy was bad, for his walk toward the door, for one thing, was too rapid to be natural; and Richardson had noted his statuesque pose, his rather pale face, and his unmoving hand on the paper. So he had no sooner passed through the door, than Richardson, too, had read; and at once he, too, rushed to the door. But it was locked on the outside.

The thought of summoning slow Mr. Dixon by the bell never even entered his head; he simply flew to the window, dashed up the sash, dropped into the area, and climbed up to the rails on the opposite side by the help of a swinging coal-cellar door.

Yonder, half-way down the street, was Atkins, running with all his legs. Richardson, as though life lay before, and death behind, was after him.

Atkins, however, was considerably taller and fleeter, Richardson being inclined to fat; and the race was clearly the foremost man's, when, suddenly, there appeared from a bye-street, with callous saunter, a policeman about ten yards ahead of Atkins.

And at once Richardson sent forth the impassioned shout of 'Stop thief! Stop thief!' many times repeated.

And an instant later Atkins was firmly gripped in the arms of the officer.

'Let me go, Jones, you infernal idiot!' screamed Atkins, 'you ought to know better, you damned *fool!* Can't you *guess* — Jones — you silly ass—'

But Jones, with zealous sense of duty, maintained his grip on the frantic man, till he saw the accuser mysteriously rush onward past the accused. And he tossed his head with a smile, as he relaxed his hold of Atkins; and he said:

'Oh, well, I suppose it's only one of their little newspaper squabbles—'

So Richardson only reached the telegraph-office about ten seconds before Atkins; and the telegraph man was engaged to Atkins' sister.

And therefore the *Sun* got its message some five minutes before the *News*; but by some sleight-of-hand, or extra energy, the *News* was not out-done. It reached Piccadilly Circus some fifteen seconds before the *Sun*, though the *Sun* was first at Holborn; and it was never quite determined to which of the two Finsbury and Tooting owed their gratitude for the news.

On the placards of each the words were the same
JOHN HARDY ARRIVED IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER XXIV. BEFORE THE BATTLE



DURING ALL THAT afternoon and night England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland uttered its voice.

For the 5th-6th of September the usual 5,000,000 letters and post-cards delivered by the Post Office leapt to 14,500,000. This meant that the whole nation had taken busily to pen-and-ink, to paper and card-board. It meant that it was profoundly stirred about something, that it wanted something with its whole heart.

These extra millions of letters were directed to London, some to the Government offices, the majority to the London daily papers. Not a thousandth part of them were ever opened. The Circulation Office of the London Postal Service Department was kept in a flurry of business all through the night. St. Martin's in the morning got postmen where it could; and the bags of the carriers bulged.

When any vast collection of animals acts in this spontaneous way, all doing the same thing, it is that they are stirred by some instinct which is in unison with the soul of the world. The Universal Voice is, in truth, the voice of God. Democracy is thus a kind of Holy Scripture. Its will is the Decalogue.

The nation, having eagerly drunk the news that John Hardy had suddenly reappeared in England as mysteriously as he had disappeared from it, demanded his presence at the impending battle. It insisted that no nonsense about formality or convention should deprive it of his possible help. Most of the people demanded his appointment as Admiral of the Fleet.

And why? He had only been instrumental in winning a single battle for England. If they had reasoned, their ardour of persuasion could not have been so intense. But the fact is, that their cry proceeded from that divine instinct for truth which, in hours of extremity, often inspires nations, and sometimes individuals. That Hardy was the right man, just then, just there, they felt intuitively; and they did not mince matters in proclaiming it.

The only person in Europe to whom the coming battle, or his own possible share in it, did not seem of direct momentous importance, was Hardy.

For the immediate motive of the Allies was to compel the withdrawal of the British troops from the Continent; but supposing they effected a landing in England, there impended an enemy upon them, as Hardy knew, far more terrible than all the combined armies of several Europes; and this enemy would at once compel them to do the very thing they sought to force upon Britain.

And it was near — it was not far off. As he stepped into the train at Worthing that night, he bought a paper; and in a small-type paragraph, unmarked perhaps but by him, he saw this quaint item of news:

‘A train containing 500 Chinese has arrived at St. Petersburg from Vladivostok. They seem poor, and the object of their journey is unknown. It is the intention of the Russian authorities to send them back to their own country.’ Hardy muttered to himself: ‘So soon, Yen How?’

But in the eyes of England, of Britain, of Europe, the coming battle was the Greater Waterloo of world-history; the final shock of this annihilating war; the crowning Armageddon before a probable thousand years of Peace

If Britain failed now, she failed; and if Europe, then Europe failed, too. There could be little further struggle: for who would be there to make it?

There would be no fight left in the limp nations.

Hardy reached London at eleven p.m. It was partly expecting him, for as soon as the two Worthing reporters had got off their news, Worthing had pricked its ears and heard. Dixon's became the centre of the town, and a moving crowd surveyed the house for hours. Long before Hardy appeared, all his immediate plans were known from Dixon; he was then cheered by the full street; only those near enough to see him well being mostly silent, impressed with something of that strangeness of expression which made the sailors at Kiao-Chau whisper: 'What a face!'

London, therefore, expected him, without certainty as to the hour. A considerable crowd waited at Victoria; but when at last it saw him, made no sign. They looked for a very young man, with swift glance and free air. They saw a man with stooping shoulders and gray in his long hair; and decided that this was hardly he.

But one pair of eyes knew him under his disguise. Old Bobbie Mason had been waiting all the evening at the station, wondering why his boy had forgotten him, had sent him no line or word. When at last he saw, he started with horror; but he knew his own.

Outside, instead of the crowd of busy cabs, Hardy saw a meagre muster; and his musing eye noted the raw-boned look of the horses. As his carriage passed through Buckingham Palace Road, a baked-potato apparatus stood before the Palace, and he noted with a pang the largeness of the crowd around it. The streets were almost deserted. Even the policemen seemed fewer. In a bye-street, near Oxford Circus, an old woman walked, and behind her a cat, with little halts and runs, followed persistently, sending out piteous feeble cries to the night.

Old Bobbie, sitting there by his side, waited for a caress of the once affectionate hand. But no caress came. They drove onward in absolute

silence. The only words which John had spoken were the two: ‘Well, Bobbie,’ at the station-platform. The old man was frightened.

Once only, as John was moving off to bed, the old butler broke out; and he cried, with clasped hand:

‘Master John — what — what — have they done to you!’

And John answered:

‘They have tortured me to death, Bobbie, if you want to know.’

And that was all. The rose-leaf lips were pressed pretty tight now.

Early in the morning the Government knew what it had to do, if it meant to keep its place. In a thousand startling ways it learned that the nation’s will, this time, had got to be done.

But the thing was officially impossible. Hardy was nobody, officially. The ships’ crews were complete; and it was anticipated that the main portion of the fleet still at anchor would sail at noon. The Government could not exactly telegraph to a Captain or a Vice-Admiral, and say: “You must give up your place to John Hardy, because he is a better man than you.” They were absolutely at their wits’ end.

But the chief characteristic of the British race is its nimble way. It actually does manage in the end. At nine o’clock Captain MacLeod, once of the *Jupiter*, now of the *Royal Sovereign*, was seized by ‘a sudden illness’; at half-past nine, Admiral Sir Nowell Salmon, principal Naval Aide-de-Camp to the Queen, was at 11a Cavendish Square; at ten, Lord Charles Beresford, upon whom, in the hour of peril, the supreme command had been imposed, telegraphed to the Committee of National Safety, and also to the Admiralty, offering to Hardy a joint command of the squadron: at half-past ten Hardy was hasting in a special train toward Portsmouth.

But he went under compulsion, not knowing why. He had no theory of naval war. He had, indeed, won a battle, but — he shrank a little from this

prominence. The truth was, he was more or less unconscious of the clearness of his own eyes and the valour of his own heart. It needed that the actual hard facts of a situation should be before him before he could assume the aggressiveness and the self-assurance of the hero.

When on the point of setting out from Cavendish Square, he had cut from the newspaper bought at Worthing the paragraph about the 500 Chinese. And he had written the two following letters, the first to Mr. Goschen at his private address:

Dear Sir,

— I am just about to set out to fight in the battle which you kindly allow me to attend. In case I should get killed, I am writing this letter to ask you if you will kindly send a ship, flying the English White Ensign at her mast-head, under that the Blue Peter, and under that the Union Jack, to the island of Monte Christo, with orders to bring home what she will find there. I believe you will find that this will come in useful to you in a few weeks' time.

— I am, sir, your obedient servant,
John Hardy.

The second letter was to the Prime Minister. It ran:

My Lord,

— I take the liberty to enclose you a slip from a newspaper about some Chinamen who have come to St. Petersburg, because I believe it is well worth your attention. In my opinion, within three or four weeks from now there will be some four hundred millions of yellow men in Europe, and

perhaps in England, too. I have just come from China myself, so I ought to know what I am saying. A very great man, named Yen How, is the cause of all this. In my opinion, the very best thing England could do would be to withdraw at once from the Continent the armies she has there.

— I am, my lord, your obedient servant,
John Hardy.

If ever man was shocked with fright, or started at the keen spur of terror, it was the Prime Minister on reading this note.

Now he understood some things which had puzzled him.

News had reached England that some American cruisers in Chinese waters had mysteriously ceased to report themselves. Later had come the news that no intelligence could be obtained of some Italian and Austrian ships of war sent out to China during the 'Eastern craze.' Merchant ships from Europe had sailed round the Cape to the Far East, and their long-delayed return was still awaited. It was known that China and Europe were telegraphically disconnected.

These things, at another time, might have given to Europe some hint of the actual facts. But during the preoccupation of the war, not the remotest inkling of the truth occurred to any one. China was a forgotten land. The result of the great battle in the Hwang-hai was still unknown in England — all was unknown. Hardy was the first messenger from that silent, but busy, Eastern world who had appeared for many a month.

At the Hard a boat awaited him. He was taken on board the *Anson*, which carried the Admiral's flag at the main, and was received by Lord Charles Beresford in his private cabin.

The cheery sailor took the hand of the grave-faced one, and said:

‘I congratulate you heartily, Mr. Hardy, on the merited enthusiasm and confidence which you have aroused in your countrymen, and I shall feel myself honoured by your collaboration.’

And Hardy said:

‘Thank you, my lord.’

And, after some few words, they sat together, and Beresford said:

‘The facts, since you are ignorant of them, are roughly these: the navy of Italy is practically intact. Of her first-class battleships, two were sunk by Riviera forts, but about 130,000 tons of her 150,000 odd tons in this line remain, with say 16 guns over 13 inches, and, counting the whole fleet, 44 over 10. With the names, tonnage, and armaments of the various ships you are familiar, the two lost ships being the *Re Umberto* and the *Ruggiero di Lauria*. France, on the other hand, has lost heavily in the war; her Toulon squadron of eighteen armoured ships, which she had reduced by those sent to the first invasion of England, was destroyed in the Bay of Algeciras, during an attempt to pass through the Straits. A few antiquated wooden things like the *Colbert* and the *Suffren*, as well as that rather lame duck, the *Richelieu*, still remain.

‘Her Levant squadron, however, is mostly good for fight; there was a brush with our East Mediterranean force, but the French turned tail, and were lost in a mist after some mutual injuries. The majority of the fifteen coast-defence iron-clads, moreover, are intact, and I have no doubt will be dragged into this final effort. Altogether we have, I think, to reckon with a contribution from France of, say 96,000 tons, and this will include, I think I may say, the *Brenntis*, the *Sfax*, the *Trident*, the two three-masted *contre-torpilleurs*, *Voutour* and *Cosmao*, the *Amiral Duperré*, the *Levrier*, the cruiser *Troude*, the *Marceau*, and the *Magenta*. Those, I think, are all I can be sure of.

‘In the Baltic there have been four battles, one British-German, one British-Russian-German, one Swedish-Danish-German, and the last Swedish-Russian.

‘On the state of affairs with regard to Baltic ships I am unfortunately not so well informed. I very much doubt if there remains to Sweden a single effective ship of war; but, If I am not wrong, we may expect to have to do with a contribution from Russia and Germany combined of, say, 100,000 tons, one-half of which, I calculate, will be battleship weight, and the rest cruisers and torpedo flotillas. Austria will send her single battleship and her 32,000 ton-weight in cruisers, making altogether, with torpedo-boats, say 40,000 tons. Putting all these together, I have calculated, Mr. Hardy, an opposition of 456,000 tons.

‘Very well, now. Let us turn nearer home, and see what force we have to oppose to this great armada. Britain, I assure you, has had a hard and up-hill fight of it. There lie around you ships recalled from every quarter of the globe, except China, where, I hear that you say, our squadron has gone to Davy Jones. If an invading army were to descend from, let us say, the planet Jupiter, they would find all our colonies undefended. Happily our enemies are in the same plight. Altogether we have at our command, including available coast-defence ships, 156,000 tons, just about one-third of the enemy’s force; and if these figures do not fill you with a certain gravity, it is because you are a Briton and Mr. Hardy.’

Beresford smiled as he concluded, leaning back his chair; Hardy, looking upon the ground, did not smile.

After a minute Hardy said:

‘I take it, my lord, that after this battle there won’t be any ships of war left anywhere?’

‘There will be the Japanese, Chinese, and American navies,’ said Beresford, ‘and some things of Spain, with some inconsiderable Portuguese and Dutch ships. Europe will then have to fight with her Atlantic greyhounds.’

Still Hardy did not smile.

‘And what are our best ships, my lord?’ he said.

‘Our best ships are good,’ replied Lord Charles Beresford. ‘We have the *Illustrious*, the *Hood*, the *Anson*, the *Trafalgar*, the *Royal Sovereign*, on board of which you will bear the joint direction of the battle, though, I am sorry to say, without a flag-captain! also the *Centurion*, the *Nile*, the *Bendow*, the *Hero*. You will see in a few minutes for yourself. Not all the most modern of the modern, perhaps — but all good ships and true.’

‘There won’t be much of them left after the battle, my lord,’ remarked Hardy.

This was obvious. Lord Charles Beresford coughed. And he said:

‘I suppose not. But now — the case being as I have explained to you, what are your ideas as to a plan of battle, and so on?’

For some time Hardy was silent, perusing the ground. Afterwards he said:

‘To be candid, my lord, I have no idea, not a single one. Or rather, I have *one*.’

‘Very good, Mr. Hardy; let me hear it, and we will then confer together upon it.’

My idea is this, sir,’ said Hardy, ‘to ask you to let me take a cruiser, or a pinnace, or something, and go to the foreign fleet with a flag of truce to try and persuade them, by hook or by crook, to go back again to their own country.’

‘My good Mr. Hardy!’ broke from Lord Charles Beresford’s lips.

‘You are astonished, my lord,’ said Hardy. ‘You guess that I am as fond of a fight as any one, and you did not quite expect to hear that sort of proposal from me. But I make it seriously to you, and in doing so I forget my own inclination, and even I forget the glory of England. I am thinking of the good of the whole world. The fact is, sir, I happen to know more of the actual conditions of the present and the near future than you do,’ and therefore see things in different proportions. I say to you, Lord Charles Beresford, that mankind is at this moment in by far the greatest fix in which it has ever been since the first man stepped; and how it is going to get out of it, God only knows. You think you have been having a great war in Europe, and so you have. But this little great war of yours is not anything compared with what is coming upon you, sir. Believe me, for I know, or I would not say it. It has been man fighting with man all the time, has it not? But how if all the devils in hell, myriads of them, my lord, suddenly break loose upon you? It would be an easy thing for four millions of yellow men, with a proper leader, to conquer Europe in its present state. But it is not four millions which are coming; it is four hundred millions; and every single one of them a devil, as I say, vomited from hell. I have just come from China, and that is what I have to tell you, sir.’

As Hardy ceased, he lifted his hitherto careless eyes, and now there was a flash in them; in the face of the other was horror, query, incredulity.

There was a dead silence. Lord Charles Beresford had of old been himself one of the preachers of ‘The Yellow Danger’ but he had preached it as a theory, afar off. When he was told that it was here — had come — it shocked and appalled him as though he had never once heard of such a thing.

In the midst of the silence there was a knock, and the Admiral’s Flag-Lieutenant entered the room. He said:

‘The *Indefatigable* has steamed in, sir, and signals that the enemy are now passing the Straits.’

A chain of four British cruisers, going and coming within signalling distance, the remotest keeping watch upon the enemy, the nearest in touch with Portsmouth, had been told off for this duty two days previously.

‘We must be looking alive, then,’ said Lord Charles. ‘The words you have spoken, Mr. Hardy, are terrible; and the course you suggest seems to me one almost requiring the authority of the civil powers. But now, you see, there is no time. I suppose I must take upon myself the responsibility of acceding to your views.’

‘I believe that England will approve our conduct, sir.’

‘Good. At the same time I can’t say that I have much faith in the success of your expedition.’

‘I *hope* it will succeed, my lord. If it does not—’

‘Well?’

‘Then it will serve another end.’

‘What end?’

‘I shall have a good look at the enemy’s formation, forces, and disposition.’

And at these words the eyes of the two men met.

And Lord Charles Beresford smiled.

And John Hardy, for the first time, smiled.

CHAPTER XXV. THE GREATER WATERLOO



THE SHIPS LAY in harbour with fires banked and steam at a quarter of an hour's notice.

The single signal 'Weigh!' went up from the *Anson*, and ten thousand sailor - hearts went fluttering, as the fat chain-links, like processions of slow-footed sea - tortoises, came waddling clumsily in-board.

It was arranged between Hardy and Beresford that the plan of advance which the latter had long since determined upon should be put into execution and maintained, up to the time of Hardy's visit to the allied fleet. If, after the visit, Hardy desired to take over the sole command, he would signal that fact throughout the fleet.

At noon exactly the ships steamed out. At once the news was flashed over all Britain, and an hour later the churches of the land, in hamlet, town, and city, were thronged with worshippers imploring the Almighty to protect His Witness in the earth, and not to forsake in the hour of her extremity that chosen Nation, His Servant, which had proclaimed the greatness of goodness, and, as far as her poor striving eyes could see, had loved Righteousness, and had hated Iniquity.

The ships passed Spithead massed in four columns in line ahead, flag and senior officers leading their columns, Hardy at the head of the starboard line in the *Royal Sovereign* and Beresford at the head of the extreme port. Ships had stringent instructions to keep their speed, and maintain an exact formation. Six knots, eight knots, ten knots were signalled; and it was

evident from the position of the steam-cones that every ship had steam in plenty.

It was a bright early-September day; but as often happens on such days, a bluish mist, which was half a mist and half a luminosity, delicately veiled the distance.

Off Selsey Bill the second link of the chain of look-outs joined the fleet, an hour afterwards the third, and half an hour afterwards the fourth. The last, having come in at the rate of twenty-one knots, reported the enemy off Winchelsea, steering W. by S. in four lines abreast, the last line consisting mainly of troop-ships, and the whole occupying a vast breadth of sea midway between the French coast at Dieppe and the English at Winchelsea. In half an hour everybody of any rank in either fleet had a glass at his eyes.

It was the head signalman of the *Royal Sovereign* who first sent a thrill through his ship by reporting that he could make out something to eastward; and five minutes later every glass could detect the enemy, faint and toy-like in the vague haze as mirage, or the other-world hues of soap-bubbles. The fleets were then twenty miles apart, and it was just after four, the day being as bright and hot as ever.

Hardy, the glass at his eyes, said to a signal midshipman, an old *Britannia* ship-mate of his own age:

‘I want No. 98. Have her signalled alongside at once.’

No. 98 was a quite new first-class torpedo-boat, the fastest thing in the British navy, and the first of her build. Only 130 tons in displacement, she yet had a length of 160 feet, and an I.H.P. of 2800. She steamed, or rushed, at the rate of thirty-three knots, and while she was doing it her crew were not comfortable, and the sea in all her neighbourhood changed colour. Hardy, before he stepped aboard her, took the precaution to drape himself from head to foot in oil-skins.

Away, then, in a few minutes, drove No. 98 at full speed, swaying through a horrible vibratory heave of her flanks, like a charger which has galloped all day, and at night-fall he sprawls with drooped neck at the inn-gate, the sweat reeking on his rocking ribs; so drove No. 98, groaning for speed, seeming far too frail for the power that pumped and travailed within her rocking ribs.

Eastward she flew, a mere white spectre of hurrying foam; and within this shroud of spray, Hardy, in his oil-skins, lay flat on his face, his left arm round an upright at the extreme bow, a double spy-glass at his eyes. From the mast-head amidships floated a large white flag.

As soon as No. 98 was seen to shoot ahead of the fleet, Lord Charles Beresford signalled slow speed, and the fleet proceeded at a mere crawl through the water, this having been previously agreed upon. It was Hardy's idea that the enemy were probably ignorant of our exact forces, and that something might possibly be gained, when the facts of the battle unfolded themselves, by maintaining this ignorance as long as might be. Hence a nearer approach was for the present avoided.

In thirty-five minutes Hardy was on the deck of the allied Admiral-ship, the ship being the *Andrea Doria*, and the Admiral, in virtue of seniority, Admiral Premesnil, the Grand Duke Alexis being second in command.

He was led, his face half enveloped in the throat-flap of the oil-skin, and the water streaming to his feet, into the Admiral's quarters. Premesnil, a tall man, with gray hair, and a stately courteousness of manner, sat opposite Hardy, supporting a thoughtful brow on thumb and finger.

'May I ask, sir,' said Hardy, 'are you fairly well acquainted with English?'

'Fairly well, sir,' answered Premesnil; and that is not a confession, but a boast.'

He bowed. Hardy bowed.

‘Well, sir,’ said Hardy, ‘I come to you to make a proposal of peace. But before I can say anything, I must ask you to slacken your speed, so as not to approach too near to my fleet during our talk. Our fleet is almost stationary. I ask the same of you.’

‘It shall be done, sir. But first let us understand who we are. I, as you guess, am the Admiral-in-Chief here: Admiral Premesnil. Who are you?’

‘I have the joint-command of the British fleet,’ said Hardy, * in collaboration with Lord Charles Beresford. My name is John Hardy. I speak for myself and my colleague.’

‘Might I ask — Hardy of Shoreham fame?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Good. Then I shall at once comply with your request as to speed, and order you a glass of wine. You have had a good drenching, I see.’

The Admiral touched a button, and gave an order as to speed. But Hardy declined the wine.

He put his brow on his hand, and he began to talk slowly and gravely in his plain, strong Saxon, unfolding to the Admiral why he was there, going into the minutiae of the Chinese character, prophesying in simple English, but with the conviction and effusion of a Hebrew Seer, the doom of Europe,

He spoke for half an hour without interruption. And when he was finished the Admiral sighed, for he was weary, and was wondering what this all was about, and when it would end. He did not believe a word of the matter.

The thought occurred to him: ‘Can this be a ruse to keep back the battle till darkness comes on?’

His manner stiffened. He was narrow and technical; he lacked both sight and insight.

‘And what are your proposals, sir?’ he said.

‘I have made them!’ said Hardy.

‘But not seriously — come now.’

Hardy leapt to his feet, flushing. ‘Do you reject them, then?’

‘In my own name, and in the name of my colleagues, without consulting them, most decidedly — yes.’

«Then, sir, we will fight you.’

‘Since nothing else remains, Mr. Hardy.’

‘I say you *bon jour*, monsieur.’

‘Good-day, Mr. Hardy.’

They bowed. Hardy passed through the door, his brow very pink, the Admiral following.

Again they bowed as Hardy passed down the ship’s side, and never met again.

Back tore No. 98 to her own fleet, Hardy lying at her stern with the glass held steadily to his musing eyes.

To the surprise of the British, the torpedo-boat, instead of returning to the starboard column, made for the extreme port, steering for the *Anson*.

At this time Hardy, stung by the French Admiral, and excited at the near approach of battle, was flushed in face, and about him was something of his natural look of youth. His blood was up. He had come into contact with the realities of the case — the very realities to which his own inner nature was akin. Here he was at home, among native things, which he could manipulate without fail. His nature, as it were, rose and buckled on its sword, feeling its force, not doubting its dowry. He was prepared now for any responsibility. His soul recognised and acknowledged itself, and his eyes were bright. He was a Hero.

As other men discover theories and apply them to facts, so he, on contact with facts, evolved theories. He had formed a plan of the battle.

He ran up to the *Anson's* side with alacrity. And as he was hurriedly met by Beresford, he hurriedly said:

‘These people will have nothing to do with peace, my lord. The thing now is to beat them.’

‘I heartily agree, Mr. Hardy. Am I to understand that, having seen their disposition, you are prepared to take over the sole command?’

‘I am willing, my lord.’

‘Good! And have you come to tell me that? *

‘No. I came to save you a journey to my ship, as I was already abroad from mine. What I want is a meeting of all captains and commanders in your ward-room at once. But it must be at once/

Beresford instantly turned, and sent a middy packing with the order; the flags climbed up, and a flotilla of forty-three hurried boats came converging over a wide space of sea.

They were soon on board, and gathered in the wardroom. Beresford, half-rising from his chair, said: ‘Mr. Hardy will speak on my behalf and on his own, gentlemen,’ and sat down again.

Every one of those assembled eyes rested critically upon Hardy as he rose, he in his oil-skins, they all in uniform, prepared to pass judgment upon him as seaman, as general, as man.

Would he not hesitate, or blush, or strut, or stammer? Would he not show himself blatant, or timorous, or crude, or uninitiated?

They none of them felt absolutely sure of him. Only Hardy felt absolutely sure of himself, standing on fact. He rose with the self-assurance and the self-unconsciousness of Cromwell, four-square to his place and his hour.

This is what he said:

‘We have not much time for talk, gentlemen, as the enemy must now be approaching us at the rate of eight or ten knots, and I do not want them to come too near before I tell you what I think. Lord Charles Beresford has calculated that they outweigh us by three to one, and that is just about the truth. Now I am not at all sure that you will all absolutely agree with what I am going to say about that; but, personally, I am quite certain of my ground. They are three, I say, and we are one. Well, suppose three men attack me in the street, what would be the best thing, and what would be the worst, which I could do? The best thing I could do would be to set my back against a wall, face them, and try to drive away at them; the worst thing, would be to get in the middle of a triangle formed by them. We agree, of course, as to that; and hence the horror which all military people have of the phrase “between two fires.” But surely, gentlemen, with a ship it is different! On land you must not be too bold, for then you become rash; but on board a ship, I give it as my opinion that the rasher you are, the better the chance you have! *Why*, let me ask you, ought I to try to get my back against a wall, if three men attack me in the street? There is no other reason than this: that I have only got one face and two hands. If I had three faces, and six hands, the best thing I could do would be to get in the middle of them, and try to finish them all off, before any two could attack me in one quarter. Now a ship has four faces — a bow, a stern, and two sides — and under each of these a gallant number of hands. I believe now, whatever the books on naval tactics may say, that you will be on my side in this matter; for one, of course, must not go by books, where so much is at stake.

‘But I do wish to convince you quite fully. Let me point out to you, then, what you know, that the modern battleship, as distinct from the old-time ones, is a far more potent thing as an attacking than as a self-defensive

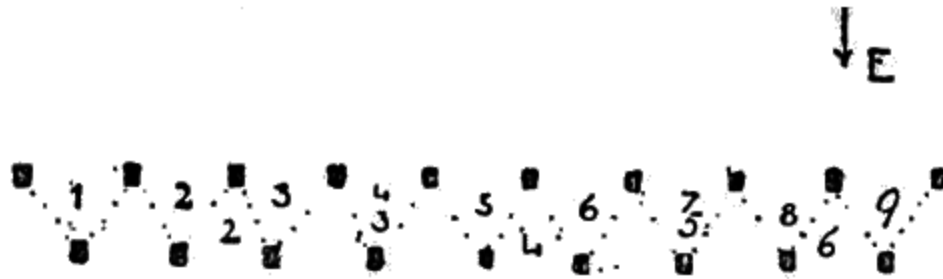
machine. The *Camperdown* rammed the *Victoria* as they were playing about together, and down, with hardly a sigh, went the *Victoria*, like lead. If you were to armour a battleship to resist the attack of a 11 i-ton gun, that ship would sink without troubling any one to fire the gun off. And what does this prove? It proves that if three ships attack one, the best thing which that one can do is to turn three faces simultaneously to those three ships, and batter away at them with her hundred hands, making sure that, not one, but four ships will have disappeared when the smoke clears. In other words, the one ship must get in the middle of the three. It is a question of time.

‘Of course, gentlemen, if a ship could float with only one side, then it would be of great importance for her to avoid getting “between two fires.” But when one side is broken, both sides sink, and it is of no consequence whether or not the other side is broken too; while it *is* of consequence that that other side should, before it sinks, be sinking an enemy’s ship. It is a question of time.

‘I hope I make myself clear. I am led to express these thoughts to you, because they have just been passing most vividly through my own head; and they have been doing so in consequence of the sight I have had of the enemy’s fleet.

‘The arrangement of that fleet you already partly know. The important point is this: that their first and second lines abreast consist of two rows of battleships, the first numbering ten, and the second nine. Now these are arranged in echelon; so that you get a series of nine triangles with their bases toward us, and their apex away from us, as you see in this drawing which I have made, marking the names of ships as far as I could determine, or guess, them.’

A paper with a diagram was handed round.



‘Now, gentlemen, since we have just nine battleships, we have it in our power to make a dash into these nine triangles, and fire away; but in that case, every second allied battleship in the front line would be attacked by two, instead of one, British ship; and we really have not the material to spare for these luxuries. No: what I propose is that we spread ourselves out, so that six of our battleships shall occupy the whole length of the French line abreast; and in that case, as the diagram shows us, our extreme starboard ship will find herself running into a foreign triangle, base facing; our second ship into a quite distinct foreign triangle, apex facing; our third ship into a third foreign triangle, base facing; and so for the six ships, base facing and apex facing, alternately. Thus our six ships will engage eighteen distinct foreign ships; and the foreigners will have one ship left: and we shall have — three.

‘Now that one left ship of the foreigners I wish to have attacked by Torpedo-boats No. 47, No. 53, and No. 98 at the same moment, the instant the battle commences. They are to do nothing else till that one ship is in the air.

Well, with regard to our three battleships left, it is chiefly to tell you what I think should be done with them that I have called this hurried meeting. Gentlemen, it seems to me, really, that a perfectly whole and sound ship, suddenly and unexpectedly entering a battle when it is more

than half over, must be not only a tremendous weapon in herself, but must necessarily be the cause of a tremendous demoralisation in the minds of her enemies. Hence it is that I grudge the time taken up by every word that I am now speaking. The enemy cannot be quite certain of our numbers — they do not know that we have these three ships. I therefore want these three, at once, to retreat westward under forced draught till they see the smoke of the battle, and then, making a detour, to get behind the enemy's troop-ships, and dash among them from the east. I have very good reasons for knowing that, this time, it is not a matter of supreme national importance whether the foreigners land upon English soil or not; but still, we do not want the people of Britain to be saying that they had a fleet, and it was not good enough to clear the seas of foreigners. The three ships will therefore worry among the troop-ships, sinking all they can — on this clear understanding, that they be not careful to destroy straggling ships, that they waste little time, that they dash as soon as may be into the general battle, and finish the destruction of the enemy.

‘The three ships which I tell off for this duty are the *Centurion*, the *Bendow*, and the *Hero*.

‘With regard to the method to be adopted by the Six, the three which enter a triangle-base will, after as much fight as possible without lowering speed in the middle, pass through and ram the apex; then if possible, and if need be, re-form, return, and fight. The three which enter their triangles by an apex, will ram the apex, enter, and fight.

* One of the greatest horrors of modern sea-battles I believe to be the danger we are all in of doing injury to our own ships. But this time we shall be so spread out, that nothing of that sort is likely to happen — to battleships at least. But to captains and commanders of cruisers and composite vessels I commend that reflection. For they, passing into the

second line of the enemy, will have a thicker fight, which, I hope, will be conducted on the same principles as those I have enunciated for battleships.

‘That is all I had to say, and now we must look sharp, I think, especially those Three. I wish you success and goodbye. After all, ships are dead things; it is not ships that fight a battle, but men; and every one knows that we have the right men. Nice steering, dash, and plenty of quick thunder: that, I think, is much. We ought to be able to destroy this foreign fleet I have seen their Admiral-in-Chief, gentlemen, and he certainly did not look to me as if he knew much about ships and fighting.’

A low noise of laughter ran round the room. Already the magic of Hardy’s plain but dashing and fascinating personality had caught and won his colleagues. It was impossible not to see by the faces around him that he was approved. He possessed the faculty of making men work with enthusiasm for him.

‘What about the battle-word?’ said a captain, as they turned to troop away.

‘Suppose we say *Trafalgar*?’ said Hardy.

‘*Trafalgar* has been already used three times during the war,’ said Lord Charles Beresford. ‘I had decided upon another, Mr. Hardy.’

‘What, my lord?’

‘*Shoreham*,’ answered Lord Charles Beresford.

And a murmur of ‘Hear, hear,’ as the officers busily shook hands, spread half-way up the stairway; and Jack, a short while afterwards, knowing who now led him, received the signalled word with high enthusiasm.

By the time Hardy reached his own ship in No. 98, the three appointed battleships were off to the west.

It was just three bells, first dog-watch; and the day, as if lingering to see, showed hardly a tendency to darken. The allied fleet was now much more

distinctly marked on the horizon. The British had quite a stripped appearance, prepared, to its mast-heads, for battle.

As soon as Hardy reached his deck he ordered ten knots to be signalled. And at once the two masses of power began to approach rapidly, growing up upon each other, marching over the insubstantial deep, to meet.

It is impossible for even the coolest heart to be present at the impending of a contest so august, without a quickened beat, a thump of awe. Even to contemplate the thing from afar is horror. The weak flesh shrinks. The forces that rush to horrid combat are hardly of man — they stride out into the infinite, they reach the supernatural, they become *ghostly*. Commonplace Jack suddenly finds himself face to face with ineffable Hell.

They are ten miles apart — they are eight — they are six. The heart seems jammed in the dry throat, and the hands shake like reeds through which the huntsman's dog has flitted. The anticipation of the thing is, if possible, a greater horror than the reality.

The five ships have pricked their course off, debouching to port, and the three appointed torpedo-boats are rushing like sword-fish still farther to port upon the single doomed ship designated by Hardy. Only the *Royal Sovereign* in the far starboard limb maintains her straight course to eastward. Hardy is in her conning-tower, and his eyes, alight with awe and joy, are everywhere.

Signal after signal goes up from the *Royal Sovereign*. The speeds on both sides intensify. She is five miles from the two ships between which she means to run, and she is the foremost of her own fleet. In two minutes she is four miles; in two more, three. How frightful is her Silence...!

If the earth's foot should slip upon its course, and she were perceived to be sailing slowly, yet with ever swifter and madder joy, toward her native sun, just so the wild heart would beat, and the blanched face be pinched...

The ships are no longer mere toys one to the other. They are two miles apart. Hardy waits, grandly patient. They are two thousand yards apart... And then the *Royal Sovereign* talks.

Talks — and is answered. It is a single savage bark of Cerberus, the hell-dog, answered by two single savage Cerberus-barks — the talk of heavy guns. But before the sounds have passed in pallid flight over the sea, there breaks forth a continued rolling row, like that solemn roar of doom and deep-throated jabber of bubbering and thundering Etna, the mere intolerable tumult of which throws the three crews into a sort of crazy daze. It is the lighter guns which jabber.

John Hardy forgets Yen How and his tortures. He is a youth again. A wild hilarity lights his gallant eyes.

But now he is passing midway between the two ships, and straight before him is the third. Not an instant of that precious period passes unmarked by him. Though his face, like all faces there, is a face of ecstasy, the back of his brain is cool as ice.

‘Plenty of quick thunder,’ he had said — in his robust, Cromwellian way! And as he passed by her, the great *Brennus* reeled and plunged, with a sort of tragic haste, from sight.

But now all the battle, over many a mile of troubled sea, is rolled in smoke; and nimble-treading clouds pass in mysterious haste to and fro across the water. From fifteen miles away to northward there comes a great detonation, and the *Italia* is ‘in the air.’ The three torpedo-boats detailed to attack her have been sunk, but the sixth steel-needle waits half a minute swinging between her screws, and bursts, and sends her — flying.

Near by, Lord Charles Beresford on the *Anson* has rammed the *Lepanto* at a triangle-apex, and run on with sinking bows toward the *Amiral Duperré*

and the *Oldenburg*; and these two he passes with such a rain of wrath that not a single crew is left alive at their unprotected guns.

Now, if never before, is proved the truth of Hardy's saying, that the modern battleship is a destructive, rather than a self-protective, engine. Even as he gasps the sharp, short order *Ram!* the two masses of white cloud, within which are the *Royal Sovereign* and the *Francisco Morosimi* coalesce; they are both tearing along at fifteen knots in nearly opposite directions; they close — they meet; and there is nothing on earth to which to liken the shocking jar with which those armoured powers crash.

On both ships every living brain spins and faints; and before any one has recovered consciousness, the *Francisco Morosimi* is wheeling furiously in a hollow basin of sea, whose waters shoot and gurgle in cataracts above her leaning hull.

All along the line of fifteen miles, from the *Italia* 'in the air' to the *Francisco Morosimi* in the deep, the tale of tragedy has accumulated; and in three minutes the charge is over, and the ships are firing stern-guns.

Only three minutes — and at the end of that time, one British battleship, the *Illustrious*, and four foreign battleships, the *Italia*, the *Francisco Morosimi*, the *Lepanto*, and the Admiral-ship, are no longer there; seven minutes later, and nine more foreign battleships, with three more British, sink, without receiving further injuries. Some of the crews of these last are afloat in boats.

Two of the six British ships in tatters, and six of the enemy in tatters, still float. Hardy slowly opens his eyes, leaps to his feet, looks around, and orders his helm to starboard; for there is a wide clear space about him. He is told, in reply, that it is impossible to keep steam, as the water is rising in the stoke-holds.

This only means that he cannot ram again, not that the fight is quite over for him. The *Royal Sovereign* creeps wearily round; yonder to the north-west is a still reeking ship, the *Sfax*, hardly moving; and like a dying lion, intent upon dealing a last rent to his enemy, the *Royal Sovereign*, trailing her wounded stern, drags herself painfully forward upon the *Sfax*.

The ships are alone, and the combat, dreadful because almost stationary, lasts five minutes. Neither is fit for fight, yet neither will strike colours. The rain of shells clash midway in the air, and burst in unison, as if with clapping hands, and grand hurrahs of flame and sound. The ships are near; and suddenly cries Hardy: 'Helm hard to port — hands prepare to board!' And as the *Sfax* discharges a last broadside at nothingness, the high bow of the *Royal Sovereign* creeps forward upon her quarter; there is a small crash and mutual shudder of the meeting ships; and the next moment, Jack, with Hardy at his head, is swarming, cutlass in hand, with nimble impetuosity, into the enemy's aft upper-deck. The feat is unexpected; the Frenchmen wince and die; in a moment the British tar is everywhere, and his touch is rough. A white-faced commodore rushes past Hardy on the main-deck, crying: We yield! we yield!

The stern of the *Sfax* sways and wobbles a little: she feels the suction of the *Royal Sovereign* which has quietly sunk beside her.

Hardy stills the tumult, orders the French flag to be pulled down, and leaps to the conning-tower. He looks abroad with keenly curious eyes over the sea. Around him is a great dull roar, and the air is all of thin smoke. No human brain can now altogether divine, much less direct, the vast drama that is still progressing. Far away, beyond the ken of vision, the battle is raging between meeting cruisers, between torpedoes and contre-torpilleurs, between shot and shell, ram and barbette, in incalculable hurly-burly. But through all this confusion there has run, and runs, a thread of plan, on at

least one side. Hardy, as far as he can see, is well content. He waits and waits, with wildly throbbing heart, for the appearance of his three battleships.

As for himself, he is a prisoner. The *Sfax* has neither screw, nor rudder, nor boat. At last they come, hurrying from the eastward, where they have been delayed by sinking the greater part of the enemy's troop-ships — in line abreast. Hardy's signalman has been busy among the French flags, and when they approach within a thousand yards of the *Sfax*, summoned by steam-siren, he signals them to destroy, or capture, first the five dismantled battleships which remain.

And with this order the battle is nearly over: the mere apparition of the fresh ships has all but won it. There is a renewed energy of firing which lasts from four to five minutes. And then a gradual, and finally deathly, silence grows upon the dun air and the callous green sea-surface; and night at last descends.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE YELLOW DANGER



WE, WRITING THE history, have gone into detail, and explained the means employed by Hardy in the winning of this great, battle. But the mass of the British public, not looking narrowly into means, looking only at the astonishing result, hailed the victory as a perplexing miracle of genius.

That even one of the British ships should return to harbour was marvelous. But that three should return, having in tow two Italian and one French ship, after destroying the overwhelming remainder of the invading force, this seemed to approach the incredible.

The three ships arrived at Portsmouth at eleven in the night. They were the *Nile*, the *Hero*, and a sloop, the *Pelican*. (The *Benbow*, the third of the ships kept by Hardy in reserve, had been torpedoed at the last moment.) They had on board, beside their own crews, Lord Charles Beresford, Hardy, and a number of boat-loads of British and foreign sailors which they had picked up. The three captured ships — the *Sfax* and two Italian gunboats, — all disabled, were towed to Newhaven and left. The three British, almost intact (the *Hero* had some central-battery guns unshipped), proceeded to Portsmouth.

At midnight there was a sound of jubilee bells in London, in Liverpool, and in every considerable town in Britain. Watch - night processions, which showed no intention of going to bed, filled the streets; and penniless Hodge at the door of the village ale-house heard a rumour, and was glad.

Better times would come now; hard Scarcity and dreary outlook would be no more; the great war was over; and the True Blue had won it.

But the real case was fearfully different. The war just practically ended was a preliminary: it was the first-piece comedietta before the tragedy, and it was put upon the stage by a great actor in order the better to set off his own grandiose strutting and storming. It was the streak of foam which foreruns the tidal-wave.

If ever man had a day of strain and toil it was John Hardy that day; with every breath, his chest wheezed in labour; when he landed at Portsmouth at eleven, his hands hung so heavy that he could hardly stir them. His voice was gone. The sound of thunder still sang in his ears.

Yet, even while preparations were being made for a train to conduct him to London, he wrote, and had sent off, a telegram. It was to the editor of the *Times*. It said:

Kindly reserve two columns for letter from me for to-morrow. Will let you have manuscript by three a.m.

John Hardy.

At this message Printing-House Square rubbed its tickled hands, and was prone to dance. The editorial head grew dizzy with big anticipation. For copy at that moment from John Hardy, two columns of it, was copy indeed — and gratis! It seemed too exquisite a thing to be true.

‘But what can it be all about?’ wondered the editor.

A thrilling description of the battle!’ suggested an inspired sub.

‘Hardly that, perhaps,’ doubted the Chief.

One of the staff waited in Cavendish Square, which, till far into the morning, was filled by an upper-class crowd. A little before three the *Times* man drove from Hardy’s door with the precious copy written in pencil; and

not till then did Hardy's head drop asleep on the table where he sat; part of the copy he had scribbled in the train with half-closed eyes.

The letter contained no thrilling description of the battle; though it was thrilling enough, too, and made the *Times* editor rub his eyes in a somewhat unusual way.

Was the letter a stupendous hoax? Or was it a letter the publication of which would lift the *Times* to a greater pitch of glory than was ever dreamed by human editor in this world before?

The *Times* man was questioned narrowly. From whom had he received the letter? From Hardy's old butler himself. There could be no mistake.

It appeared next morning, side by side with the detailed description of the battle. And England rubbed its eyes, too, as the *Times* editor had rubbed his.

Hardy had spoken out clearly, careless, in his belief in the British character, whether he threw the nation into a state of panic or not. He told what was coming; he explained the motive with which the European war had been brought about by Yen How; he told of the massacre, of the action of the Japanese fleet; he showed how there was not even the least possible chance for Europe; how England alone, for a time at least, was sheltered by her sea; and how this was the chance of England to come forward and prove her patriarchal heart, her imperial clemency, her motherhood of the world. He gave his reasons for thinking that the fulfillment of his prophecy was near, impending, about to happen. And he wound up with a series of numbered skeleton recommendations. They were:

1. That the tiny remainder of the British fleet be utilised to seize all the merchant-ships in European ports; and that these ships, together with all the available ships in the British mercantile marine, be employed, with or without the consent of foreign governments or individual owners, in

bringing over to England, and in taking to America, and to Africa, such of the inhabitants of Europe as could and would seek shelter in those countries.

2. That America be invited to a League with Britain, having for its object the salvation of the white races, and the extermination of the yellow.

3. That the armies of Britain be at once recalled from the Continent.

4. That the Government at once begin to make all possible provision for the huge increase of population in Britain which would result on the appearance in Europe of the yellow men.

Such were the *Times*' two-columns, and under the last was the name, John Hardy.

Of the sensation which this letter caused it is impossible to give a real idea, for there is nothing else to which to compare it. By noon copies of the paper were being bought and sold for ten guineas.

At this hour thanksgiving hymns were being sung; and the name of Hardy was being made the text of a thousand sermons.

After the battle of Shoreham, he had been instinctively adopted by the race as its 'darling'; the battle of the Channel made him definitely its hero; his letter made him its Leader.

He was at once elected a member of the Permanent Committee of National Safety.

Not that there was no searching of heart, no doubting, as to this extraordinary letter. To many people it seemed as wild as possible. The proof which Hardy adduced to show that the Yellow Wave was near (*if* it was coming at all) was his contention that Yen How, having destroyed Europe by the European war, would not be sufficiently silly to wait for Europe to recover herself before his invasion. The argument was sound, if

the hypothesis was sound. But where were the signs of his coming? There was an 'if.'

On the whole, however, the nation had learnt to trust him; and trusting him, it stood aghast at his awful message.

At this time, the people of Britain, if they had never been so before, was genuinely a nation, as distinct from a mob. They had suffered keenly together, resolved and acted nobly together: and they had been welded in the furnace-heat. By a Nation we mean a multifold Man. It was remarkable, about this period, how large an amount of attention was attracted by certain badly-spelled letters written to the papers. Each man felt himself verily part of the whole, and 'the government was upon his shoulders.' It was no longer a nation of shopkeepers — it was a nation of Councillors. 'To be made perfect by suffering' is even more true of communities than of individuals. 'Happy,' it is said, 'is the nation which has no history' — but 'nation' in that phrase should be spelled 'crowd.' It is the Marathons and Trafalgars which knit and nationalise. At all events, Britain, now, with her largely decreased population, was certainly knit and nationalised. She could proceed from thought to action almost with the spontaneity of a single brain and arm. In her hand was the sword — but upon her brow sat Deliberation, and the grave air of the Statesman.

This was all the more, and not the less, reason why Hardy's announcements were followed by the wildest dismay, the most unalloyed panic. For Britain, and every Briton, felt that it was England, in the end, who would have to dam the yellow wave, or sink beneath it; that it was she, and she alone, who must needs take up the cross of the world, and, like the Christ of the nations, with many an agony and bloody sweat, redeem mankind.

Whatever else was true or false in Hardy's letter, this, it was clear, was true: that, in the event of the yellow wave, Continental Europe was powerless.

When there would be no eye to pity, and no arm to save, it must, then, be the arm of England which should bring salvation. And *was it able...?*

There was the fleet of Japan, the fleet of China. And if even there were not the fleet of Japan, neither was there any longer a British fleet at all capable of opposing the landing, even in open boats, of an endless succession of innumerable armies on various parts of the coast.

These reflections at once occurred to every one. And they had the same effect upon the mind, as if it had been scientifically announced that some fatal change was about to occur in the composition of the atmosphere of the earth.

It was felt, of course, that the yellow conquest could not be an ordinary conquest, if it happened at all. There was no question of conqueror and conquered living together afterwards and fraternising, like Norman and Saxon. The yellow conquest meant, naturally, that wherever it passed, the very memory of the white races it encountered would disappear for ever.

At this dark thought the heart quailed; and there was Panic.

And at five o'clock of the day of the *Times'* two-columns, the *Pall Mall Gazette* came out with the following:

(From our own correspondent.)

By Anglo-American Cable Co.

New York. — The *New York Evening Post* publishes to-day the report that a body of Thibetans (?) has seized the Russian railway between Kokand and Krasnovodsk, together with the partially - dismantled fortress at

Samarkand, and have finally appeared at the east bank of the Caspian. Their number, probably amounting to ten or fifteen thousand, has not been definitely ascertained. The rumour originates, I understand, from an *Evening Post* correspondent at Astrakhan, and comes *via* Odessa and Paris.

This item of news, meagre as it was, was enough for Britain. At once every one jumped at the right conclusion. Here, it was agreed, were ‘the signs of his coming’ — the first!

As when a sudden comet lowers near the earth, terrifying the heart of kings, prophesying Change to the nations, and shaking pestilence from her ‘horrid hair’ — so, with its growing certainty, did the British nation cower at the drear future. Some one rediscovered the telegram about the 500 Chinese at St. Petersburg, and noised it abroad afresh. The bleak and dismal sky lowered darkling.

At twilight the Prime Minister was sitting by John Hardy’s bedside, which two physicians had just left.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE THREE GOSPELS



ABOUT THE TIME when the three important personages met at the inn, in the wood near Liege, Dr. Yen How was deep in study from morning to night. On the table before him, all round his feet, overflowing every article of furniture in the apartment, were maps, general maps, local maps, special maps, survey maps. He had a goodly wide brain, and every village in Europe, its position, its name, its population, and every stream, and fort, and railway, and town, was climbing into that brain, one after the other, with the intention of staying there. And when he was finished he knew how God had made Europe, and how man had made it, and what was in it.

He knew also Asia.

While he was still pondering his maps, China was already far on its march. The seizure of the railway-line by ‘Thibetans’ (?), reported in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, had taken place four weeks before the news reached New York. The British army of India, afterwards annihilated in Russia, had passed that way, and left an easy task for the yellow pioneers.

Even before this China had begun to flow westward. Yen How had found her a frozen stream; and like a frozen stream when the sun shines strongly, she had moved at last under his steady heat, slowly, in trickling rivulets, long before the crash of the dripping ice and the billowing broad rush of the torrent.

Having waked China by the methods we have described, how did he effect this irresistible Western tendency, so mighty in its impulse at last, that

an arm a million times stronger than Yen How's could not have checked it, had he willed?

He did it by preaching, with the inspiration of Confucius, only with a far greater success than Confucius, his three gospels of Greed, of Race, and of Cruelty.

And in doing so, he remembered the density of the skull which he had to inspire with ideas; he was not preaching even to Russian moujiks, but to men slower still of understanding. To plough a fact into their brains he knew that he must plough hard. But he was quite equal to this. With his usual thoroughness he said: 'A hundred ways: and of these *one* will not fail.' At all events he had chosen the doctrines to teach which the Chinese were most apt to learn, and had, in fact, already been taught by nature. And herein lay his chief wisdom.

Just when the pressure of the new taxation crushed heaviest upon the penurious poor of China, he collected an army of 400,000, composed of men taken from each of the regiments into which all the land of the Mongols was now divided; and this force he hurled in two divisions across the Si-kiang against Annam, the ancient antagonist of China, and Burma. The horrors perpetrated in these atrocious and totally unexpected raids could not be described; a great massacre resulted, and the army amassed hoards of spoil, gathered from many a Buddhist *vihdra* and jewelled palace - gate. And immediately on its return, the individuals who composed it were redrafted, laden with booty, to their former districts, to spread through every village in China fairy-tales of gore and gold in foreign lands.

There was not, moreover, a drill-sergeant of the remotest squad of conscripts who did not become a missionary of Yen How, preaching for him the three glad tidings of hell.

Many Chinese did not know that there was any other land than China, nor had, till the Massacre, seen a white man, nor known that there were such things as white men.

Now they heard; and the astonished ear was charmed.

Could it be that beyond that land of pinched scarcity which they knew, there was *Another*, in which feeble, pretty creatures, resembling real men, lived in rose-beds, and threw to one another balls of gold, and made love on couches of eider-down and ivory? And if not, what was this rumour, these tidings of good, coming strangely from afar, this new talk? And this new holiday of blood, and this new drilling, after four thousand years? And this new Movement, and this new stirring of sap in the old, dead tree-trunk after the long long changeless winter? Surely the seasons return! and *by wondrous miracle* leaves are again on the branches, and all is new! There *is*, then, Spring and joy in the world? and not utter, ugly woe — four thousand years of age? Gold? — and frail, white limbs to be torn apart? — and the blood of luxurious kings to be quaffed by thirsty Chinamen in carved goblets of alabaster? — and cushions of embroidered silk hanging in plenty for all among the lazy, rotting melons on the far-off trees?

Far into the dreamiest wilds of savage China, Mongolia, Thibet, came this message of blessedness, this New Religion of lust. And every citizen became a convert, and every convert a zealot, and every zealot an apostle.

And the more intolerable Yen How made China for them with burden, and drill, and tax, the louder and deeper swelled their cry to be led forthwith into this promised land of plenty afar.

In the Commentaries of Caesar we read of whole communities packing, as it were, their trunks, leaving their own land, and migrating in a body to some new territory. It was this strange, wandering tendency which now

possessed the Mongolian race; but instead of a tribe or community on the march, the stars were to look down and behold a nomad Empire.

This weird and, indeed, awful spectacle destiny had held concealed in her womb; for this, too, was to be one of the acts in the drama of Man; and in the fullness of time it was evolved, and seen.

But no one knew better than Dr. Yen How that the Mongolian race in its passage across the old world would meet with obstacle and pain — the weariness of the march, the day's hunger, the fight in the street, the rain of shot and shell at Metz, and Koenigsberg, and Paris, and Dover; as for the Japanese section of the race, he knew that Greed and Cruelty alone were incentives sufficient to provide a steady impulse to their native firmness and valour; but as for the Continental section of it, he decided to hurl them forward by an added impulse — the excitation of the instinct of Race.

In China this instinct took always a religious form. And hence Yen How had skilfully contrived to invest his Massacre with something of the solemnity of a Rite. In the cities round the coast, where the white man had long been known and abominated, the massacre gave an impetus to racial animus, which perhaps was capable of no further fury; but, in addition, he planned for China on the whole a religious mania in connection with this very race-instinct, which he counted upon to inspire it in the direction he willed with the frenzy of the Crusader.

The religion of China consisted in the worship of the dead; and this worship took the form also of the worship of the living, whenever the living happened to be a reincarnation of the dead. On this point Buddhism and Confucianism were at one: the belief in reincarnation.

The living were reincarnations of the dead when they were either proclaimed to be so by the priests, or when they were proclaimed to be so by the Emperor, or — when they could work miracles.

Now Yen How could work the most astounding miracles; and he was proclaimed by the Emperor, and he was proclaimed all over China by the priests, to be the reincarnation of a dead man. And the dead man of whom he was proclaimed to be the reincarnation was — Confucius.

To begin with, he was made a Saint.

Then (at about the time when John Hardy joined the Englishmen at Kiao-chau) began a remarkable 'triumphant passage through China of this great man and his enormous Court of dignitaries, when, in a grand religious festival lasting by Imperial Decree through a month, Yen How was presented and hailed in temple and at praying-mill, from Peking to Lhasa, as the Heaven-descended Leader of the only Race, come back, according to old promise, to lead them to the conquest and fruition of the world. His progress was attended with more than Imperial pomp; he was raised high on a throne of royal splendour, and exhibited to the muttering and kneeling people: the dazzled eye admitted him a god.

If in some mountain-dell of remotest China there dwelt some benighted peasant who had never yet heard the name of Yen How, the ruler, the driller, the oppressor, there was certainly not one now who did not know of Yen How, the Reincarnate, the bringer of glad tidings, the Head of his People.

Confucius was China; and Yen How was Confucius. He stood for the Race.

Thus did he centre in his own Person the whole race-instinct and race-religion of the land. He associated the new creed of lust with the old of superstition; and of both he was the embodiment and Prophet.

He knew that principles must centre in a Person before they can lead nations by the nose, and fire them to heroism and martyrdom. No stirring Mahomedanism without Mahomet, and no strong Christianity without Christ. But in thus making himself the sole guide and motive-power, the

one centre of adoration and trust, to the whole people, he went a step too far; he committed an error in tactics; he did not take into account every contingency.

For if the shepherd chance to perish, what will become of the sheep?

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE YELLOW TERROR



THIS WAS THE very question which John Hardy, with his sure eye for the main fact among ten thousand, asked himself— ‘If the shepherd chance to perish ...?’ At all events, it was the shepherd with which he, personally, had to do. Between him and Yen How was the tug of war; and he knew it.

So, as he lay among his pillows, almost as white as they, a week after the battle in the Channel, he called old Bobbie to him, and said:

‘Bobbie, do you know anything about British regiments and the dress they wear?’

‘Not much, I am afraid, Master John,’ answered Bobbie. ‘Well, then, you will find out, please, and as soon as possible — to-day. I want to know what regiment it is whose privates wear—’ and he frowned in an effort of recollection— ‘wear a scarlet uniform with white facings, and have somewhere about them a Prince of Wales’ plume and a coronet. Yes, that is it. Please find out; and whether they are still in existence, and all about them.’

The old servant bowed and went away. In his eyes now was a perpetual wonder and reproach. The colour and taste of the world were changed to him; some one had meddled with his heart’s delight; Hardy had come back, but the dazed old fellow could not find him.

Hardy was now recovering from an attack of asthma which had brought him near to death. When he opened his eyes to renewed care and thought, he had lost a week. The Chinese were in Europe.

He put out his thin hand and languidly lifted a *Times*, and he saw the words ‘The Yellow Terror,’ and his hand fell helplessly; and presently he lifted the paper again, and he glanced at another place, and saw the words — ‘It is *this scream of the Chinese* which seems to inspire their victims with some indefinable new species of terror, never before ...’; and his hand fell again.

But already, by the next morning, he could sit up in bed to drink his cordial, and then he began to study the week’s events. His vitality was in reality intense and tough, and the thread by which he clung to life a strong one. He set to work to gather facts, and he could work stoutly.

While the pile of papers was about him, old Bobbie hobbled into the chamber.

‘This, I think, Master John, is the name of the regiment you want,’ said the old man, handing a slip of paper.

On the paper was written —

‘The Duke of Cambridge’s Own (Middlesex Regiment). Regimental Dist.: No. 57 — Hounslow.’

‘Well, Bobbie, and what about them?’ asked Hardy.

‘The depot of the regiment is Hounslow, Master John; and their late history is this: the first line battalion was in India at the beginning of the year, and the second line battalion was drafted from South Africa to join them a month after the commencement of the war. Both of these, as far as is known, have been destroyed in Russia. The 3rd and 4th (militia) battalions have been fighting in North Germany, and seem to be no longer in existence, except for some few now in hospital at Chelsea, sir.’

‘And have you found out the names of those?’

‘No, Master John.’

‘Then do so at once.’

He went on reading. The details had about them a certain indefiniteness, and they were not voluminous; but he was quickly able to determine that the Chinese avalanche was pouring in four main streams.

The 500 'Chinese' who had come to St. Petersburg 'seeming poor,' and were to be 'sent back to their own country,' were not Chinese at all, but Japanese; and before they could be 'sent back' they had mysteriously scattered, and disappeared in the general mass of Europeans. They were intended to report to Yen How when the moment had come for him, personally, to move forward toward Europe.

The Jehu of that wild four-horse chariot still sat far back in his seat, the reins taut in his hands. The fourfold van of his army was upon Europe, while its rear was still upon Peking. It stretched across the world.

Between those two mighty masses of mountains which, like the ramparts of the New Jerusalem, have locked in the Celestial Empire from contact, or knowledge, or suspicion, of the vague world beyond, they came. The Dead-sea lake, after old ages, was amove, aflow. Through that mysterious land, which the race-venom of the Mongol race have made a third unknown Pole in the midst of the earth, crawled the weird procession, the unbounded caravan. The wild elephant and the mild-eyed zebu saw them with wonder, and the summer monsoon went gadding with the marvelous tidings toward the plain, and over the sea to Africa, gossiping that there above, on the high flat land, was a New Thing moving under the sun. The sources of the Mekong, the Salween, and the Irrawaddy, which only the eye of the couchant tigress and of the yellow man have seen, beheld their week-long passage, and heard the creak of the cart, and the cry of the camel, and the muling of a child at the breast.

They heard also the sudden scream with which the Chinese laughed.

Never was so sloven and pell-mell an army; never so straggling, and lumbering, and clumsy an array; but never a power more eager, and more certain, to reach its goal.

The Friant Division of the French Army, going from Presburg to Austerlitz, once marched forty-five miles a day for two consecutive days. But never a day which did not see this far-spread host sixteen leagues farther towards its aim. They could not be called infantry, though millions, during great part of the way, went on foot; for the armoured carts which Yen How had provisioned, the presence of which spread out the host from continent to continent, were the chief means of locomotion, and continually changed their occupants. There was, moreover, no care for life; if a man was ill, if he dropped out of the march like a bird from the flight, he was left to perish, or to return.

The length of all the units of a single army-corps in column of route was so unlike anything with which we are familiar, that the figures are incapable of conveying any idea of its vastness. If the corps could have marched on a single road its length would have been 1200 miles, that is to say, the length of three Englands; and the entire corps would have taken thirteen days to pass a given point.

This inconceivable worm of humanity contained among its two millions of individuals women incapable of walking a thousand yards, children born since the march began, old men, boys and girls of ten.

Each of these pilgrimaging masses of men was in itself a nation, such as those of which Caesar writes, only probably far vaster. Its members came, nearly all, from the same province, spoke the same dialect, had been impelled forward by the same set of influences, had been drilled by the same captains. Only its officers were, in the main, Japanese; and into the

rank and file of each corps had also been drafted thirty thousand Japanese, all men.

At the time when the five hundred scattered at St. Petersburg, and Yen How, immediately afterwards, received from them through Vladivostok and Nagasaki the news that all Europe was ready to receive him — there were already of these nomad nations a hundred and forty on the march.

Some of these hosts (particularly those that passed by the depression of the Jungarie Mountains, along the course of the Irtysh, where the central plateau of Asia finds its Western gate) had need to traverse tracts of desert country, bare of flocks, bare even of forage for mule and camel. Even by these, however, no widespread difficulty as to food and forage was felt. Whole districts of China had been left bare, as though eaten up by human locusts, by the successive corps which, as it were, bore the country away with them.

Already, on the march, the soldiers of Yen How — men who had lived upon skeleton scarcity from birth, at the rate of some fraction of a penny per week — began to taste the luxury of life. Not merely dried vegetables, rice, salt, and tea, he saw squandered around him, but sausages, pressed meats, fresh meats. The administrative convoys and regimental trains, intended for the distribution of supplies to the troops, covered many a mile; the administrative convoys being in four echelons, two half-a-day's march in the rear of the regimental trains, and the other two intended to bring up possible additional supplies from the rear. Auxiliary convoys, also in four echelons, and containing many hundreds of vehicles, took up deposits of rice, biscuits, and hay, made long before the commencement of operations at cantonments which extended to the farthest bounds of Chinese and Thibetan territory. They also carried supplies of preserved meats and forage, and followed the army-corps at a distance of two days' march.

Each individual of an army-corps, besides, was compelled to carry seven pounds of food in some utensil corresponding to a mess-tin or haversack; this to form a reserve not to be touched, except when every other means of supply failed.

During the process of mobilisation, each division of infantry, and each army-corps headquarters, had already vast collections of requisitioned herds of animals, from dogs to camels, sufficient for four days' meat, but intended by the help of other provisions to last for months. On the march the cattle marched between the advanced column and the main body of the column.

It was grand with what smoothness the immeasurable machine slid into motion; there was no confusion; western army-corps marched first, and then the next in order took up the minuet of nomadism, all converging and diverging in, rhythmic involution and evolution, like the harmoniously intertwining currents of a stream, as China began to flow in earnest. In the week; on the day, at the hour that Yen How designed, they moved, they passed away.

Through all that breadth of Thibet between the Himalayas and the Kuen-luns, on a level equal to the height of Mont Blanc, they came pouring and blundering ponderously, fifty army-corps of them, some abreast, separated only by short intervals of twenty, or thirty miles, a hundred millions of them, — and behind each man a pigtail wriggling in haste.

Towards what do they press? What vague blessedness? They do not know. They do not ask. When the Pied Piper played his tune, all the rats of all the cities went gaily in haste after him, entranced, they, too, with wriggling tail, and whiskers cocked, and vaguest prospect. Yen How is the Piper of these prone, purblind, forward-shouldering multitudes of nations — he himself a dancer to Another piping.

Then, again, along the sources of the Irtysh they poured, and, one night, all round the inhospitable steppe-like slopes which surround the lower level of Lake Balkash, there camped another fifty army-corps, some within sight of others, making by far the largest collection of human beings covering a similar area which the stars had yet seen. And the next morning, and during all that day and the next, army-corps after army-corps, they moved, they passed away.

The first (Thibetan) fifty are southern and western tribesmen, used to hard industry, short of stature, their skin a clear yellow, almost of lemon. They are from farthest Taiwan, from Fo-kien to Yun-nan, and from Kwang-tung to Ho-nan; and they pass between the sources of the Yang-tse-kiang and the Mekong, and between the Hwang-ho and the source of the Kia-ling, climbing to the flat roof of the world through colossal forests bordering on everlasting snows, where glaciers and masses of angry water tear and pierce the mountains, forming natural routes through the impassable. By the time they reach the high table-land of many rains and rushing rivers and abounding lakes, they find silent villages and deserted groves of the mulberry. The Thibetans have already passed away. And on through the stripped and empty land they go, shouldering and trundling — a hundred millions — and behind each man wriggles a pigtail in haste.

Then, by the caravan - route which passes from Peking through the Gobi desert north of the Southern Altai, pass the second (Balkash) fifty. They are Kobdoans, North-western Mongolians (so-called), and tribesmen of the Chinese provinces north of the Hwang-ho (Except those of Kan-su, Shen-si, and Pechili); men of a duskier yellow, as of weak-tea-and-milk, tall, and nomads already by instinct and habit, not averse to a further house-flitting — in plenty of company! And these pass the sources of the Irtysh to Balkash, and thence go swarming down into the lowlands and desert places

round the Aral Sea, where Russia had so sweated and striven in vain. Across the Caspian they will follow at the right hour the pioneering (Thibetan) fifty.

Then there are ten corps (the smallest of the four great branches), which, one by one, take the caravan-route passing from Pekin north of the bleak and bare Kuen-luns through all that rich agricultural region — an oasis in a land of barrenness — which is traversed by the Tarim river, beginning at Lob Nor, and ending beyond Kashgar. They are from the teeming provinces of Kan-su and Shen-si — twenty millions — behind each man wriggles a pigtail in haste.

But the fourth main branch — Pechili, Korea, Kirin, Manchuria, Eastern Mongolia — tarry long behind; for these are to travel swiftly, and in luxury — in Western-civilisation railway-trains! Not till the last moment before mobilisation is the Russian garrison at Vladivostok shelled by Japanese ships, and Vladivostok itself seized from land by Chinese soldiers. From Vladivostok runs a railway to St. Petersburg; and outside Vladivostok harbour, while the shelling of the forts is proceeding, waits a fleet of merchant-ships crowded with many thousands of large-grade railway-carriages, such as are required by the Russian lines, manufactured all at Nagasaki. And so to Vladivostok come the thirty Western corps, the sixty millions, the fourth great torrent of that disemboguing Nile. And as the crowded train moves out westward from the station, a shocking shrill scream of glee and terror from two thousand throats — the shrill glee and terror of a child in its first swing — fills all the air. It is ‘the Chinese scream.’

But how great a general is that little doctor! This large matter of his, which would have bewildered, and abashed the genius of Caesar, is all clearly perceived and calculated in his intellect of ice. When he thinks of

the world-magnitude of it all, he says ‘Poh!’ To God the world is a grain of dust; to Yen How it is a geographical globe: he metes it with a compass; in a moment he walks about it With what ease and thoroughness has his first thought — that thought which could have occurred only to genius — been realised! By a few scratches of his pen Europe has been prepared to receive him. 1 *There will be no more Maxims there*’ he had said to the Marquis Ito with screwed-up eyes; and there *are* no more Maxims there, or none worth mentioning. To lead one’s troops ‘along the line of least resistance’ — that being the first maxim of the general, how great a general is this Yen in first of all creating a line of no resistance along which to lead 1

But to guide that restive, rearing four-horse chariot even over the levellest plain, — how iron-strong must be the wrist of its Jehu, and how sublime his gallant callousness!

This was his general plan: to connect himself telegraphically with his armies, and personally to direct their actions even in minute particulars. For the peculiarity of these monstrous hosts was this: that by means of their unimaginable numbers they could, almost without effort, carry out works in a day which no other army could dream of ever accomplishing at all. Thus, the fifty Thibetan corps crossed the Caspian from Krasnovodsk to Baku, with its carts, transport, and stores, on huge towed rafts constructed *within two days* from materials which they carried with them. So also, wherever the first three great branches passed, they were followed by as many lines of telegraph as there were corps, just as the spider is followed by the thread it spins. And in the centre of this web sat Yen How at Pekin.

Such was the general plan. His particular plan was this: that the first line of Europe’s defence should be Germany; for with exact foresight he calculated, some months before the battle in the Channel, that, in almost any case, Germany would still have left some of her army-corps. Russia he

meant to take by surprise; the Balkan Peninsula by surprise; and both, he calculated, would be incapable of serious opposition.

Into Russia he would pour the sixty millions who went screaming along the Vladivostok railway; into the Balkan Peninsula sixteen millions of the first (Thibetan) hundred millions. The remaining eighty-four millions of these were to be German, Swiss, and Austrian. The two other branches, numbering altogether a hundred and twenty millions, were to be divided into thirty French, twenty Italian, ten Norwegian and Swedish; and because Holland and Belgium had not been directly ravaged by the war, and Spain only by the American war, he designed for Spain the large number of thirty millions, and for Holland, Belgium, and Denmark thirty millions.

And at Pekin Yen How might very well have remained, and directed all this with absolute exactness and success, were it not that, at the back of the man's brain, there lay this singular thought: that none of the women of England must be killed! — till he gave the word. And he knew well that no earthly power, save his own strong, present, personal grip, could restrain his wild hordes, fresh from the gleeful slaughter of Europe, from washing their hands in the blood of every human female in Britain.

Therefore he took train at Vladivostok.

The difference between him and Hardy was chiefly this: that with the race-instinct and race-hatred and race-ambition of the Chinaman was mixed a personal, private motive, stronger even than the race-motive. Hardy, *like the very greatest*, was concerned only for the world.

It is written in the book of the Law of the Universe that selfishness shall sooner or later be a source of weakness. Whoever denies this has not gone deep.

The difference between Hardy and Yen How was the difference between Wellington and Napoleon. The latter, being more richly endowed, should

have been the stronger — and was not.

At the time when Yen How took train there was no longer any country corresponding to what was meant when one said ‘Russia.’

As soon as the first contingent of the first army-corps passed through the Urals north of Mount Iremel, its first care was to destroy all telegraphic communication between the locality and western centres. Up to this moment not even a suspicion of what was coming had occurred to any one on the Continent, for it was not till the day after the first arrival of Chinese that the two British forces in France and Germany received homeward orders.

On the very day of their arrival, the final battle had been fought in France near Bar-sur-Seine with a French loss of eighteen thousand; and on the same day the Emperor Wilhelm, rashly advancing with his staff and an insignificant reconnoitring party too near the British lines at Landsberg, was surprised by a troop of mounted vedettes, and taken prisoner.

But when, on the next day, Lord Roberts invited General Daubisson to a conference, and Sir Evelyn Wood invited the freely-liberated Kaiser, the announcements by the two British generals of their intention of immediate withdrawal, and of its cause, was received with mere amazed incredulity. The blow of the thunderbolt was stupefying. The Continental leaders did not fall to their knees and beseech the aid of their British invaders; there are tidings too large to find for themselves room in the brain.

But even while the two conferences were proceeding, what was to become known as the ‘Yellow Terror’ was already abroad — and fifty thousand Chinese had settled in fifteen or twenty Ural villages, whose streets were strewn with disembowelled dead.

And almost as fast as the news could spread westward the Chinese spread westward also.

It was the strangest army of occupation. As soon as an army-corps entered upon Russian territory it scattered and vanished; it split up into divisions, and one division went one way and one another; and divisions split up into brigades, and one brigade went one way and one another; and so the subdivision went on, every regiment, every company, having its town or village allotted to it by long-previous design. By the time the first contingents of the second corps had crossed the Volga at Syzran, there were probably not a thousand Russians left alive anywhere between Perm and Astrakhan.

There was no fighting. Those that could fly or hide, fled or hid. The rest heard the 'Chinese scream,' and died. For every one that died two screams went to Heaven — the scream of the victim and the scream of his slayer.

Then spread 'the yellow terror' — at first slowly, then with the wings of the lightning.

In old Saxon times mothers frightened their crying babes with the swiftly-whispered words: 'The Danes are coming!' But the panic horror with which Europe in a few days learned to receive the simple announcement: '*The Chinese are coming!*' had no resemblance, in its unutterable awesomeness, in its supernatural affright, to any previous terror experienced by men.

The Black Death of the Middle Ages, which nearly altogether emptied Europe, inspired no doubt an equal tragic *suggestion*; but it probably failed in something of that staring, pallid, dry-throated *panic* characteristic of the Yellow Terror, chiefly on account of the element of the unknown and wholly novel in the Chinese cataclysm, — on account, also, of the *certainty* of his doom which pierced the heart of each European, — and on account, thirdly, of certain hints of unutterable horror which accompanied the rumours of the onward sweep of the yellow wave.

The reign of hell which had followed upon some Japanese victories during the Chino-Japanese war was well known in Europe. If China had fared so at the hand of Japan, how would Europe fare at the hand of China led by Japan...?

Lamentation and a voice in Ramah, and a widening, running shriek, swelling into a cry of such volume and intensity as had never yet risen from earth to the throne of Heaven, marked the middle of the month of September in Europe.

Then came to pass, even to the utmost, that vision in the Apocalypse of the poet: 'Woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth ...'

Among the millions that rushed westward in plague-stricken panic and frenzied selfishness was the famous duellist Edrapol, who happened to be then at Cracow.

He made straight for Paris; and on arriving at the hotel in the Avenue Wagram where he always stayed, he found awaiting him this letter: —

Sir,

— As I promised you, I am writing to seek you out for the purpose of the little duel to which you challenged me, the European war being now at an end. I confess to you that this duel of yours and mine seems to me a very absurd thing; but still, a bargain is a bargain. I am in a low state of health at present, and quite unable to come to you, even if I knew where you are to be found. But I write instead, so as to be able to say I did not altogether break my word, and am getting the letter to you at considerable personal trouble. I hope you will receive it, and send me, when you can, a reply.

I am, sir,

Your servant,

John Hardy.

CHAPTER XXIX. THE WEAK POINT



DURING THE FIRST part of that memorable Week of accountable, yet strange, Night, when the darkened sun and the quaking crust of the earth seemed to the affrighted imagination of men surely to portend the coming of the great and dreadful day of the wrath of God, John Hardy's agents were hot on the trail of the young woman whom he sought.

Three weeks previously, the old butler had brought him a list of the men left in hospital of the Duke of Cambridge's Own regiment, and as Hardy's eye ran down the list, he saw a name which he had heard, which was on the tip of his memory, yet which he had been unable to remember. His eye lit up at the sight of it. It was the name of the soldier John Brabant.

There was nothing miraculous in the fact that Brabant still lived; yet to Hardy it seemed nothing less than a genuine miracle. Faith in the Divine formed the groundwork and rock-bed of his simple nature: and his eye continually searched for, and assumed, the stealthy, busy Finger.

A day afterwards he was able to leave his bed, and at once he hurried, muffled up, in a close carriage, to the Chelsea Hospital, and the bedside of Brabant.

Brabant, as it happened, was dying from exhaustion as the result of an amputation, and did, in fact, die a few days later. He was, however, able to give the address of the villa at which the girl Seward had been, or was still (for he was not sure), a servant.

To Hardy, the one thing of paramount interest in the world seemed to be to have this girl, whose initials he bore branded on his breast, secure in his own keeping. He had the instinct to lock her away in some castle of

absolute safety, and feed her every hour with his own hands, lest chance or change should befall her.

That, at a time when the earth was travailing in death-birth, all should depend, one way or the other, upon a London servant-girl, was wondrously like the way of Life. Things happen so — not ‘with vigour and rigour,’ as Mr. Matthew Arnold very well says, but in that fast-and-loose fashion. When fate is not freakish, she is unlike herself. The unprecedented is the natural, and may be counted upon. Destiny is full of novelties.

That a nerve in this particular girl should set a nerve in Yen How a-tingling, and that Yen How’s tingling, spreading out beyond all limit into transcendental rapture, should infect a whole planet with tingling, — this was nothing more than the launching of a battleship by the pressure of an electric button, or the loosening of an avalanche by the rolling of a pebble. In such surprises both Fate and Nature abound.

But Ada Seward was no longer at the Pattison villa; all the information which could be gathered there was the fact that she had a brother, a bicycle-smith, residing in Church Road, Chelsea, to whom she may have gone after suddenly leaving the Pattisons. But the brother declared that she was not there; and either he could not, or would not, give any further details about Ada to the agents employed by Hardy.

It became clear that about the girl and her movements hung some sort of mystery; that something was being concealed with regard to her.

Hardy commenced to seek her throughout England, advertising in every paper, and setting to work the best detectives.

If she were abroad? If she were dead? And if Yen How knew it — had secret means of knowing it? In that case Hardy had no hope.

He remained in a state of brooding, morbid pensiveness. At night he sat long at table after dinner, drinking much too freely, his right hand on the

mouth of the decanter, his left hanging heavy, his head sunk. In this way three weeks * passed; and still the girl remained hidden.

Then came the memorable Week of Darkness.

At this time the wild flood of migration from the Continent was in full sweep. England had risen nobly to Hardy's summons to offer herself as the City of Refuge to the ill-fated peoples of Europe, and had opened to them a large and pitying bosom, as a mother folds her terrified child.

The merchant marines of all the still unswamped nations, with the whole available merchant marine of Britain, were engaged in the continual task of deportation.

But like 'the pious pelican' which feeds her young with the blood of her own torn breast, England fed the stranger with her life.

The famine grew sore in the land, even though the self-governing colonies, at the first warning of the facts, set stoutly to work to meet the demands upon their feeding powers.

In Britain itself, quite suddenly, there sprang into being the visible germs of a real Socialism. The necessities of the human race no longer admitted of quibbling and compromise with the root facts of life and the root laws of God. It had been the custom before the war to say, in a phrase so generally accepted that it had passed into an axiom, that England could not feed herself' The wild fancifulness of this assertion (which might bring a smile to the lips of even a child who seriously thinks of it) may be seen from the arithmetical fact that England (or any ordinary piece of land of similar size) can feed, not only herself, but almost the entire population of the globe — under right and natural conditions of life. For if a man, or a child, unhampered by artificial customs, will set to work with a spade and a hoe upon the ground, it is a fact that a very small piece of fertile land — something like the tenth of an acre — will supply him not only with food to

keep him continually munching, but with so much more than he can eat himself, that he shall have enough left over to give in exchange to some one else who has spent his time in making boots and clothes, and wishes to sell these in exchange for the surplus corn or carrots grown by the first man. Now, on the broad bosom of Britain, which is not niggardly, but rich in alimentary bounty, there are 790,000,000 of such pieces of land; and 790,000,000 is much the larger portion of the population of the earth.

England, therefore, if she be properly governed, can quite surely feed not only herself, but the rest of mankind as well.

This had been the ‘open secret’ of social life, preached through many a century by the single-eyed great ones — with their simple and discerning wit! But it needed nothing less than the inexorable compulsion of Destiny to teach it clearly, once and for all, to the whole race.

Meantime, in the absence of regulations, which involve time for their accomplishment, the rich men, and the not-poor men, of Britain came nobly forward with proffered purse to the perishing millions.

But from the West, from across the Atlantic, there came to Britain a shock almost as horrifying as the vague rumours of the reign of Hell then going forward eastward on the Continent.

America, crowded with ten thousand Christian churches, refused to receive the fugitives from Europe.

This shocking inhumanity had for its excuse an objection to be swamped by ‘a pauper immigration.’

England, now the one great Mother of the world, pondered this thing in her heart — and never forgave it.

Hardy’s proposal of a League between Britain and the United States had ended in a fiasco. An attempt had at once been made by the British Government to carry the proposal into effect. America had accepted the

idea; but as soon as it came to a question of detail, of the making of sacrifices, Mammon, 'the least erect' of all the spirits, drew back into selfish aloofness.

Meanwhile the only possible defensive measure against the Yellow Wave on the part of England was an intense activity at Chiswick, at Jarrow, at Chatham, at Birkenhead, at Sheerness, at Portsmouth, at Paisley, at Glasgow, at Newcastle, at Pembroke, at Sunderland, in every Government, in every private, dockyard. Thousands of men were requisitioned from remotely allied trades to aid in the agonised work of building, building, building. But Hardy, for one, smiled at the idea that Yen How was going to be simple enough to allow Britain time to build ships to beat him.

He, for his part, had set going another activity, equally eager, and more to the point.

By direct suggestion to the First Lord of the Admiralty, he had singled out the men of the Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers as the nucleus of force which must now become the hope of Britain.

Though there was hardly any longer a Royal Naval body of men, there still remained a Royal Naval Reserve in considerable numbers; when therefore Hardy designated the Artillery Volunteers, Mr. Goschen, who alone was in the secret of his plans, expressed surprise.

Hardy, however, persisted; and the next day, by proclamation, the members of the force were requisitioned for service. At the same time a large additional number of volunteers sent in their names to the commanding officers of the stationary drill-ships.

The members of this force, which had always, since its formation by special Act in 1873, formed one of the most exclusive clubs in the world, consisted only of professional and business men, — doctors, bank-clerks, solicitors, stockbrokers, authors, — who had regularly left the desk, or the

consulting-room, or the office, to attend at least twice a month at gun, rifle, pistol, and cutlass drill, until they attained the standard of 'efficients', — men who had cast off the orchided frock coat, completely sinking their social position, to put on the blue working-dress of the simple blue-jacket on the yearly cruises in the gunboat, or the Saturday-to-Monday cruise in the seamanship-practice schooner. These men, belonging exclusively to the great middle class, represented the very essence of the mood of England. And it was with them alone that Hardy proposed to set up the first, and perhaps the last, dam to the flowing Yellow Wave.

He wanted 4000 of them; and he got them.

The various drill-ships of the local brigades were assembled at Portsmouth with tenders, and the work of drilling and instruction went forward with unremitting zeal, the 4000 and odd gentlemen who composed this strange force subjecting themselves to the most grinding discipline, sleeping in hammocks, swabbing decks, cooking food, and cleaning guns; opening, above all, their already trained minds to the art of fighting on moving water.

But when they asked one another *why* they were doing all this, there was no forthcoming answer. There certainly were the men, but where were the ships?

Hardy, in his jealousy lest his ships might be used for purposes at all other than those for which he designed them, had kept his secret well. They were to him like buried gold to the miser. He gloated over the thought of them, over the loud bad language he would make them talk, when that great hour came.

Meantime, he sat brooding often, sometimes desperately ill, sometimes with his hand resting for hours on the mouth of the decanter, his sunken head crowded with the busy fumes of wine.

And as he sat so one night — it was the Tuesday of the Week of Darkness — something spurred within him, and he sprang to his feet, and took his cap, and went out into the stifling dark air.

His once gentle heart, though embittered and desperate, was not wholly dead. Under this sudden impulse, wine-inspired, he jumped into a cab and drove to Hampstead.

He stopped at the door of Miss Jay. He had now been several weeks in England, yet had not seen her. Why he now went he did not ask himself: some vague motive worked in him to insult, or press, or smite her in the face, — such was the tragic desperation of his empty and callous heart. Love, tenderness, were far from him now; yet in the depths of his nature some ungovernable cry in the dark, some fierce yearning perhaps, spurred him toward the sister of his soul: such subterranean throes occur in the dim places of the hearts of men.

Her carriage drove up to the door as he entered it, and he found her in evening dress in the drawing-room, cutting the leaves of a book. War, and eclipse, and the overthrow of the world, seemed to leave untouched the reposeful tenor of this very modern young lady's life.

Here was the '*morgue Britannique*' in its very ultimate demonstration.

'You are well again, then, Mr. Hardy?' she said, giving her hand, 'I am so glad!'

'Well or not, I am come to see you, you see.'

He threw his cap one way and himself another, and looked gloomily at her.

She, for her part, was shocked — at his aged eyes, his wild aspect, the quite visible gray in his hair. Now, at least, she recognised a grown man, and a master of men.

For minutes of inward reflection there was silence between them. He said:

‘I told you I would come again, and come I am.’

Her heart bounded. She answered:

‘Yes.’

‘Have you got over all that about Art?’ This he asked with a momentary gentle smile.

‘No — not got over it’ — the irony in her leaping up, and smothering the pity: ‘not yet. A weakness of that sort clings so to one. In the absence of a sun, one works by lamp-light — which is all that remains.’

‘Well, I see you are still a mocker. But one cannot always go on mocking.’

‘No, no. I do not mean, really, to mock at anything. In reality, I am very sorry, and sad, at everything.’

‘Is that so?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, I believe that, too. At bottom you are good and kind.’

‘I hope so.’

‘That was why I came to see you, now. God only knows why I came. You ought to have married me when I told you.’

‘Oh, as to *that*—’ she said.

‘No, no, do not begin that again!’ he retorted fretfully. ‘Can’t you guess that I am changed in mood, and everything? All that is not for me any more.’

Somehow her heart sank; and the sadness of autumnal winds sighing among dead leaves smote its chords. So wild a pity is in the world, and so bitter a sob.

She said:

‘I can see that you are changed, yes; and I divine that you are far from happy. What has been the matter?’

‘Why should I tell *you*?’

‘There is no reason in the world, Mr. Hardy.’

‘You see, that is the way you talk to me!’ he said, regarding her fixedly under his eyes: ‘soon, when I am gone, you will be saying to yourself, “Well, it was bitter of me not to love and comfort poor John Hardy in his misery.”’

‘Gone?’ she questioned,—‘gone, where to?’

‘Gone to God’ — and in a lower tone—‘gone to hell.’

And now she rose, and in haste went to sit beside him. And the pity of ministering angels was in her voice.

‘Tell me,’ she said, ‘for you have come to me feeling that I am your good friend, and you should tell me.’

‘Ah, it is nothing,’ he said, and he flung himself backward on the sofa where he sat.

‘It must be very much since it has affected you so. I heard something ... but did not quite realise it. You should — you should have come before.’

Come for what? I tell you it is no good at all any more!’

‘But you are too — too despondent. See — you say you want my love and comfort — there is my hand in yours, my friend. If you do not tell me your trouble, that will mean to me that you do not — really — care for me.’

‘Ah, I did, though! I did!’

‘And do — or you would not come. Can’t you see that? You do still. So you must open your heart to your friend.’

He looked into her eyes, and they swam in tears. His head lying back on the sofa-back rolled from side to side.

‘You are a good, kind girl,’ he said, ‘and I knew that long ago. I had a kind of power to guess everything that was in you. Why did you not — but it is useless talking now. Let me go away.’

‘No, no — do not say that.’

‘Well, now, I call you wondrously good.’

‘Of course I am — *of course*. Can’t you divine? I — *naturally* — do not wish you to go. You look so sad — so worn with suffering. Why is that? How is it? Ah! I am so — I could not tell you. But you — tell *me*, for I beg you, all your trouble.’

‘Well, well ... But to what end?’

‘Because I ask you; and because I feel that it will do you good to tell me.’

She ought to have said, ‘Because it will redeem you, and save you to tell me’ for that was the truth.

And, indeed, an impulse did then rise in John Hardy to tell to *her* at least that history which he was hoarding and hugging venomously in his breast, which he had breathed to no living soul, save in one short sentence, to old Bobbie Mason; the history of those long tortures — how the scream of a cat had been rent from his twisting and beastilised soul — how he had cursed the deaf ears of God — how, now, his poor nerves, tingling in a chaos of jangling dissonance, like the wires of some shattered instrument of music, represented all the universe to him as a mere black nightmare crowded with sighing winds and unutterable, dismal shapes of woe — how, above all, his passion for vengeance had settled within him into the cruel and wicked malice of a fiend.

He had the impulse to tell it all out, and save his soul; and he said:

« Well — I will tell you — if your ears can bear it. You know, do you not, that I went to China — but no, no, no! I am not a child, Miss Jay! do let

me get away — !’

And suddenly he had snatched his hand, had sprung up, and was gone almost before the cry had leapt her lips.

And she, for a long time, sat staring vacantly at the floor, and did not go out that evening.

During that (Tuesday) night, the Japanese fleet, just arrived in Europe, appeared in twos and threes along the southeast coast. On Wednesday morning, England heard the news that Hastings, Brighton, Worthing, and so on to Bognor, had been reduced to heaps of broken stone, some seven hundred people having been killed. None of the muzzle-loading district coast-defence ironclads had been left afloat.

That was on the Tuesday. On the Wednesday evening Hardy received a small wooden box, bearing the direction: ‘John Hardy, England.’ It bore no stamps, and had evidently been brought from its origin ‘by hand.’

On opening it, he found a quantity of paper stuffing; and, this being removed, a dry and shrivelled, but still evil-smelling object, upon which had been stuck a small oblong piece of paper. On the paper were three lines of tiny, neat writing; and the words written were these:

‘From Yen How to John Hardy.

Heart of His Royal Highness Prince Heinrich of Hesse.’

Prince Heinrich of Hesse, as Hardy knew, was a young child of eight.

Even while Hardy sat contemplating this object, a private detective was ushered into his presence. He came to say that, at last, by means of a confession of her brother, he had been able to trace the whereabouts of the girl Seward.

CHAPTER XXX. THE CHINESE SCREAM



THE FRENCH INVASION was twofold, one-quarter of the Italian Chinese crossing into the Gulf of Lyons to Cette by towed floats, and so along the canal from Cette, across the narrow part of France, to where the canal meets the Garonne near La Reole, and thence to the Gironde and the Biscay coast. This horde, with half the French horde proper, making altogether twenty millions, were to be British.

So it happened that, while the French horde proper were pouring through Belgium by Verviers, Liège, Namur, and Charleroi, pressing towards the practically unfortified northern frontier of France between Maubeuge and Rocroy, at Hirson, five million Italian Chinese had already decimated the western sea-board, and had been organised into stores - collecting, and barge, raft, lighter, and tug-collecting and constructing brigades.

All behind these two invading hordes, what resistance there had been was over, with the exception of some half-dozen detached strongholds, whose garrisons were gradually yielding to famine; and everywhere to the east and north of France, again with some exceptions, was the unsparing pigtail. These exceptions were Hungary, Turkey, Lapland, Finland. For in Europe the Mongolian invaders found some twenty-seven millions of Mongolian inhabitants already there, and it was one of the purposes of that great inventor and consummate statesman, Yen How, that these should be left alive to form (the Hungarians especially) the nucleus of a new civilisation, which was to be neither like the old Western, nor like the old

Eastern, and like nothing in the world save something which *he*, Yen, had quite definitely mapped out in his own wide space of brain.

The western sweep of the Yellow Wave had, in fact, been slightly swelled by some hundreds of thousands of European Turks and Magyars.

Near Charleroi was made what was practically the last battle-field stand of Continental Europe. The Elysée, with rash pride, had issued a manifesto to the people of France, inviting all who could not fly to give in their names as fighters at *bureaux* established in various quarters of various cities. To this call 200,000 French youths and old men responded, and an untrained army, of which the last residues of the Reserve of the Territorial Army formed the nucleus, set forth to hurl themselves upon the infinite.

It was computed that each fighting European destroyed, one way and another, thirty yellow men. But could the arm of each, dead-weary of slaughter, have destroyed three hundred, or three thousand, still the effort would have been wasted. Over the carcasses of a thousand dead straggled a million living. To shoot the vagabond Atlantic with cannon is a mockery of one's self.

The garrison of Paris remained; but the occupation of the French capital, supposed to be impossible to any other army, was, though bloody in its accomplishment, not extremely difficult to this.

A corps and a half, making nearly twice the number which, in its palmiest days, had inhabited the city of light and joy, sat down along the northern valley of the Seine, their lines occupying a length from the Achères-Poissy railway-line to the Forêt de Bondy, well beyond that outer *ceinture* of fortifications composed of great strongholds such as Corneilles, Franconville, Cotillons, Montmorency, Domon.

The first care of the besiegers was to isolate the city; and in every direction, during one- night, all the lines of railway radiating from the

centre were blown up along a distance of some score of yards.

Then at once, with light siege train, a brigade was thrown forward, and an attack begun upon St Germain-en-Laye.

Precisely what was the thought of the French general, what his ultimate hope, in making his determined resistance is not known. But a determined resistance he did make. Such had always been the splendid desperation, the tragic pride, of France.

The Chinese, on their part, might very well have drawn lines round the entire outer *ceinture*, and waited there till all the cats and dogs of Paris and its villages had been eaten; but this no longer suited their mood. The yellow man in his senses is, indeed, afraid of cannon. But the entire race was by this time no longer in its senses; here was a people dancing mad, gorged with gore, flushed with victory, greedy of agonies. Fear they no longer knew. To celebrate for ever a jubilee of devils in a scarlet world — to raise ever higher monuments built of human corpses, and shriek and dance around them — to live, to roll, to die in red — this was their sole remaining instinct.

General Saussier, sitting at St. Cloud with his staff, received telephonic message from St. Germain:

‘Chinese are being mown down by thousands, but still they come.’

And half an hour later by telegraphic click-clack from the mighty seven-battery Fort de Marly:

‘Strong assault by Chinese. No. 2 redoubt carried by gangways and scaling-ladders in teeth of guns. Loss of enemy immeasurable.’

And an hour later from St. Cyr:

‘Chinese now swarming over glacis. Battery in rear carried. Ammunition cannot, I fear—’

No more. So southward and eastward spread the tale of huge carnage, of steady, rapid advance. By nightfall of the first day of siege, St. Germain, Marly, St. Cyr, Versailles, Chatillon, had fallen.

It was on the next morning, at the hour when the sun should have been seen to rise, that men were first startled by a continuance of the darkness of the night.

The secret of this phenomenon was, of course, unknown at the time. In England, presently, it was given out by the scientists that some monstrous thing had happened, probably in some region of the South Sea — some unparalleled passion of Nature — which had poured over the earth in inconceivable mass its scoriae and tufaceous particles and multiform volcanic ashes, darkening the day. That some new properties were present in the atmosphere could not be doubted; for at the same time an intolerable oppression settled upon the chest, and, perhaps by reflex action, down sank the spirits of men; the minds of the children assumed the garb of crape and sackcloth which the Mother had put on; and an awe, and a charnel horror, and a *fear*, such as the heart had never yet known, gripped it now.

In England, it may be presumed, this unutterable pall of gloom lay much less heavily upon the imagination; for here the Chinese and their reign of terror were a mere inconceivable nightmare, not a present fact. But in England, too, the universal nerve felt the strangeness and the thrill of that ghastly obscurity.

It was ghastly because it was not complete. Utter gloom would have been more tolerable. Towards noon, during all the week, the sun was not wholly hidden, but appeared as a garish blotch of leprous lavender, giving nothing that could be called light, making only the darkness visible; while, as if to vie in chromatic hideousness, the moon appeared one night for an hour as a black eye-socket, with a rim of pallid green; and then disappeared.

The sickly gloom of the daytime was just sufficiently relieved to enable near objects to be discerned by the troubled eyes, while distances were lost in unrelieved blackness.

The event at Timor, by which the entire island was destroyed, was of so extraordinary a character that positively the whole planet, with the exception of some parts of America, may be said to have been infected by the catastrophe. Nagasaki disappeared, with many of the inland towns of Japan; a tidal wave inundated a large tract of the Kimberley district of Australia; Vesuvius plumed her cones with a rufous fume of lurider red; and old Etna, purring and stuttering her thunders, broke into strange and gruff garrulity. Over Europe, from the Mull of Oe to the Urals, there was an almost continuous, just perceptible quaking of the ground, which nowhere broke into violence, nowhere did damage, yet was remarkable for its menacing continuity, its unparalleled universality.

Not a breath stirred the air.

If beneath such a sky and upon such a quaking earth we could really conceive the 'Chinese scream,' we should then really understand the speedy delirious deaths of the few successful fugitives from Europe during that week of apocalyptic woes.

At Auxonne, in the Place d'Armes, where there stands a statue of Napoleon I., the whole remaining population assembled on the irruption of the yellow man, almost filling the open space, and fell to their knees with clasped hands, waiting. They only knew the nearness of the Chinese (who always and everywhere ran noiselessly, barefooted, or in soft shoes), when the sudden Chinese scream at the glimpse of the crowded victims burst upon their ears.

One of the terrors of this massacre, and of others, was the uncertainty as to which sort of death any given victim might die; one of the horrors was,

that whatever death a Chinaman inflicted, he loudly imitated with his lips, in an instinctive way, the nature of the death. They came pelting in their swinging run, into the *Place* at Auxonne, and as one lifted a club to smite a head, he screamed inarticulately; and as the club fell, he cried ‘Shrash!’ And as another caught a flying child by the heels, he screamed inarticulately; and as he swung the frail skull against the base of the statue, he cried, ‘Pop!’ And as another aimed his pistol at a near man, he screamed inarticulately; and as the pistol went off, he cried ‘Bam!’ And as another seized a woman from behind by her hair, he screamed inarticulately: and as he danced and jumped upon her spouting abdomen, he cried ‘Wash!’

A very large proportion of the populations of Europe had been absolutely unable to fly: many had not had time, when the Chinese were upon them; many, with infinite effort, had reached the coast to find no craft there to bear them away. Roughly speaking, about one-half, calling upon the rocks and hills to cover them, remained; many, as at Auxonne, shut up in fortified towns. For a time the darkness of day and night enabled many to hide about the country; but it is doubtful if any considerable number could have owed a final escape to this means.

At Epemay, half a regiment having entered the town toward night — though between day and night there was small distinction now — went marauding with flaring torches into every house, searching for victims and finding few. The streets were empty — the inhabitants had vanished. In this surprising famine of blood the baulked hordes poked furiously about, like tigresses robbed of their young. At last, a party, ferreting around the entrance of M. Moet’s cellars, discovered the subterranean excavation which extends in vast vaults some nine miles through the chalky rock of this region. Hither for the most part the doomed people, in unreflecting panic, had rushed, as into the last hole left on earth to cover them; and here

like rats in a trap they were caught. With thrilling screams the Chinese, at the signal, ran swinging from their scattered search about the town, toward Moet's in the main street. It had been drizzling all the day, and their feet were dabbled to the knees with the soft clay of the neighbouring hill of Montigny, of which was made the Epernay earthenware; so that within an hour the long ramifications of the ransacked excavations were a mere filth of dabbled gore and mud. The vaults, moreover, contained several millions of bottles with from four to five thousand pipes of the best champagne; and here at this depth of forty feet below the streets, in the midst of this gloom relieved by rare lurid flares, there was transacted so red an orgy of massacre, screaming lust, and sighing drunkenness, so mixed a drama of filthy infamy and sabbatic Satanism, as earth, and perhaps hell, never saw. In the matter of crime the yellow man is ingenious; what we cannot conceive, he can do; so that where we end he begins, his natural talent being for the grotesque and the *macabre*. And when the orgy grew still for very surfeit, when there welled from him the sigh of perfect peace, down dropped his head upon its pillow of flesh, and his snoring breath fanned the hair of the naked dead.

Simultaneously, the other wine-vaults of Epernay were invaded; and, above, too, the streets were strewn with dead and drunken. The town was burned down before the night was over, some thousands of Chinamen perishing in the flames.

As for the Parisian corps and a half, fort after fort of the outer *ceinture* glutted their monstrous batteries with carnage, and yielded. At Meudon two gallant companies of *chasseurs d pied* flung themselves down an escarpment to hurl back an assault with scaling-ladders; they hurled back the assault, and were literally trampled under foot by the swarm of on-coming multitudes. Then it was the turn of Mont Valerien. Bouviers fell, de

Buc, Bois d'Arcis. At Satory every siege-gun of the Japanese was uncarriaged, and the fort was only taken by the sheer powerlessness of the great guns any longer to keep range with their mangled rifling. Issy fell. At Chatillon the whole stock of ammunition was exhausted in slaughter. Vanves fell, Ivry fell, Montrouge fell. Nearer and nearer closed in the inevitable crowding circle. The Chinese were at St. Cloud, at Putoux, at Suresnes, and at Sèvres.

Even while the war was raging round southern forts they came screaming through the Porte de St Cloud, and went swarming into the Bois up the Alle de Longchamp, making for the Porte Maillot which gives direct access to the city. The iron-barred gate was closed, and the foremost, pressed forward by the now disorganised mob behind, fainted and perished in the block. Still onward surged the crowd, trampling itself in frantic, blind rage into a ghastliness of heaped-up death, while the *gendarmerie* which lined the walls sent whistling gusts of lead through the trees upon the ever-advancing hosts. Then a stream of Chinese extricated themselves sideways, and with a half-run to the right sought to make through the trees for the fosse, and so for the *fortifications*. And as they turned, they fell; and others following, turned and fell. And now, the whole current began to tend in the way of these pioneers. Forward they are pressed, and press, and fall; but they fall ever nearer to the fosse; and now they are falling *into* it; and down through the wide, ever-filling ditch they press, treading upon a carpet of dead flesh only; and now there is no more a fosse, but a level floor of bodies; and across this they rush, and attempt to climb, and fall; and the level floor is no more level, but slants upward to the parapet; and along this sure gangway of soft and sinking luxury, this vast snake-nest of intermixing pigtails, they press, they run; now they cannot fail: they gain the parapet; they scream; and Paris is Gomorrah.

The mystery of license to which, during all that week of black horror, the chief of the cities of men was a prey, can only be hinted here. It was well understood that Paris was to be the capital of the new Chinese world; and it was therefore with a certain feeling of old proprietorship that the Chinese entered it. They dealt with the inhabitants as a man, returning from a long journey, makes short work of an accumulation of rats in his chief cellar.

They stormed in a solid body up the wide Avenue de la Grande Armée, and also in two solid bodies, right and left, just within the fortifications. Near l'Étoile, stretching right across the breadth of the avenue, and also across the Boulevard de Berthier, there were barricades of the Garde Municipale, and street-fighting, and massacre, and mounds of trampled yellow corpses. But the flood behind swept onward the flood before with the inevitableness of the ocean-tide. Within a few hours all that length of thoroughfare which the Parisians called the *boulevards extérieurs* was occupied; and the inhabitants were driven inward like wild horses within a ring of prairie-fire.

Another host had entered south by the Porte d'Ivry into the 13th arrondissement, another from Montrouge by the Porte d'Orléans into the 14th; and now, swarming in their millions, they infested the ways and by-ways of the city, its squares and its bed-rooms, its stables and its public buildings, with glad rage, with prying Bacchic stare, with gaping mouth.

Here was the New Pekin.

The bony visage of the yellow man, in moments of unbridled lust and mad excitement, is a brutal spectacle. The countenance is a travesty; the divine image becomes a mask of hellish farce. It is as though a panting skeleton played a comedy. There all is seen — the nakedness of the passions, the bare, rampant hideousness: the face becomes an indecency. What added to the frenzy of these riots was the fact that among the invaders

were sweating women, crazy with heat and dust, and the instinct of blood, and the ultimate wantonness of crime.

On the night of the entry, on each of the iron railings in the wide space of the Place de la Concorde glared an impaled head. At the Invalides, in the circular pit where lies the tomb of Napoleon, there lay a compact mass of bodies reaching to the level of the railings; and on this bed of mortality lay a score of Chinese men and women in exhausted sleep.

Here, too, was subterranean massacre in catacomb and *égout*. On the Quai St. Michel a body of fifty Quartier Latin students stood waiting in proud, pale, silent patience, holding hands, and died smiling.

While the city from La Villette to Boulogne was still one shrieking Sodom, Yen How arrived in Paris.

Though eager to be away to the coast, he had come hither to inaugurate a ceremony, which was to be memorable. This was on the Tuesday of the sunless week.

He lost no time. He summoned to him at the Elysée captains and generals of brigades, and commanded them to make ready the people for the long-predetermined Ritual.

To-day he was no more Yen How the General, he was Yen How the Prophet-Priest.

He had with him the Chiam, the hereditary high priest, counting an Aaronic ancestry of a thousand years; he had with him a gorgeous retinue of bouzis; he had with him the idol of Quonin, the Chinese Virgin, sitting among cushions in rich robes — the idol of Matsoa, who swam from a far country to China through many seas in one night — the idol of Quonin, Virgin of the North — the idol of Fe, the eagle-headed joss — the idol of Minifo — the idol of many-handed Puffa — many idols; he had with him the books of Confucius, and the books of Tansin; and he draped himself in

the robes and solemn gauds of the Arch-Priest, that he might inaugurate and set up in one central Temple of the West the religion of the East.

He chose Notre Dame.

And the work of torture, and infamy, and slaughter, now nearly over, ceased; and on that day the people flocked toward the Cité, and the ancient church of Christ.

Never was assembled such a multitude within a city. To lend the last impressiveness to the ceremony, Yen How had ordained that these should be the sole public idols, for the time being, brought over from China. A Chinaman without idols is like an opium-smoker without opium. This gorgeous ritual, therefore, was in itself quite sufficient, once for all, to fix and establish Paris as the centre of the new Empire. In the earlier hours of the day messages were everywhere flashed over the Continent, and to China, stating the exact hour of the Inauguration; and at that hour, account having been taken of differences of longitude, by far the greater portion of the yellow race bowed its muttering head, prostrated itself, and turned a jaundiced eye to Heaven.

Yen How, with thick ivory ring on thumb, arrayed in a blaze of colour, was borne in open palanquin of gold all along the Rue de Rivoli and by the Pont de l'Arcole through the kneeling throng, preceded by thousands of bouzis, bearing the majestic god Fo, and the huge - bellied, broad-faced Gan.

The line of route was illuminated with the myriad variegation of lanterns, as was also the interior of Notre Dame. While everywhere, from Montmartre to Montrouge, a noise of jangling bells rang through the sombre air. At the hour of the sacrifice, steaming human heads were offered to Matsoa, as a variation on the usual boiled heads of the pig.

In the tiny shrines which, on three sides, surround the nave, where pricket-candlesticks and rich, religious *decor* had long represented the rather foppish religiosity of the Parisian '*dévoté*' were set up the statues of grotesque and grinning josses. The Crucified gave place to Fo, and the Immaculate to Quonin.

The studied pomp of this memorable Hegira was overwhelming in its effect. The prostrate multitudes groaned in inward agonies of veneration; and the God of their veneration was, in reality, Yen How.

When the sacred books were opened and solemnly presented, it was not forgotten that Confucius, who wrote them, was mysteriously *there*, in carnal presence, before their favoured eyes.

He, for his part, the little doctor — even in that grandiose hour of his triumph — smiled inwardly, as usual. In all the sun and earth there was hardly heat to melt that ice.

Only where the focussed rays of self touched the secret spot, he warmed, and flowed, and felt.

The pageant of Inauguration was at two. By four the broken Paris-Calais railway was repaired, and Yen How with his retinue set off westward.

Already Paris presented a strange sight, apart from the heaps of dead in the streets, and the bodiless heads and arms with which the screaming Chinese played ball. She looked Chinese. The Mongolian race, like the English, can adapt itself readily. All the winding length of the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré was, in two days, bright with gauds and hues. Shops had been appropriated by individuals, who made haste to find pigments to daub the legend in characters which seemed to grin. Lanterns were hung out. The gay city assumed another tone of gaiety: vermilion on her houses, and vermilion in her streets.

The work of blood recommenced.

At battered Marseilles, the Chinese, entering by the Boulevard de la Madeleine, found a deserted city, filled with the roar of the famishing animals at the Zoological Gardens. Their only prey was the very aged, and a number of nuns, medical men, and invalids, collected chiefly at the New Hospital. In their squeeze to get at these a number of Chinese were crushed to death.

At Lyons an incredible *mêlée*, made up of the madmen of the hospital of Antiquaille, of Chinese, and of Soeurs de la Charité, raged for an hour through the vast, straggling building. Beneath the Pont de la Mulatibre there occurred a block of corpses which spread gradually upward between the banks of the Saone; and this, within two days, aided by the stifling heat of the stagnant and sunless air, resulted in a pestilence among the invaders. At once the dying men were seized with the instinct to rush northward toward Paris, the home of the gods; and it was only the promptness of Yen How, who ordered the clearance of the river, and the instant shooting of every sick Chinaman, which prevented more widespread disaster.

At old Valence, where some failure of commissariat — caused by the deportation southward of provisions, and the voluntary destruction of the vineyards — had occurred, there was scarcity for a day, and food in plenty the next. The low hedge that divides the yellow man from omnivorousness was in Europe found to be very low indeed — where ‘the flesh of men is not yellow, but pink, like the new-born mouse. At the first spur of hunger, the hedge was leapt with an easy bound.

For a day hard scarcity; the next, flesh in plenty — roast and sodden, bake and stew.

Meanwhile, if there was a man in Europe who had a strong will neither to be eaten when dead, nor tortured alive at slow fires, nor shot with arrows,

nor pierced with bullets, nor pulped with the clubs which the Chinese use for pounding rice — that man was the duellist Edrapol.

Thrice had he been caught, and thrice he had escaped.

He reached Dieppe, and for the second time within two days, he had no sooner reached his point of aim than the irruption came.

He ran at the first breathless news down to the basins; and, with a crowd of hunted men and women, saw the last little boat making her way, thronged with people, out of the mouth of the outer basin.

He had forgotten, in his mad haste, both sword and pistols; and as he saw hope cut off by way of the sea, his first instinct was to rush back, and get what was like life to him — a weapon in his hand.

Even as he ran through the street, along which men and women were rushing in wild-eyed distraction, he heard *the scream*. It had reached Dieppe.

Edrapol stopped, and gazed crazily about. His big soft-felt hat was pressed back hard on his head; the long hanging ends of his white moustache shook. It was not a moustache — it was a drapery.

Here was a stern end to an existence of pleasure; here an absence of all punctilio intruding itself upon a life which had made punctilio its bride. The Chinese slew without ‘seconds,’ or ceremony; though the aggressors, they chose their own weapons. The trifler’s heart sank within him.

Round he leered, standing a moment in the third position, as if to parry the *tierce* thrust — his hat pressed hard back on his head.

The scream came from a side-street; it was very near; his inn was before him; he flew forward.

He reached the deserted house, rushed up the stairs to a room, and dropped to his knees before a portmanteau. From his arsenal of weapons he

chose a six - chambered revolver and a dainty rapier. With these in his hand he felt better.

He stood and listened, his beard, his whole body, shaking.

In about a minute the place was filled with noise, shouted gibberish, shrill laugh. Edrapol bolted his door.

But it was soon discovered, and battered in with clubs. About ten Chinese, hot, crazy, bent upon blood, rushed in upon him, screaming.

But this time they reckoned without their host. A man does not acquire a European reputation for nothing.

Edrapol put his legs into the exact pose of elegance suited to the occasion, and with the revolver in his left hand and the rapier in his right, he began to kill scientifically. Every shot entered the middle of a heart or brain, and every stroke failed not to sever the intended artery. The last pigtail dropped upon the writhing corpses of his fellows, and Edrapol leant a little on the handle of his dripping rapier, the model of grace.

It was near sunset then, about two weeks before the dark time.

He crept from the chamber. The house was empty. He found a recess in a wine-cellar, in which he hid till three the next morning.

The house was then full of other Chinese, and the corpses of white women; but the living were as unconscious as the dead, drunk with the orgy of the day. Edrapol passed through them, and made his escape from the town eastwards and southwards.

For a week he lurked in a little empty farm-house between Dieppe and St. Valéry; and then some Chinese came to the farm-house; but Edrapol escaped.

For another week he seems to have dodged and lurked about in that neighbourhood, near the shore, in the vain hope of somehow getting away in a ship. But no ship came.

He was carrying about with him a piece of cheese which he found at the farm-house, and this, with occasional autumn hedge-fruit, appeased his hunger. He remembered the bonbons of Moissier with regret.

Unexpectedly, one midnight, walking along the beach, he came upon a broken hut, and near it a small seamy skiff, containing half an oar. He was just able to move her; and after three hours' work, got her to the water's edge.

He put off in her, and as the water oozed in, he baled it with his voluminous hat. When he was not baling, he paddled.

His notion of reaching England in this fashion was hopeless; but the old duellist, the luxurious *boulevardier*, clung to life with the desperation of a pampered woman. And he fell upon his feet where another would have failed.

On the third morning, he was picked up, half dead, by a small barque, almost in mid-channel. She was the *Conrad*, which had borne Hardy to Nagasaki; she was then, for the first time, on her way to England. So that, late that night, Edrapol's glittering fingers pulled the patriarchal tassels of his moustache on Newhaven broken wharf. And there he examined the edge of his rusted rapier.

CHAPTER XXXI. THE MEETING



AS FOR THE girl Seward, Hardy was told by his agent that she occupied a flat in Bloomsbury, a flat rather well furnished, where, with a servant of her own, she lived alone. And, without five minutes' delay, Hardy was in a carriage hurrying to the address given.

He doubted if this could be the girl he wanted. She lived, certainly, under another name. And how came Ada, the nurse-maid, to be flourishing in such a style? Morbidly anxious as he was to have her safe and sure in his own keeping, it hardly occurred to him that this very opulence accounted for the reticences and hesitations of her brother with regard to her.

But in twenty minutes he was sure. On a third floor a servant led him into a smug drawing-room, and there, on the wall, he saw an oval coloured photograph: and he recognised the slim bust, and the little Chinese eyes, and the piquant Geisha-girl face, warm-yellow in tint.

At the door, the servant, a narrow-browed, mean-looking creature, had told him that Miss Seward was away; and as he wished to speak further, she had asked him within.

Where, then, was Miss Seward?

She had gone away.

When?

Four hours before.

Where to?

To Dover.

Was that certain?

Quite certain.

But whatever had she gone to Dover for?

That the servant could not say, or would not say.

But was Miss Seward coming back soon?

The servant did not think so. Miss Seward had left her sufficient money to keep her for some time.

Did the servant know much of Miss Seward's private affairs?

She knew something. She and Miss Seward were very good friends indeed. Miss Seward sometimes spoke of things to her. But, of course, she did not know everything.

What did '*everything*' mean?

It meant nothing.

Then Hardy began to woo, to implore; then to speak of big matters; to say that all this was important to more than he could name. But the girl smirked, and did not follow that flight. The last thing that occurred to him was a bribe; only in the final moment of his despair did the thought flash through his mind. He hinted at hazard a hundred pounds, and the promptness of the response surprised him.

It was a large sum for a poor girl.

Yes; and all he wanted to know was *why* Miss Seward had gone to Dover.

She had gone in order to go over to France to the little Chinaman who was in love with her.

And now it was the turn of the servant to be surprised — at the swift energy with which Hardy vanished from her eyesight.

He bore on his breast the initials of this girl, Seward; she was *his*, his very own.

But he was in this dilemma: that things far more momentous on their surface demanded his personal presence where he was. It needed all the acumen of his shrewd eye to determine which was the main fact which must influence his conduct.

He drove to the nearest post-office, and telegraphed to the Manager of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway.

There was at this moment not a hope left to Britain. The Admiralty had chains of steamers, intercommunicating with each other, and with the south-east coast, whose task was to watch and to report. And the nation now knew that on the morrow of this final-looking, sunless Wednesday was due the horror of ultimate overthrow — the going beneath the wave of the last emerging rock of the old world.

Nor had the general mass of the nation the faintest suspicion of any power in the earth which could save, or even momentarily help, it.

If a heavenly host should appear in mid-sky wrapped in flames of vengeance, then, perhaps, that surge might be stemmed. But though the people were now far from doubting the interest of the gods, their reasons were the offspring of too advanced a period of Time to await any such manifestation.

It was known that a wholly inconceivable number of floating things of every kind were massed upon the extreme northwest coast of France; and that in their passage over to England they would have one of the finest war-fleets the world had ever seen to protect them — against nothing!

And now — in this hour of world-tragedy — the British people offered to the ‘Eyes that regard’ a good spectacle. The panic was gone. In such a place as the City of London there was, of course, no business done; but everywhere else there was business done. Shops were open; post-offices were open; the printing-press throbbed. If a man met a man in the street,

one pallid lip spoke to the other pallid consciousness of the dark weather, of a business matter, of a family affair — of everything except the Chinese. The subject of the Chinese in these last days was rather looked upon as being in bad taste. The lower classes spoke of them — but, in general, with splendidly curved lip. With a sublime stoicism, with a regal disdain, Britain waited for her overthrow.

Nearly every one made a point of going about his ordinary work.

In the last resort, *the lip* remains. It is the final retort of a noble man, of a grand nation, to destiny. ‘The mind and spirit remain invincible...’

What could Britain do now? She could smile.

And by this her pallid smile in that hour, she proved, in truth, her divine right to the Empire of the Earth.

Besides smiling, every man, and most boys, managed to provide themselves with some sort of weapon, sharp or blunt, dull or gleaming, which they laid quietly by.

A gentleman in Gray’s Inn had for a week been training a fine specimen of the British bull-dog to fly at a Mongolian effigy set up in the gardens.

In reality, the arm of England was as strong as her soul; but she knew the strength of her soul, and did not suspect the strength of her arm.

Her arm was John Hardy.

At least he was the main muscle of it. He was as much the West as Yen How was the East.

But what is this shadow that dogs his steps? — something absurd, grotesque, yet terrible?

At eight he had sent the telegram to the railway company. At nine he drove once more from Cavendish Square, leaving a host of orders with an almost permanent committee of naval men who now attended upon him.

And he had no sooner driven away, than a man in wide sombrero was asking at his door if he was at home.

In this man, Edrapol, there was not now, if there had ever been, an atom of venom against Hardy. He was merely the absurd slave of punctilio. In the view of that frivolous old brain, nothing in the world could compare in importance with the importance of an *affaire d'honneur*, a delicate point, a shade of usage. The thing first of all that a gentleman must do — in every case — whatever happened — was to settle ‘a delicate point.’

Also, he knew the greatness of Hardy. And his vanity was prone, the moment he found himself in safety on English soil, to measure swords with him.

He knew, too, that soon the Chinese must be here also, and then ... what could be done? *C'est une affaire manquée*. Nothing could be more annoying to a gentleman than an *affaire manquée*.

It was clear that whatever he did must be instantaneously done. The morrow would, perhaps, not ‘do his affair.’

He took the broad hat from his long-haired white head, and he bowed largely, as old Bobbie himself informed him that Hardy was from home.

Edrapol asked whither he had gone, and the old man said:

‘To Dover, sir.’

Edrapol asked no more. He had brought over on his person a good sum in specie; he had also rings on his fingers worth money. He jumped into a cab, and drove in haste away.

With that noble phlegm of which we have spoken, things in England still, at this eleventh hour, ran, for the most part, their usual course. Few people were moving about, yet the trains went empty, and the show of civilisation continued when its reality was like a spent heart, about to beat its final throb.

So that Edrapol found a longed-for train about half an hour after Hardy's departure; and both engines, flying simultaneously through Kent, were 'express.'

As for Hardy, he reached Harbour Station in his rocking train within an hour and twenty minutes from his start.

He hurried to the Cross Wall, and there had no difficulty 'in learning that the girl had certainly not hired any local craft, nor started from Dover that day. Nor had any craft left Dover eastward for some time.

The natural conclusion was that Ada Seward was still in Dover.

Nevertheless, Hardy spied about the harbour for some time among the steamboats, and pointed out one to a blue-jacket named Brassey, who accompanied him. Brassey was to arrange with her captain; have her fires lit and banked; and Hardy scribbled a note to South Front Barracks, signing his name with the initials P. C. N. S.; it was a request for a small three-pounder and ammunition, which he instructed Brassey to mount for'ard on the designated steamer. He himself hurried to the Royal Ship Hotel, followed by a train, of watermen, policemen, and residents, eager to serve him.

Nothing was so certain as that, if the girl were there, in a small place like Dover, he would quickly know it. In a few minutes fifty men were dissecting the town for him, and very soon he had the whole history of her stay in Dover.

She had put up for two hours at the Lord Warden Hotel, and had then left it, taking her portmanteau, in a cab. In the small period of her stay she had made herself singularly friendly with one of the chamber-maids of the hotel, and confided to her the surprising secret that she was about to set out for Dunkirk. The cabman who took her away was found; and he stated that, having driven for some distance east towards St. Margaret-at-Cliffe, along

the high road, his fare had ordered him to turn down a by-road, leading directly to the shore. His surprise was immense when, about a mile from the Upper Foreland Lighthouse, which was burning all day, she again ordered him to stop and take down her trunk. He did so, laid it on the sands, and was paid. The last he saw as he drove away was the girl sitting on the box, with lonely outlook over the dim sea.

Was there no ship in the offing?

There might have been; he could not say. One could not see many yards over the sea through the dark. He was certain that there was no ship with burning lights.

Here, then, was the last link: the chain ending at the girl watching the drear sea from her box on the sands.

It did not, however, need a very vivid imagination to conjecture why she sat there; and in half an hour after hearing the news, Hardy had the North Pier Signal-Light dwindling into nothingness on his port quarter; and the Downs-trotter which bore him was panting and quivering as she had not panted for many a day. He calculated that the girl had, at most, an hour's start of him.

As he passed out between the two piers, Edrapol arrived at Priory Station, and began to make inquiries for Hardy. After a time he heard the truth, but his disappointment was solaced by the information that Hardy would very likely return before morning.

At this time Ada Seward, borne in one of those safe, but rather clumsy, Havre-Antwerp boats, was fifteen miles or so on her way from the English coast.

Some months before this a singular adventure had befallen the girl.

Walking along the street, she had been accosted by a man — a Yankee, as she judged by his goat beard, his lank lounge, and his talk.

He nodded with cool confidence to her, and, with oily modulations, he said this:

‘Well, young woman, I guess you are in luck’s way this time, anyhow.’

In ten minutes he had left her, and leaving her, insinuated in Bank of England notes into her hand. This, he explained, was only ‘to go on with’ for a day or so.

He was not the principal, he said, but only an agent— ‘matter of business’ — in which, to tell the God’s truth, he did not stand in so badly. But he was not the principal in the deal: the principal she would see on the next evening at the hour and place which he named.

The ‘principal’ was a large, pigtailed, silk-dressed Chinaman — a great man in his country.

All he wanted of Ada Seward was to be permitted to buy her grand houses, and carriages, and footmen, and downs, and luxuries. For this nothing, on his honour, in return, save that she should be under his eye, and obey him as a daughter. The Yankee acted as go-between, and Ada thought she would like all this.

So, away now with Pattison’s, and the nursery; and shopping now all day for Ada at Peter Robinson’s, the carriage waiting outside.

She changed her name, breaking with her poor, but proud, relations, who, in spite of her protestations, believed that her foot had slipped. Her brother tossed back the gold she offered him into her face.

Then came proposals from the ‘principal.’ Ada was wanted in China, where wealth, beyond all dream, awaited her. She refused.

Now first she heard the name of Yen How in the matter, and began to understand. That little doctor at whom she had scoffed...

Then came pressure, threats. But apart from the pressure, and the threats, she understood now that she had sold herself into slavery. She was

subjected to a most rigorous, unremitting surveillance, like an upper-class woman in China; and she had at bottom a rather touchy, independent pride of character. Add to this surveillance the pressure, the threats, and to these her uneasy consciousness of her people's displeasure, and what she did may be guessed: she collected all the trinkets about her, which now amounted to many hundreds of pounds' value, and she ran away.

It was then that she set up on her own account in the Bloomsbury flat. Already she was too much of a lady to do without a servant.

She hid herself with such absolute craft, that neither 'principal,' nor 'agent,' nor for a long time the agents of Hardy, nor her brother, could find her.

It was on learning this flight that Yen How decided that, whatever happened, none of the women of England must be killed...!

Then, when the end was near, when it was certain that England was doomed, a noble throe leapt into life within this girl. She conceived the quixotic, but subjectively fine, notion of sacrificing herself for her country. On condition that England was spared, she would go to Yen.

And boldly breaking from her seclusion, she presented herself with this proposal before the agent'; and agent and principal, in a room in Portland Street, where the principal lived now in strictest retirement, gloated over this thing.

And they two, with elaborate cautions and precautions, made two voyages to the French coast, one with the glad message in the girl's own writing, from which they returned with Yen How's 'come'; and one to arrange minute preliminaries of the meeting.

And thus it happened that in order to get to France, Ada Seward sat alone on her box on the Foreland sands, and looked across the sea.

She was genuinely confident that she was 'saving' something large and not very definite; and, as she stepped into the boat which quickly made its appearance at the surf, the thought in her beating, yet bold, heart was this: What a One am I!

In order to lay his eyes once more upon this girl at the earliest moment, Yen How was ready to fling to the winds, or at least postpone, a world of affairs which no head but his could surely organise. But the momentum of events overpowered him. He could not go.

He himself chose the safest-looking, tidiest, and smartest of the smaller craft of which the Outer Harbour, the Commercial Dock, and the Naval Dock were now one thick crowded mass.

He had then been at Dunkirk two days, making the Casino des Dunes his headquarters. But when he looked abroad upon that once neatest of cities, and considered the heaped-up horror of its red streets, and the whirling drama of mixed revel and warlike preparations going forward within its walls, he knew that here, at least, his bride could not come.

Standing, however, a little back from the Sea Baths at Rosendael, two miles away, was a lonely villa, backed by the desolate sand-dunes, and within ear-shot of the continual rumouring of the shore. Here, at eleven in the night, almost alone, restless, perambulating, expecting, was Yen How.

He had rescued himself with a sort of stealth from Dunkirk.

He was like some singer, the darling of the world, who yet is the secret victim of drink; and while the plaudits still ring through the opera-house, *he*, in the inmost recess of the greenrooms, has the tilting bottle at his lips.

By midnight the lights of Dunkirk were well in sight of the steamer which bore Ada Seward. The boat was manned by Japanese, men in whom Yen How had confidence. But she was unarmed.

She was travelling at her utmost speed, and carried only one light — a mast-head light.

This fact made her *outré*, an object of observation; it was sufficient to hint her identity; and behind her, straining every timber to catch her, came frothing a slightly faster boat.

So that when the boat ahead was perhaps not half a mile from her anchorage opposite Rosendael, the boat behind was five hundred yards only from the boat ahead; and it was then that the former sent a guess-work shot, but a shot aimed by Hardy's own hand, into the stern-works of the other.

The Japanese boat at once shot round, and went steaming in a changed direction, rudderless. Consternation reigned on her decks: over the sea came to Hardy's ship sounds of shouted voices.

The girl, who had been lying on the red-velvet cabin-cushions, rushed on deck. And as she reached it, again she heard the boom of cannon, and screamed.

And all that happened from that moment during ten minutes was a mere horrid whirl to her; there was a scampering of men, and yells, and everywhere a rush of the sea, and a leap into a boat, and a singing in her ears, and a smell like brimstone, and the flash of a bull's-eye in her eyes.

Then she felt firmness beneath her feet, and presently she was crying, half-lying back on cushions.

Hardy, sitting near, eyed her curiously for some minutes of silence. Here was a force greater than a 100-ton gun, great as the moon and the tides; old Astarte sobbing there in a dainty West-end bonnet — the strong sex of Woman.

The presence of the girl, in his power at last, filled him with a certain calm. With her, he felt, he might win.

The sobs died gradually lower. And he said:

‘You feel better now?’

‘Yes — thank you — sir,’ she answered jerkily.

Up to now she had not recognised him.

‘Then I can talk to you. You understand, that it was to get *you* that I sank the other ship?’

‘*Me?*’ she queried, sitting up at once in wide-awake interest.

‘Yes. I knew you were going to Yen How, and I wanted at all hazards to prevent you. Whatever induced you to act in that unworthy way?’

‘Which unworthy way, sir? But stop, are you—’

‘Yes — we have met before. But that is not the point. Tell me, why have you been so foolish and wicked, Ada?’

‘Oh, come now, this is a little too much, you know 15 cried Ada. ‘Who are you? And what right have you to take me in this way? I foolish and wicked? It is absolutely untrue; and I don’t think you’d be ungentlemanly enough to treat a poor girl in this way if you knew all.’

‘Well then, tell me all. And do not cry, because that wastes time.’

‘Oh, it is all very well to talk in that way, sir!’ she answered saucily, though her heart misgave her at the look of the face before her. ‘Who are you? I am not aware by what right—’

‘But you are wasting my time. John Hardy is my name, and I have the right of a man trying to serve his country. Tell me now.’

‘Oh, John Har — ! Well, you will excuse me, won’t you? I was not to know that. But was it you, then, all the time, at the music—’

‘Yes. Now tell me.’

‘Why I was going, you mean? Well, if it comes to that, wasn’t I going for the same reason which you say — to serve my country, too?’

‘Is that really so?’

‘It is, sir.’

‘And how?’

‘Well, since you seem to know about me and Yen How — didn’t he give me to understand that, if I came, he would save England from the Chinese? And isn’t that why I am going to him? to make him keep his army away from England?’

At this exhibition of inherent confidence in her power over Yen, this radical, unquestioning trust in the might of her sex, a smile flitted through the brain of Hardy. He said:

‘Then you are not wicked, after all; but only foolish. As I have you in my hands, and as I am going to take you back to England, I will let you understand why. You are right in believing that Yen How is very much attached to you; that is so; I know it well. I believe that his attachment to you is as extraordinary in its force as the man himself is extraordinary. Well now; but can you be so simple as to think that the way to make use of this infatuation for the good of your country is to come and put yourself in his power in this fashion? Supposing he even tried to keep his armies from going over to England and killing us all, he could not permanently succeed, you know; and supposing he succeeded, you have sense enough to know, have you not, that England would be no good at all with the rest of the world full of yellow men? In that case she had better go under, too, like the rest, don’t you think? You would not care to live in such a kennel, nor would I, nor any of us English. So, you see, you are throwing away yourself for nothing. But I, now, have a better card to play, I am thinking! Do you know that I have been searching everywhere for you for weeks? My idea was this: that this vast Chinese people would be no good at all when confronted with the harsh, steady, untiring frown of England — provided we could only get their leader well dead. That is the first thing to do. Yen How is the weak point of all that great host; and you, Ada, are the weak

point of Yen How. That is why I wanted to have you safe in my hands all this time, so as to be sure that you were there. If you are in England, I have not a doubt that Yen How will come, like a fish to the bait; and if he comes, as sure as fire we'll catch him. But if I let you go over to him in this way to France, you see, don't you, how that would spoil everything?'

'I see, sir,' said Ada.

'Well, now, in what we have got to do to-night you can help us: we want to let Yen How know that you are safe in England, and in my hands, He must not have any doubt about that in his mind; and as he is expecting you, I suppose, in the ship I have sunk, he will have a doubt when she does not arrive, unless we enlighten him. He will think, very likely, that you are lost with the crew of the ship; and that suspicion may be enough to keep him out of our hands. So, then, I want you to tell me where, and under what conditions, you were to meet Yen How to-night.'

'I can hardly say exactly,' she replied; ' — he is in a house by itself near the shore.'

'Is he alone?'

'They told me that there was hardly any one with him.'

'There is a single light just ahead of us in shore: is that the place, do you know?'

'It may be, sir; I should think it would be. I cannot say.'

Hardy jumped sharply up, and called 'Brassey!' in a shout that made him cough.

Brassey at once appeared — a beardless, Cockney-looking man.

'How far are we in?' asked Hardy.

'About a quarter of a mile, sir.'

'No lights on board showing?'

'No, sir.'

‘Pick three men to go with you and me in the boat; ask if they can shoot at all, and give them the pistols; better look to yours and mine. Tell them to stop speed. And find me at once, Brassey, a pair of scissors, if you can.’

On a side-table in the cabin were pens, ink, and paper. Hardy sat and wrote a few words; and almost as soon as he had finished Brassey was at his side with a pair of scissors.

Hardy at once hurried across to where Ada Seward sat; he muttered:

‘If you do not mind — just one little lock...’

Before she knew, he had clipped a tendril of her light-reddish hair.

He returned now to the table, and enclosed the hair with the scribbled sheet in an envelope, which he directed: ‘Yen How, Europe.’

On the sheet he had written:

‘From John Hardy to Yen How.

‘Hair of Miss Seward, who is in the safe keeping of John Hardy, at 11a Cavendish Square, London.’

A few minutes later, wrapped to his ears in a long black ulster, he was at the tiller of a boat making for the shore.

The sea was calm, and only a slow, rolling *bruit* from the breaker-line informed with its murmurous monotone the very drear and dark night.

The air was stagnant as the vapid atmosphere of some dead world. It seemed pervaded by a certain visible gloom.

In ten minutes, Hardy, with a spring, was upon Chinese territory. The three men put off again a little from land; Brassey stationed himself on the wet sand, instructed how to act in case of a preconcerted signal; alone Hardy moved forward.

He had in one hand the letter, and in the other a pistol.

Yonder, shining steadily through the murky dark, was a light, which seemed nearer than it was; half a mile along the east stretch of fine sand lay

Rosendael, but invisible, deserted. The noise of Dunkirk could not be heard, but a blurred hint of luminosity marked its situation. A stone's throw away, on the left, stood a row of five bathing-machines. The upward-tending region of sand-hill and dune behind the villa was lost in gloom.

Yet the near was not invisible. Hardy having passed the broad band of level sand, was able to make his way with tolerable precision among the knolls and light, uneven ground. Once he collided with a low backless bench, half sunken askew in a scraggy growth of grass; once and again he stumbled into a hole of sand.

The house was very far. It stood on a slightly raised plateau of firmer ground, facing the sea; and the light seen from the sea was in an open window near the ground. The villa was white, and small; its doors and windows Gothic.

He stole stooping to the window, and looked in. The room, lighted by a lamp, was a species of *salon*. On a chair in a corner burned a Chinese lantern.

From a window on the right side also he saw ooze a radiance from within, and with cautious tread he approached it also. The casement was latticed, and overgrown with chèvrefeuille. But he was able to observe that the room was gaudily decorated, tapestried with green and crimson silks, in the centre a spread table, laden with fruit and plate of gold. A multitude of coloured lanterns made it a nest of variegated glammers. And here, busy about the table, he saw two richly-dressed Chinese.

He made the tour of the house, and saw no other living thing. All was dead silence and stagnation. He came back to the front window, dropped in the letter directed to Yen How, and turned away.

His way now was downhill, and he walked faster, with less precaution, swinging freely along. He had gone on in this way for perhaps five minutes,

when he stopped suddenly short, all eyes and ears. He had heard the distinct sound of footsteps near.

In two or three seconds the muzzle of a pistol was at his forehead, and the muzzle of his pistol was at the forehead of a man.

They peered closely into each other's face.

'Well, you do not fire, and I will not,' said the man coolly.

He was not an Englishman — something in his intonation showed that; yet he spoke English.

He had, in fact, recognised Hardy; but Hardy did not recognise him.

'Is it agreed?' the man said.

'Well.'

'Drop your pistol.'

'You drop yours.'

'And you promise?'

'Yes.'

There was a thud on the ground, and a moment after another.

'Poh! You have lost your chance,' said the man.

Then Hardy knew Yen.

Even though it was a totally different Yen from the pompous pigtailed Arch-Priest, the great Apostle, who had been awaiting, with restless wanderings over the dunes, his tarrying bride. It was a Yen in simple English clothes, with a hard felt hat over his bald forehead, and without *queue* behind.

The consciousness of failure, of folly, thrilled through Hardy like a pain.

He had, in truth, lost the best possible chance.

'Well,' he said after a minute, 'and you have lost yours, too, Yen How.'

'I will get you another time, boy.'

'If I do not get you.'

‘Well, well,’ said Yen.

They had moved on a few steps — together. There was silence in the darkness. Already in the two men was working the strange law whose operation they were to feel for long hours that night: the law which made it next to impossible to them to tear themselves one from the other.

Yen How hit upon the same half-sunken bench upon which Hardy had stumbled. Hardy put his foot upon it, and leant his elbow on his knee at one end. At the other Yen How sat down. Below them was the undulant spread of weed-patched sand, and the vague noising of the sea.

* * * * *

Yen How, who was smoking, took the cigar from his lips, and said:

‘So you got away, after all?’

Hardy did not answer.

‘*How* did you get away?’ asked Yen.

‘God, I suppose, let me free, that I might strangle you yet, Yen,’ said Hardy.

‘Poh!’ said Yen How.

Minute after minute rolled by in a silence punctuated by the faint puffing sounds of Yen How’s lips — a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes. Hardy was looking forth with wrinkled, speculative brow over the sea.

Yen How said:

‘Did you have anything to do with the capture of the nine ships?’

‘Which nine ships?’ said Hardy.

‘The Japanese war-vessels.’

‘Go to Hell, and ask me no questions.’

‘I suppose it was your doing, boy.’

‘Perhaps.’

‘What have you done with them, then?’
‘I have them.’
‘Not in Europe — come now.’
‘How do you know that?’
‘I have searched.’
‘Europe is a good big place, Yen.’
‘Big, no. A green billiard-table, my son—’
‘With pockets.’
‘So you have got them — in a pocket — really?’
‘I may. There is no telling.’
‘If you had, you would not try to make me think that you had.’
‘Ah,’ said Hardy, of the two one fathom the deeper.

* * * * *

Caught in a sort of fascination, in a feeble, flaccid species of mutual mesmerism, they could not leave each other. Intense hatred and intense love are, of course, inverse forms of the same thing, and their manifestation is the same — an instinct for contact. A stab, a kiss — these are resultant varieties of the instinct. Through a grating a dog and a cat will maintain a mutual watch, lingeringly, for hours, averse to part. Here was something of that sort — a warfare and an attraction between a whale big as an ocean, and an elephant, monstrous, four-headed, big as a continent.

And as all grand intensities are primal, elementary, and resemblant to the passions of childhood, so the talk of these great men was not altogether unlike the wrangle between two bitter, lingering schoolboys, sitting on a bench, with lumps in their throats — fastened together, unable to part.

There were few words, and a long interval, and few words, and a long interval. So a dark hour passed.

* * * * *

Hardy said:

‘What a beast you must be, Yen, to torture a poor boy like that! What a sad beast!’

‘Poh! You do not know anything. I had worse in store for you than that, boy.’

‘What a damned reptile for God to make!’

‘Abuse away. Your mind is not really first-class, after all. You are the slave of old, popular surface-ideas. A reptile is no worse than anything else, boy. If he is stronger than other things, he is better than them.’

‘Ah, well, if that were so, I should be glad, too, Yen. There is not much to choose between us, now, in that way.’

‘What, you are of the species, too, then?’

‘Something of that sort, perhaps — if venom makes the reptile. It is your own fault. You have made me like yourself. By the Lord, I warn you, Yen How...!’

* * * * *

‘Poh! it is a question of strength, not of venom. You can be as venomous as you like. But what can you do?’

‘Nothing perhaps; and perhaps something.’

‘Suppose you had a fleet to beat me at sea. Do you know how many I am sending over? All at once? You can’t dream. Twenty millions. What could you do with them? It would take you a year to shoot them all. But suppose you did; there will be some more hundreds of millions left. You cannot exclude the innumerable. What could you do with them? Be as venomous as you like, my son.’

‘Ten good men against a hundred million rats — I bet on -the men.’

‘Poh! I bet on the rats.’

‘On the side of the men — science.’

‘Science. What sort of science?’

‘The science of the gunmaker, of the tactician, of the—’

‘Well?’

‘Need I say it?’

‘Yes, say it.’

‘Of the — chemist.’

And at the word Yen How started as though pricked by a goad. He said nothing.

‘But, after all, you are a fool, Yen.’

‘Ah. How so?’

‘Well, now, I suppose you are a learned sort of dog. You know science I daresay; you know history, and on what trajectory the world has run so far. But it seems to me — can it be that you have really never caught a glimpse of the one big, fugitive Thing?’

‘And you, my son?’

‘Yen! sometimes it hits me straight in the eyes in one blinding flash of lightning — a momentary flash, happily, for no staggering eyeball could bear it long.’

‘Ah! And what is it you see?’

‘A tendency in the world — the hell of a current — a secret design, Mr. Chinaman.’

‘Well, suppose I have seen it too, boy, or guessed it? Why call me a fool?’

‘Because this invasion of yours is not in accordance with the tendency so far; and the tendency is jolly strong!’

‘You think the tendency is English in feeling; and I say it is Chinese; that’s all.’

‘I’ll swear it is not Chinese, Yen How.’

‘Well, I don’t care. Tendency or no tendency. Poh! A tree has a tendency to grow, all the universe is trying to make it grow — but how if I come with a saw and cut it down, my son?’

If you cut it down, yes. But if it is older than that old sea there, and has in it the toughness of eternities, and is as wide as the girth of the earth...

A murmur of contempt came from Yen How. But his left eye glanced a moment upward at the darkened heaven.

* * * * *

‘But what is it you are doing here, my son? How if I have you captured now?’

‘You cannot. I have help near. I could more likely capture you.’

‘I would not be easily captured, you know. But what is it you want here, sir?’

‘I received your present of the child’s heart. I came to make you one in return. I have dropped it inside the window of the house yonder.’

‘Ah, what present?’

‘The present of a lock of hair.’

‘Ah, yes. *Is she safe?*’

His voice dropped low, clandestine, wheedling.

‘Yes, she is safe.’

‘On board your ship?’

‘Yes.’

‘I knew. I heard your cannon. You are a devil for cannon, my son. But I do not look perturbed, I think. A man like Yen How knows how to wait.’

‘Then wait.’

‘I am waiting.’

‘It need not be for long, Yen.’

‘Poh! a day or two.’

‘So soon?’

‘Meanwhile, if you do not want me to strangle you, get off this soil.’

‘Yes — I must be going.’

* * * * *

Another half-hour, and Hardy sprang suddenly upright, a lank dim figure in his ulster. It was not very far from morning, yet no sign of light.

‘We shall meet again, then?’ he said.

‘To-morrow, perhaps,’ answered Yen How.

‘Or to-day.’

‘So true. It is morning now. Say to-day, perhaps, then, boy.’

‘Well, to-day...’

One walked hurriedly away; and the other, sitting there in the dark, smiled above his nose.

As for Hardy, he flung himself upon the cabin-cushions of the steamer as she turned her bows westward, and for four hours slept there, Ada Seward asleep, too, on the opposite side.

CHAPTER XXXII. 'TO-DAY'



SUDDENLY, A BREATH, a murmur, a thrill, a word of Life, ran like an electric wave through the length and breadth of Britain.

By wondrous marvel there were once more solid war-ships in Portsmouth port — ships friendly, belonging to England, not made for England by English hands, come from nowhere! By wondrous marvel ... by the might of the Almighty God ... by His unspeakable favour...

With this miracle was coupled by the people, without knowledge, by mere infallible intuition, the magic name of Hardy...

Early on the Thursday morning the wild rumour spread, incredible, yet believed. And at once the entire nation rushed into undoubting hope, gladly casting off its gloom, smitten with new and strange assurance of its high and worldwide destiny. And all the daily private business of life now, for the first time, utterly ceased, and men stood wondering to wait and watch the throes of Time, agape as though scribbled across the sky in Sanscrit of everlasting red they beheld the signature of God.

As for doubt, with rash faith they flung it quite away. In England — once more — were ships; and in England — once more — a Captain of ships.

At this thought a thrilling heat swept through the blood of every British being.

And there was a rumour abroad that, beside these marvelous battleships — nine, it was said, and more — there lay suddenly assembled that Thursday morning in the inner harbour of Portsmouth, a quite unaccountable crowd of *other* ships, Atlantic greyhounds, Norddeutscher

and Austrian Lloyds, Royal Naval Reserved Merchant Cruisers, prodigious four-masters, tenders, Scotch and Irish coastguard vessels, unarmoured cruising ships, transports, colliers, trawlers, wooden merchantmen of every build, thronging the harbour.

A great unseen ferment and movement, a wide business of preparation, unknown to the general mass of the nation, must have been going forward for many days. But to what end the concentration of all these promiscuous crafts? Clearly, not a fighting end 1

At eight, Hardy stepped upon the Dover Cross Wall; and is it to show how with the awful and momentous is mingled the grotesque, and how 'something infects the world,' there, before him, on the quay, stood a bowing, long-haired figure.

Hardy recognised him at once, and a sound of vexed impatience started from his lips.

Edrapol tendered his shrivelled card. Hardy did not take it. He said:

'I know.'

Edrapol was all bows. He said:

'I take this liberty, monsieur — sir. I find myself without a friend to make me a small service in this country...'

'Well, now, is it possible?' said Hardy.

'You refer to-?'

'To your frivolity, monsieur.'

Edrapol bowed.

'I am here in response to your letter, monsieur. Between gentlemen—'

'I have no *time* / Is it that you still wish to fight with me?'

'The question is explicit, monsieur — sir. Can you ask? Am I not here to make you a favour, since you were unable to present yourself with me? Such terms, between gentlemen—'

‘But you know, do you not, that it is not legal to fight in that way in England?’

Such a smile smiled Edrapol!

‘Monsieur-!’ he said reproachfully.

‘Well, come now, I will fight you,’ said Hardy suddenly.

Out swept Edrapol’s arms, and down curled his complying back.

‘But not to-day, you understand.’

‘To-morrow — perhaps — the deluge!’

‘I cannot help that, sir. You are, I take it, a great man for rules and ceremonies. Well, then, I keep you to your rules. It is not, I presume, a usual thing in your country to fight duels at a moment’s notice? Well, then—’

‘But, monsieur—’

‘No. I have no time. I am going away to sea to-day. If I come back safe, we fight at the first moment, as I promised. Even if you choose to meet me at my landing-place, which will, I think, be Dover, we fight there. You will easily find me; and I will provide you with a second, and everything. If I return at all, I shall be here by to-morrow week — nine days. I think that is not beyond the usual interval which one takes to arrange preliminaries, so you cannot complain. I cannot stay longer. Bon jour, monsieur.’

Hardy walked away, while Edrapol shrugged, looking after him. With the girl, Seward, Hardy proceeded to the Ship Hotel.

He at once wrote a letter to old Robert Mason, bidding, him come for the girl, recommending her to his strict surveillance, and making certain monetary provisions for her future.

He then despatched four telegrams: one to Portsmouth, announcing his coming; one to the Admiralty; a third to a i Dr. Fletcher of Harley Street, in these words: ‘Send at once the things promised to me on board *Hirosaki*’; the fourth to one Henrik Bjornson, a Norwegian, living in Parliament Street,

Westminster, in these words: 'Hope you will not fail to be with me by noon.'

He himself made his way without delay to Brighton, and thence onward by the coast to Portsmouth, arriving there shortly before eleven.

Looking abroad from the Hard, the Cumber, the quays of Portsea, the whole harbour seemed a mere endless tangle of masts and rigging.

By this time the four thousand gentlemen who formed Hardy's army of blue-jackets were distributed among the nine new-arrived ships of war, the rank and file partly furnishing their own former officers, and being partly officered by the remnants of the regular service.

The entire still-living crew of the *Iphigenia* — the 'Hundred and Eighty' — were borne in the *Hirosaki*, flagship.

We have not spoken of the doings of this gallant cohort subsequent to their departure from Far Eastern waters.

They had found at Hong-Kong some coal-ships which they loaded, and brought forward in their wake. Again they had stopped at Singapore, and doubling the Cape, steamed by night, near by the African coast, through the Straits of Gibraltar; the garrison on the Rock, at a loss as to their identity, concluding that they must be Italian.

They were well provisioned in proportion to their number, and well coaled; so, passing south of Sardinia, they steered northward to M. Dumas' uninhabited island of Monte Christo (which is some twenty-five miles distant from the nearest land), prepared for a lengthy stay, there being two or three coves and bays affording very good anchorage.

The steam-pinnace of the *Iphigenia* carried a small quick-firing gun mounted on a pedestal for'ard; and Hardy, on leaving his men, gave instruction that any craft which might come near enough to sight the fleet should be chased by the pinnace, and, if not captured, sunk. As a matter of

fact, only three small Corsican craft were captured, and their crews retained at the island.

Hardy himself left them in the *Conrad*, and at the d'Elbe contrived to make terms with the *padrone* of the Maltese *speronare* in which he reached England.

The *Conrad* he left behind, in order to serve as a despatch-boat.

Here, then, during some weeks, remained the Hundred and Eighty under the lazy Italian sky, shooting goats, and looking to their ships and guns. The Japanese whom they had with them they retained till the end of their stay.

At last, with glad hurrahs, they saw the ship, flying the agreed flags, which came to recall them; and on the fifth morning were at Portsmouth.

If it was true, as Hardy maintained, that it was men and not ships which fought a battle, the ships being only the tools of the men, then the *Hirosaki* was a great fighter. She was gallantly manned.

In addition to this, she was a wonderful tool: the largest effective-tonnaged ship that had ever been launched anywhere; the latest and most exquisite product of the Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company.

But with the fleet which we may call British collected at Portsmouth the resources of Europe were not wholly exhausted. Among them, arrived during the night, were four ram-cruisers, a large corvette, two ram-monitors, and five torpedo gun-vessels from the Netherlands, the remainder of Holland's armament having been caught by the Japanese, or being with her East Indian Navy; there were also three small Norwegian torpedo-vessels; also, the first question asked by Hardy at Portsmouth was this: 'No sign yet of the Spaniards?' There was none: the reason being that, as the entire home-navy of Spain left her by America lay at anchor in Lisbon harbour, together with some Portuguese, they had been attacked by a Japanese cruiser-squadron. Not one escaped without damage; yet, as the

Portsmouth force passed down Spithead, they were joined by a force of twelve sail, mostly small, consisting of torpedo gun-vessels, all unarmoured.

Thus in this new Armada, the Spaniard and the Englishman, in strange neighbourhood, fought side by side; this last answer of white Europe to yellow Asia being, as far as possible, unanimous.

There could be no doubt as to the day, or even the hour, of the final forward step of the yellow races. Already, at two of the previous night, it was known in London that incalculable masses of men had put off from Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, St. Valéry, Tréport, Dieppe, all along that coast, borne mostly in flats with single paddle-wheel astern, in French-barge fashion — the most elementary form of steam motion — requiring from eighteen to twenty hours to attain the nearest point of the English coast.

The front of this floating host must, therefore, be upon British soil at some almost calculable moment during the afternoon.

They were, as a matter of fact, retarded by an event which, though normal, came upon every one with the effect of a surprise: the air, which for six days had seemed settled in a thick stagnation, at about ten in the morning — moved. A sensible breeze sprang up from the N.W., driving the sea-surface in sharply-lined ovals before it.

And at once there was a slight lightening of the murk of the atmosphere.

Near noon a brief meeting of captains, summoned by Hardy, took place at Government House. He had little to point out, except that the battle upon which they were about to enter was with men of different, less nice, *morale* and training than ordinary European sailors — clever apes — islanders, yet real foreigners on board a western ship-of-war. He tossed his hand, and added: ‘It is true they are flushed with a consciousness of power,

gentlemen, and are greatly superior in metal and numbers. But that will not weigh too much with you.'

He also said that when definite orders went abroad on the impending of the contest, it was his will that his purposes should be explained by captains and commanders to every person in the fighting fleet.

He also said that they would be wasting their energies in this battle, unless one man, whom he had reason to think would be there, were killed or captured; and he himself undertook to discover, without fail, in which ship that man was borne.

Immediately a move was made by captains towards ships in the port, and a few minutes after twelve the signal 'weigh' went up.

At the same time a great bustle of preparation was taking place within the harbour itself. Dark smoke left particles of soot on flapping sail. A host of boats flitted to and fro. Never did Gosport, Portsea, Portsmouth, South-sea, and the forts around them, and the still harbour between them, hear so widespread a rumour of rattling chains and hurrying feet, and shouted God-speeds, and ordering voices.

Cumberland and Southsea Castle Forts hooted a volley of blessings and farewells as the war-ship fleet slipped down the flood-tide. A few minutes later the twelve Spaniards hove in sight.

The fleet was also augmented by the *Hero*, the *Nile*, the *Sfax*, the two gunboats taken in the battle of the Channel, patched up now, and three French composite gun-vessels captured during a Mediterranean battle.

They made up a respectable fighting-power: the nine ships being considerably the most powerful of the Japanese navy, and the *Hirosaki* the most powerful of ships.

Yet it was only the audacity of Hardy that would, with any hope, have led this force against, we will not say the weight, but the numbers, opposed

to him; and the havoc which overtook his comparatively little fleet in the battle that followed would certainly, had his judgment been absolutely cool, have been foreknown to him — or perhaps was foreknown.

Since the year 1892 Japan had placed orders with firms all over the world for a hundred and seventeen new ships, making an aggregate of some hundred and fifteen thousand tons, half to be completed by 1902, and half by 1906. At the period of this new programme, she already possessed a very respectable navy, and at the time of the outbreak of the European war, more than one quarter of the new ships were already in her hands.

Hardy therefore opposed a fleet of forty-three ships all told (only eleven being ships of a high class) to a fleet of one hundred and thirty-nine sail, including the Chinese vessels, mostly of extreme modernity, and high fighting power.

His main dependence at this time seems, as he said, to have been upon the comparative *morale* of the two crews. He* commanded a fleet manned, except for the Continentals, wholly by British gentlemen; the enemy were imitators, acquainted with tactics recommended in books, incapable, he conceived, of originating, incapable of combating originality. He guessed, too, that small as was his force, he happened to have a superiority in one weapon — not in general a very reliable one — the torpedo.

Perhaps trusting to one or both of these things, he contrived to give the impression (though it is questionable if he was as sincere as usual) that, on starting from port, he was without suspicion that he might now fail to account for Asia as he had accounted for Europe.

The breeze freshened, but the air, though lightened, continued murky; there was some difficulty in deciphering signals; and to facilitate messages by trumpet-call, the ships moved onward in close formation, the Dutch to the extreme starboard, the Spaniards to port.

Ten miles astern spread far the great mass of merchant craft.

Alone sat Hardy in the *Hirosaki* conning-tower, her flag-captain and staff standing on the bridge. The conning-tower stood on the after-part of the forecastle-deck, very strongly armoured, and communicating by a host of knobs, and an armoured tube, right down to the armoured deck, and every part of the ship.

In that hour, so great a travail came upon this poor, troubled soul, that he could hardly bear to live. Here was the Gethsemane of the young man. All the Care of earth burthened upon him; all the floods and the waters of Destiny passed over him. He groaned; the forehead that rested upon his hand sweated great drops. A year ago he had thought himself a simple Hampshire sailor-lad — and see, now, with the cracking thews of Atlas he must uphold the world! (Oh, if it be possible — if it be possible—’ This old cry of passionate agony rived through all his being. That he alone should bear the whole, he — one frail back; that *he* should be the ordained to shriek in solitary travail with the birth-pangs of the new Future that was to be, and be rent to shreds and atoms by the eruption of his monstrous offspring, this was piteous. To be a Saviour, it seems, is no light matter: the Redeemer from Hell must himself traverse the flames. At all events, the brain upon which what we call civilisation now depended was near to frenzy. That his toiling back could bear the horrid mass at all proved the dazzling splendour of the boy — but he writhed. The weight was strong: his sinews creaked. Also, in that hour of his gloom, his shattered nerves represented to him the world which he upheld as a world black, draped in crape. ‘Oh, if it be only possible...’ Again and again, in groan on groan, he uttered his agony of spirit, longing only to die, to die. And even as he longed, he sprang up briskly, and he rang:

‘Twelve knots!’

A little S. W. of Beachy Head the fleet was joined by the fast private yacht of a gentleman who was acting as scout. He went on board the *Hirosaki*, and was conducted before Hardy.

The Japanese fleet, he said, were on the way between the Somme-mouth and the Sussex coast, but very much spread out, not apparently expecting serious opposition, and steaming at the rate of perhaps four or five knots. A vast breadth of channel was parterred for league on league with masses of barge-like craft, which, if one might conjecture, were concentrating toward the narrow part of the Strait. Their progress was very slow; but some were by now certainly not more than nine or ten miles from the Kent coast. The gentleman had passed so near to one mass as to see through his glass a distribution of some sort of green pottage in one barge, and what looked like a fight between two Chinamen in another. He had not been fired at. The boats were incredibly overcrowded. He had heard, he said with a smile, that about 70,000 men were massed upon Hastings, and that forty Maxims were in position on the sea-front.

Shortly before four a scout of the enemy directed from beyond effective range the rays of two search-lights upon the British, and at once hasted back to eastward.

By half-past, the British made out a great bank of cloud to eastward. The breeze had now freshened to a moderately stiff gale from the north-west. For the first time for a week, hurrying dark clouds above were visible athwart a gloom of twilight. The sea was curling into fore-running hollows before the British stems, like backing pages, who, with bows and graces, usher in the visitor.

John Hardy's brain, and heart, and life was in his eyes. He glared through his glass like a famished wolf.

The bank of smoke quickly cleared; he could discern forms of ships — eight miles from him, a line abreast — and moving, it was clear, rapidly. Legion was their name. His eyes started and stared; he muttered with his lips.

He gazed for two minutes, crazily, hundred-eyed; then he * started, and hissed a swift ‘By God!’ Then he flew to the communications.

To be signalled to the fleet:

‘Keep speed and formation. Use no torpedoes in combat.’

To his own engine-room:

Full speed ahead 1’

The engines of the *Hirosaki* instantly quickened their throb and complex turmoil. She forged forward. Her best speed was nearly nineteen knots. She was like an ugly, stout island in a hurry.

The wondering question went pervading his fleet — was he about to fight the entire navy of Japan *alone*? Was he not rushing like the demented whom the gods destroy into the very mouth of hell?

The *Hirosaki*, we have said, was undoubtedly the best engine of war that was ever devised and built. She was armoured with Harveyed nickel steel, and her belt, which extended from stem to stern, was over eight feet in depth, and nine inches thick throughout engine, boiler, and magazine spaces. Now, above this belt, her side to the height of the main-deck was covered with 6-inch armour for a length of some 250 feet, enclosing two barbettes; while at each end of the belt there was a curved bulkhead fourteen inches thick between the armoured and main decks; so that a quite complete citadel, 250 feet long, was formed.

Her gun-casemates, moreover, were shielded both on the inner and outer sides, so that their crews worked under a protection almost ideal; while her

barbettes, circular in plan, were protected with 14-inch armour, rising to a height of 4 feet above the upper-deck.

With such a tool of war something might be dared. Nearer she went, ploughing in impressive, squat haste straight towards the middle of the interminable Japanese line; and while the rest of the British fleet were still beyond effective range, a sudden rain fell from the military-tops of two cruisers upon her decks.

The *Hirosaki* did not answer.

With ripped decks and annihilated boats, on she went, straining her engines, every egress from the stokeholds closed by the devoted men who toiled like salamanders in her depths.

Within two minutes from the opening of fire, a shell from the 32-cm. gun of the *Akitsusushima* (one of the two ships at the point where Hardy aimed to break the enemy's line) had burst through the shield of the fore-barbette, killed or wounded all its crew, and disabled the turn-table.

And now a horror of wonder and consternation spread among the crew of the *Hirosaki* — at her strange silence — at her frenzied adventure.

Where was Hardy? Was he stricken dumb? Was he dead? Was he dancing mad?

An ashen-faced London barrister in one of the port casemates of the 6-inch quick-firers on the main-deck gasped in a dry-throated whisper:

‘He is dead!’

And Brassey of Kiao-Chau, ashen-faced also, gasped in answer:

‘Bah! what are you talking about?’

The engines roared, the sea whitened, the *Hirosaki* walked grandly down an arcade of flame and smoke.

She had passed through the first line of the enemy between two cruisers, the *Akitsusushima* and the *Hasidate*, which she could have sunk by a mere

snarl of her broadsides. Yet she did not speak.

Before her came two more, the *Ten-rio*, and the *Takao*; and the two before and the two behind concentrated upon her their fires.

Every one looked to see her sink; certainly, it was only a question of moments — of how many moments the fire continued from such close quarters. The outward appearance of the ship, by the time she reached the second Japanese line abreast, was one of mere ruin and havoc.

The enemy were as astounded at her conduct as her crew. But in a few instants they knew — they thought that they knew.

Twenty or twenty-two cables behind the second Japanese line came a ship of considerable size, alone — that is to say, protected by the whole praeposited mass of her navy. Yet she was a ship-of-war.

As soon as the *Hirosaki* emerged from the world of coppery gloom into which she had passed, as it were, a living thing, to come forth, but for her central citadel and propelling mechanism, a dead — she turned her bows upon this ship.

The ship was the *Yoshino*; though powerfully armed, she was one of the ships called ‘unarmoured’; smoking over a map in her cabin sat Yen How.

Hardy had reached him! One well-directed shell, one happy torpedo, and, beyond doubt, the yellow host will be leaderless...

And now, at last, the *Hirosaki* talks; but she talks in such a sorry, effete, and slipshod manner, that a whole crowd of Japanese captains who are already hastening to the rescue of that one precious ship, laugh in their conning-towers. Was there ever such miserable aiming? such false sight? Not one of the shots takes effect. The *Yoshino* keeps on her way untouched. The rash *Hirosaki* has run that appalling blockade of flame in vain. And to complete her ignominy, immediately upon her first feeble effort, she turns tail, and goes blundering in defeated flight to the S.E.

She was evidently the flag-ship of the British, and the fact that she had reserved her fire in her passage through the fleet, and had then singled out, and fired upon, the *Yoshino*, proved to the Japanese that the British knew in which ship Yen How was borne, and that their one and only object in fighting now was the destruction of Yen How.

The one and only object of the Japanese must therefore be the protection of that one ship, the *Yoshino*.

It was in order that they might arrive at this very conclusion, that Hardy had made his awful passage through their fleet, had abstained from firing, — and had fired upon the *Yoshino*.

It was his design that the enemy should be, above all things, anxious to protect her. And he used the *Hirosaki* for the adventure, because he knew well that no other ship at his disposal could have continued on her way forty seconds through that flaming avenue.

But the on-lookers slandered the *Hirosaki's* crew in supposing them such very sorry gunners. The same mind which had bid them fire had bid them miss. The *Yoshino* was needed.

‘The *morale* of the fighters!’ With the most astounding precision Hardy seems to have divined it. How much of his mind the enemy would guess, and exactly where their guessing power would cease, he appears by some divine instinct to have known infallibly. A European crew, knowing the fame of Hardy, and observing his present fatuity, might have surmised some design, all the more appallingly rough and rude in its results, in proportion to its consummate depth. The Japanese simply read the surface of his mind, and were proud of their reading.

They-concluded that his main design was to destroy the person of Yen How — and it was — they were right. But his thoughts were as much beyond their thoughts as the heavens are beyond the earth.

He goes careering to the S.E., and three very swift cruisers that follow in chase he promptly sinks.

Yonder, at the front, the general battle has begun, and a sound breaks out like the sound of ten million rocks battering in rowdy degradingation down a wooden stair reaching from the moon to the earth. And see how, really, that is good for Hardy — native to the very temper of his mother's womb — the sole rough music in the universe which can make his large spirit *dance*! It would be hard now to recognise in him the gloomy, cowering, burdened wight, who, half an hour ago, groaned in the *Hirosaki* conning-tower. His exhilaration is boundless; his face is flushed. If it were possible, joy now would re-dye the hair which grief had blanched. Here is his element, his day — great *Thursday* — and he, once more, Saxon Thor, red-handed, swinger of thunderbolts, tosser of linked lightnings. The oil of gladness is on his head. He feels his arm, his soul, his ordination. He knows that he cannot fail.

He wheels: — the *Hirosaki*, left alone, is steering S. — S.W. — W. — then W. by N. What is left of the European fleet, thirty-five craft, most of them already gravely injured, have now changed places with the Japanese, they being to the east, the Japanese to the west of them. Both sides put their helms down to re-form and change. Only a solid phalanx of twenty ships remain in guard about the *Yoshino*, which is slowly forging ahead in her old direction.

The *Hirosaki* is signalling. The old starboard half of ships are to follow her in single file; the old port are to watch evolutions of *Hirosaki*, and follow suit on their side.

Immediately the *Hirosaki's* bows turn a little to the south of eastward. Nineteen ships follow her with bows a little to the south of eastward. Sixteen ships follow her with bows a little to the north of eastward. At the

utmost speed of the craft of lowest power they steam away in these directions.

The yellow men discern that the white are flying. Or is it not rather a mere feint to get at the precious, guarded ship? Yes, that is soon evidently it! for the two files of retreating ships turn south and north, and then in wide curves westward. The Japs are after them.

Between the Europeans are intervals of not more than six cables. The crowd of Japanese come two abreast, the nearest four about a knot astern of the two hindermost Europeans. The *Hirosaki* leads now the port European limb, the *Hero* the starboard.

The two hindermost Europeans in the two limbs are the Dutch corvette *Van Galen* and the British-Japanese battleship *Fugi*; these are the only direct combatants, and are using stern-guns. In three minutes the *Van Galen* dives, and the *Fugi* cranks and stops. The British force is reduced to thirty-three.

So far not a single yellow ship has sunk. Five, in the first charge, have been disabled, the rest only seriously injured by the destruction of unprotected crews. Hitherto they are victors twice and thrice.

They gain upon the retreating squadrons, The average of their speed is greater than that of the Europeans.

Suddenly, after four knots from the start, Hardy turns, and in a short inward curve comes back eastward. The starboard limb, with a short inward curve, follow suit.

And now it becomes quite clear to every one on his side that, whatever his design, he is accomplishing it at a murderous, a disastrous cost. For as the ships come back, they present a long line of broadside to a still greater length of Japanese broadside — at horribly close quarters; and in the sudden, exclamatory, almost momentary, outrage of hell-fire which bursts

from both sides, the ships sink fast. The gentlemen of England acquit themselves well; with precision, with tympana that do not quite burst, with brains that do not quite faint, with hands that do not fail. In that loud squall of wrath they send twenty Japanese and Chinese ships to their grave in the two limbs; and they themselves are nine the less. The Japanese can afford the loss. Not they.

And now, in a minute — so fast do they tear along — the hostile fleets are parted. The enemy, all very near together, go on through the evolutionary curves which the British have described, and come following eastward.

They look now for a rush of the British upon the guarded ship, ready to follow. But no rush comes. The British keep on their way almost directly east.

A rush will come. But Hardy intends it to come when the Japs are in a position to intercept and cut him off. His thought, his patience, is far beyond their divination.

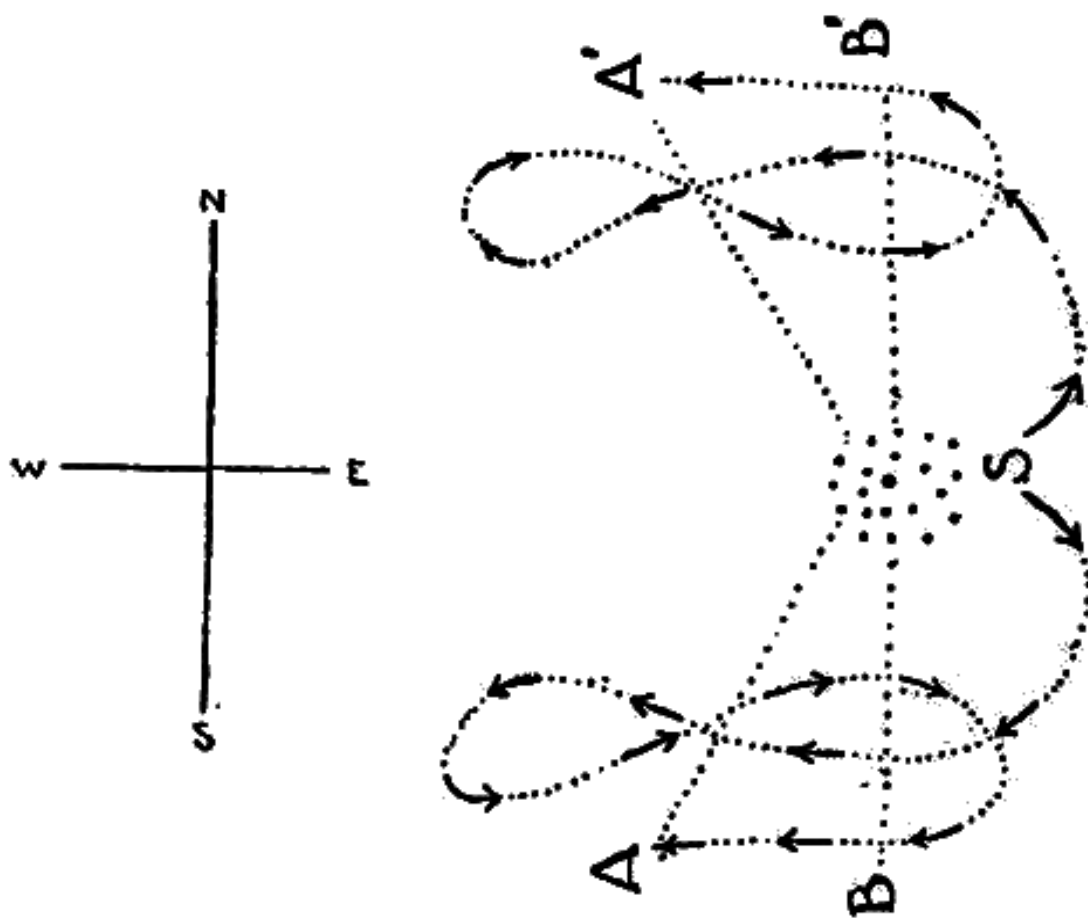
On he goes, leading them grandly through the mazes of that tragic, coiling minuet; and they follow, hasting gladly after him, triumphant, blind, fated.

The Pied Piper and his retinue...!

His ships sink one by one. He is aware of it with guilty disquiet. Will enough be left for his purpose? The falling out of each one by the way-side is to him like the taste of the second death.

The Japanese follow, not gaining ground this time, purposely keeping their distance, even increasing it, waiting for the next curve to westward, and the disastrous swift broadside.

And round again goes Hardy, wheeling outward, this time in a broader curve; and outward wheels his northern limb.



[The arrows in the diagram will show the course he took, S being the region of his start, and the dots in the central part representing the twenty ships round Yen How.]

And once again clatters the sudden, exclamatory outrage of hell-fire, bursting from both sides, and Hardy comes out of it leaving behind him four, and the Japanese seven ships.

But the numerical strength of Hardy's remaining ships by no means represents his real strength. He is far weaker than he seems. Twenty-two floating craft are still visible to his eye, but craft so broken and undone, that

he knows them incapable of further serious combat. Nearly ninety Japanese are as good for fight as ever.

Once more he is running westward, and the enemy, conscious now of easy victory, follow.

Westward — till his two foremost ships reach the positions marked A and A' in the diagram: and then hard to starboard races his helm. He goes driving sharp and straight with straining engines for the packed group of ships around the *Yoshino*.

This, then, is 'the rush'! But the Japanese ships, their foremost being at the position marked B and B', are nearer to the *Yoshino* than the British — are in the exact position in which Hardy, at the price of so much, has led them by the nose in long twining dance in order to place them.

What they will now do, he knows with certainty: they will cut him off. And, in fact, they turn sharply inward towards the precious, guarded ship, in order to intercept, and, with one unanimous battery of their entire navy, finish at once his small remainders.

And thus it has suddenly happened that the whole yellow fleet is packed into a mere bundle of ships whose crews can speak to each other, whose steersmen need be cautious to avoid collision.

And when Hardy sees them so, — herded together by his harsh and baleful forethought, — like sheep driven into the pen-fold, — he knows that the yellow wave is dammed, and the greatest of his works is accomplished.

He could shriek aloud with cruel glee. ...

Abroad roams his eye over the sea at his sinking and battered fleet. And as he looks he sees the foundering of the *Nile*.

And swift, with concentrated fury, the massed Japanese open fire upon his feeble residue.

At that moment the two limbs of the British are not more than three hundred yards from the front of the enemy.

And at that moment it is that an appalling, horrid, unparalleled thing is happening to the Yellow Men.

Hardy has signalled to his ships to launch among the crowding enemy every possible torpedo in his fleet.

His prohibition to use torpedoes in the combat had led his captains to expect some such final order. They were well ready.

The torpedo was, of course, the most deadly of the then instruments of war. If it exploded beneath a ship, *without fail* it destroyed her. But precisely the most deadly was also, in general, the most unreliable, of weapons. In general it might be counted upon to explode, not beneath an enemy's ship, but beneath a friend's, or, more likely still, beneath nothing at all. No serious tactician depended upon it.

In other words, it was not a good engine of aim at a given target, for it usually missed the target. Its course was more or less deflected by the waves — many things happened to it.

It was left to the eye of Hardy to perceive that its proper function was not one of aim at all toward a particular target, but one of loose direction toward a general mass. Under such conditions, it might be counted upon to annihilate in an instant all the assembled navies of the earth.

Prompt upon his order, the *restes* of his fleet, shattered as they were, were able to launch a ripping navy of nine more torpedoes than there were crowding Japanese and Chinese ships. The *Hirosaki* sent five: one from a bow-tube above the water-line, four submerged. All the other ships were ships with a varying number of tubes.

Three exploded in mutual collision before they reached the hostile fleet.

The rest arrived.

Men clapped and squeezed their hands upon their ears in expectant horror. The sea began to start, and rush, and quake. A swift series of venomous, behemoth bangs — *quickenning into ever madder swiftness* — and bawling at last into a steady brooding roar of passionate volleyed thunder that seemed to proceed from the very throat of Jehovah — rent the universal air, and split the hearing of all about that sea.

In London, men, three-eared, lifted a listing hand; far over Europe the rumour of it was heard; it was heard in Paris; it was heard in Brussels.

The British ships, shocked at each swift-recurrent detonation, jerked and started in convulsive throes, like dying fowl, upon the spasmodic, kicking water — started, and leapt, and dived, and foundered. And as though in response to some vast upheaval of nature, down upon the sea swept at once a passion of wind, and a furious rain, and a black and total gloom.

Wide over the ocean the floating millions of yellow men heard the staccato of that dread tumult. And many a one imitated and repeated the sound with his lips.

Pop, pop, pop, they went; and pop, pop, pop, they went.

CHAPTER XXXIII. THE 'CRIME' OF HARDY



IT IS NOT our business here to defend what has been called by leisured persons sitting secure in their studies the 'crime' of Hardy.

Napoleon, taking the 'Laws of Heaven' into his own hands, poisoned at Acre a number of his sick soldiers to save them from the hands of a cruel enemy. This, too, raised a cry, and was called 'crime.'

Another of that genus took upon himself to break the old Sabbath, and this raised a cry; but he did not mind.

Personally, we believe that the Great Man has, naturally and properly, these powers; that what he does is right; that the King can do no wrong.

Having cleared the sea of hostile war-ships in that world-tragedy in the Channel, Hardy found himself confronted with the problem of an army which was approaching a long line of English coast — not far off — an army which was not so much an army as a locust host.

What was he to do with them?

He could not set about and shoot them, for that, supposing he had had a large fleet, would have taken him a year, as Yen How said. Moreover, he had next to nothing to shoot them with.

Possibly he might, by spreading out his vast merchant fleet, armed with small guns, along the south-east coast, have kept them off till they starved; and this was supposed by his captains to be the course he would adopt.

But twenty million putrefying, derelict Chinese in barges floating at random in the Channel fair-way for the next year or two does not seem to

have been after his mind. And to starve them on the open sea ... even his pitiless heart revolted from that.

Or, they might have been driven back to France; or, seeing that they could not land on England, they might have returned to France on their own initiative. But Hardy did not wish them to return to France, thinking that there were already there a sufficient number of millions to engage the energies of his country for many a long day to come.

And so it happened that with the next morning's light — for at last something resembling a sun was seen, in spite of a furious gale of wind now blowing from the north-west — a strange, new spectacle, somewhere rather south of the latitude of Harwich, was seen — an immense multitude of ships covering the entire circle of sea, crawling painfully northward, each one trailing behind her a long line of barges crowded with men.

Hardy had the twenty millions in tow.

Not one had landed. To this diversion from their purpose they had made practically no resistance. If a Chinaman fired at the tug which came to secure his barge, the barge was promptly sunk by way of stern example. Most were unarmed with fire-arms.

For many hours during the afternoon and night of the battle they toiled by the aid of search-lights, the ships having rendezvous at the N. Foreland, where, at about midnight, they congregated.

And now began the long, toilsome voyage northward.

What made the sufferings of both whites and Chinese worse, was the fact that, from the first bleak sunrise to the last, a heavy wet sea was running in the direction of the gale, and the creaking and labouring ships continually drenched their length in spray shipped over the dipping bows. A monotonous, light rain fell from the 'dark-gray and hurrying sky; and wide over the heaving, stale sea-water rolled down stretches of foaming sea-

spume, as though the sea, sea-sick of itself, spumed the vomit of its bitter old unrest adown its own weary bosom. Through the cordage skirled in many tones the gale; and salt was in the weird sagas that it skirled, and salt on the drenched decks, and salt in the wet sea, and the world was made of winds and brine.

Ever and again, a ship staggered through every timber, and stopped, tugged from behind by a backward swing of her ponderous following. Then on, crawling, again.

Here the tail led the dog.

Ever and again, pop would go a stout hawser, and away would go drifting to the S.E. the lessening scream of a barge-load of Chinamen.

Northward, northward, in vast funereal procession. And far yonder in the van of all — the *Hirosaki*, shattered-looking, butting bulkily at the billows, as one who has seen worse things, — and come through them. In her cabin, which is crowded with wounded men, sits Hardy; and near him, in long colloquy, a man named Henrick Bjornson, a Norwegian sea-captain, who can shout broken English. What Hardy's deaf ears cannot make out, the man writes.

Northward crawls the unspeakable procession. It crosses the latitude of Hull, of Edinburgh; it approaches the Norway coast; it is at Bergen, at Christiansund. Always it crawls northward, and the *Hirosaki*, like the Pied Piper, leads...

On the Tuesday foreday, the *Hirosaki*, in latitude 67° 48', slackened speed, and, while the dawning was still gray and ineffably bleak, the stragglers of the fleet came in.

Hardy had reached the grave-side now — the side of the one grave which Europe offered him for the burial of his dead.

Here and now a very great stress and sound of stormy winds was abroad, struggling for the held-on hat', blowing long ribbons of rope, and rolling before it billows of the sea.

The *Hirosaki* trumpeted a semicircular formation, and this for about an hour, from ship to ship, went trumpeted, till it reached the outermost rings of ships ten miles away. And in another hour and a half the vastest curve of ships, stretching north-east and south-west, that had ever been seen by an eye — the horns looking like tiny toys to the centre, and invisible to each other — lay assembled, slowly steaming, or sailing close-hauled.

The morning lightened, but with ever a slow, and drear, and raw melancholy. It was the morning of an execution.

Hardy, with the flaps of an oil-skin hat about his ears, in oil-skins to his feet, stood clinging to a roping aft, facing the strong blast that loaded his breast with spasms of violence, and struggled for the ends of his flapping and quarrelling skirts. And near him, in oil-skins, stood a tall, broad-bearded man, the sea-captain Bjornson.

Bjornson touched him.

Hardy said: 'Well?'

Bjornson took out his watch, held it before Hardy's eyes, put his mouth to Hardy's ears, and shouted:

'It is time!'

Hardy said:

'All right.'

Already in the look of the water around, there was something horribly *outré*. It seemed as if the sea was getting calm — too calm for the wind that blew. It acquired a certain pallid oiliness in its heave.

Hardy called his trumpeter; he said:

‘Tell the captain of the *Umbria* that I want a hundred and fifty Chinamen taken on board his ship — at once.’

And down the wind went this command to the neighbouring ship.

And in ten minutes this other:

‘Ships to cast off barges, and follow flag-ship in same formation, west by south.’

At once the *Hirosaki* put her bow in this direction. The other ships, as their hawsers astern tightened on their new course, slipped them. A thousand hawsers slapped the sea.

The ships moved on. The barges remained.

But not stationary. They, too, moved — slowly — glidingly — right in the teeth of the wind — northward — all of them, over many a mile.

The barges fell into long strings, and patches, and colonies, like trailing sea-weed, always, as they glided, retaining their fixed relative positions.

The men in the barges saw surely that they moved. But what moved them? The crude early-morning blast blew upon their most woeful, fallow faces.

Their rate of motion, from moment to moment, quickened...

There was something now detestably baleful in the aspect of the water. The great waves had died to a glassy, heaving smoothness. Only, here and there in irregular patches over the surface, broke out stretches of vapid foam, or ghastly bubbles. And the ocean went gadding, gadding northward.

This is the first mood of the Maelstrom...

Then a wonder happened. A string of barges shot suddenly askew, and went wildly hasting in a long curve to the east; and another string shot askew in a western curve; and in not more than a minute a hundred thousand barges were flightily ranging in curves of every shape and

direction over the sea, flying a while — then slowly stopping — then flying off in new curves again.

Suddenly, all this motion ceased. The sea settled into a lake-like stillness, except for patches of bursting, simmering bubbles on its face.

But with the suddenness of the thunder-clap came a change. The surface rapidly assumed a morose hue of the deepest blue, a blue which was liker black. And at once it began to heave itself up into waves, mountain-high, which danced like the Merry-men in a swinging, oscillatory, up-and-down jig, as if buoyed up by some great submarine power which dandled, and tossed, and danced them. And down the steep sides of these cones of water poured the barges of the clinging, staring, screaming men.

But now again, suddenly, the mood is changed — and a ‘Voice goes forth over the waters, a doleful sound of the sea. The high dancing waves die down, and immediately an awful wide change is taking place — a rapid, intense reorganisation of the whole sea-surface — a breathless hurry and scurry of preparation for some unspeakable drama of the deep. There are tracts of black and choppy sea tumbling in roaring haste one way, and tracts tumbling like herds of ten thousand bellowing bisons another, as if flying across to take sides in some impending agony. And all at once the whole is over: and every wave, and eddy, and barge, and flake of froth slips into the sweep of one mighty, bawling, racing whirlpool.

Within the writhing uppermost ridge of this vast circumference, invisible under a fierce white wrath of shrieking spray, fly with a thousand wings the barges of the yellow men, fly on even keel, fly uplifted, spurned from the polished ebony of the dizzy basin of water. And as they fly, the storm smothers their gasping breaths, and lifts their hair.

And as their speed intensifies to the droning sleep of the spinning-top, their queues stiffen and rise horizontal like darting serpents; and twenty

million straight and fluttering pigtails, keeping ever their distances, race in narrowing whorls towards a bottomless, staggering well, a steep epileptic abyss, that yawns, six furlongs broad, within the central space.

Six miles away, his glass at his eyes, stands John Hardy, musing...

* * * * *

Opposite Christiansund, the *Illrosaki* and the *Umbria* were very near together; and here a change of crew took place; the entire crew of the *Umbria* transhipping into the *Hirosaki*, and one hundred and thirty of the *Hirosaki*'s crew going over into the *Umbria*.

These hundred and thirty consisted exclusively of 'Hundred-and-Eighty' men of Kiao-Chau fame.

It was a mysterious proceeding, incomprehensible to *Umbria* men, but readily comprehensible to some of the 'Hundred and Eighty.' These had sworn an oath.

On board the *Umbria* were a hundred and fifty Chinese.

Murray (he of the Diary) took over with him to the *Umbria* a small packet which he had received from Hardy's hand — which Hardy, in his turn, had received from a Dr. Fletcher of Harley Street.

The packet contained some hypodermic syringes, and three vials, containing a thick dark-gray liquid...

The *Hirosaki* then continued on her southward way; but the *Umbria* put in at Christiansund.

There, on the strand near the town, shortly before morning, they landed two of the hundred and fifty Chinamen. In the right forearm of each of these two men was a tiny needle-prick; and as they went walking toward the town, an ink-black spot appeared on their cheek, and a black froth ridged their lips...

The *Umbria* then continued her voyage, which lasted two weeks. She stopped at Copenhagen, at Koenigsberg, at Stockholm, at St. Petersburg. And wherever she stopped, she landed two Chinamen with black spots on their cheeks, and a black froth at their lips...

She continued her voyage. She stopped at Amsterdam, at Boulogne, at Bordeaux, at Genoa, at Constantinople, at Odessa, at seventy-five European ports. At each she left two Chinamen with needle-pricks in their forearms.

* * * * *

Well, well, Brassey,' said Hardy in the *Hirosaki* cabin, his arm flung spasmodically round the neck of Brassey, who had remained with him, 'well, well, boy. I was once — I was once — different from this—'

His arm dropped heavily. Then, suddenly, he pushed Brassey violently on the breast.

'Go away — go away — sir,' he cried.

And in an instant his arm dropped heavily again, his chin on his breast.

He was no longer sane. His hand was thicker than itself with brother's blood. His final hour of darkness and tragedy was hasting to meet his life. All his sky was an ink of clouds. Now again he tarried, cowering, in Gethsemane.

He no longer slept. Now he roamed the cabin like a wild man: now he sat still and languid, his head on his hands, his eyes having in them the senility of old people's. Every five minutes he bent double in paroxysms of moist coughing. Always the sailor, Brassey, was by him.

The *Hirosaki* arrived at Dover on the Friday evening at seven. A red brand of fever was then on Hardy's brow.

He was taken through the crowd in a close carriage to the Lord Warden Hotel. The news was flashed abroad that he had arrived, and all the bells of

England gladly lilted and welcomed his coming. Hardy could not hear them.

For him was neither joy nor sleep. Doctors were summoned, but Hardy would not see them.

He threw himself on a bed; but rose again and paced the chamber in shirt and trousers and socks to a late hour.

At eleven there was a ring. Brassey, who was in an anteroom, received a card at the door from a servant, but said there was to be no admittance of any sort that night.

Hardy appeared suddenly at the inner door of the anteroom; he said:

‘What is it?’

Brassey handed him the card, and Hardy- looked at it.

‘Ha! ha! ha!’ he laughed at once. ‘My friend Edrapol! Ha! ha! ha! Edrapol, my old friend!’

He had wholly forgotten Edrapol.

Behind the ruins of St. Mary’s Church, north-east of the town, at two that morning — they fought.

Here the strong, prone will of Hardy had asserted itself. He had insisted, and could not be withstood by Brassey. Edrapol’s second was a sailor from the *Hirosaki*, Hardy’s was Brassey; and the weapons used were *Hirosaki* swords of Japanese design.

A full moon shone. Yonder on the footpath leading from the East Cliffs waits a carriage, which has been coachmanned by Brassey.

It is a barbarous duel. There is no doctor there. Positively only four men are in the secret.

They take places, sword in hand, stripped to their shirts. The seconds take their places too. There are two Admiral Colomb ship-lanterns.

This is a duel without venom on either side. In one mind there is the mere prone desperation of an hour of tragic gloom; in the other a mere coxcombish pleasure at finding once more a sword in his hand, and an antagonist before him.

Only two hearts throb as though they must burst the imprisoning bosom — the hearts of the seconds. The hearts of the principals are cool, though Hardy's body burns with fever.

The moment comes. Hardy coughs; Edrapol waits. Then the swords lift and cross.

And now ensues a three minutes' contest between the most exquisite conceivable science on the one side, and the shrewdest, quickest wit on the other.

Briskly ply the complex, gleaming steels, with feint and thrust and parry, in tierce and quarte and staccado, stab and hew — to the infinite surprise of Edrapol, who finds here a man that can fight, and is glad.

He braces himself to the matter, Edrapol. He rises *a la hauteur* of his antagonist. But rise as he may, the fame of great Edrapol is henceforth stained, and his sleeve — with a thin trickle of blood.

He flushes somewhat, Edrapol. It is necessary, then, to *couper court*? He rises to a still greater height. Among the long white hairs of the famous man plays the night wind.

Then there is the sudden 'Ah-, ' and the limp failure, and the strong contrast of red on white, and the sword clattering to the ground. The steel of Edrapol is in Hardy's bosom.

The next morning Britain learned with woe and terror that he was wounded. He lay at the Lord Warden Hotel, and was unconscious; but as to the wound, it was not dangerous. So ran the bulletins.

But by the next night he was tossing in acute hyperpyrexia, and was delirious. Miss Isabel Jay had hurried to his side in almost crazy scare, and about his apartment waited two royal ladies. In one of the anterooms of the suite sat old Mason, stricken to death, swaying his decrepit body from side to side.

Half-hourly bulletins were issued by the royal physicians.

At one time during the second night, Hardy seems to have gone back in imagination to the period of his tortures, uttering fearful screams, and exhibiting signs of the most abject terror. But toward morning, he became calmer under the influence of opiates.

About noon, Miss Jay's hand being then firmly gripped in his, he said quite coolly:

‘A good strong coffin of Harveied nickel steel dropped into the middle of the Channel...’

And there stopped. Nor spoke again till some three hours afterwards, when, lifting up his right arm, he cried in a loud voice:

‘By the Lord, I warn you, Yen How...!’

After this the delirium appeared to leave him. He sank into a quiet sleep, which, however, was made ominous by a throat-rattle, and the venous transparency of his far-sunken eye-lids.

The nation waited on in a bitterness of suspense, humbling itself before the Almighty in anguished prayer for his life, *but* for his life...

But at seven in the evening the end came. Hardy suddenly woke from his feeble slumber, jerked his body upright on the bed, and as if in answer to some official summons and roll-call, screamed a sharp ‘*Here!*’ and gasped, and died.

His Calvary was not heroic — without ‘vigour and rigour.’

That the great man of England should perish by the hand of an impossible, very-foreign professional duellist, here was the very irony of Destiny. But so it was.

CHAPTER XXXIV. THE BLACK SPOT



WITH THE DEATH of Hardy the detail of our chronicle must end.

The results of his malignest act of enmity against the yellow race — results far surpassing in horror and vastness those of any of his other acts — he did not live to witness.

It is certain that he could never have expected so widespread a result from the distribution of the injected Chinamen about the European coasts, for the simple reason that he did not know of Yen How's inauguration of the Yellow Gods at Paris, which inauguration was the chief cause of the universality on the Continent of the new Black Death.

As soon as an idol-less Chinaman was griped by the malady, or even saw the black spot on a neighbour's cheek, his first instinct was to rush toward the one place of hope — the temple at Paris. And as he rushed, he went spreading far and wide that winged plague, that more putrid Cholera, dissipating it among thousands, who, in their turn, rushed to infect wide millions.

So within three weeks perished, it is said, a hundred and fifty millions. Europe was a rotting charnel-house.

But in three months the plague was over; and still England found herself confronted with the long, and sometimes bloody, and always tedious, task of clearing out of Europe nearly a hundred million yellow men.

The operations of the two main British armies were long and wearisome. One was led by Lord Wolseley in person; the other by Kaiser Wilhelm. (Wilhelm, having refused to leave the Fatherland on the Chinese irruption,

had been seized by the members of a conspiracy initiated by Fürst Bismarck; the gallant man had been brought over *bound* to England. He was afterwards given the command of the British force which had been recalled from Germany; and this he led with fine success.)

On every spot on the Continent where the British could get a board stuck up, there were boards, offering, in Chinese characters, safe-conduct back to their native land of all Chinese who chose to present themselves at certain ports. And even while the fighting went on, millions of suffering yellow men took advantage of this offer.

After all, John Hardy's idea of the extinction of the yellow man never came to pass. Hardy was wise, but Nature is wiser. The yellow man is in *the Scheme*:

And since God suffers him to be, He, too, is God's minister, And labours for some good...

But now, this one appalling fact arose upon the consciousness of the British people: that the Continent of Europe was British territory. This meant that all Asia and Africa were British too. And if Europe, Asia, and Africa, then, beyond doubt, America also; for no two Powers, one so vast, the other so comparatively small, could coexist side by side without a formal or informal acknowledgment of the suzerainty of the greater by the smaller. The sceptre of Britain, therefore, stretched from pole to pole,-and from the river to the ends of the earth.

How now would she comport herself, old England? Would her reign be mild, and golden, and millennial? Or harsh, and vulgar, and *triste*?

Here now was the chance for the rather minor poets of the time to break into measured prophecy, and, with a certain real authority, sing for the nation its august present, and suggest its future. And Mr. William Watson — the man-harp — say Apollo's lyre, without Apollo — he sang:

Now declare me, my love, my sibyl,
The Temple you foresee;
Its technic, and scheme, and glamour,
And the Fabric's summary.

So the lover sitting at the feet of his inspired mistress; and the mistress:

But the technic, and scheme, and glamour
Of the world they now shall use?
Like a purple bed of rainbows
En route with a Corinth of hues!

Like a dew of flocks on the hillside;
Or the flocks of dew at morn:
So harmless, various, off-sprung.
Like a King's Heir, tardy-born.

Like anything mild and pompous,
Like anything based and broad:
Like the ascent with which Sh'lomoh
Went up to the House of the Lord.

Like the minuet's sphere-rhyming,
So cultured, fated, gay;
Like the Voice of God in the Garden
When it walked in the Cool of the Day.

It is the Ergon of all the Ages,
And kin to all Works of Art;

It shall stand in the All-Museum
As Man's contributed part.

For Mr. John Davidson, on the other hand (Gilpin Pegasus-rider he, or say even Pegasus-Jockey, not unacquainted with falls), the throng and noise of martial things — Man's struggle before his triumph and rest — had charms; and, out at the spur of the war, he breaks:

Roll, rotary barytone!
Break up the camp of them!
Weigh now the ramp of them,
Marching to Marathon;
World-quake the tramp of them!

And he insists:

Wide, wide is the song of it,
Martyrdoms, doubtings,
Battle-words, routings,
Mix in the throng of it,
Jericho shoutings...!

* * * * *

But Ares, our man o' war,
O'er-flames us unequal,
Nor doubtful the sequel:
Hark! vague from the van o' war
Rave rumours of triumph...

But in the matter of prophecy, it was the poet, Mr. Francis Thompson, — Miltonic he, if not Milton, seeming sometimes to possess that rarest of human faculties, the power of expressing an idea (or ‘thing-seen-in-the-mind’) in few, wraithly words, suggesting magic — he, in a single line, struck the chief motive of the future. For he says, shortly before the war:

I had in dreams an omen of the Year,
And many shapes foresaw, and divers woes;
In earth and sky was storm — till one clear sphere,
Calm as the moon, arose.

I marked processions; runnings to and fro;
(One gasped his news, and died, arrived from far);
The torch of France, and England’s tramping slow;
And trumpets blown for war.

Then grided the fight — smoke-patched the champaign old;
The roving saddle trailed a gory smile;
And prattling brittle crackles broke and rolled
Far down the thin, red file.

“The people have forgotten God,” I said:
Frowns so superb, a war so vast, they showed:
The rocking nations, brazen-throated,
dread, Like Bulls of Bashan lowed.

* * * * *

A Comet in the East, hell’s search-light drear;
Eclipses boding Change; and divers woes:

In earth and sky was night — till one clear sphere,
Calm as the moon, arose.

* * * * *

Then one I saw who steered a boat of air,
A thing with helm complete, and valve, and sail:
He called: “To bring man nearer man I fare:
The gods up here — are well.”

This prophecy of the *boat of air* was quite worthy of a seer; for that — successful aerial navigation — was, as it turned out, the big matter, the paramount *motif* of the new century, utterly changing the relations of man with man, and, in fact, making Man a new creature.

When the journey from London to Pekin became a matter of a few hours, and a thing easy to each man, then Man, and each man, might be said, for the first time, to possess the earth.

The immediate result was the establishment, once and for all, of that sole basis of real national culture, and of real individual refinement — ÉGALITÉ!

Upon the practical annihilation of one sort of space followed the annihilation of other sorts of space — of the space, for example, between you and me.

Egalité! Victoria does not despise the Prince of Monaco. Both are independent sovereigns. The little prince does not kneel before the great queen: they are independent sovereigns. When all men were independent sovereigns, then came Culture, and the golden time.

A democracy of kings ... or, at the very least, of gentlemen...

The name of this democracy was — English?

The words France, Germany, Russia, persisted — but only for postal convenience?

No, certainly, that would never do — not in 1899. England, no doubt, *will* in truth, absorb the world; the Loadstone is within us. But we must change. If the world is to become English, the English must first become worldly. We will not, of course, do as we are — we are in such very shockingly bad form! God will not have his otiose, green world made into a great, base Factory. We are not wild and innocent enough, not simple and archaic and joyous enough. In England, there do not, at present, grow sufficient flowers to adorn a length of sceptre which could stretch across the earth.

Yet here is a question: how came that epithet '*merry*' to be applied to our vulgar Yankee-Roman England? *How came it?*

Is it not for this very reason — that all Man is embryo within us? Man the engineer, Man the conqueror, Man the ruler, Man the Puritan, Man the Greek, Man the Bacchant?

That Bacchant-Greek phase, certainly, is in a state of embryonism 'highly elementary'! Our Oxford professors do not crown their heads with vine-leaves — yet. The vine is not, in fact, an English plant. Yet, lo! one hears already that it is being grown with success in Wales.

Wales — note the locality. Great England! In her is everything. In her also is — *the Celt*.

This is what John Hardy meant, when, writing from Paris, he said that all which they had there we should have too, in time — and much more, much more. And Hardy was a lad likely to know.

England, indeed, is nearly as old as France. But not so 'precocious.' Just as the French ladies *fade* sooner than the English, so France has become a

modish, sprightly old dowager, while England is yet a bouncing, crude, coarse-handed lass in her teens.

The centuries are not ended; the years of God will unfold themselves.

On the whole, we here, looking up through the Night at the general drift of the stars, read for the earth a good Horoscope. We bet on Man. He is a right clever fellow — honest-hearted — well-made. We lay our money on *him* — to our last kopek, to our final obol, to our uttermost farthing — we bet it all on him!

His past is good — it is even brilliant. And somewhere within it there peeps and flirts a Secret, which, at certain swift moments of detective luck, shocks and dazzles and electrifies the soul.

We, then, for our part, believe, and cry aloud, and prophesy. Out of the Eater shall come forth Meat, and out of the Strong shall come forth Sweetness.

‘The gods up here’...!

THE END

Contraband of War (1899)



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DECK P. HOCKING LOOKED DOWN AT LAST UPON APPADACCA.

[To face p. 27.]

The original frontispiece

CHAPTER I.

A GENTLEMAN OF SPAIN.



DICK P. HOCKING weighed, stark naked as he was born, just thirty-two stone.

When he put his left hand behind his back, and cocked out his thick, short right leg at Wall Street, with the intention of sending the biddings up, and by hook or by crook of ‘getting there,’ you saw solidity. He was a sort of monument in flesh, conveying a tremendous suggestion of heaviness. He did not look like a man; he was like a Brobdingnagian paperweight.

His right leg was not really short, as we have said; he was, in reality, a tall man, only he looked squat in proportion.

His two jaws seemed to hang on his shoulders.

In addition, he carried a broad, thick beard, and above his superfluously large body a small bullet-head, flat behind, of which the hair was always cut as short as a convict’s.

His face was not an ugly one; it was only a distinctly vulgar one, like everything else about the man.

He was one of the shrewdest fellows in the world. Sometimes, early in the morning, he would leap out of bed, blow through a whistle in his bedroom, send his hoarse, rasping voice through a tube, and do a deal that would set New York and Throgmorton Street talking for a week.

When he took a dislike to a broker, to a fellow-speculator — and Dick P. Hocking was apt to take strange dislikes — it was, in general, woe to that

broker or speculator. He had once suddenly appeared on 'Change, and, off his own bat, sent up three months' fine paper 2 and a half per cent., for the purpose of smashing an operator who had unconsciously thwarted him in a Greek Monopoly deal.

It was admitted that the price of silver was a matter depending on the will, or the whim, of Dick P. Hocking. In Washington his backstairs influence was enormous; for who did not know that Hocking, at a critical moment, had thrown his huge weight into the McKinley scale, and that had it been otherwise, things might have been otherwise also?

This powerful man, for whom the world, like some golden (or silver) palace, seemed to have been specially built, had a thorn in the flesh. Other rich men, to show that perfect happiness is not for man on the earth, suffer from weariness, from anxiety, from disease. From all this Dick P. Hocking was exempt. But he suffered from the thorn in his flesh.

This thorn was called Immanuel Appadacca.

Immanuel Appadacca was a man whom Dick P. Hocking had never seen. Yet Hocking hated him worse than poison.

The man whom Hocking had seen, and whom for a long time he thought he hated, was Josef Campos. Then, quite suddenly, by a mere chance, he got to know that Campos, the visible, was only the hand, the agent, of Appadacca, the invisible.

So often had Hocking been crossed and whipped and outwitted by this unseen power, this mysterious *deus ex machina*, that at last it might be said that the one remaining object of his life was to destroy it.

Who was Josef Campos? Everyone knew.

Who was Immanuel Appadacca? No one could say.

The two known facts about Appadacca were these — that he must be fairly rich; and that he possessed the swiftest ship in which a man had ever

crossed upon the deep.

Now, it happened that, about six months before the outbreak of the war between Spain and the States, one Senor Canalejas, a Spanish Minister of Justice and of Finance, had come to the States, and in an interview with the President at Washington, had been told that the desire of America was to see an autonomous government in Cuba, and assistance given to the 'Reconcentrados' — though, of course, the States recognised the sovereign rights of Spain — nothing more.

The interview, however, got abroad. And the consequence of this hint of the President's was an immediate slight slump in 'Spanish' on 'Change everywhere, quotations going down from 57 and one eighth to nearly 55. And the next day Josef Campos was reported to be realizing largely in Mexican Internals, Peruvians, and American Railways.

To meet pressing liabilities? It was an inference!

Hocking snapped his doughy fingers.

Spanish bonds, then, were the weak point of Immanuel Appadacca.

It was not certain, but he was in the state in which men jump at conclusions. It was at least a hint of light in the absolute darkness which had tormented him for seven years.

He already possessed in Cuba considerable territories of tobacco and cane estates. And that night Dick P. Hocking slept in a Pullman, bound for Washington.

He plumped for war, or at least for a war-scare — and he had enormous power.

If he had not a right to determine how Cuba was to be governed, who had?

In the exciting months that followed down crept 'Spanish' on every Bourse in the world. They reached 45; they reached 40.

And the more Dick P. Hocking and a whole train of smaller men under his thumb plumped for war, the more isolated became the position of Josef Campos, and the more guessable his embarrassments.

But whosoever was the brain that inspired him, Campos was well inspired. On February 23, when the anticipation of trouble and the fear of dear money had already led to a heavy fall in high-priced securities, Josef Campos at three o'clock suddenly disposed of a large handful of South American steamships, which were promptly taken up by Hocking; and the whole of the funds realized by Campos were in half an hour invested in Argentine railways.

During the evening the news reached New York that a boat of the Rio-Buenos Ayres line had been mysteriously sunk — by Valparaiso buccaneers, it was said; and the immediate consequence on the opening of 'Change was a slump in South American steamships, and an unwonted activity in the land-traffic market. By the *coup* Campos realized two millions, and Hocking sunk five, and took it badly.

It was anticipated now that Josef Campos would not hesitate to dispose of the evidently large amount in Spanish bonds which he held. These were daily sinking lower, and it was assumed that so shrewd an operator, seeing the heavy selling from Paris, and probably himself in touch with the Spanish Government, could not remain blind to the rotten financial position of Spain. But Josef Campos sold not a single Spanish bond.

'Suppose I believe in them?' he said to a financier friend, who wondered at his pertinacity.

'But—'

'I have that right, you know. Every man must judge with his own eyes. Besides, I am the servant of another.'

‘Ah — in that case. But could you not advise your chief of the patent facts?’

Campos smiled. He was a tall, thin man, with a brown face and silver-white close-cut hair, though he had not reached middle age. His beardless face was handsome, his manners distinguished, his eyes dark-blue and restless.

‘No,’ he said, when his smile was over, ‘I never advise my chief.’

Yet in his heart he was anxious: confident, in the long-run, in the unfailing brain on which he relied, but anxious for the near present. Again and again, by the receipt of secret information, for which it was impossible for others to account, he was able to startle the market during February, March, and the beginning of April, with successful deals. And yet he was like a man whose backbone is touched with disease — as a financier, he had locomotor ataxy.

‘Spanish’ was his backbone: and ‘Spanish’ was going, going.

Then he did what he had said that he never did, *he advised*: and he received an answer which he remembered to his dying day.

The next day he received a message from the ex-Queen Isabella, stating that, on the Spanish side, war had definitely been decided upon. This was on April 12. Heat once sent the information to Appadacca.

Appadacca wired:

‘You are very simple. Please discover date of sale of land on Guiana-Venezuela frontier by Calvos. Want to buy. Make private offer.’

Campos knew that the vast piece of ground in question was in the market, or would shortly be; but he rubbed his eyes. The land was of no present value, it would require many millions of money to develop its resources; even if his chief was able to purchase, his fortune was in no condition to be ‘plunged’ in wild speculations of that sort.

But he did not hesitate. He at once attended at the branch firm in Brooklyn, to hear that the Calvos would in no case part under 5,000,000 dollars; but probably would not part at all except by way of public auction. However, the branch telegraphed to the head firm at Caracas that an offer had been made by Appadacca. And by night Richard P. Hocking knew of it.

Now, Hocking had no conception of the motive of Appadacca in aiming at the acquisition of this particular tract of ground; but he knew two things: that Appadacca had never yet, on any single occasion, allowed himself to be out-bidden in any object which he desired; and he knew that the business concern represented by the names of Campos and Appadacca must fall, if pushed.

He determined to bid, to push; it was of no importance to him how high. For the money sunk he even had a plan how to recoup himself.

He was a connoisseur in ships, was Dick P. Hocking. His thousand - ton composite yacht was a luxurious thing, capable of twenty-three knots, and good for the eye to look upon. But she had been designed by hirelings, and the *Huelva*, which he had once seen in Boston harbour, had been designed by the brain of Immanuel Appadacca.

This ship had seemed to him dainty as a tender lily looking up in surprise at the world from the water-side; lying at anchor in the sea, she conveyed the impression of a young doe the moment before it starts, affrighted, into running.

To put his hands into his pockets, and bulge his broad hips into a greater breadth on the deck of that ship, Dick P. Hocking thought would be a good thing.

And there were precious few things in this world desirable in his eyes which, in the long-run, he did not possess.

He brooded so continuously in secret over this whim that in the end his eagerness to walk the deck of the *Huelva* took equal place with his eagerness to crush the man who had so often cost him dear.

But though on pleasure he was bent, he had a frugal mind. War was coming; whoever else did not know it, *he* knew it very well. America wanted ships, and was buying them; and how good a thing would be the *Huelva* to America in that day! He reckoned on his fingers the millions which she would fetch.

He would charter her to the Government, he promised himself; he would not sell her.

He made a bid by telegram of six millions for the Venezuela-Guiana territory, and this lay for some days on the files of the firm of Calvos.

He had had many friendly relations with the firm, and now, guessing his motives, they did him a good turn — and themselves also. They telegraphed that bidding was likely to be brisk; that it was rumoured that Immanuel Appadacca had suddenly appeared at his castle among the mountains west of La Guayra. He was likely, therefore, to be present in person at the auction; so that nothing less than the personal presence of Dick P. Hocking, or of a fully authorized agent, in the auction-room, would be likely to secure him the territory in question.

Hocking looked about him, rushing through a limited area of New York in quest of certain knowledge. Had Campos sold any ‘Spanish’? No. At what were ‘Spanish’ now? As low as 38. Had he time? Yes — he had even two days to spare.

He telegraphed to the *Union* at Raleigh Bay, and on alighting from his train at St. Augustine in Florida, met her there. That ponderous bulk could travel, being light and full of motion.

And now events developed rapidly.

First, there came the settled conviction of the public that nothing could avert war; active preparations began in the States, mobilization of troops and militia, registration of volunteers both for army and navy, and the purchase of ships; then the squabble between the Houses; truculent and imperious messages from the President to the Spanish Government; the break-out of a definite war-fire in long-sleeping old Spain; then the resolutions of Congress; and the signed ultimatum.

‘Spanish’ fell to 37 and one eighth.

CHAPTER II.

IMMANUEL APPADACCA.



IT WAS TRUE that Immanuel Appadacca was at his Venezuelan château.

He was writing a Spanish madrigal in an apartment overlooking the sea at three in the afternoon of April 20, when an ivory card, scribbled with the words, 'The *carrosse* awaits your Excellency,' was dropped through a slit in the porphyry wall upon a table near his hand. He glanced at it, and continued to write.

Here the hot sweltering sun came in in mellowed rays through blue and scarlet-tinted glass, making tolerable to the eye the blaze of splendour with which the apartment was adorned.

From the gaudy mosaic floor to the torrents of copper - coloured draperies that rolled in thick luxury from the entablatures, and the hundred ornaments of gold and ivory and malachite that crowded the not large apartment, there was poured forth a suggestion of princeliness that bewildered the imagination. A soft sound of music, the source of which was not visible, breathed through the apartment.

Far below lay, glittering in bright sunlight, a sheltered bay, readily accessible to the château by steps cut zigzag down the cliff side.

In appearance Appadacca was one of the most striking of men — pallid, with ink-black hair, but under the pallor a certain suggestion of duskiness which could not be readily fixed and described. Some remote ancestor had,

in fact, been an Indian squaw, and this trace, mingling with the highest caste of the blood of Seville, still informed his wan visage.

He was rather below the middle height, with a well-knit, compact, erect figure.

The whole man was extremely finely wrought, beautiful in a high degree. Of his face, in moments of perfect calm, the riveting feature was the lips, well-chiselled, pale, and marble in the firmness of their pressure. When he spoke, it was the eyes that caught the attention: they lit up into a species of flaming dominancy.

He had been left rich on the death of his father, but, tiring of a life spent wholly in seclusion and study, he chose to direct from his various palaces about the world what was known as the House of Campos.

In character, in thought, in aspiration, he was intensely Spanish.

At his name, the Queen Regent, the people in the inner circle of the Court, the Ministers, smiled with a certain mild indulgence. His ideas, like the ideas of all men somewhat above the crowd, had in them a savour of wildness.

The question which puzzled him always as a boy was this: *Why* was not Spain great among the nations? She *had* been!

She had still all the elements of greatness within herself — a large home-territory, rich in the good things of the earth; her sons were proud and nimble and brave; they had over-run and dominated the world. Yet now Spain had become a byword, a synonym for weakness.

Afterwards, he definitely fixed the origin and secret of this tragedy: Spain had been first made great, and then destroyed, by one of her own sons — Columbus.

He had discovered America, and old America had made Spain the mistress of the world, and new America has made her its reproach.

He saw clearly how this was so: Spain, in reality, was a maritime power, a colonizing force. To her, whose sceptre once stretched over the earth, and whose sons gave their names to continents, there now remained Cuba and the Philippines.

Still, from the Rio Grande del Norte to Cape Horn, all that great world of Central and South America was, in feeling, Spanish, or Portugo-Spanish — in feeling, in speech, in habit, in instinct.

And at the thought of the ultimate destiny of that great continent, even when a boy with ripening thought he shuddered.

Instead of beautiful old Spain of the hidalgos, the Monroe doctrine; instead of the mellow and musical reign of great Ferdinand, the encroaching paw of Dick P. Hocking.

Absorption of the beautiful by the ugly, slow but sure — this was Destiny.

Later on he began to find pleasant the dream of a greater Espana, strong at home, and once more a continent abroad. The dissipation of the little republics of South America, and their aggregation into one vast flourishing Spain — it became his vision.

He had seen all the world. His learning, his beauty, his gaudy and mysterious way of life, had made him a chief figure at courts, at masques, in secret cabals, in the conclaves of revolutionists. From China to Chili he had investigated the world: and nowhere had anything struck his imagination as being so beautiful as Spain, or as being so ugly as— ‘the States.’

The passion of his youth was for the beautiful; its detestation was for the ugly.

Though a Spaniard (Venezuelan by birth) his motive was not patriotism. It was something greater — his ideal of the beautiful.

He conceived that nothing whatever was of half so much importance to the actual world of the nineteenth century as the conservation of the small residue of the humanly picturesque which remained to it.

When the Venezuelan dispute arose, he bitterly resented the interference of America; England encroached, but the United States encroached still more in raising her voice to check the encroacher. She had, he thought no right to raise it.

The outbreak of the Cuban War opened his eyes to one fact — that the chief misery of Spain was her impecuniosity.

Poor nations can no more command the respect of their colonies than poor men of their servants. Cuba broke from her leading-strings mainly because they were fustian.

And now his vague dreams all at once froze within him into definiteness. What was wrong he saw; and how it could be remedied he saw also.

At this time he devised the *Huelva*.

She was a craft of 12,500 tons, of steel and wood, having a belt of Harveyized nickel-steel, as though made for the express purpose of warfare.

During the period of her building, the ship had been what she was destined to continue — an enigma.

Was she a yacht, or a ship-of-war? While she lay upon the stocks in the Union Ironworks of San Francisco, this had been the question of rare privileged sightseers.

The vague answer to these questions was that she was ‘a composite vessel,’ designed in person by a Venezuelan millionaire for his private use.

Some, looking at her lithe sheer, her entrancing suggestion of swiftness, said ‘yacht.’ Others pointed to an armour belt six feet deep, and three inches thick; to five torpedo-tubes — one in the stern above the water-line, and four below; to the complete armoured deck at the water-level extending

from stem to stern, two inches thick on the flat part, five inches thick on the slopes; and they promptly said 'sloop-of-war.'

For the rest, she was constructed on the usual system of double-bottom, connected with watertight flats at stem and stern, thus extending the double-bottom to the extremities of the ship.

If there were no visible guns, there were, at least, visible on her main deck eight casemates, and on her upper deck six, armoured with six-inch nickel-steel of the size usually constructed for carrying four-inch quick-firing guns, and fitted with the usual dismounting and stowing gear.

As to these casemates, a singular contrivance had been adopted. They had been made watertight on the inner as well as on the outer side. The men, therefore, who crewed the possible guns would be protected from explosive shells; and also, should a gun-post get damaged, between-deck spaces would be insured from the irruption of water.

There was no part of the ship upon which the minutest forethought, the adroitest cunning, had not been lavished — and with forethought and cunning, wealth.

Upon her engines, above all, an extravagance of care was expended in their manufacture, in their adaptation. The boilers, twenty-two in number, were of the latest type of Belleville, and the engines triple-expansion, driving twin screws. The thickness of deck over engines, boilers, and magazine-spaces was doubled.

On the day of her launch she lay upon the water a unique thing.

She combined the formidableness of a battleship with the buoyancy of a duck; she was the last triumph of shipbuilding; in the same entity was the lightness of foot of Asahel and the strength of Samson; she was force wedded to frivolity.

There was something almost secret about her building; there was something mysterious about her launching; there was something bizarre and unguessable about her movements.

She was manned by a crew gathered from nearly every region of the globe, gathered by Appadacca himself, and gathered under circumstances the most unexpected, the most outré. One of her stokers was a Chinaman, condemned to death for murder in Pekin, for whom Appadacca had purchased a substitute; another of the crew was a Cockney street gamin who probably owed his rather enviable position to a pair of brisk blue eyes; the captain was a Maltese Mediterranean coaster, a rough man of little education, yet a born sailor, who had fought side by side with Appadacca in a village fray among the Western Sicilian mountains; the first lieutenant was a nobleman of Andalusia, royally connected, poorer than Lazarus, prouder than Lucifer; three were Chilian contrabandists, chosen each of them at a different time, under quite different conditions, with varying motives; there were many races, Irish, Peruvian, half-caste, Catalan, Basque, Arab — but there was no American.

The only hint of nationality on board the ship was to be found in the fact that the predominant language was Spanish. By such men as those called by Appadacca from the world a language was readily learned.

The Cockney and the Chinaman swore at each other in Cockney and in Chinese, and obeyed in ‘the language of the gods.’

Could anyone have looked into the hearts of this crew and seen how there the image of one man lay enshrined and worshipped, he would at once have arrived at some sort of conception of the strong personality which swayed them.

The movements of the ship, as of her master, were incalculable. At the hour of the blowing up of the *Maine*, the *Huelva* lay, without her master, in

a creek outside Havana harbour; and half an hour after the explosion steamed away. Since then she had appeared neither in Spain nor at Taranto, where Appadacca owned a palazzo, nor at Venezuela.

Sometimes for weeks Appadacca buried himself in the gloomy luxury of a cabin, where a shimmering fleece of liquid-looking cloth-of-gold carpeting the floor mingled with paintings of David, and the uncouth grotesques of old and the chaste carvings of Greece, in a rich bizarrerie of pomp; his presence on board being at such times known only to the greater part of his crew by mouth-to-mouth rumour. Sometimes, again, she cruised for months without him.

Suddenly, on the very day when General Woodford left Madrid, and, at Washington, Senor Polo de Bernabe applied for his passports, the rumour spread through Caracas and La Guayra that the *Huelva* was lost.

It was the day when the stretch of land contiguous to the boundary line in dispute between Britain and Venezuela was to be disposed of at public auction by the Calvos. Some hours before the sale it was said that the wreck of the ship had been seen upon some rock-islands a long way down the coast, near Cumana.

The details were explicit; the news was eagerly discussed. If it were true, dark clouds must overshadow Appadacca's sky. Spanish bonds were at the lowest quotations yet reached.

Sharp at four the auction was timed to commence; and as the clocks struck, the buzz of the crowd in the room died suddenly into perfect silence. Appadacca entered.

The place was full, many people having come merely to get a sight of the face of this man. It was a third-rate apartment at the back of the Calvos office, without flooring or furniture, save a chair by which the auctioneer stood, and a table with writing materials.

It was a picturesque, somewhat squalid, gathering of men, quite Spanish-American in character — sombreros, ponchos, hide - boots, colours, dirt.

Appadacca wore a tunic of very thick plushy dark-blue velvet, with rough woollen stockings, and a wide hat, pinned with a dagger of gold, the rim rather concealing his face.

On his entrance the sale began without delay.

The auctioneer, in a hurried way, read out the specification, ending with the words: ‘And now, gentlemen—’

By the side of the table stood an old man, the head of the firm of Calvos, and near him Appadacca, holding in his hand a bundle of script and title-deeds.

A hoarse, rasping voice was heard:

‘I offer seven million pesos.’

Appadacca slightly nodded towards Senor Calvos. He said:

‘Eight.’

The crowd parted into a wide lane for the passage of a great bulk of flesh which now moved forward into the small open space. The eyes of Dick P. Hocking looked down at last upon Appadacca as from a citadel.

Hocking said:

‘Nine.’

And Appadacca said:

‘Ten.’

Both were apparently calm, except that Hocking’s chest and abdomen heaved somewhat largely in the taking of his breath. Appadacca, as he callously raised the bid, figure by figure, in the merest whisper, examined one after another the papers in his hand.

Hocking put his left hand into the pocket of his loose, enormous trousers, and he cocked forth his short-looking, ponderous right leg, and, fetching a

breath from the gulf of his abdomen, he said:

‘I offer eleven million pesos.’

And Appadacca, turning his leaves, in the merest whisper said:

‘Twelve.’

‘I offer thirteen million pesos,’ said Dick P. Hocking.

Appadacca turned over the leaves of paper in his hand. There was a pause. He frowned a little. He said:

‘Fourteen.’

‘I offer fifteen million pesos,’ said the emphatic, self-sure, gross voice of Hocking. With every bid his stuck-out right leg seemed to lift a little, and his huge body to come an inch more forward.

There was a pause again.

‘Fifteen million pesos,’ said the auctioneer— ‘fifteen million. Is there no advance?’

Appadacca was very closely examining his leaves of paper now. His head bent over them. An eight-sided clock, hanging by a ring on the board partition, ticked half a minute — a minute.

‘Sixteen,’ came from Appadacca’s lips.

‘I offer seventeen million pesos,’ said Dick P. Hocking, heaving his mountain of flesh yet an inch nearer.

These were huge figures. The roomful of people were on the very tiptoe of excitement. Spain and America were on the point of war; and here, they had a sort of idea, were Spain and America ominously fighting out the big warfare in little, just as the old kings used to decide the issue between two armies by the single combat of two chosen champions.

Which would win — ugly, strong, nineteenth-century, Saxon Dick P. Hocking, with his encroaching, ponderous right leg, or picturesque, dainty,

small-handed, Latin Immanuel Appadacca, turning the leaves of his papers with the dreamy old air of a medieval student of Salamanca?

Certainly Hocking seemed the favourite of the gods. Appadacca now was looking too closely at his papers. Was he not — hesitating?

‘Seventeen million — going at seventeen—’

‘Eighteen,’ said Appadacca.

Down came Hocking’s leg an inch nearer.

‘I bid nineteen million pesos for this property,’ quoth he.

And as he said it, Appadacca smiled.

He made a sign to the auctioneer that the bidding was not over, and at once he stepped up to old Calvos, the head of the selling firm, ‘You, I think, are Senor Calvos?’ said Appadacca, not even careful to lower his voice to a pitch inaudible to Hocking and the others near.

‘Yes, señor,’ said Calvos.

‘Then I can speak to you and he smiled with ineffable condescension. ‘The parcel of land which you are selling it is my whim to possess. I have now, however, it seems, bid my entire fortune — securities, châteaux, bric-a-brac, even the value of my horses. There is nothing left, señor, except one thing — my yacht, the *Huelva*. I offer to bid two million pesos more, on the understanding that you accept the *Huelva* at that sum, should no higher bid be made.’

‘But — señor — the *Huelva* is — on the rocks!’

‘She is afloat, señor.’

‘She is wrecked!’

‘She is now steaming toward Caracas at the rate of twenty-seven knots an hour, señor.’

‘Can you believe that, señor?’

‘Yes, señor.’

‘But have you not, then, heard the report?’

‘Ah yes — the report. The report is not a true report. The report has been spread abroad by that person, for his own purposes.’

He barely indicated Hocking with his head. Dick P. Hocking was like stolid wood, waiting.

‘So you believe the *Huelva* is afloat?’

‘Yes.’

‘But with what motive could anyone—’

‘You are not so simple, señor! With *this* motive: that, in case I should be compelled to offer her as a bid, the amount of my bid might be as low as possible, since I should be bidding a risk.’

‘Is not the *Huelva*, then, insured?’

‘No, señor.’

‘Well, suppose I accept your offer, señor — say two million pesos?’

‘You will do well, señor. She cost fifteen millions. She is worth fifty. And she should be steaming into Caracas at this moment — she *is*, in fact.’

‘Well, it is agreed. You have the papers with you? And you will hand them over immediately, if the bidding falls to you?’

‘Precisely so.’

‘And there are no tedious formalities? The *Huelva* will be ours on the spot? The papers are duly regular?’

‘There are no formalities. She will be yours — as far as she can be anyone’s other than myself, señor.’

‘What does that mean, señor?’

‘It would be long to explain, señor.’ He smiled. ‘May I now bid? I bid—’

Before he could name the figure, there arose a bustle, a pressure, and a hubbub at the door; and a moment after the whole crowd of loiterers broke

into involuntary cheering. Two idlers of the town had come running with the news that the *Huelva* had just dropped anchor in the bay.

For three minutes nothing could be done. The room was a babel of tongues.

Dick P. Hocking shifted his quarter-ton weight from one leg to the other. He was embarrassed.

That Appadacca would now part with his ship for two million pesos was not to be expected. So far the Yankee's scheme had failed.

Old Calvos's face wore a look of dogged shamefacedness.

'So much the better for you, señor,' he said to Appadacca. 'The *Huelva*, then, is here.'

'You said, señor—'

'So much the better for you.'

'Really? How? I do not see your meaning.'

'You will now, of course, demand more. Oh, I do not blame you!'

Appadacca's lip assumed the faintest curve of contempt.

'I demand nothing, señor. I had already arranged.'

'Oh — ahem! — well, that is only what one would expect from a gentleman. Yes. You adhere, then — ?'

'Yes. May I now bid? I bid — twenty-one million pesos.'

Then there was silence.

The auctioneer looked at Hocking. Hocking looked at the ground. With an arm the size of most legs he made a slight deprecatory wave. The hammer came down.

The land was Appadacca's.

But the ship was Hocking's!

For, half an hour after Appadacca had handed the title-deeds to Calvos, Calvos handed them to Hocking, receiving in return a cheque for fifteen

million pesos, and thus clearing thirteen millions by the deal.

Dick P. Hocking stood for an hour at the very end of a small jetty projecting into the bay, and his hands bulged his pockets. Not once did his gaze shift from the *Huelva*, lying there like a painted ship upon a painted ocean. She seemed to him like a doe the moment before it starts, affrighted, into running — and she was his!

He jerked his head sideward at her as he turned to leave the jetty; and he said:

‘I guess you are the kind of hotel that will put up Dick P. Hocking to-night, my girl.’

At seven he was sitting at a gleaming oval table made of walrus-tusk arabesque in ebony in the cabin of the *Huelva*.

Man after man of the crew, one by one, two hundred and eleven, came up to him as he sat there; and from a hand-bag crammed with Venezuelan gold pieces he paid them off, adding a month’s salary in lieu of notice. He possessed at times a certain large generosity which even his enemies could not deny him; and till eleven in the night he was engaged in this task. Then, weary, he was led down three corridors to Appadacca’s chamber; he turned on the azure-blue jets of electric light; he undressed himself; he drew on a suit of voluminous silk pyjamas that would have fitted an elephant; and he threw himself on the most luxurious bed of which he had ever dreamed. One by one he had warned the crew that by nine, at the latest, the next morning they must have left the *Huelva* to their successors.



At the moment when Dick P. Hocking began to snore with the vibratory resonance of a trombone, Immanuel Appadacca, at his chateau ten miles away, in Tunisian slippers, gold-embroidered, softly opened a door. He had in his right hand an antique gold candlestick, and to the shade of crimson silk which mellowed the light he added the shade of his left hand.

In an alcove, concealed by tapestries of black and crimson velvet, was a bed. Appadacca laid the candlestick upon an ottoman, and with exquisite caution drew aside the draperies. In the alcove on the bed lay in careless sleep a female.

She was a girl of seventeen; her bosom was half revealed; her masses of absolutely black hair lay far in vagrant largesse over the bed and pillows.

He looked at her a minute; he stooped; he touched her forehead in the lightest caress with his lips. As he did so, he breathed the word ‘Good-bye.’

Turning to move away, he glanced upon the lithe sleeping form again, and smiled faintly.

‘Little Lola,’ he said; and, again, he added, ‘Good-bye.’

He let the curtains fall together noiselessly as he passed out, and, with the light, went walking rapidly through the house.

In one chamber he selected a key from a bunch which he carried, and opened a cabinet. From this he took two cylindrical objects of the size and shape of an ordinary ruler.

He then ascended a narrow wooden stair to the flat roof of the castle. It was a luminous tropical night, the vault rich with stars; no moon. Appadacca looked abroad for a few minutes — over the mountains above him, down into the gloom of the still bay. The roadstead of La Guayra, on which lay the *Huelva*, was invisible to him.

He had with him a box of coloured fusees, and striking a fusee, he applied the flames to one of the two objects taken from the cabinet. Spouts of bluish sparks began to fizzle and shoot upward, and in another moment long ribbons of bluish flame went aspiring skyward from his hand, to burst in a cataract of bluish glamour three hundred feet above his head.

He put down the burnt-out rocket, and at once applied a flame to the other; and this time the night was lit up with a vermilion glow, ribbons of vermilion flame, and a bursting cataract of vermilion glamour in the sky.

It was a signal to the crew of the invisible *Huelva* lying in La Guara roadstead.

Having done this, Appadacca, without a moment’s delay, descended to the suite which he occupied in the castle.

And now, for about half an hour, he busied himself in collecting papers, a cameo here, a small painting there, an ancient Limoges enamel, a cangiar of Tangiers. These he placed in a portable cabinet, which he locked.

He sounded a gong. A black servant appeared.

‘Take this to the boat in the bay,’ said Appadacca, indicating the cabinet.

And as the box left the room, he took from a rack a tiny Venetian stiletto, stuck it in his girdle of silk, and followed the servant.

They descended the steps in the rock to where the wavelets splashed languidly on a rough natural landing-place. There, in a highly-polished shallop, two men rested on their oars. The stern of the boat touched the rock. The negro deposited in her the box. Appadacca sat down in the stern.

Without a word from him, the oars lifted and touched the water, and the light boat leapt forward.

A quarter of a mile out burned the three very slowly-moving red port, green starboard, and white mast-head lights of a steamship. It was the *Huelva*, which had dropped round hither from La Guayra.

As Appadacca stepped upon her deck, he said to her captain:

‘The course is north by east, and the speed twenty-eight knots.’

At once he disappeared into the cabin.

As the *Huelva* began to skip the waters with the light step of a young grisette, he stood by his bedside, meditatively gazing at the great bulk of Dick P. Hocking, who, in spite of the flood of light which now poured upon his face, still slept and snored.

CHAPTER III.

DICK P. HOCKING LIFTS HIS ARM.



THE NEXT DAY the two nations which had produced these two men were in a state of war.

At three on that day the *Huelva* dropped anchor at Ponce, in Puerto Rico.

The first lieutenant landed, and despatched this message by the Domingo-Cuba cable to Senor Sagasta, the Spanish Premier:

‘Immanuel Appadacca requires letters of marque to use *Huelva* as privateer. Meanwhile will act on private authority of Queen. The *Montserrat* will be protected as far as Cienfuegos.’

The *Montserrat* was a Spanish transport-ship, which, since April 13, had left Las Palmas (Canary Islands) with a thousand troops, beside war material, stores, and money, for the Spanish forces in Cuba.

And in an hour the *Huelva* left Ponce, where she drained the town of coal, and steered directly west.

In a very small room in her cabin, a room which seemed scarcely big enough to contain him, sat Dick P. Hocking. An elbow was on a knee, and his fingers supported his forehead. He was very hungry; his throat was dry. He touched an electric button.

Instantly there appeared before him a bowing Chilian rascal, with a number of parti-coloured ribbons round the sombrero which he held in his hand, and *botas vaqueras* reaching above his knees.

‘Well, my lad, I guess you can roll your tongue about a bit of honest lingo, though I know a bit of yours, too,’ said Hocking.

‘I spoke already to your Excellency last night,’ said the man, in decent English.

‘Then you tell me this: does this man Appadacca mean to starve me on board my own ship?’

‘Not at all, your Excellency.’

‘I don’t see much victuals coming along this road, all the same, so far.’

‘Your Excellency has only to order what you require,’ said the Chilian, bowing low.

‘Oh, I do the ordering, do I? Well, suppose you bring round a good roast chicken, as thick as you like to make it, and a bottle of —

Have you got any lachryma Christi wine?’

‘Yes, your Excellency.’

‘Well, then, say a “good round capon” — which is poetry — and a bottle of the lachryma.’

‘Yes, your Excellency.’

‘Then move.’

‘I wait, your Excellency—’

‘I see that. But I do not want you to wait. Why wait?’

‘Payment must be made first, your Excellency.’

‘This is a new sort of hotel, then, I calculate?’

‘No, your Excellency. But such are my orders. Payment must be made first.’

And now, for the first time, some suspicion of what was coming, some dim remembrance of stories of extortion practised by the old buccaneers and marooners, the Kidds, and Morgans, and Averys, crossed the brain of Dick P. Hocking. He said:

‘I have got little or nothing to pay with, my lad. Stop a bit — here’s a greenback. I guess that will about do my day’s board anyway.’

‘The price of a fowl is five million dollars, said the Chilian, ‘and the price of a bottle of any sort of wine is fifteen millions.’

And now Dick P. Hocking showed his race — its stoicism, its squareness to events, its genuine large-mindedness, exhibiting itself in a manner so commonplace and remote from display as to approach vulgarity.

This demand for the five million dollars meant, if it meant anything, that he was to be slowly and cruelly starved. But he neither groaned nor showed surprise.

‘Well, I don’t call that a bad deal, my lad,’ he said. ‘No man knows better than Dick P. Hocking that business is business. I make you an offer of four million dollars for a fowl, and fourteen million dollars for a bottle of lachryma Christi wine.’

‘My orders, your Excellency—’

‘Never mind your orders, sonny. My turn may come some day, and — what is your name?’

‘My name is Zambra Adelo, master.’

Dick P. Hocking took out his note-book from a vast breast-pocket, and he scribbled that name in pencil.

‘Now, Zambra Adelo,’ he said, ‘look you, my son: I tell you my turn may come some day — may, mind you — I am not saying *will* — and I make you a bid of four million dollars for that fowl, and fourteen million dollars for that bottle of wine.’

‘Your Excellency is wasting his breath,’ replied Zambra.

‘Very good, sir. What is the price of a loaf of bread on board this ship of mine?’

‘Three million dollars, your Excellency.’

‘Not dear, considering. Well, you bring me round a roast fowl, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of lachryma Christi wine, and don’t stop to chew your spittle, neither.’

‘If your Excellency will sign these three papers —,’ said Zambra; and he laid the papers on a three-legged stool, and took pen and ink from a shelf.

Hocking, without hesitation, signed.

Now, a fowl, a loaf, and a bottle of wine were not an overpoweringly large meal for a man of Dick P. Hocking’s cubicity. By nightfall he was hungry again; and when, before nightfall, the Chilian had come to clear away the *restes* of the meal, and had found a piece of loaf and some fragments of fowl, he had asked if he should take them away, for they were Hocking’s; and Hocking had said: ‘I guess so.’

Under that bulging paunch there lay a stomach more high, and a pride more unconquerable, than ever swelled beneath the courtly exterior of grandee or hidalgo.

At all events, the fowls and the wine became a pretty frequent order from the captive locked in the small room. The lowest rate of living possible for Dick P. Hocking established itself at the rate of twenty-three million dollars a day.

On the evening of the 25th, just after sunset, the *Huelva* sighted a large three-master to the north-west, opposite the Cuban town of Trinidad; and on running in toward the land for half an hour, made her out as the *Montserrat*.

The war was by this time fairly under way. Nothing heroic had, indeed, happened; two Spanish merchant ships had been seized; recruitment was going forward with considerable zest in the squares of New York, and other American cities; North Cuba and South-West Cuba had been blockaded; the world was waiting for the first serious encounter between the American Eastern squadron which had left Hong Kong and the inferior Spanish force

assembled round Manila. Some war-vessels had mysteriously left Cadiz bound west, and excitement as to their unknown destination prevailed in New York. Also it was known that the *Montserrat* was upon her adventurous way; nor did anyone doubt that she must be intercepted with her valuable cargo before reaching Cienfuegos.

On the discovery of the identity of the *Montserrat*, the *Huelva* quickened her pace, and walked up rapidly on the other ship. At three hundred yards, the *Montserrat*, at a signal from the yacht, put out a boat, and her captain was rowed to receive Appadacca's instructions.

Appadacca, however, remained invisible. The captain of the transport spoke with the captain of the yacht in the cabin of the latter. And this cabin immediately adjoined one of the two apartments in which Dick P. Hocking, dozing most of the day in a sitting posture, dreamed of boiled and roast and stew.

He had now given notes of hand of over sixty million dollars for a few days' scarce rations.

Now, Hocking had started life as a clerk in a Chili nitrate office; he had all his life had large interests in Cuban and South American concerns; he had a very fair smattering of some Spanish patois somewhere in his cute and much-experienced head: so when he heard two voices in colloquy, and this question asked, 'How many American ships are blockading Cienfuegos?' he bent his ear much closer to the intervening door, and the musing, vacant eye of the listener was Dick P. Hocking's.

The answer was: 'Two cruisers, both nineteen knot boats, and crash for you if they get near you!'

It was the captain of the *Huelva* who spoke, a thick-bearded, brown, short man, with plain, thin hoops of gold in his ears. He added:

‘Here is a paper written by my master himself, telling you how you are to act hand in hand with the *Huelva*. You will see that you are not really to go into Cienfuegos at all, but only to make a feint that way. We are going to take in your stores and arms now, but not the men till the last moment. The paper will tell you. What we want to know from you is this: Is there anything in the way of prizes going on the seas the way you have come?’

‘There is,’ said the other captain. ‘I had it from a Matanzas sloop in the Bahamas that a big transport would be leaving in four days — that should be to-morrow — from Key West for Havana, crowded with rifles and stores for the army coming to Cuba.’

‘And her name?’

‘The *Sable*.’

‘Convoyed?’

‘I heard no — alone.’

‘Ah, we have her, then!’

‘Something rich if you take her.’

‘Good! we take her. But time, time, Senor Capitan! We need be in Cienfuegos by midnight. My master has conference with Gomez, the rebel chieftain.’

Dick P. Hocking heard no more; nor did he know that all this concerned him personally. He put up his hands before his eyes, looked at them, and his mouth opened in a desperate yawn.

He was feeling intensely now the pinch of hunger, he, the opulent, the Scatterer; for on the day before he had nothing, nor on this day. Had he, then, ceased to satisfy his cravings for the sake of a few millions? Not he. The fact was that he had no more millions to squander, there being a limit to all wealth. And Dick P. Hocking, with a certain rough honesty that was in him, had blurted the fact.

He had ordered his chicken, his wine, and his loaf. And when Zambra handed him the customary three papers, Hocking had said:

‘Come, you just get me those eatables, young man. I guess “nothing” is about the name of what’s left to pay you with.’

And the result, had he known the character of those with whom he had to do, was what he might have expected. He got no fowl, no wine, and no loaf. He lived upon the sight of his fat fingers; he yawned till his jaws ached.

And larger grew the great empty hole within him.

About an hour after he had listened to the conversation in the apartment near, while he dozed with sideward-hanging head and opened mouth, the door opened. The captain of the *Huelva* entered.

‘I am from his Excellency to you with a proposal,’ said the man. ‘Can you understand this talk of mine?’

‘Some,’ replied Hocking.

‘Then here it is for you. His Excellency—’

‘Who is his Excellency, my man?’

‘Immanuel Appadacca.’

‘Go ahead, then.’

‘His Excellency has present need of sixty thousand dollars — a mere nothing — in specie, understand. Paper no good. In specie. Well, he means to put you in another ship to-night, if you agree, and get an order from you near the Florida coast for the sum; and on receiving it, you have thenceforth what food you want — everything — free of cost and charge. You agree, I know.’

‘H’m! I don’t say I do, neither.’

‘You will.’

‘You will starve me, you rascal?’

‘Yes.’

‘And if I fall into your views — you feed me meanwhile — you give a famishing man something to eat *now*, I guess?’

‘No. Everything after; nothing first.’

‘That means, I’m thinking, that I shall have to fast for days, my man, doesn’t it?’

‘Some days.’

‘But I tell you, I’m famishing already.’

‘Can’t help that. Money first.’

‘Yes, yes. I guess I am a business man myself. Dick P. Hocking knows what business is, and likes it. But you are Christian people, I reckon, on board this ship? You belong to a Christian race, I’m thinking—’

‘Money first,’ said the captain.

Dick P. Hocking looked the man slowly up and down from the crown of his head to the tip of his boots. Then he put his hand into his breast-pocket, drew out his leather note-book, and said:

‘Would you mind giving me your name, my man?’

‘My name? That is nothing to the purpose, señor. My name is Silvio Murena. Come, now—’

‘Silvio Murena,’ said Hocking slowly, while he inscribed the name — for future reference, perhaps. ‘I take it that you still refuse to give a hungry man a bit of food?’

‘Come, you trifle, señor!’

For quite a minute Hocking said not a word. He sat regarding the floor, elbow on knee. Then suddenly he heaved himself upright, and out went his right leg, and up rose his mighty right arm; and with a high flush of wrath on his face, he said these words:

‘Well, I guess I call you a cursed bad race of people, anyway, the whole tribe of you! And if Richard P. Hocking’s got the sense in him, if it is in a

year, if it is in ten years, to do anything to crush and swamp you out, he's just going to do it, and to that you may lay all there is of you!'

He sat again.

The manner of this huge man was impressive. At that moment he recalled a hundred-ton gun in action — a thing which does not often talk, but when it does, talks things that one cannot help hearing.

The captain of the *Huelva* looked at him, and was silent for a goodly number of the clock's ticks; then he said:

'But that is talk. The question — do you consent or not to his Excellency's proposal?'

'I consent,' said Dick P. Hocking.

CHAPTER IV.

RUNNING THE BLOCKADE.



THE NIGHT CAME very gloomily. In those tropics it comes almost as suddenly as when one turns an electric button, and the red wires in the globes glower and die out rapidly into invisibility in the dark.

For two hours the sixteen boats of the *Huelva* and the *Montserrat* plied busily from one to the other, the ships being now only ten yards apart, the *Huelva* taking in a goodly mass of Sniders and Martinis, together with some uniforms, ammunition, flour, tins, and other stores. The process was slow, and before it was half over the *Huelva* ordered steam ahead.

They went forward, the smaller ship with her three lights, the *Huelva* in darkness. Cienfuegos was thirty miles to the north-west. Ten miles in advance of both went a smart picket-boat, provided with signal-rockets, and steaming zigzag about the sea at the rate of twenty knots.

At half-past seven it was as dark as the gloomiest midnight — a quiet, stagnant night, the sea heaving in flat, pale swells. At that hour the picket-boat sent up a rocket. She had sighted two steamer lights five or six miles to the north-west — the two American ships-of-war maintaining the blockade of Cienfuegos.

The *Montserrat* contained a thousand land troops; at once she and her convoy slackened speed, and the rapid work of transhipment began; the picket-boat meantime panting back to her parent ship, and both the

American cruisers, which had been loitering almost stationary with fires banked, starting in chase toward the locality of the rocket.

By this time the captain of the *Montserrat* had well digested his written instructions. He was informed as to the exact spot of his next destination, as to the spot at which he was to rejoin the *Huelva*, as to the conditions under which he was to keep the prisoner who would be committed to his care. The most stringent of these conditions was with regard to food. Hocking must fast till the required sum in specie was on board the *Montserrat*. It was Appadacca's will — a will which no man had known to relent.

At this time Hocking had received notice of his transhipment. He had brought with him on board the *Huelva* a black handbag, and into this he had now packed the few things about him — some papers, a toothbrush, a pair of pyjamas. The bag was still not full. He threw it into a corner, and sat again on his hard stool, waiting.

Whether it was the cradling motion of the ship, or the state of hunger in which he lived, he was now in a chronic condition of drowsiness. He had hardly sat again when he began to nod.

But his slumber was of that light, spasmodic kind easily broken by disturbance. There stood an Admiral Colomb hand-lamp on a bracket in the room, giving a dim light; and through his drowsing eyelids he seemed to see, as it were in dream, the single door of the apartment cautiously pushed back.

A figure entered the room. But it had all the characteristics of the figure of a dream, and for a moment or two, which seemed much longer, Dick P. Hocking really subconsciously believed that it *was* a dream-image.

It was a man rather below the middle height, but with a figure erect and knit. He had about him a black cloak, the skirt of which trailed on the floor;

over his forehead and nose was a black mask, but the pallid, chiselled, and hairless lips could be seen.

He must have paused, listening to Dick P. Hocking's breathing, for it was half a minute after the door moved before he entered; then he looked rapidly and, as it were, guiltily round, noticed the bag, stepped briskly and noiselessly toward it, pressed the clasp, and opened it.

At that moment Dick P. Hocking was wide awake. He started; he observed.

The man had a pile of something in his hands, which he was stuffing eagerly, with stealthy haste, into the bag; and Hocking saw what it was, and his avid nostrils smelled.

It was a quantity of bread cut in slices, and between the slices — meat. The whole was wrapped in two parcels of rice-paper; but as one parcel was being forced into the now full bag, the paper broke.

That gruff and rasping voice spoke. It said: 'Well, now—'

The visitor, or visitant, started, and at once turned to hurry away. Dick P. Hocking, in the passion of his gratitude, was up and after him.



Hocking just caught him by the mantle near the door. He said:

‘No hurry, sonny. Just let Dick P. Hocking get your name and address down in this memorandum-book of his—’

Then he started backward. A stiletto, whose luminously-jewelled handle flashed like a galaxy even in the vague light, was at his breast. And as he started backward, the other man was gone.

Hocking, hungry as he was, sat again on his stool, and propped on his hand his meditative brow.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘I’m *darned* if I don’t call that handsome! and handsomely done, too. “When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know—”’

Then he said:

‘But why in Jericho should the fellow be so mightily ashamed of feeding a hungry man? He *looked* ashamed, sure enough — or afraid, is it? Well, the world isn’t done with Dick P. Hocking *yet*, sonny; and if ever he tumbles upon you again, it’s settling off old scores between us we will be, I reckon —’

Beneath that gross front beat a heart strong in generous impulses as it was strong in rancour. He sat grumbling his thoughts of future punishments and rewards; but not for long: in a few minutes the door opened again. He clasped his bag hurriedly, and walked out with it behind a lieutenant.

The last thought to enter his head was that his visitor might be Appadacca himself — Appadacca, who, perhaps, had secretly relented; Appadacca, too sensitive to admit another being into the knowledge of a weakness, too haughty to confess before one of his crew even the possibility of a change of purpose.

In ten minutes Hocking was on board the *Montserrat*. The two Spaniards steamed forward in the old direction. The two Americans, not eight knots away, came rapidly nearer.

Xagua Bay, at the head of which lies Cienfuegos, now lay about north by west. Its entrance is only three miles wide; the two cruisers were therefore sufficient to maintain an almost infallible blockade against ships of equal or inferior speed. Within the wider part of the bay were mines and two masked batteries, with which the Americans were under orders to abstain from engaging; but outside the entrance the *Montserrat* ran the risk of almost certain capture.

At the moment when the lights of the two cruisers were judged to be four thousand yards ahead, the *Montserrat* was commanded by trumpet-call to hide her lights. The *Huelva* was already in darkness.

Immediately one of the two cruisers hurried back toward the harbour entrance, to checkmate a dodge in the dark by the expected prize. Meanwhile, from each cruiser the beams of two electric searchlights streamed, peering in all directions over the sea.

But before it could be definitely determined by the cruiser which continued her southern course that there were not one, but two ships, with which she had to do, suddenly the three lights of the *Huelva* appeared in the darkness, and at the same time the *Huelva* swung round, and went steaming south; the *Montserrat* steamed north-east; and the cruiser followed in chase after the *Huelva*.

But it was like a chase between a greyhound and a bird. The officers of the cruiser, knowing the speed of the expected *Montserrat*, were endlessly mystified to observe the lights they pursued stealing rapidly from them, though their engines were toiling, with every aperture in the stokeholds closed, under forced draught.

On, however, they strained, two miles to southward, then in a wide curve, south by east, south-east, east, hopeless now of overtaking the fugitive thing already quite four miles ahead.

By this time the *Montserrat* had changed her north-easterly course to one north by west, and when about a mile from the harbour entrance, suddenly showed her lights; the other cruiser waiting there promptly gave chase, and both went racing south-west, the cruiser gaining somewhat on the transport.

This manoeuvre was adopted in order to draw away the cruiser from the harbour mouth, for at once the *Huelva*, which was about in the course of the transport and her pursuer, put out her lights; and both cruisers a few minutes afterwards started in the wake of the *Montserrat*.

The chase now would have been short, and already the foremost of the cruisers was about to send a twelve-pounder across the sea, when once

more the lights vanished, and instantly reappeared.

But the lights that reappeared were not the *Montserrat's*. The ship which the cruisers now chased was the *Huelva*, the transport calmly continuing her way south-west toward her next destination.

And now the great yacht, as it were, took the two cruisers in tow — led them dancing a mile or two in a southerly curve, and then came racing back due north. She passed through the harbour mouth while the cruisers were still two thousand yards to the south.

It was reported next day in all the newspapers of Europe and America that the *Montserrat* had run the blockade.

CHAPTER V.

SIXTY THOUSAND DOLLARS IN SPECIE.



THAT NIGHT, TOWARD one, a small skiff put out from a creek grown to the water's edge with cocoanut-trees in a lonely part of Xagua Bay. She was rowed by a single negro, naked to the waist, and in her stern sat a man, wrapt in a voluminous coarse brown poncho, who left behind him as he moved a trail of the most delicious fragrance. He was smoking a green tobacco-leaf, moistened in cocoanut-water, and rolled before the first 'sickness' of the plant. It was the rebel leader, Gomez.

One of the points which, as the American-Spanish War developed itself, surprised and puzzled the world, was the inactivity of the insurgents on the island. Now that they had the great power of America on their side, important movements, brisk and energetic enterprises, were daily expected of them. But in vain was any such news awaited.

Gomez was a thick-set, powerful man, but with a surprising activity of movement. His face wore a continual expression of rough good-humour; but in the hard-headed look of his low, broad, slanting forehead was a suggestion of aggressive self-assurance.

The *Huelva* lay at anchor half a mile from the point of his embarkation; the land-troops had long since been disembarked from her, and a number of boats were even then making the last voyage shoreward with the remainder of her military freight.

Gomez swung himself nimbly up her side by the first end of rope he happened to catch. The captain of the *Huelva* awaited him. He was at once conducted aft, and into the regions of the cabin.

It was not the first time he had entered it; yet again he started with surprise, and a certain feeling of awe invaded a mind not very inclined to reverence. He was led through a complexity of corridors into a circular apartment, from whose dome hung a vague pink globe of softest light, making black the crimson hangings of Utrecht velvet in the semi-gloom, while the furnishing was of that heavy and rich pomp inaugurated by the Venetian noblesse of the fifteenth century. Gomez had sat down upon a swaying tabouret of silk and augite for some minutes, believing himself alone, when from the dimness of a far portion of the room there reached him a voice.

‘Pray come nearer, Senor Gomez,’ it said.

Gomez leapt up, Appadacca put down a book, and they were face to face.

‘Well, I am glad you have been able to come after all, señor,’ said Appadacca, ‘though we meet under darker auspices this time than ever before. Our sport has ended in earnest, you see.’

‘Sport, your Excellency? Senor, I call the holy Madonna to witness that this insurrection has never been sport to *me*! Sport, say you? No sport to me, by the great God! Do you call, then, a hundred and fifty thousand starving women and children *sport*?’

‘No. The sport came first; the hundred and fifty thousand after. I always looked upon you as a person of excellent memory, Gomez.’

‘Well, but, your Excellency, in the name of—’

‘No. Pray calm yourself. I did not wish to see you in order to blame you for anything, but merely in order to guide you for the future. This absurd war is as much, perhaps, the fault of my own rather precipitate crew as it is

your fault; they know my private likes and dislikes, and foolishly imagine that they can fulfil my will by acting on their own whims. You have heard of the catastrophe to an American warship in Havana Harbour — However, it is of no importance. But what you must now understand, Gomez, is that the hour is come for a total *volte face* on your side. Your country is in genuine danger, my friend.'

'Cuba is my country, señor — not Spain.'

'Well, then, since you will have it so, I repeat, your country is in genuine danger.'

'Of what, señor?'

'Of ceasing to be Spanish.'

'And of becoming Cuban, señor?'

'No, of becoming — ha! ha! — American.' Gomez hung his head.

'The idea does not please you, Senor Gomez, I see.'

'I admit that it does not please me, señor. But by the Madonna, I do not know that I should not prefer to see Cuba a Yankee rather than a Spanish land.'

'Come, sir, do not lie to me in that fashion!' said Appadacca sternly. 'If your Mother is cruel, she is at least not disgusting; if she lacerates your back, she at least does not revolt your stomach. And you know it. And in your heart you prefer the cruel to the ugly Mother. Nor is your memory really bad, Gomez; nor have you *really* forgotten the actual sequence of events — how that the cruelties came after, not before, the provocation which you and I, in our rôle of amateur insurrectionists, gave to them. This provocation, sir, is what I have called our "sport"; and since it has resulted in very serious earnest, I say the time is now come for it to end.'

'Well, I have proceeded so far on your Excellency's counsel and support. I suppose that is what I must continue to do. But what is it you propose,

señor? Not that I should disband any troops?’

‘No; what are the plans of the Americans?’

‘The first move which they intend, as far as I understand it,’ said Gomez, ‘is to establish a base in Cuba; and for that purpose they intend to bombard the two forts at Matanzas on the north coast in a day or two.’

‘Then?’

‘Then a detachment of some five thousand troops which are massing at Tampa, most of them, I hear, inured against the yellow fever, will be brought over.’

‘Then will be your chance.’

‘To turn against them, you mean, señor?’

‘I compliment your divination, Gomez.’

‘But your Excellency must see that it is impossible to maintain an army without funds; from these Yankees I await the sinews of war. And having once received their benefits, I am not the man to turn against them afterwards.’

‘Then, do not receive their benefits.’

‘But, señor—’

‘No, I have foreseen your difficulty, Gomez. On the night of Thursday next, at eleven, the *Montserrat* will be at the Cape de Cruz, having on board the sixty thousand dollars in specie for which you telegraphed. The captain of the *Huelva* will give you instructions, as you pass up, under what conditions you are to receive the sum. Within another week you shall receive in addition several times that sum; the condition being — loyalty, and, for the present, the cessation of the Sport.’

The two men continued to converse for yet an hour. Then Appadacca touched a button and rose; Gomez was left to ponder drowsily over the

interview, his senses being overpowered by an incense of myrrh which languidly fumed behind a drapery in the apartment.

At this time the *Montserrat* was moving along the Isla de Pinos on her weather bow, steering east.

Avoiding the blockaded coast, she passed midway between Cape Catoche and the westernmost point of Cuba, and then, steering northwest, made for the North Florida coast. By this time her name had been painted out, and the name *Caico* substituted.

Her whole object in the present cruise was to fulfil the obligation entered into with the *Huelva* to do Appadacca's bidding, in return for his assistance in taking her cargo and troops through the blockade.

Her captain had, therefore, no sort of animus against Dick P. Hocking; and though stringently fulfilling his orders as to Hocking's diet, admitted him to a certain intimacy. Hocking was allowed to wander about the ship as he chose, and, meantime, with scrupulous economy, he subsisted on his rounds of meat and bread.

On the second night out, during the captain's watch, Hocking being then on deck, and the crescent moon shining in a brand of crushed silver over the smooth sea, the captain said:

‘And as to the war, master, you bet on your own side, no doubt.’

‘Well, I reckon I do,’ said Dick P. Hocking, ‘though there is precious little I know of it so far.’

‘There is little to be known, señor. The Americans have blockaded the island yonder, and captured some few ships. But what they are thinking of in attacking Cuba, and leaving alone the weak point of Spain, is more than a man can know.’

‘Which is the weak point of Spain?’ asked Hocking, looking at the sky.

‘Manila, surely,’ answered the captain.

‘Ah, how is that?’ asked Hocking.

‘Well, one may talk to you, being a prisoner, and so on. It is the thought of the Philippines that is troubling the big heads at Madrid — not Cuba. There are five warships at Manila, and — you would not believe it — they lack the common shot and shell and powder to do their work when an enemy puts in an appearance.’

‘But forts — they’ve got forts, man, at the entrance to the harbour,’ suggested Hocking musingly.

‘Forts! The forts are much in the same way, as I happen to know. And if you knew how we Spaniards fall down before those islands! If harm came to them, there would likely be revolution and military dictatorship, and I know not what, as you’d see. Happily, you Yankees are afraid of the forts, as you say, and daren’t touch them yet. By the time you begin to think of the matter, we’ll be ready, don’t you see?’

‘I do some. But where have you run foul of these facts about the forts and ships, then?’

‘Oh, I! I would know, you know. I have been in the swim in high tides over yonder for the last three weeks on account of my cargo, and have heard the whispering one way and another. Besides, am I not just back from the Eastern waters, where I took out troops to knock Alejandrino on the head?’

‘He another rebel?’ asked Hocking.

‘Ay.’

‘Rebels here in Cuba, and rebels yonder in the Philippines — it looks as if you were about wanting someone to lend a hand to your country some, these days, friend,’ muttered Hocking.

‘Ay, but it’ll be a bad throw for those who try to lend the hand,’ said the captain, with a nod of menace.

‘H’m! Well, we’ll see into that, sonny,’ mused Hocking.

The next evening the *Montserrat* put in at a deserted part of the Florida coast about seven miles north of Tampa Bay.

All that day Dick P. Hocking had been strangely studious, reading the 'Taçano' of Quevedo, a torn book of rather ancient Spanish which he found in the cabin. He could not understand two consecutive sentences of it; yet he seemed to pore with eagerness over the pages.

He had also found on a shelf in his cabin an old square bottle of small size, and in the bottom of this a little gum, some of it still liquid. This Dick P. Hocking had all the day in his pocket; and there, too, lay a little penknife of fine amber as sharply-bladed as a razor.

He had now consumed the last of his sandwiches, and was again famishing.

At about seven o'clock, while the ship was coasting slowly, well in sight of land, the captain of the *Montserrat* entered his apartment. Hocking was studying, with glasses on nose, Quevedo's 'Taçano.'

'Now, señor,' said the captain, 'if you will write a note at my dictation — in Spanish, please — to your nearest agent for the amount, the boat is ready, and the first train from Tampa shall take my messenger.'

'I am ready,' said Hocking.

'One moment — I will bring you pen, ink, and paper.'

'Pencil will do,' said Hocking.

He took the slim brown pencil from the pocket of his note-book.

'Bring us a sheet of paper, capitan. Or stay — this will do — this will do.'

In a moment he had torn the fly-leaf from the 'Taçano.' On one side it was yellow, on the other white.

At the bottom of the white side were three lines of print which the captain, bending over Hocking as he wrote, saw without seeing, noticed

without noticing. It looked like some announcement of the publisher of the book.

Had the printed words been Spanish, their meaning would probably have entered in a mechanical, unconscious way into his preoccupied brain. But they were English. His eyes rested long upon them, and did not see them. They were so obviously natural just where they were.

Hocking scribbled in pencil:

‘DEAR SIR,

‘You will be good enough to deliver to the bearer of this, *without delay*, sixty thousand dollars for my account in gold specie of the United States. I have strong personal reasons for writing in Spanish, and for approaching you in this manner. See below — my signature. The matter is very urgent.

‘Yours truly,

‘RICHARD P. HOCKING.

‘To JAMES M. SHERMAN,

‘Halifax, Georgia.’

And as the captain turned to procure an envelope, Dick P. Hocking said to himself:

‘I’m darned if it doesn’t look like getting there!’

The words printed at the bottom of the leaf were these:

‘Tell Gov. Span, ship near Tam. going south at once. I pris. Give money, but capture.’

At about seven two men, able to speak good English, were landed on the coast. They walked to Tampa, and within an hour took train northward,

bearing Hocking's pencilled and printed messages.

Few as were the words printed, they were yet a model of the man's measureless patience, his minute acuteness — that patience and that cuteness which had gone to the amassing of his uncounted millions. Upon the cutting-out of those few letters from the thin - leaved book, and the pasting them together in the required order, he had spent fifteen hours, working with thick, buxom, blunt fingers never intended for that sort of labour. He had known well that the least flaw, the slant of a letter, the trace of a joining, and attention would be attracted. And in the end there was not, as a matter of fact, the least flaw, or slant, or trace of joining. Over the whole, when the work was done, he might have scribbled the word 'Thorough.'

By noon of the next day the two messengers were back at Tampa, and their walk slanted to the right under the weight of the cash-boxes which they carried.

At two the *Montserrat* stood away to the south by east, bound for her rendezvous with the *Huelva*.

At half-past three she sighted a long bolster of brownish smoke on the southern horizon.

Fearing trouble, she pricked off her course east, and put her last two knots upon her speed; but in doing so, she too poured out a goodly volume of dark redundant smoke.

The day was bright and hot, the sea glassy. The two ships were ten miles apart.

Dick P. Hocking stood near a taffrail astern, looking over the glistening expanse of pale water. He was as content as a man could be; his fists bulged out his lax voluminous pockets, and rattled the few pieces of coin within them; his squat right leg cocked out; between his lips was one of the most

aromatic cigars of Havana; he had just been learning what a joy it is to eat. The *Montserrat* seemed a little kingdom, and he its king.

He watched that growing bolster of smoke; but he could stand beans both ways — good luck as well as bad. His face showed no exultation. He did not forget that he was smoking an exceptional cigar.

The chase intensified to straining-point, but it was hopeless for the trooper. Her highest speed was nineteen knots, and there came tearing after her a thing all guns and tubes and gleaming mechanism, at the rate of twenty-three an hour. It was the gunboat *Terror*.

A quarter of an hour before sunset — that is to say, within two hours from the start — the *Terror* was two miles away on the port quarter of the *Montserrat*, and it was then that a puff of smoke was seen to issue from the warship's beam; a half-minute afterwards a gross hoot of sound; and Dick P. Hocking looked upward to see a raging baleful thing fly quarrelling with itself over his head, to plunge into the sea two hundred yards away in a mêlée of flame and spouting foam.

He nodded his head.

‘Capitan mio!’ he said, ‘this time I guess—’

The *Montserrat* was now a flurry of palefaced men scurrying wildly about, but she continued her course till, five minutes later, a thing rushed past her bowsprit, carrying it along with it, and immediately her captain was seen at the mainmost shrouds, hurriedly hauling down something. The beat of her engines slackened; the *Terror* grew large and near; there were boats in the water, and soon a young lieutenant was bowing before Dick P. Hocking.

Hocking was, as it proved, in a considerable hurry to get his feet once more on United States soil. Even while a prize-crew was being got on board the *Montserrat*, he was on board the *Terror*, and with him the cash-boxes.

He arrived at Tampa in the early evening, and at once set off northward. He had several things to get off his chest.

The first was to announce that the ship known as the *Huelva*, a craft passing for a monstrous yacht, but in reality possessing the arms and armature of a ship-of-war, would very likely be lying in wait between Cuba and Key West for the next transport-ship to Havana.

Also, there was not a member of the Naval Committee in whose mind the name of Dick P. Hocking was not of high significance. And to each, in the week that followed, Dick P. Hocking made a point of mentioning one word — the word ‘Manila.’ And that word he impressed upon them all, and told them why. A week later the Stars and Stripes waved over the town.

He had all his life been a busy man, but he had never been in such a heat of business as now in his life before.

He had to send advices in urgent haste to a host of correspondents; certain bills drawn upon them by him at certain dates were invalid, and must be dishonoured; but he found that some of them had already been discharged in favour of the house of Campos.

Also, Hocking in these days was very much in the company of naval experts and builders, and the man’s whole mind seemed open to drink in the details of an entire new science. At an interview with the manager of Cramp of Philadelphia, he said:

‘And now, how long to build? — for that, I guess, is about the main question.’

‘A battleship, in general — two years.’

‘Ah, but we are not discussing battleships at the present. Let us confine ourselves to torpedo-boats. Seems to me they are about what the future’s got to reckon with.’

‘Well, of course that varies, according to the orders a firm has on hand. Nine months — six months.’

‘Six months. Now, I put to you a question in simple proportion. Suppose it takes two hundred men six months to build a torpedo-boat, how long will it take four hundred men?’

‘Something in the neighbourhood of three months, I should guess, sir.’

‘That’s about it, I reckon,’ said Hocking. ‘And how long would it take eight hundred men, if your brain doesn’t break down under the strain?’

The manager laughed.

‘Well, Mr. Thompson,’ said Hocking, ‘there is one thing I want to impress strongly upon you, if we do business together — and just see you don’t be forgetting it, neither — that I am one of the richest men on the face of this globe.’

CHAPTER VI.

A SPANIARD THINKS.



THE *HUELVA* PASSED out of Xagua Bay soon after darkness fell, not even careful to mask her lights. There was a short chase by the two blockading cruisers towards the south-west, and a blank shell splashed into the sea a hundred feet astern of her. But she ran on her way as unconcernedly as a high-gearred bicycle chased by a stout policeman.

At the moment news was scarce and rare. It was said at Cienfuegos that an invasion of Cuba was impending by an American army of some 20,000 regulars and 50,000 volunteers; it was said that Admiral Dewey had set out with his Far Eastern fleet from Mirs Bay, with Manila as his objective — nothing more. Meantime, as the captain of the *Montserrat* had informed the captain of the *Huelva*, an easy prize for the latter was about to sail from Key West with a valuable military cargo, stores, and specie for Havana; and when the captain communicated this news by telephone to Appadacca, and asked if he should prosecute a capture, Appadacca replied: ‘You may.’

And so it was that the *Huelva*, with close on two thousand tons of coal in her bunkers, steered west, and next morning was making her way leisurely at twenty knots off Cape S. Antonio, the western extremity of Cuba.

Immanuel Appadacca had just cast himself upon a couch, and there lay back, musing. It was in his library, where all night he had been poring over a volume of old-Arab verse-lore. Here no hint of the day intruded, but tongues of blue and green flame, writhing from openwork censers of

Etruscan pottery, diffused a species of tinted half-light. The long piles of books were mostly hidden by tapestries of Arras.

He was roused from his thoughts by a sound in a neighbouring alcove — a whistle. He rose and went to the tube. A voice said:

‘There is a large barque on our port bow — has hoisted the Union Jack. She is close-hauled on the starboard tack, wanting to weather the Cape. Shall I’

‘Make her lie to,’ said Appadacca. ‘Do not harm her; get news.’

The *Huelva* turned her course across the bows of the barque, sent a three-pounder over the sea, and in a few minutes slackened speed sufficiently to get a pinnace out. The barque lay to at her signal.

The first lieutenant took with him one of the crew of the main-deck four-inch guns, a London lad called Roach. And from Roach’s interpreting it was learnt that the barque was from Liverpool, bound to Belize with iron sleepers, and had met near the Florida Reef an American transport, convoyed by a cruiser and two gun-boats, bound for Havana. By one of the gun-boats she had been bespoken, and had learned — news.

The transport was at once guessed by the *Huelva*’s captain to be the one which the *Huelva* was seeking. (She was being convoyed in consequence of the warning of Dick P. Hocking.)

Within half an hour Appadacca in his library had in his hand a despatch giving this and the other items of news gathered from the barque.

The chief of these related to the event at Manila.

Eleven Spanish ships, armed with old muzzleloading guns incapable of destroying a sea-fowl at three thousand yards, had stood still to be shelled by exquisitely modern long-range rifled cannon in Manila harbour; old sandbag forts had spluttered ineffectually at the invading fleet through

impossible old brass guns. Manila, whose very name was poetry, was at the mercy of a Yankee commodore.

The Spaniards had not killed one single American. They were reported to have injured not one single ship. Some of the shells which they had fired had struck, but they had been blank; they had ricocheted, and harmlessly fallen into the sea. Why, being at long distance with bad guns, and so at a disadvantage, they had not adopted the very elementary tactical manœuvre of coming to close quarters, was not explained. They had died heroically under a perfect tempest of shrapnel, and had done nothing.

And this was at Manila, the land of aromas, the nosegay of ancient Spain, whose name was poetry!

It was a place very dear to the Spaniard. Immanuel Appadacca thought of it as the future domain of Dick P. Hocking, and smiled. Among the nutmegs soon would clank and throb a red-brick factory; through the groves of almond and cornel would scream and rattle the cars of an elevated railroad — I guess.

He smiled. Then, suddenly, he crumpled the paper in his clenched fist, and cast himself face downward on a divan, heaped with llama wools; over his face pressed his small jewelled hands, and through his body passed the slightest spasmodic movements.

He was a man of the acutest mental calibre. He could knit his brows and see far into a fact where many another, even with the aid of glasses, would find only darkness. And as he lay, quivering slightly, he peered deeply into Destiny, with travailing, anguished brain.

Already, from that beginning, he seemed to see the end.

That beauty which he loved, was it not the hectic beauty of the consumptive patient — doomed, doomed?

Or was it not like the beauty of woman, weak, skin-deep, spoiling at the first rough blast, the first unsparing sun; unfit to combat and survive the rude, earnest traffic of the coming centuries?

The Latin races — were they then doomed to go, to pass for ever away?

And leave what behind? Nothing but one vast workshop, side by side with one vast Stock Exchange, and one vast railway-station? Here was a survival of the unfittest! So it seemed to him.

But, at least, the old beautiful was worth fighting for, and dying for, as against the new ugly. And there was at any rate one man prepared to fight and die for it — the name of him, Immanuel Appadacca.

He lay there contending with a thought which rose in his brain. It was a tremendous thought; he was unwilling to give it entertainment, but it persisted, he struggled, and it came back and conquered him.

He leapt up, he touched an electric button, and instantly a dark-skinned man in Moorish robes was bowing before him.

‘You are to see, Ali,’ said Appadacca, ‘whether the holy Father can find it convenient to grant me an audience here within the hour.’

The Moor, making an obeisance, retired backwards.

Appadacca reseated himself, took up the book he had been perusing, and again began to read. In twenty minutes the arras at an angle of the apartment opened, and a tall man of austere and pallid countenance stood there.

His face was very long and thin, and darkened over lip and jaws and chin with an inky indication of shaven hair; the black eyes rather too close together, and downward-looking, and shifting; the forehead narrow, high, and bald at the corners; the chin very prominent. An odour of peace was about him.

A silver crucifix hung on his breast, a rosary at his hip; his lank form was closely wrapped by a surtout, banded at the waist.

Appadacca rose and bowed. And he said:

‘Holy Father...’

The priest inclined his head, and his lips muttered:

‘My son...’

CHAPTER VII.

SAXON V. LATIN.



THE TWO MEN sat near together. The priest, with his long left forefinger stroked gently down and down the smooth part of his crucifix with a slow, clandestine movement. Appadacca had thrown himself into a violet velvet armchair with an appearance of carelessness, yet, in doing so, had slightly shifted its position, so that his own face could not readily be seen, while a pallid greenish ray from one of the lamps shone full upon the priest's wan countenance.

Appadacca said:

‘I have news, Father Pedro. Manila is in the hands of the Americans.’

‘Soh, my son.’

‘You know?’

‘Yes. I had Sancho with me in the chapel, surmising that something had been heard. He told me all.’

‘But the details — they are interesting.’

‘Ah?’

‘Eleven Spanish ships have been destroyed — burnt, sunk, or battered. No American has been killed; it appears that no American ship has been seriously injured.’

‘That is so,’ said Father Pedro, with no sign of emotion, only his downward-looking eyes continually moved, and his finger lightly stroked

the crucifix. He waited. He knew well that he had not been summoned to a conference with Immanuel Appadacca for nothing.

‘Yet the sailors who fought on our side fought bravely — one, it seems, might almost say heroically,’ proceeded Appadacca.

‘They were Spaniards,’ said Father Pedro.

‘Yet they effected nothing.’

‘It is strange.’

‘Hardly strange, perhaps. The inference as to cause is obvious.’

‘What, then, is your inference, my son?’

‘That they were badly generated.’

‘It is an inference, certainly.’

‘The old story, Father, you will say.’

‘Ah, perhaps those words might possibly rise to the lips.’

‘Badly generated — badly generated in Cortes and on battlefield, in council-chamber and at sea. And badly, because selfishly.’

‘Do not suppose that my silence means disagreement,’ said Father Pedro after half a minute.

‘Quite so. I say selfishly. But the selfishness will persist to the end: that, assuredly, will be the last thing to die in Spain. Our prominent men seek to be more prominent, and Spain is the victim. The people are devoted; the devotion of their great men is corrupted by the taste of power. And if that persists — and it will — we shall lose; we are doomed.’

‘I follow you carefully,’ said Father Pedro.

‘A man, however,’ said Appadacca — and his face was not visible—’ who was as prominent as possible could not seek to be more prominent.’

‘No; that is so — that is certainly so,’ assented the priest.

‘And the inference you draw, Father Pedro?’

‘Tell me your whole mind, and I will tell you plainly if I am in accord,’ said the Jesuit.

Appadacca threw down a book.

‘A military dictator would be such a man as I have described.’

‘Certainly; such a thought cannot fail to occur to one.’

‘You agree, then?’

‘In the main.’

‘But the consequence would be large, Father Pedro.’

‘Large, certainly,’ said the priest, and a smile flitted over his lips; ‘highly important for Spain, at least.’

‘But I do not see why we should not be quite candid with each other — I mean *larger* than that.’

‘My son, my son—’ said the priest.

‘The holy Father disapproves. For the present I will say no more.’

Appadacca’s lips closed tightly. Both men were cunning. Appadacca had the human instinct to seek ghostly fellowship with, and consent to, a thought which something within him warned him was monstrous. The priest now divined the thought, and adored it, and wished to conceal his adoration of it; and Appadacca was half doubtful, half divining of the priest’s adoration, and wished to force an avowal of his approval.

‘I have not expressed disapproval of anything, my son,’ said Father Pedro. ‘Of what should I disapprove? What, then, are those *larger* consequences of a dictatorship in Spain to which you refer?’

Appadacca picked up a book, opened it, and, looking steadily at the priest, said:

‘The greatest war which has yet occurred in history.’

The padre perceptibly started, and his finger paused midway in its descent down the length of the crucifix.

‘May the Immaculate preserve our hands from the stain of blood!’ he said.

Appadacca’s lip slightly curled.

‘They are already stained, Father,’ he said—’ all our hands. The whole present world is in a state of bloody-minded enmity. Is it not written that he that hateth his brother is a murderer? The nations, I think, have been slow to adopt the Christian Idea. They were never so very, very far removed from it as at this hour. The stain of blood, you say? Our hands are thick with it, Father Pedro!’

‘That is in spite of the Church, my son. But you speak of great matters. For what reasons, think you, must a military dictatorship in Spain be followed by the awful thing of which you speak?’

The padre was a man intimately familiar with the inner minutiae of European affairs, and their sequences one upon another; he knew well the answer to the question which he asked, but he asked it for reasons of his own in reference to Appadacca.

Appadacca said:

‘Holy Father, you are aware that the world is at present in the hands of two chief races — the Latin and the Teutonic. There is a third power, the Empire of Russia, which is neither, being Slav; but this power is so much in sympathy, both from its innate affinities and from the force of circumstances, with the Latin, that we may class it roughly with the Latins. French, Spanish, Italians, Russians — British, Germans, Austrians, Americans: there, for the most part, are the two *prima facie* camps. I say *primâ facie*; for, in reality, between all those in the second camp who live together with those in the first camp on one mainland there is an affinity, and a resemblance, and a sympathy, which, in a general war, will not fail somehow to show itself. Did I tell you that at Cienfuegos I received a

telegram from Cadiz informing me that the crew of the German cruiser *Oldenburg* went ashore there, and fraternized enthusiastically with the men of our *Pelayo*? The sailors of the two ships marched through the streets arm in arm, wearing one another's caps. Now, American and German must be bracketed together in respect to race; yet we find German sailors wearing the caps of Spanish sailors at a time when Spanish and American are at war, the fact being that the Germans have now become very much more like the unrelated Spaniards at their doors than like the related Americans far away. Our barque this morning also gives us the news that four German warships are hasting toward Manila with some unknown object, certainly not friendly to America. I have a purpose in saying all this, if you will bear with me.'

'You interest me profoundly, my son.'

'Well, then,' said Appadacca, 'from our second race - camp we must take, for the practical purpose of computing the sympathy on our side in this war, both the German and the Austrian. And you have left two lonely nations, both disconnected with the communism of nations on the Continent of Europe — two only — Britain and America.'

Appadacca paused. The padre drew a deep breath.

'These two nations,' continued Appadacca, 'are, in reality, very unlike each other. There can be no radical sympathy between them: they are too far apart in every respect. America, to a cultured mind, is as much more repulsive than England, as England is less beautiful than the Venice of the Doges; but, unlike each other as they are, they are more like each other than either is like any of the Continental nations, and sympathy depends upon similarity. In a game of universal war, where each chooses his own partner, these two would assuredly fight together: it would be a Saxon League.'

'A formidable combination, my son.'

‘Yes; and possibly it might be made still more so, by becoming, not a Saxon, but a Teuton League — sympathy of blood proving stronger than sympathy of manners, and Germany, Austria, Sweden, and the like, joining with their cousins. On the other side would be France and Russia, Spain and Italy.’

‘But that is heterodox,’ said the padre, with the gleam of a laugh in his eyes. ‘Italy goes with the Teutons — with Germany, with Austria.’ Appadacca smiled.

‘You and I know differently, Father; the rulers of Italy, perhaps — not Italy. The Triple Alliance is dying; a telegram from the *Huelva* to a certain village in Calabria would, as you are aware, kill it. The first object of an Italian revolution would be the reduction of the cost of the standing army; and with this reduction, or even with the demand for it, the Alliance would be at an end. And it is not far off — probably not a year away. Italians are now paying more than 50 per cent, of all incomes in taxes. How and by whom all that could be swiftly swept away, you and I know. It was not precisely for this buffoonery of government that Mazzini, Cavour, Garibaldi, and Victor Emmanuel gave their lives.’

‘Your Latin races, my son, make excellent soldiers, but bad generals. They are all badly led, to come back to the old point.’

‘Precisely. Their general shall be — Russia.’

‘You say “*shall* be”?’

‘That is, if a military dictatorship happens to be set up in Spain.’

‘Who would be the dictator — Weyler?’

‘He is a brute!’

‘Polavieja?’

‘He is not disinterested.’

‘Then Martinez Campos?’

‘He would be my choice.’

‘And your choice would infallibly succeed?’

‘Yes. Their great need is money. My choice would be abundantly supplied with money.’

‘Are you still very rich, my son?’

‘Yes: I possess the *Huelva* and her crew.’

‘But why not call the dictator Appadacca?’

‘I see you consent to the general scheme, Father.’

‘Ah! to discuss is not invariably to approve. But why not call the dictator Appadacca?’

‘No, Father Pedro. That is not precisely in my way; your inner instincts do not admit it as suitable to my personality. With your help, I prefer to direct from the dark.’

‘Direct what?’

‘The apparent anarchy that must ensue during the process of revolution both in Spain and Italy. In Spain there will follow repudiation of the National Debt. And you are aware who will be principally interested in that matter.’

‘France and Russia—’

‘France will claim Ceuta, face to face with Gibraltar; Russia will claim Minorca — at least, it will be persistently suggested to her to do so; nor will the persistence be very necessary, I think. England will protest, and flame. The naval bases of Spain in European waters are the envy, and are destined to become the apples of discord, of the races, to range them in final fight for the possession and government of the earth.’

‘I follow you,’ said Father Pedro. ‘But to state a scheme such as that which you have in mind, and to claim for it the sanction of the Church,

whose robes are Peace, and whose tabernacle is Compassion, are two different matters, my son.'

'The Church in your person disapproves, Father?' asked Appadacca insinuatingly, his eyes musing on the priest's face.

'My son, yes.'

'Ah, then, I, for my part, find the sole responsibility onerous; I drop the notion. I thought that perhaps the tacit support of the Vatican, obtained through your great influence, might, in Spain, help forward the initial steps, but — I admit my error.'

The priest blinked. He was a man of intense passions on national questions; he felt that he had said too much, and not enough.

'The end you propose is, nevertheless, blessed, my son,' he said, looking low under his eyes. 'As I understand it, it is the providing of a good soldier with a good general; it is the salvation of Spain.'

'And the aggrandizement,' added Appadacca eagerly. 'It is Morocco, South America, Mexico, and the West Indies, spreading the actual Spain of to-day over the world.'

'I repeat, it is a blessed end.'

'Yet the Church rejects it!'

'Striving to be harmless as doves.'

'And forgetting to be wise as serpents.'

'Have no fear; She is that too — that too.'

'The Latin League of which I have spoken is purely Catholic, Father, and Græco-Catholic.'

'I am vividly alive to it.'

'And the end here, if anywhere, should justify the means.'

The padre smiled.

‘Ah! I am reassured,’ said Appadacca. ‘The Church, come now, is a consenting maiden, using sweet, reluctant, amorous delays. I dare say that you are at one with me.’

The priest stood up, with fixed lips.

‘But,’ he said, ‘make haste! and when you strike, strike home.’

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PHANTOM FLEET.



NOW, IT HAPPENED that one of Dick P. Hocking's chosen satellites was a certain Rev. Silas M. Petersen, of the Methodist Free Church, whose Brooklyn chapel Dick P. Hocking had built; and the Rev. Petersen was often to be found in the company of Hocking, in Fifth Avenue, for he possessed unction, freedom of speech, and a shrewd, practical head of the world — things dear to the cockles of Dick P. Hocking's heart, I guess. So Hocking patronized and sheltered the parson under the warmth of his mighty arm, and the parson lived there as in a pleasant greenhouse of comfort, liking the patronage; 'for,' said he, 'talk as you like, I guess you can't get along without it, any way.'

Now, about the time when the priest and Appadacca were fencing in the cabin of the *Huelva*, these two others were travelling south alone in a Pullman car, with Hampton Roads in the eye of purpose, where the *Union*, recalled by telegram from Carracas, awaited them. Dick P. Hocking was taking the Rev. Silas M. Petersen with him on an exciting cruise.

And as they sped along Petersen put his elbow on his knee, and, in the midst of a conversation, said:

'Now, I'll tell you, sir, how these same Latin races, as we name them, strike me—'

Hocking nodded, and leant forward to listen. Petersen, though of goodly proportions, was a very small edition of Hocking, but uglier in figure and

face, his legs being very short and his body long, so that he had rather the look of a pig standing on its hindquarters. Over his fat yellow cheek and upper lip a few hairs, which one might count, straggled and curled. His nose turned up, and his thin, falsetto voice spoke all in oily coils and modulations. He leered always downwards and far sideways when he spoke to one.

Often from those fleshy lips came words wonderfully related to the facts of a matter.

‘Well, let us have it,’ said Hocking.

‘Isn’t it just about like this somehow,’ said Petersen: ‘that just as each separate country grows its men and its women, so the whole earth, as a whole, grows its men and its women; only the men and the women of the whole earth, as a whole, are not individuals, but nations?’ Dick P. Hocking, looking at the carpet, nodded slowly several times.

‘Well, now, it’s about striking me,’ proceeded Petersen, ‘that this same Latin race is just what we may name the Woman of the civilized world. They have the pretty ways, the weakness, the excitability, the cleverness, and, I guess, the sharp nails of woman. They can’t kill, but they can get in a good scratch at a man’s eyes — till you subdue them, and train them to fetch your slippers, and darn your socks. And we others are the Man — we Americans, those Britishers — we have about got the enterprise, the independence, and the world-care of the man. And I put this question to you, sir: What is the natural end to a man and a woman brought into daily close relations?’ Dick P. Hocking looked sharply up with a kind of glad surprise, a light in his eyes, and stretching out his arm, he shouted:

‘Marriage!’

‘That’s about what it comes to, I guess,’ said Petersen—’ marriage; and till that marriage comes off in the cathedral of the world, with the angels for

bridesmaids, and all the fiddles of God a-playing and making merry, neither that man nor that woman is going to have any idea of what true happiness is about like.'

'Well I'm darned!' cried Dick P. Hocking, with waving arm— 'well, if I'm not darned! Why, that's the very selfsame notion, man, that's been hovering round the back of my brain for the last two weeks — only I didn't know how to say it to myself!'

'That's so,' answered Petersen. 'Only the Woman still has to be fought for, and won. There's going to be some blood spilt over that business, I reckon. She will have to be conquered before she will give in. She's a maid, I guess, used to her freedom, loath to part with her habit of virginity — and her nails are sharp. She will have to be cruelly banged and bastinadoed before she comes round to reason, and then she will love the man for conquering her, and she will be all voluntary service, and tender cares, and she will be mending his things, and be making him smart and handsome like herself, and *he* will be making her healthy, and matronly, and content, and the mother of the world. That's Marriage.'

'Look here, my son,' said Dick P. Hocking, 'how about that new schoolhouse of yours?

Not roofed yet? Just do me the favour to put me down for another thousand dollars on your list! It's the very thing I've been thinking all the time! And that's just about how we'll have to work it, or else Dick P. Hocking is a fool, and so is Silas M. Petersen! and that's a lie, whoever says it.'

But now the warning change of sound when a train slows into a station was heard; and early the next morning the *Union* was out of sight of land, steering south-east by east toward the east Cuban coast.

Toward night she fell in, north of the small islands called Cayo Romano, with the American squadron, consisting of the battleships *Iowa* and *Indiana*, the armoured cruiser *New York*, and four gunboats taken from the patrol squadron. They were steaming eastward, bent upon the discovery of the Spanish squadron which had lately left Cape Verde Islands, in order, it was not doubted, to cross the Atlantic.

It was with a view to this Spanish squadron that Hocking himself was now promenading the seas. The speed of the *Union* was considerably higher than the average of the American squadron. He would serve as a scout, and he would see a battle.

The next day it was heard at Washington that the Spanish ships, consisting of four armoured cruisers and three destroyers, the flagship being the *Infanta Maria Theresa*, had been sighted off Barbadoes; and this news the *Union* learned at Porto Plate, in northern St. Domingo.

With all her speed she went on eastward.

Meantime, with the certainty of an engagement now in their minds, the Washington Government hurriedly despatched the battleships *Massachusetts* and *Texas* and the armoured cruiser *Brooklyn* to reinforce the rather deficient American squadron. These three, however, were now a long way behind, needing three or four days to come up with the main body.

These were sighted in the longitude of Andros Island by the *Huelva*; and at the next noon the main body of the squadron was passed by her on the starboard bow. She was then tearing furiously eastward, having now learnt the news of the advance of the Spanish fleet to meet the American, about to be reinforced as the latter was. Appadacca had no intention that a fresh Spanish squadron should be annihilated by a superior force at that moment: he had other views.

Meantime, the *Union*, with Dick P. Hocking and his militant spiritual prompter, was heading briskly along the south Porto Rico coast. Then, changing her course somewhat to the east of south, steamed so for half a day, when, an hour before sunset, the look-out man in the top sighted the advancing Spanish fleet. Their torpedo-destroyers were, of course, of considerably higher speed than the *Union*, and as soon as their number and disposition had been made out, the *Union* turned tail, and went hasting back northward, hoping to encounter the advance force of the American squadron not later than three the next day somewhere in the longitude of 70, and report.

The night was very dark, and when the day was coming, a dense and dank sea-born haze, white but impenetrable, muffled and blanketed all the ocean and the ship in a mystery of moisture.

But almost instantaneously, as the first horizontal beam of the sun shot in intense radiance over the sea-surface, the mist thinned and vanished into clear, hot day; and at this sudden transformation - scene, the first thing which the Rev. Petersen, in his morning mufti at an aft-taffrail, and with him the watch on deck of the *Union*, perceived, was a huge ship, seeming to walk the water with the gliding buoyancy of a sea-gull wetting alternate wing-tips in the brine — a ship not a mile from them, bearing down straight upon them.

At her main she flew a flag orange in colour, and bearing in the centre a device in black, altogether unknown to any published code in the world. It was the *Huelva*.

CHAPTER IX.

CABLE CUTTING.



ALL THE DETAILS of the swiftly-advancing ship became terribly distinct to the crew of the *Union* as the pure-white smoke of the fog suddenly thinned and dispersed.

She was three-masted, the fore-mast being much the tallest of the three, with a long space between it and the mizzen-mast, sufficient to admit four tall funnels, from the hinder-most of which now swayed upwards a languid streak of smoke. At the first glance the eye detected that she was armed, but though she had no visible ram, there seemed a good difference of length between her upper deck and her water-line; and about her bows, her beam, the lithe sheer and under-curves of her stern, there was a delightful suggestion of clipping levity and grace, which imparted to her the air of some winged sea-horse. Under plain sail and courses, without the aid of steam, she could flit with all that weight through eleven knots.

The Rev. Silas M. Petersen hurried below. Dick P. Hocking was still asleep in his bed. Petersen broke into his room and shook him.

‘There’s a large ship ripping straight down upon us,’ he said; ‘it strikes me the meaning of her is trouble. I reckon it is the — the *Huelva*!’ Dick P. Hocking lifted his body; his heavy-lidded eyes were puffed with sleep.

‘What’s her painting?’ he said.

‘A bluey white.’

‘Then it’s she.’

He heaved himself from the bed. As he did so, he heard running feet above, and a single bark of cannon.

‘Well, it looks as if they’d got me again this time,’ said Hocking.

‘If we haven’t got them,’ answered Petersen.

‘What’s your point?’ said Hocking.

‘What about those twenty-five Winchesters?’ answered Petersen.

Down upon Petersen’s back came Dick P. Hocking’s mighty paw with a slap.

‘You are the little parson for me!’ he cried.

‘What *you* have got to do is to *hide*,’ said Petersen.

‘That’s it, I reckon. But where?’

‘Why, here. And that great chest, there, it’s about made to take those Winchesters.’

At this moment down rushed the *Unions* captain.

‘You have heard, sir?’ he cried breathlessly. ‘It is that Spanish privateer we met at La Guayra. Do we yield? There is still five minutes’ running.’

‘Yield, yield,’ said Hocking. ‘I am not at home — that’s about all you need remember for the time being. There are twenty-five brand-new Winchester rifles on board this ship; just order a couple of hands to get them into this chest before those beastly pirates get there. And don’t forget ammunition and a good hundred and fifty rounds of shot. And look you, captain, here is the little man whose orders have got to go during my temporary absence. I guess he’s about right for both worlds, and you remember it.’

He pointed to Petersen. And deliberately he lifted himself into the bed again, put out his arm, took a cigar and lit it, drew the bedclothes to his chin, and lay there calm and huge as a fallen monolith of Stonehenge.

By this time the slowing engines of the *Union* were calling out in two tones long-drawn whines of melancholy rest after dire labour; then, where travail and complex turmoil had been, was perfect quiet. The ship lay stationary on the gently heaving water. Three boats were being lowered from the *Huelva*, which was now forging slowly through a twenty-point curve.

The Rev. Silas M. Petersen was saying to two men on the poop of the *Union*:

‘That ship, you may be certain, is in a hurry to get somewhere. I’ll swear — though swearing isn’t precisely in my line of business — that she was at full speed when I first sighted her. I guess what she wants to do is to get at the Spanish fleet the first moment she can. Even if she sends a prize-crew aboard here, she doesn’t mean to wait for them; we can’t keep pace with her. The moment we see the last sign of her smoke, captain, it isn’t in our pockets we’ll be resting our hands.’

The little fleet of three boats came nearer. The *Union* put out her trellis-work escalier, the eager mixture of tongues in the boats reached her, and in a minute men were hurrying up the steps.

One man, a Catalan giant, with a red bandana tied tight concealing his head from the eyebrows to the neck behind, came up to Petersen, who wore the parson’s collar and a short jacket. The collar perhaps attracted him. He said in rough, broken English:

‘You give our ship?’

‘We yield,’ answered Petersen.

‘What you got here?’

‘Nothing. Ballast, and may be a thousand dollars or so in money, and stores.’

‘Ah, we go to see. You come too.’

The twenty-five who had come on board then scattered to ransack the ship, with the exception of one, who bore in his hand a large official-sized envelope apparently full of papers. Petersen, the captain, and the first officer descended to the cabin with the Catalan, to whom they had handed a bunch of keys, the register, and the clearance; with them also went a negro and two Creoles from the *Huelva*.

Dick P. Hocking's door was in a partition jalousied in the upper portion, plain varnished walnut below. It was one of a series of doors on both sides of the passage; all were closed, most unlocked. Only Hocking's was locked, and two others of which Petersen had taken the precaution to turn the key. Three locked doors, he reasoned, would be less an object of curiosity than one.

When the Catalan came to the first locked door, he found in his bunch no key to fit it.

'The key to this port,' he said.

Where was it?

The captain was not sure, Petersen was not sure; someone ran to look; but it was weary waiting, and the Catalan appeared in a desperate hurry. At last the key was found; the door was opened; there was nothing worth seeing in the room.

Then came the second locked door. Where was the key? It was not to be found. Three *Union* men ran to look, and there was more waiting. It was only after the Catalan had flung his hand and said: 'Oh, afterwards I will come to look,' that someone came running with the key. The door was opened; there was nothing worth seeing in the room.

They came to the door behind which lay Hocking. The key could not be found. Again the Catalan flung his hand.

'I cannot wait,' he said; 'afterwards.'

They passed on, searching. They were interrupted by a trumpet-call from the *Huelva*; there was no time, the boats must be sent back.

The Catalan hurried to the upper deck, and whistled. The *Unions* fifty-three men and boys were now drawn up in line within each bulwark. They were summarily searched by the twenty-five who came running from below, and everything in the shape of a weapon was taken from them. Four of the twenty-five then hurried into one of the boats, took the other two in tow, and made for their ship. The *Huelva* began to smoke, and in a few minutes started into running between two long wavering pennants of foam. In twenty minutes she vanished from sight twelve miles to the southeast.

The bow of the *Union*, meantime, had been turned due north. She was now in what is called the Mona Channel, between Porto Rico and St. Domingo. The prize-crew was in charge; the men of the *Union* were mostly huddled together toward the fo'castle. What was the new destination of the vessel no one, except the Catalan and two or three of his men, was aware.

At one bell of the forenoon watch, the American squadron was sighted in line abreast at eight cables' interval on the port bow of the *Union*, heading east by south along the St. Domingo coast near Cape Engano. The *Union* passed within a knot of them, showing the Stars and Stripes.

It was soon after this that a once Sicilian bandit, happening to pass along the main corridor of the cabin, heard a sound, and stopped to listen. It came from behind a door, and resembled the slow, heavy breathing of someone sleeping. Dick P. Hocking, who had been interrupted in his morning's nap, had let the neglected extinguished cigar slant from his lips, and in the long interval of waiting had lapsed into napping.

The Sicilian listened till there could be no doubt of the accuracy of his hearing; then he tried the door and found it locked; then he started to run upward with the news; and as he started, he dropped with a groan.

A man who had been watching him from behind an angle of the corridor had stepped out briskly and silently, and dropped the weight of a belaying-pin upon the foreigner's temple. He stopped to take a knife with sickle-curved blade from the sheath, and two Colts from the girdle of the fallen man; then he picked a key from a pocket of his clerical waistcoat, and opened Hocking's door.

'It's about time, I reckon,' he said quickly at Hocking's ear, and flew to the chest. Hocking's lids slowly unrolled themselves, and instantly he was alert and up. At the same time three other men, the captain, mate, and engineer of the *Union*, appeared. They had come aft under-decks through the space of two planks removed from bulkheads. And at once the five, Hocking still in his pyjamas, set to work to load the Winchesters, and then hurriedly passed out, bearing between them the twenty-five rifles and a box of ammunition.

The whole length of cabin was deserted. They passed on till they came to the first plank-space in the bulkhead; and here there was a pause. Hocking could not get through.

The silent removal of the board had been a matter of considerable difficulty to that militant and resourceful person, Petersen. The removal of another at this juncture was not to be thought of.

'All right,' said Dick P. Hocking; 'I'll keep one of the guns, and you go ahead. I'll join you in my own fashion.'

He deposited the Winchesters which he carried on the other side of the bulkhead, and crept cautiously back to the room which he had left. Here, with sideward listening head, he waited.

He waited five, ten minutes. Then there reached him the muffled sound of a great outcry from above. There were shouts, names called, scurrying

feet, Spanish oaths, and then, all suddenly, the prattling-, brittle crackle of a musketry-volley, instantly followed by another.

The Americans, twenty-six in number, two of them armed with the dead Sicilian's weapons, had taken their stand just aft of the fo'castle, with a breadth of mast and two considerable heaps of chain in protective opposition; the twenty *Huelva* men were better shielded, and took aim from among the funnels and deckhouses. The non-combatants of the *Union* were below; the vessel lay without forward movement on the water.

Abroad on the deck lay in various curves of death and anguish seven bodies — three Americans, four *Huelva* men. There was a profound silence, save for a hollow sound above the funnels, and the hoarse cry of a flight of boobies afar.

Then suddenly again, from the Spanish side this time, there broke the brittle crackle, the prattling musketry, a whole volley; and as the answer came crackling, the whole forward portion of the ship was rolled in hot reeking smoke and stench, within which men writhed and died.

But now, as the thickness of the powder-fog thinned, it was seen that the Spanish loss was the greater; for at the moment of firing they had exposed themselves unduly, offering their whole bodies as targets, and four had fallen to two on the other side.

There was, however, not the least disposition toward yielding. The Catalan, who was behind the forward funnel, surmising rightly that guns were the Americans' only weapons, hit upon the very best tactical device that could, in the circumstances, be conceived. The thing was to make a rush, and kill at close quarters with knives, daggers and swords.

He called:

‘Everyone this way!’

And at once there began a mixed crawling and swiftly-dodging manoeuvring of the members of his force toward him. The Rev. Silas M. Petersen, lying at full length behind a coil of chain, and observing a flying lower leg, sent a single shot; but it splintered the deck beneath the foot.

‘When I cry “One!” everyone rush and stab in a body,’ said the Catalan. By this time the American muzzles were resting ready pointed, prepared for the first human limb that showed itself. But the interval between the combatants was not large, and a second’s failure to fire on their part might now prove fatal to the whole body, who would be



unarmed save for the butt-ends of their not very wieldy guns.

The word 'One' was on the mouth of the Catalan. He had, in fact, begun to say it, when from behind a shot entered his brain. It had come from the shoulder of Dick P. Hocking, who had quietly walked forward from the cabin-region toward this point.

One man only turned to knife him, and he was met by the butt-end of Hocking's weapon, which broke open his chest. Eleven pelted with all speed forward, and as they ran, five dropped. Hocking stood with projected leg, taking a long, steady second aim, his lips pressed firmly together, the morning air fluttering his pyjamas about his legs.

When he fired, there was already an impassioned stand-up mêlée going on between the contending parties. It was two or three chances to one that he would hit one of his own men. But after a long, steady sight, he fired, and a marked Spaniard fell.

It was the sixth gun he had fired in his life. The most craven of his flatterers could never call Dick P. Hocking a brilliant shot. But he was an efficient man; his name was 'Thorough he 'got there,' I guess.

In two minutes the struggle was over. The Rev. Silas M. Petersen's face and pastoral collar ran red, and a long rip went up his palm. He had fought like three, and the last *Huelvan* that went down rolled together with Petersen in a hissing struggle that was ended by a blow on the Spaniard's nape from the *Unions* mate. Dick P. Hocking stood contemplating it, and these things he pondered in his heart.

He was once more master of the *Union*. He dropped the rifle with a bang.

In half an hour, as the *Union* moved once more southward to reseek the American fleet, Petersen approached him with an envelope, all red. The parson said:

‘One of them had this about him; I guess it was to deliver this that they were taking us northward, and it ought to interest you.’

The envelope under the blood was directed to Joseph Campos.

Dick P. Hocking sat down at a table, and he put his spectacles on his nose, and he opened that envelope.

‘This, I reckon, comes under the head of contraband of war, anyway,’ said he.

The chief bulk of the contents consisted of a piece of parchment, partly printed, and partly written over in Spanish. Hocking made out that it was Immanuel Appadacca’s title-deed to the tract of territory purchased by him contiguous to the disputed boundary-line between British Guiana and Venezuela.

Then there was a letter written in Appadacca’s own hand on vellum. — It gave to Campos certain detailed instructions as to the winding-up of various business affairs in the United States, as to conveying a sum which he named to the rebel Gomez, and as to Campos’ immediate departure for Cadiz, where Appadacca needed him.

But the interest of the letter was in its end. It stated that a certain millionaire, named Immanuel Appadacca, had lately died. He was a Venezuelan, but entertained a profound admiration for England and the English. Moreover, he was a man with whom the mere possession of a whim meant its accomplishment. He had left the disputed Guiana-Venezuelan territory as a free gift to the British Government. The title-deeds were enclosed.

The letter ended with these words:

‘I am about to cut the cable between the two British islands of St. Lucia and St. Vincent. You are to spread the report by every means in your power

that this act, which constitutes an act of war against Britain, is the work of the Spanish cruisers now in these waters.'

CHAPTER X.

THE CHAMBERLAIN SPEECH.



DICK P. HOCKING sat long, puzzling over this letter. He understood the meaning of the Spanish words, but he did not understand the letter.

Only, he understood that it meant mischief, earthquake, world-trouble. Also, he understood that all this was proceeding from the intellect of Appadacca; and by now he had learnt to reverence the intellect of Appadacca.

He called to him the Rev. Silas M. Petersen. He said:

‘Look here, parson, just let me translate to you this thing.’

And he translated it, word for word. And when he was finished, there was silence for five minutes, until the reverend gentleman, lifting up a clear brow, said slowly and distinctly:

‘It is the sharp nails of — the Woman, I guess.’

‘Yes, I can make out that much of it,’ said Hocking, scratching his head.

‘He says that he wants it to look so that Spain has committed an act of war against England, as I understand. Well, that signifies that he wants England to declare war against Spain, if words have any signification.’

Hocking’s abdomen began to dandle in a laugh.

‘Ho! that would signify a rather sharp bust-up for Spain, wouldn’t it?’

‘It would signify a bust-up — yes,’ answered Petersen, ‘but not a sharp bust-up. Not if Russia, and France, and Germany, and Italy, and Austria, and the rest of Europe took sides with Spain.’

‘Damn the rest of Europe!’

‘Well, *condemn* the rest of Europe as we may, there Europe stands, a solid fact. And I am only saying that it seems clear to me that that is about what this Appadacca is feeling after. A quarrel between Spain and England at this moment will just signify to the rest that England is siding actively with the States; and just let that word “Alliance” get abroad, and the skies’ll blacken, you’ll see, and there’ll be thunders and lightnings on this earth.’

‘Yes; but don’t you see, parson, here’s the fellow doing something in just the opposite sense to his other act: he’s actually offering this piece of land to England. It’s the motive here that bothers me.’

‘Ah, there I don’t pretend to perceive the inwardness of his deal,’ said Petersen. ‘It looks—’

‘It *looks* as if he wanted to open old sores between England and the States. You know, parson, that the two nations have forgotten all about this matter very near — the two *nations*; but perhaps you don’t know that the big guns, the people behind the scenes who run the nations, are a bit sore yet over that same Venezuelan boxing-match. It wouldn’t altogether be sugar-plums and cocoanut-water to Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, if this particular piece of land became British territory, I tell you, sonny.’

‘On the other hand, he is aiming at throwing the two nations into each other’s arms by his cable-cutting. He is either a fool, or a precious profound sort of rascal—’

‘Stop! I have worked it out, parson,’ cried Hocking, dropping his fist on the table. ‘No, no, the man isn’t a fool; he’s a man worth fighting with and conquering, is this Appadacca. Wait — wait. It’s a case of going one better, is it? All right, Mr. Senor, with your beastly jokes. Don’t you surmise what he is after now, parson? He wants to make England look so that she seems allied with us, by snarling at Spain; but he doesn’t want it to be a firm and

cordial alliance. Between the two friends, just at the critical moment, he throws this bone — not enough, perhaps, to bar the alliance, but enough to make them snarl at each other behind the scenes while they are openly snarling at the common foe. This darned fellow means mischief all round.'

'You've hit it there!' said Petersen.

They nodded at each other.

'Yes; but this particular bit of land belongs to Dick P. Hocking at the present moment,' said Hocking. 'These title-deeds are contraband of war, if anything is. First I got the ship and he got the land; now I've got the land and he's got the ship, I guess. We'll see how we go on.' By noon the deck of the *Union* had been cleared of the dead, and the five wounded were being tended in cabin-berths. At three o'clock the American squadron was again sighted at the southern end of the Mona passage. A boat of the *Union* was sent to the flagship, and information given as to the latitude in which the Spanish ships had been seen, and also as to the sailing of the *Huelva* in the direction of the Spaniards.

It was therefore without much hope of finding the enemy that the Americans continued on their way. Towards sunset of the next day their scouts came in with the announcement that the Spaniards had undoubtedly turned back. Twenty-four hours afterwards Europe learnt that the Spanish cruisers and gunboats were coaling at Martinique, and a few days later at Curaçao.

The Americans, on their part, turned back also. Some of their ships were detailed to watch the Cuban 'Windward' Channel, some hurried to the east end of Cuba to watch the Yucatan Channel, lest the Spaniards should pass that way to fall upon the few unprotected ships maintaining the blockade of Havana; the rest of the Americans proceeded to San Juan.

Then followed the bombardment. The Americans, entering the bay, poured a red rain upon the wretched forts intended to protect the more wretched town. The San Juan guns were manned by amateurs, untrained enthusiasts, local warriors; their shots fell wide or short, they did little damage. In England the newspapers printed in bourgeois type ‘thrilling’ details of this ‘terrible’ affair. But the important point of the engagement was announced in small nonpareil in sequestered corners. It was this: that at every shot which inflicted an insignificant damage upon an American ship, the crew of a small French cruiser in the bay sent up cheer on cheer.

At this time it had been resolved among the ladies of New York to import no more Parisian modes; and popular feeling against France for her supposed partisanship with Spain had gone so far, that members of the House of Representatives were declaring their determination to oppose any money vote to enable the United States to take part in the Paris Exhibition of 1900.

It was at a time like this that a British Minister of State, and a member of the Cabinet, threw his bomb.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, in a public speech, spoke of ‘alliance’ between the English-speaking races.

It was to be presumed that he spoke with authority, with responsibility. And if so, his words were great in import. It meant the complete upsetting of the balance of power of the world. It meant that Britain would be far stronger than any present combination of force in Europe; it seemed to invite all the various combinations of force in Europe to become a single combination of force — to put all their weight on the other side of the see-saw — if they were not to be hurled and scattered into the air by this tremendous aggregation of weight.

And at once the Continent took fire. The island threatened to become the dog; the mainland was dwindling to the tail. Can the tail wag the dog? Look well to it, ye Powers.

Whether the British Government was aware how events connected with the Spanish-American war were already tending to bring about a European combination against the Saxon race, without the aid of outspoken speeches, is unknown. *With* the aid of outspoken speeches, it was certainly not far off.

Even the Swiss and Belgian press cried out in scare.

On the next morning there was a hurried meeting of the Cabinet Council at Madrid. For one Power to offer alliance to a second at the moment when that second is at war with a third, was not unlike an act of hostility committed by the first against the third.

And to make the cloud darker, just at the beginning of the Cabinet Council, General Martinez Campos had handed him the following telegram:

‘*Huelva* will be at Cadiz during the week, when I hope to confer with you for your guidance. British cable about to be cut will be cut by me. — APPADACCA.’

At the Cabinet meeting it was resolved that at once the Spanish Government should make representations to the various Powers, beginning with Russia, as to the speech of the British Minister, and its obvious effect in upsetting the balance of power in Europe.

And that night, under a dulled moon stooping her head through sombre trails of cloud, a party of men landed on a rocky coast at a southern headland of the island of St. Vincent. The occupant of the stern was wrapped in a flowing mantle, and as the boat’s bow touched the gravel where the surf came with spasmodic lap, he was lifted out by a man who

stood knee-deep, and deposited on the dry sand. Ten of the twelve who formed the crew then walked along the edge of the curving coast-wall, searching the ground, that cloaked figure last.

In five minutes someone whispered, 'Here it is!'

He pointed to a thick cable made of layers of netted wire, alternating with gutta-percha, which ran down a hillside, then along the sands, then dived to its dark bed within the deep. A man lifted an adze.

But before it fell, the cloaked figure cast a hurried glance behind. He had heard a footstep. The next moment a fat hand was laid lightly on his back.

'Don't you do that,' said a voice.

The other's face paled with passion; he said not a word.

'Look you,' said Silas M. Petersen; 'I came all the way over the mountains from Castries to-day on horseback, purposely to stop you in this affair, for I knew beforehand all about it, you can bet. And I can stop you, for behind those rocks are twenty men, well armed. Well, but I don't mean to stop you. I have about come round to the view of my kind friend and master, who wants you to work your will in this deal, and take the consequences. Only, hark you, I am a preacher of the Gospel — and stop — are you a priest? You are! Then we are birds of the same quill, I reckon. It's peace and goodwill we are both after, I guess. That's what we are there for, you'll say: to do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Then I counsel you, stop this business, brother. I won't prevent you, but, if you love your country, and your own life, stop it.'

Down, once, twice, thrice, fell the adze.

And from the priest's curved and pallid lips fell one word, the murmured word:

'Vermin!'

And Silas M. Petersen, as he turned away, he, too, with a certain disdain, said aloud:

‘Pride goeth before destruction, my man, and a haughty spirit before a fall....’

CHAPTER XI.

IN DEEP WATERS.



THE *HUELVA* COALED at Martinique. She left the south end of St. Lucia, where the cable was cut, without the least suspicion on the part of anyone on board that the Union, with Hocking was at Castries, near the north end.

During the night of the seventh day the *Huelva's* pinnacle was throbbing up the Solent with Appadacca in her stern. Late the next afternoon he was closeted with the Prime Minister in an inner apartment at the Foreign Office.

At this time the Anglo-American *rapprochement* was looming large. It was in everyone's mouth.

There was, indeed, the faintest suspicion abroad that the British Prime Minister himself was not so passionately enamoured of alliance as some of his lieutenants, as the mass of the nation, as the mass of Americans. Since the beginning of the movement he had made speeches, but on that subject had remained austere mute.

It was known that, in general, he had the strongest personal antipathy to the Yankee; but it was supposed that one man, even if he were strongly inclined that way, would be unable to withstand the set of the national currents. Already, in fact, a meeting to settle preliminaries had been arranged to take place in New York between the American Secretary of State, the Assistant-Secretary of State, Sir Julian Pauncefote, the British Ambassador, and Sir Louis Davies, the Canadian Minister of Marine.

The mightiest affairs, however, depend upon the wills and motives of individuals.

‘You tell me a strange thing, señor,’ said the Prime Minister.

‘It is, however, true,’ replied Appadacca.

‘And the title-deeds, you say, should be in our hands — when?’

‘Within nine days at the furthest.’

‘It is by no means certain, you know, that our Government will see its way with absolute clearness to accept the gift. I do not conceal from you that we are, most of us, in no mood at the present moment to give any cause of jealousy to the people of the United States. We recognise their war as just and magnanimous—’

‘Their very justice is unjust.’

‘Ah, you think that—’

‘Their very magnanimity is mean.’

‘There are those who say so.’

‘When a whole nation gives itself up to one object for a whole century, my lord, and that object a base one, you will find at the end of that century, if you observe them narrowly, that their very pity is tainted, their very truth is false. They will have generous impulses, but their very generosity will be a self-deception. In nothing, nothing, will they be quite sincere, except in their greed, in their selfishness. In this matter of Cuba, you have a nation whose sole motto is self-interest, whose very soul is corrupt with it, whose very name has become synonymous with callous greed — this is the nation which you find exclaiming, with a kind of fictional belief in its own words: “How admirably magnanimous a one am I!”’

‘I follow you, señor. You, however, miss my point. I did not say that this war is magnanimous. But I said that we here in England — the mass of our nation, magnanimous itself, and judging, of course, only by the first outside

look of things, which is all they ever get to see — that *they* regard it as magnanimous.’

‘And this view of theirs—’

‘Makes our position with regard to this otherwise most acceptable gift of land a far from certain one. You are, I presume, the executor—’

‘Informally, yes. The real agent for Senor Appadacca in the matter is a Senor Josef Campos, the head of the house of Campos in New York, of which your lordship may have heard.’

‘And Campos—’

‘Will be in England, as I can say positively, within eight days. He should be now, in fact, at Cadiz.’

‘Then I shall wait the coming of Senor Campos with some impatience. The matter, of course, is sufficiently momentous to call for the summoning of a Cabinet Council; but nothing can be done till I have in my possession the title-deeds to lay before my colleagues. But this gentleman, Appadacca. You knew him, of course? I seem somehow, or somewhere, to have heard the name.’

‘He was the son of a nobleman of Spain. Your lordship probably heard of him in connection with his armed yacht, the *Huelva*.’

‘That is so. Now you say it, I remember. And the *Huelva* — will she continue her mysterious voyages?’

‘I cannot say, my lord. If she does, you will be certain to hear of her.’

‘But stay. I was very much puzzled a few days ago by reading in the newspapers that a British steamer had reported in New York having sighted some Spanish ships of war near the American coast, when everyone knew that no Spanish ships were in that neighbourhood. Then, if I remember right, two other ships came in and reported the same thing afterwards. It struck me at the time—’

‘That the *Huelva* might have had something to do with it?’

‘Just so.’

‘It is quite possible, my lord. The captains’ imaginations magnified one ship into a fleet; or else the swiftness of the *Huelva*’s movements, perhaps, during the night, and her appearance at unexpected points, led them into the belief that it was not one, but several ships which they sighted.’

‘And the cutting of the St. Lucia-St. Vincent cable? Have you any suspicion that the *Huelva* was involved in this matter?’

‘On the contrary, my lord.’

The Prime Minister shot an under-glance at Appadacca’s face.

‘How so?’ he said.

‘Has your lordship, then, reason to think that the *Huelva* was in those waters?’

‘It has been hinted to me.’

‘Oh, in that case — but with what motive? Her owner, on the one hand, dowers the British Government with one of the vastest estates in the world. Is it likely that, on the other, he would leave behind him a crew ready for the first act of unprovoked hostility within their reach?’

‘Was it, then, señor, an act of the Spanish cruisers?’

‘That I admit, though with reluctance, is more probable.’

‘Ah — I note the admission.’

‘The matter, I hope, is not acutely serious, my lord?’

‘It is acutely serious, señor. I give you my word that the affront will not be permitted to pass from sight without due and proper repentance on the part of your country. The unfortunate affair of the *Maine* was, you know, the direct *motif* of the present war; now comes another similar act, different in form, but identical in a certain spirit of lawlessness, against another nation.

One could almost swear that the two acts were performed by the same hand.'

'However, they were not.'

The Prime Minister swept a swift, downward hand on his beard.

'Well, you appear to be more familiar with the details of both matters than I, señor,' he said. 'Are you about to proceed to Spain?'

'Yes, my lord.'

'Then, you should give them this hint over there: that what is called the British Lion will bear a large amount of horseplay with his tail — until he feels a twinge of pain. And *then* he is very apt to get up, and pile roar on roar in a way that frightens everybody into a disinclination for any more play during a century or so.'

'I will do so, my lord. Personally, I find the roar of the lion exhilarating. I have hunted him in Somaliland with some little success; off my own camel, assisted by a French, an Italian, and a Russian fellow-huntsman, I have captured — four.'

Once more the Prime Minister swept his In Deep Waters 131 hand down his beard, in a manner characteristic of him. He said:

'You were quite an international party, then. The secret of your success seems to me to lie in the fact that you were united, while the four lions did not fight together. The four, joined into One Big Lion, might have been able to make short work of that international big-game expedition, I fancy.'

Appadacca rose.

'The title-deeds shall be in your hands within the time mentioned, my lord,' he said. 'Well, then — good-day, señor.'

They parted.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TITLE-DEEDS.



IMMANUEL APPADACCA AT once telegraphed to Cadiz:

‘*To* CAMPOS. — Have you arrived? In any case send me word immediately on receiving this.’

He received no answer that night. He was annoyed, but remained in London, in the confident assurance that the next morning he should receive news from Campos, whom he had ordered to Cadiz. The order, written with his own hand, was in the breast-pocket of Dick P. Hocking.

So were the title-deeds of the frontier estate, without which Appadacca must seem either simpleton or impostor in the eyes of several people.

He had engaged a suite of apartments at the Hotel Métropole, though his stay was only for a clay. He would soon, he knew, be in pressing need of money in specie without the arrival of Campos. He rose early the next morning; there was not a word from Cadiz.

He sent at once a telegram to New York:

‘Have you received my instructions and the title-deeds?’

He waited four, six hours. At last the reply came:

‘No; thought there was something wrong. Await instructions.’

Appadacca wired:

‘Charter, if you can, swift craft for Cadiz, and bring all specie at your disposal.’

Then, with knit brow and set lips, he drove to Waterloo. The steam-pinnacle of the *Huelva* awaited him at an agreed point of the Hard at Portsmouth.

About two o'clock in the morning he stepped on the deck of the *Huelva*, and at once disappeared below. The bows of the ship turned west, smoke poured from her funnels, and the early break of dawn found her stretching, like a racehorse in the final heat, at full speed across the Atlantic.

Appadacca whistled to her captain at about eight o'clock.

'What is the speed?'

'At the moment thirty-three, your Excellency.'

'How is the wind?'

'On our starboard bow, west by north.'

'I depend upon you, in any case, to arrive within the time I have prescribed,' said Appadacca.

Now, quite five days previously Dick P. Hocking had walked up Pennsylvania Avenue; for, after the cable-cutting, the *Huelva* had spent three days in forerunning the Spanish Squadron, and contriving its safe arrival at the protected port of Santiago de Cuba, a feat of strategy which, had it been unassisted by the incalculable movements of such a ship as the *Huelva*, would have fully justified the exultation with which the news of the squadron's arrival was received in Madrid.

Hocking reached the shaded park, and entered the White House. He sent in a card marked 'Urgent: ten minutes.' One of the bamboo screens swung back to admit him, and he found himself in a scrupulously business-like apartment, in the presence of the President. There was a cordial hand-shaking; a massive chair uttered creaks of distress beneath Hocking's weight.

‘I have not much time for palaver,’ said Dick P. Hocking. ‘Look here, I have had written out for you a description of the present position and so on of our fleet, and the reason why they haven’t come aboard those Spaniards yet. The worst enemy America’s got at the present moment is not any Spanish squadrons, but one Spanish ship, President; and that, I guess, is what you will be finding before long — that is, if *I* don’t come in somewhere. But what I’ve got to show you chiefly is this little piece of beastly joking. Just you look at that.’

Hocking slapped down the parchment title-deed of the Venezuela estate, and a translation of Appadacca’s letter to Campos. Then there was silence for five minutes. The President’s eye ran eagerly through the words.

‘This means mischief, I calculate,’ he muttered.

‘It meant,’ said Hocking; ‘it can’t mean any more. That parchment is now in the pockets of the United States, and so is the piece of land it represents.’

‘It isn’t, Dick P. Hocking,’ replied McKinley.

‘Look here, don’t you fancy that you are going to get us into any hot places more than we are in already. That parchment will come in handy later; it won’t go rotten in your drawers, may be. Right now I beg to decline it with best thanks.’

‘Well, I am not saying that you don’t know your business.’

‘No; you are too cute a man. Look you, Dick P. Hocking, we have got to be getting along slow speed and fog-sirens piping these days in this country! The motto on the doorplate of these States has been: “Hands off, thanks, and let’s go our own way in our own way.” And a sound motto it was. Now, all that is about over, I guess. We have got mixed somehow in the thick of the row, and the Almighty only knows what it’ll run to. Here’s a

document, now: that's a note from the Italian Government, my son, protesting against the blockade of Cuba as insufficient.'

'Protesting? Why?'

'*International Law*, Dick P. Hocking. It's a spell of international law now that we're in for, I guess, and the isolation's off, and every little effete Punch and Judy show of a State in Europe's beginning to criticise their betters, because they see that we've been dipping our finger into their dirty little international law pie. Well, and do you know what?'

'No.'

'Then I'll tell you: The world's about in for a new era of things right now. There, on the desk, you see a telegram which gives me to know that an old man is lying at a place called Hawarden, in the West of England, just at his last gasp. That old man's name is Gladstone, and another way to spell Gladstone is P-e-a-c-e. When I say that one is at his last gasp, I just mean that the other is too.'

'Yet he retired long ago.'

'Don't you believe that. There wasn't anywhere for him to retire to, you see, except under the pavement of Westminster Abbey. While he was above it, he was there just the same, I reckon; and everybody knew he was there, and everybody was afraid of his frown, and of what he would say if they went crooked any. Retired — no! He wasn't a snail; he was a force.'

'And you think — ?'

'I think that things look — bad. I reckon that France and Russia are building too many battleships; I think that none of those big old nations are strong enough to keep up their swaggering armies another five years. I reckon that England is the best hated nation on the face of the earth; and I reckon the States is in for the row, and has got to take sides whether she wants to or not.'

‘I can tell you one thing,’ said Hocking: ‘it will be a war of races.’

‘That’s so.’

‘Saxon against Latin.’

‘Something not far off.’

‘We and England—’

‘I reckon that’s about the combination. If between us we aren’t good enough to boss the world—’

‘But—’

‘Well?’

‘Hasn’t England everything to gain, and we nothing, by an alliance at this moment?’

‘That’s so. But there isn’t going to be an alliance at this moment. The States wait. But when the day comes, it isn’t a matter of small advantage to one or the other that we shall consider, but the general good. Meanwhile, you can see why I tell you to keep your title-deeds in your portfolio. They would be exploding in mine.’

The same night, toward morning, Hocking arrived at New York. His first care was to telegraph to the manager of Cramp’s shipbuilding works, Philadelphia, desiring a further immediate interview; his next was to ascertain the movements of Josef Campos during the last few days.

‘Has he been realizing largely?’ he asked.

‘Apparently not,’ said an agent.

‘Has he chartered any ship?’

‘I could dare bet no.’

‘Then he hasn’t heard yet. Appadacca wants him badly, and will telegraph. The thing now is to keep him here a prisoner.’

‘How could that be managed?’

‘We shall see. Here, parson, just come and help on this little conference.’

What was certain was that Appadacca, from the instructions given in his letter to Campos, needed ready funds for the prosecution of his schemes. And during the next day several eyes kept sharp watch upon all the transactions of Campos.

Then came Appadacca's telegraphic summons; and the fact of its arrival was known to Dick P. Hocking with a certainty as absolute as though he had read it. The deals of Campos revealed all.

Campos sought next to obtain a ship; and there, with a shock of dismay, he found himself foiled. None of the Transatlantic boats sailed for two days, and his orders were instant and urgent. He was instructed, moreover, to leave by a privately-chartered boat, but no boat could he find to charter.

After a day's scurry among the shipping agencies of New York and Brooklyn, a confidential clerk came to acquaint him with failure.

'There is some mystery in it, you may be certain,' said the clerk.

'A plot of Hocking's?'

'That, and nothing less.'

'We shall obtain a ship at Newport?'

'If all the disposable ships at Newport have not been got at in the same manner.'

'Then at Boston or Baltimore?'

'Would it not be better to telegraph your dilemma to his Excellency? Boston, I firmly believe, and Baltimore, too, will offer us nothing.'

And with this suggestion Campos at once fell in. — He telegraphed to Appadacca at London. He got no reply.

Appadacca was on his way in the *Huelva*. His powers of divination had led him to suspect that, supposing his letter and the title-deeds had reached the hands of Hocking, Hocking would adopt the very ruse which he did in fact adopt with respect to Campos. Hence, in the act of telegraphing for

Campos, he felt fairly certain that Campos would not come. He was ignorant that the ship captured by the *Huelva* in the Mona Straits was the *Union*, or that Hocking was on board of her; but he had a suspicion amounting to certainty that documents so important to himself, once miscarried, could hardly fail to reach the hands of Dick P. Hocking.

During two days the brows of Josef Campos were a continual wrinkle of vexation. The whole man grilled with suppressed rage.

At last he lost restraint. He went to Hocking's office; Hocking was not there. He went to Fifth Avenue; Hocking was not there.

'Where is your master?' he asked of a footman.

'He is at Bellevue for some days,' said the man.

Bellevue was one of Hocking's country seats, half-way between New Haven and Providence — a very lonely pile, overlooking a stretch of sea, and standing in its own wide parks.

'I am going at once to Mr. Hocking's seat of Bellevue,' said Campos to his head-clerk.

'In two hours I shall return. Meantime, if there be sudden news from his Excellency, you will not fail to follow me.'

He took train, and in an hour was at Bellevue. Dick P. Hocking had just ended a conference of three, consisting of himself, an agent from Cramp of Philadelphia, and an agent from the Union Works of San Francisco. By this time he was something of an authority on the technicalities of torpedo-boat and torpedo-destroyer building.

'Show Mr. Campos right in,' he said to the man who made the announcement.

And while Campos was coming, he blew through a whistle communicating with the Rev. Petersen's apartments; and even as Campos appeared, he was whispering into Petersen's ear:

‘I don’t know that it will be necessary, but it may — I’ll see. If it is, I’ll whistle twice, and you’ll know what to do. Sit down, señor — sit down,’ he added.

The brow of Campos was flushed with anger.

‘Why this unlawful persecution, Mr. Hocking?’ he said.

‘The weather is beginning to warm up at last, señor. Which unlawful persecution do you refer to?’

‘There is no necessity to beat about the bush, Mr. Hocking. What you have done I know well. I come to inquire into your motive, that is all. *Why* do you seek to prevent me from leaving this country?’

‘Well, now, that’s talking straight out, and I like a man who talks straight out. I’ll tell you:

I have happened to tumble on the fact that your master, Appadacca, or whatever he is to you, is making for some queer mischief, in which he can’t very well get along just now without you. So I keep you.’

‘I see. Mischievous which concerns you personally?’

‘No, no; not particularly me. But when a man gets to my age and weight, he begins to think of other things besides his own five-cent affairs. Appadacca isn’t going to get along anyhow with Dick P. Hocking pulling the other way.’

‘But you speak precisely like a simpleton P cried Campos in surprise. ‘You might as well try to check the momentum of Niagara, as seek to balk the purposes of the man against whom you are absurdly ranging yourself. He is a gentleman — a prince! I tell you, for I know.’

Dick P. Hocking’s abdomen dandled upward in a laugh.

‘Don’t be frightening me now, señor,’ he said; ‘if I faint in your arms, you’ll be sinking under the strain, I reckon.’

‘But it is ridiculous!’ cried Campos in a high pitch of voice. ‘You are merely wasting good money in keeping me here. You merely retain me for a day or two — you might guess that. The *Huelva* is now on her way to America to fetch me.’

‘She’ll have hell’s bells knocked out of her bottom if she comes anywhere across New York Harbour, señor.’

‘If, perhaps.’

‘But you are sure she’s coming, eh?’

‘Practically — a telegram of mine to his Excellency having remained unanswered.’

‘Oh, very good. But when she comes, I’m darned if she finds *you*!’

‘I do not follow you.’

‘I am going to ask you to be my guest for the next three days or so. I promise you that you will find Bellevue a more hospitable place of residence than I found the *Huelva*.’

‘You mean that you will keep me here by force?’

‘That’s what it comes to, I reckon; as your head man kept me. All’s fair in war, for that matter.’

Hocking rose and blew twice through the telephone whistle.

‘However, you will bitterly regret this, you ruffian!’ cried Campos.

‘I don’t say it’s impossible, señor. But look you, I will act above-board to you; you shall know at least that I have an honest motive in this affair. Just cast a glance at that.’

As he spoke he had opened a cabinet, taken out the title-deeds of the Venezuela estate, and Appadacca’s letter to Campos, which was attached to the deed by an elastic band. He handed the letter to Campos.

‘Now tell me if you call that a right piece of business,’ said Hocking.

Campos read the letter.

‘But how — how, in the name of Heaven, did you obtain this?’

‘Well, you see, your master was sending it to you in my own ship, which he had seized with his beastly *Huelva*. I simply got back my ship by killing the crew he sent aboard. Both ships are mine, if it comes to that. And the land’s mine, too, you may bet. But he can keep his beastly *Huelva* till I’m ready to deal with her.’

‘Thank you. You have made much clear to me. And I am your prisoner, you say — for how long?’

‘Call it prisoner, if you see fit. Guest is what it is. And for as long as you choose. Four or five days, any way. Till then I guess you don’t find many open exits from this house. If you’ll follow me, I’ll point out your lodging for the time; and if you’ve a conscience, as you have, no doubt, I guess you won’t be saying that I’m exceeding what a man should do in the case.’

‘But, in Heaven’s name, what right—’

‘Oh, right enough, right enough. War’ll come; it’s coming faster than any of you think, and plenty of it, and loud. Only Appadacca shan’t make it come any quicker than it wants to, if what Dick P. Hocking says goes any.’

He rose, nodded his head, made a motion, and stepped forward. Campos glanced rapidly round the room, and, smiling, followed.

Campos was conducted to a third floor. He was ushered into a complete suite of five rooms luxuriously furnished. One of them looked by three windows over a sloping lawn at the back of the house, the lawn plunging steeply twenty yards away into a large-treed park.

At about midnight, when the house was absolutely quiet, Campos went from room to room, searching in the drawers of the looking-glasses and the ornaments of the dressing-table for pins. He found a few.

From the top of a sofa he took a bright-yellow Japanese cloth. In his pocket was a dark-red handkerchief, which in shadow had quite the look of

black. With the pins he had found he pinned the handkerchief in the central space of the saffron cloth. He had now a flag with the *Huelva* colours.

The night was very still. He opened a window, and there was hardly a breath. To the inner and upper framing of the window he attached the cloth by means of his last three pins, leaving it to hang; and immediately behind it he moved a table, on which he placed a lamp. The jalousies he left open. As seen from the garden, the light made quite luminous the colour-contrast between the dark red and the light yellow.

Campos sat near the window. The time passed.

At half-past twelve he began to nod. At one he rose, pacing restlessly. At half-past one he was fast asleep. Near two he heard something resembling a whistle. He looked out cautiously. There was a man below, looking up.

The night was dark, but not too dark for Campos to recognise the general form of this person. It was not an enemy; it was a friend — his clerk, Francisco. Campos lifted the lamp, and showed his own face in clear light.

Francisco talked. Campos could not hear.

‘A little louder,’ he said in a strong whisper.

Francisco could not hear.

‘I do not hear you,’ he said in a strong whisper. ‘The *Huelva* has arrived.’

‘It is impossible to hear,’ said Campos.

‘What do you say?’ whispered Francisco.

Campos took down the cloth, unpinned the handkerchief, took from his pocket a penknife, and began cutting both cloth and handkerchief into very thin strips. He held up the lamp to show Francisco what he was doing. When he had obtained about forty strips he tied them together, and he lowered the string with the words scribbled on a note-book leaf:

‘I am a prisoner.’

After a few minutes the string was tugged. He drew it up. It was tied round two leaves of telegrams, and a note from Francisco.

The telegrams were from Appadacca.

Francisco said:

‘I received telegram summoning you to join *Huelva* at Halifax (see telegram). Wired that you were probably a prisoner, and where, and reasons why you were there. Received telegram ordering me to convey to you instructions at all costs to secure title-deeds to land. This urgently wanted. You to be rescued to-morrow night (see telegram). Let me know if you will be able to secure title-deeds.’

And Campos, having carefully read the note and the telegrams, pondered for a minute. Then he wrote on a leaf:

‘To your question — yes.’

And this he lowered.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NIGHT.



THE MAN BENEATH the window moved down the slope of the lawn into the forest. Josef Campos drew up the string, hid it, put out his light, and went to bed.

In Bellevue he fared quite sumptuously the next day. No repayment of *Huelva* starvation here, but, on the contrary, a rather crude plenty — the wines good, but not *recherché*; the fish costly in species, but indifferent in specimen; everything large and liberal and decent, nothing exquisite and high-toned.

‘Here is a being,’ thought Campos, ‘who can speculate better than he can dine, and fight better than he can eat.’

Dick P. Hocking would have admitted it with pride, but Campos thought it with scorn.

Perhaps the only implements of perfectly civilized man will be the table-knife, the fork, the curling-tongs, and harmless varieties of the plough, such as the needle, and the needle’s wife and helpmeet, the thimble. Meanwhile, blessed is the man who has handy the Maxim, the Martini, the Nordenfeldt, and the Tape-machine.

But though Campos missed his chef, and the good things nibbled in the *Huelva*, he dined largely; and his sense of gratitude did not sufficiently realize the fact that he was a prisoner, or it might have been greater. The

suite of apartments in which he found himself formed a sort of flat, of which the rather massive hall-door was double-locked.

He spent the entire day in devising his escape.

It was necessary for him, by midnight, to have the title-deeds to the Venezuela estate in his hands, and to place in the window his lamp as the signal that he had them.

Reviewing the whole matter now, he saw that his promise to obtain them had been rash; that his attempt to obtain them must necessarily be as ticklish as possible — if he was able to make it at all.

He waited. By half-past ten the house was quiet. He stood at the locked door, listening. No sound. Dick P. Hocking was an early elephant — to that fact he attributed his ‘success.’

At a few minutes after eleven Campos set to work. He took off his boots, and lifted a small table into the passage, or narrow hall, ended by the door. He put the table against the door, and on it he stood.

His plans were formed with all the adroitness characteristic of the Southern Latin races of Europe — an adroitness in which, in truth, as the Rev. Petersen said, there is something feminine, something of woman’s wit.

As one of the *plats sucrés* of his dinner, he had had a thick-crust, rather doughy apple-pie, and a large piece of that crust he had secreted. Of this, when he found himself alone for the night, he had managed, with the help of water, to make a mass which formed an excellent adhesive paste.

He had also been provided that morning with a copy of the rabidly anti-Spanish *Journal*, and a leaf of the *Journal* he now tore into an oblong about two-thirds the size of the pane of orange-coloured glass which stood above the upper horizontal joist of the door. This leaf he glued with his paste to the inner surface of the glass. He got down from the table, washed his hands, and waited a quarter of an hour.

He was in a state of great excitement. His hands trembled; but his purposes were quite definite and clear, and he proceeded to their execution without hesitation.

He had on one of his fingers a many-faceted and very large diamond of the purest water. He remounted the table, and with an edge of the diamond cut the glass round the edge of the pasted paper, taking care to cut the bottom of the oblong flush with the timber above the door.

With such scrupulous care did he proceed that it was twenty minutes before he gave a sharp inward pull at the paper, of which he had left an unpasted border for the fingers. The oblong of glass cracked, and came slanting inwards upon his two arms. He coaxed it, it disengaged itself wholly; he deposited it on the table; in a minute he was a free man on the other side.

He began to run with thievish care through the darkness; he heard a clock in a passage strike with dreadful loudness a quarter to twelve; he was very late.

He knew exactly his way to the cabinet which was his aim; he had noted it minutely on his passage to his quarters.

He slid swiftly down some broad-carpeted stairs, along two passages, then, with the slowest caution, he turned a handle and entered a bedroom. Now there was sound — the loud slumber of Dick P. Hocking. At one end of the chamber burned a nimbused *veilleuse* in feeble loneliness. Campos saw Hocking lift his stiff beard, and scratch the neck beneath in sleep.

He passed through by another door, then across a dining-room, stumbling over a chair, and down a corridor, and half-way along this he stopped and tried a handle.

He had luck; the door opened.

As he entered, a feeling of security and success possessed him. He knew even the tool by which he would be able to do his work. It was a short, sharp-pointed poker of brass, which lay with a larger one in the fireplace. But even as he went to seek for it he started: the melancholy gong of a clock in the room clanged and shivered. It was twelve, and Appadacca was as punctual as the moon and the tides.

He set flurriedly to work: struck a match, found the poker, struck another, found the lock in the cabinet, and in a moment the point was working and rummaging in the hole.

He evidently knew his way; his work was deft, swift, and almost noiseless. With a little pop and outburst the small square door flew back. Campos inserted his hand and felt the papers, and as he did so started. Suddenly the room was full of light.

He spun like a wind-smitten weather-cock, the papers gripped like death in his hand; and there at the door he saw in nightshirt and fat, short trousers, and slippers too big for him, the Rev. Silas M. Petersen, holding a lamp, gazing at him.

They faced each other, Campos very white, Petersen looking far sideways on the ground in a severe, surprised, judicial way, quite cool.

‘This, I guess, is what you’d name knocking pieces out of the rights of hospitality, señor,’ he said.

And as he said it, Campos was at him. Seizing the parson by the arm, the Spaniard dragged him into the room with a sudden tug which brought Petersen stumbling, and sent the lamp flying from his grasp.

And in the darkness Campos rushed to the key, turned it, and put it into his pocket; then to another door nearly opposite rushed, turned the key, and put it into his pocket.

At the same moment Petersen was whistling through the telephone-tube; and almost as soon as Campos had secured the second key, a responsive whistle whiffed in the room; and Petersen cried:

‘Here right now, sir! The Spaniard is here purloining *the deeds!*’

He had hardly screamed the words, when he flung himself upon Campos.

There was a hint of obscure light in the room through a half-open window, though the night without was dark, and rain was falling in sullen, heavy drops.

Campos no longer had the papers in his hand. He had with a swift movement deposited them beneath a chair; but the aim of Petersen was one of the large door-keys quite palpable in the trouser-pocket of Campos.

And now ensued a panting struggle among tumbling chairs and the cracking lamp, Petersen heaving and slanting the slim body of Campos in the strain to effect a throw, and Campos, grinning with effort, forcing Petersen backward by the hair on both sides of the temple. It was only when it was clear that the parson was much the tougher of the two, and the floor was dancing from side to side under Campos’ struggling toes, that, at the moment before his fall, the Spaniard made a sudden effort and lurch toward the window, and away went both keys flying through the air.

Outside a gruff, rough voice was heard.

‘Hi, there! What’s the meaning of this? — you and your beastly jokes! Open the door, there!’

‘The man has thrown away the keys. He has the title-deeds—’ began Petersen, and stopped suddenly in wild surprise.

A singular sound was heard from some short distance. It was a sound of cannon — the steady, sharp jabbering of a quick-firing gun.

In the room was silence, without it no sound, save that panting, intense bang-bang, bang-bang. The three men stood listening, Hocking, with

sideward head and frowning brow, his heavy eyelids making small his eyes.

Then all at once there was a cracking row, the ripping of woodwork, and the ponderous downfall of something.

‘His friends, I reckon,’ cried Petersen, ‘breaking in the front-door! You should call up the servants and — quick — the villagers!’

The ‘villagers’ consisted of some three hundred operatives, engaged on the steel-works of Hocking and Dorst at Chickville, a mile and a half away.

By the time Hocking could turn to run, there was audible a scattered tread of feet in the house below.

As he panted along a passage, he met about ten servants, some of them women, cowering and inquisitive.

‘Every Jack of you,’ cried Hocking, ‘get pokers — anything you can grip — ah, some of you have already — and knock the bottom out of that door. And you, Jane, get right to the village, and tell the men to come with any weapon they can grip.’

He himself snatched an iron bill from the hand of a girl; some ran to seek clubs of wood in the kitchens; the rest followed him to one of the locked doors, and at once a battering hail of strokes began to bump upon it.

Above the noise was heard the voice of Josef Campos crying shrilly in Spanish:

‘Hi! hi! I am here!’

The sound of the straggling, wandering footsteps had died in this tumult, though, in reality, they had come nearer; but for a time the invaders were unable to locate the spot. The loud bombardment of Hocking and his servants continued; the door began to start and spring inward at the continued stress of blows. Presently outside the other door a quiet voice said in Spanish: ‘It is here.’

And instantly at this other door began a second furious hammering, and the



THE REV. PETERSEN, WITH A DIVING RUSH, PASSED THROUGH IT.

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two, raging

together upon the two

doors, filled all the house with uproar.

It became a question of moments which of the two sets of besiegers would succeed in forcing entry. They were separated from sight of each other by a wall.

It soon became certain, however, that the later set of besiegers were both more numerous and were battering with heavier implements — with the butt-ends of their rifles, namely; and in perhaps three minutes at this door there was a crackle and crash, and two shoulders which had been urging together near the lock tumbled in with the sudden flight of the woodwork.

Now light from two ship's hand-lanterns streamed in. But as the door flew inward, the Rev. Petersen, with a diving rush, passed through it, and, before they could seize him, drove beyond the small crowd without.

Someone said above the noise:

‘Senor Campos.’

And Campos said: ‘Your Excellency.’

‘You have the deeds?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then to the shore instantly with them.’

It was then that the second door crackled and burst in. Dick P. Hocking, huge in his pyjamas, appeared.

A man with a mask over his brow and nose said in a hurried whisper to Campos:

‘Quick! Take the men with you.’

Campos was already at the door, the deeds in his hand. The man in the mask stood in the way of Hocking. Campos slipped through.

As the man turned to follow the last of his own side, Dick P. Hocking sidled with a swift movement, and barred his way.

‘Guess you don’t,’ he said.

At this time there was very little light in the room — only that of a very small bedroom lamp, held by one of the servants. The whole of the individuals composing the other party had gone, taking the ship's lanterns. The man in the mask was left alone with Hocking and the servants. He found his passage barred.

The *Huelva* party — for the *Huelva* lay in the offing — consisted of twelve. They had brought with them a small quick-firing gun, mounted on a pedestal on wheels, with which they had demolished the hall-door, on missing the preconcerted signal which Campos was to place in the window.

As they came down again, Campos in their midst now, their first thought was of the gun. It had been left on the lawn when it had been used. But now it had vanished.

They scattered to seek it among hedges and tree-clumps, and in this fruitless task spent some minutes. And even while they were so engaged, they heard a tramp of running feet and a shout.

The Rev. Petersen, on making his escape, had rushed down to bring Chickville out upon the invaders. He had only stopped to wheel the gun into a hidden grotto at the edge of the park; then, as fast as his short legs could carry him, set off for Chickville.

He met them half-way, coming. They had been roused by a servant from Bellevue. Petersen put himself at their head. They were forty workmen, who had hurriedly snatched some sort of weapon, and rushed out half-dressed.

As they entered the open space of lawn, they sent up a shout, and were joined by the servants of the house, who issued from a side-door. And the whole body scattered in twos and threes, making for the individuals of the Spanish party, who, too, were scattered in search of the gun.

The Spaniards, outnumbered and hopelessly demobilized, took at once to their heels, firing as they went. All round the undulating spread of lawn rose thickly-wooded land, and into this, at various points on one side of the house and the other, the thirteen vanished, three of the Chickville workmen having first fallen, dead or wounded.

The only course now open to the Spaniards, who had no preconceived signal for meeting, and were lost to each other, was to make their way, each man for himself, through the trees toward the seashore. And Petersen, imagining that precisely this was what they would do, hurried with his

following down in that direction, patches of smoke breaking out at odd spots along the edge of the trees.

They reached the shore with the loss of only one man more, however. Then looked for the boat; and could just discern it a cable-length from the shore, well beyond their reach. Yonder, over the water, a red port-light.

As for the Spaniards in the wood, they found themselves cut off from the boat, and without the power of mobilizing themselves in the absence of either leader or signal. This thought occurred to some, 'Where on earth *is* our leader?'

Appadacca was face to face with Hocking. They were alone. Hocking was opposing the egress of Appadacca.

'Guess you stop here, you rascal,' Hocking said.

'I warn you, however, that it is dangerous to oppose my passage,' said Appadacca.

'To the devil with your warnings! And be marvelling at my mother's gentleness in not cleaving your head with this chopper right now.'

'You refuse me passage?'

'Refuse! Ay; you and the race of you, with your beastly jokes.'

He said it with ineffable contempt.

Appadacca did not reply, or his reply was a red flash of something in Hocking's eye. He had struck a fusee, which filled the apartment with a rosy glare.

It was now that Dick P. Hocking for the first time saw him clearly. And, seeing him, he started. Here was the mask, and the very cloaked-figure of the man who had one night mysteriously fed him in his hunger.

He was so possessed and impressed by the recognition that for the moment surprise kept him from interfering with the proceedings of the unknown man; and during that moment Appadacca had lighted a small

rocket, had rushed to the window, and was holding the spouting and soaring flame out in the open night.

It was seen by all the Spaniards on both sides of the house, most of them being now far down in the neighbourhood of the shore; it was seen also on board the *Huelva*, and from her two boats at once put off.

And here was the signal which the Spaniards needed for their renewed mobilization. Immediately each man, knowing that each of the others would do that very thing, rushed from his lurking-place, the whole making half toward the house, and half toward the centre of the lawn at its back; and near here they met, and went running toward the spot of the rocket, where some belated sparks still slowly fell. Behind them came the hue and cry of the villagers and servants from the shore.

Campos had joined in this run; he borrowed a clasp-knife from one of the sailors. In his breast-pocket were the title-deeds.

At the moment when the Spaniards entered the house, the struggle between Appadacca and Dick P. Hocking was nearly over. It was fought with a cat-o'-mountain fury in that dark room, the Spaniard showing his teeth, the American heaving in persistent, unconquerable effort. There came a moment when Appadacca, freeing his right hand, buried a small curved cangiar in the American's shoulder, and at the same instant was impelled



TWO MUZZLES POINTING AT HOCKING'S HEAD.

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backward by a heavy blow in the chest. As his back staggered against the wall, the whole weight of the American pressed over him; his right hand was gripped in Hocking's left, and Hocking's iron bill was held aloft, ready to descend.

Appadacca seemed at his mercy. Yet the bill paused before it descended, and when it descended, descended harmlessly.

‘Now we are about quits,’ panted Hocking.

And while the clock might tick twice, there were rapidly-approaching footsteps, light in the room, two muzzles pointing at Hocking’s head.

Appadacca, the mask still covering his face, held up a forefinger. The muzzles dropped. Hocking hurriedly scratched his chin, hesitating, pricked, puzzled.

And now came near the sounds of the running villagers, and the shrill voice of Silas M. Petersen was heard.

Appadacca saw Campos, and said angrily:

‘What are you doing here?’

Before he could receive a reply, an indescribable mêlée, fought with every manner of weapon, commenced. In the packed passage outside the room there were crackling guns and shouts, and cracking heads, and the smiting of clubs on the partition, and struggling feet, the men of the *Huelva* fighting like tigers, the men of the village like veterans.

It could not, however, have lasted more than two minutes, when from behind the villagers there came a fresh crackling of musketry, with dying cries, and loud confusion rolled in smoke, and smell of burning wood. Then there was a shout from Josef Campos, crying, ‘Back! back!’ and the gruff growl of Hocking, ‘Stop fighting!’ And in a minute each man was running for himself, and the corridor shot out tongues of flame.

The Spaniards hurried down the stairs, and out to the front of the house, which was the end furthest from the shore.

There they formed, and at a quick march set out for the beach. The three boats were waiting now near the surf.

Behind a tree near by crouched Petersen, who had escaped from the house by the back. In the stern of one of the boats sat a lank, cloaked figure.

The Spaniards began to jump into the boats. Appadacca had already been lifted into one of them and been rowed away; five men only were left on the shore; one of them was Josef Campos.

He happened to be standing by himself a moment before being lifted into the third of the boats, when from behind a tree near a swift figure darted out upon him with such intense impetuosity that, before Campos knew of its advance, he was on the ground. With such skilled precision had Petersen chosen his opportunity, that his feat of consummate audacity was successful before he was even perceived by anyone. He had the deeds in one hand, and in the fingers of the other the windpipe of Campos, stifling his cry.

But as he leapt up, Campos shouted; and the lank figure in the boat had a night-glass at his eyes.

‘There, there!’ he cried; ‘pick me down that man quickly, one of you!’

Petersen, as he ran, dropped. The smoke cleared, and the priest, with the glass at his eyes, said:

‘Let him be brought on board the *Huelva*, if he still lives.’

The three boats passing over the sea, weltered through a red of blood, thrown abroad by the flames of Bellevue.

CHAPTER XIV.

ORGANIZING A VICTORY.



APPADACCA HAD PROMISED the British Prime Minister that the title-deeds should be in his hand on the ninth day. In spite of the fact that it had been necessary for the *Huelva* to coal outside Halifax from a collier which she molested, and for him to regain the deeds by grim fight, he was able to present himself at the Foreign Office during the afternoon of the promised day.

At this time he was alone in England, the *Huelva* being already far on her way to San Sebastian. In a room of her cabin sat the Rev. Silas M. Petersen, and opposite him on a couch reclined Father Pedro. Petersen's wounded leg lay on another chair, his trousers pulled above the bulky roll of white bandaging.

'The books I have given you,' said the priest, 'I shall expect you to read with all the intelligence at your command.'

Petersen nodded.

'I'll read them,' he said. 'Guess the look of them is a trifle heathenish, all the same.'

'I have taken this interest in the salvation of your soul,' said the priest, 'because you once quoted a passage of Scripture to me, with little comprehension of its meaning, I fear, and because, in fact, I choose to do so.'

‘Well, I am not for saying that your meaning, though mistaken, is not a praiseworthy one,’ said Petersen.

‘If difficulties should arise in your mind as you read,’ went on the priest, ‘you will apply to me. By faith, and prayer, and humility, every obstacle will be found to vanish.’

‘That’s so,’ said Petersen. ‘Myself, I guess I’ll count the time on board this yacht a well-spent season if I am made the blessed means of plucking you from the burning, old gentleman, and guiding you into the way of a real and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.’

The priest looked at the man under his eyes, stroking down his silver crucifix with his forefinger.

‘That, however,’ he said, ‘is hardly the spirit in which I wish, and expect, you to peruse the works which I have selected for your correction and conversion. The grace of humility — constant prayers for that I recommend to you as your first and chief orison.’

‘Right you are there. Don’t you go thinking that I am saying that I need it any less than you, old gentleman. I guess the old Adam is in about all of us — not a bit more in you than in me. If I could only put you in the same way of squelching him which I have found to the joy of me heart—’

The priest rose. He could not hide the nausea on his curling lip.

‘Don’t you be going right now,’ said Petersen. ‘There is that verse in the third chapter of St. John which I want to lay before you—’

The priest stalked three paces, stopped, and turned. His face was severe, his lips pressed.

‘You must pray for humility,’ he said.

‘I will,’ said Petersen; ‘I will pray for humility to be given to you.’

‘And I, on my part, will pray for it for *you*, sir. And *my* prayer will be answered, for you shall be humbled.’

‘Those only who exalt themselves shall be humbled, old gentleman. That’s the promise, and self-exaltation isn’t in my line of business, any way. You think I exalt myself, when I’m only working for your immortal soul’s good; and there’s where you mistake me. However, we’ll be understanding each other better later on, I reckon.’

‘Meantime, it is my will that you read—’

‘I will; and on that you may rely. The verse is in the third chapter, beginning, “Except a man be born—”’

Father Pedro was gone. Petersen sat and commenced to read.

The next morning the *Huelva* reached San Sebastian. Father Pedro made haste toward Madrid, where he had three long private interviews with Senor Sagasta, Martinez Campos, and the Queen, before he again set off northward for Paris.

On the third noon he was closeted at one of the Government offices in the Place de la Concorde with M. Hanotaux. He presented an informal letter from the Queen Regent.

‘What you have in mind, señor,’ said the Foreign Minister, ‘is on the programme of destiny. I speak frankly. It is too momentous to be brought about by any one man or nation, to be hindered by any one man or nation. Events have prepared it — it will be.’

‘But when, monsieur?’

‘The apple falls when it is ripe, señor.’

‘Or it may be plucked.’

‘That is an alternative, certainly.’

‘By the time the apple is ripe, monsieur, Spain may be no longer there.’

‘Yourself have said that it may be plucked, señor.’

‘How?’

‘Nothing can be done for Spain till she does something for herself.’

‘What, monsieur?’

‘She must organize a victory.’

‘One?’

‘One will be sufficient.’

‘And with what motive?’

‘This: a recovery of her collapsed prestige. Europe will not intervene on behalf of nothing, will not be urged to union and movement on behalf of nothing. Spain must show herself something — a virile, living, more or less successful nation — before she can command our overt sympathy or aid. Let her do this, and that will be one step — perhaps the only one necessary — towards the plucking of the apple.’

‘I follow you. But this victory, monsieur — is it possible, practicable?’

‘Oh, distinctly. It needs only organization.’

‘If you will hint to me in what direction—’

‘When will you see Senor Appadacca, Father Pedro?’

‘Soon. Within three days, if necessary.’

‘He is—’

‘In England.’

‘You should telegraph to him, and tell him you heard me say the word “Santiago.”’

‘Then you think — ?’

Hanotaux bowed.

‘I think the situation at least promising, Father.’

‘But the blockading ships greatly outnumber the blockaded.’

‘Not greatly, I think. Add to the side of the blockaded such a tool as the *Huelva*, and such a brain as her master’s, and, if I am a judge, Spain will vindicate her right to existence in the eyes of Continental Europe.’

‘Then I shall at once fulfil your recommendation, monsieur,’ said the priest, rising.

‘Well, then, Father Pedro, I counsel haste, while the situation is *in statu quo* — and this time there should be no failure.’

Father Pedro within the hour wired Appadacca from Paris a long telegram in cipher. It arrived at a moment when Appadacca received also the news that a telegram had been sent from New York to the London Foreign Office, warning it of the fact that the gift presented to it by the supposed dead man was, in reality, a bait offered by a living person called Appadacca, for motives inimical to both the British and American nations. The information was conveyed to Appadacca by an under-secretary in a cold note of a few lines. He recognised the hand of Dick P. Hocking. And when the telegram from Don Pedro was placed before him, he had already said to himself that very word—’ Santiago.’

At this time Commodore Schley had been already five days blockading, in the landlocked harbour of Santiago, five first - class Spanish cruisers and two destroyers with the battleships *Texas*, *Massachusetts*, and *Iowa*, the cruisers *New Orleans*, *Marblehead*, and *Brooklyn*, and the torpedo-boat *Porter*. Santiago had, in fact, been the point to which the long dodging and manoeuvring of the Spanish, aided as it had been by the great yacht, had been directed. The entrance was only a little over a couple of hundred feet wide, was long and winding, thick with mines, and dominated by forts with modern guns.

Appadacca replied to Don Pedro’s message in the words:

‘Shall await *Huelva*’s pinnacle on the Hard at Portsmouth on Thursday night. See Sagasta, and make necessary arrangements.’

It was necessary for the priest to return to Madrid. There he had left Silas M. Petersen on Petersen’s parole to make no attempt at escape.

On the second day they travelled together to Valladolid, by which time Petersen had won from the priest, by means of a particular display of interest in the doctrines of the Church, the fact that Santiago was the point of their next aim.

And at Valladolid, Petersen, as he sauntered on a tour of inspection round the town, sent this telegram in an easy figure-cipher:

‘*To* DICK P. HOCKING, New York. — Have reason to think that situation is about to be forced at Santiago. Take steps.’

CHAPTER XV.

SANTIAGO.



BY THE TIME the *Huelva* reached the neighbourhood of Santiago de Cuba, Admiral Sampson's squadron had unexpectedly joined Commodore Schley's — unexpectedly, both to Schley and to everyone else.

Sampson had been guarding the Yucatan Passage, when he received sudden sealed orders by a despatch-boat from the Navy Department. The truth was, that the message from Valladolid, communicated by Dick P. Hocking, had caused a stir at the Navy Department: 'The situation about to be forced.' At the game of 'organizing a victory' both sides could play.

As for Dick P. Hocking, he had conceived the bold idea of himself some day fighting a naval battle; meantime, he had a strong will to see one. The *Union* got under way.

So it came about that by the time the *Huelva* reached the neighbourhood of Santiago, there were some twenty ships of war of various sizes blockading the narrow harbour-entrance, and prepared for any counter-move.

In two days it was given out in New York that the destruction or capture of the Spanish squadron was certain. That they could escape from the harbour — that they could even hold communication with the open sea — seemed impossible.

The harbour mouth, as we have said, is not more than two hundred and fifty feet wide at its narrowest; along the canon it was defended by forts like

Morro Castle, and Forts Estrella and Socopa, some fitted with quite modern guns, some of the batteries masked. There were lines of torpedoes. The entire winding passage was said to be mined. Within, the land opens into a wide spread of still water, capable of holding craft of the draught of a 14,000-ton battleship. Further inward, the town spreads far upward, rising in terrace on terrace of lovely landscape to the blue distance, where it is backed by the towering ridges of the Sierra Maestra chain.

During the day the American ships coasted slowly within two thousand yards of the shore.

At night the smaller craft were left on guard, and the big cruisers and battleships retired to the deeper sea.

For this there was a pressing reason: with the Spanish fleet were two destroyers, extremely fast, and in the night terrible to the imagination.

Yet seven days passed, and nothing happened. The destroyers lay at anchor. Over Santiago brooded a horrible silence, a baleful uneventfulness.

In the brain of Admiral Cervera must be a thought, a design. But what?

He had received a telegram dated from Cadiz stating that the *Huelva* was about to sail for Santiago.

The Cadiz squadron was waiting idly, daily expecting instructions from Cervera to sail in order to reinforce him. Yet from Cervera came no word. In his silent self-sufficiency there lurked a certain mystery, a hint of terror.

On the eighth evening of the blockade, the *Huelva* lay ten miles to the south by west of Santiago. Her engines almost stopped. She showed no lights. Immanuel Appadacca, wrapped from nose to heel in indiarubbers, ascended the broad stairway to her upper deck.

The captain of the vessel awaited him, and at once preceded him toward the fore-part of the ship. There a boat of strange shape, very slim and long, resembling a huge shark in hue and form, hung ready to be lowered. She

already contained five invisible men, and near her, in the dim light, stood the lank figure of the priest. As Appadacca passed to the gleaming boat, Father Pedro lifted his right hand, bowed his head, and muttered an orison.

As soon as he had stepped on board the boat, Appadacca, too, disappeared. Rising from her flush deck a little forward of amidships was a small erection, an oblong box of steel, capable of containing a man. It was a tiny conning-tower. Within this Appadacca took his place.

The boat slid downward, and as soon as she touched the sea, flitted off, precisely in the manner of a fish, the water washing freely over her scudding deck.

She made toward the coast. In ten minutes she sighted the lights of the American warships, then proceeding to their deep-sea stations for the night; in twenty she was right among them.

They were jerking white searchlight beams in wide erratic arcs all over the sea. Yet they did not detect the hurrying boat, passing sometimes within a cable-length of some forging ram; for the fish-boat had put her fins into play, and sunk ten feet beneath the surface.

Even at this depth her speed was nine knots. Her motor was electric, supplied from storage batteries.

Every few minutes Appadacca rose from his dark course for an observation of distances and directions; then immediately sank again.

He passed through the line of smaller craft near the harbour without having been observed. He entered the canon. Here he rose. The forts had been forewarned of his passage.

In a few minutes he was on the deck of the *Vizcaya*, and was conducted to the Admiral's quarters, where he was awaited.

'I congratulate you upon your passage, señor,' said the Admiral, a plump and hale-looking man, with gray hair and cultured *bigote*.

Appadacca bowed.

‘Our conference must necessarily be hurried,’ he said. ‘The *Huelva* lies yonder, and may find it necessary to show her heels to those people. Before then I should regain her. What, Admiral, are your intentions?’

‘They remain the same, señor, as those with which I came here originally. Santiago needed a third line of defence. I supply it.’

‘It is, however, a rôle full of danger.’

‘It may be, señor.’

‘Fuller, perhaps, than you realize. It is the intention of the Americans to land some twenty thousand land-troops and marines with siege-guns; in such a case they will deliver a combined attack from sea and land, and, beyond doubt, block the harbour entrance by means of a sunken craft. In that case, you would be a prisoner, between two fires, and the end would be worse than destruction. It would be capture.’

‘Never capture, señor. Be sure that I have sufficient dynamite on board my ships to blow them up.’

‘Still, I have something better to suggest.’

‘And that is — ?’

‘Not defence, but attack.’

‘Willingly — if it be practicable. They, however, are twenty, and we are seven.’

‘Eight — with the *Huelva*’

‘Ah, yes — that is so.’

‘The suggestion is not primarily mine.’

‘Whose then?’

‘M. Hanotaux’s.’

The Admiral’s eyebrows lifted.

‘And it is known and approved in Madrid?’

‘Of that you may be certain.’

‘And what is the direct motive?’

‘It is necessary to the friends of Spain that Spain win at least one victory — the greater the odds against her the better.’

‘Then, señor, let us win it. I, at least, am ready.’

‘Victory, however, is essential. There must be no failure here. Before the attempt we must have the certainty.’

‘But how to get the certainty?’

‘By means of a little thought. It is Thought, in the end, and not metal guns which, in every contest, prevails. In that we all agree. Yet thought is almost invariably the last thing to which men resort.’

‘You have a scheme, señor?’

‘It is here,’ said Appadacca, laying a pencilled paper on the table.

The Admiral bent over it, and as he bent, he smiled.

‘This seems to me most admirable!’ he said.

‘Do you advocate to-night as the time?’

‘Why not at once?’

A flush gradually overspread the Admiral’s face. He rose and held out his hand to Appadacca. Appadacca had the trick of inspiring men.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BATTLE.



FOR OVER TWO hours a continual bustle prevailed throughout the length and breadth of the Spanish ships. Collision mats were got ready; water-tight doors were closed; on the cleared decks preparations were made for rigging torpedo-nets. By the time all magazines were opened, and ammunition and projectiles got out, the ships lay with fires banked, and steam at a very few minutes' notice.

It was ten o'clock. Yonder, up the terraced hill, blinked Santiago through a thousand dim and sleepy eyes of light; silence was in the air, made deeper by the vague drone of the mosquito, the West Indian moscon, and the rare firefly. The air was black and hot. With every movement of the sea, luminous mists of phosphorescent lights danced and twisted and disappeared on its surface. The noise of preparation on the ships died down, and all was still. As for Appadacca, he was reading, fifteen miles away, in the library of the *Huelva*.

Then there was a quick panting of small engines, a clank of chains. Captains of cruisers and commanders of destroyers had returned from a conference in the flagship. Boats were swung up, and in ten minutes there was movement on the water.

The ships passed down the narrow channel, the two destroyers leading. The unarmoured *Reina Mercedes*, a rather lame duck, was left in the harbour. At three hundred feet from the entrance they were sighted by a

passing American torpedo-boat. When the foremost of the Spaniards emerged, signal of their coming had been flashed among the Americans.

The first object of Cervera was to escape injury from this small flotilla, in order to engage directly with the heavily-armoured ships under the conditions as to sea-room and other things arranged with Appadacca.

At the harbour mouth one of the destroyers turned sharply to port, the other two to starboard; the four cruisers, the Cristobal Colon, Vizcaya, Almirante Oquendo, and Maria Teresa, steered south at only a cable-length's interval, the Vizcaya leading. These were all ships of twenty knots, as modern as they were fast, with 12-inch armour-belts, plated decks, turrets firing two 28-cm. guns, with ten Hontoria 14-cm. guns, and eight 57-mm. quick-firers. The Americans had present no equally good combination of speed, power, and modernity.

At a thousand yards from the harbour entrance the cruisers had acquired a speed of twelve knots, while the position of the steam-cones told that they had power to spare. Every moment their rate accelerated. At nine hundred yards from the region of the Americans they were racing forward in line abreast.

Still no sound; the American ships are greatly spread out; three having gone racing eastward, four westward, to deal with the two destroyers, which else, with their high speed, will elude the blockade; only three are left in the centre of the American line to oppose the advancing cruisers.

The tactics of the Spaniards are to be silent for as long a time as possible, lest the big ships outside hear the rumour of the row. But suddenly, with one venomous exclamation, the stillness is over; the *Texas* has launched a needle of steel from her bow tube above the water-line. From her the centre of the advancing Spanish line is not more than two hundred yards away; the torpedo plunges like a slim, athletic diver, and goes darting steadily, as if

with headstrong design, straight for the ram of the *Cristobal Colon*. The sea is smooth, rolling in oily heaves. In another moment the torpedo is at the central armour-belt of the *Colon*; it has touched, and runs, but as lightly as a piston glides in its cylinder; there is contact without impact. In intense haste the needle glides sternward along the glassy metal, until it reaches the region of foam around the screws. The port-screw strikes it, and it utters its awful bark.

The stern of the *Colon* jumps a little upward, but without injury. The explosion is ten yards astern.

At that moment, along a line of five miles, the night breaks into smoky glare and blustering, rolling hubbub.

But in the centre the row is so short as to resemble an exclamation. The four cruisers have broken the American line — the *Maria Teresa* with shattered fore-armoured tube, and the torpedo-boat *Texas* dipping by her broken bows.

Yonder, east and west, the American boats are crowding in pursuit of the two swift destroyers, training their lights and guns upon them as they rush at twenty-five knots through the whitening water. And there the sound of the battle congregates into two crowds of quickcracking uproar, while from the outer sea the massive armaments of the Americans, pouring hurried masses of dense smoke from their funnels, come hasting in, in two lines ahead, at the noise of the fray.

That the four Spaniards can hope to live for five minutes in the presence of this accumulation of power seems like a madness. The *Massachusetts* is a 10,000-ton ship, with two barbettes, carrying 13-inch guns; the *Iowa* is an 11,000-tonner, with four 45-ton guns. None of the Spaniards are over 9,000 tons, and they are four to ten.

On the weak side, however, is audacity, design, and the *Huelva*.

On board the *Huelva* there is a strange something swaying in the faint night-breeze near the second funnel. It is a great oatshaped bag, made of twilled Lyons silk, coated within and without with gutta-percha, and it contains hydrogen gas, obtained by passing the steam from a small boiler through a furnace of coke and anthracite. Over it is a net, and attached to the net a hoop, and attached to the hoop a cubical wicker-work basket, capable of containing four men.

And since the four men who will now occupy it must necessarily — almost necessarily — die, the crew of the *Huelva* is drawn up on her upper deck, and her captain, passing before them, puts the case, and demands volunteers. Appadacca and the priest are standing on the poop. Some hundred right hands go up. The captain thinks a minute, and puts his hand on four shoulders.

At that moment the priest spoke, as if smitten by a sudden thought.

‘But stop,’ he said; ‘we have a prisoner, señor. We may therefore save a life.’

Appadacca smiled, rather contemptuously.

‘Does he, then, remain unconverted, Father?’ he said.

‘As unconverted as an ape. The man belongs to an impossible race.’

‘But his life is a life also, is it not? Have we the right — ?’

‘A prisoner may be made to perform forced labour with justice. The man is joined to his idols.’

‘Ah! I see — joined to his idols; therefore he must be — Well, I naturally do not care what you do with this person, Father Pedro.

He is your prisoner, you know. If he no longer amuses you, destroy him by all means, if that is your whim.’

The priest at once went forward, and spoke some words to the captain. The captain descended into the cabin. As he did so, out, from hardly four

miles away, broke the huge clamour of the meeting ships. The *Huelva* had need of haste.

The Americans were steaming directly north in two lines ahead at some eleven knots, the *Iowa* leading the port limb, the *Marblehead* the starboard. The Spaniards came south at fifteen knots, making an aggregate passing speed between ships of twenty-six knots, or nearly half a mile a minute. Yet in that swift by-rush of the ships — two of the Spaniards on the outside of the port limb of the Americans, and two on the outside of the starboard, and each ship belching a broadside within the space of four minutes of some 11,000 rounds of quickfiring and machine shot and shell — not a single unprotected man or gun on the Spanish ships was fit for further work. The crews in their military tops, as in the military tops of all the Americans, were no more; and from the stern-works of the *Vizcaya* a wide, sparkling fume, thronged with ascending points of light, went as a beacon through the night. The ships turned, re-formed, and prepared to charge.

At that moment it was that the American officers became aware of two things: First, that one of the enemy's ships was flying; and, secondly, that an electric light was passing and pouring, first upon one ship, then upon another, downward from mid-air.

At this sight the heart of the boldest quailed.

But it was to the running ship that Admiral Sampson first turned his thought, in spite of the impending doom above; and out from the *Brooklyn* at once went the trumpet-call, ordering two of the cruisers in that limb to join her in the chase of the escaping ship. The speed of the *Brooklyn* was twenty-one knots, at least one knot faster than the speed of the fastest of the Spanish cruisers.

The three ships, labouring under all steam, went churning to the south-east, one of them rattling as they did so the ribs of one of the port Spaniards

which came within effective range.

But *which* of the Spanish cruisers was it that they chased? They did not know. And they were hardly half a mile gone when wonderment seized the rest of their fleet, for there, certainly, returning to the charge, were the four battered cruisers!

And now began to be revealed to all the whole inwardness of the scheme of Appadacca; for yonder in the starboard line of the Americans are only two ships left to fight two, and in the port line, above the five, hangs in the air a thing which will surely speak.

It is a thing which can make its way in the air even in the face of a light breeze. It is fitted with an electric light arrangement which can throw its rays in a circle five feet wide directly downward on the deck of a ship, and its car is packed with dynamite shells, whose steel casing contains liquid oxygen and blasting gelatine.

Positively now, unless the small flotilla further in shore speed at once to the aid of their ships in deep water, it seems that there is no hope for the concentrated fleet of America. But the small flotilla have their work cut out in dealing with the rushing destroyers, which are eluding and attacking them in incalculable conflict.

Suddenly, just as the big bow-guns of the ships begin to bark in the renewed attack, there hoots a sound which drowns every other, a sound at which the palefaced inhabitants of Santiago, listening in horror to the thunders of this hideous night, start with an intenser shiver. One of the shells has dropped from that evil, soaring thing directly above the engine-room of the *Iowa*; there resounds a series of heart-appalling shocks, hurrying at last into a roaring and raging rattle, as a spout of red and yellow flames bursts high and far over the sea. The two fore-port magazines have

been ignited, and, as the ship lurches and dives, the thing in the air sails onward a score of yards, and manœuvres above the *Vixen*.

But what is the astonishment of Admiral Sampson when he finds that the further he chases, and the greater the agony of haste with which he urges the *Brooklyn*, the further seems to steal away the ship he follows. When he starts in pursuit, a barbette shot from his bows bursts a hundred yards ahead of the flying ship; seven minutes afterwards she is beyond effective range.

The Admiral, gazing abroad over the waters, is puzzled, but determined. He will follow her, he says, to Hell — igoland; and as he goes tearing on this wild-goose chase, the navy of America behind him is being annihilated.

It is a question of minutes.

Suddenly, at a moment when the wide uproar of the spouting and thundering *Iowa* is beginning to sink into a sullen muttering, a new, sharp sound breaks from the dark upon the Admiral's ear. It is a trumpet-call from a lightless ship travelling briskly in the opposite direction, two cable-lengths on his beam; and from the sonorous throat of brass came these words in vibrant distinctness to the Admiral's ear:

‘Don't follow her, Sampson! it's the *Huelva*!’

The throat was the throat of the trumpet, but the words were the words of Dick P. Hocking.

The *Union* had arrived just in time to see the battle.

Straight onward she went, smoothly walking the water, dangerously near to the region of shrieking shell and white sea-thrash, and the quick jabbering of Nordenfeldts and Gardners, and balls of flying flame. At this time the Spaniards were for the second time turned outwards to the Americans, and the Americans for the second time shoreward to the Spaniards, all the Spaniards still afloat, and the odds four ships and the balloon to five ships.

But the balloon, cruising high up in darkness, except at the moment of action, when it cast its intense instantaneous fan of radiance, had an effective value of quite five or six other battleships.

At the moment when the slow, distant firing once more quickened into a sudden thronging outrage of hell-fire, bursting from both sides, dazing the brain and splitting the ear, the *Union* was perhaps two thousand yards to the southward of the southernmost American ship, and was still forging slowly ahead to the northward. She had a searchlight playing, and Dick P. Hocking, in pyjamas, had his eyes at a night-glass on the poop.

His soul was in his gaze; his lower jaw hung open a little. Here, truly, was man's work — no child's-play — a thing which a man might do. A kind of crooked smile distorted his gaping mouth. It was a sight one might pay to be at — a thing a man of force and intelligence might set about himself, and take a pride in doing right well. He looked, and he saw a flame burst from the forecastle of the *Cristobal Colon*, and go waving aft like a plume; he saw the *Vixen* throw her humming screws into the air and her nose into the sea, as a duck when it dives; and immediately afterwards he saw an intense light shoot downward upon the deck of the *Massachusetts*, and he made out the form of the balloon. It was sailing on the land-breeze in the direction of the *Union*.

A shell broke into glare ninety feet from



Hocking, and sent a splinter into his aft skylight.

Hocking hardly noticed. He had lifted a Winchester which had been leaning near, and had put it to his shoulder, the muzzle pointed upward.

He was in no hurry; he took his time. He cocked his right leg, and drew it in, and cocked it again. His left eye was shut tight. Then he pulled the trigger, and as he pulled it he muttered:

‘You and your beastly jokes...!’

Like a creature which has received a deadly hurt, the balloon uttered a shriek, heard indistinctly by the men in her car. At that moment it dropped a shell, but it fell into the sea.

The car was seen to protrude its form into the region of smoky glare; then the hoop and strings; then the now lax and flaccid silken bag. Floating hopelessly, with languid abandonment, at the mercy of the wind, it drooped downward and outward. When the car touched the water, it was about two hundred yards from the *Union*. Her boat was out, ready to rescue.

The balloon floated quite steadily for a minute, then with an absolute suddenness disappeared.

At the same time the battle was over. The three cruisers which had hurried after the *Huelva* reappeared, long before they were looked for by the Spaniards. The Spaniards at the same moment saw the two sources of hope upon which they relied cut off. The *Huelva* was no longer pursued — the balloon was in the water. Without hesitation the four cruisers, one of them very low in the bows, turned for the harbour at full speed, firing only stern-guns. They found the passage clear, and immediately on entering it were followed by the destroyer *Terror*, which, with the *Pluton*, now at the bottom, had accounted for five of the American small craft.

The forts now opened fire to cover their retreat, but, with the inefficiency of Spanish forts, did no one any hurt. The *Massachusetts*, growling her last growl as the last of the Spaniards disappeared beyond a curve of the canon, withdrew sullenly to the outer sea.

Meantime Dick P. blocking's abdomen was in agitation, heaving with laughter. Up from the boat sent to rescue the balloonists climbed the Rev. Silas M. Petersen, streaming with brine.

‘Parson!’ said Dick P. Hocking. ‘This can’t be you, man! Why, I’m darned if it ain’t a case of Jonah and the whale’s belly!’

‘Guess you ain’t far out there,’ said Petersen; ‘though sharks are more in the line of business of these waters, I reckon.’

‘But it *can*’t be you! Is it you?’

‘That’s about what it comes to.’

‘Then — you — are — the little parson for me!’ cried Hocking, shaking his hand crazily; ‘that’s about all I can say!’

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHASE.



IT WAS NECESSARY for Dick P. Hocking to return immediately to New York. During the night he received from Admiral Sampson a despatch for Washington, and set off eastward before break of day. He was perfectly serene, having no suspicion that his presence there was known to any enemy, or that he had been watched.

To his chagrin, the next morning at breakfast he received the news that the *Union* hardly had coal in her bunkers to take him to Tampa. It was either a question of returning to the fleet, or making for Cape Haytien. He was now a considerable distance out from Cuba, so he went about, having determined upon the other route homeward.

He coaled at Cape Haytien, and was not more than half an hour from the harbour when on the port bow he sighted the smoke of a big ship.

All on the *Union* were very much on the *qui vive*; an eager look-out was kept. The rate of approach of the other vessel was phenomenal; one seemed able to see her growth on the horizon. Before the *Union* herself could have been visible to the other, it was definitely made out that the other was the *Huelva*.

And now Dick P. Hocking had searchings of heart. He had felt the keenness of Appadacca's sting, and for various reasons, at this precise juncture, he was averse to feeling it again.

He called a conference in the cabin — himself, Petersen, the captain. Petersen said that, in his opinion, the *Huelva* had seen the *Union* on the night of the battle, and surmised the share which the small vessel had had in the determining of events. He would not be surprised, he said, to find in her master the petty spite of a woman. The *Huelva* was seeking the *Union*.

‘Then what to do?’ queried Hocking.

What *not* to do Petersen knew. They must not think for that day of the ordinary route to Tampa. The *Huelva* would be upon them before nightfall; they must pursue, while still unobserved, their eastward course.

So eastward the *Union* went.

At Savanna, Hocking heard by telegram from an agent in Cape Haytien that a fishing-boat of the port had been stopped by the *Huelva*, which had demanded news of the *Union*. The boat had given it. The *Huelva*, was therefore on her way eastward in search of the *Union*.

Then again there was conference, anxious heads laid together. Petersen lived studying the map. He gave his voice, and Hocking agreed, for proceeding still eastward, to find perhaps a hiding-place among the islands of the Lesser Antilles. When the *Huelva* shot further eastward than they, then they would return on their westward course.

For three days the *Union* neither heard of nor saw the *Huelva*; she prepared to retrace her long détour. They were seven miles to the windward of the island of Nevis when, in a new laying-together of heads, this step was agreed upon at an early hour of a bright tropical morning.

However, they had hardly come to this decision when there was commotion on deck, a series of calls from bow to stern, and all the signs of that excitement among sailors when the monotonous deep brings forth a sensation.

Dick P. Hocking and Silas M. Petersen ran at once above.

It was towards the south-east end of Nevis, on the windward side of the island.

Hocking, Petersen, and the captain of the *Union* put glasses to their eyes, turned to the north-west, and mused. The pennant of smoke in the distance acquired distinctness; it grew rapidly.

‘Say,’ said Dick P. Hocking, ‘is that thing there the *Huelva*? Yes or no?’

The Rev. Petersen slowly lowered his glasses, and he said: ‘Guess it is, this time.’

A sound of vexed impatience came from Hocking’s lips.

‘Darn the thing!’ he said. ‘Isn’t anything to be done, man? I’m not over keen on falling into that liverless Spaniard’s hands right now, either.’

Petersen did not answer. He stood thinking a minute; then he ran towards the chart-room.

In less than two minutes he reappeared.

‘Guess there’s a chance,’ he said. ‘What’s your very best speed, captain?’

‘I’ve seen her do her twenty knots before this,’ said the captain.

‘Look at that darned thing, how she’s growing up there like a prickly-pear tree,’ said Hocking.

‘We may play her a trick yet,’ remarked Petersen.

‘Come, the parson’s got something in his head. What’s the colour of it, parson?’

‘Yonder, right ahead of us, is Redonda,’ said Petersen.

‘Well?’

‘Just put this ship in my hand right now, and though it isn’t what you might call in my line of business, I’ll answer to bring her through.’

‘Here’s the little man that’s right for both worlds, capitan mio! A fe de caballero!’ cried Hocking enthusiastically. ‘What he says goes aboard this

craft, I guess.’ And he added in a lower tone: ‘But he’ll need to be precious cute to get out of the clutches of that ship this day, all the same.’

Petersen and the captain rushed together to the bridge. The captain, meanwhile, touched the electric knob, ordering full steam. The *Union* poured over the sea a wide hovering incense of black.

On board the *Huelva* was a very powerful telescope, specially designed and constructed for her conning-tower. At about the time when Petersen and his captain were consulting together on ways and means, the captain of the *Huelva* called down to Appadacca in his cabin:

‘A ship ahead, which I believe to be the one we are looking for.’

Appadacca answered:

‘It is important that she should be captured.’

‘Right, your Excellency!’ cried the Sicilian, and at once the whispering run of the steadily-clipping ship increased in speed. There was then an interval of perhaps fifteen knots between the vessels.

The chase began in earnest. The bows of the *Union* pointed straight upon Redonda, which appeared as a mere faint dream of blue in the delicate haze of the distance.

Down beat the tropical sun upon that peculiarly deep and steel-like blue which the sea of those regions assumes. Hocking lay at his length in a deck-chair, in pyjamas, smoking, peeping now through shuddering eyes at the glowing ball of flame above, now at the growing pennant of smoke across the heaving waste of water.

And as he looked he groaned, and the heavy lids of his eyes drooped lower in a sulky frown. But no one could have told by regarding the man that within he was all a-tingle with apprehension.

The bell went clang-clang, then again after two seconds clang-clang: four bells in the forenoon watch. The *Huelva* was ten miles astern. Her hull

now was visible through the glasses.

But now, too, the azure mirage which had been Redonda began to be no longer azure, nor a mirage; streaky opal zigzags of rock lined its face, and one saw that it was not a cloud, but solid land.

The Rev. Silas M. Petersen walked the bridge; his hands trembled with eagerness. Would he not be too late? The waving pennant of the *Huelva's* smoke was like a brag of invincible speed. The captain ran to the engine-room stair, and, calling the chief engineer half-way up, cried:

‘For Heaven’s sake, get every inch you can out of her!’

The sea whitened round the toiling *Union*. The *Huelva* stretched like a greyhound bent upon a leveret.

The island towards which they were hasting was a mere rock, rising with craggy sides from the water, conical in shape, and uninhabited, save by boobies, and three men who live on its summit for the purpose of collecting the guano of the innumerable sea-fowl which haunt its shrubless sea-wall. The three men are lifted and lowered from and to the sea by a basket-and-crane arrangement high up on the face of the rock. From the summit a view (which the present writer has twice enjoyed) is obtained for many a mile over the sea as far as the coasts of Nevis to the north and Montserrat to the south.

By the time the ravines and indentations of the rock had come to seem to the *Union* near and real, the *Huelva* was five miles astern. The great ship sent up the single signal in the common code:

‘Stop!’

The *Union* kept on her way.

There was a minute’s silence of fear and awful expectancy, and at the end of it one of the nine-inch fore-barbette guns of the *Huelva* sent out a rush of redness. Then came a shell travelling in silent swiftness along the

water; a ball shot with extraordinary precision from a distance usually beyond effective range, making right in the wake of the *Union*, bound without fail for her poop. Certainly the crew of the *Huelva* had among them at least one perfect marksman.

But the shot, fired too far off, dived into a wave twenty yards astern of the *Union*. The rock was two miles ahead of her.

Dick P. Hocking, standing now with Petersen on the bridge, said:

‘Parson, this time, I reckon—’

‘They’d better look lively about it, then,’ answered Petersen. ‘They’ve got exactly seven minutes and a half to do their work in. If they linger, they’ll lose the deal.’

‘But how, man — ?’

‘Wait — you’ll see.’

The *Huelva* was evidently reserving her next shot for closer quarters. It was quite four minutes before it left her bows. She was then within four miles astern of the *Union*.

And the shell came with the same appalling precision of aim, crying that peculiar busy shriek of large shrapnel fired over water. It was clearly meant to annihilate the screws and rudder of the *Union*, and it struck.

At the moment of impact, however, the *Union* was on the point of mounting a wave, her bows up, her stern low; the shell caught the extremity of her upper stern-works, and sent the woodwork spouting and hovering sixty feet into air, like a scattered group of black sea-birds.

That was all. When the burst of uproar was over, the flash and smoke out of the eyes, and the wreckage a hundred yards astern, it was seen that rudder, steering-gear, and screws remained intact.

‘Now, at last, I guess we’re safe,’ said Petersen.

‘Believe me, parson, I don’t understand you!’ cried Hocking. ‘How safe?’

‘Well, they can’t have that gun ready for another shot within four minutes, I reckon; and unless they fire upon us from their broadside, or from a military-top, they’ll find us under cover next round sure enough.’

‘Under cover? Where?’

‘Behind the rock.’

‘But they’ll come behind, too, I guess?’

‘Then we’ll be on another side when they do.’

‘But—’

‘That’s so.’

‘Yes; but they are miles faster than we.’

‘Not in dodging round that rock, sir.’

‘Anywhere.’

‘But not there.’

‘Why not?’

‘Because the inner of two circles is the smaller, any day. We can get in nearer than they — so the chart says, and so the captain says.’

Hocking’s eyes opened wide, and his mouth.

‘Well, I’m darned if I don’t think you’re right!’ he cried after half a minute, and he shook Petersen’s hand in a grip that meant many things.

As he did so Petersen clutched him, cried, ‘Look out!’ and skulked behind the railing. A rain of machine-gun shot fell ripping and smashing upon the quarter-deck.

‘Hard down!’ cried the captain at the same moment.

They were at the rock. In perhaps half a minute the *Huelva* was hidden from the *Union* by a bluff. The small ship was not two cable-lengths from the shore.’

Even within few yards of the narrow strip of sand the water is deep; but the bottom shelves very gradually outward, so that for a considerable distance to sea the rock is unapproachable by such a ship as the *Huelva*, with draught of twenty-five feet. In order to steam round the rock, it was therefore necessary for her to traverse a distance some three times greater than that necessary for the *Union*, and her speed was not nearly three times greater. When the *Union* found herself under shelter she slackened speed.

Presently the bow of the *Huelva* was seen, far out, peeping round the brow of a headland, but by the time her whole length emerged the *Union* had disappeared behind a curve of land. They went steaming round the rock, hiding and seeking.

And all the length of that tropical day they resembled two persons dodging round a table. Sometimes the *Huelva* slackened speed and waited; and presently there, stealing forward far within, would come the *Union*; and before a volley could leave the broadside of the great yacht the other had turned and disappeared. Sometimes, again, the *Huelva* would fly in circular career with all the power of her travingling engines, but always the smaller ship could beat her in the revolution of the rock.

Moreover, the *Union* had a three-pounder on board with which she could readily have sunk a boarding-boat. But no such attempt was made.

It was towards one bell, second dog-watch, when the sun's lower rim had touched the horizon, that the *Huelva* turned her bows finally away.

And as she did so the *Union* for a minute or two stood boldly out, and on her main stood arrayed in signal-flags these words:

‘Next time *I* will do the chasing.’

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE 'JANE RICHARDSON.'



THE *UNION* WAS not more anxious to be out of her imprisonment round Redonda and to be away than was the *Huelva*.

One went toward the north and east, the other toward the north and west. The man whom Appadacca was anxious above all others to see was M. Hanotaux; the man whom Hocking was bent upon seeing was Cramp, of Philadelphia.

He determined that Immanuel Appadacca had been leading him a dance long enough. He had begun it seven years before, and he was doing it still, with his beastly jokes.

Hocking spent three extremely active days at New York, transacting a world of business connected with the general running of his house. What kept him back longest was the getting of the *Jane Richardson* to sea.

She was a 5,000 - ton steamer, rather old, barque-rigged — for the most part a Rio and Liverpool trader — one of the makers of the house of Hocking. She was off now to Rio, and she had on board three hundred thousand pounds in gold specie. On the third day Dick P. Hocking saw her drop down the harbour past Fort Wandsworth into the Narrows. And at once, with Petersen, who meanwhile had preached a thrilling discourse at Brooklyn on the horrors of war (by an eyewitness), he set off for Philadelphia.

He knew that there was something there for him to see. What there was for him to see was two boats lying quietly in the Inner Dock — black, ugly things, low in the water, with the curve of a ram indicated at the water-line; small craft, one a hundred and forty feet long, one two hundred and twenty; and within one three tubes, and within the other, five. Besides these, there is a third on the stocks — the biggest of the three — a cross between a torpedo-boat and a destroyer. A yard from the rudder of the first is painted on her side the large white figure 1; in a similar place on the second the figure 2; on the third the figure 3: 1 and 2 have already had trial-trips, and the speed of 1 is twenty-five, and of 2 twenty-eight; the speed of 3 is estimated at thirty-three, her indicated horse-power being four thousand eight hundred.

And on the dock-quay stood Dick P. Hocking, right hand in pocket, left behind his back, leg projected, with slanting, contemplative head. He looked up at the short mast with the crosstree, and his eye followed it to the hull; and from the low stern to the high stem his eye travelled along the lengthy rake of beam. And on his left Petersen stood, and looked with slanting head; and on his right, Cramp, with slanting head.

Twenty men, leaning over the side of No. 1, and twenty-three over the side of No. 2, got a signal from Cramp, and understood who it was that was inspecting them; and they sent up a cheer.

And Hocking said:

‘That’s about something like what I wanted. And No. 3 — I request to know the earliest date at which she can be put to sea?’

‘Say Thursday,’ said Cramp—’ four days from now.’

‘Coal and everything?’

‘Fifty-five tons of it.’

As they were leaving the yards, a telegram was placed in the hand of Dick P. Hocking.

It came from the captain of the *Jane Richardson*, which had put in by order at Charleston. It was a rather lengthy communication; it ended by saying:

‘Strange man came on board during my absence in port, and got from first officer all information as to cargo, etc., under false pretences, apparently. Guess from description disguised Spaniard. Apprehend danger, perhaps groundlessly.’

Dick P. Hocking handed the telegram first to Petersen, and then to Mr. Cramp.

‘Guess that ship could do with a bit of convoying,’ he muttered with a nod.

And Petersen nodded, too, and Cramp was serious.

‘You both look like agreeing with me,’ said Hocking.

‘It has that appearance,’ assented Cramp.

Then, what you’ve got to do is to make those four days three, or even two, if human nature can screw itself up to it.’

Cramp speculated upon the ground.

‘Can’t be done, sir!’ he said with decision.

‘It can, if I make it worth your while; and I will. Three days at the outside, and there’s fifteen thousand dollars over and above the contract. Why, man, a million and a half in solid gold is at stake here!’

‘Well, I might shake hands on three days, perhaps; but it’s a risk, I guess. As it is, no dockyard on this earth ever turned out ships at the rate we’ve run these. But I can only try, that’s all.’

So they went forth, and drank champagne: and as they were drinking, Immanuel Appadacca, on the other side of the ocean, was drawing on his

gloves at a window in the salon of his suite in the Hotel de l'Athénée, Paris.

Behind him sat Josef Campos, nervously turning the leaves of the *Figaro*. He turned them to the end, and began again from the beginning. He wanted to say something which he found it hard to say.

Appadacca turned to go. He bowed as he passed Campos, with a 'Buenos dias, caballero.'

Campos coughed.

'Am I wrong in thinking that you have something to communicate?' said Appadacca, stopping.

'Senor, we are — *very* — pressed for money,' answered Campos, coming straight to the point.

Appadacca laughed.

'Excuse my levity, Senor Campos,' he said, 'but you said the words with *such* an air of seriousness!'

'But — is it not, then, serious, señor?'

'Is it? It may be. I never gave the matter a thought. But I will; you may rely upon me.'

'Thank you, señor.'

'Meantime, the time you choose is inopportune for the discussion of a matter of that sort. I cannot wait; I am about to meet the French Minister. Pray refer to the subject again. Good-day.'

His close brougham was at the door. He drove south-westward to the Foreign Office, where he was awaited. He was soon closeted with M. Hanotaux.

Hanotaux continually stroked his straggling imperial, and there was rather an underlook in his eyes as the conference proceeded.

'It is necessary for me, monsieur,' Appadacca said, speaking French, 'to know how far and how near is the intervention of Europe in this war, before

I can take further steps.'

'The intervention, I fear, is where it was, señor,' said M. Hanotaux. 'You know of that natural condition of very cold water in a glass or cup: the least shake of the vessel will make it shudder into solid ice, but in the absence of the shake, it remains liquid an indefinite time.'

'The naval affair at Santiago, and the loss of the Americans therein, does not, then, affect the European situation?'

'It was *nearly* a great victory, señor,' said Hanotaux with a bow. 'Certainly, it was organized with consummate skill; but the results, I must say, have not struck Europe with the vividness which your generalship richly deserves.'

'You compliment me too much, monsieur. The affair was entered upon at your suggestion. Is another attempt necessary?'

'It would be difficult now, señor.'

'Nothing is difficult, monsieur.'

'Still, there are other points upon which the activities of the friends of Spain might at this moment be more profitably directed.'

'And those are?'

'Firstly and chiefly, the prevention of the invasion of Cuba by land-troops — or, at least, the retardation.'

'And why, monsieur?'

'Because — because — . I tell you that there's not a single State in Europe which is not secretly and strongly on the right side. Germany, it is already known in diplomatic circles, is prepared to interfere — actively, if need be, if only in Manila. Of France and Russia, of Italy and Austria, you have no doubt. Even in England, I assure you, the middle and upper classes favour Spain. It is only the rabble and the base press of that country which have had the bad taste to range themselves on the queer side. As for

Germany, well, Italy, of course, is her ally, and Italy is the cousin of Spain. You may be sure that Italy, if it be suggested to her, will do all the spurring of Germany which may be necessary; in fact, none is necessary. But I say this: Spain must not make it too difficult for her friends; she must not show herself incompetent. She must not permit herself to be invaded — at least, not just yet.’

‘You have now told me the why, monsieur,’ said Appadacca, ‘but as to the how? The invasion of Cuba is regarded as more or less inevitable.’

‘It may, however, be retarded, till the friends of Spain decide together upon their course.’

‘And how?’

‘By means of a real phantom fleet.’

‘Ah? Pray be more explicit.’

‘You know how many phantom Spanish fleets have lately been seen near the coasts of America and in other parts of the world. Suppose, immediately before the embarkation of American troops for Cuba, a well-authenticated phantom fleet be seen in the distance. Since the troops must necessarily be unconvoyed for lack of warships, there I think you would have a perfectly sure method of delaying the embarkation for some considerable time.’

‘But “well - authenticated”?’ said Appadacca.

‘Yes; hence I say “a *real* phantom fleet.” The ships must really be seen by perfectly trustworthy witnesses, for the effect of a mere report would simply be nil. Meantime, while the mysterious fleet was being seen, the Spanish Premier might persistently declare the Spanish ships to be at Cadiz — which would be perfectly true, but which would be at once supposed in America to be perfectly false. The mysterious fleet would thus be infallibly assumed to be Spanish.’

‘Precisely, monsieur. But since this phantom fleet is, as you say, to be composed of real ships — and since the Spanish fleet at Cadiz is unready to put to sea — where, think you, is Spain to procure this phantom fleet?’

‘Ah, that is the business of Spain; I merely make the suggestion,’ said M. Hanotaux, stroking his *barbiche*, his mouth a little open.

‘I might also make this further suggestion, that such a thing as the *borrowing* of a fleet has been more than once known, señor.’

With such delicacy had the suggestion been led up to, that Appadacca was now expecting it, and showed no surprise.

‘If we must borrow, monsieur,’ he said with a bow, ‘it is surely from France that we would choose to borrow.’

‘And if France is to be a lender, señor, it is surely to Spain, above all, that she would choose to lend.’

The two men were all bows and smiles.

‘We, however,’ said M. Hanotaux, ‘are in this unfortunate position, that the present Government is, from hour to hour, uncertain of its tenure of office. Very soon, in fact, it is certain that a crisis will come; M. Méline will resign; a new Ministry will be formed. Nor am I sure that I shall then be asked to retain my portfolio of foreign affairs; and the Minister of Marine is in the same predicament.’

‘I follow you closely, monsieur.’

‘It results from those facts that we must be in a position at any moment to give an account of our stewardship. The cost of an expedition of French ships on a service not French would therefore necessarily be defrayed by the nation benefited. The Ministre de la Marine assures me that the cost on the whole, including loss of home-service and expenditure, would amount to six hundred thousand francs.’

‘You will not, pray, be at all concerned as to that, monsieur,’ said Appadacca. ‘I, personally, undertake to be responsible for the amount, and will refund it as soon as ever it becomes due, tendering you, in addition, the most earnest, the most profound thanks of my country.’

Shortly after this the interview closed. Appadacca had no sooner reached his hotel than a telegram, dated Rome, was handed him. It was from the priest, Don Pedro, who had been sent first to Turin, to conduct negotiations with the Canon, and thence to the Vatican, with which he had been in correspondence through the Pope’s Vicar-General. Father Pedro wired in cipher:

“Interview with Cardinal Parocchi quite successful. Germany certain. No cross-currents. Vatican and Crown pull together here. Immediately necessary for what you surmise — nine hundred thousand lires.’

Appadacca, still gloved, read the telegram standing. To Campos sitting in the balcony he threw it.

‘There, señor,’ he said, ‘is yet a further call upon your resources. Will you be also good enough to add to the nine hundred thousand lires, say, six hundred thousand francs, which will be due from you to the French Government within, let us guess, a week.’

Appadacca threw down his hat, and began to draw off his gloves. Campos came before him, standing with pallid, agitated face.

‘Senor!’ he said, ‘is it that you persist in mocking me after my long service? or do you assume the rôle of the *ingénu* out of mere merriment?’

Appadacca with a quick movement confronted him, surprised.

‘What do you mean?’ he asked.

‘To be quite frank, señor,’ said Campos, ‘it is rather a question with me how to pay our current expenses, our hotel and travelling bills, than the meeting of monstrous Governmental demands such as you mention. To

myself, at least, I seem to deserve some sympathy from a faithfully-served master.'

'And I give it you, señor,' said Appadacca. 'I think, however, that I remember reproving you, and this very day, for taking with so ponderous an air what cannot be a matter of supreme importance.'

As he spoke a footman entered with a telegram. Appadacca glanced through it, and flung it to Campos, saying carelessly as he left the room:

'See, señor, how Providence opens for you interesting methods of repairing your collapsed commissariat. I will even assist you in the matter.'

The telegram was from Charleston, and came from one Fernandez.

It described the cargo of the *Jane Richardson*, the sum she carried in specie, her destination, hour of sailing, course. Her owners, it said, were the house of Richard P. Hocking, of New York.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRIZE.



APPADACCA LEFT PARIS hurriedly that night, directing his course toward Madrid, where he arrived incognito, and at once made his way to the house of Senor Sagasta.

The interview was hurried, Appadacca merely indicating the prominent, if secret, part he was being called upon to play in directing the destinies of the country — the sacrifices he made in wealth and, what to him was far more, in time. He said quietly, but in a tone which implied the will of steel, that when the right hour came, and the need for his open guidance, he would not fail to present himself as the leader of the leaderless country; and, for so long a time as he chose, would expect to be recognised as such by whosoever in the land was unwilling to feel the hand of iron beneath the velvet palm.

And at once, when he was certain that he was well understood, off he set by special train for the Bay of Algeciras, wherein lay his well-loved ship.

Here he met Campos and the priest.

He was intensely eager to join her, to be away. In spite of a certain nonchalance which he affected as to all mundane matters, such as money, not only to Joseph Campos, but even to himself, he was in reality of a perfectly practical nature. His calculations had the exactness of a ready-reckoner, and many a time the hard, close-seeing eye of Dick P. Hocking had found the eye of Appadacca a mile the shrewder.

He calculated in the luxury of his library the means of catching the *Jane Richardson* with all the astuteness and the caution of an old miser.

And he did not fail.

By the time the *Jane* was at the Bahamas, the *Huelva* had reached the latitude of the Canaries. And the two ships were converging sharply in a southerly direction, when Dick P. Hocking, commanding his flotilla of three, set out from Philadelphia; and with him, borne in No. 3, was the Rev. Silas M. Petersen.

The object of Hocking was twofold. It was, in the first place, to convoy the *Jane Richardson*; in the second, to see the *Huelva* in the air to the dance of torpedo-music. But in order to see her in the air, it was necessary first to see her; and the sea is wide. He expected to have a search of at least some weeks.

Meanwhile, with eager pump of the mighty engines in his small craft, he pushed on south in search of the *Jane*, his great bulk wrapped in oilskins, and he for the first time learning what a joy and a misery lay in ranging the ocean in a tearing torpedo-boat.

But with wondrous quick adaptability he became quite a sailor, growing in few days to tolerate the fearful vibratory heave of those toiling and swaying flanks.

He feared danger from some Spanish ship-of-war, without precisely thinking of the *Huelva*, and on without pause he drove. As for Petersen, he had the air of one born in a destroyer.

When the *Jane* was at Trinidad, the *Huelva* was in the longitude of Cayenne, not six hundred knots from her, and Hocking's flotilla was near St. Kitts. He knew that the *Jane* would put in at Port of Spain, so from the Lesser Antilles he wired her not to leave that English port until he joined her.

But the message was just too late; the *Jane* was gone.

And the next day at three p.m. she sighted the *Huelva* on her port quarter, and was in turn sighted by the *Huelva*, which rapidly drew near.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.



AT THE MOMENT when the ships came within each other's ken, each appeared like a tiny-tail of gray only just deeper than the gray of the sky on the far horizon.

The *Jane* was steering about south-east, the *Huelva* south-west.

The captain and first officer of the *Jane* held steady glasses to their eyes on the bridge, and the mere speed with which that brush of gray afar grew darker upon the vision was enough to spur suspicious alarm.

Presently the captain growled.

'What do you make of her?' he asked.

The first officer shrugged his shoulders.

'What I say,' said the captain, 'is that she is after us, and a foreigner. That's enough for me. I have three hundred thousand sterling on board this ship. Here's to run for it.'

'Not much good, apparently,' answered the first officer, 'by the way she's raging along there. What a devil of a speed!'

'There's night,' said the captain, 'and luck — confound her!'

And he rushed to the communications, and trilled down to the engine-room, 'Full speed ahead!' At the same time the *Jane's* bows swung round eight points to starboard.

And she had hardly done so when the *Huelva*, certain now that she had found what she sought, bounded, like a courser at the spur, under the yet

more quickened travail of her engines.

But the captain of the great yacht walked his bridge with too eager a step; his hands in his pockets, his brows knit. His dark countenance was anxious.

He did not expect — he was not prepared for — a long chase. Half an hour before, an ominous message had come to him from the engine-room. He continually dived his head inside a door, and looked at the clock.

The *Huelva* ordinarily consumed about a ton of coal in six knots; but the three thousand five hundred odd miles which she had traversed since leaving Algeciras on this money-hunting voyage had been performed at enormous speed, with heavy smoke continually pouring from her funnels; nor, owing to the urgency of her master, were her bunkers quite full at the moment of departure.

The chase had lasted half an hour, the two hulls being now clearly visible to each other, when the captain of the *Huelva* groaned. His eye had long been haunting some dark clouds on the southern horizon, and with that hurry of preparation characteristic of the sudden, passionate tempests of the West Indies, these now rose, and went ranging in haste across the sky, while half a dozen darts of rain fell upon the ship.

Her captain took pen, ink, and paper, and, in his imperfect handwriting, stated the case: Should he continue the chase? The chief engineer had reported that there were not more than forty tons of coal in the bunkers. In ten minutes all the sea and sky would be wrapped in midnight; the other ship, if she knew her business, would be certain to dodge. Should he fire now, though they were well beyond effective range? Should he cease the chase till after coaling in Trinidad? He was at a loss.

He sent the note below. It passed through five hands, and at length reached the deep-shaded library and the eyes of Appadacca.

Appadacca, at this foreboding news, started. The *Jane* was absolutely necessary to him. The money-claims upon him, both in France and Italy, were pressing. He wrote on the back of the sheet, after a full minute's deep meditation:

‘Continue chase. Report to me in ten minutes.’

As the captain above read these words, suddenly the two ships were hid from each other. A passion of wind and water swept down upon the sea, shutting the ships in an isolation of storm and stinging white rain. The sky was quite black. And at once, with the first rush of the wheeling gloom, the *Jane's* bows turned four more points to starboard. She was running straight back for the southern end of Trinidad.

That she would dodge in the darkness, the captain of the *Huelva* well knew; but he calculated that she would dodge in the most divergent direction, and so turned his bows about north, while in reality the *Jane* was heading nearly east.

In half an hour the storm cleared somewhat, and then the two ships had so far diverged as to be invisible. The *Huelva* was running with a line of Trinidad hills showing faintly on her port bows; the *Jane* was lapsing from the heaving outer sea into the absolutely smooth water of the Gulf of Paria.

Trinidad approaches the mainland of South America closely at two points: at a south channel called the Serpent's Mouth, and at a north called the Dragon's Mouth; between these and the mainland and the eastern coast of the island lies the placid gulf.

While the *Jane* was passing north into the Serpent's Mouth, Dick P. blocking's flotilla of three was passing south into the Dragon's Mouth.

The *Huelva* was scouring the sea for the *Jane*, and the three torpedo-boats were scouring the sea for the *Huelva* and the *Jane*. And while the

Jane and the three boats were making along the east coast, one north, the others south, the *Huelva* was making along the west coast, northward.

As the sun, a marred blotch, was disappearing for the day, the chief engineer of the *Huelva* sent up formal notice that he had only twenty-eight tons of coal in his bunkers. The captain rang half-speed.

At this time the flotilla of three were at anchor in Port of Spain. There the intelligence was received that the *Jane* had gone on southward through the Serpent's Mouth; so, after surrounding his craft with lighters, which worked through the night, and taking in about seventy tons of coal, Hocking, while it was yet dark, towards morning, set out to continue his southward search.

And because the *Jane*, fearing that the *Huelva* might be tracking her in the dark, had put out all external lights, the three boats which sought her passed her at an interval of two knots on their starboard side toward the south end of the island, they faring south, she north: her object being to pass through the north channel, and then resume her course, on the chance of eluding the *Huelva* by the long dodge.

By ten o'clock a.m. she was out in the rough sea once more. The storm had lasted through the night with lulls and outbursts. The morning on the open sea was murky and bleak; it was as though the wind was visible and shut off the distance. Five miles away, unseen, the *Huelva* was cruising slowly in search of the *Jane*. —

Something like despair reigned on board the great ship. She had steamed very slowly through the night, yet things looked ugly. At last the captain sent down word that he had only sufficient coal to take him to Port of Spain.

Then only Appadacca yielded. The ship turned her bows southward, and in ten minutes sighted the *Jane*, now so near as to be within range of small

gunshot. She was recognised, and at once the *Huelva*, with glad haste, sent her bark across the water.

The *Jane* instantly turned tail, and as she turned became the target for some three hundred rounds, which shattered the sea-surface all about her into a frothing chaos, and shivered her bulwarks. Also a wide smoke arose from her stern-works. And at once she slowed, and waited.

The *Huelva* steamed near and put out a boat. Her captain and five men went on board the *Jane*; there were confabulations, gesticulations, oaths, on the bridge; but within a quarter of an hour the boat returned with the specie stored in *coffre-forts*.

Things looked well now on board the big ship. But we are never certain for what to thank the gods, since in their good is ill, and in their ill good. The *Jane* was the bad genius of the *Huelva*. She made Appadacca decide not to put into Trinidad for coal. In the bunkers of the *Jane* was plenty.

Rut the process of transhipment was bitterly slow, and Dick P. blocking's flotilla, though steering at the moment of capture in an opposite direction, was swift. All the boats of both ships were employed in the work; but the sea ran high, and the *Huelva* avoided frequenting the smooth channel of the Gulf with the *Jane* bearing witness beside her. The slow work went on. A boat was swamped, another broke her bows against the *Jane's* side; two of the *Jane's* had been powdered by four-inch shell; all were more or less small. So passed the day; at night, with such a sea, it was impossible to work. A prize-crew was stationed on board the *Jane*. The next morning the slow labour recommenced.

The object of the *Huelva* was to get in merely sufficient to take her to Grenada or one of the near islands; in the last resort, Martinique. The loose way in which the regulations as to contraband of war had been fulfilled in the West Indies since the outbreak of hostilities left no reason for doubt that

coal would be obtained in plenty. Moreover, the *Huelva's* letters of marque did not make her strictly a combatant.

Slowly rose the tale of tons: sixteen, eighteen, twenty, enough to take her to Grenada; not half enough to take her to Martinique. It was decided to ride through another night, get in thirty tons, and start.

All this time the two ships lay rather out of the route from Barbadoes, to the east of Macaripe, with the bold profile of mountainous Trinidad showing like some vague and distant mist.

And once again, as the sun rose upon a less fierce and boisterous sea, the flotilla of boats went plying with their little loads. The *Huelva* had stowed just twenty-three tons, when her captain put down a glass, and rushing to the telephone, whistled. He said:

‘I notice three steam-craft from the southeast making straight this way.’

‘What are they?’ asked Appadacca.

‘I will tell you in three or four minutes. They seem small, but strange somehow. Shall—’

‘Get up steam.’

In six minutes the captain of the *Huelva* made out that the three boats were war vessels, and that they carried the American flag.

The men working in the boats scurried at the call of the siren on board their own ship. There was confusion, pattering of feet, crews organizing themselves to places, the voice of the captain, and the cry of electric bells. The *Huelva's* lofty bows walked round to northward, holes here and there gushed trickles into the sea, puffed whiffs into the air, while vast foam-billows rose and rolled before the advancing ram, as the ship began to foot the deep. And on in her wake came the three torpedo-boats.

They had proceeded south and east to a point which, according to the news received at Trinidad, it was certain that the *Jane* could not yet have

reached. They concluded, therefore, that they had passed her. They turned back to cruise in search, and off Point Baja fell in with a barque which had passed the *Jane* toward morning the day after her first *rencontre* with the *Huelva*; the *Jane* was then steering northward in her flight.

If the *Jane* were doing anything so unaccountable as to be sailing *northward*, then it could only be that she was being chased. So reasoned Hocking and Petersen, and at once they set off northward, also along the eastern Trinidad coast.

And as soon as ever their glasses turned upon the *Jane*, she was recognised by them, and near her unmistakably lay the *Huelva*.

And as the *Huelva* turned and steamed away, one of the fleet of three hoisted four flags, and the three smothered themselves and the sea in a coverlet of smoke.

And leaving the *Jane* there with a message from Hocking to go on to Port of Spain, the four passed on northward, the foremost seven or eight knots from the hindermost.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHASE.



DICK P. HOCKING had said that the next time *he* would do the chasing, and he was doing it. Yet he might have sought the *Huelva* all over the broad face of the sea and never have found her; but the *Jane* was the decoy-bird which had revealed her.

He had no knowledge of the *Huelva's* fatal lack of coal. He simply dared with the three comparatively tiny craft he commanded to oppose himself to that tremendous power which he followed.

Torpedo-boat against battleship; the novel, the original, against old use-and-wont; Saxon against Latin.

He followed.

His boats were literally robed and drowned in white from stem to stern, their ribs rocking in horrible, heaving, vibratory fits. Like a creaky chair too frail for the weight that bestrides and rocks it, so these creaked and rocked at the throbs and impulse of their pumping - engines. They were all of very high speed, and within ten minutes it was clear that they gained upon the *Huelva*, till the captain of the *Huelva* himself noticed it, whereupon she quickened her run to the utmost, and stole away somewhat from the boats.

But at a disastrous cost. She could do a good pace under sail alone, but now she was heading in the teeth of the prevailing West Indian wind, the north-east. There was, therefore, no question of sail; she depended solely upon steam, having twenty odd tons of coal.

Appadacca knew that he was being chased by ships carrying the American flag; he knew his lack of coal; but he continued in the deep recesses of that part of the ship which formed his sanctuary, preoccupied with matters as trivial as possible. During the first halfhour a dark-hued violin was at his shoulder, and he was uttering, in the dreamiest slow undertone, that resembled a sigh, one of Bach's fugitive fancies; then, his mood changing, he leapt up, drew a drawer from a cabinet, and laid before him a collection of stones, the delicate wine-tone of amethyst, gross copper-green of augite, with sardius, and chrys-oberyl, and thulite, and that blue-stone with which the denizens of Ararat ward off dropsy. He held them one by one in tenuous fingers beneath the rosy light of a central lamp, searching the secret of their hues. He set about arranging them in sets.

Behind him ploughed the ugly snouts of Dick P. Hocking's torpedo-boats with steady forge.

The Latin was playing prettily; the Saxon was working vulgarly.

It was Appadacca himself who had given the order to fly. Fear was not in his nature; he was pride incarnate. He made the quick resolve, on learning that he was pursued, to seek out these particular boats on the first possible occasion, and ruthlessly batter them from the face of the sea. But for the moment he had pressing engagements in Europe. Till they were fulfilled he shunned a conflict.

And Hocking, clinging to a davit of No. 3 near the one mast amidships, stood looking abroad on the sea. Hardly anything of him was visible save his stiff fan-beard; the rest was wrapped away in oilskins. He looked like a big wine-butt covered with a tarpaulin — from which peers a head.

A knot behind came No. 2, and still a knot behind No. 1. All their for'ard hulls, except their stems, were invisible under foam. The water went clipping backward and upward from their rams with the brisk hiss of

syringe-expulsion, while behind they left a region of spotless churned milk. Their crews for that day made up their minds for biscuits and cold things; cooking was out of the question.

But by noon the *Huelva* had grown very small in the north distance. By one, when the coast of Grenada was made out by the big ship, the little ones had vanished, and the big was all but invisible to them.

It almost seemed to Dick P. Hocking that he was enduring this hardly tolerable life in mid-ocean on board that pulsing boat in vain. But he bated no jot of his speed. At two o'clock Grenada was well in sight. At three the little flotilla divided, one passing by the eastward coast and two along the westward, to meet at the north end.

But the eastward boat quickly spun round, and hurried back south and then west and north to rejoin the others. She had, to the surprise of her crew, sighted the *Huelva*; nor could the *Huelva* have been sufficiently near to make *her* out. This was the news with which she went straining back. It was boat No. 2, on board of which, at this time, was Petersen.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BATTLE.



THE *HUELVA* HAD passed to the eastward of the island, though St. George is on the west, for the reason that the east is never used on the northward route to Martinique, to which island she had the appearance of being bound. She thus hoped to elude the pursuing boats. At the moment when she was sighted she was all but stationary in the water; a ton or less of coal was all she carried.

The hours passed. Four o'clock, five, six. She waited for darkness. The sea, as generally round Grenada, was very unsettled. The *Huelva* rode the slow, big swells with a gallant nonchalance.

And now the sun dips, and, as his last segment disappears, it is night.

There is a sound on board the *Huelva*, the rattle of electric wires. She prepares to make for St. George. As her lights gleam abroad, already overhead is a black vault of stars.

But besides the stars there are other lights which claim attention this night — three more on the sea, yonder to northward, suddenly appearing, and they draw fearfully nigh.

Have ships life? So sailors tell. And, if life, then an instinct of death? So, too, runs the tale. The *Huelva*, as she is in the act of moving round to south, drives her head into a swell with such sudden and sullen fury, that the heavy rush of water breaks the arm of a man against the armour of the bow-gun, and souses all her forepart in a drenching baptism. A singular act for her.

There are certain conditions of the atmosphere and light in tropical countries in which things remote seem more remote than they are. When their nearness becomes evident, it does so with a certain effect of surprise.

And a feeling of surprise it was with which the captain of the *Huelva* all at once became aware that the three lights were within a knot of him. He made haste to communicate that fact to Appadacca, who, indeed, already knew that he was again being followed.

Appadacca replied:

‘Husband your coal. Make ready for a battle. Rig torpedo-nets — now. I will come on deck.’

He entered a species of boudoir, and in a moment came out masked and cloaked. He rang the bell communicating with the priest’s suite, and sat with knit brows till the priest appeared.

‘Excuse me,’ said Appadacca hurriedly. ‘It is necessary for me to tell you that I am about to be attacked by some small American ships of war. You will not be alarmed? I hope not. I am so sorry for the inconvenience, for your sake. At least, you will not now be taken by surprise, if anything serious should happen.’

‘Do you anticipate anything?’ asked the priest, his face very white.

‘It is within the possibilities, holy Father.’

‘Then, my son, you shall have my prayers—’

‘Thank you. I cannot stay—’

‘Do you, then, direct the battle in person?’

‘Yes. Farewell.’

He was gone. Up he went, with steady, stately step, up to the hurricane-deck, into the conning-tower.

It was a good-sized room, cushioned and velveted within — without, gleaming nickel-steel. In the fore-surface, a circular glazed window, giving

view of a wide reach of sea; around, a multitude of knobs and telephone-mouths, communicating with engine-rooms, gun-casemates, and every part of the ship.

Now there was no more flying. As he entered the conning-tower, Appadacca ordered his helm to port, and as the intense moonshine of her two searchlights shot shimmering over the water, the *Huelva* ran to meet her enemies.

They were not quite two minutes apart, and at the end of the first, Appadacca tinkled the bell connected with the fore-port casemate on the main-deck. The light was shining full upon a torpedo-boat not eight hundred yards away, and, following instantly on the rattle of the knob, the *Huelva* sent out the sharply-punctuated, jabbering row of a four-inch Hotchkiss over the water.

The sea, however, was so unstable, and the target so small in size, that only one shell told, carrying away a cowl. And herein was manifested that shrewdness of Dick P. Hocking which had given him riches, that when advised to have torpedo-vessels built for him, he had stuck manfully to his boats, pointing to an account which he had been studying of the blowing-up of the ironclad *Blanco Encalada* on the Chili coast by two small torpedo - craft. 'The smaller,' he had said, 'the better. Smallness, strength, speed, and tubes — those are my sentiments.'

And now he had all this, his tubes numbering twelve.

The three boats came on in a line abreast, No. 2 in the middle, No. 3 to starboard, No. 1 to port, with an interval of half a mile. The *Huelva* almost immediately upon her first outbreak passed between No. 1 and No. 2. And as she did so, trailing her lights on her two enemies, with a unanimous battery of both broadsides she sent forth a red thunder that shook her frame to its keel.

And at once mast and funnel disappeared from No. 1, and, as the *Huelva* sped past, the crews of the starboard guns sent up a cry of pride, for the boat's bows were seen to be as low as her stern had been.

But meantime two eighteen-inch Whiteheads, with a speed of over thirty knots, are making for the great ship. On each side one is marked, with outcry, with alarm; and wide, wild eyes follow the hurrying run of that bruised water-weal, and catch glimpses of the fatal, struggling, buffeted, yet headlong steel. Appadacca's eyes turn from one to the other with patient, eager scrutiny. It is an awful moment.

Suddenly he orders helm to port, for he has noticed that the port torpedo slackens, while the starboard races steadily through and over the impeding sea. So long is the agony of suspense that there is time to shoot from the military-tops, but no shot takes effect. The *Huelva* turns to port, and at once arises the outcry that she is making straight for the port torpedo, which has been deflected by a wave; and as she returns to starboard through a frothing curve, the starboard torpedo is shooting close upon her; and an instant afterwards it is observed, with heart-shrinking terror throughout the ship, that *both* torpedoes have been caught in the stern-wake of the vessel, and are converging, with absolute, inevitable certainty now, upon her. Then from every bosom bursts a sigh as the swift catastrophe comes; the torpedoes, rushing in the ship's wake, both of them, close. They meet — they clash; and four hundred pounds of guncotton rend the air with a bang of venom at which the heart faints and the whole sea-depth trembles.

But the *Huelva* is untouched, and torpedo-boat No. 1 has disappeared.

With that rude self - sureness which distinguishes Americans, the crews of the torpedo-boats had not been chosen, except in the case of their commanders, for their special knowledge of torpedoes, or special skill in handling them — only for their general skill and intelligence. Hence the

torpedo of No. 1 had actually been fired from beyond range, which in no case exceeded 700 yards, and was about to cease its motion when taken into tow by the *Huelva's* wake.

And now it is only two to one; and Dick P. Hocking's brow wears a frown, as does the brow of Petersen. The result is not so sure as it seemed.

One torpedo beneath the keel of that ship will suffice; but to get it there?

The boats were fitted with a system of double lanterns, electrically worked by a keyboard, for signalling; and, as the *Huelva* came raging back to the south, Hocking signalled:

‘Give her all possible torpedoes this time.’

At that moment the *Huelva's* captain was speaking to Appadacca in the conning-tower. Coal at that pressure could not last two more minutes. He had told the engineers that if the ship could not keep speed she must be destroyed; but —

And again came the boats to meet her, port and starboard; but this time at such close quarters, that no sooner had the machine-guns in the tops commenced to crackle than every living thing on the decks of the boats was mangled, and their whole riddled surface presented an aspect of havoc. Still, as the *Huelva* was prone to pass between them, at a distance of less than 400 yards from No. 2, a navy of five ripping steel-needles set out to reach her, shot rather at random, but all in a fair way to intercept and end her. The first, by the merest agile seamanship, and a slight sheer to port, slipped astern ten yards from the screws; a second was caught by a wave, and tossed aside in a whiff of spray; a third was caught in a net. At that moment the speed of the ship was furious; quite suddenly she seemed to hesitate, to give in, to lapse, to pause. The fourth touched her port beam, and there, for half a minute, hung swaying; the fifth struck her after-armoured tube to starboard at the level of the belt.

At that supreme instant, while expectation stood in silent horror, there burst a hissing shriek from the boilers of No. 2, and men were seen wildly leaping at random over the side, through a wide seething of white steam; but instantly afterwards this explosion was lost and a thousand times drowned in two monstrous, deep-throated shocks, swift-succeeding, which were like the death-sobs of the fated vessel. From both bow and stern, high and wide over the sea, she cast her mighty fragments, while at once the speed of the wreck stopped totally, and she was seen to have settled evenly lower all round her hull.

She was still in brilliant light; and as the only boat of No. 3 capable of floating came near from the rescue of the men of No. 2, only four of whom were found, Dick P. Hocking, sitting in her stern, saw, standing on the bridge, a figure which he had twice in his life beheld — a man in a mask and mantle, a man to whom he owed a debt, whose name he did not know.

The next moment the man was hidden from sight, the ship being now one heaven-high cloud of angry steam, proceeding from her quenched and screaming fires. In the sea were hundreds of men, who had plunged into the water to escape the unexpectedly swift doom of the vessel.

She left them not much time. Her bow lurched down to port, then, as if she



MEN WERE SEEN WILDLY LEAPING.

[To face p. 252.]

were being tugged opposite ways by spasmodic strings, she jerked herself sternwards to starboard, and in that position lay wobbling a little, as if to settle herself to comfort, the seas breaking all the time over her bulwarks; and so remained an incredibly long time — perhaps three minutes — till she suddenly skipped forward, dived, and disappeared.

And once more, at nearly the last moment, Dick P. Hocking saw that cloaked figure; and he leant forward, and he lifted his right arm, and he said:

‘You see that man standing there high up on the bridge? Ten thousand dollars to every man in this boat if he is saved!’

But the offer was met by the men with a certain sulky dissentience.

‘Saved, Mr. Hocking, sir?’ said one. ‘It wouldn’t pay you or me to go an inch nearer that ship now. No salvation for him in this world.’

‘Does every man in this boat refuse?’ cried Hocking, in a voice that equalled the shrilling steam.

No answer.

‘Come along, parson; *we’ll* do it together!’ roared Hocking. ‘It’s my own boat, any way, I guess.’

And he manoeuvred himself ponderously forward, pushed away an oarsman, and in a trice was doing stroke to the bow of drenched and scalded Petersen.

And never in his life did Dick P. Hocking come so near so huge a danger. As the boat drew nearer the ship, she was suddenly dragged into the influence of a vast wheeling basin of sea. She twisted, shot, and in an instant went careering with intense speed round the area of the sunken vessel’s suction. Happily, at a hopeless moment, there shot from No. 3 a light, illumining a whole section of the whirlpool; and, as the light glowed red on the water, Hocking, before he knew what he had seen, or realized what he did, so swift was his action, had put out his hand and grasped the collar of a man.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MARRIAGE.



TORPEDO-BOAT No. 3 entered St. George with a crowd of castaways, picked up beyond the region of the *Huelva's* suction. Among them were Father Pedro and Josef Campos.

Hocking, on removing the mask from the face rescued in the whirlpool, had seen with a profound shock — with a throe that was half wonderment and half gladness — the face of Appadacca. As for Appadacca, he remained in a faint.

Hocking found at St. George a steamer, which he chartered for New York, and with him took Petersen, Don Pedro, and Appadacca.

As for the war, his interest in it was over. He knew now how it would end; if not this time, then the next time; if not this century, then the next century, or the century after that.

It would end as the quarrel of Appadacca and himself had partly already ended, and partly was going to end, in victory for the Saxon, and in the Marriage, as Petersen had said, ‘with all the fiddles of God a-playing,’ between the Saxon and the Latin.

Even yet Hocking did not carry his idea of marriage in his own private case without difficulty; there was the pride of Appadacca, the haughtiness of the priest. But Appadacca was really conquered; he and the priest between them could not muster ten cents in ready cash; and Hocking left no

humility untried, no intercession unmade, to bring about ‘the marriage.’ One day Appadacca said:

‘Mr. Hocking, you have carried your point. In your way you are stronger than I. I admit myself conquered — with gladness.’

‘Well, now you are talking, sonny,’ said Dick P. Hocking.

And so it falls out that the house of Hocking has now changed its name to ‘Hocking and Appadacca,’ and that, whereas Hocking is the man for the big idea, the gross conception, Appadacca can plan the details of its execution with fine skill, proving himself in very truth a ‘helpmeet.’

The execution itself is left in the hands of Campos. Appadacca does not live at New York, nor anywhere in ‘the States’ — neither, for that matter, does Hocking, for where Appadacca is, lo, there is Hocking also; and Appadacca is mostly in old seigneurial chateaux, breathing an air of ancient peace and culture and loveliness, where one, of one’s self, gets to feel that a human creature, having the same external form as Plato and Shelley, and, in fact, made in the image of God, should never, never say, ‘I reckon, guess, and calculate.’

A distinct improvement is perceptible in Hocking’s whole manner of speech, of bowing, of carrying his neck, of bearing about his abdomen.

His body is getting narrower, because he eats less, and eats better; his head broader, because he cannot be got away from the side of cultivated Immanuel Appadacca.

And Appadacca is getting in many ways wiser, stronger, truer to Nature and the facts of life, because he cannot be got away from the side of level-headed Dick P. Hocking.

Only, between Father Pedro and Petersen there is not quite the same harmonious reciprocity; for these are theologians, seeking not so much to find truth, as each to prove that truth is on *his* side — neither suspecting the

possibility that Truth probably inhabits quite other regions than the small elbow-room at *his* ridiculous side. However, even Petersen and the priest have derived mutual blessedness from the union; they follow Appadacca and Hocking from château to château, and discuss; but in their discussion is a note of greater suavity: the priest is less arrogant; the parson less rawly obstinate and impossibly hideous. In time they will find out that both are eternally right, and both barbarously wrong; and for each reason they will learn the secret of Love, which is the secret of Life.

THE END

Cold Steel (1899)



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À MA PETITE FAFEMME,

LINA,

QUE J'AIME BEAUCOUP.

After this work was printed off, it was pointed out that the title, 'Cold Steel', had already been used for a work on swordsmanship by Captain Alfred Hutton. The title, however, by Captain Hutton's courtesy, has been allowed to stand.

CHAPTER I

THE FORDS



‘YET THEY LIVE again in the dreamer’s brain,
As deeds of Love and Wrong,
Which pass with a sigh, and seem to die,
Survive in the poet’s song.’

BARRY CORNWALL.

THE literary historians have not always recorded the most interesting, or the most important, facts of history. They tell us of the Battle of the Spurs, but not of the incidents of Luther’s youth; of the Edict of Nantes, but not of the case of Bessie Ford.

Yet these unrecorded were more interesting and important than those recorded events.

As for Bessie Ford, she was like a pebble dropped into water, round which float out and widen slow circles; only, in *her* case, instead of the circles fading as they widened, they still gathered depth and height, they filled a sea, till at the horizon they rolled away in sombre billows, mountain-high.

Bessie Ford lived the most intensive part of her life during the second reigning decade of that strong English monarch, Harry VIII.

Let us state at once that the whole motive and mainspring of her life lay in a sister, called Laura Ford. We say ‘called’ with special meaning, for it is

doubtful if Ford could have been the girl's real name. It was more probably Garcia, or Gomez, or Perez.

Bessie was a girl of humble though worthy class, born in Hampshire, both her great-grandfather and grandfather having been noted in their small world as good Lollards, men who walked with God in this their journey, and His, through the great Deep; her father also having been for years a chorister in Winchester Cathedral. But once, when she was three years old, some Spanish noblemen connected with the Court came, with retinues, on an Autumn visit to my Lord Bishop of Winchester. And to the Episcopal Palace Bessie's mother, then a widow, often took eggs and butter to sell.

And so (as we suspect) it came about that, whereas Bessie Ford was a girl of quite plain and homely seeming, her sister Laura, four years younger, was a creature of simply gorgeous world-loveliness, flamboyant as sunset, Spanish in type.

At the age of twenty Bessie came to great London to work. It was at the invitation of mine host of the Bell in Eastcheap, who was the uncle of her mother. Laura then was seventeen years, and half a head taller than Bessie; she looked in her heeled cordovans like a young birch in Spring sprung lithe from the hill-side. And Bessie loved Laura foolishly, and was infinitely proud of Laura, and lived in a constant tremble and trouble of fear for Laura.

Bessie was slim and quick, with a perfectly erect back and neck, her hair being nut-brown, and combed flat in two clean curves over a great broad forehead. Below this dome of brow was a rather small triangle of face, but very chastely lined. Her brown eyes were small and grave, with little eyelash, and set far apart in the head one from the other.

By her labours at the inn she was able to keep Laura living almost luxuriously in a lodging near the Whitefriars; and since Laura could not, or

would not, wholly be made a nun, all Bessie's musings among the gallants at the bar were of the perils, and the abominations, and the tribulations of Babylon.

There was one name at which, above all other names, she started: it was the name of Henry, the King.

One night she dreamt that the King, passing on horseback through the streets, looked up and saw the face of Laura at her window. And Bessie leapt from sleep with wild eyes, and rushed, crying out, toward the door....

Already the fame of the King as the dragon-gallant, the Blue Beard of his female subjects, had spread through England.

Bessie, being lately come to Babylon, did not yet fully recognise the difference between its dimensions and those of a country-villager. It got into her head that the danger of a meeting between Laura and the King was always imminent, just about to culminate; and she divined, with woman's instinctive accuracy, that one glance of those royal eyes at the face she cherished would be enough to ruin all her Hope in life.

She could not dream that there existed on the earth any Beauty comparable to that of her child; and, perhaps, in fact, there did not.

King Henry became Bessie Ford's nightmare. He loomed upon her imagination as a vast monster, girleating; his name changed the colour of her face.

Besides this big dominant terror which never left her, she had a hundred others. She used to listen with eager ears to the many love-adventures recounted in the inn, if haply she might catch that name of Laura.

She had not been two months in London when, already, she knew that Laura had a lover.

This one, however, did not excite in her any unqualified terror. She had looked into his face, and seen it honest and gentle; but he was young in his

nonage, and very poor. Her dream, her ideal, for Laura was — Marriage.

His name was Mark Bonner.

He began by passing very often along an alley in the Whitefriars, and glancing at a certain casement; and across this casement, sometimes, a Face with a daintily-built head of black hair would saunter with a musing, coquettish slowness.

Bonner was a scholar, and eighteen. The future held in it for him this vision of glory — the Bachelauriat of Arts. He had heard of Aristotle, and dreamed of him; he had read Terence; he knew Cicero by heart.

He attended classes at the new Paul's School of Master Colet in threadbare sarcenet doublet. In odd ways he eked out a livelihood, hanging often about the courtyards of my Lord Cardinal, and running errands.

Wolsey knew his face, and once, in the clock-yard at Hampton, had honoured him with the memorable favour of a glance.

Mark Bonner bought a new velvet bonnet at a frippery-store with his last angel, and set it jauntily on. He began to pass and repass in the Whitefriars, shot to the reins.

He had a very spiritual face on his lank body. The forehead widened as it went up, and the chin lengthened down into a delicate, quaint point. His thin lips were like the scarlet rouges of kermes on the stained Greek marbles and ivories, and his eyes were large and luminous, and swam in melancholy.

And Laura from that overhanging small-paned window could divine all this.

CHAPTER II

THE HEART-CRY



‘SORROW WITH SORROW sighing, hope with hope Exulting, heart embracing heart entire.’

POLLOK.

BEFORE the second month Laura began to pout. She had on her upper lip a downy growth of just-visible black hair, which added a poignant something of humanity to her divinity — one of those striae which enhance and ravish. When she pouted in her sulky way, this hinted moustache made her little thick pale-rose mouth an object of foolish worship.

She pouted, and decided that she was neither a nun, nor a nursery-flower, nor a King’s-prisoner.

She began to steal out in tentative promenades to the top of the next byeway and back.

Once she knew that she was being followed by a warded warrior, and took to her heels; once she was chuckled under the chin by a marshalman, and reddened; once she was seized and kissed by a hostler, and meditated on it all the day.

But she continued her walks, and daringly extended them. Of all this she said not a word to Bessie.

Once Mark Bonner saw her picking her steps in the mud of the street. Here was that for which he had wildly hoped. But instead of being in heaven, he was rather in Hell. He could not address her: his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. As he brushed by her with hung head, she saw his white face and the trembling of his veined white hand.

The next clay she received a love-poem with the last line of each verse in Latin. She could by chance read the English tongue, but Latin was far beyond her. Still, she conceived a great reverence for the scholar, and a week later a jolly Augustinian, who came to collect abbey-dues (for the house was within the manor of the Hospital of St. Barts), told her with a fillip that the meaning of ‘Te dulcem meam amo’ was this: ‘I love thee, my sweet one.’

Twice more they carefully met, and hurriedly passed, like ships on the sea, without voice; but the third time Laura, with ice-cold hands and bounding heart, laughed a challenging giggle to herself, and Mark, hearing it, stopped, hesitated in the throes of a thousand indecisions, and turned; he whispered huskily to her in a throat so parched that the words were lost.

However, he walked by her side, and when they parted, he uncovered and laid his lips upon her hand.

Rising and looking from her window in the dead of night, she saw him standing there below; and the lonesome gleam of the rare candle-light of the alley showed his uplooking face.

After that they met daily, and a great mystery was revealed to Southern-blooded Laura Ford. Within these two began to stir that Spirit which from the seed brings forth the Harvest. Then suddenly it was as though a great Sun dazzled their eyes.

‘How lovely you are!’ he said.

‘And you also,’ she replied.

Laura's face was washed in morning dew. They fell to speaking in a language that resembled song rather than simple speech. At this time they did not know each other's name.

Onward from the Fleet down to Westminster was mostly open field and tree-land, varied by the palaces of my Lords Essex, Arundel, Somerset. And hither, as evening fell, and hardly a hay-cart drawled in sight, they wandered, or halted by the river, or whispered their intense secrets under bowers of the ducal grounds.

'Faith, here is the thought that gives me pause — if I had never seen you!' he said.

'That would not have been possible.'

'Faith, but 'twas by sheer hazard of my good star!'

'What would you have done?'

'I? I should even have died! By the Rood, what could I have done? You are my very life!'

'What, you love me so, sir?'

'Stars of the Night, bear witness!'

'And always — from the very first sight you had of me — I knew that it was so with you.'

'From the first sight, and before.'

'How — *before*?'

'Oh, long I have known you. When a little boy, I saw once your face in a clear running brook of the wood; I have divined you in my reading of Helen, the Greek; I have foreknown you in miraculous dreams of the night. Nothing in the earth is potent, sweet, which does not resemble you. In the faces of newborn children, and in the smells of dungs and flowers, and in the corn-shocks of harvest, and in all the motions and method of the World, I have had hints and presages of you, oh, my dearest dear!'

She looked at him with eyes in trance.

‘Our Saviour — what a music ’tis you speak. ’Tis surely so the angels in heaven chant, sir!’

‘You love me?’

‘Ah — I cannot speak such words as you—’

‘But you love me? You love me?’

‘Ah—’

Her sigh fainted in the anguish of its utterance; she was in torture for lack of expression; her fulness was a pain. She reached up her pale pouting mouth in abandoned offering to his. Then, after awhile:

‘But my sister — Our Saviour! she will sure, sure, wot!’

‘And how, prithee?’

‘She even will!’

‘Is she gentle and good?’

‘Oh, she is very good, my sister. But—’

‘You must tell her.’

‘An I dare!’

‘Let *me*.’

‘Is it that we will be married?’

‘Why, my pig’s-eye — yes.’

‘When?’

‘Ah, when! I lack substance! When the wind shall fill my sail! I have twice attracted the great Cardinal’s eye; and he is, you know, the patron of poor scholars. Like you poverty?’

‘No.’

‘Not?’

‘No.’

‘But to me it were heaven with *you*.’

‘I like not poverty, I. Have you seen the interior of a great palace? *I* have, at Winchester. Oh, the mighty mansion-house, the gaudy menials, and the bravery! I like *that*. An I had that, and you also, then were I happy indeed.’

‘But of the two you prefer — which?’

‘I like both.’

‘But you prefer — which?’

‘Why, you.’

‘Crowned saint!’

‘But my sister. Our Saviour! what shall be done?’

‘I will speak to her.’

‘An that be indeed the best—’

‘Why, yes, as I deem it.’

They rose to walk homeward, and on the morrow Mark Bonner was at the Bell. He stammered his tale. But under the considering eyes of Bessie Ford he felt the sensation of scrutiny, and chill reception.

CHAPTER III

‘CROM ABOO’



‘THERE CAME A certain lord....’

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Bell was full of uproar.

From the dim winding street, paved with oval pavers and grass-grown, one descended by three stone steps through a hooded doorway into a room so sombre that for a time the eye saw nothing.

Some faint light, however, came in from a passage which led to a yard at the back.

In the front, at the centre of the four gables of the house, stood a post bearing the sign of a black Bell on a red ground.

It was three in the afternoon.

A horseman came eastward. A noise of revelry went out to him as he approached. He had been in London five weeks, and each day had made the Bell his haunt. But to-day he hesitated.

He had in his holster two letters of high importance. One was to the Governor of the Tower of London, one to my Lord Wolsey. Both were from the King, writ with his own hand. The latter letter contained thoughts, arguments, State-secrets, which King Harry, for a new province, would not have had an eye other than his Cardinal’s peruse.

The noise of revelry came out to him, but the horseman went past the Bell, going eastward to the Tower.

He was a man of very great size, standing six feet above his spurs. His russet-leather jerkin covered a heroic swell of chest, a broadsword hanging at the buff-belt, and on the other side a pair of pistols, and a dudgeon dagger.

He went past the sign-post — and turned again.

On his broad, massive face was a smile now. It was a genial face, clean-shaven over-all; with humour in the lines of the mouth, whose ends were lengthened into two little folds; and phrenological bosses on the forehead. That forehead was white, but the expanse of face was ruddy and tanned, and crossed with many a hack. Surely, Garrett Oge Fitzgerald had been in the wars.

He was a bastard son of a bastard branch of the great Geraldines of Kildare, his great-half-uncle being even then the King's Deputy at Dublin. Yet Garrett Oge was the possessor of one only harry-noble in his slop-pouch.

He called 'Hi!', threw his reins to the hostler, and, as he sauntered with his laggard gait into the parlour, waved his arm round, and cried:

'Crom aboo!'

It was the war-cry of the Geraldines.

He was received by a shout of welcome, and a lifting of the six-hooped pots.

Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, in the midst of that uproar, touched with his finger the slit in the murrey taffeta lining of his riding-cloak, to assure himself that his letters were there; he had taken the precaution to remove them from his holster to his person, and he was not a cautious man.

New brooms sweep clean: he had that morning, after five weeks' care and contradiction, been admitted into the King's Guards, one harry-noble, as we say, being left in his slop-pouch.

He cried above the din:

‘A stoup of your spiciest canaries, mine host! Who's for drinking with me the King's health? Ah, little wench—’

He touched Bessie Ford under the chin.

Very singular, certainly, is the secrecy of the Heart Between these two — little Bess and big Fitz — there subsisted some natural affinity, some mutualness of Terror and Longing, Hope and Love, indescribably vague, yet deep, deep, real as Life and Death — perhaps the affinity between two Valours. Yet if such was suspected by either, it was very dimly, and by Bessie; certainly not yet by Fitz.

Sometimes, bearing the tankards, she would giggle clandestinely at his jokes and quips; and he would throw his head back and look at her, smiling lordly approval of her appreciation.

‘He *is* a one...’ she would say to herself.

‘But the King's health?’ cried a mercer of London Bridge. ‘Adding two and two to make four, one would say that Master Fitzgerald has e'en won his entry into the King's service at the last.’

‘Uds daggers, my masters, the King has e'en won his entry into the service of Master Fitzgerald, an that's what you would say!’

So said Fitzgerald, and the laugh rang high. Now all were happy, having in their midst a tongue that bred merriment; and the tongue itself was happy, having before it a pot of mulled sack, sunlight-coloured, placed there by silent, assiduous Bessie Ford.

As Fitzgerald poured down his first draught, a hand fell upon his shoulder, and a voice said in the lower tone of friendship:

‘What, Fitz—’

‘What, Mac, my good friend and ingie! Beshrew my heart, but I saw thee not before.’

‘Is it so with thee? Is it true?’

‘About the King? Ay, true as a cup of clary is bright.’

‘Fitz, I congratulate thee from my heart.’

‘Congratulate the King, Mac.’

‘Both. Fitz. But tell me the manner o’t, lad. How did the King take to an unthrift and scant-o’-grace like thyself?’

Their voices were now higher raised. From the tables over the redstone floor, from the black-oak corners, gathered the revellers, pewter flagons and tankards in hand. As for Bessie Ford and the tapster, they plied busily between spigot and tables, and every faucet of the sack-butts flowed. Master Somers, mine host, a heavy old widower, lolled drinking muscadine at a table with his guests.

‘Well, it was on this wise,’ said Garrett Oge Fitzgerald. ‘For four weeks, as you wot, I have been loitering at the levée-time in the antechamber at Westminster; but never a chance had poor Fitz in the busy going-and-coming, and that shoulder-rubbing of great dukes, and Corinthians, and gallants. Oh, ’tis a brave show there o’ mornings, my masters — ambassadors, princes, courtiers, Frenchman and Spaniard, doublets pinked with Venice gold, and inlaid foils that water a fighting-man’s mouth. And says Fitz to himself, “How through all this bedizenment shall a poor soldier of fortune arrive at the King’s eyes to show his proportions?” For it was even the King himself, I deemed, that must needs see a man like me, and no linsey-wolsey captain of the service. So I dallied from day to day, till yester

morning a great lord with lackeys and much ado comes sauntering through, and what name should I hear announced but my very own—” Garrett Oge Fitzgerald.” It was my great-uncle, the Deputy, whom, God wot, I never saw afore. If now, I thought, I can get that name sent in on my own count, and so slip in to the King, all’s well. So next morning, with a high head, I gave that name to a myrmidon. He eyed my apparel, but said never a word from his scorning lips, nor did he cry me out, while many another came and went. So I, at the last, was slouching down the great staircase, when into the courtyard came a lady. She was unattended, her face had an aspect forlorn, and she was all in robes of black. I was not such a chuff as not to divine in her the Queen, and she had no sooner put brodequin from the coach than I was there to her assisting. She drew from me somewhat. “Would you see the King, madam?” said I. “Yes; and who are you, sir?” says she. “Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, madam,” said I. She bowed and smiled, leaned on my arm, and in two minutes the Queen Katherine and Oge Fitzgerald were cried together. The King was walking to and fro, hands behind, and on his brow sat thought. He turned and saw us, and “Ha, coz!” cries he, “how goes the morning with you? But this is strange companionship — you and my Lord Fitzgerald — Ha, sirrah! who the pestilence art thou?”— “Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, sire,” said I reproachfully. Gallant he is, the King, when he frowns and puts on kingly anger, tall and massive, cocking one well-turned leg afore, with a face large and strong, not unlike mine own, my masters, and a way of twisting his lips aside and gnawing the pout at a corner. Just so he contemplated me, now gnawing his wry-pushed lips, now drawing in a moustache-end with his tongue to gnaw, meditating upon me, angry; and very chill and threatening is the regard of his eyes, and severe, and hard to bear without a pallor, my masters all. And he says, “So, cullion,” says he, “thou wouldst mock at me, then?”

“Far be that from me, sire.”

“What is thy name?”

“Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, sire.”

“Ha! again thou liest.”

“It is you, rather, sire, for that is even my name.”

“Hi, there, my Guards!” cries the King; “thy neck for this, caitiff!” Before I was fluttery, but now cool as a gaze-hound’s nose at the near bracing danger. Three minions ran with drawn swords, but I spoke: “Your Majesty is really astray, for that is my name in baptism. ’Tis true I bear a bar-sinister on my coat, and ’tis true the Lord of Kildare claims my identical name, but without my approbation or consent. The Queen here will bear me out: she straightway scented me real and only Fitzgerald, sire.” I had no sooner said, than back went the King’s head in a shout of sudden laughter. The Queen, methinks, is no longer favourite there, and her foreign mistakes and ineptitudes become food for scornful mirth. But for me, I was saved, and—” Unhand him, knaves,” says the King; and to me: “What is thy true name, sirrah?”

“Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, sire.”

“Thou hast served in the wars, methinks?”

“In the Low Countries, sire, and in Ireland.”

“Art thou leal and trusty?”— “Try me, sire!”— “Thou deservest for thy audacity either to taste the Tyburn tippet, or to enter the King’s own service: what think’st thou?”

“I seem like to do both, sire, taking the least exalted first.”

“Thou appearest Kildare to thy tongue’s-tip, villain. Send me thy name in an hour.” And so, my masters, was it that I come to have in my cloak here two letters — one to my Lord Wolsey, and one to the Tower — letters of high and solemn import, writ by the King’s own hand. Already he hath in

Fitz the confidence of old friendship. A right royal personage is he — do me right, my masters all — and here's to him!

‘But thy tongue, thy tongue, Fitz, runs too furiously fast,’ whispered his friend Macdonald. ‘Gad-a-mercy, man! hast thou no inkling of prudence?’

CHAPTER IV

THE FATAL ACT



‘GREAT GOD! WHAT perils do environ The man who meddles with cold iron!’

‘HUDIBRAS.’

‘Te, soror, nunquam volo esse securam, sed timere, semperque tuam fragilitatem habere suspectant.’ — ST. AUGUSTINE.

AT this reproof Fitz looked up in demure surprise. He had the massive, staid face of a statesman, and the simple heart of a child. He was a man more loved than respected, Fitz, till his white forehead flushed, and he chanced to draw his sword: and then he was much more respected than loved.

As for Macdonald, he was a fellow built on a smaller scale, but well-knit, agile, yet weighty-looking. Between the parting of his moustache one saw how the upper lip pressed like strength itself upon the lower, and the bright brown eyes glinted shrewd and hard as cold steel beneath the lowered lids.

He was somewhat of a dandy, with an eye to his apparel, for his doublet was laid down with two galoon laces, and on his head was a slouch hat with drooping feather, and in his Turkey-leather sword-belt a poniard of Milan arabesque-work: a fellow neat, and wary, and canny, a Scot, having a care

for his life. He had fought both at Guinegate and Flodden, and was a Wolsey-man.

His eyes saw many things, and as Fitz spoke about the King's letters, he had seen the start and the slow advance toward the table of a man who, he was sure, was a foreigner — a tall man, muffled in a black riding-cloak, wearing the plumed bonnet of a hidalgo. He was all in black and silver — a silver buckle, a silver brooch, a silver hilt to his rapier — and what one saw of his regular-featured face proved him Spanish.

'Tush, comrade!' said Fitz to Mac; 'care killed a cat. The King knows to whom he trusts his letters. I say, my masters, 'tis whispered among the Guards that the King is in love again.'

'By my sooth!' said a gruff botcher from the Cheap, 'Tis the forty-fifth tale of kingly love within a month!'

'Ay,' answered Fitz, 'a damsel and a half a day.'

'And who is the new Lindabrides?'

'A certain Mistress Anne Boleyn.'

'Gramercy! that is an oldish tale enough,' observed mine host.

'He hath fallen in love with her afresh, forgetting that he had done it afore,' said Fitz: 'I heard the news as new.'

'New, quotha!' cried a tipsy reeve of the Abbot of Paul's, 'why, the fame of her has long been everywhere: she's the cream of dainty moppets.'

'Tush!' cried Fitz.

'You gainsay me? Why, is she not known for the prettiest piece of femaledom in all the breadth of England?'

'Tush!' said Fitz 'By the Mass, here's a paltering fellow talks like a new-returned from the Spanish Indies! He knows not the fame of Mistress Anne!' said a King's Pursuivant, loitering here with a King's-warrant in his doublet-breast.

‘In faith, I’d give not one peeled codling for your Mistress Annes!’ said Fitz, and looked round challengingly.

‘Come, Fitz,’ said Macdonald, with laughter in his eyes, ‘Tis clear thou hast been following thy master’s ensample, and hast been caught by one fairer, for thou hast a beam of prejudgment in thine eye. The Lady Anne is indeed fair, for I have seen her.’

‘Tush, tush,’ said Fitz.

The eyes of Fitz were directed upward upon one black ceiling-joist, and they were full of tasty musings, and on his lips was the smile of pleased remembrance. Looking up, he uttered this judgment slowly, with calm authority:

‘The King never, never saw a lovely wench.’

As he said it, a mug, dropped by Bessie Ford, smashed upon the tiles, spilling costly wine of Alicant.

‘Come, my masters, draw near — Master Fitzgerald hath e’en an adventure upon his tongue!’ cried the mercer.

‘Provided it concerns not any of the great folk, Fitz,’ whispered Macdonald warningly.

Fitz suddenly took his eyes from the ceiling, and, smiting the table, cried:

‘She is the rarest, the gloriousest, the gaudiest little perroquet that ever flashed from bough to bough!’

‘Who, then?’

‘The damsel which is mine.’

‘What, already?’

‘She *will* be to-morrow at this time.’

‘And her name?’

‘Her name I tell not. Bah! why not? — her name is Laura, an you would wot.’

‘Laura — what?’

‘That I wot not.’

‘And you rencountered her — where?’

‘In the Whitefriars — in the hiddenest nook—’

‘When, though?’

‘Three days since.’

‘And you had speech with her?’

‘Troth, yes. Oh; ’tis the shrewdest minx! coy, yet sly, showing impudent blushes, pouting compliances. She would speak, and yet would not; she would say “No,” and mean “Yes.” Oh, ’tis the naughtiest bit of purity!’

The poor little chamberlain of the Bell Inn tripped over someone’s foot, and sent flying a stoup of good Sheres wine; it was the second bit of broken crockery within two minutes.

‘Why, Bessie lass,’ said old Somers, now fuddled, ‘what make you there?’

The little face was white; a string of rowan-tree berries about her low-clad neck wavered with strong agitation. She hid away her face.

‘But what is thy plan, Fitz?’ said Macdonald.

‘Wilt thou — ?’

‘I never make a plan, Mac, till I am in the carrying out thereof.’

‘But you swim in the tide of luck, my master,’ said the crafty-eyed Pursuivant, pushing out his ivory wedge-face; ‘for you may e’en present this beauty before the King’s Majesty. Nay, frown not like the devil o’erlooking Lincoln Town—’

‘The first duty of a King’s Guard is to guard the King,’ answered Fitz—’ and from presumptuous follies above all. Count upon Fitz to do his devoirs there, my master.’

‘But the manner of thy courting, Fitz?’ said Mac, feasting upon his friend’s free - tongued simplicity; ‘tell, tell.’

‘Oh, ’twas in an alley: there she tripped, stepping with shown instep and fragile ankle. And “Mamsel,” ko I, “sure for a lock of that soft and black-brown hair I would carry you all your journey in my arms.” And she: “’Tis useless, sir, to waste your timè, for I have a gallant whom I love, and a sister whom I fear.”

“Uds daggers, mamsel,” I riposted, “that knot were easy cut: for the gallant whom you love shall wed the sister whom you fear (or I will wed his costard to my poniard), and you, well rid of both, shall wed with me.” She laughed, and, “Our Saviour! ’tis a witty solution, sir,” ko she, “and a most hasty proposition.”

“Mamsel, I am a Fitzgerald of Kildare.”

“I suppose ’tis a noble family, sir, with mansions and demesnes?”

“It is, mamsel.”

“Still, ’tis useless: I know one which, though poor, I prefer to all your quarterings — though he be not so great and manful, I avouch.”

“Do you affect a great and manful man, mamsel?”

“Well, sir, young maidens are pleased by such men.”

“Then, here is one for you, mamsel — the very thing — this sounding chest, this fair brow, this sword, mamsel.”

“Our Saviour, sir!” ko she, with tittering, “you retail your points like a frippery-man: yet I say not ’tis unhandsomely done.”

“Thou art the choicest morsel, mamsel, that goes uncooked in Europe.”

“But you, sir, must needs munch other sweet-meats: for I am not for you.”

“By the Mass, the choicest morsel thou, the daintiest minx, the cosiest pig’s-eye—”

“*Thou* me not, prithee, sir, for I am another’s—” and she laughed the mockinigest mavis-laugh. “By blood and nails, thou shalt be mine, mamsel!”

“In faith, not by fair means, sir,” says she. “Then, by blood and nails, mamsel, by foul!”

“Our Saviour, sir, you fire quickly; I swear you frighten me!”

“Wilt thou say me a yea?”

“Faith, you make me laugh and cry together, sir. Only by force could I be won by you.”

“Where dost thou dwell?”

“That will I not declare, sir; ’tis true, I pass hereby each day about this hour.” I left her then, and tracked her to her domicile. And this was the manner of our first courting-time.’

‘But thy scheme, Fitz!’ said Macdonald; ‘wilt thou be using force, thou gamesome gibbet-carrion?’

‘Force, ay, and this very night.’

‘What! and whither wilt thou bear her?’

‘To an old grand-dame’s, where I have made terms in Billingsgate.’

‘But by the damsel’s will?’

‘Nay, but by force.’

‘Oh, thou merry gaol-crow, Fitz!’

‘Nay, ’tis honourable. Steal a broad-piece, and thou art felon; steal ten thousand, and thou art exchanger; steal that most precious, a woman, and thou art gallant.’

‘But how wilt set to work? — thou most frolic villain!’

‘I will set well to work; for I shall have drawn sword in hand.’

There was a square black-oak post, upon which for one moment Bessie Ford staggered and leant. But by a power of will which was hers, she kept from fainting.

‘A drawn sword, sir, say you?’ said a voice — the voice of the black-dressed stranger.

‘Ay, sir, I said that,’ said Fitz, looking round and up.

‘Bah! your whole tale of the girl is a mere currish fantasy of your invention,’ said the stranger.

Fitz’s little gray laughing eyes opened wide, looking about the room in amazement.

‘Uds daggers, my masters,’ he said, ‘here is a gentleman who gives the unprovoked lie to a Geraldine.’

Macdonald whispered low:

‘He seeks for his own ends to pick a quarrel with thee: answer him not, or fell him with thy fist.’

Fitz took no notice.

‘Say you that I lie, sir?’ he asked, turning in wonderment on his stool to face the stranger.

‘Yes. You lie.’

‘*Crow aboo!*’ cried Fitz, springing up, a brand of red on his forehead, his sword half drawn.

‘Fitz, Fitz,’ said Macdonald.

‘But surely the gentleman is not in his serious earnest?’ said Fitz; ‘are you in your serious earnest, my master?’

‘You lie.’

‘Then, by Christ’s wrath, I spatter your brains for it!’

Fitz’s quick blood grilled. He looked now a very noble species of giant, his big head thrown back, and his mantle hanging from a shoulder. But he

said quietly enough:

‘Draw, sir.’

‘Hold!’ cried mine host, drunk now; ‘all combats in the back-court, my masters, I pray you.’

The stranger waved a courtly invitation toward the passage; and at once the whole roomful of fuddled men made in that direction. Fitzgerald, on the way, hurriedly undid his cloak to disencumber himself, and flung it casually upon a table. The King and his letters had clean vanished from that heated brain.

Through the passage they trooped — mine host, too, the tapster, the hostler — out into a wide court paved with dislocated flags, a well-and-bucket in a corner, some hens and a cock, some stables, and sweet water wimpling leisurely, like melted diamond, over the pantiles of the gutter. Here had been the last scene of many a man.

‘Ready, sir — draw!’

It was begun at once, without ceremony.

The foreigner had retained his mantle, and wrapped it thick round his left forearm as a shield. He was nearly as tall as Fitzgerald, though much more slenderly built. And from the very first passes it became clear that he was an antagonist of great skill.

Macdonald drew in his breath. He had an eye of clearest judgment: and Fitzgerald, he knew, had in him a quart of the Bell’s strongest canaries. But if Fitz fell, there would be a second trial of skill: Mac secretly examined his own edge.

Clash, clash, with a continual motion, to and fro, back and fore, at the lithe-sheering hips of the fighters. The revellers stood around, with breathless comments, eager peerings.

Always the stranger smiled. He parried Fitzgerald's strong strokes with a wrist of steel, and ever with the same precision. The face of Fitzgerald heated, and suddenly, at a quick foin made high up by the foreigner, down the left cheek of the Geraldine came winding a scarlet thread. Sure, Fitz was drunk.

'Steady, Fitz, steady...' whispered Macdonald.

But steadiness was soon no longer part of the game. Both men's mouths were open now. The combat began to stagger like epilepsy, hither and thither, within some four feet of area. The crowd opened wider, stooping forward, hands on knees, souls in eyes.

Fitzgerald had not got in a scratch. The fight, from moment to moment, became brutal. The Geraldine had met the Devil. In his surprise, his rage of incredulity, he grew crazy for blood, hacking with the fury of a man extinguishing a flame. The rapier of the stranger must have been tempered in Damascene forges to resist that operating, imperious blade; and his science was fine. Yet he, too, was amazed: never had he encountered wrath so shrewd and quick as the wrath before him now.

Wider the combat staggered. There was a rip of cloth, a spout of blood, wet red on the paving-tiles.

The stranger's rapier had entered the left upper arm of Fitzgerald and, with swift outward wheel, torn through the flesh; at the same time he staggered over a cocked-up tile-edge, and Fitzgerald's blade plunged into the mass of cloth round his hand, to come away with a long ripping noise of rent fabric, in time to strike into air the rapier making prone for his heart.

Chink, chink, they go afresh: but now the combat fills the yard, and the spectators are cringing against the wall, and on its top the hens and cock look on silent, with round, sage, sideward eye — alternately bent — as though, forsooth, the right may have seen wrong, and lo, one now must try

with the left. Fitzgerald's redness has turned to mottle, and on both sides coolness is gone, and they rush round, stooping, with murderous stare, and an audible humph of their gasping bosoms. The sallow face of the foreigner is now a face of mere wild ecstasy. He darts anew upon Fitzgerald, and in a moment of opportunity hacks between neck and shoulder; Fitzgerald feints a hew at the head; up goes the parrying rapier; Fitzgerald makes the *tierce* thrust, and enters between the third and fourth rib; back comes a second time the wild rapier between neck and shoulder, and up flies the broadsword in a tardy attempt at parry; now the stranger has him: the broad breast is undefended; the stranger foins at *quarte*; the rapier is in prone career for Fitzgerald's heart; but he lurches backward — the rapier pricks his abdomen; and at that instant the flapping rags of the stranger's cloak are in his eyes. 'Hew, Fitz, hew!' hisses Macdonald. Fitz hews. His blade, feeble now, drops upon the stranger's skull. The rapier leaps far, with clattering fall; there is a thud, a head strikes the flags; Fitz falls upon the stranger, and immediately leaps up, and with wry mouth — laughs a little, awaked from a drunken nightmare.

But that poor heart in the dimness of the parlour yonder! It was worse with her than with the stranger lying in his blood.

She, a girl from the country — a simple wench — and what a thing was this which she was about to do!

The hand she held out fluttered like reeds; there was a panic stare in her eyes; her breath came raspingly, like the breath of Fitz in the court.

For her, a simple country-girl, fresh come to London, ignorant of the unguessably vast consequences of her act, it was an awful deed to do! — a thing more daring than the leap of horseman into some bottomless chasm.

But she did not hesitate at all She saw the fall of the stranger; she saw Fitzgerald stand, hale and hearty — she saw him laugh. He was the man

who that night was to despoil her nest and ravish her life. She put out her hand.

Oh, Fitz would have quite other cares, altogether different sorts of occupation that night, than the abducting of innocent damsels! He would clean forget the very existence of Laura Ford!

Out went the little fluttered hand. That brow, with its clean, chaste curves of hair, was wrinkled with the horizontal lines of wide-eyed scare; her little nose was pinched; her little heart seemed beating itself to death. But never in the bosom of Cœur de Lion, or aggressive dragon-fly, beat one bolder, more audacious.

She did not hesitate at all. Her hand was in the cloak of Garrett Oge Fitzgerald. She glanced once crazily round the room: it was wholly deserted. She touched the letters, held them, drew them out.

Then she ran, hunted by terrors.

Here was the mortal act of her life.

CHAPTER V

THE ALCHYMIST



‘LANDS HE COULD measure, terms and tides presage.’
GOLDSMITH.

THEY came trooping back into the sombre, low parlour. Instantly, the duel ended, their wild interest died down into mere dead indifference. The stranger was left lying with upturned face.

‘Well, well,’ said the Pursuivant, fumbling at papers in his doublet-breast, ‘late I am this day. This comes of loitering and lingering. Yet one half-pottle-pot of bastard, mine host, and then away on the King’s business.’

‘What, so early gone, Master Pursuivant,’ said the mercer, ‘when good-fellowship only begins to warm? And whither away?’

‘A neat’s tongue, mine host, an you love me, shouted Fitzgerald, above the din of tongues, doing on his cloak, ‘and with it a warm culiss, or such a thing as a dish of spitchcocked eels.’

Mine host went hobbling with bustling cares, burdened with orders, somewhat sobered.

‘Where’s the lass? Where’s Bessie Ford, John?’ he went asking. ‘In faith, ’tis ever so — few hands to many needs. Is she above-stairs, then — ?’

“Tis the alchymist, Calvo, whose arrest I go to make,’ said the Pursuivant. ‘I should e’en now be at London Bridge with my warrant.’

The air was full of tongues. Cups left half-empty were being drained.

‘But the man is not *deptif* said the Cheap botcher.

“Tis pity he be left weltering like a stabbed ox without chirurgeon’s aid.’

‘But Calvo! What, the alchymist?’ cried the mercer. ‘Why, ’tis a name known over half England. And wherefore arrest him, prithee?’

‘Witchcraft, friend,’ answered the Pursuivant dryly. “Tis a deadly one, a dark and evil one, this Mauro Calvo. A man long suspected, and over him the King’s sword has hung this many a day. And to-day, by my sooth, it falls.’

‘Truly, I believe you,’ said a scrivener of the Jewry to the botcher; ‘the man needs chirurgeon’s aid. Hi, mine host! — the man is not dead that lies yonder.’

‘Softly, my masters,’ answered mine host; ‘each thing in his own time. Seen to he shall be, and by Master Bygood, of Bishop’s Gate, the druggist. For as fair a gentleman was he as ever spoke, and here hath lodged five nights, paying his shot like an earl — but each thing in his own time.’

‘Yet ’tis a strange happening, this warrant of arrestment,’ said the mercer, ‘for Signior Calvo is a fellow in high favour among the common folk o’ London, and hath been known to tell them things that came afterwards to pass like Holy Writ. Sure, ’tis a wight of strange foreknowledges and wisdoms, my master.’

“Tis even wherefore his skin shall burn. ’Tis an unclean beast, having conference with spirits of evil, a fellow which vanishes before your very eyes — pah! But three days shall see the faggots crackle round his members.’

‘But—’ said the mercer.

He got no further. A terrible outcry of alarm — a shout as of horror — came from the table where Fitzgerald had seated himself. He had touched

the slit in his cloak, and he had made — a discovery.

‘By God’s death...!’

He drew in his breath. The first swift thought that flashed upon him was this: that he was even on his trial — that this was his first day in the King’s service — that he had yet been strangely trusted — that now he had been weighed in the balances and found most woefully wanting — that the letters were gone!

He stamped. He flushed with imperial rage. Then he sank to his seat, faint. All his left arm and shoulder was soaked with blood.

‘Fitz, Fitz, what hast thou?’ whispered Macdonald.

Fitzgerald pointed to his cloak. At his shout a hush had fallen upon the war of tongues. Macdonald looked round.

‘Who has left this room?’ he asked.

It was discovered that three of the revellers had gone away after the duel.

‘No man now shall depart till he has been searched,’ cried out Macdonald.

The news spread consternation. The landlord paled. Each man seemed to see bent upon himself the intolerable frown of King Harry for his mere presence at such a sacrilege.

All came forward readily, parading the innocent nooks of their apparel from ruff to hose. Fitz did not look. His head leant on his hand, and on his nose were the wrinkles of pain. Macdonald cried:

‘They have, then, been abstracted by one of those three, else by one of the inn-keeper’s myrmidons. ‘Sdeath, mine host, your house must even be searched.’

A movement was made toward the staircase behind the bar. But Macdonald returned, and whispered to Fitz where he sat:

‘Tut, man, mourn not like a nun in Holy Week. At what hour was the letter to be handed to my Lord Wolsey?’

‘Before Vespers.’

“Tis not now far from that. Here’s my counsel, Fitz: Leave the tracking of the letters to *me*; I wager odds that I recover them. But before then, my Lord Wolsey, expecting the letter, and not receiving, will send messengers to the King, or the King, for some cause, may send messengers to my lord, and so will thy case be declared, and all thy fat be on the fire. Now, thou knowest the little hedge-lane of yew and holly-bush that leads from the south postern of the Westminster Palace wall. Thereby must messengers both to and from the King pass, and ’tis my counsel that thither thou hie, and there take stand, with drawn sword defending from any soul to pass this way or that, if it be not over thy body. Quick, Fitz! and there await till I come.’

Macdonald had his hand on the shoulder of Fitzgerald, his face stooped to Fitzgerald’s; and the thing, being an affair of desperate action, pleased Fitz. He sprang, nodded to his friend, and with fresh energy swung toward the outer door. Macdonald heard the clattering hoofs go galloping into faintness and silence.

Then he rejoined the party of search. They were near the top of the stairs.

That little fluttering heart beat with a more poignant ecstasy. She heard them come. She stood listening in her own bed-chamber — the letters in her hand — her eyes wide.

It was certain that with such an army of searchers the house held no hiding-place. To tear the papers would mean discovery of the shreds, to burn them she had no fire. But even so, the thought of destroying the King’s letters never occurred to her: to that immensity of daring her mind did not

rise; she was a simple country-girl, full of awe. The steps came nearer, hunting her down.

She fell to her knees, and, with eyes turned white to heaven, prayed to that Mother who was a Virgin.

But the steps had rounded the corner of the corridor which led to her chamber; they seemed to be making straight for her. Her forehead struck the floor, so low she doubled.

But she sprang, all wild and white, for the steps were very near. Apart from heaven, on earth there remained for her but one refuge now — the refuge of Mauro Calvo.

Mauro Calvo was a man who knew, in addition to other things, the Future; for this was revealed to him by the stars of night. To very many, for the sum of two groats, he had told the future of their lives; and to Bessie, who had quickly heard of him, he had twice told the future of Laura Ford's life.

One of Bessie's nightly tasks, as she lay pondering many things in her head upon her bed, was to harmonize those two futures which Mauro Calvo had said that Laura should live. Laura could not live both, yet, so strange is the mind, Bessie had not the least doubt of either.

Bessie believed that Mauro Calvo was the profoundest soul who ever deigned to walk this earth, and perhaps was not very far wrong. At all events, she had strong confidence in his wisdom and goodness.

And they were very good friends, she and Calvo. Calvo forgot in an hour many a face of his pilgrims: but he remembered the face of Bessie Ford.

Bessie did not know that the pile of faggots intended for Calvo's roasting was already dry, though Calvo himself, being a divining man, well knew it.

To him the thoughts of her panic turned. When the steps were nearly at her door, she slipped through another into a tiring-room, thence down a

winding stair, and so to the front-door of a gable. And down the street she went running with hasting pattens, in that pretty hatless freedom usual then everywhere, and still in France.

London Bridge was near; it was a street broad at bottom, narrow above, where sombre old gables left an irregular line of sky. Here was market, and money-changer's, the mercer, and the stout, capped apple-woman. The bridge lay upon sixteen very large blocks of masonry, some of them hollow, with windows. Within one of them was a Chapel of St. Catherine; within another, the twelfth, nearer the Surrey side, was the laboratory and den of Mauro Calvo. At high-tide the surface of the river ran half a foot above his head.

Bessie Ford, still running, traversed three-fourths of the now-quiet bridge, and sped into a dark doorway on the west side. She ran down a passage. From above, through the still evening, there came to her with unreal vagueness the scolding of a housewife.

Four steep ladder-steps led her to some very narrow and high stone steps, the descent of which involved a series of downward jerks. At the bottom, where the darkness was absolute, she tapped at a locked door.

In a minute she was admitted into a narrow room, reeking of the brews which sent their chymic fume from a den still beyond.

An azure flame beneath an alembic on a tripod gave some light, which was hardly augmented by the yellowish blotch in a lanthorn of horn on a stand.

Before Bessie Ford stood Mauro Calvo. And he said:

‘Surely, now, it is you. Why, I knew you would be coming.’

CHAPTER VI

THE MESSENGER



‘IN THE DEEP dungeon of some Gothic dome Where night and desolation
ever frown.’

BEATTIE.

CALVO poured a piggin of Malvoisy wine from an earthenware cruche, and held it to the lips of Bessie. She gulped a throatful. He seated her on a stone stool, held his ear a moment to the simmering alembic, and sat on a small table beside her.

He was a man of forty-five, but looked older. The underlids of his eyes were drawn down awry, the left showing a triangle of the red flesh, but the shapeless, goggle eyes were full of a sage calm. Whatever hair he had was concealed by a close-drawn skull-cap of black cloth, which, however, left visible a broad prominence of pallid brow. He was dressed in hopelessly begrimed black velvet, with pantofles.

‘But the letters you hold in your hand,’ he said—‘surely they are King’s letters!’

There was a shout and ado of some overboiling crucible in the eastern apartment, and Calvo rushed away. In a minute he was by her side again.

With heaving breath she told her awful tale — why she had stolen, why she had brought the letters to him to keep. Calvo heard with sideward head, one side of his face screwed up to listen. She ended with these words: ‘You told me — you *told* me — that she should be — married.’

‘Did I say that, now?’

‘Well, so she shall,’

‘But — *when*? I cannot wait, sir. Oh, I shall die if she be not married!’

‘As to when, now. The stars are not quite precise as to the *when*, you see.’

He spoke in a rather absent way. At that moment he was not thinking of Bessie Ford at all. He was thinking of himself. The profound man had an — idea. He was walking on the road to the stake. These King’s letters, if they contained secrets, would surely save him. And as he listened with absent air, he mused.

Not that Mauro Calvo feared the actual stake, or the King, or the Church, or the powers of the land. On his side was Nature and her secrets. He could escape. But the laboratory of a scientist is not made in a day, nor was it pleasant to be molested, and driven out, and hunted by the myrmidons of Power.

‘Never fear,’ he said, absently patting Bessie’s shoulder, ‘she shall be married; that is quite settled.’

‘But, Master Calvo, to-morrow — the next day — this man will outlive the loss of the letters, and return to thoughts of taking her off! I took the letters but as a temporary device. Oh, sir, I could not bear to live through another day—’

‘But I thought it was the King which you feared—’

‘But did you not promise me that the King should never, *never* see her — ?’

‘I think I did, I think I did. Oh, well, all will be right, never fear.’

‘But to-morrow, sir! if the man should re-think of her to-morrow?’

‘He will not.’

‘Oh, he may — he *may*.’

‘Never fear.’

‘I cannot bear it!’

‘Then, what would you have?’

‘Let her be married to-night — this self-same night!’

‘How! — to-night? That cannot be.’

She fell to her knees with clasped hands and pleading eyes, and, weeping, she said:

‘Help me! you can do whatever you will: pity a poor maiden in her sore tribulation, for that pity which is Above! You cannot say me nay — see, your hand is on my head, and your heart is most fatherly kind. Help me, sir! I have heard tell of such things — by a dispensation of the Abbot. Say that she shall be wedded this night!’

She was engaging the whole attention of Calvo now. His hand passed and repassed over the smooth glossy convex of her hair.

‘Well, well, weep no more. If I can — But to night, say you? Have you, then, a lover ready to which to wed her?’

‘Yes, sir — a student of goodly dispositions — a poor lad — but a husband none the less.’

‘Well, I will see to it. Have you any money?’

‘I have fifteen hoarded crowns,’

‘That is ample. I will disburse the fees, and you shall disdamage me after. I know a good frater of the Crouched Friars which pays me frequent visits. Trust me, he will do your affair. He shall be here with cross and book immediately after Compline, and ’tis your part to bring the maiden and her

lover hither at that hour. So now, you see, you have not prayed the diabolist, Mauro Calvo, in vain.'

He looked momentary kindness, and again rushed to right some crisis of his brewing cauldrons. And she, on his return, put her lips to his hand with the fervour of a *dévôte*.

'Good father to me you are, sir! May the prayers of all the distressed return upon you with blessing!'

'Well, well. He touched her cheek, and 'Away now, away,' he whispered bustlingly.

He closed the door behind her. For a moment he stood near the light, the letters in his hand, hesitating. He looked aside, thinking. Then he smiled. With a bistoury he cut the silken thread of the letter to my Lord Wolsey.

He read it, and coolly he said:

'Just the very thing.'

He went at once to the stairs, toiled a little way up, and began to call, 'Tommy! Tommy!'

Above he occupied the topmost stage, where was his observatory and optic tube. Tommy was a child of the house and a quirister in St. Catherine's near. He was also a messenger pressed into the service of Calvo, his great reward being an occasional sight of the' simmering stews, of the entanglement of retorts and twisted tubes, of gaudy chromes, and clotted precipitates, and working menstrua, and hissing limbecs, and festering fermentations.

By the time Tommy appeared, breathless and wideeyed, Calvo had written a note. He said:

'Thou wilt take this note to Thames Street, Tommy, the number 12, and ask for Master Mark Bonner, into whose hands thou wilt deliver it.'

While Tommy was gone, the skirt of his buckram cassock, leather-belted, flying behind his legs, Calvo stood leaning sideways upon a shelf, inditing two letters, one to his friend, the frater, one to the King.

‘If the King’s most gracious majesty would deign to guarantee to his slave, Mauro Calvo, free immunity in the performance of his lawful occupations from the persecutions of the King’s myrmidons, then Mauro Calvo would undertake to keep privy in his own bosom certain momentous secrets written that morning by the King to my Lord Wolsey, secrets of which he, Mauro Calvo, by his science, had knowledge.’ So wrote Calvo.

But in so writing, though his reasoning was good, he hardly took into account the clearness of King Henry’s mind, or the fury of his rage, or the implacability of that will of steel.

Henry was a perfectly enlightened and materialistic person. To tell him that Calvo had discovered the secrets *by his science*, was an insult to that strong intelligence.

As Calvo finished the letter, Mark Bonner stood panting within the room. Here he had often stood before, drinking with greed from the lips of Calvo that for which he thirsted — Knowledge.

‘Thou knowest Brother Bruno of the Crouched Friars, I think, Mark?’ said Calvo.

‘Yes, worthy master.’

Mark had reason to know. Many a day he fed free at the Friary ‘frater’ when the wolf was at his entrails.

‘Then thou wilt bear this letter to him; with this broad-piece thou wilt buy a ring for a bride’s finger, which the good brother will marry here to-night, and with the other letter thou wilt then make with speed to the Westminster Palace, burrowing as near the King’s person as thou canst before delivery. ’Tis urgent, Mark, and I wish thee a soon return.’

Mark bowed, and was gone, both he and Calvo being ignorant of the fact that he had been sent to purchase his own wedding-ring; or that Garrett Oge Fitzgerald stood with drawn sword, three wounded men lying about him, in the path where Mark must needs pass.

At this time Bessie Ford was at Mark's lodging, waiting for him. Mark was from home that night.

She waited half an hour, walking, standing, muttering orisons, under the high projecting garret where Mark lodged. Stepping back, she could see far up his broad, low window-leaf, criss-crossed with leads, stand open, and hanging from the sill a trunk-hose, drying. She wrung her hands, mourning, 'Oh my! oh my!'

If things should go other than she willed that night, of all nights! If the Destiny which infects and shapes the lives of men were against her! and on that night! She tapped again, and left a message for Mark: he was to meet her beneath the river at Calvo's. And off she went, running. The night now had come.

If the wedding, after all, should lack a bridegroom...! That would be hard.

Her bosom strained with the stressful prayer of her lifted heart; on her lips was a constant mutter of prayer.

'Virgin,' she said, and again, 'Virgin.' Only a Heavenly Maid could comprehend the cry of her pure heart.

She had not yet seen Laura. On leaving Calvo, she had hurried back to the Bell, and in a few words had told mine host that she must even be absent for some hours that night — willy-nilly, she must. In her fear of all the world concerning Laura, she had not even acquainted the simple good man of her sister's presence in London. She distrusted his tongue among the

gallants of the inn. Her outings o' nights, when she went to Laura, she explained in various ways, never, however, uttering direct falsehood.

From the Bell she had gone to Bonner's lodging; thence she hurried to the Whitefriars.

She ran up some low, broad stairs, with massive brown-oak banisters, to the first landing — to the second — to a half-open door: and she cried an 'Ah!' of joy. Laura was in her arms.

'Thou didst not expect me?'

'No.'

'Kiss me!'

Laura kissed her 'Again.'

Laura kissed her.

'Oh, harder 'n that — longer 'n that.'

Laura kissed her harder and longer, minutely obedient.

'I did not expect thee. This is not thy night....'

'No. Laura, thou wilt be married this very night.'

'In truth?'

'This night.'

'Whom to?'

'Oh, sweetard — art not very sweet? Dost love me, Laura? But what a query! Why, to Bonner, sure!' Laura clapped her hands a little. The prospect of marriage so near was agreeable — marriage with Mark Bonner above all.

'Art glad, Laura?'

'Oh, I like being married, I!'

She clapped her hands a little.

'But—' she said.

'Well, sweetard?'

'He has nothing.'

‘I know it. But he is learned: he will be a wise and worthy man, Laura. I predict it of him. Oh, thou must love him, love him always more than life itself!’

‘Oh, I love him, I. But he has not a noble to buy me a fore-part,’

‘Nay, but for the present he shall live with thee here; and what I earn will nourish you both.’

All this time it never occurred to Laura to question the cause of this sudden marriage. She simply acquiesced in a pleasant thing, confiding in her sister’s devices.

‘But — ah, Laura,’ said Bessie, ‘I have need to scold thee warmly, minx, for a thing. Dost talk with strangers? — nay, nay, I cannot scold thee. I have pined so to see thee! How much dost love thy Bess? Come, kiss me more, girl, girl, and tell it me in mine ear!’

Laura, in the act of kissing her, cried:

‘But — !’

‘Well, pig’s-eye?’

‘I saw him not one half-hour ago, and he said naught of this marriage.’

‘Who?’

‘Master Bonner,’

‘Oh!’ Bessie leapt up. In her lover-like preoccupation with Laura she had half - forgotten her quest of Bonner, as the mind in moments of awful stress is sometimes captured by trifles. ‘Oh, then, thou hast seen him? Methought perchance thou hadst. Faith, I was in so great scare, seeking him high and low.’

‘He is easy found,’ said Laura. ‘He was on his way to the King’s Palace with a missive, and stopped midway to have speech with me,’

‘Then I must even go thither — now. Perchance on the road I may meet him.’

‘Why, and I, too,’ said Laura.

‘Haste, then! All will yet be well.’

She lifted her eyes in a prayer of praise.

A minute or two afterwards the sisters were hurrying together westward through that lane in the fields which is now the Strand.

CHAPTER VII

HOW A WEDDING UNDER THE RIVER FELL OUT ILL



‘THEN SHALL THOSE creatures all forlorn Warie the hour that they were born.’

LINDSAY.

‘Il n’y a guère d’homme assez habile pour connaître tout le mal qu’il fait.’ — LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

AT that precise moment Mark Bonner stood confronted with Garrett Oge Fitzgerald.

It was in the hedge-lane of yew and holly-bush leading from the south postern of the palace-wall.

Mark came whistling, his bonnet far back on his fall of golden ringlets. There was a moon. But he did not see the three wounded men in his path, though there, standing huge, he saw their wounder.

‘Hold!’ said Fitz. ‘What make you, sirrah?’

‘I am a messenger to the King,’ answered Mark.

‘From whom?’

‘I may not say.’

‘Then return to him that sent you, and say that Garrett Oge Fitzgerald bars your way.’

‘I may not pass?’

‘That may you not.’

‘Nay, but I must.’

‘Then pass.’

‘Sheathe first that ominous-looking sword.’

‘Nay, friend, I am in no humour for jests to-night, by my halidame. Go thy way in peace.’

‘Wherefore may one not pass?’

‘I will tell thee, lad. There is a danger that the King receive to-night unpleasant tidings. Now, I am a King’s Guard: and ’tis the first duty of a King’s Guard to guard the King — from unpleasant tidings, above all. So go thy way unpricked, lad.’

‘Then I will tell you from whom I have the letter.’

‘From whom?’

‘From Signior Mauro Calvo.’

‘Who’s he?’

‘The great chymist of London Bridge.’

‘Ay, I recollect. No, lad, no letters from any wizard-men to the King to-night.’

Mark was confounded. He could not rush upon a sword. He turned back upon his way, hesitatingly, uncertain what to do. Finally, he rested his foot upon a fence-bar, and leant upon the top, whistling, looking at the moon.

He heard near footsteps, turned, and saw Bessie and Laura Ford.

‘Ah, this is happy meeting!’ cried Bessie.

‘What make you here?’ asked Mark, astonished.

‘We shall be married this very night!’ blurted Laura, with one hand-clap.

‘Say you — ?’

Bessie took Mark aside, and explained how all was ready, and what her will was.

‘In Signior Calvo’s studio, say you?’ asked Mark.

‘Even there. Is he not as a father to me and mine?’

‘Then ’twas my own wedding-hoop I have purchased!’ cried Mark. ‘Oh, the abounding of my lucky star! I bless thee, sweet Bess, I thank thee from my heart!’

‘Then come, for the time is not far off. Hast thou delivered thy letter to the King?’

Bessie glanced timorously at that awful palace. Even its exterior was to her a terror.

‘Nay, I have not delivered it, inasmuch as a pestilent outrageous fellow stands yonder to prevent me with drawn sword.’

“Tis pity. Yet must thou come now. From whom was the letter?”

‘Even from Signior Calvo.’

‘Say’st thou — ? from *him*? Oh, ’tis most great pity thou shouldst return and not deliver his missive!’

To Bessie, in the poignant grip of her gratitude to Calvo, this seemed a monstrous indelicacy, to return to the enjoyment of the alchymist’s favours, leaving his will undone.

‘But why art thou debarred?’ she asked.

‘Faith, the knave is somewhat incoherent. He would guard the King from unpleasant tidings. He stands yonder at the turn of the hedge.’

‘But sure, in Master Calvo’s missive would be no unpleasant tidings; ’tis rather some request which he tenders,’ she said musingly. Then suddenly: ‘Come with *me* — for a woman’s son tongue may more persuade than a

man's strut. And 'twere most great pity to return, having failed Master Calvo.'

She had wondrously little dread of cold steel: all her terrors being for another, and moral in their character.

They went forward, she and Mark before, Laura walking listlessly a little way behind, not knowing nor caring why she went. Mark flung back at her a 'Sweet!', and she smiled.

There, standing, was Fitzgerald. But Bessie was quite near to him before she recognised him. Suddenly she screamed. Fitz, hearing footsteps, had looked round, and recognised both Bessie and his sweetard, Laura. In an instant Bessie had turned, seized the hand of Laura, whispered an impassioned 'Run!', and was gone with her sister flying down the path. Fitz was after them.

He was a man whose mind could bear the stress of only one impulse at a time. While it lasted, he forgot all else.

The race was intense, though Laura was weakly and no runner, and Fitz's long legs were rather weary; but he meant to overtake them, and ran hard. On the whole, however, they distanced him at first. Behind all came Mark Bonner, running, and wondering why.

Suddenly the race ended. A man had rushed into the path from a by-way, and in his course collided heavily with Fitzgerald. They fell together. It was Fitz's friend, Macdonald, come to report the final failure of his search for the letters.

Mark Bonner, meanwhile, had stopped, and seeing the fall of Fitz, and that the two girls were now safe, took to his heels in the direction of the palace, and almost as soon as the two men were on their feet, had entered the postern.

'But is't *thou*?' said Macdonald. 'What cherry-pit is this thou playest?'

'Tis the little perroquet, of whom I told thee to-day, that I chase. She came strangely near me of her own will, and flies yonder with little Bessie of the Bell. Hast found the letters?'

'No, no. But Bessie of the Bell, sayest thou?'

'Ay.'

'Phew!' went Macdonald, pondering with eyes glinting close.

'What of her?' asked Fitz.

'Tis she hath the letters, sure, blockhead!' cried Macdonald.

'How makest thou that?'

'I think only of the fact that she is in visible friendship with the pretty moppet whom thou this day blurtedst thy will to steal. Tis clear enow: she hoped to do thee some injury for thy misbehaving to her friend. Never once did I suspect her. But now I recollect — I saw her not at all after the letters disappeared, though we searched the inn thorow. She must e'en have slipped away, bearing them somewhither. Quick, Fitz! we must after and track them.'

At once the two men took to running. The girls, by this time, thinking themselves out of harm, had fallen to a panting, rapid walk. Within ten minutes the men spied them afar; and they, too, slowed their pace, clinging to the shadows, wary of their footfalls, tracking the girls at a distance of some forty yards.

On by the orchard-wall of Essex House, crowded with blooming espaliers, and a ghostly whiteness of blossomy fragrance, and on by the shafted-windows and oriels of the Knights Templars, through the desert loneliness of black tree-shadow, and broad, white moonlight.

Suddenly Laura Ford thought that she would like to be married in a hat.

'Well, then, Laura, thou must e'en run fleetly to get it,' said Bessie, 'for the hour is near, by my credit. Heaven grant that Mark Bonner be not

tardy...!’

And at once they doubled down a dark alley in the Whitefriars. To the men behind, this sudden run seemed precisely like purposed flight: and cried Macdonald:

‘They have spied us, and run, Fitz. After them, lad...!’

They, dropping caution, started the chase with loud footsteps; and at the same time Bessie Ford exclaimed:

‘Oh, my mother, we are still pursued!’

The girls redoubled speed, spurting like gaze-hounds. But Bessie’s wits did not forsake her: she knew that Fitzgerald knew the abode of Laura; to that abode, therefore, there must be no return now. Down another alley she darted, dragging panting Laura, and into the first open doorway. Here all was dark and still. They waited in a corner of the hall, hardly daring to breathe their laboured breaths. In a little while they heard the two men run past.

The men, missing the quarry, made for Laura’s lodging. They ran up the stairs, alarmed the household, demanded her room, and searched it. But by the time they had finished, Laura and Bessie were well on their way through Paul’s to London Bridge.

Fitz and Mac descended and stood in the alley. Whither now should they turn, what do?

‘Whither away now, Mac?’ asked Fitz.

“Tis a vile business, this,” said Mac, at a loss.

They hooked arms, and strolled listlessly down to the river’s bank, pondering on emptiness. To Inanity there is no solution, nor can the Void be added up.

Here they remained a long time, perhaps an hour, strolling to and fro, watching the darkly-bushed banks, and the broad play of the rippled water

into which the moonshine beat and sweltered.

“’Tis a filthy business?” said Mac.

‘By now the King knows,’ said Fitz.

‘Most like.’

‘I knocked on the head three several messengers from my Lord Wolsey. There will be the very devil to answer for, Mac. Beside, there was a fourth —’

‘Who?’

‘A messenger from a wizard-man of London Bridge.’

‘Say you — ?’

‘But hold! why, this same boy was with the maidens!’

‘And this fellow who was with the maidens bore a message from Calvo?’

‘He did.’

‘Gadamercy, Fitz! why saidst thou not this before?’

‘How so?’

‘Uds daggers! ’tis clear that ’tis the wizard hath the letters! Know’st thou not this man? He is called Calvo, and not a wench but holds in reverence his dark powers. ’Tis to just such an one that the girl would have borne the letters for their keeping; and if his messenger was with her, s’death! ’tis not a long guess. Come, Fitz — to the wizard’s den, lad!’

They took to their heels eastward with new impulse.

Meanwhile, in the den beneath the river, Bessie Ford and Laura waited, and Brother Bruno and Mauro Calvo waited. All was ready, but a bridegroom lacked.

Had the Fates in whom she trusted not been against her, Bessie would ere now have seen her sister’s finger hooped, for the hour was well past, and she lifted her eyes, and her hands were damp in one intense, long clasp

of fear, and Brother Bruno showed fervent impatience, and Mark Bonner did not come.

Calvo went about, decocting his brews, holding vials to the light, adjusting a still, smelling a fishy jelly, seeking ever to bind volatile Hermes, who would not be bound. And now he would tap Bessie Ford on the cheek, saying:

‘Never fear, never fear....’

‘Pray he come anon,’ said Brother Bruno. ‘Even a Crouched Friar cannot subsist without eating,’

He was a portly bonhomme, Brother Bruno, with an asthmatic throat-groan, and a depth of abdomen equal to his breadth of shoulder. He drained at a gulp a piggin of Calvo’s wine, and sat his broad overlapping bulk on a stool with short-winded sigh. The long cross of his order heaved in spasms on his chest. Bessie Ford noted the signs of his growing unrest with a wan agony.

‘Oh, Something is against me, sure!’ she muttered.

Calvo expounded a scientific theory to Bruno, who did not care, holding a test-tube and tiny balance before the friar’s eyes.

Laura noticed her sister’s careworn face, and leaned, and said:

‘Don’t fret! he will come...

It was really she that held Brother Bruno. His eyes fed upon her. Here was the gayest flash of womanhood those epicure looks had yet blinked at.

‘And he should be the happiest groom, too, in the King’s realm — he should, yes,’ he said. ‘Wherefore comes not the mumping knave?’

Would he never, never come? A slow hour drawled away.

Bruno rose to go.

Mark, meanwhile, was coming, swiftly, on horseback; and with him, swiftly, on horseback, was coming King Henry the Eighth.

Mark had sent in his letter to the King after half-an-hour's waiting in an ante-chamber; and as soon as ever Henry read the words, he ordered the messenger to be detained.

King Henry at this time was in the first fulness of his vigour; the blood ran red in his veins; and never was a King more vividly a Man.

He had the power of deliberation in the midst of his most arrogant passions. The first thing he saw on reading Calvo's letter was that Calvo had his letter to Wolsey, and had read it. That letter, then, lay open: and it contained secrets which, for a large part of his kingdom, he would not have another eye peruse. Like lightning, he resolved that he himself, and no other, must recover that open letter; also, that the eye which had read it must never see another sunrise.

All the time he thought thus coolly, his face was the very expression of royal rage.

He had expected some despatches from Wolsey in answer to his own, and understood now why they had not come. He remembered, too, the messenger he had employed — the newly-tried Kildare fellow. This gibbet-crow, then, had proved miscreant...

The King sat again at his escritoire, and took up some paper-of-state, to finish its perusal; but as he read, he cast it down, and smote with his fist, crying:

‘Well, by the Splendour of God...!’

He went stalking to and fro in the chamber, stretching his sculptured, close-clad legs.

‘Tell three Guards to await me in the palace-court with two saddle-horses,’ he said to a gentleman-in-waiting.

He resumed his striding. He tossed up a breath of bitter laughter on the words:

‘By the Splendour of God...!’

In about ten minutes he reappeared from a withdrawing-room, bonneted and muffled in a cloak. In the anteroom he cast a casual eye upon Mark Bonner as he passed, and said:

‘Lead the way to this Calvo.’

Mark was trembling like aspen.

The cavalcade set off, with a lanthorn. Mark led. They went galloping, the Guards behind. In fifteen minutes King Henry was jerking down the steep stone steps of Mauro Calvo’s dark den.

The door was half-open. It was pulled back. Laura and Bessie Ford leapt up, expecting Mark. Bruno was just about to go.

For Mark they saw King Henry. The first face upon which the King’s eye rested was the face of Laura Ford.

He started: and immediately turned his look away. The light was very dim, and came only from the yellow blotch of the horn-lanthorn.

Mark and the Guards entered. The arms of Bessie Ford were trembling in visible up-and-down jerks like spasms. She knew the King, and had seen him look — *and turn his look away*.

As for Calvo, he stood erect, near the further door, eyeing the King with calm, goggle eyes. Here were two kings, and not one. Though Henry’s visit was sudden as thunder-bolt, and the reason was readable in his face, yet Calvo did not flinch.

Why did not the King speak? He had his outstretched finger covering the alchemist, and on his tongue were the words: ‘Arrest me that stinking rat!’, but instead, he turned his head, and said:

‘La, mamsels, what make you here...?’

His face wore a coarsely sheepish expression of some dawning, sly purpose.

Bessie Ford, cold with horror, had cringed and backed, as from some deadly snake, toward the further end, instinctively near to the protection of Calvo, drawing her sister with her.

At that moment, Fitzgerald and Macdonald came bounding into the room and saw — the King! Fitz hung his head, as the King's hard eyes rested a moment upon him.

Again the King's finger went out, and this time he said:

‘Seize me that lousy stinkard!’

Even at that moment of his peril Mauro Calvo's eyes rested upon the face of Bessie Ford, and saw its anguish. And, even at that moment, he had room in his brain to pity her. He remembered that the thing which she feared had come upon her.

Suddenly, as the Guards moved to seize him, the room was in nether darkness. At a mere touch of his finger the lanthorn had gone out.

A dagger now at his heart would not have surprised King Harry.

‘Quick — light...!’ he cried.

The Guard who had carried a lanthorn had deposited it on a step outside, where he had stood to light down the King. He rushed out, and perhaps within a minute after the darkness there was again light.

But where was Mauro Calvo? He was gone. And where were Bessie and Laura Ford? They were gone, too.

The men rushed into the inner room. They ransacked it; in rushing search they tapped the walls; they looked toward the ceiling; they looked at the floor. The wizard had vanished on the devil's wing; the girls had thinned to air.

Harry wry-pushed his lips and gnawed the pout at a corner, meditating with scowling brow. He took in with his tongue-tip his moustache end, to gnaw.

His first words were a surprise: they showed that the centre-of-gravity of his interest had changed.

He said to Mark Bonner, speaking very low:

‘Knowest thou that maiden?’

‘Which, sire?’ faltered Mark.

‘The taller.’

‘Yes, sire.’

‘What is thy name?’

‘Mark Bonner, sire.’

‘Find her, and tell me where, and I will make of thee what thou wilt.’

He turned to Fitzgerald:

‘Well, villain — my letters!’

Fitzgerald said:

‘I deserve to be hanged, sire.’

The King lowered his voice:

‘Sawest thou that maiden even now?’

‘Yes, sire.’

‘Art thou truly a shrewd fellow?’

‘I believe it, sire.’

‘Then prove it Find her, and thou hast my favour. What is thy name?’

‘Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, sire.’

‘I remember. An thou hast need of a full purse, bear this ring to my Chamberlain.’

He turned to Macdonald:

‘Fellow, thou art in my Lord Wolsey’s service, I see.’

‘I am, sire.’

‘And a comrade of this knave here?’

‘

‘Yes, sire.’

‘I know thy face. What is thy name?’

‘James Craigie Macdonald, sire.’

‘A Scot?’

‘Yes, sire,’

‘Then a shrewd fellow, I warrant,’

‘It is like, sire,’

The King’s voice dropped:

‘Sawest thou that maiden even now?’

‘Yes, sire.’

‘Tell my Lord Wolsey that the King takes thee henceforth into his service. Find her, knave, through whatever difficulty, and thou reap’st a fair harvest. Go first to my Chamberlain with Fitzgerald and Bonner, and have thy purse well filled. But find her — fail me not an thou lovest life.’

‘I will do what trying can, sire.’

‘And thou?’ he said to Fitzgerald.

‘Why truly, sire.’

‘And thou?’

He turned to Bonner.

Bonner did not answer, though he felt himself, willynilly, one of the League formed by the King.

But the King did not notice his silence, and at once went fumbling from the room.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FUGITIVES



‘FREEDOM ALL SOLACE to man gives:

He lives at ease that freely lives,

And should think freedom more to prize

Than all the gold in world that is.’

BARBOUR.

WE have said of Bessie Ford that she was more important than the Battle of the Spurs; also that she was like a pebble dropped into water, round which float out and widen slow circles: only, in *her* case, instead of the circles fading as they widened, they still gathered depth and height — they filled a sea — till at the horizon they rolled away in sombre billows, mountain-high.

From her partly sprang that Reformation which shook the world.

Let us follow, circle by circle, the widening reach of her life, and watch its culmination. Of this she is worthy: for really heroic was the Virtue of the girl, and great her passionate unselfishness, and her strong patience, and her pious valour.

When Mauro Calvo vanished from King Harry, as it were on the wing of Sathanas, taking with him Bessie and Laura, in reality, of course, Satan had nothing to do with that matter. The escape was effected in the darkness

through a hole which did not at all seem to be there. On one side, the wall slanted inward toward the roof, and in this wall was a circular window near the bottom, shut with a slab of stonework. The inner surface of this slab was coated with cobalt, and touched a ledge in the wall, coated with loadstone, then called 'Lydian-stone'; the slab was thus kept in place by magnetic force, and it was only necessary to present an artificial magnet to its upper edge to cause it to fall by its own weight upon the palm. On its hidden surface was a handle, and Calvo had no sooner whispered Bessie and Laura, and pushed them through, than, himself following with a bag, he replaced the slab with perfect noiselessness, and left the wall impenetrable.

The fugitives groped their way up some steps in the thickness of the wall. At the top was a similar window, opening inwards, and before the window a little boat, lolling in the thick shadow of London Bridge, fastened to a staple.

They hurried in. Calvo pushed off, and plied an oar.

In the middle of the river he stopped, and looked up at a black sky, crowded with stars. He thought of his optic tube, quite lost now to him, and was pettish.

'Well, now, you see what you have brought me to,' he said.

Bessie Ford's hands were clasped in a passion of gratitude.

'Sure, my good father, may the good God—' she whispered.

'Yes, yes: but you see what you have brought me to now, don't you?' he said.

In reality, of course, Bessie had not brought him to anything. This sudden separation from his retorts, and alcahests, and alchemies had been occasioned by his own letter to Henry; and even before that letter, as he knew, his doom had been settled. But upon poor Bess he poured the blame.

Laura leant her lovely forehead upon Bessie's shoulder, which trembled. Calvo, looking up, observed old Aldebaran and Bootes, and the drifting planets.

‘Mumping chuff, that King!’ he said. ‘What, i’ God’s name, to do now?’

There was silence.

‘Sure, Master Calvo,’ suggested Bessie, ‘my uncle of the Bell would not be slow to give hiding to so good a friend to me as you.’

‘The Bell, is it? Are *you* going back to the Bell?’

‘Why, yes, sir, as I suppose.’

‘Very well. Go your own way, go your own way. I have nothing to do with you, you know — nothing at all — you are to remember that, prithee. But did you see that chuff of a King look at your sister?’

‘Alas, Master Calvo, yes.’

‘And did you understand the full meaning of that look?’

‘Alas, alas, yes, sir.’

‘Well, then, take my word for it: before morning he’ll have all London searched to find her.’

‘Oh, holy Mother!’

‘Go to the Bell, if you like, and take her with you. That will be the first place his paltering priors will hie to, be sure. But ’tis no affair of mine, you understand. As for me, ere morning I shall be far enow from London.’

‘Then — then shall I be left fatherless in good sooth, my master!’

‘Well, well, don’t start, don’t start crying.’

‘You foretold me, sir, that the King should never, *never* see her!’

‘Did I say that, now? Well, he *has* seen her, you see. The stars mean not always what they say, young woman. But never mind — I can’t abye the crying, you know — we shall see, we shall see.’

He patted her head.

There was silence.

‘Do you mean that you will be taking us with you into the country, sir?’
Bessie asked with timid voice.

‘What! encumber myself with two young women — perfect strangers to me — in that way?’

‘By my credit, no, that in truth would be asking a world too much, Master Calvo.’

‘It would, it would. Gramercy! I am not your father, I suppose, hey? And I without a groat to buy myself a platter of firmity withal! No, no, no — what are you talking about? You go your way, and I go mine. Only, whatever you do, don’t cry, don’t cry.’

Listlessly he patted her head, his goggle, misshapen eyes wandering over the sown and straying firmament.

Laura lifted her fatally-fair face to make an observation.

‘I don’t like the country, I,’ she pouted.

‘Why, Laura — sh-sh-h, dear,’ whispered Bessie.

‘Hullo! here’s another of them,’ said Mauro Calvo. ‘What! you like not the country, hey? Well, into the country you go, then. ’Tis you, with your face, that’s the cause of all. What! not like what your sister wishes, hey? Into the country you go!’

Bessie’s heart bounded. By the side of Calvo she felt an arm of mighty protection underneath and about her. She divined continually that his heart was fatherly and his brain potent; and that both were hers.

She waited. He had taken the oar again, and was paddling toward the north bank, in the direction of the Old Swan steps.

Presently he spoke good words: he said:

‘Have you any money?’

‘Why, yes, Master Calvo; fifteen hoarded crowns in a coffer at the Bell.’

‘Very well. Go and get them, and make a bundle of them with some clothes. Take your sister with you, and get into the house secretly, letting nobody at all know that you are there. Give heed you be not followed in the streets now, and look out for me in an hour. I will give three whistles. I am going now to get horses for us.’

Bessie Ford whispered into Laura’s ear:

‘Isn’t he *good*,’

The boat’s prow touched the green old slime of the steps. The sisters went running, hand in hand, northward. Calvo glided into darkness still further eastward in the skiff, past Botolph’s Wharf toward Billingsgate.

CHAPTER IX

THE SPANIARD



‘AND UP AND down they pace with frantic air,
And scorn a comforter, and will despair.’

CRABBE.

LONDON now lay well asleep, and the watchman’s lanthorn dawdled, blinking, through a glum, cemetery quietude. Only yonder, in Bridewell, was there sound and movement, where a *soirée* went forward in the palace of Queen Katherine; and also, close by, in the Bridewell Palace of my Lord Cardinal of York, was light, and some stir, and the smiting of a horse’s forefoot.

Eastward, in the yard of the Bell, were also four moving feet, Bessie’s and Laura’s. They descended, with stealthy trepidations, some steps to the cellar-door, of which Bessie, the inn’s chamberlain, kept the key in a hip-pouch. Through a trap-door they ascended to her room, and here, within five minutes, groping without sound, Bessie had busily pinned together a little bundle.

Laura sat on a bed on the floor, embracing her knees. Her left lid had a droop, making the lovely brown brightness of that eye smaller than the lovely brown brightness of the right, and this droop gave to her beauty a certain melancholy, purely Spanish, when she held her head sideways in a brooding moment. So now she sat, woefully meditating.

There was yet an hour to wait for Mauro Calvo. Bessie sat by Laura with the bundle, and presently there was low speech.

‘Well, Laura girl, it has really come to that — the King has seen thee,’

‘Is it that we shall go back again into the country?’

‘Why, certes, as thou know’st. Do not fret now, nor be cruel.’

‘I like being in London, I.’

‘But thou wilt like the country also, sweet — Be sweet and good, now — oh do! Shall I not be with thee always and always? — and Master Calvo, also?’

‘What, that old lobcock—’

‘Laura, sh-h-h! Oh, Laura!’

‘But is it that I shall not be married any more with Mark Bonner?’

‘Why, yes, of course, of course, if the good God shall be our friend. But not now! That King, Laura....’

Laura’s hands met gaily in a single silent clap.

‘I saw him looking at me!’

‘Laura, thou didst?’

‘He is very big and handsome, the King.’

‘I hate him! Oh, I hate him, hate him!’

‘He had five big rings on his left hand, and round his neck was a baldrick thick with balasses.’

‘But that look, Laura! Didst thou see it? Oh, there was a world of evil in that look! There was no good in that look of King Henry!’

‘They say he is a great one for pretty girls, the King.’

‘But let him beware of *one* pretty girl, Laura Ford! If that man meddles with thee, I will *kill him*. Thou hear’st me? I will *kill* him — God forgive me!’

‘Our Saviour! thou art not jealous of the King, Bess? Phew! I would not desert thee for him, not I! Phew! — thank you, sirs — not I!’

Bessie wrapped her in a passionate kiss. Never could she quite believe in her actual possession of so glorious a thing as Laura. Laura seemed ever on the point of taking everlasting flight from her arms, and every rare word of love uttered by her sister made her glow, and she treasured it long, like a rare coral, in her memory.

‘But,’ said Laura, ‘how came the King in that old hoball’s den?’

‘Oh, love, speak not so of Master Calvo, I prithee! he came, ’tis clear, to arrest Master Calvo. And I suspect ’twas because he knew, someways, that Master Calvo had the letters.’

‘Which letters, Bess?’

‘Why, the letters of the King which I took from Master Fitzgerald.’

‘Thou took’st some letters?’

‘Ah, thou dost not wot, I forgot. I will tell thee all.’

So she told how, to save Laura from the Irishman, she had stolen from his cloak the King’s letters, while he fought a wager of battle with the foreigner in the Bell’s yard; and how she had taken them to her good ingie, Mauro Calvo; and how, perhaps, as she divined, the King had heard of this, and come and seen — and seen —

And she had hardly finished the tale when both leapt to their feet with stifled cries. For there before them, holding a light, a bandage round his bruised skull, in a *déshabille* of camisole and hose, stood that very foreigner with whom Garrett Oge Fitzgerald had done battle.

He put finger on lips, and bowed low.

Almost before his eyes could rest upon the lovely face, Bessie Ford had cast over it a capote lying near, and pushed Laura toward the tapestry. And

at once she stepped toward the stranger, puffed out his taper-light, and stood pale, in challenging expectancy before him.

‘Mamsel,’ said the gentleman, ‘such precautions, by my faith of a caballero, are unnecessary with me: from me you have nothing to fear.’

‘Then what make you here, sir?’ said Bessie.

‘I come to serve you.’

‘How wot you that we have need of service, sir?’

‘Troth, lady, I have been put to bed in the neighbouring chamber with my broken skull, and the door lies open. I avouch that I have harkened to the most of your palabras, having heard the name of the king oft repeated by you.’

‘The King, sir?’

‘Why, yes, the King. If now I say that the King clearly seems no friend to you, and if I add thereto that I, at this hour, am no friend to the King, then it ensues that you and I are friends,’

‘But, sir, I know you not—’

‘Nay, but if I tell you who I am, then will you know me better. I am the servant of the King of Spain, sent express to England to search into certain allegations respecting the King in relation to Queen Katherine, who happens to be aunt to my master, the King of Spain. This is the real truth, on my faith of a caballero; so now you see that I can be no great friend to the King of England, who is no great friend to you,’

‘But, sir—’

‘Nay, nay, lady, I tell you candidly that I have need of you. Again I vouch you assurance that no hurt is meant you; but the Infanta of Portugal and the daughter of Ferdinand is a personage of some importance, even in this currish land. And you hear? — that is one lock secured. I am going to leave the house, and you will wait here till I return. And now the other,’

The Spaniard, as he spoke, had rushed from one to the other of the two doors, locking them and seizing the keys. In a minute he was heard in the next room, fumbling, striking a light, hurrying on his clothes.

Bessie Ford's wild eyes wandered round the blank darkness for help or hope. And she wailed:

‘Oh, my mother, what is this? Master Calvo will come, and we locked in! Oh, sure, sure, Something is against me, sure—’

CHAPTER X

THE CIRCLES SPREAD



‘AH! THEN AND there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,’
BYRON.

‘He was a man of that magnanimity and prudence, understood so well
which way men were to be wheedled or destroyed...’

MACHIAVELLI.

THE Spaniard cautiously butted his way toward a front gable-door, drew the bolts, and went running down the slumbering Cheap toward Bridewell.

At this time, King Henry, long since grown tired of Spanish Catalina, his dead brother’s wife and also his own, was playing the gallant with a maid-of-honour of Catalina’s Court, Anne Boleyn. The answer of Anne, who had guile and unbounded ambition, was a persistent: ‘No — I have a fancy for passing through the gate of Marriage.’ Whereupon King Henry, whose will, once roused and crossed, was like a West Indian cyclone, said to himself: ‘Anne I must have, since I will it: but how?’ Suddenly it occurred to him that the death of the male heirs borne him by Katherine was a dispensation of Heaven for his sin in marrying a brother’s wife — a superstition with

which this potent mind so impressed the English people, that, in an amusing form, it remains part of our social life to this hour.

The word Divorce accordingly arose in the kingly brain. And on the subject of Divorce he began to write argumentative letters to my Lord Cardinal of York, receiving in reply argumentative letters from my Lord Cardinal on that very subject.

Unfortunately, a nephew of Katherine was the Emperor Charles V., of Spain and Austria, the most powerful of monarchs: and in close league with him was — the Pope.

Now, a whisper of how matters stood was in the air, and Katherine had written letters to Charles, her nephew, full of complaint and despondency: the King no longer cared for her, the King, the King, the King. So Charles had sent over, in reply, a secret agent, the Condé Christoval Alvarada d'Ossorio, a redoubtable fighter and courtier, instructed at all costs to gather furtive information.

The Condé Alvarada d'Ossorio, hearing Garrett Ogè Fitzgerald boast of secret letters of the King in his riding-cloak, fought him in the yard of the Bell, hoping for a glance of those letters, and had been knocked on the head.

In fact, one of those letters did relate to Queen Katherine, and the King's tender conscience, and the killing charms of Mistress Anne; and it contained that word Divorce. So that when Calvo wrote to Henry his veiled threat of publishing this letter, he knew well that were its contents just then to meet the eye of Charles, its effect would be an instant conflagration of war between Spain and England.

Alvarada, however, had been balked of a sight of it by the great sword of Garrett Oge. He lay bruised on his bed, when, lo, there had come

voluntarily to his ears, from the next room, yet another tale of Henry's vagrant passions.

Down past the Cheap, past Paul's, he went running toward Bridewell.

Now, it happened that that night was the eve of the Vigil of St. John, on which day the standing and marching watches, levied from each ward, with mayor, sheriffs, and waytes of the City, filed past the King and Queen — a great day. And because this was the eve of that Vigil, the masque at the Bridewell Palace was nocturnal, in contrast with the mid-day functions then everywhere usual.

In a hall of the palace sat Queen Katherine on a daïs. The hall was gay with green birch, long fennel, orpin, St. John's wort, and white lily, in honour of the occasion. A band of minstrels in the great cave of an oriel played the tabouret, the virginals, the lute, the rebeck. And before the Queen a refulgent crowd of flushed beauties and priests and nobles danced that more stately gavotte, the pavan.

At that time the sun was hot, and the heart of Europe young. Women knew how to be born beautiful, and men admired them with gusto; also, everyone's tongue ran free, and extraordinary things were said.

But the Queen was a contrast to her surroundings. The Spanish melancholy was upon her. She had taken to wear the sad-coloured fabric called Lombardines; and though her placard was an embroidery of diamonds, and her vest brocaded gold, and her cloak a crimson velvet of Genoa, ermine-furred, yet she remained a figure of grief. Her ears continually awaited a sound which did not come. She expected the King.

After a long time he came. He had returned to the Westminster Palace after the fiasco in Calvo's den; and then, with a 'Pah!' of disgust, he remembered his Queen's masque.

He threw on a Russian masquerade, and as he stepped into a whirlcote, accompanied by the Earls of Essex and Fitzwater, he hissed to himself, 'Christ! 'tis a luscious bit...!'

Presently, Queen Katherine's straining ears heard a sennet of hautboys and trumpets, and the herald-cry:

'Henry, King of England and France, and of the provinces of Gascoigne, Guienne, Normandy, Anjou, Wales, and Ireland!'

The Queen arose, and stepped down. The dance ceased. In the lane that formed, two eyes — the eyes of Anne Boleyn — waited for a meaning glance. But no glance came. Henry walked through, a plump and stalwart figure. He took the Queen's hand, saying listlessly: 'Ah, lady mine.' He sat sideways by her, sticking out a straight left leg. And presently, with a slap of the hand, he cried: 'Dance it, then! dance it! Let the music knock it!', and sat listlessly again, his head on his hand.

At once the hall slid into rhythmic movement to the lilt of the lively canary-dance.

Once Anne Boleyn, tripping near the royal seat, armed her eyes with an under-glance of coquettish flame; but at that moment Harry was taking from a cup-bearer a goblet of gingered ypocras, and did not even glance at her. Her eyebrows lifted, and her flush turned to mottle.

And once again she came: she was a girl of bold heart, prompt to action, iron in purpose — qualities which she concealed under the levity and *abandon* of a Parisian dancing-girl. She was like a rock invisible under foam. Dancing slowly near, she said to her partner, loud enough for the King's ears:

'Sure, to-night the King is glum. Gogsnouns! he hath the sweating-sickness, sure.'

Henry, starting at the prick of the challenge, cried:

‘God! the Lady Anne is observant to-night. Sweating-sickness, quotha! Ha, mamsel, can you see beneath my clothes, then?’

‘Why, sure,’ said Anne, ‘a king is oft a naked thing to his female subjects’ eyes.’

A ribald jest leapt to the lips of Henry. But, instead, he waved her wearily off, saying:

‘Nay, nay — go to — none of thy banterings to-night, lady.’

Anne wheeled away with a raging heart. Those simple words were to her nothing less than a huge calamity, the shattering of a thousand dreams. Suddenly, at the brusque rebuff and dismissal, a whole fabric collapsed — all seemed lost. She went dancing down the tiled floor a crushed and wounded thing, with white face.

She was a girl of twenty, French in manners (having lived at the French Court as maid of Queen Claude), with a far out-push of kerchiefed bust; with solid *embonpoint*; with frizzy, straw-coloured hair; neither tall nor short; with a low, broad brow; and a delicate, freckled nose; and a broad mouth, having character in its pressure; and a brownish mole on the firm-fleshed short upper-lip.

As for Henry, the face of *another* filled his brain that night — one far lovelier than Anne, who, too, was lovely.

Five minutes after the King the Condé Alvarada d’Ossorio arrived at the palace, running. He handed to a gentleman yeoman an *écrin* containing half a ring; the yeoman, mounting the stairs, gave it to Anne; Anne, kneeling, presented it to Katherine.

On the face of Katherine was a broad smile: she had seen the King’s rebuff of Anne, and was happy.

She took the *écrin* without opening it, though Anne had already peeped into it, knew whence it came, and waited for a message of reply.

Katherine said:

‘Do not wait, lady.’

And she called another maid, in whom she had perfect confidence, and whispered:

‘In the *salle d’attente* below you will see a nobleman with the wyvern of Aragon in a silvern brooch. Bid him watch for the King’s departure, and then await me in the palace-orchard.’

Anne was now walking down the brown-oak hall, fierce at heart. Making his way through the crowd to meet her came Monsignor du Ballay, the French Ambassador, a portly, tall Churchman (Bishop of Bayonne), who could use his sword.

To no one in the world was the progress of Henry’s love-matter with Anne of greater interest than to him. His soul sweated elaborately to advance it. For Henry was the balancing element between Francis, the French king, and Charles, the Spanish: into whichever scale he threw his sword, that scale must sink. If Henry mortally offended Charles, France would be supreme. Hence Du Ballay loved Anne like the apple of his eye: and a minute since he had seen her coldly dismissed by Henry. He went urging his way towards her, meaning to drop a hint of what Anne well knew — that that rebuff was not without some specific cause; that Anne, for the love of Heaven, must keep both eyes open, nor harbour despair.

Anne, on her part, had every intention to keep both eyes open. Before Du Ballay could reach her, the trusted lady-of-honour whom Katherine had sent down to the Spaniard, passing close to Anne, whispered airily:

‘Guess you, child! — a secret meeting with the Condé d’Ossorio in the palace-orchard!’

Instantly Anne resolved to be there. She started straight for an opening in the storied arras; and after her Du Ballay urged his way.

She did not see him, but in a dim corridor, hearing following footsteps, and anxious at once to conceal herself in the orchard, she took to her light heels. Du Ballay, quickening his heavier pace, was only just in time to see her fly down an outer escalier of wood, bowered above in jasmine. Still eager to have speech with her, he, too, descended. But she was quite lost to him now. He went rummaging through the rank vegetation of the manor-close.

A few minutes later Harry rose brusquely from his seat, said *bonsoir* to the Queen, and stalked with discontented brow from the hall.

Immediately the Queen, too, rose and left it.

Now, the grounds of the Queen's Bridewell Palace abutted upon the grounds of the Bridewell Palace of my Lord Cardinal of York, nor was there any definite boundary between. Wolsey's was a magnificent place, once belonging to Henry's VII.'s Empson, and given to Wolsey by Harry. Its grounds contained twelve distinct gardens, and an orchard.

Toward ten that night Wolsey had come hither from Hampton. At the moment when Anne concealed herself in the Queen's orchard, he was walking in the spiced and blossomy air of his close, under the star-lit, black sky.

Clad, in Cardinal frock he walked — cassock, rochet, and mosette — both hands flat on his chest; stout as an old woman, with the quick-planted steps of a vexed old woman; on his fat-necked head sat the four-cornered baretta of red, and on his frowning red brow sat — Deliberation.

The Divorce I the Divorce! — that now constantly recurring word: this was the burden of his thoughts, of his angry musings.

He was dead against it. He saw that it must fatally offend Charles; and Charles was the Pope's friend, and Wolsey aimed at becoming, some day, Pope. At least, if Henry's will must have its way, if Spain *must* be against

England, Wolsey decided that, as a set-off, France must be gained. He had therefore determined that the Duchesse d'Alençon, sister of Francis, must replace Katherine, since Katherine had to go. As for Anne Boleyn, he detested her, he detested her name. She was his obstacle, his danger, his evil Fate.

Suddenly, as he walked there in the garden, a fresh hope came voluntarily to him — a Hope in the person of Laura Ford.

An old pistoler came running from the mansion, in buckram cassock, with the words on his breath:

‘My Lord Cardinal—’

‘What is it?’ said Wolsey.

‘James Macdonald, one of your Grace’s ewerers, hath importuned me to crave speech of your Grace for him.’

‘Go away. You see I am meditating,’

‘He said ’twas urgent.’

‘Get you gone.’

‘Well, well—’

The old man turned to hobble off. Wolsey said:

‘Is it that young Scot which I sent with letters to Stirling Castle?’

‘The same, the same—’

‘Send him here.’

In three minutes James Craigie Macdonald, the good friend and ingler of Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, was bowing before Wolsey.

Wolsey continued his vexed old-womanish walk of short, decided steps, hands on chest, his stubby nose in air, and his bright eyes calm, deliberative; and Macdonald, like a towed boat, followed.

Their steps went toward the orchard, where hedges were high and the foliage thick.

After some time Wolsey said:

‘Well, what have you?’

At this time Du Ballay was still seeking for Anne, hopelessly now. His steps had unconsciously led him into the Cardinal’s grounds, and hearing near the voice of Wolsey, he stole closer, stooped with a grimace behind a shrubbery, and listened.

Luck is the finishing touch of the perfect diplomatist; to peep through the right hole in the nick of time — here is the art of Courts.

At that very moment Anne was straining her ears to catch the Spanish talk of Katherine and the Condé d’Ossorio not far off.

‘What have you?’ said Wolsey.

‘I came to acquaint you, sir — the King would have me leave your service straightway, and enter his,’ said Macdonald.

Wolsey stopped his walk, and examined Macdonald from head to foot.

‘So. What for, princex?’

‘He has imposed upon me a special devoir, sir,’

‘What devoir?’

‘Must I needs acquaint your lordship’s grace?’

‘Art not my sworn man? Give it me,’

Macdonald, eyeing the ground, waltzed his steel cap round his forefinger. He was now in armour.

‘Come, Scot, you keep me waiting. Give it me, man,’

‘An I enter the King’s service, I keep his secrets,’ said Macdonald boldly.

‘Palterer! a murrain on thy trifling! Come, sirrah, give it me, now — into my ear—’

‘Gogsnouns! I would liefer not, your Grace,’

But of the two Wolsey was the more cunning, and the less honest. He said:

‘Then, marry, thou wishest expressly to displease me? Dream’st thou that I do not already know, and do but try you? The matter relates to a wench,’

The guess that a secret of King Harry’s related to a wench was not a very far one; but its confirmation of Wolsey’s reputation for omniscience conquered Macdonald. He said:

‘In faith, my lord, it doth,’

‘What wench?’

‘Her name, I learn, is Laura Ford,’

‘When and where did the King see her?’

‘Even now, in the den of the alchymist — Calvo — under the river,’

‘So — so. He was there: in the den of the alchymist — Calvo — under the river. Yes, I knew — I knew. And there he saw her — and her name is Laura Ford. And thou, Scot — hast thou, too, seen her?’

‘I have, my lord,’

‘Is she — art thou a fellow which know’st a pretty wench when thou seest her?’

‘Marry, my lord, why, yes,’

‘Is she hitting? Doth she spank the eye?’

‘Bread and salt, my lord, she doth,’

‘She is spicy, eh? Thou hast seen her. She tickles the regard, eh, Scot? She’s a cockle, a solace, a peppermint — eh, fellow?’

‘Bread and salt, my lord, she is!’

‘Hast ever seen the Lady Anne Boleyn?’

‘Why, this thrice, my lord,’

‘Then tell me — reflect first and then answer me: wouldst thou liefer cuddle, varlet, the Lady Anne, or this Laura Ford?’

‘Why, Laura, my lord, twenty times o’er, since you ask me. I tell your Grace, ’tis the curiouset, the flashiest moppet I ever laid look upon.’

‘So. ’Tis fair and good. So. And now tell me: when the King saw her, how looked he?’

‘Faith, he looked, sir, like one dazzled.’

‘He did? He looked like one dazzled, did he? Oh, ’tis fair and good. Yes — go *on* — tell me, Scot. And what happened?’

‘Before the King could have speech with them, Mauro Calvo darkened all the den, and vanished with the maidens.’

‘Maidens, thou sayest? There were more than one,”The other is sister to Laura. She is called Bessie Ford.’

‘Is she lovely, too?’

‘Nay, but plain and homely.’

‘Ah: one or other is bastard then. Are they girls of the people?’

‘Yes, my lord. Bessie is chamberlain to the Bell Inn in Eastcheap.’

‘The Bell Inn in Eastcheap. And when they vanished thus, what said the King?’

‘He momentarily formed a league of my own self, one Fitzgerald, and one Bonner, a lad, to hie in search of the maiden on his behoof.’

‘Is he not a Prince of most royal will? — prompt in purpose — eager in action? He is in earnest, then, in this matter. But stay — hast found the girls?’

‘Nay, my lord, we have had scant time for that; we have but hied to the Westminster Palace to fill our purses and procure us horses. We go now to the Bell, where there is some small chance that the maidens are, and on the way I stopped to tell you that I am now, by your good leave, no more your man, but the King’s.’

For half a minute Wolsey, intensely thinking, said nothing. Then he spoke:

‘I grant thee the leave thou cravest, Scot. But do not yet set out: thou wilt wait in the palace with thy friends for half an hour, till I have further speech with thee.’

Macdonald bowed.

But to Du Ballay, listening behind the shrubbery, this question occurred: ‘*Why* the half-hour’s delay?’ And when, Macdonald having disappeared, he saw Wolsey instantly go trotting in heavy haste towards the mansion, he guessed the natural answer. The half-hour’s delay could only be due to Wolsey’s purpose of himself seizing Laura Ford before the King.

Now, since Wolsey was as much the enemy of Anne as Du Ballay was her friend, whatever was his design in seizing Laura Ford, it was clearly a design inimical to Anne. And this, to Du Ballay, was a quite sufficient reason to make him hie from the spot as if pursued, with the purpose of himself anticipating Wolsey in the capture.

His palace was near, in the chase north of the Knight’s Templars. He, too, in heavy haste, went trotting through the Queen’s manor-close with agitated cymar of white damask-silk, out into the open lanes, and so home. Within ten minutes the horses of himself and four men-at-arms were clattering eastward through the startled Cheap.

As Du Ballay hurried from the Queen’s palace, the Queen, in her orchard, was saying:

‘Yes, you will seize this girl, my good Condé. Poor King Henry! — he is frail in this way. And I, you know, am only a woman — I cannot bear another infidelity just now.’

‘If *she* is removed, the Lady Anne Boleyn remains,’ said Alvarada bitterly.

‘Yes; but I have a notion that the Lady Anne will whistle in vain after her flown eyas, if one were to guess from what I have witnessed to-night. The dear changeling no longer hankers after that hussy. Let us deliver him from this new temptation, and he may be again my own good lord.’

‘To seize the girls I need help: it was therefore that I came to your Majesty.’

‘Yes; help you shall have, and now, since the girls, having fled from the King, will instantly be chased by him. The valiant Sir John Perrot, who is my very good friend, and Lidcott, and James Burdet, shall be with you. You will send the lovely girl across the seas, good Condé, far from my lord’s sight. Separate not the sisters, I prithee, and provide well for their sustenance. Come, come.’

But in the thickness of the foliage there listened one whose lips curled at the Queen’s shallowness. ‘How little,’ thought Anne, ‘must this woman know her husband, when she imagines in this fashion to cure him of a passion! An he doth not possess Laura Ford, he will hunt her with mad and growing vehemence to his dying day!’

And Anne had no intention that Henry should hunt Laura to his dying day: she willed rather that he should hunt herself. And that, she saw clearly, he would never do till the day when, like a gnawed bone, he flung Laura Ford aside, a discarded thing — since there could be no question of marriage between the King and Laura. And in order to hasten that day, she, Anne, would have the girl in *her* own hands; would present her, a free-will offering, to her King. And since Katherine was hasting in the opposite sense, surely, on her part, too, there was need for haste.

She went tripping, with held-up skirts, stealthily treading, through the lanes of the close.

She darted, prone as an arrow, through the intricacies of the palace, and in the dancing-hall, with hasty breath, said at a young man's ear:

‘Percy — quick — come here!’

She led him into a corridor. He was the heir of the Earl of Northumberland, broad-shouldered, bow-legged, a lad of twenty-two, blue-eyed, with hair of flaxen silk. With him, a year before, Anne had had a flagrant love-affair, nipped by Wolsey. She panted:

‘Thou art to go — quickly — sans dallying — and a buss for thee, boy, on the lips, you hear? — if thou succeed'st — to the Bell — in Eastcheap! Two girls — locked in a room, I think — thou must seize and bear them away with thee — anywhere — but quick. Take three or four with thee — and fail not. An they be not there, hunt them — hunt them — far and wide! Fail me not, Percy, coz, an thou lov'st me! The Bell in Eastcheap — now!’

Percy squeezed her at the waist, dashed back his hair, and rushed away. He ran, dodging his impassioned way among palfreys and whirlcotes in the lane before the palace; and in a very few minutes was clattering eastward, with four men, through the Cheap.

About the same time three Wolsey-men galloped from the Cardinal's palace. Alvarada, with three Queen's-men, had already galloped from the Queen's palace, and Du Ballay's five from the Ambassador's palace.

If Anne was profound, Wolsey was more profound still, and knew his King. His reasoning was this: ‘The King will continue to love this Laura Ford, to the exclusion of the Lady Anne, up to the week after he gets her into his hand: that week Anne will regain her power. The King must not, therefore, get her into his hand, but I, Wolsey. And lest the King's flame for Laura, by the lack of fuel, grow cool, I, having her, will continually reincite him by sights of her, by new hopes of her, under such conditions that he

shall see only, and hope only, but shall not handle. She shall elude him like a Jack-o'-lantern; he shall stretch out his hand for her, and she shall not be there. Thus will the influence of Laura grow, and be permanent, and the defeat of Anne be permanent also,'

So reasoned Wolsey: and hence it was that at the moment when his gallopers had set out for the Bell, the King's seekers, Fitzgerald, Macdonald, and Bonner, still sat in the Cardinal's *salle d'attente*, holding their chins, waiting through that 'half-hour' of the Cardinal's command.

Till Garrett Oge, lifting his great big body, and releasing his chin, said:

"Tis wearisome this. Is it meet, my masters, that a Geraldine should wait on a Cardinal?"

"Tis a nice abstract proposition in Logics," said Bonner with a smirk.

Garrett Oge Fitzgerald laughed. In a single hour the face and words of this slim student-stripling had grown exceeding pleasant to the warriors fancy.

"Tis a proposition in Theology, boy," said Garrett Oge: 'I call it a Cardinal sin.'

'Still, we must needs stay,' said Mac.

'And wherefore?' replied Fitz.

'Since the Cardinal bids us stay.'

'But the King bids us go, Mac.'

'The Cardinal is the King's king, Fitz,'

'He is therefore a King with but one subject, and his kingdom is contracted to a point — say a Cardinal point. Thou and I are withouten his bounds, Mac.'

'Still, Fitz, maugre that — caution, lad! The Cardinal's wrath is red.'

'His frock also, and his nose. Yet they burn not, Mac,'

‘Which,’ said Bonner, ‘proves the maxim of the Schools, that the converse of every true proposition is not true: for though all mice have tails, yet are all things with tails no mice, as when big Sir John Perrot personates the devil in a pageant. So are all burning things red, yet all red things burn not.’

Fitz laughed, intimately tickled by this quaint personality. And ‘Yea, boy,’ he cries, ‘but though our red Cardinal burn not now, yet burn enow, my troth, he shall — down yonder. But that apart, Mac, I say thee this: that this day twice hath the King entrusted me the executing of his will. The first time I failed him like a base-born tyke: this time I have no intent to fail him encore. *Why* wait we here, Mac? Come, come, let us begone!’

Macdonald said:

‘By my faith, thou hast reason. If thou art bent upon going, I am with thee,’

Fitz jumped up.

‘Come then, Cardinal or no Cardinal Come, boy, come...,’

Bonner wondered why *he* was going, and what would be the end. Yet he went — with a hand on Fitzgerald’s shoulder.

Their horses were in the courtyard. In three minutes they were galloping past Paul’s eastward.

As soon as ever they entered Eastcheap, they were aware of a tremendous hoop-hoop and to-do in the neighbourhood of the Bell. There was a block of armed men on horses. There were shouts, threats, brandished swords, rearing steeds. There were flaring cressets. There were bangings and batteries at the doors of the inn, startling the night. There was the nightcap of the round-eyed landlord, who savoured still in his nose the savour of midnight snores, popped in amaze from an upper window.

Fitz and Mac drove spurs into their horses' flanks, and dashed toward the fracas, Fitz crying to Bonner:

‘Keep close to me, boy! *Crom Aboo*, by God!’ And out with a rushing sound leapt his sword.

Thus, as round a pebble, did the circles widen round Bessie Ford and her strong Virtue.

CHAPTER XI

THE STORM OF THE BELL



‘MIT STÜRMEN SICH herum zu schlagen...!’

GOETHE.

MOST of the five parties — the King’s, the Queen’s, Anne’s, Du Ballay’s, and Wolsey’s — come to seize Bessie and Laura Ford, were astonished at the presence of all the others at the Bell.

They were nineteen: the King’s three — Fitz, Mac, and Bonner; Du Ballay, with four French knights, on steeds caparisoned in goodly trappings with purples; hotheaded young Percy of Northumberland, sent by Anne, with three stout livery-men; the Condé Alvarada, with the ferocious huge Sir John Perrot and two Queen’s-men; and, lastly, three blood-hounds of Wolsey, gentlemen of his bed-chamber, gallants famed for tilting at the quintain, running at the ring, or jousting in single combat.

Of all these, Alvarada alone knew that the girls were locked in a chamber, and where. The keys of the chamber he had in his doublet.

The first to arrive were Du Ballay and his knights. They commenced to pound at a door of the Bell, but before the landlord had time to start from bed, the Spaniard with his three dashed up. Now, the Spaniard, on leaving the inn, had left one of the gable-doors unfastened, though closed, and on arriving made for it. His surprise at seeing some men thundering at another gable-door was increased when he was promptly attacked by those men. Du

Ballay wrongly surmised that these were the Wolsey-men whom he expected to come: and at once spurred, and, with waving blade, drove upon Alvarada, who had dismounted.

Alvarada was on lower ground, having descended two of the steps leading to the door. He parried a blow at his head, and ripped his skilled rapier along the horse's throat: and at once the animal dived prone on kneeling knee, pitching the stout Churchman into a bundle of defeat in the depression before the house.

Meantime the hoofs of seven horses were striking fire-works out of the smooth large cobble-stones, for the four Frenchmen had spurred at the three English, and were plunging in circular fight, with hacking blades, around them. In another minute Alvarada had leapt to his saddle and joined the affray. After two passes he pricked a French knight through the gorget, and sent him rolling, and towering Sir John Perrot, one of the fiercest of fighters, cleft the helm and brain of another, in spite of the heavy armour then worn. The French were now reduced to two, and the *mêlée* would have been short: but at that moment young Percy, with his three henchmen, armed each with the bow-and-arrow, spear, and demi-lance, arrived on the scene; and feeling his big sorrel mare go wheeling at a blow on her polished haunch, Percy cried 'Northumberland!', hurled up his short battle-axe, and commenced to hew at whom he met.

His men joined in, and the fight was general. A persistent chopping clash, mingled with struggling hoofs, spattering sparks, was heard over an area of fifteen yards of street. And now the landlord's head was out, and down the double length of drowsy households night-caps craning from high gables peered beneath the held-up rushlights.

The fighters, for the most part, wore black masks, or visors, and were unknown to one another. Alvarada, quite unarmoured, was parrying the

fierce brusquerie of Percy's onslaught, and Sir John Perrot had shattered the arm-piece of Bishop Du Ballay, who had risen and fought on foot, when Wolsey's three gallants arrived, and galloped right into the brawl before they could rein impetus. Two, attacked at the same moment, set to work with instant briskness, rising in their step-ropes. The third, their leader, upon whom Wolsey had impressed the need for urgent haste, forged beyond the region of the chopping chaos of steel, and leaping into the depression, began to pound with far-echoing hubbub at a door.

While the landlord still peered paralyzed upon this entangled nightmare, yonder, to westward, was raised the cry of '*Crom Aboo*,' — and the sword of Garrett Oge was in the air.

Instantly he divined that those fighters were battling for the possession of Laura Ford — some of them, perhaps, sworn-men of Wolsey, who in that case had played false in bidding Fitz and Mac tarry at his palace. And partly for the King's sake, whom he had already once that day failed, he galloped forward with something like enthusiasm.

Partly for the King's sake, and partly — so complex are the workings of the mind — for Bessie Ford's. For now Garret Oge knew somewhat more of Bessie Ford, and at the thought of her jerked his head with reflective twist. At least, if the lovely sister were to be torn from the plain, he, Fitz, himself, and not another, should tear her, and for no other than the King himself. So resolved Fitz.

In a moment he was in the fight, his hand against every man's, his potent broadsword raging everywhere, like the very tooth of pestilence in his hand — sure token of coming death.

And ever and again, even in the thick and acme of his contests, he glanced about him to note where young Mark Bonner was, and how the stripling fared.

With two swift-successive downward cleaves he sent to heaven a gallant of Wolsey and a gentleman-waiter of Queen Katherine.

His curvetting horse, brought down from a rear by the forward impulse of his last hew, slipped on the smooth pavers, and in the midst of a clattering fracas of sparks was struggling to right itself, when Fitz was impetuously attacked on the left hind-flank by Sir John Perrot, who was helmless, and on his face a mask of blood. Fitz, twisting sideways in his heaving saddle, received the first blow obliquely on his tingling elbow, and the quick rain of the next three he received with agile parry on his sword-edge in a clash, clash, clash, of three distinct musical notes. The next moment four front-teeth of Sir John lay loose in his bubbling mouth, and at the same time Fitz was attacked simultaneously, in front and on the other flank, by Alvarada and young Percy.

His position now was dangerous: for though his helmet was of good Milan flutes, and his corselet strong ring-mail, he wore neither visor, gorget, armpiece, nor greaves, while, of his assailants, two were armed cap-à-pie, and all were terrible in fight. Macdonald was engaged some distance away, and as for Bonner, though he had been given a sword, he had not drawn, but sat haloed in golden ringlets beyond the region of battle, musing on abstract things.

Fitzgerald was already winded, when he found himself the centre of this tempest of steel. His energy might have succumbed, but a street lantern showed him dimly the general lineaments of the very Spaniard with whom he had that day fought in the Bell's yard. At the sight his rage of effort redoubled. He executed a swift demi-volte to the right, with a hack at Percy's haunch which drove the Northumbrian mare at full shock upon Sir John, whereupon Sir John and Percy engaged; and Fitz, with *demi-volte* to the left, had the Spaniard *vis-à-vis*. And now, round wheeled the two horses,

head to head in stepping dance, with little runs and curvets, spattering sparks, as the blades went chink; but before the event up came Macdonald at a steady canter, and joined against the Spaniard.

If Fitz fought like a storm, Mac fought like a rock — without heat, without fail, with the pressure of his upper lip visible between the parted moustache, and eyes that glinted intense, like cold steel, beneath their lowered lids.

But before he could bring his horse into position to aim a single cut, there was an outcry from the inn. The Wolsey-man, who had been thumping ineffectually at one of the gable-doors, had moved on to thump at another, and that other was the one left open by the Spaniard. He perceived that it was open, and shouting, ‘Jack! Jack! an open door!’ in he dashed. This Alvarada heard, and, fearing the loss of all his plans, slid hurriedly from his horse, leaped the depression, and slipped within the house.

At this moment Mauro Calvo sat on a mule serenely regarding the affray. He had just arrived, having come, as arranged, for Laura and Bessie, leading by the halters two jennets, procured by the contrivance of Brother Bruno.

At once the disappearance within the inn of the two Wolsey-men and Alvarada was the signal for a general rush. The fighting-men left alive leapt from their saddles, and, with here and there a mutual cut, made for the inn, squeezing and shouldering through the doorway.

And Mauro Calvo said:

‘Well, now, a murrain on these cattle. This will never do for me, young women. Go ye your way, and I go mine. I’m off.’

But he muttered very low, as if ashamed:

‘Though ’tis a worthy soul, that Bess. A spirit, I fancy, of uncommon chemistry.’

CHAPTER XII

CALVO'S BAG



‘IN THAT WIGHT’S pouch were oddish ends,
Strange relics, gews, and witcheries.’

OLD TALE.

IN turning, however, Calvo perceived Mark Bonner, who lingered in the street.

‘Well, what make *you* here?’ he asked.

‘Faith, master, I have the smallest notion,’ answered Mark with doffed cap.

‘Who are these brawlers?’

‘They are King’s-men, as I surmise, come to attaint the person of my sweetheart, Laura: yet, strangely, they hew one at the other in the way you see, having, as is like, more sword than sense.’

‘That chuff of a King? What! so soon would he be at that poor Bessie Ford?’

‘Tis Laura he would be at’

‘Laura, yes: but who cares aught about Laura. ’Tis of the poor little sister that I think.’

‘I pity both.’

‘That mumping chuff!’

‘A King is a King.’

‘Were it not for one thing, I’d—’

‘Prithee, Master Calvo, if you can succour them—’

‘Believe me, I have a mind — yes, I will. Have her he shall not, the chuff!’

At once he turned his mule, and before the house gave the three pre-arranged whistles, hoping for an answering face at the window. But no face came. There came only into the street the vague uproar that filled the house. He dismounted and made fast his animals to the inn’s sign-post. He cried, ‘Come, boy,’ and taking his bag, smuggled from his river-den, entered the inn.

The searchers by this time had spread themselves over the upper floor, searching blindly, each for himself. Only Alvarada had exact knowledge of where the girls were locked, and held the keys. He, however, had no idea of opening the locked room in the presence of so many opponents, only stationing himself near to watch.

The fighting had, for the moment, ceased in the dispersal of the searchers; till young Percy, wild with hot wounds, running with held-up battle-axe and torch, found himself stopped by a locked door, and commenced to hew the woodwork; for Anne had told him something of ‘a locked room.’

Alvarada at once stepped out, and, at a run, inflicted a rather foul stab from behind in the crevice between humerus and back-piece; and even as Percy turned to fight, he commenced, finding himself thus wounded, to bawl, ‘Clubs! clubs!’ — a cry of the period meaning ‘help’ — in order to summon those of his henchmen who searched behind him.

Fitz and Mac, who were running past, attracted by the row, rushed into the room. Percy had stuck askew in a sconce the pine flambeau, which, at the inn-door, he had snatched: and Macdonald, seeing the chopped door,

cried: 'Here the girls are, Fitz, my brave! Kill first these cullions!' and commenced with his bill to batter at the door.

Fitz turned upon Percy and Alvarada, but at once two of Percy's Northumbrians, together with three other fighters, including Sir John Perrot and the Bishop of Bayonne, dashed into the room. The mere sight of Macdonald heaving furiously at the door made that door the centre of interest for all, and a hot mixed scrimmage, wild as it was hot, and bloody as it was wild, began to transact itself within the small apartment.

At the open door stood Mauro Calvo looking with calm eyes. Three men had already fallen when he shut the door upon them all.

The struggle round the locked door led him, too, to the conclusion that the sisters were probably in the room beyond it. To reach them, therefore, he must pass through that door, and before any of the fighters. He laid his bag on the ground, and opened it. It was a goodly sack made of thin russet-leather, and bulged by the mass of objects with which Calvo, foreknowing his expulsion, had long since stuffed it. Its top was opened and closed by a running string of pigskin.

The air of the very limited space in which the combatants fought already grew foul with their passionate breathing: the room was thickly tapestried round; there was no window, and the only ingress for air consisted in the two key-holes. Against one of them the face of a dead man, fallen in a sitting posture, pressed; and the other Mauro Calvo stuffed with tow from his bag. He then quickly bored a hole in the door with a gar; into the hole he inserted the pipe of a baggy sort of bellows made of Spanish foot-cloth; and this he began to work.

At that moment, for the third time that day, Fitzgerald was engaged with Alvarada; while Macdonald, jammed in a corner, was defending himself against the bill of a Wolsey-man and the demi-lance of a Northumbrian. As

for Percy, he had fallen from loss of blood; and big Sir John Perrot, his sword shattered, had grasped Du Ballay round the middle, and was heaving and slanting the equilibrium of the portly bishop to effect a throw. But now the breaths of the fighters grew wondrous short; they gasped in an agony of effort strange in fighting men; their contortions acquired an extravagance of cat-o'-mountain fury; their faces grew crimson, then black; their eyes bulged; the room was full of raucous breaths, of the heaves of groaning and despairing bosoms.

Sir John and Du Ballay fell together, a thumping mass of carcass, and, having fallen, did not move. Macdonald, with a last sigh and gasp, resigned himself to die; and as he resigned himself, the bill and the demi-lance failed, too, and the three men dropped together. Down upon the skull of the Spaniard sped the avenging blade of Fitz; but the sword failed, and Fitz failed, and the Spaniard failed: and together, with a dying gasp, they dropped like lead. And over the room in limp oblivion lay the bodies of the warriors; and without, Mauro Calvo, with steady, calm pump, worked his implement.

Anticipating by over a century the famous invention of Otto von Guericke, Calvo, darkly working in his temple beneath the river, had contrived an air-pump of rude, yet effective, construction. When he was certain that hardly any air was left in the chamber, he opened the door. The door opposite was already half-demolished by sword and axe-hack. Stepping among the prostrate men, Calvo muttered 'Silly cattle,' and with one thump of his back against the locked door, was in the next room.

Bessie stood holding Laura by the hand. In her face was awe, even despair — hardly fear. Suddenly she uttered a cry:

‘Oh, bless God!’

‘Get you gone,’ said Calvo. ‘Have you the bundle? You will find two horses in the street below: away on them, and await me in front of Essex House. Get you gone now, get you gone.’

He spoke calmly, like a calm god to Bessie’s ear.

Even as the girls picked their way among the fallen warriors, there was a stirring among them, and a rubbing of dazed eyes, and a rising on the elbow.

Bessie noticed Fitz lie stricken there. But the girls were already well on their way before Fitz, the first to recover, leapt to his feet.

At that time Mauro Calvo, shouldering his bag, was going through the rooms of the inn, methodically, without haste, calling:

‘Hi, there, hi! landlord, mine host! Hi, hi!’

Presently, in a high garret, he came upon the old fellow hiding in an ague.

‘Why, sir, sir!’ cried mine host, ‘what may betoken all this battery and morris-dancing in an honest house-of-call at this blessed hour of the night?’

‘That you may discover for your own self, friend,’ replied Calvo. ‘All I need tell thee is that your niece is in danger, and I am her friend, I being that Mauro Calvo whom you know. Therefore is it that you will not fail in the following mission: You will seek out one Brother Bruno of the Crouched Friars, and deliver him a letter which I shall now hand to you, with a message from me that he expedite the same, without delay, to the address in the Kingdom of France thereon writ. You understand? — Brother Bruno of the Crouched Friars.’ Mine host was all bowing compliance, while Calvo took from the well-packed bag a cista, containing ink-horn, pen, a seal, black resin, and parchment. And leaning sideways against a buffet to write, he muttered: ‘Now, Master King, let us see whether we cannot pit against

thee an antagonist worthy thy steel. Never met such a mumping chuff in all my life!’ He wrote:

‘To Francis the First, King of France, from Mauro Calvo these presents.

‘The most surpassing maiden in the world, of whom Mauro Calvo, it is now four years gone, prophesied to Francis the First the dominion and jouissance, is now in the Kingdom of England. She is to be found in the cathedral-city of Winchester, or in that environ, and standeth in instant peril of capture at the hands of Henry, King of England, Wales, and Ireland. Mars being in conjunction with Sol in the Fourth Shamaîm, and Venus retrograde in the Sixth House, it is betokened that around the maiden shall spread conflicts; nor, save by prowess of arms, can she be won.’

Mauro Calvo re-read his letter with smiling lip and scornfully-wrinkled brow, and he said:

‘That will fetch the other chuff over,’

He handed the letter, sealed, to mine host With quickened steps he descended, mounted his mule, and rode westward. The fighters were still searching in the inn, and with them Mark Bonner, who, in the dark and confusion, had lost trace of the sage.

CHAPTER XIII

AT HOUNSLOW



ΠΟΙΗΣΟΝ ΑΜΠΕΛΟΥΣ ΜΟΙ!

ANACREON.

IT was not long before the searchers in the inn, no more barred by any locked door, decided that the girls were no longer there.

‘Phew, comeradoes! but I could drink well a pottle of posset,’ gasped Fitzgerald, staggering out to the street.

‘Well, Fitz, hast had thy bellyful to-night, lad?’ asked Mac, staggering too.

‘Nay, Mac, but would have it, as I say. Posset, ye saints, browsed of warm cow’s milk and boon Porto, well sugared and cinnamoned! How good! Or a draught of ypocras, or ale — even ale. Oh, my lusty throat!’

‘Fitz, lad, never had I a heavier arm.’

‘Nor yet I. I have brained — how many? — five: one for each sense, to give it wholesome appetite. But, by the Holy Rood! — where is that boy?’

‘Which boy?’

‘Why, the boysie Bonner, sure....’

‘Faith, I know not.’

‘He is killed!’ cried Fitz; ‘sure, sure!’

‘Nay, but he lives, for there is he.’

Bonner appeared at the doorway, sauntering out. Fitz ran to meet him, and threw an arm round his shoulder.

‘Why, boysie—’ he said in a low voice.

‘I live to tell the tale — in hexameters,’ said Mark.

‘What are hexameters, boysie?’

‘Verses with six feet.’

‘But six-footed things do crawl, boysie, and thy verse should go brisk, like the action described,’

‘Nay, but verses, unlike other polypeds, go not on all feet at once, you perceive, but hop-wise, foot by foot, which faculty is called their Scansion,’

‘Then are they like hopping zanies, or saltimbanques, boy, and should be away with,’

‘Nay, but—’

‘Come Fitz! — come!’ cried Mac from some distance. ‘What now, Mac? Hast found some posset in the street?’

‘Nay, but some traces of the fugitives, perchance,’

‘Sayest thou ——?’

Fitz went to the spot.

‘See there,’ said Mac, ‘the red hoof-prints of two horses that have trod in blood, and gone off close together, galloping — thou observest their length of stride? If the maidens were verily in the inn, and have escaped, then this must be—’

‘Hath anyone seen aught of Master Calvo?’ asked Mark.

‘What! was the wizard here?’

‘Even he,’

‘And in the inn?’

‘Why, yes,’

‘Then ’twas that cozener that rescued them!’ cried Mac—’ Fitz, man, to horse!’

‘Hold, Mac: I leave not a goodly inn full of fluids behind me, with my weasand dry as a corned rey—’

‘Ah, but there ’twas not the real Fitzgerald that spake,’ said Mac, ‘but a thirsty weakling. Come, Fitz, be whetting thy manhood, man, and leave thy throat to wet itself. Our devoir to the King — and those vile black-riders within, who will be out anon — and we without a moment to throw away —’

‘Well, then, an you put it so—’

Fitz’s nature, prone always to drop back into pleasant sloth and dalliance, stiffened at the reproof of the harder-souled Mac, and he ran promptly forward.

Four of the nineteen horses which had lately thronged the street now strayed, insolently cropping the grass-grown pavers with lowered neck, and a swagger pose of one projected fore-leg; the others were dead or fled. Three of the four, with a mere fling-away and pretence of flight, accepted capture. Fitz cried:

‘Come, boysie, haste thee!’

And they mounted just in time: for even as they rode away, the searchers came trooping from the inn, and someone sent after the riders a random bullet.

At the door one Wolsey-man said:

‘Yon flyers were e’en fighters in the inn: whither away are they in such haste?’

‘Ay, whither?’ answered the other: ‘after the maidens, marry, most like.’

‘Gogswounds! ’tis even so, or I’m a beggar’s brat! Let’s after!’

‘No steeds.’

‘Pah! then home for steeds o’ God’s name let’s hie!’

These two started westward. In another three minutes the same reasoning was agitating every brain of the searchers, and westward for steeds became the *mot d’ordre*. In twos and threes, far-scattered now on their divers ways, they went running with prone trot through a London dead and buried in slumber.

Meanwhile, Fitz and his fellows, galloping past Somerset House, had encountered a watchman callously sauntering with steps that tolled through the hushed midnight. The riders drew rein.

‘Hast seen, Master Watchman, a pair of females and a man on horseback pass this way?’ asked Mac.

‘Two females on horseback,’ said the deep-voiced watchman, who had learned observation from solitude and the stars, ‘and a man on muleback. The females wore neither porringer, coif, nor bonnet, the man a skull-cap of black silk; and they made haste toward Westminster.’

“Tis they, Fitz! Give rein—”

They were off, cantering; Fitz and Mac abreast, Bonner behind. At Westminster, from a club-man sleeping forlorn on a doorstep, they learned that twenty minutes since the fugitives had taken the way to Hounslow village. And they were off, cantering through open Middlesex country now, under open heaven.

‘Why should I be constrained into the chase of my own sweetheart and wife-that-is-to-be?’ observed Mark Bonner, his mass of golden hair jumping in measured spasms on his galloping shoulders.

‘Poor boysie! Yet is it better to be constrained into a chase than chased into constraint, as thou well might be,’ said Fitz.

‘Wife that *was*, not is, to be, lad,’ added Mac; ‘what is a King if he hath not right to the person of his subjects?’

‘I refer you for answer to “The Republic” of Plato,’ said Bonner.

‘Wah, Mac — *there* is a hard nut for thee to crack!’ cried Fitz, delighted, his bossed and blue-white brow pouring perspiration down his tanned face.

‘A truce to thy Plato, lad,’ said Mac. ‘The King is in his earnest about this Laura, hark ye. And have her he will, and droightly, say I’

‘Have her in her entirety he cannot,’ answered Bonner: ‘for her mouth I have already kissed so sore, that she will bawl an it be but touched,’

Fitz slapped his thigh.

‘Is it not a philosopher?’ he cried. ‘Doth it not take his whipping gaily, the boy, in light scorn of all things and Kings? But nay, nay, Mac, I fall not wholly in accord with thee. If the boy loveth his Laura, and Laura loveth her boy, ’tis a nice question, meseems, to which Laura belongeth, whether to the King, or to the boy,’

“’Tis rank heresy, Fitz: she belongeth, certes, to the King,’

‘Well, have it so. But that Bess—’

‘What of her, Fitz?’

‘Is she verily sister to Laura, as thou saidst, boysie?’

‘Why, yes,’ said Bonner.

“’Tis Bess I think of, Mac,’

‘What of her?’

‘That lass, many a time in the tap-room of the inn, I have chucked under the chin, man — lightly done it! — mockingly done it! — and knew not what I did, nor whom I chucked!’

‘Ay, ’tis a lass built of strange timber,’ assented Mac.

‘Of old English oak, methinks, Mac — tough as hell, and sending back the sledge that smites it with a bounce. And I have chucked it under the

chin!’

‘Twas a bold deed that, the taking of thy King’s-letters, Fitz; and one worthy a stout heart, I avouch.’

‘But, Mac, consider that flight with her sister from the King! Consider what of rough old virtue is thereby betokened! Sure, man, there’s not a ladyship of the land which, having a daughter with Laura’s face, but would have hurried her hie to Court, that she might incur the honour of becoming what thou wot’st to our jolly Harry. And Bessie Ford — a country wench — Oh, ’tis incredible! Oh, it troubleth the eyes!’

‘Ay, faith, ’twas seemly done; yea, I avouch, ’twas virtuously achieved.’

‘She ran from the King, Mac.’

‘That did she, Fitz.’

‘She tumbled not to her knees, Mac, when the King beheld her sister, to thank God that now should she have waving oak-lands and a thousand livery-men; but she ran in fear, Mac — she took to flight—’

‘Oh, I avouch, I avouch— ’twas virtuously achieved— ’twas seemly done.’

‘Ha! ha! ha! ha! and I have chucked it under the—’

A ‘phoo — o!’ of spasming laughter puffed between the hand that rushed to cover Fitz’s down-bent mouth. But in a moment the redness of his laugh turned to mottled pallor, and he said:

‘Rude grampus I must have been! Pah! I have shame on it—’

‘Nay, Fitz,’ said Mac, ‘but thou takest the matter with too much unction, coz: being apt, I observe, to run into extremes always, goring prone like a mad bull for one red point, nor seeing a whole business in its entirety. Sure, our main concern is not now to prate about the virtues of this Bess, but to catch the maidens for the King.’

Fitzgerald put spurs to his horse, and said nothing.

After some minutes, passing through Hounslow, he drew rein at the sight of moving lights in the Cross Hands.

‘Nay, Mac, no more to-night, no more,’ he said; ‘*I* feel three burning smarts on my body, and my throat screams for a cup of clary.’

‘And my belly is void for neat’s tongue and capon pasty,’ said Mark Bonner.

‘Well, well, ye are like two boys,’ answered Mac. ‘But as you will: who knows if we shall not find our quarry even here?’

Fitz set to pounding the door with his dagger-handle. The landlord of the Cross Hands popped his head out o’ window, and cried:

‘What! more o’ ye this night?’

‘Fitz,’ whispered Mac, ‘I’ll lay a ban-dog to a beagle that they are in this very inn.’

Fitz made no reply.

The moment the landlord appeared at the door, Mac slipped a broad-piece into his hand, and, whispering, said:

‘We pay scot and lot, mine host, and command a goodly collation. But first we need to know — have a pair of bare-headed lasses and a man in skull-cap arrived at you but now?’

‘Why, even so: they are just a-feed in the pantry yonder.’

‘And to the pantry how many doors?’

‘But one, opening upon the inn-buttery.’

‘Fair and good. Say naught of us to these good folk on consideration of yet a rose-noble for yourself, and conduct us to this buttery anon. Give us there what cheer you have with speed, and our steeds send to stable without unsaddling. And as we feed, seek us out a length of rope for money’s worth, we prithee. Fitz, we have them, lad!’

‘Have them or no, to me ’tis pretty equal, Mac. Hast any Alicant in buttery, landlord?’

‘Sh-h!’ said Mac; ‘talk low. And while we feed, since feed we must, and mine host seeks rope to bind the wizard, prithee mum, now. For if the wizard scents us here, ’tis a miscreant full of tricks. Bonner, make but one wilful sound, and I stick thee.’

‘Well, Mac — but hast any Alicant in buttery, landlord?’

‘Why, a pipe or so in cellar, my master.’

‘Then up with a brimming flagon, quick.’

They followed mine host to the inn-buttery, with soft tread, and, in the midst of casks and cupboards, sat lolling in poses of abandoned weariness round a deal table. Mine host spread a soiled portpane, and busily laid on good cold viands: caviare, a haunch of veal, stuffed yern, and roasted byster, with oats-bread. The three, cutting with knives and feeding the gorged mouth with forkless left fingers, set to work. Under the table Mark Bonner swung a jubilee leg, and hummed inaudible madrigals. His head presently dropped to the massive shoulder of Fitzgerald, and so, reposing sideways, ate gladly. And Fitz, inwardly conscious of the resting head, ate gladly also.

‘But,’ cried Fitz suddenly, ‘a murrain on that landlord! Wilt never bring that Alicant, mine host?’

‘Fitz, Fitz!’ hissed Macdonald bitterly, ‘this is crazy folly.’

Bessie Ford leapt, blanched, to her feet. She whispered to Calvo:

‘I have heard the voice of Master Fitzgerald in the next room! We are lost!’

‘You are certain of his voice?’ asked Calvo, still munching.

‘Oh, quite, quite....’

The landlord bustled in, closing the door. The trapdoor into the cellar was in the pantry; he lifted it. Calvo said:

‘You descend for wine, mine host?’

‘Why, yes,’

‘For guests?’

‘Why, yes.’

‘Wine of what sort?’

‘Alicant.’

‘What! you keep Alicant?’

‘Even so.’

‘Sure, I did not know. Bring me also a flagon.’ The landlord descended. Calvo hurriedly took from his bag a three-ounce vial.

Mine host re-emerged with his vesper in one hand, and two tapering pewter flagons, held by the handles, in the other.

To reclose the opening, he laid the flagons on the floor; and as he led the door, stooping, to its drop, Calvo, leaping from the table, approached him.

‘Which is mine?’ he said.

‘Either.’

Calvo took one flagon, emptying, as the door dropped, his vial into the other. The vial had contained a distillation of essential alcohol.

Fitz, as he drained his first cup, nodded the remark: ‘Boon and heart some, this!’

And Conner, draining his, hummed quite aloud. Fitz’s arm went round Bonner’s head, and he knocked the head against his corselet, saying: ‘Boysie.’

Mac drank with much more deliberation, pondering his flavours; but even *his* eyes swam.

Fitz drained another cup, and cried aloud:

‘Ha! ha! ha!’

Bonner another, and threw himself frankly on Fitz’s breast, sobbing.

In the other room Mauro Calvo said to the girls: ‘Now! You will dart with all your legs through the next room; the door is right opposite; we make for the stables. Our animals stand saddled, and the knaves can’t follow us, being drunk. Our landlord is against us — we must not tarry here. To Kew, then — away.’ Calvo flew first, close on his steps Laura, then Bessie, with sudden spurt. They were in the middle of the room before Mac saw, and started to his feet. But even as he rushed, he stumbled. Fitz, with thrown-back head, was shouting the red laughter of alcohol Bessie, in her swift passage, noted him — the flushed, jolly face; Mac, too, she saw; but as for Bonner, his face was hidden on the breast of Fitz.

Mac at once recovered his legs, having drunk little, and dashed to the door; but there, barring his way, stood Fitzgerald, staggering with outspread arms.

‘Ha! ha! ha!’ he laughed, with fainting breath; ‘what, art after the little Bess, thou Mac? Oh, gamesome princox! Tis not Laura— ’tis *the little Bess* thou wouldst be after for thy little dainty wife — God, thy little sweet, sweet wife! Nay, but thou shalt not — shall he, Bonner, boy? Shall he, now? Little, dainty, tricky Bess...’

Mac had his arms round Fitzgerald’s body, and after a brief tussle, they fell together. It was some minutes before Mac could wriggle himself free. He ran staggering out, but only to hear a sound of hoofs go galloping into faintness and silence.

When he returned to the room, Fitz and Bonner were inextricably cuddled into a heap on the floor, quite drunk.

CHAPTER XIV

AT KEW



AS FRESH AURORE of mighty Tithone spouse
Unshut the windows of her large hall...

GAWIN DOUGLAS.

WITH earliest dawn Bessie awoke, after three hours' sleep at the Blue Bottle, Kew. She hurried on her clothes, and, having put her lips to Laura's open mouth, descended into the yard at the inn's back, and, mounting on a bench, was able to scan far back the London Road. It was empty, and she breathed with thankfulness the fresh summer air of a balmy morning. There by the bench she knelt, crossed herself, kissed her thumb-nail, and prayed.

Her milk-white brow, lined with two chaste curves of dark hair, touched the wood-work. Beneath was a rather small triangle of face, but chastely lined. There was little eye-brow or eye-lash; her hair, as was mostly the way then with maidens, fell in a 'natte' or plait — not a long one — long as a hand. On her cheekbones were bright carmine spots; and her thin lips were scarlet.

Long she prayed, to many saints — little for herself, much for Laura, much for Mauro Calvo — and devoutly, with awe-struck, believing heart —

not as men and maidens pray now.

As she rose, she saw far off, as if in sad inverted answer to her prayer, a cloud of rising dust. She clasped her hands, and, ‘Oh, Master Fitzgerald, sir!’ she whispered, ‘if you only knew what you are doing, sure you would not—’

She was about to run to rouse the sleepers, when she noticed a hole, long since made, five feet deep and broad, at one corner of the garden. Beside it was a dung-heap, bricks, old earth, and battered tin, and rubbish, sufficient to fill the hole; and beside these, spades and garden-tools. She had a sudden inspiration, and ran within.

First up to the room where Calvo slept. The alchymist snored, his bulging brow pallid in contrast with his black cap. Bessie put on his forehead a kiss. She would not wake him yet, cherishing with economy each precious moment of his repose: their animals fed saddled; there was still a little time.

She knew, for he had shown her, that he had the King’s-letters, which she had given him to keep, in a box in his bag. She opened the bag, searched, took the letters, and with them an inkhorn, pen, and parchment. This occupied five minutes. She hurried to Laura’s bedside.

Laura, deep in dreams, resisted the rousing hand with objecting elbow, and ‘Let me alone’ she droned drowsily, and flung herself into another pose of slumber.

It took Bess another five minutes to wake her. Then she ran to a window commanding the London Road.

The hasting cloud of dust was near now. She saw that time would fail her for her scheme. But even as she looked, there arose a hope. The horsemen stopped at another inn — the Crown — which stood alone in fields half a

mile nearer Hounslow. They dismounted and hammered at the door. They were not Fitzgerald's party at all, but another of the searching parties.

Bessie hurried back to Laura, who sat nude, wantonly yawning in bed, showing her little teeth; and 'Write, Laura, write,' said Bessie.

The bed was on the floor, and near it a chest. Laura took pen in hand, for she could write; but as for Bessie, she did not know the alphabet.

Laura waited. Bessie, sitting on the bed's edge, pondered, seeking for expression. After a minute, her little scarlet mouth twitched with humour, and she said:

'The real and only Fitzgerald—'

Laura wrote with flourished letters:

'The real and only Fitzgerald—'

'Is sure a gentleman,' said Bessie.

Laura wrote it.

'Why, then, should he hunt down to death,' said Bessie, 'two poor maidens who bear him only good will and good remembrance?'

Laura wrote that 'Sign: "Bessie Ford."'“

It was signed.

'Now, on this other piece write: "Here lie the King's-letters taken from Master Fitzgerald's cloak."'“

It was written.

Bessie leapt up; she wrapped the King's-letters, together with her letter to Fitz, in a piece of blank parchment. Then, with winged feet, she hied to the garden, dropped the packet into the hole, and commenced with vigour to shovel in the earth and rubbish. Her frame was vigorous and vital, and the work swift, for the loose refuse ran freely, in lumps and thumps. Ever and anon she stamped upon the rising level in the hole to consolidate the mass;

and on the surface, when all was finished, she impaled with a dry twig the words: 'Here lie the King's-letters.'

What in a few minutes she had thus buried would require, perhaps, hours to recover: and in this way she counted upon retarding her pursuers.

She ran in now, and woke Calvo, and soon they were ready to set out.

The wife of mine host, a kindly soul who had spoken with Bessie on her arrival, rose from bed to receive her reckoning; and to her at the last moment Bessie said: 'Prithee, Mistress Perkins, an a stranger named Master Fitzgerald come hither to-day, conduct him to the hole in the back garden. 'Tis a masterful great gentman, with large and humoursome face *sans* hair on it, and sky-blue eyes that twinkle. Sure, you could not miss him when once you saw him, for 'tis an Irish gallant like few.'

Mistress Perkins promised; and the party set off, bound for Colnbrook through Brentford.

CHAPTER XV

AT COLNBROOK



‘A GOOD MAN there was of religion
That was a poore parson of a town.’
CHAUCER.

SINCE Mauro Calvo knew that his westward flight was now tracked by his pursuers, it entered his calmly meditative brain that his best course would be to make them pass him on the road, and rush onward seeking him, while he, in his serene way, ambled after them at leisure on his mule. Therefore he made haste through the scented morning toward Colnbrook, where he had old acquaintance with a priest; and the girls followed at a canter.

In that day, when all travelling was by horse, everyone could ride. Laura’s dark face flushed to carmine; her hair loosened somewhat to a wanton slovenness; jollity was on her breath. And Bessie, seeing her so, a flash of galloping loveliness still near her, was inwardly content. Calvo said:

‘By all that’s rigolo I here’s a beautiful occupation for a man like me.’

They were descending slowly a stony path through over-arching beeches.

‘Oh, ’tis your exceeding wondrous goodness, Master Calvo!’ said Bessie.

‘A truce to my goodness, young woman. You have reason to talk of my goodness, methinks. Gadding over the country with two moppets on

galloping tits behind me, and a lot of silly mad cattle on my track! What do you call that?’

‘Oh, Master Calvo, ’tis even exceeding abundantly gracious—’

‘Well, well. Don’t distress yourself — can’t you see you bother and worry me? Everything gone to rack and ruin — all my plans — all gone. I had in my mind the doing of — a thing! Aha! And now, where is it? — gone! And I was just preparing an electuary for that old hag Gammer Welch’s sore chest: now, I suppose, the old fool will die. And here am I gadding about this blessed morning with two young women — perfect strangers to me — and everything gone to hell. And all through that mumping chuff of a King — my God!’

Laura, behind, pulled a wrinkled nose and down-turned mouth at Calvo; and Bessie, shrinking painfully at every grumble, went with bent and guilty head.

They came to the top of Colnbrook village-street. It lay dozing in tranquil sunlight, three cows loitering down it. They proceeded to the bottom, past the church, searching for the presbytère.

‘Where the pestilence *is* the presbytère?’ grumbled Calvo.

They came back, searching. An old gaffer, clad in hempen gabardine, stepped from a door. To him Calvo spoke.

‘Is Father Anstrewther still the priest here?’

‘Ay,’ said the yokel.

‘Where the pestilence is the presbytère?’

‘Why, yonder, back o’ the church, behind the rows of yews.’

Thither they turned again, and found that the house lay quite concealed in a waving meadow-land behind three thickly-founded lines of yews. This was unfortunate for them, for, three hours after they had been received by the good Father, Macdonald, galloping toward Colnbrook, spied the

identical gaffer whom Calvo had questioned ditching by the roadside. And said he:

‘Hast seen a pair of girls, with a man, pass riding, gaffer?’

‘Ay, the same as went to the presbytère, no doubt.’

‘How long since?’

‘Nigh on three hours, maybe.’

‘ ‘Sdeath! they must have gone further by this. Come, Fitz, ride — to the presbytère!’

They clattered up the blinking, white street, which drowsed in a languishment as of slow cud-chewing opium-eaters. Failing to find the house, they turned back, and questioned two women who, with elbows akimbo, expatiated by the gurgling pump. Far-sunken now, those two, down into the dim dark: but there on that hot mid-day in Colnbrook street, they did authentically discuss, minutely careful, with rough arms akimbo.

From the church-yard to the presbytère there wound a little path through the screen of yews. Along this went Fitz, Mac, and Bonner.

They were three hours behind the fugitives, for the reason that it had taken Fitz two hours to dig up the King’s-letters buried by Bessie at Kew. The letters Fitz had given into the keeping of Bonner for safety, since he himself anticipated more fighting, and possible death. But as for Bessie’s missive— ‘The real and only Fitzgerald is sure a gentleman’ — he had put it into his own pouch.

They had then taken to horse, and ridden hard for Colnbrook. And down the path through the yews they went to the presbytère.

“Tis sure they are gone onward by now,’ said Mac, ‘for why should they linger here to be captured?’

‘Sure enough,’ said Fitz.

‘Except the good Bess tarry for confession before Vespers,’ suggested Bonner.

‘Tush!’ answered Mac, ‘you lisp like an urchin. Folk tarry not to make confession when fears urge them forward.’

‘Which proves that you know naught of Bess: for she’s devout as a seraph, and bold as a dragon-fly.’

‘Being devout as a seraph, she hath naught to confess,’ said Fitz.

‘Hath she not on her conscience the stealing of thy letters, addle-pate?’

‘But being bold as a dragon-fly, she will cry “buzz!” to her conscience.’

‘Oh, they will sure not be here,’ said Mac: ‘yet no harm to question the good Father,’

They had arrived at a low odd-gabled manse, buried in greenery; they knocked.

The Father in person opened. He was a broad-faced old man, red and stout, with defiant, autocrat eyes.

‘What make you, friends?’ he asked aggressively.

‘We seek a pair of girls and a wizard-man, who were here three hours gone, Father,’

‘By what authority?’

‘By the King’s,’

‘Deliver me your warrant,’

‘We have no warrant,’

‘Then are ye mere strolling Corinthians. Get you gone,’

‘Nay, ’tis insolently said, Father. Abase, prithee, that high stomach. Are the maidens here — yea or no?’

‘And an they be? Here, Grip — at ’em, dog!’

The priest whistled. A huge ban-dog bounded bristling from nowhere, and was sprawling in the air, making with vicious spring for Bonner’s

throat. But it dropped in two wheeling parts. Fitzgerald's sword had whisked through its neck.

'Father, are the maidens here — yea or nay? We take your sacred word,' said Mac.

'I will not give it,'

'Then we search the manse.'

The priest dapped loudly three times.

"Tis a signal to the fugitives, Fitz!" cried Mac. "They are here, sure!"

'In, then!' responded Fitz, with rising colour.

The two brushed past the priest, and went with prone outlook, ransacking every room and nook. Only one locked door checked them: it was a great Gothic portal of thick oak, barred and studded with iron, the entrance to the priest's library.

'They are behind this door,' said Mac.

"Tis so, Mac, but naught less than a culverin could bring it down,"

'Hi, there, hi!' cried Mac, pounding.

There was no answer.

'What now, Mac?' said Fitz. 'By the Rood, I have a deadly thirst. Let us e'en ravish the curate's buttery.'

'Nay, to the inn, Fitz. Escape us now they cannot, if once we get them from this hole. Let us away, and consult.'

They started for the Rose and Nettle, not fifty yards away; but the priest, jumping to a conclusion, hurried to the fugitives with the news that the searchers, failing to find them, had ridden off in further pursuit. Mauro Calvo supposed that his scheme had now succeeded; he resolved to tarry there till nightfall, and then proceed leisurely on his way behind his pursuers. Meantime, Macdonald, feeding at the Rose and Nettle, with the

environs of the presbytere under his eye, said: 'Faith, Fitz, here's what I see not: wherefore squandered they three good hours waiting here?'

'God knows. The alchymist tarried to marry with little Bess on the road, mayhap.'

'They must have had some design, sure?'

'God knows.'

'I have explained to you that the good Bess tarried to confess.' said Bonner with demure smirk.

'To confess her envy of the kisses her sister hath sipped of thy cherry lips, boysie,' remarked Fitz.

'Nay, 'tis rather *thy* rough warrior-busses that the little Bess would be after: for she hath writ thee a letter of amorous, challenge that laughs while it weeps, for saith she: "The real and only Fitzgerald is sure a—"'

'A truce to that, boysie!'

'But by the eleven Virgins!' cried Mac suddenly, 'if the boy hath reason, after all?'

'How mean you, Mac?'

'If Bess hath not indeed tarried to confess, but if, being for whatever reason here, she *do* confess.'

'Well, what then?'

'Why, then we have her! and having her, we have her sister.'

'How have we her?'

'Gramercy, we seize her in the church.'

'Bah! Bess is too wary a wyepe for that. If she be indeed bent upon confession, she steals like a wind to the church, and there hides in some locked nook of the sacristy, till her turn come.'

'But as she kneels confessing, we grab her!'

'But the old priest whisks her into his box, and slams us out'

‘Then we lay siege to the box!’

‘She escapes by some little door or trap-door, and leaves us whistling,’

‘Then, by blood and nails, we pinion the priest beforehand!’

‘Say’st thou?’

‘Aye, by thunder! We lie in wait about the manse, and as the old Father steps out, we gag and bind him. Then I don his robes and hie to the confession-box, there to wait till the lass comes kneeling: then I have her.’

‘Aye, ’twill do — *an* she come,’

‘She will— ’tis odds she will. The boy, who knows her manners, says it. And ’tis her first occasion since she stole the letters,’

‘But ’tis *I* will don the curate’s robes,’

‘Thou?’

‘Aye, Mac.’

‘As thou wilt. But wherefore not I?’

‘Oh, I wot not. Swipes! ’twere like a morris-dance o’ May-day to hear Bess lisp confession!’

‘But, Fitz, thou wilt not fail the King?’

‘Fail? I?’

‘Once afore hast failed him with his letters, lad: a *second* time were a wee too much—’

‘Sure, ’tis not to me thou pratest, Mac? *I* fail? By the sacred wounds! I’ll pin the misproud little minx, I swear, as rudely as a beagle his hare o’ Christmas Eve!’ Fitz said it angrily, and Mac went: ‘H’m!’

All day they kept close in the inn till the dusk deepened, then went out on foot.

As the Father put a leg from his threshold, he was seized in vigorous arms. As his mouth opened to roar, it was dumb.

Without noise they laid him in a near room of the presbytère, after taking his hat, surtout, and beads.

Mac, with Bonner in tow, ran to lurk among the yews, if perchance Bessie should pass, that he might seize her.

Bessie, however, sat already in the church, easy of capture without the trick of the confessional: for she supposed the pursuing party gone far past Colnbrook by now, and an hour before the liers-in-wait had come to lurk among the trees round the manse had gone openly to the holy place, to string together and lay up for herself in heaven that day a long litany and treasure of devotions.

As for Fitz, he hied to the church in the black frock. As he passed, a sexton tending the graves doffed his hat. The evening dusk had deepened.

Through a side-door Fitz flitted into the sacristy. He flung on indiscriminately the priest's alb and chasuble and stole hanging there; thence he slipped by an open door into the confessional.

It was a small den, with one window and two doors. In two adjacent sides were two little gratings fitted with sliding shutters, one of them in one of the doors. Fitz made sure by trial that this door opened and swung freely, that he might pounce out with quick ease. In the den, by the gratings, were two high-backed, old, brown-oak chairs. He sat, drew back a shutter, and his small blue eyes twinkled.

A buxom village-wife came; and, kneeling on a hassock outside, said:

‘Prithee, Father, give me thy blessing, for I have sinned—’

Fitz muttered a deep monotone. Sitting with averted face, he said:

‘Say an act of contrition, daughter.’

Here and now the dusk had grown to a brown, religious gloom. She confessed to ‘scolding,’ related her part in a brawl, and a night of perry, and

an opus carnis. With smitten breast she said her ‘Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.’

Fitz, in absolution, muttered a longer monotone of indistinguishable nonsense-words, and imposed a chemin de croix. The woman, with an upward glance of question, went away.

Fitz closed that shutter and opened the other. There a woman knelt, confessed, and went away.

Then, with bowed head, came Bessie Ford, and knelt, with a ‘Prithee, Father, give me thy blessing, for I have sinned—’

There spread a pallor under the tan of Fitzgerald’s face.

The very last tints of the summer - evening sun shone through the stained needle-window, and lotioned her smooth hair in a vision of faint other-world hues.

Fitzgerald’s will was on the spring to seize her then and there, but his body sat still. Imitating the priest’s gruff voice, he bid her say her Act Then she confessed in a voice lowly as the moaning evening breeze.

Her crimes were deep-dyed before God, red as crimson: she admitted two — the sin of Theft, and the sin of Idolatry.

She had stolen some King’s-letters from the cloak of a fighting-man in order to save from him her sister, Laura Ford; and she adored Laura Ford sinfully, with idolatrous lechery, as the creature should not be adored, but only the Creator.

‘But in thus abstracting the letters thou didst treason to the King,’ Fitzgerald growled in the voice of the Father.

“’Twas for my sister.’

‘And thou broughtest anigh the Tyburn tippet the poor fighting - man’s neck from which thou stolest them.’

Her bent head bent very low; her voice dropped to the lowliest whisper:

“Twas for my sister.’
‘So, an ‘twere to do again, wouldst do it?’
‘Why, Father, I fear me — yea.’
‘Then art thou not truly contrite.’
‘Oh, I am crooked as sin, Father, and the root of evil is rank within me.’
‘Not truly contrite, I say. What! wouldst again brave the King’s wrath?’
‘Oh, the King’s wrath, Father, that your poor penitent could lightly abye,
an that were all! The King’s wrath frights me not a toe.’
‘But the wrath of God—’
‘Aye mi! ’tis there, by my credit, that my sickness of soul is evidently
seen, good Father, since for that girl’s sake I would even rush upon the
damnation of Hell.’
‘What! and writhe in flames for ever under the pitiless pelt of Christ?’
‘Oh, ’tis my soul’s flaw! By my credit, ’tis my nature’s fault, good
Father!’
‘Why, ’tis a wondrous love. ’Tis a wild and deathly passion!’
‘She is my little sister — she is all I have — I die every moment for her!’
“Tis a rank idolatry!’
‘Father, ’tis a most wicked idolatry.’
“Tis a most noble idolatry!’
‘Say you, Father?’
’Tis a most divine idolatry!’
‘Then, Father, you absolve me? Oh, my heart! But the wicked theft,
Father?’
“Twas a glorious theft! Oh, ’twas a most brave and royal theft!’
‘From the poor gentman, Father, whose life I thus imperilled?’
‘From the wretched caitiff who would have robbed thee of thy lamb!
Curse him!— ’twas nobly done!’

“’Twas not, then, Father, a most deadly sin?’

‘Contradict me not. ’Twas most virtuously achieved— ’twas highly transacted! Oh, to think of it, it troubleth the eyes! But that poor fighting-man, tell me, hadst thou no thought for him and his peril?’

‘I had, yes: not at that moment, but afterwards — even with tears.’

‘What, *tears*, thou sayest?’

Her voice dropped to a lower whisper:

‘Why, Father, yes—’

‘Tears for *him*?’

Her lips moved, but without sound.

‘What is his name?’

‘He is called Garrett Oge Fitzgerald.’

‘Thou knowest him well, then?’

‘Well.’

‘And thou bearest him no secret malice in thy heart?’

‘Oh, *I!* none.’

‘What! And he would have ravished thee of thy idol!’

“’Tis a gentman of gallant and bounteous temperament, Father, tossed on impulses. If evil be within him, methinks it cannot be deep — oh, no, no. Or, it may be — I wot naught of him.’

‘Thou said’st that thou knowest him well.’

‘I think — I thought so. It may be — I wot not at all, Father. How should such as I wot of a gentman such as he? He is even now hunting after me as a goss-hawk hunts a linnet—’

‘Why, ’tis most foully done!’

“’Tis *hard*— ’tis very hard. But, by my credit, I say not ’tis foully done.’

‘Oh, ’tis a most miscreant crime!’

‘He but obeys the King’s behest, good Father. He is the King’s sworn servant—’

Down sledged Fitzgerald’s fist upon the chair-arm, and—’ A murrain on the dirty King!’ he cried, with red face, in his natural voice. ‘Oh, generous Bess! Oh, large and wholesome Bess!’

Bess then, for the first time, glanced upward. It was dark: the hues from the window were all dead gray: but his voice she knew, and felt.

In his passion he made a movement to rush to her: a movement infinitely sad and tragic in its final results. He had come to seize her, and she had won him: but his rush impressed her only with the fact that he had come to seize her.

A crazy instinct that his words of sympathy were only part of the whole *ruse* flitted instantly through her brain: and she was gone like a roe — he after her.

She dodged behind the sacrarium, leapt the altar-rail, and he lost her in the dark church. He went trotting after her, calling woefully: ‘Good Bess! Sweet Bess!’ Then out from the church he ran, his eyes swimming in tears, towards the yews; and to meet him ran Mac and Bonner.

Fitz put both hands on Mac’s shoulders, holding him away. He could not speak; a lump in his throat struggled with his spittle.

‘How now! the maiden, Fitz!’

‘Oh, ’tis the rarest spirit!’

‘Fitz, thou — !’

‘Hear me, Mac; hear a man—’

‘Hast sure not failed *again*, Fitz?’

‘Hear me. We cannot hunt her more, nor thou, nor I. She said there was no ill in me, Mac; that the ill in me was not deep; “oh, no, no,” said she.’

‘But, Fitz—’

“Tis a very angel, Mac. She’d move and melt Beelzebub. Oh, if thou couldst hear but one half her gentle, gentle whisperings that I have heard but now!’

Mac’s eyes glinted keen, like cold steel, between his lids in critical, close thought.

‘Well, and what said she?’

‘She said that for love of the little Sis, Mac, she’d brave, not only the wrath of ten thousand Kings, but the eternal wrath of God Himself!’

‘Well, ’twas boldly said.’

‘And she said that like goss-hawks hunting a poor little linnet — a poor little fluttering linnet, Mac, coz — so thou and I were hunting her.’

‘Said she that?’

‘The little thing, Mac! the little helpless soul, my friend. Oh, by God — no more! no more!’

‘I avouch, ’tis piteous.’

‘Aye, but hear the whole! Hear a man out! She said ’twas not foully done, Mac. “Nay,” said she, “by my credit, I say not ’tis foully done: for they but do the King’s behests, being his sworn men.”’

‘Said she that, verily?’

‘She said it, Mac. She sought pretexts and loving pleadings for rude, unmanly tykes like thee and me.’

Mac’s glinting eyes moved between their lids in close, keen reflection.

‘Well, ’twas finely said.’

‘Then draw thy sword, Macdonald!’

‘And wherefore?’

‘Bonner, boysie, draw thy sword!’

‘But wherefore?’ reiterated Mac.

‘To take oath with me, who am thy true friend and ingie, James Macdonald. Hunt her without me thou wilt not, sure; and hunt her more with me thou shalt not, by the Holy Rood of Christ! Swear, then, with me, that we escort them into safety now, and, now and always, with our bodies do succour, shield, and champion them against Cardinal, or Pope, or King, or Hell, with all their dastard myrmidons. Swear — wilt thou?’

‘Nay, but this is rash impulse that will pass. Faith, faith, I act not in that way, Fitz.’

Fitz put his arm close about his friend’s neck.

‘Come, Mac, come, coz — for me, if not for her. Drop that hard brow, and be still thy old friend’s friend. Else draw thy blade and stick me!’

Fitz persuaded, as he fought, like a whirlwind. He had a will as passionate as the will of Bessie Ford, whom he championed.

‘Fitz, Fitz,’ said Mac, ‘hast weighed all the awful consequences of this change? The King—’

‘Consequences! King! But nay, Mac: men of rich blood think not of Kings and consequences — never, lad, never! A poor little thing, in sore distress, most chaste, most sweet, braving all alone in her innocence the high Puissances of the land that hunt her, hath need of us. Consequences, quotha?’

Mac studied the ground with slanting frown, perplexed. Suddenly he threw up his head. His pressed lips were smiling.

“Tis heroically said, Fitz, lad! But remember: I, if I swear, abye my oath, not for a day or two, but for ever.’

‘For ever, aye! There ’twas Mac that spake. Draw, draw, my brave!’

In a moment three swords, with rushing sound, leapt into the air. Three mouths kissed the hilts.

‘I swear!’ cried Mac.

‘I swear!’ cried Bonner.

‘By God’s light, I swear!’ cried Fitz.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ESCAPE



‘FLY, FAIR LADIES! Oh, fly! fly!’

SHAKESPEARE.

THE swords dropped back into their scabbards.

‘Our first gear must be to hie to the manse,’ said Fitz, ‘and acquaint them that we fight now, not against, but for them.’

‘This night shall I see Laura!’ cried Bonner, with backward-shaken head and wriggling locks; ‘we shall have long rendezvous beneath the trees.’

‘And to-morrow night beneath the sheets, boysie: for, by the Rood, the good Father here shall wed ye before another sunset.’

‘Sheets or trees ’tis indifferent, sir: both being conductors of lightning in their way.’

‘Yet hold to sheet-lightning, boysie, as the less dangerous of the two sorts. Only, who then shall be my sweetheart, when Laura takes thee from me?’

‘I will give thee the little Bess,’ said Bonner with his smirk.

‘A truce to that, boy!’ growled Fitz.

And Mac went: ‘H’m!’

They ran up the three green-black wooden steps of the front gable, and into the manse.

‘What if they be gone?’ said Mac.

‘But nay, Bess cannot have yet returned from the church to bid them fly,’ said Fitz: ‘thou and Bonner must have spied her in the coming. They will be here.’

Bess, however, *had* returned. From the church, dreading an ambush among the yews, she had warily made a wide, breathless *détour*, speeding down the village street, and so round to the back of the manse. She had entered it with the word ‘fly’ panting to start from her tongue-tip.

In her passage, she saw the priest lying bound on the floor. A bitter ‘Fie! Oh, fie!’ directed against Fitzgerald, passed her lips. Wild as she was to be away, she stopped, and in an agony of flurry freed the kerchiefed mouth and bound limbs. A moment after, in the room where Calvo sat, the palpitating prone word burst loose, and ‘Fly!’ she cried, ‘oh, fly!’ Hence, when the three searchers now approached the great library-door, they saw it this time open. At the same moment the old priest, with quick step and menacing scowl, came up. He lifted his hand to utter anathemas.

‘Nay, ’tis useless, Father,’ said Fitz; ‘now we are nothing but your friends. Where lurk the maidens and the wizard-man?’

‘Gone, ye lilburns! gone, ye daws — !’

‘Bah! ’tis false—’

But it was true. The next moment, hearing a thud of hoofs, all rushed to a library-window to see.

From a little outhouse, where the mule and horses had been secreted, the girls and Calvo were just galloping off. Fitzgerald sent after them a passionate cry:

‘Hi! good Bess, halt! Hi, girl, hi!’

Two seconds, and the fugitives were hidden behind trees.

‘And we without a blessed nag!’ moaned Fitzgerald. ‘To our inn, Fitz, for the steeds!’ cried Mac. ‘They ride but sorry tits: in ten minutes we shall be up with them!’

Back to the Rose they ran, were delayed some minutes in trapping their horses and paying their score, then mounted, and, with loose rein, were away.

As they went off, the landlord, lounging by the inn-door, remarked to a neighbour:

‘So God me save! there be brisk riding about country to-day with one and another of them!’

‘What’s stirring?’

“Tis my question, too. Yon’s the third cavalcade to-day. This morning, foreday, comes a troop of three gallants, and ko one: “Landlord, hast thou in herbergage two maidens a-horse, with bare heads, and a man a-mule in skull-cap?”

“No,” ko I. “Then,” ko he to his mates, “are they fled onward to Slough,” and away they hie. Then, it being *none* in the afternoon, come those three who have even now ridden off; and it is twenty minutes ago, another five, with the self-same question anent the two maidens with bare head, and the man in skull-cap.’

‘What answered you to those?’

‘Why, that I wot naught of the matter. “Then,” ko one of the five, “are they fled onward to Slough.” And away in deathly haste they hie.’

‘Why, ’tis a very plague of scampering crosscountry cavalcades.’

“Tis so.’

‘But hold! Did not Dame Higginbottom’s grandchild aver that old Gaffer Meux had babbled somewhat of three folks asking the way to the manse—’

‘By St. Hubert!’ cried the landlord, ‘I’m a lost spirit if here comes not yet another troop o’ them — !’

In a minute a sweating cavalcade of six drew rein at the inn-door. They desired to know whether the landlord knew aught of a party of two maidens with bare head and a man in skull-cap. They were Alvarada’s party, with Sir John Perrot and four others.

The foreday party of three, of whom the landlord spoke, were Wolsey-gallants; the evening party of five were Anne’s emissary, Percy of Northumberland, with four serving-men.

At about eleven that night Du Ballay arrived at Colnbrook with a party of six knights.

Meantime, even as mine host of the Rose answered the fierce queries of Sir John Perrot, Fitz, Mac, and Bonner, with loose rein, were hot in loving pursuit upon the trail of the fugitives.

But now the twilight had deepened almost into night, and the girls were quite lost to sight.

Calvo, in the; urgent moment of his flight, had left the main Bath Road, and now was travelling hotly through bye-ways, across country, with a very vague idea of direction.

Here the Bucks country undulates in hillocks, rendering escape easier.

‘Ride, Mac, like furies!’ cried Fitz. ‘Miss them now we must not! Spur, spur, Bonner!’

‘An we miss them, captured they will be, certes, wizard or no wizard,’ answered Mac. ‘Royal Harry will sweep the country with five, with fifty thousand men, an need be, till he have them. Anyway, Fitz, we’ve entered on a biggish game of shovel-board!’ ‘Thou falterest not?’

‘I? No.’

‘On, then,’

‘Give rein, lad!’

They went in single file, pattering through a winding lane of soft, dried mud. In reality, they were in no danger of missing the fugitives, for they were galloping in the right direction, though on a different path, and their cattle were travelling greatly faster.

And suddenly clear sheen overspread the country from a risen moon, and as they came to a wide level of hedged meadow-land, out cries Macdonald:

‘There, Fitz, are they — near ahead — to the left!’

‘I see. But, blood and nails—’

‘Look!’ cried Bonner excitedly.

‘Oh, they are pursued!’ exclaimed Mac with conviction; ‘there’s fighting, Fitz!’

Still further to the left, galloping obliquely upon the fugitives, appeared a party of cavaliers, five in number, somewhat nearer to the fugitives than Fitz and Mac. They were Percy of Northumberland and his four.

There was nothing to do but cut them off, by taking three hedges, a five-barred gate, and the intervening fields. And at the first bend of the path, over a bramble-hedge with easy vault slid Fitz, and over after him, in supple succession, slid Mac and Bonner with easy vaults. And now, with deep-driven spur, they scampered across field, bounding the hedges in supple succession, Fitz foremost. And ‘Hi, there! stop, stop, or we fight!’ called Fitzgerald in clear bell-tones when he was near. But young Percy, not being of a mettle that stops, advanced: and in another moment there sounded the shock of their meeting.

Percy’s men were themselves galloping in mid-field, but, intent upon the fugitives, had held their course till nearly the last. They were, therefore,

caught in demi-flank, and at once two riderless horses went trotting across the meadow.

Two fighting-men fastened upon Macdonald, and the steels of Fitz and Percy met. Bonner, too, with chilly heart, had drawn sword, and, at the first shock, given one blind hack at someone's armoured back without effect. Then, as if of its own accord, his horse had backed: and quiet sat Bonner with lifted sword and vigilant eyes and panting nostrils, as who should say: "Twere dangerous to approach me, yet prithee do it not."

At the same time, Mac did battle with a demi-lance on one flank, a bill on the other. Under these conditions his defence was as faulty as the light was dim. The lance pricked his horse's shoulder; in the rear-up he received a wound through his mail on the breastbone, and he tumbled backwards over his croupe.

That moment would have been Percy's last — for his battle-axe was wheeling away in air, and Fitz had his two-handed sword heaved almost behind his back to hew once and make an end — but there rang a shrill, affrighted cry of 'Clubs! clubs!', and the blow did not descend. The cry was Bonner's, upon whom Mac's victors were riding full. Like tempest flew Fitzgerald to his aid, and it was astonishing in what swift succession the two men tumbled dead. Of one he ripped the abdomen; the other he split through helm and brain. At once he turned back to Percy: but Percy saw, not only Fitz, but Mac on foot running upon him; and he was wounded in the forearm, and weaponless. He at once turned and fled.

Mac's trained horse, meantime, had run away but a short distance. The three, without delay, started in renewed chase after the girls. But in the short interval of the fight Calvo had descended behind a hill-slope, and there cunningly changed his course. Fitz, Mac, and Bonner scoured the country till far into the morning: but the dear fugitives were lost to them.

CHAPTER XVII

WANDERINGS



‘DEAR IS MY little native vale, The ring-dove builds and murmurs there;
Close to my cot she tells her tale, To every passing villager.

The squirrel leaps from tree to tree, And shells his nuts at liberty.’
ROGERS.

IN a week Calvo had traversed the spur of Berks which separates Bucks from Hampshire. To not one of his pursuers was either his direction or his exact position now known, though, ever and anon, as he journeyed, rumours of armed cavalcades, galloping hot, and reining for hurried inquiries, reached his ears at the taverns. One or more of the parties, it was clear, had preceded him; the others, he guessed, were near him, behind or around.

He reached Coxton in safety, a hamlet south of Odiham, umbrageously sequestered in a little deep-wooded Hampshire vale. They arrived at matins, and being miserably weary, Calvo threw himself upon a mattress in the dim loft — a piled chaos of odorous hay — to which guests were conducted. And Laura’s lovely head dropped near his knee; her pale-rose lips opened; she breathed in heavy sleep.

Bessie, however, did not drop in sleep. Three hours later, when Calvo and Laura awoke and hurriedly descended, she was not to be seen. They

called; Calvo fretted; the animals, brought round to the inn-door, waited.

Calvo, with irritable brow, went down the side passage into the long inn-yard, cobble-paved, behind. There, by the pump, stooped hard-souled little Bess, intently washing and kneading with turned-up sleeves; a heap of washed woollens, hems, and linens was near her; and the landlord's wife stood inspecting the Augean work, arms akimbo.

'Come there, come!' cried Calvo peevishly. 'What make you there at all? You keep me waiting!'

'Oh...!' leapt from Bessie's mouth. She ran with a swift whisper to the woman, and then to Calvo; behind him she walked in silence to the horses.

Calvo asked the way to another village of the landlord, went a little in that direction, and then turned another way. This was a ruse continually adopted to baulk his pursuers.

'What made you with that washing?' he asked on the road.

Bessie averted her face. Her fifteen crowns — their all — was spent. She had implored of the landlord's wife the washing job to settle for Calvo's and Laura's hay-bed.

'Sure, Master Calvo—' she faltered.

Calvo was the most unpractical of men, with a head in the clouds. That the fifteen crowns with which Bessie paid their way might fail did not occur to him.

'Whatever could have been your motive for keeping me waiting in that way?' he said with corrective severity.

Bess could not answer. Laura gaily pointed out an aspiring lark.

'Oh, 'tis minion!' quoth she, grinning sweetly; "'Tis a frolic chansonnette!'

'Silence, you, with your face,' said Calvo.

But at Witton, four leagues thence, concealment as to the state of the exchequer was no longer possible. The supper and cider could not be paid for.

‘But, thou silly daw, why didst not tell me before?’ asked Calvo.

‘Sure, you have gear enow to occupy you, Master Calvo, by my credit, without curing of these things.’

‘So that was the secret of the washing at Coxton, when thou wert sore travel-worn, hey?’

‘Not that I was so travel-worn, Master Calvo; for, by my credit, I have a tight back-bone, too, though minion in stature,’

‘Well, well. Thou art a Bess. We shall see.’

That night they slept at Witton. The next morning Calvo slung his russet-leather bag to his back in evil humour, and went out afoot. Bessie, who was up, seeing him, followed wondering, and he, seeing her, turned and said:

‘This is rigolo! To think that a man like me should go gadding forth to trap halfpennies like some vile zany or touring punchinello!’

‘Oh! is that your purpose, Master — ?’

’Tis need that I feed thee, I suppose, girl? and that maudit sister of thine, who eats like the seven elephants of King Sut? What hast done with all the money thou hadst, hey?’

‘Sure, sir, ’tis a miracle — what with horses’ provender—’

‘And sea-swallow pasties for that sister, hey? and thou thyself thinning with meagre fastings, like the Mater Dolorosa! What atest thou yester-eve?’

‘A great portion of rye bread, sir, thick with rich Hampshire butter, and nigh a pint of ale to swill it,’

‘No viand, then?’

“’Twas a Friday, Master Calvo—”

‘Nay, then, I have no further interest in thee and thy affairs! Do as thou wilt, thou stiff and naughty spirit! Friday, quotha. ’Twas not too much Friday, methinks, to stuff thy sister with boiled picarell, and duck, and Rhenish, hey? And myself also — well, well—’

They had reached the street-top. Calvo took from the bag a little stick of brass, and a brass bowl of carved Hindoo work. With the stick the sage beat a ran-tan on the bowl. Something pathetic there was in that beating in mid-street, and something incongruous with those sage, calm owl-eyes, and with the bulging brow where dwelt Reason, and with the savant’s skull-cap, concealing all his hair.

By his side stood Bessie, rather pale. Her ‘natte’ of plaited hair — long as a hand — was tied with a little bow of black ribbon.

Faces began to look from tiny sweet casements, lovely as that old dead England. Calvo beat his ran-tan.

Presently there was movement in the street, a tendency toward him. As the moon the tides, as the piper his rats, so he drew them. For such is the interest of Man in Man.

In ten minutes there was an agitated crowd before him. Calvo handed the bowl to Bessie, and, eyeing them calmly, he said:

‘I wish you joy, friends, for the lucky fortune which has brought me into your midst this day. I am a physicianer, trained at the feet of the illustrious Magister Antonio Bartolomeo of Padua, who discovered the philosopher’s-stone. I am known at the Universities of Padua, Paris, Boulogne, Orléans, Montpellier, Salamanca, and Bourges. I am a distiller of simples of every sort and species. I am a witch-finder, a necromancer, and a cheiromancer. I possess the secret of the grand magisterium, and I sell talismans and cabalas, tessaras and amulets, that counteract the Evil Eye. I cure the King’s-evil and the dance of St. Vitus. In this magic bag which ye even now

behold is that orviétan, or miraculous Venice-treacle, which is the antidote for all poisons; there is saltartare, argaile, cinoper, alkaly, and that arsenic, which, taken in small doses, protects from cold feet at night, but in large, has just the contrary effect. There also is turmeric, gum-mastic, marygold, sorrels, burnett, rue, hartshorn, spavin, and every wholesome medicament that completes the mediciner's elaboratory. Come, friends, open your purses; open, open. For a groat I cure the lumbago with the marvellous unguent of the Magister Sachs of Amsterdam; for a groat the sweating-sickness; for three halfpence I strike a cow with the plegia, by means of the famous abracadabra of the Persian magi, or else by common witch's-elm. Open, open: set briskly to it. Here are plasters, spasmadraps, waters, lotions, solutions, decoctions, ointments, poultices, and clysters. I tell fortunes, not solely by palmistry, but by the stars, being skilled to astrologize, or star-gaze; and I cure cast-in-the-eye by virtue of a magic sapphire-stone, discovered on Mount Ararat by the great Hasn-us-Sabah. Draw near: open, open. I see a good man yonder with rheumy nostrils: him will I medicine with an electuary of honey, olive-oil, and mint. Another hath the air of one who mourneth after a stray sheep: I am a discoverer of stolen goods by the Greek method, and a tracer of strayed animals by the Tartar method of striking the spittle. Another, as I see, hath the toothache, for the wrench of grief is in that wry jaw: him will I cure with the panacea of the Dominie Y'hudah Benisrael, else will I draw the evil fang with a waxed hemp tied in a knot which I learned in the Lazarro at Salamanca; for you, gammer, with the jaundiced face and dull eye, I have an elixir decocted from the Mexican herb — —'

'Ha! ha! ha! Tis all false!' cried a most weird, shrill voice, whose laugh ended in a wail.

Calvo looked up calmly.

“‘Believe not all you hear” is a good proverb, friends,’ said he, ‘yet “Disbelieve not all” were a better proverb still. There now sits a young man on a horse who would have none of me, and my nostrums, and my catholicons; yet that young man, believe me, is suffering agonies through all the nerves of his face; and, an he would but come to me, in two seconds would I, without recompense, send him laughing on ‘his journey,’

’Tis Flying Sidney?’ said one of the crowd.

’Tis crazy Sidney Boleyn of Ormond!’ went the rumour.

He had come galloping at a frantic pace through the village, and, seeing the crowd, had drawn rein to listen.

He was an extremely thin lad, with the blank pallor of wax, with eyes large, wild, black, and elfin, and a ribbed suggestion of outstanding sinews about his meagre face and jaw.

His movements had in them the swiftness of a spirit’s. The words of invitation were hardly out of Calvo’s mouth, when Boleyn had flung himself from his horse, and was standing before the sage.

‘Here am I, quacksalver! cure me!’ he said in his high, trilling cry.

‘You perceive, he calls me quacksalver,’ said Calvo to the crowd: ‘now we shall see.’

‘Shall what see? Zany! Saltimbanque! Charlatan!’

‘He calls me, you see—’

‘Arlequin! Polichinelle! Buffo! Pantalon!’

‘Calm your excitement. I am not altogether a pantalon — not altogether a charlatan.’

‘Why, thou art!’

‘No. Have I reason in saying that you have a torment, or nevralgia, in the face?’

‘Yea.’

‘And this many a year?’

‘Since I was born.’

‘Swallow that.’

Calvo, having dived into his bag, had taken out a box divided into squares. From two squares he took vials, and mixed a few drops of the liquids in a piggin.

Sidney Boleyn, with a wild hilarity of mockery and desperation, tossed the brown fluid down his throat.

There followed an interval so long as when a man swallows some novel wine and ponders the flavour in his gorge, gazing into nothingness. The crowd gaped silent. Calvo put back the vials and reclosed the box.

As he did so, Boleyn burst into passionate tears, and dropped, as if shot, to his knees. For the first time for twenty years he felt rest, he experienced sanity.

Calvo patted the bowed head. Bessie’s eyes filled with tears of worship. The half-crazy lad sobbed piteously. After two minutes he raised himself, walked to his horse without a word, and went down the street with bent head, holding the bridle.

‘Now, good friends, you see—’ said Calvo.

They had seen: and during an hour he did good trade, the coins raining into Bessie’s bowl. As they walked to return to the inn, Calvo said: ‘Well, now, you see, we are rich. No more hard washing, then, for little travel-worn lasses; and the sister with the face shall gorge herself with pasties,’ Ah, my master,’ quoth she, ‘great you are, and *good*—’

‘Well, well. But hullo! here is our man after us again—’

Sidney Boleyn was following deferentially, pervaded with his new surprise of painlessness, bowed with gratitude, full of adoration, behind them.

‘Well, does that go well?’ asked Calvo dryly.

‘Yes! yes!’

‘Don’t call me charlatan again, then. What is your name?’

‘Sidney Boleyn.’

‘What, not a son of Sir Thomas?’

‘Yes.’

‘And brother to the Lady Anne?’

‘A half-brother.’

‘H’m! And what make you here, so far from home?’

‘Oh, I am always far from home. I never leave the saddle — I am crazy — I fly — I fly always. I am a servitor in my father’s household: but they let me go, and I ride, ride. They know my pain.’

‘Well, poor lad! Keep courage. And when the pain comes again—’

‘It will come again?’

‘I fear me sa’

‘Ah! But I reckon not! I have felt pleasure! I shall remember this hour! Master, what is your name?’

‘I do not wish it known: but I will tell *you*, since you are my friend. I am called Mauro Calvo.’

‘Mauro Calvo — I have heard the name. May I come — ?’

‘Nay, nay. But return to your home, taking these liquids, which, mixed a few drops each with each, will relieve the pain, and it return. Good-bye.’

He gave the two vials, and the young man went reluctantly away, leading his horse.

CHAPTER XVIII

PALM SUNDAY AT MIDSUMMER



‘FAR FROM THE madding crowd’s ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.
GRAY.

FROM Witton, in a south-west direction, the nearest village is Skipley Rising; and here the fugitives spent a night.

The next day, on the road from Skipley Rising to Littlebush, passing between two chalk ridges, they saw above them a horseman, who, though he vanished, appeared to follow.

It was Sidney Boleyn, known through Hampshire as Flying Sidney.

Caught in a sort of fascination for the Magister who had given him painlessness, he was hanging in this way upon the course of Calvo, tracking him from point to point. The fugitives got to be aware of his furtive and Jack-o’-lantern attendance, though, having once been dismissed by Calvo, he did not sufficiently approach for speech. But by the time they reached Hadleigh-Stoy, some rumour, or new whim, must have enticed his flighty brain, for, for some days, he disappeared.

About here the country dips into a succession of vast vales, almost saucer-shaped, each an entity in itself, shut away from the world. Viewed

from the encircling hills, each spreads out in dreamy panorama of uberant oak-land, toy pastures and orchards, bosky dingles, wheat-field and stream, knoll and lake — all delicately and daintily distinct, like images mirrored in an eye — an earth in little, good to smell, melting afar in azure haze — at which the sight swooûs with love: the difference between now and then being an enormous decrease now in the proportion of forest to the whole, the villages then being quite buried away in umbrages.

Still on ambled Calvo, from hamlet to hamlet, tending south-westward always, cheating day after day his pursuers by nothing but a marvel of luck, ever and anon, as he went, bringing forth his bag, ringing his ran-tan, and dryly prophesying lies which were partly true.

But at Mede Down, which lies nearly at the centre and bottom of Arling Vale, he received a warning.

‘Sure,’ said a little apple-cheeked inn-chamberlain to Bessie, ‘you be the very souls with which a party of three gentmen would be coming up.’

‘Mamie,’ said Bess, ‘oh mi! and when were they here?’

‘Yester-eve, near compline.’

‘And what asked they?’

‘Had we seen, ko they, aught of a pair of damsels ahorse with bare head, and a man a-mule with skull-cap.’

‘And how looked they, mamie?’

‘Two were martialists, sure; and one a stripling with flowing blonde locks, and burning-red lips, and eyes large, pleasing to the regard.’

‘A stripling with flowing blonde locks — ? I cannot divine—’

She thought of Mark Bonner, but could not imagine how he could be in the company of two fighting-men, following her.

‘What had he on for apparel?’ she asked.

‘A princox sarcenet doublet, a velvet cap, and threadbare hose.’

‘Sure — sure— ’twas Bonner! And *he* was with the martialists, say you? — in their company?’

‘Even so.’

‘And they — how looked they, mamie?’

‘One was small-knit in comparison with the other, who is mighty and deep-chested, and hath a walk like a lazy, laggard, swaggering giant-man; but the steps of the small one are quick and neat,’

‘My mother! — it is they — !’

‘You know them, methinks?’

‘Most like. What eyes had the great gallant!’

‘Small eyes — blue — very droll and twinkling, under à large bossy brow,’

‘Oh! ’twas he! And hair on the face — ?’

‘No hair on the face: and I should wot, for the malapert took the privy of kissing me,’

‘Of — ?’

‘Kissing me. And “Faith,” ko he, “a tasty little moppet, thou—”’

Bessie glanced quick with a half-terrified interest at her. In a moment it was over.

‘Sure, I pray thee divulge me none of thy lightnesses, girl,’ she said, turning away. ‘Is this the chamber. ’Twill serve. Prithee, get gone,’

‘Bessie, girl!’ cried Mauro Calvo from below. ‘Come! I start forth to the green,’

Calvo was going to harangue, and gather groats. As they set out, Bessie told him the inn-chamberlain’s tale.

‘Well, let the cattle come,’ answered Calvo, ‘all of them. But let ’em come quickly, an they love their skin’s salvation! for, an I be not far at fault,

by this there is arrived in England a Sword that will make 'em skip a morris-dance to the tune of *Placebo, Dilixi* by St. Louis!'

Bessie did not understand, knowing naught of Calvo's summons to Francis of France. Later she understood.

He laid down his bag, and set to beat his ran-tan.

The village was in a singular state, which, as he had just arrived, he could not comprehend. Knots of twos and threes discussed in the open; yonder, by the little church-door near the green, sat two gammers with baskets containing box-twigs, and to everyone that came they handed a twig; box-twigs were in windows, in doors, in gabardines, in the hand. The church-bell was ringing in a tone of larum. Some stir was in the air. Three boys only gathered round Calvo.

Even these were in clean stiff buckrams; the poorest in decent Sunday trim of sober russet: yet it was not Sunday.

The bell ceased to ring; the last of the villagers trooped into the church. Calvo and Bess were left alone.

The high sun dappled the green with the vague wandering trellis-work of the chestnut-shadow, beneath which Calvo stood. All was sleepy, still. A sleepy breeze ran ruffling, with soft rush and vast rumours and raids of tittering whispers, through the leafage of the embowered little empty hamlet, as when faint airs stir the hair of some noon-day slumberer.

'Well, now, what make these silly cattle?' asked Calvo.

'By my credit,' said Bessie, 'meseems as though they celebrate Palm Sunday,'

'What! but this is not Sunday; and we are nearer Midsummer than Easter: for to-morrow, and I mistake not, is the fête of St. Philip and James.'

"Tis like, sir,' said Bess.

No sound in the hamlet; only, yonder above, through the ocean of leafage that giggled as if tickled, pelted with soft rush and rape the breezes, in tittering troops of whispers wide-rumouring: hush! shibboleth, shibboleth.

‘Let us to the church, and see what is toward,’ said Calvo.

They started, he shouldering his bag.

The building was nearly full. At the altar-rail stood a deep-girthed, heavy-faced Augustinian, with tiny eyes, blubber lips, and tonsured skull. He was explaining to the rude little flock that he had called them together that morning for their souls’ salvation. Owing to the remarkable length of the winter that year, he had appointed no Lent; and he was there now to tell them that, things being as they were in this most sleepy world, that was the day, though not a Sunday, on which they should hold the procession of Boughs, and the Sunday that followed he decreed should be Easter Sunday.

In fact, the good simple Brother, drowsing through that particular nook of sixteenth-century Time in which his life was cast, had wholly lost count of saint-days and seasons, nor was there anyone in Mede Down to remind him. His calendar had run crazy. The Year became to him a burden and an enigma; only the Day was sweet and soluble. Ignoring Time, he napped serene in a blank Eternity of threescore years and twenty. And like him was Mede Down. The little flock sat listening now with quiet faith, believing in what proceeded from his mouth, that it was good.

But the Brother’s awakening to a consciousness of Time on that particular morning was not without a cause. In his stream of monotonous days there had arisen an Event: he had received a letter with a date.

When he saw the date, he had rubbed his little fat eyes. And when he saw Calvo enter the church, he stretched his fat forefinger, crying out:

‘My children, my children, seize that man — !’

The letter with the date had been handed him that morning by a mounted messenger from one Mr. Justice Newton, of Alton.

It was now that Calvo first felt the length of Thomas Wolsey's arm, an arm longer than that of King or Emperor.

Wolsey, for his own political ends, was as fixedly resolved to possess Laura Ford as was Anne or Henry, more fixedly than was Katherine or Du Ballay. And he knew his way.

He had lately sent messengers all over England to every High Sheriff of a County and Constable of a Hundred, with instructions that these in turn should send to each Head-borough and Justice, and these again, to every Reeve of every Abbot, and through them to every priest of every parish, describing Calvo and the maidens, and directing their arrest.

There were now, therefore, several thousands of persons in England on the look-out to effect the seizure of the wizard and the girls.

And at once, as the oblong finger of the Mede Down Brother stretched upon him, Calvo divined the facts, and knew that now, at last, his feet were in the net.

In a moment all the church was in a flutter, but the calm, tumble-down eyes of the sage remained calm. Before any of the astonished yokels could move to touch him, he whispered Bessie, 'Follow me close,' and went with swift decision toward the altar-rail. The monotonous old lump of a Brother saw him come with alarm, raising both averting hands; but, or ever he could run, Calvo had his mouth at his ear.

The scientist, frowning, whispered in a tone of authoritative and severe reproof. He said:

'I am astonished at you, Brother Augustinian, for your manner of tending the little flock here. It is incredible to me that you should have the stupid audacity to introduce Palm Sunday into Midsummer in this wise. And no

Lent, quotha? And no Good Friday? And the souls of the poor sheep perishing for the hunger which they have of the ordinances of Christ's Church. Fie! fie! A fine tale, verily, to open to the Bishop! And to these poor sheep, if now I turn and declare how matters are! And that your motive for wishing my seizure is but fear of my honest tongue? Fie upon you for a sloven dotard, I say!" Keep them here, therefore, every one, during a ten minutes' space, till I be gone upon my way, or it were an ill case with you, I promise!'

The sheepish tongue of the Brother poked his cheek. Calvo gravely walked to a near side-door, leading Bessie by the hand. There was a movement, as of pursuit, among the people, but the Brother waved them back, speaking comfortable words.

In five minutes the fugitives were galloping hie from Mede Down.

Calvo was angry. Whither now to fly? England was divided into squares, like backgammon, each square a trap, to catch him.

'This should be Wolsey,' he said, 'that bladder of hog's-lard! It is Wolsey; it is like him, the pork. Why the devil don't you ride, you two? — for, look you, I have had enow of you by now, young women, methinks — both of you — you, Bessie, with your ways, and that silly daw, your sister, with her face. It is rigolo — it is rigolo — this scampering over the earth by a man like me with two hussies on tits, and all the empty-pated chuffs of Christendom on my track! I call it rigolo, by God! But wait — wait: perhaps I have yet a card to play. Well, well—'

Calvo knew by now that his pursuers were many, divided into parties, some, for some reason, inimical to others, perhaps each to all, and a plan for destroying them all had formed vaguely in his brain. This was the reason that he travelled south-westward always, in the direction of the city of Winchester, and of Southampton.

Suddenly, as he galloped from Mede Down, his plan congealed into definiteness: for suddenly there came to him definite news, and his case now was desperate.

A horseman, galloping with wild haste in the opposite direction, almost collided with him, before either could draw rein. It was Flying Sidney Boleyn.

His dead-white face almost blushed, and his elfin eyes dropped, at the sight of Calvo.

‘Well, now, you see, you want to ride me down, who have done you good,’ said Calvo.

‘Oh, your pardon, master!’ cried Sidney in his falsetto.

‘How does that go with the pain?’

‘Oh, ’tis clean gone to-day!’

‘But you grow tired, I see, in your gratitude, like the rest of you: naught have I seen of you for days.’

‘I have been galloping further down south.’

‘And whitheraway now so fast?’

‘To London! To London!’

‘And wherefore?’

‘To tell the King!’

‘Tell the King what?’

‘Of the strange Knight, and his exploits,’

‘Ah...?’

‘My father hath sent me with a dispatch.’

‘Soh! Which strange Knight?’

‘Oh, you have not heard? Yet he is near. Oh, I could not tell you— ’tis past belief!’

‘Nay, tell me.’

‘He is from across the sea: his ship, I know, lies in Southampton Water, for I have seen her. Such a ship! — she is crazily glorious! Her sails are of cloth of gold, damasked; she is painted all of gold and blue, and hath four masts and a bowsprit, all square-rigged, with a hundred and ten guns in port-holes on a battery-deck and on two gun-decks afore and aft. Sure, she must be near equal to our English *Henri Grâce à Dieu*, for she hath, I guess, eight hundred tons in burthen, and from her mainmast there flutters a streamer, most wondrous long and exorbitant, of sky-blue silk with a single fleur-de-lys.’

‘Fleur-de-lys, say you?’

‘Yes.’

‘Very good. Continue,’

‘And she hath, O, for her figure-head—’

‘Never mind the ship: tell me of the man,’

’Tis the strangest wight! Tis a fellow most tall and lank—’

’Tis Francis of France,’ muttered Calvo. ‘Good. Tis he.’

‘Tall and lank, and his mission, guess you, is to search out a beauteous maiden — for so it seems from the queries which he everywhere makes — a beauteous maiden in the vicinity of Winchester.’

‘Yes, ’twas to Winchester that I bid him come,’ muttered Calvo.

‘And since he was not long,’ proceeded Sidney, ‘in hearing that others, as it seems, are seeking for that very maiden, neither was he long in meeting them, some or all; and that joust, I, master, saw, and ’twas royster, O!’

‘You saw it?’

’Twas not far from here, near Penton, and yester evensong.’

‘How many were with the Knight?’

‘Seven only, and of the others seven. And they met. Oh, by the Rood, I’m all a-gee to think of it! He rides a battle as a ship a boisterous sea! With

his own arm I saw him mow down four, as easy as a hunter takes a hedge. Oh, triumphant is his sword!’

‘Well, I suppose the chuff will do,’ muttered Calvo. ‘You know him, then, by sight?’

‘I know him like my father, though he wears a fluted Milan visor of glittering steel.’

‘Could you find him?’

‘Why, yes. His band carry a vast shimmering banner of sky-blue silk with one fleur-de-lys, and from a window of every inn at which he bides out floats the ensign.’

‘That will do, then.’

Calvo’s mule was standing near to Laura Ford’s horse. He turned to her; he put his hand beneath her chin, holding up her face. He said:

‘Turn a little more this way, that I may see you.’ Laura resented, but was compliant. Calvo, with goggle, contemplative eyes, coldly regarded the miracle of beauty. Then he let go the chin, and muttered:

‘Yes — that will make a fool of him. But he must see it: his enthusiasm must be awaked.’ To Sidney Boleyn he said:

‘So you are hurrying to London?’

‘Yes, master.’

‘But if *I* ask you to turn back a little way for me beforehand?’

‘Why, sure, most pronely will I do it!’

‘I thank you. Know you well the country hereabouts?’ ‘Every pebble.’

‘Then can you tell me of some river or stream with good steep, high banks to it?’

‘Why, the little Renney, a mile or two on the yon side of Chipping, hath that,’

‘Well, then—’

Calvo dropped from his mule, and took from his bag writing materials and a string. Holding the parchment against his saddle, he leaned sideways and wrote: ‘To Francis the First, King of France, from Mauro Calvo these presents.

‘If Francis the King will perambulate alone close by the water-edge of the stream Renney, a mile or two on the southern side of the village of Chipping, to-morrow even at the crépuscule, or it may be the morrow after at the crépuscule, this day being a Thursday, then Mauro Calvo will, by his science, so work and elaborate, that Francis the King shall have at least a sight of that most surpassing maiden of all, of whom Mauro Calvo long since prophesied to the King the dominion and jouissance.’

He bound the letter, and handed it to Sidney.

‘You will deliver this to the Knight in person,’ he said, ‘and you will not mention that I am hereabouts, or say from whose hands you received it.’

Sidney, as he took it, reverently kissed Calvo’s fingers. The next minute he was gone.

‘Come, come,’ said Calvo, mounting.

Bessie Ford woke from reverie with quite a start, and a little frown, vexed at herself.

‘By my credit,’ she muttered, ‘thoughts are childish things: else am I a most childish maiden....’

She had been allowing her mind to wander with a vague wonder on the kiss which that great warrior, Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, had given to the apple-cheeked little chamberlain at the inn at Mede Down.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RENDEZVOUS



‘... FAIRY DAMSELS met in forest wide
By Knights of Logres, or of Lyones,
Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellanore.’
MILTON.

‘Therefore sayd Arthur vnto syr Bed were, “Take thou Excalybur my good
swerde...”’ — MALORY.

THE plan which congealed into definiteness in Mauro Calvo’s brain when he had definite news of the advent of Francis was this: He would first give Francis a mere glimpse of the face of Laura Ford, in order to arouse his ardour to the utmost; then he would hurry back some twenty or thirty miles from the neighbourhood which Francis then haunted, sleeping in woods, and seeking in every way to cheat the long, thousand-handed arm of Wolsey; then he would again advance upon the neighbourhood of Francis; but this time, as he passed hurriedly through each village, he would take care to leave behind him approximately accurate information as to his next destination: thus would he be sure to draw gradually together upon his trail all the various pursuing parties; and thus would he lead them all upon

Francis, for destruction at the hand of Francis, or at the hand of each other, or both.

His mounted and martial enemies being thus disposed of, he hoped by disguises, sleeping in woods, and precautions, to elude the civil watch-dogs of Wolsey as far as the coast, where he might obtain a boat, and sail for French land.

That night on which he sent his rendezvous to Francis, the three slept in a wood of oaks, six miles south of Mede Down; and here Laura felt a pang of that vacuum which her nature abhorred.

Yonder the picketed horses cropped close; and anon, as they moved a pace, cropping close, they smote a hoof that tolled. Near by a brooklet murmured through the night.

Careful Bessie had in her bundle a woollen sheet, in which the sisters lay naked — the universal custom then, as still in France, Spain and Italy.

Calvo went some distance to lie upon a slope of warm verdure; and, as he stooped to lower himself, addressing the Deity, he muttered for evening prayer: ‘This is rigolo, my God!’

Bessie’s orisons were longer, and must have winged vastly higher. As she scuttled between the draps into close friendship with Laura, quoth the beauty:

‘But what a life is this I am leading here, our Saviour! — following that old hoball about, into woods and all. Phew! thank you, sirs — phew! not for me.’

Laura was cross, feeling the vacuum.

‘Why, Laura!’ said Bess.

‘I have a horrible hunger. ’Tis too much to expect of me, at the end of the tale.’

‘Oh, my dearest life, don’t say anything! — do, Laura, bear with me — till the morning—’

‘And why should I lead this life? phew! I have a pretty face, at the end of the tale — I am a plump and well-made girl—’

Bess rose on her elbow.

‘What art talking about, lass?’ she said with knit, puzzled brow.

‘Many and many a gallant, rich and high, the King’s self, were glad to have me—’

‘*Silence,*” hissed Bessie, with a serpent intensity that cowed the other. But Laura under her breath went:

‘Phew!’

There was a good long pause, during which Bessie, frowning, leant on an elbow over Laura, poring upon her in the darkness. Laura said, whiningly:

‘I have hunger....’

‘My mother! but I have naught to give thee—’

‘Well, let it pass. Thou’dst give it pretty quick an thou hadst it, I know, Bess — and I pity thee—’

Down fell Bessie sobbing upon her, gathering her passionately, sobbing, sobbing.

‘Oh, my dear soul — my darling pig’s-eye! Wait — bear with me — my little one — !’

So presently, being wearied, they fell lullabied into sleep, under the old hushing susurrations and shibboleths of the moving forest.

All the next day, till near even, Calvo and Laura remained in the wood; only Bessie, by twice asking her direction, made her way alone to a hamlet to get their nooning, and came back well provisioned, having forgotten nothing, and bought cheap.

Near curfew, Calvo informed Bess that he intended to take Laura with him a little distance, while Bess remained behind. Bessie's nostrils panted once in vague dismay, but to her what Calvo did was well. Only Laura dared to question the sage's purpose.

'But wherefore this?' she asked.

'Laura, sh-h-h, dear,' said Bess.

The two set out together, Calvo binding a kerchief round his head to hide the skull-cap.

Laura on the road complained lackadaisically.

'Oh, I am fatigued I' quoth she; 'I can't walk far.'

'Your fatigue, I assure you, is of no consequence,' said Calvo. 'Come, now, walk, walk.'

Chipping was only two miles way; they went through it undisturbed, and yet a mile beyond, tracking the brawling course of the Renney.

Nearly all the way there rose from both banks fairly steep, cliff-like slopes, ten to twenty feet high, leaving only, down below, a narrow foot-way of moss by the water-edge.

Calvo selected a point where the slope was highest, and was distant only by some twenty yards from a fairly thick green-wood. There standing, he spoke seriously to Laura.

'A Person,' said he, 'will be passing down yonder presently upon which I would practise a jape. You are to understand that the least flaw in the executing thereof will be followed by the gravest results, so be intelligent, sure and attentive — if so be you have such qualities in your pate. You will stand at the edge even here, still and steady, during two minutes' space from the moment when the Person rounds the bluff yonder and sees you. Then you will drop suddenly to the ground on your face; and, as you drop, you will pour out the contents of this vial. Then, bending low so that he see you

not, you will run to that point of the wood there, where stands the blasted elm. And there shall I be, awaiting you. All is simple — there need be no error — you know the English tongue — have you understood me?’

‘I am not such a daw but that I understand,’ said Laura, ‘but wherefore all this?’

‘Silence you, and do it.’

He handed her a vial full of a red liquid — the liquid bromine — which, when poured into the air, sends up a profusion of brown vapours. The idea was to convince Francis that the vision of Laura had vanished into an ascending incense of brown vapour — leaving a smell behind.

Francis differed from Henry in this, that he was a real believer in the operations of witchcraft — in the witchcraft of Mauro Calvo above all, who, long since, had acquired a strong ascendancy over the French King’s credulities. And this Calvo knew.

Laura took her stand; Calvo retreated toward the wood. Unfortunately, half an hour elapsed, and no Person came. This made the miracle of beauty restless. She pouted; her right ankle, which was weak, continually jerked outwards. She said: ‘What a life I ’tis too much to expect of me, at the end of the tale.’

She forgot the vial in her hand.

Then he came — he saw her.

Stalking kingly he came, tall and lank, in armour, but without visor. He had a profusion of glossy black hair, and a hairless face, brown and dry as an autumn leaf, and lean as the east-wind; a face far from good, with an expression in it of the satyr, of the he-goat. Only, the eyes were royal, and flashed battle with black and gallant glow.

But what a bow bowed he! A wave of consummate humble grace, well worthy a prince of the Palace of Armida. Then, starting back, he shaded his

eyes with horizontal palm, in the knightly pretence that her beauty dazzled him like a sun.

‘Pretence,’ we say: but only during the first moments, when he had not seen her well. In another few seconds he was genuinely dazzled, for her face was great, and akin with the sun and the moon.

He could hardly believe his eyes. He made a quick step nearer to watch, and wonder. The twilight had deepened into dun gray.

His next instinct was to rush, and seize, and ravish.

Laura Ford stood, rather pale, with opening nostrils, regarding this man, her spirit and posture on a sort of frightened tip-toe.

Francis was not a man to hesitate. He lived in a continual Now. She saw him rush toward her point of the cliff, and with a scream, was gone.

As she ran, she had a dim consciousness of the vial in her hand, and tossed it obliquely backward. It fell into a tuft of grass, and did not break.

Many men could not have scaled the cliff at all. Francis was over it in half a tick. Before Laura Ford was half-way to the near green-wood she was shrieking in his arms.

Francis lifted her as lightly as a plump down-pillow, and went running with her, as one trots hastily with a burning barrel, toward the point where he had dismounted.

At that point the run of cliff-wall dipped into a low curve, and in the grassy depression here browsed the picketed horse. Francis dropped Laura, sprang to his seat, and as she ran again, with a stoop he plucked and gathered her at a canter, and was off with loose rein, he hardly knew whither.

She, before him, beat with sweet provocation upon his tough face, wriggling, calling, with visage all inflamed, upon Bessie and upon Master Calvo.

Francis rushed through a space of greenwood, and came out into a tract of undulating grass-land. He slackened speed, and looked about, but saw no village. A house — an inn — this with all speed, was what he wanted. He was unfamiliar with the country. ‘Better keep straight on,’ he thought.

Off at full speed he set again, and in two minutes was galloping through a forest-path. His steed was a massive war-horse of Norman blood, more powerful than swift, the battery of whose hoof-beats was strong and ponderous. This, perhaps, was the reason that, as he plunged into an open flat glade, he called fire from heaven, bitterly annoyed: for yonder, from a nearly opposite avenue, came three riders, pelting prone upon him.

They were Fitzgerald, Macdonald and Bonner. These, at Mede Down, to which they had just returned, had learned that another pursuing party of six had not ten minutes before left Mede Down, taking the way to the forest; also, that the six had taken that way, for the reason that, as *they* had learned, the fugitives had taken that very way on the previous day. Hearing which, Fitz had cried: ‘Shall we after them, Mac?’ and staunch, unemotional Mac had replied: ‘What else, Fitz?’ and with loose rein the three had set out after the six; the six being Alvarada, Sir John Perrot, and four Queen’s-men.

And passing through the dim forest in pursuit, the three heard the ponderous battery of the Norman blood’s hoof-beats, were attracted, deflected their course, and came pelting upon Francis in the glade.

The impetus of the double advance was terrific. Francis had between his arms a still-struggling girl, whom, at the first glance, Fitzgerald recognised, and snatched his sword. Francis, seeing that he lacked space to rein, turn, and run, with dogged obstinacy persisted in his hold upon the girl, managing at the same time, by help of his elbows, to draw also. And at the awful impending crash of those on-rushing steels, Laura Ford sent through the wood an impassioned shriek of fright.

The shriek took the form of the one shrill word:

‘*Bessie!*’

And this cry Bessie, waiting for the return of Calvo and Laura not two hundred yards away, heard and knew. As a shepherd the bleating of his lamb, or as a young mother the cry of her babe, so she heard and knew it.

‘Oh, my mother — !’ gasped she.

Fluttering, deadly white, she flew to her palfrey, tightened in a moment the loosened girth, and was away.

But though she heard the cry, and knew it, she had no idea of direction. The voice had seemed to come from the heart of space, from the depths of nowhere.

But a minute before ever Bessie had mounted, Laura was already free, having tumbled on her length to the ground an instant before the meeting of the blades. Terror gave her power: she picked herself up, and went running wild, with bloodless, lovely face, through the wood.

Fitzgerald and Francis met, Greek with Greek.

King Francis had a sword, made specially for him by the world-famous artist of Toledo, Sylvester Agara, whose steeling was tempered to so fanciful a pitch of perfectness, that its solidity depended entirely upon the manner in which it was held. In any hand but that of Francis, it would have splintered at a first blow; in *his*, neither keen nor solid could resist that edge. Its steel-coated core was of soft iron; and it could be bent into a complete circle, which, at the instant of release, flitted back into perfect straightness. In sunlight it had the appearance of a rippling silver flame.

Two chops each, on steeds that stepped circling, head to head, they made; the four ineffectual, save that after the second of Fitz, a deep gap notched his blade. Informed by that instinct by which fighters feel their match, they drew deep breaths, strung, hundred-eyed, full of plots. Francis,

by an intensely swift double-wheel of his blade in air, met the descending sword of Macdonald, who had attacked in flank, whereupon Mac's sword dropped like a pack of cards in sherds. Fitz at that moment hissed: 'Now!' but even as the hack came down, Francis bowed as easily as one stoops to avoid the tendrils of a bindweed, and the blow slipped upon his back-piece. Now, however, his back was completely at the mercy of Fitz: but before the next chop, the two were literally torn apart by a very tempest of force. Alvarada and his five, at rushing rate, had galloped up.

There was still sufficient gleam in the brown, and now rapidly thickening, twilight of the glade to distinguish forms: and at once it was seen that the entire new party of six concentered upon Francis, with design, the venom of their blades. He fought positively surrounded by them.

And now the sight was good to watch the warrior's nimble rage. His fate, indeed, under such conditions, was certain, for with every passing instant he had at least two blades to baulk; but in perhaps ten seconds he had beheaded a horseman, and driven another armless and *hors de combat*; and at a light and almost flippant movement of his busy sword, which sent Sir John Perrot's steel cap pirouetting high, out cried Fitzgerald, the fighter:

'Why, lightly done, Sir Knight — bravo. 'Tis an assassination this—'

And with that cry the contest was all but ended: for Fitz, shouting 'We fight a couple, Sir Knight!' spurred into the row, and after him Mac, who had snatched Bonner's sword.

It was precisely then that Flying Sidney Boleyn, posting hot to London with news of Francis for King Harry, drew sudden rein, and watched the fray from near. Fitzgerald cleft to the breast a martialist of Queen Katherine, and Francis sheared to the bone Sir John Perrot's bridle-arm, whereupon Sir John's horse bolted, and ran from the glade, Macdonald after him. The one remaining Queen's martialist, losing heart, took to flight, hacking as he

went the skull of Bonner's nag, which dropped; and Alvarada, finding himself alone with the blades which he judged the two best in Europe, turned, too, and fled. Flying Sidney saw Fitzgerald and Francis disappear in chase behind him, and he knew Fitzgerald: for now, with his curiosity for facts and inn-news, he knew all the searchers after Laura Ford, their faces, and names. He started afresh on his pelting way, bound for London, big with news.

Meanwhile, Sir John Perrot, after a long ride, finding himself still hotly followed, and weak with loss of blood, drew a blunderbuss, and sent a random shot at Macdonald. The shot entered Mac's horse's brain, which dropped.

About the same time, Alvarada, who had fled a different way, and rode a swift Arab, dodged his pursuers down a path, and escaped. Fitz and Francis drew rein.

Francis turned upon Fitz with his large bow.

'La! I have to tender you thanks, comrade,' said he, in mincing, lisping English. 'To you I owe the saving of my life.'—'

'And the losing of a wife,' said Fitz, twinkling.

'Ah, so true, so true! But, as I have a hundred wives, at the least, and but nine lives—'

'On your conscience, you would say?'

'La! more upon my conscience, sir! but nine upon my saddle, I would say, which being less tough heareth less. But on the word of a — knight' — he half said 'king' — 'I tender you good thanks. You fight well.'

'Tush!' said Fitz, knowing not to whom, 'tis nothing.'

'But if *I* say 'tis something? And— 'tis my will that you accept this sword of me.'

'Why, nay—'

‘No nays, prithee, lest I call you neighing ass. For this priceless blade which you refuse hath but one brother in all the earth, and that, too, is mine. Take, sir!’

His tone was both *bonhomme* and commanding. Fitz, with blushing forehead, obeyed.

“Tis a most gracious gift,” said he.

‘La! as to that, say nothing. But learn it nicely in soft practice, I warn you, till you know its secret jars and tempers, before trying fight, or it will shiver in your hands. And now, my good will, and *au revoir*. To our next meeting, sir! Ha! ha!’

Francis at once galloped away; Fitz back to the glade.

To his surprise, Mac was not there, and Bonner had disappeared.

Bonner, being horseless, had run after a stray nag that, after the fight, had passed trotting through the glade. The nag, with stoppings to crop, and runs, had refused capture, and tempted him far. He was now, as Fitz waited, trying in vain to rediscover the glade.

Fitz lingered with hot impatience some half-hour, puzzled. He did not know that either Mac or Bonner had lost horse.

‘Perchance are they gone onward to Chipping together,’ said he, and, with that thought, started for Chipping.

Mac, when he reached the glade on foot, found no one. He concluded that Fitz and Bonner had gone back to Mede Down, and thither went on weary foot.

Bonner, in the midst of his hopeless search, flung himself, desperate, upon a bank, and slept a supperless night in the forest. The three were mutually lost one to another.

As for Laura Ford, running with blanched face from the battle, her flight had unknowingly led her to the little spot which they had made their home

for a night and day. She recognised it, and stopped. But Bessie — she was not there. Bessie had gone out after that cry which she had heard, and known. Laura called timorously:

‘Bess! Bessie!’

Suddenly she heard cantering hoof-beats — approaching. They were the hoof-beats of a riderless horse fled from the battle. But fear took her. ‘Our Saviour...!’ quoth she.

She ran to where the animals fed; tightened the loosened girth of her nag, leapt up, and was away.

Some ten minutes afterwards, Mauro Calvo arrived from the rendezvous, holding his chin, concerned and guilty, saying:

‘But whatever can I find to tell the elder sister? That silly daw — !’

He approached with lingering foot. But when he came, Bessie was not there. He looked, and saw the two nags gone. He held his chin.

‘In that case,’ he mused, ‘Laura must have escaped from Francis, and now gone somewhither with Bessie, for here are the nags vanished. But whither away? And why? Or are they captured? Taken to Mede Down? Or Chipping?’

He walked to and fro, bent, holding his chin, quickly.

‘I pity her from my heart,’ said he ruefully.

Inquietude would not let him be still. He mounted the mule, making for Mede Down.

About a half hour afterwards Bessie came back, weary of search. There was no one there.

‘Oh, I can’t find her!’ she moaned. ‘Oh, sure, sure, Something is against me, sure...!’

And away, again, with her bundle, she rode.

CHAPTER XX

HENRY HEARS



‘DE QUELLE MANIÈRE Ulrich Gallet fut envoyé à Picrochole.’
RABELAIS.

HENRY was floating on the river when Flying Sidney reached the Placentia palace at Greenwich.

In London the ‘sweating-sickness’ was abroad — a malady of which Royal Harry had a most head-prone and indigestible horror. So at the report of each fresh outbreak, he would flurriedly pack for Windsor, for the palace at Richmond, for the palace at Greenwich.

It was noon, an hour after the royal dinner, for Royalty, then as now, ‘dined late’ at eleven a.m., ten being the more usual hour of the forkless feast Henry sat canopied in the stern of a high-prowed barge, rich-liveried in cramoisi velvets whose gold frounces trailed; and with him sat and talked the two Howards (Edward and Edmond), Surrey (my Lord Treasurer), Sir Thomas Lovel (Constable of the Tower), Knevet (Master of the Horse), and some gentlemen-archers and body-knights.

Sidney Boleyn got into a skiff at the palace landing-steps. The day was bright, and had in it the spacious charm of the summers that then were. The fringes of the barge, trailing, drew two wavering lines that widened to their languid death on the dappled and brindled surface, fading in the water just

as the trail of that lazy summer-day, with its lazy breezes, and its spacious lazy charm, has faded now in the River of Time.—’

Flying Sidney came up with the slow royal Argo opposite West Ham. He hung on forward and sent word aft that he bore a despatch from Sir Thomas: and soon he was standing before the King.

Harry’s shapely left leg stretched stiff, his right elbow on knee, forefinger on brow, and thumb on cheek; and as he read the letter, lo, he gnawed a wry-pushed pout at a corner; he took in with his tongue-tip his moustache-end, to gnaw.

‘H’m!’ went he; and again: ‘H’m!’; and at last: ‘*Ha,*”

Let it be understood that Francis and Henry were life-long and bitter rivals in the two favourite pursuits of both — Love and War. In both, Francis feared the growing fame of Henry; and Henry detested and envied the established fame of Francis. In the matter of fighting, it was almost certain that Francis was the better man; though it was currently believed at the time that with the bow-and-arrow, and in barrier-combat with axes, Henry took the palm. But in the matter of Love, the question of superiority was more wholly in dispute: here they remained the patterns and paragons one of the other: if Henry was a dragon, Francis was an ogre; if Henry was a ghou, Francis was a vampire. They surpassed each other.

And the mere mention of the name of one in the presence of the other acted precisely in the manner of a prick, spurring to further exploit.

‘Ha!’ went Henry; and, turning upon Flying Sidney, he said:

‘Well, what’s all this affairing?’

‘What the letter declares you, sire,’ said Sidney.

‘Hast seen this knight, thou?’

‘And his ship!’

‘Ship? How looks this ship?’

Sidney described the glowing nautilus. And at once something like certainty dawned upon Henry: only kings possessed such ships. He jerked up his straight leg, and turning from side to side his nodding head, he cried:

‘Well!’

‘She’s a thing of glory, sire! Damasked sails of gold-cloth, and—’

‘The fustian hulk! But this knight’s self, varlet?’

‘He is most tall and lank, sire, and he wears a visor of fluted Milan steel —’

‘Ha!’

‘Milan steel, and carries a shimmering banner of blue silk with one *fleur-de-lys*, with a *fleur-de-lys* wrought on his horse-trappings—’

‘Oh, but this is strong, my gentlemen! this is a bit strong — !’

‘And he fights, sire—’

‘Ha! how fights he — ?’

‘He fights with grand ease, sire; he fights as a soaring lark showers her jolly carols; he fights as the wild-drake gallantly breasts a choppy tarn—’

‘Thou brazen cur! and with whom fights he — ?’

‘He fights with all the different cavalcades that are seeking the lovely maiden.’

‘Cavalcades? Maiden? *Which* maiden?’

‘A maiden called, as I hear, Laura Ford, who travels in our neighbourhood with her sister and the good wizard.’

‘Aha?... Aha?... ’tis so, eh? Aha? Well!’

‘The cavalcades—’

‘*Which* cavalcades?’

‘Oh, there are several after the girl Beside Fitzgerald, Macdonald, and Bonner, which now fight on the knight’s side, as I have seen with my own eyes, there are—’

‘Fitzgerald? *Which* Fitzgerald? But he is *my* man. He fights, say you, on the *knight’s* side — ?’

‘Why, yes, sire.’

‘Then the dark gizzard of that louse for it. ’Tis the second time — Ha! And ’tis this same maiden that the knight, too, is after?’

‘Why, yes.’

Henry leapt up with a stamp.

‘Oh, come, come, my gentlemen,’ cried he with red brow, ‘this is a bit strong — by the splendour of God, ’tis strong! Ha! What! in my own dominions? sniffing after my own subjects, the goat — in my own God’s land? What! he hath dared, then? in my own, own England, which is mine from Heaven right down to Hell? Aha! He shall see! My gentlemen! this is a bit strong, you know! Round with the boat’s prow there, you! You see, gentlemen, don’t you, how this Frenchman — this good friend and brother of France — ha! seeks a quarrel with me? Well, let him have a taste of English iron, then! To arms, I say! to arms! Dig it with the oars, there — to the palace with her! Well!’

Round went the barge, while Flying Sidney, anxious to be away once more, descended to his skiff. He paddled briskly back to the palace, mounted his spent horse, and made for the Bridewell Palace of Queen Katherine. He bore a letter from his father to his half-sister, Anne.

In that letter was a passing mention of the advent of the strange knight in the county.

Anne set Sidney before her, and fixed him with her keen blue eyes. She was the only person in the world of whom Flying Sidney stood in mortal fear.

‘You have seen this knight, Sidney?’ she said.

‘Yes, mistress.’

‘Describe him minutely.’

Sidney described him, and at once Anne muttered:

‘Oh, ’tis Francis.’

‘And the girl,’ she said aloud, ‘and her companions, and her other pursuers — have you seen them?’

‘Why, yes — all.’

‘Tell me of them.’

‘I — you mean no hurt to the wizard, Mistress Anne? — I would not — he is my good friend and saviour—’

‘Sh-h-h. Be good enough to answer my query.’

Sidney told and described, while Anne listened, her needle clicking in her embroidery. When she had heard every detail she went to a window, looking out upon the flowering manor-close, her hands behind her back.

‘So ’tis Francis!’ she muttered.

And she knew Francis well. If Francis sought Laura Ford, he would not fail to find, and possess; and if he possessed, then could not Henry; and until Henry possessed, she was certain that the Queenship of England would not be Anne Boleyn’s.

She left her station at the casement with a tottering gait, which was feigned. And with tottering gait she passed a corridor into a parlour where the Queen, with five ladies-in-waiting, wrought in six pieces a Flanders tapestry. Anne’s hand lay across her brow, and in her eyes was the glaring stare of fever.

‘Oh!’ said she. And again ‘Oh!’

‘Why, lady—’ said the Queen.

‘Madam, oh!’

‘Why, lady, thou art ill!’

‘Madam — I fear me — I have the sweating-sickness.’

‘Heaven’s mercy! sayest thou?’

‘Madam — I pray you — let me depart straightway into the country — to my father — oh!’

The Queen leapt to support her, as Anne tottered upon a sofa.

In fifteen minutes she had set out, accompanied by Flying Sidney and a servitor. As she passed from the palace-gate she tossed her pretty head, and giggled.

Two hours later Henry himself was *en route*. He was accompanied by a hundred and ten men, multifariously armed — brigandined archers, scarlet-doubleted yeomen with halberds, catafracts with partisans, arquebuse, pike, and caliver, swordsmen, mounted bill-men, axe-men; amongst them Knevet, handsome Charles Brandon, dissolute Thomas Howard, Lord Nevil, fighting-men all, with fames.

Down through the city trailed worm-like the procession of cavaliers, rolling a long rattle and pattering fracas of showering hoof-falls, Henry in disguise behind. He sat glittering upon a charger, whose bases and bards were embroidered with roses and pomegranates of gold; and before him a marshalman bore a white banner of silk with St. George in red.

And Wolsey, who had been forewarned of the King’s departure, looking from an oriel of his Bridewell Palace, saw the train move down the Strand, and heard the long pattering fracas of showering hoof-falls: and bridling his fat chin and his proud fat neck, he smiled his little superior smile.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TWO KINGS



‘... TILTING FURNITURE, emblazon’d shields,
Impresses quaint, caparisons and steeds,
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights...’
MILTON.

‘One gusty day, now stormy, and now still.’
CRABBE.

HENRY, in his bombastic way, and passion for mummary and make-believe, went out precisely in the manner of a General who takes the field, with camp-accountrements, provision of forage, herald-king-at-arms, sentry-guards, and small siege-train; his own tent being a lofty pavilion of purple Lyons silk, gold-fringed and passmented: the same as once used by him at his meeting with Francis on the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

Travelling in a strict *incognito*, he became known on his line of march as the Golden Knight, from the fulsome glow in sunlight of his rich gilt armour and horse-trappings; while Francis, for a similar reason, had acquired among the Hampshire villages the sobriquet of the Black Knight.

When Henry reached Mede Down, Francis was still prosecuting his search round Chipping, only nine miles away.

About noon of that day two of Henry's out-riders galloped into camp: they brought news of the exact whereabouts of Francis.

Henry was tilting with Charles Brandon, their lances being tipped with the globular braces called 'rockets.' For the third time Brandon was going down under Henry's *coup de cœur*, amid cheers, when the scouts came in. And at once Henry, at the news, jumped with uncouth ease from his horse.

'Come, Charles,' he cried; 'see what I say to this swart-faced French goat!'

He entered his pavilion: he sat on a stool before a chest upon which he spread parchment, with quill and ink. He was a great writer and scholar, was Henry.

He held the pen, thinking. At all times his breath vented from his nostrils in a roguish wind, whose measured fan was faintly audible to one standing near — a proof of his stern strength and energy of personality. Brandon, leaning near, hands on knees, heard the breaths now come vehemently: for Henry was angry at this French invasion, and hot.

His letters he wrote nearly all in French. After a minute, pressing wide the points of the skating pen, he wrote flowingly:

'Celui que Pen appelle le Chevalier d'Ore vueil tantost scavoir ce qui aye esmeu le très parfaict Chevalier que l'en appelle Chevalier Noir à vaguer et naiger ès le bon pais d'Angleterre à ce temps-cy, quel prouffit, louenge, fame, honneur, ou renommé, quelle enqueste, ymaginacion, ou entreprins, quel gaing ou avantaige à achapter, quel meschief ou deffaulte, ou quelle Chaleur ou aultre chose, aye esguillonné et point le dessusdict très parfaict Chevalier Noir à vuyder de son pays pour venir vaguer ès le susdict bon pais d'Angleterre. Sans doubte répondra que son mestier illec a pour but de

chercher et avoir en sa disposicion, administracion, et gouvernement une très belle, gente, doulce et débonnaire demoiselle que Pen appelle Laura Ford; en quel cas ne prendra de desplaisance ne tristesse que le dessusdict Chevalier d'Ore, à cause du roy d'Angleterre et France, et des Provinces de Gascoigne, Guienne, Normandy, Anjou, Galles, et Irlande, fasse l'entreprise *d'estraindre incontinent* la Chaleur du susdict très parfaict Chevalier Noir; en quel but passera ce soir avecques ses forces dans les champes entre les villages de Mede Down et Chipping une heure avant soleil reconscé. Vecy doncques que je requiers à Dieu à jointes mains, et que Dieu ne vueille pas qu'il advienne le contraire!' [He who is called 'The Golden Knight' desires at once to know what could have moved the very perfect Knight, who is called the Black Knight, to wander and sail into the good land of England at this time; what profit, praise, fame, honour, or renown; what quest, fantasy, or enterprise; what gain or advantage to acquire; what wrong or default, or what Heat, or other thing, could have pricked and spurred the above-said very perfect Black Knight to leave his land to come to wander in the said good land of England? Without doubt will he reply that his business here is to seek out and have in his power, sway, and government a very beautiful, high-born, sweet, and charming damsel, called Laura Ford: in which case he will not take it ill that the said Golden Knight — on behalf of the King of England and France, and of the Provinces of Gascoigne, Guienne, Normandy, Anjou, Wales, and Ireland — undertakes to *quench quick* the Heat of the said very perfect Black Knight; to which end he will pass this evening with his forces in the fields between the villages of Mede Down and Chipping one hour before sunset. And this I require of God with joined hands, and may God not bring the contrary to pass!]

Francis was made aware of the advent of this letter by a herald mouthing the shattering cry of a silver bugle in Chipping street. Another minute, and

King-at-arms, in a motley which was half his dress of office, and half new-fangled, handed the letter to Francis, who, with three of his knights, lolled under the thick greenage of the inn-porch in half-dress, playing the new game of cards, primero.

The King broke the seal, which was not the seal of Henry; but with one glance at the handwriting, he recognised his good friend and brother of England, and showed a set of extremely white small teeth in a smile. He promptly called for pen and ink, and wrote:

‘Celui que Ten appelle le Chevalier Noir n’a qu’aulcuns motz à respondre ne proposer aux raisons du très parfaict Chevalier d’Ore, qui est renomé en clergie et science par toute la terre, veue que la plume du Chevalier Noir, la mercy Dieu, soit mesmement son espée. Le Chevalier d’Ore n’a pas mal diviné ne raysonné que je cherche une gracieuse, douce, belle, bien adressée, et très gente et parfaicte demoiselle que Ten appelle Laura Ford, pour l’avoir dans ma disposicion, administracion, et gouvernement, ce que je fais jà sans decepcion ne mal engin, contre le Roi d’Angleterre et France, et des Provinces de Gascoigne, Guienne, Normandie, Anjou, Galles et Irlande. Et pour mieux faire *estraindre incontinent* ma Chaleur de la manière que, se la Fortune me donne tant d’heur, je vueil, je passeraie ce soir dans les champs entre les villages de Mede Down et Chipping, une heur avant soleil reconscé. Vecy doncque que je requiers à Dieu à jointes mains, et que Dieu ne vueille pas qu’il advienne le contraire!’ [He who is called the Black Knight has but few words to answer or propose to the arguments of the very perfect Golden Knight, who is renowned in learning and science in all the earth, seeing that the pen of the Black Knight is, thank God, even his sword. The Golden Knight has not ill-guessed or judged that I seek a gracious, sweet, lovely, well-nurtured, and very high-born and perfect damsel called Laura Ford, to have her in my

power, sway, and government, which thing I do verily without deception or secrecy against the King of England and France, and of the provinces of Gascoigne, Guienne, Normandy, Anjou, Wales and Ireland. And in order the better to have my Heat *quick quenched* in the manner which, if Fortune so befriend me, I intend, I will pass this evening with my forces in the fields between the villages of Mede Down and Chipping one hour before sunset And this I require of God with joined hands, and may God not bring the contrary to pass!]

Francis stamped the missive with a *cachet-de-chiffres*, and having tied it with scarlet silk thread, deposited it in an ambergris-scented sachet of purple Genoa velvet, gloriously brodered with diamond and seed-pearl. He bowed, showing his teeth, as he handed it to the herald.

‘Might I ask,’ he lisped in mincing English, ‘how many fighting-men are with your seigneur?’

‘Something over a hundred, sir,’

He did not start; he bowed — though he felt a chill of heart, as on that day when, afterwards, he wrote:

‘All is lost, save honour,’

With him were only six men. But they were the very cream and acme of French chivalry.

And that evening, an hour before sunset in the Vale of Arling, two dust-clouds rolled across the vast lowland to meet — one trailing long in enveloping whorls of galloping smoke, one short and globular. Nearer, spying each other, they drew, Henry with his hundred, Francis with his audacious six; and the sunlit glint of brandished steel flitted in the dust like a fire-dance in smoke.

Nearer they drew, and at the last Henry’s host was thundering at a gallop down the incline of a long road, Francis thundering up it in gallant

carelessness of his certain doom, when Henry drew breath and rein together.

‘Well, but — !’ said he.

Not five hundred yards separated now the two cavalcades.

‘Sire — ?’ said Charles Brandon, half halting.

‘Blue death, man! canst not see? Why, there are not twenty of them!’

‘Not ten, sire,’

‘Then why dost not cry halt, thou stupid dolt? Cry halt there, Nevil! Halt, there, I say! *Morbleu!* we are not Hounslow butchers—’

Halt, halt, went the impassioned word. And in another minute Francis, too, drew rein. One horseman only was in motion — Thomas Howard, galloping towards Francis with fluttered flag of truce.

Francis riding out to meet him, Howard proclaimed loud message: That the Golden Knight, having with him one hundred men, admitted himself vanquished, yielding arms to the higher prowess of the Black Knight who had with him but few; yet, if the Black Knight, would graciously spare his prisoners, then would the Golden elect an equal number of champions — six, as it seemed — to polish the Black Knight’s armour according to the old-time English fashion — *sur le champ* — then and there: and may God defend the right!

Francis lisped an answer crammed with courtly knighthood. There where he stood he awaited battle.

Henry had already selected his six. They stood grouped a-field toward the rear of the hundred, when a yeoman, left behind in Henry’s camp, galloped up hot with news. Before Howard could deliver Francis’s message, the yeoman delivered his.

‘Sire,’ said he, ‘a countryman, searching in your behoof after the maiden Ford, has just hied into camp. On the skirt of Halford Wood, two leagues on

the yon side of Mede Down, he hath spied the maiden on a palfrey, she at the time being hotly pursued by three martialists on chargers.'

'Ha!' cried Henry, and at once the heat and flame of his interest blew from Francis to Laura Ford. *Her* first — and afterwards tourney, and joust, and chivalric play. The advent" of Francis into England — Henry's terror lest the Frenchman should beat him in the game of girl-seeking — had made his eagerness for possession a thousand-fold more instant and intense. 'Tell the Black-face I'll send him other rendezvous,' he tossed hurriedly behind him, as Howard cantered up with Francis's answer, 'and lead back to camp there. Ha! you six — come — ride it, ride it!'

They went at once galloping north-westward across-field, while Howard bore the message to Francis; Francis, on his part, received it with meaning smile, and instantly galloped off southward.

And with design: for he was aware that this sudden *volte face* of his good friend and brother at the moment of impending battle could be motivated only by some superlative interest; and what interest on the earth was superlative save the finding of the superlative loveliness, the new Helen? He made a wide detour round a wood to conceal his purpose of pursuit, and then turned, galloping in the self-same direction as Harry.

Now, however, Harry and his six were lost to sight; and Francis and his six rode vainly till far into the darkness, following vague way-side rumours and directions.

They were passing at a languid walk through a forest-path after midnight, seeking some hamlet for rest, when in a near glade they spied embers glowering red in thick blackness.

'What if those be they?' said Francis.

'Then we fall upon them and take them at disadvantage,' answered the Chevalier d'Arcy.

‘Hold my horse — halt,’ whispered Francis.

He slipped to his feet and went stealthily treading through thick trees and under-wood toward the glade.

They were Henry and his six, who had scoured in vain a large tract of country round Halford Wood for Laura and her pursuers, and in this other wood had lost all sense of direction, overtaken weary by midnight. On the broad, deep-breathing face of Henry Francis saw the dim fire-gleam glower.

He stepped nearer; now the embers shed a shine on his own lean, brown wedge-face. One of the picketed horses shrilled a strong chest-neigh. He stopped, and showed his little teeth, going: ‘Sh-h-h!’

Still further, with fearless rashness, he stepped, leaning prone forward on semi-tiptoe his lank strip of body. If a horse stamped, he stopped, with held-up forefinger, smiling.

Now he was in the very midst of the seven sleepers, in a situation of sevenfold and instant danger. But he was under an insupportable obligation to Henry for the knightly clemency of that day’s encounter: and the motto of his life was to surpass Henry at every point — in the matter of chivalry above all.

Henry’s sword-belt lay lax under him, near him his battle-axe and a horse-pistol. Francis with swift noiselessness drew the sword, and took the axe and pistol. Within three minutes he was making off, burthened with all the arms of all the seven.

And had they been the ‘Seven Sleepers’ of fable, they must have leapt into wakefulness at the sound which, a minute afterwards, broke upon their ears — a cry of ‘Charge, charge!’ and a sound of hoofs galloping upon them. Henry and his warriors sprang wildly to arms that were not there; and when the hoof-sounds galloped away into faintness and silence, they stared

at the dim ghosts one of the other, all pale and bewildered men. After a time said Charles Brandon:

'Tis sure that swart-faced goat, sire—'

'Thou speakest of a King, Charles,' said Henry, with brooding undertook.

'Pardon, sire,' muttered Brandon.

Then suddenly flaming, Henry cried:

'The black French goat! If I stick him not for this — !'

His brow was red as brand. He was still raving at all gods and men at nine the next morning, an hour after his return to camp, when one of Francis's knights rode up to the purple pavilion with flag of truce, loaded with the mass of purloined arms.

He bore a letter from Francis, in a sachet of jet-and-pearl-work, costly as gold. The Black Knight, having found the accompanying arms in a glade of the forest, presented them to the very perfect Golden in token of the Black's profound homage. And if the Golden, with six, would meet the. Black, with six, on the left side of the chasm called Rendeep Fell that evening at sunset, then and there might trial by combat ensue. And this the Black Knight required of God with joined hands, praying that God might not bring the contrary to pass.

Henry sent answer confirming the rendezvous in a chryselephantine enamelled casket of Limoges, and spent the day, though rainy, with his six in the practice of arms.

It was not till his party were half-way to the rendezvous that it occurred to someone to ask:

'But *which* is "the left bank" of the chasm called Rendeep Fell?'

About the same time the same thought occurred to Francis; he had forgotten that a chasm is not a river, with sides 'left' and 'right.'

Clouds which had lowered all day were now pouring heavy rain, dashed by squalls. Premature twilight deepened; but both parties pushed on, in hope of meeting.

The chasm is an irregular cleft between Mede Down and Weedon in hilly country of chalky formation, winding two miles long, and, in places, four hundred yards wide. Open spaces round its edges, its solitude, and its character as a landmark, made it a good rendezvous for trial by combat. It runs east and west.

Francis arrived on its south edge, and, after five minutes, saw Henry's group vaguely indicated on the north.

Henry, at the very edge, shouted:

‘Wait there; we come!’

Francis, who heard a voice mingling with the dashed and huddled rain, but no words, vehemently called:

‘Good, good; we come!’

Henry, who heard a voice, but no words, set out, turning away somewhat eastward in a path between hills; and Francis, seeing him dimly take that course, galloped eastward also to a meeting at the chasm's end.

But Henry's path, after a curve, led him westward, and in fifteen minutes he was standing at the south edge where Francis had lately stood, peering at peering Francis on the north edge, where *he* had lately stood.

Francis shouted, Henry shouted, each hearing a voice in the streaming air, but no words. And now each could hardly distinguish forms across the chasm, for the darkness thickened fast.

Once more they changed places, in a bewilderment of mixed purposes, Henry to the north, Francis to the south. Henry swore; Francis, with thrown-back throat, laughed lightly.

At last, by a law of chance, they stood at the same moment on the same side of the chasm, at different points, each peering across to detect the other. Masses of mountain rock interposed between them; the last bleak twilight had left only darkness, and the parties now were lost to each other.

The same hour, on returning angry to camp, Henry heard news as to the whereabouts of a man whom he concluded to be Mauro Calvo. Where Mauro Calvo was, there, he supposed, was Laura Ford. And with little delay he broke camp and set out south, with his following.

At the same time he sent a messenger to Francis at Chipping, appointing that day week for a meeting on the shores of Ross Water, by Lipton.

CHAPTER XXII

MARK BONNER FAILS



‘QUAND ON N’A pas ce que Pon aime, on aime ce que l’on a.’

MARMONTEL.

AT this time the three fugitives, separated, were vainly seeking one another through the woods and ways and hamlets of Hampshire; so also Fitzgerald, Macdonald, and Mark Bonner, separated, sought one another.

Bessie, on the night of the separation, had in her possession three crowns, the earnings of Calvo’s street-meetings. The next morning she rode to three several hamlets, and at two inns sat through an hour with a hostess, and at a third inn with a host. The winning might of her simple and sincere character was extraordinary. At the end of the third hour she had three staunch friends.

At the first inn she left a crown, at the second a crown, at the third a crown; in each case receiving a promise that if a girl answering to Laura’s description, or a man answering to Calvo’s, should appear in the village, then they should not be utterly destitute: the crown should be there for them.

She knew that now there must be no more street-propheying for Calvo; Wolsey’s many-handed arm was stretched to seize him; and money he would have none.

But now she herself was penniless. She gave that not a thought. Laura was gone....

Her face was like the face of a man in the act of tumbling through endless space — a face of awful scare.

But not yet of despair — though she had heard that scream in the forest, and knew it. She left the crowns at the inns with the faint hope that her sister might yet be at liberty, in a position to use them.

Only on the fifth day did she reach the last depths of woe. She had come toward evening from a wood to beg a morsel of rye-bread, since many chestnuts and acorns left her craving still; and at an inn-door she heard two men discuss the great news.

Henry had come!... He was here! The very Dragon himself! In person he had followed Laura into Hampshire! As she heard it, her heart beat and hovered like the stick of a beaten drum.

The identity of the Golden Knight with King Harry was rather an open secret in Hampshire: his magnificent way, the nature of his quest, suggested it. One of the two men discussing asserted that the Golden Knight was none other than he; the second shook a doubtful head; but Bessie, quite sure, moaned:

‘Oh, ’tis he...!’

Now she divined the meaning of that cry in the wood! She did not hear from the yokels the *when* of the King’s coming, nor knew that at the hour of Laura’s scream he had not left London. She only jumped at the guess that the scream might be due to the coming; that Laura might, *even then...*

She begged no rye-bread that night. In the dark and deeps of the wood she lay on her face by her cropping palfrey through all the night, chill and still as a thing of senseless stone, dead to the hungry pangs that rived her. But when gray morning came, a thought had possessed her brain.

‘Oh, I will go to this man, and kneel, and kneel—’ she said.

And now hot tears relieved her piteous grief. An hour later, and she had a new thought — with her harmlessness of doves mingling a wisdom of serpents. If she could present herself to the King, suppliant indeed, yet having in her hand for trump card the King's-letters which she had stolen from Fitzgerald!

Bitterly now she regretted that she had returned them to Fitzgerald. But there remained a hope. From the inn-chamberlain at Mede Down she had heard that Mark Bonner was with Fitzgerald, seeking her. That Mark was genuinely in his heart hostile to her she could not believe, though she divined that he had some reason for pretending hostility, being in such a company. And Mark was shrewd and clever: for her, sure, if she could communicate with him, he would some-way get the letters from Fitz.

In fact, Mark had the letters actually in his slop-pouch, for to him Fitz had given them to keep.

How she might possibly communicate with Mark, after a time she thought: at inns she would win friendship with some chance scribe and leave letters for Mark, who, since he searched, surely travelled. Chance and tide which were against her would sure not be against her always, and on the earth was hope.

The King, she had heard, was near Mede Down, seven leagues now from her. At the instant of resolve and completed plan she started; and at the first village, after an hour's delay, left rendez-vous for Bonner, appointing for the meeting the great chestnut on the village-green of Mede Down, one hour after the third sunset from the day of writing.

Toward evening of the second day her palfrey fell lame near Lipton, having cast an off-shoe, and finally refused to budge. She led him limping to the village, and left him on future terms, conditioning forfeiture, at a farrier's, who would work no more that day. Down a short lane to the shore

of Ross Water she went, resigned that her further weary way must now be a-foot.

But there, by the water's edge, stood a group of six village-women on the point of embarking in the nightly lug-sailed transport which bridged Lipton with Halford, near a mile away. The chance and hope of avoiding the long foot-sore detour made Bessie mendicant. She begged low at the ferry-man's ear, and he granted her a passage.

The last sunlight blotched the breadth of water with winking patches of bloody dragon-scales, coming through a depression of the hills which all round embowered the cosy lakelet. Evening breezes ran with chasing heels upon it, smiting the dragon-flakes into whipped wine, and all the lake into flying black blushes. From the west they came, and the boat, running with loose sail before them, made good way.

The place and the scene was full of the earth's ancient sidereal peace, and the vague pathos of man's most weird romantic residence on it. The women sat mostly silent on two thwarts astern, three with babes at the breast, waiting inactive that the boat should run, and the journey be done. Bessie's brow leant on her hand at the port side, and so piteously undone was she, that her head nodded there in semi-sleep.

Suddenly a most hoarse and wild outcry from the water startled her. The boat was then half-way across.

A tiny skiff, rowed in the opposite direction by a single oars-man, with a single oar, had passed near; and that oars-man, as the two floating things cleared each other, had for an instant seen her face. It was Garrett Oge Fitzgerald.

But the bigger boat was making such speed with her bulging lug, that by the time Bessie had started, rubbed her eyes, and looked around, she could arrive at no more definite knowledge than that a big man stood in a

staggering skiff, stretching impassioned arms of appeal towards her. And she heard a shout, and even she thought that she vaguely heard her name.

‘Oh, Bess!’ he cried, ‘stop, for Christ’s sake! Oh, good Bess — dear soul — for — !’

But to the lugger it was a shout merely, and to Bessie merely a cause of fresh terror: terror doubled when she saw the oars-man sit again, turn his bow, and attempt, with wild right and left delvings, to follow the sailed boat. His effort, indeed, was foolishly futile: but, none the less, she ran to bury herself in a wood at the instant of her arrival at Halford.

The next afternoon she arrived at Lee, two leagues from Halford, famished. Here a school-dominie wrote a new letter for her to Mark Bonner, which she left at the Blue Bombard.

She was now only seven miles from Mede Down.

This was the day of her rendezvous. She set out, keeping to deserted ways.

Not two hours afterwards Mark Bonner sauntered into the Blue Bombard. When he opened the letter, his feet slid into a hint of dancing, and he fell to kissing the written words.

‘Oh, dear Bess — found at last! Well, my abounding star — ?’ he went.

A lady through an open parlour-door was watching him and his capers of joy. She had arrived at the inn a half-hour before him. She, too, with baleful purpose, was a seeker after Bessie Ford. It was the lady Anne Boleyn. And she very well knew Mark Bonner from the description of him given by Flying Sidney, in London.

Mark felt a finger touch his back, and, starting round, saw a low brow in an aureole over dancing blue eyes, and the brown beauty-spot on her short, firm-fleshed upper lip, and the tilted cap of white velvet, ringed with

emeralds, stuck with a jaunty feather: a face bewitching as it was strong: and the out-push of her kerchiefed bust.

‘You are Mark Bonner, she said.

‘The initials,’ he answered, with smirk and bow, ‘standing for *Maître-ès-Beaux-arts*, my mistress,’

‘Ha! ha! ha!’ — her laugh was like a carillon of silvery things—’ you are witty, knave,’

‘And you — pretty — for the sake of the rhyme,’

‘Oh, ’tis so the wind sits, then? Sit you here,’

‘Woe’s me! I must be away.’

‘Ungallant swain! when a lady bids—’

‘Tis even for a lady’s behoof that I go,’

‘What, for Laura’s?’

Bonner started, and blushed.

‘Sure, you know me well—’

‘Did I not know your name, booby? All concerning you I know—’

‘Yet I know not you,’

‘I am called Anne Boleyn,’

‘What, the King’s—’

‘Friend,’

‘Why, madam—’

‘Oh, no *madam*; I am only a girl, Mark, and you a pretty boy, by my halidom! Where didst get those rolling and wreathing locks, princex? Come, sit and confess: ’tis to Laura that you go—’

‘No, to Bess.’

‘But Bess is the sis; to go to Bess *meaneth* to go to Laura. Is’t so?’

‘I suppose ’tis so. Yet ’tis to meet Bess that now I hie.’.

‘Then go — go to thy Laura, boy.’ She pushed him. ‘But I am — jealous, tnen.’

Now she pouted a baby’s mouth, and threw herself averted.

‘Nay, but — *jealous*?’ gibed Bonner, flattered from toe-tips to scalp.

Anne threw herself again to face him.

‘Is she really — so lovely?’

‘Who — Bess?’

‘You dare play the daw with me! No — Laura.’

‘She is even exceeding lovely.’

‘Then, wherefore tarry? Go in speed to her, booby.’

‘Faith, I’d liefer stay.’

‘Oh, no lies.’

‘I would.’

‘Because, forsooth, I am the prettier girl of the two, eh? Would’st dare say that, gallant?’

She fixed a keen, earnest under-leer on his embarrassed face.

‘Oh, I say not the prettier of the two!’ he answered, ‘but only as pretty. You are diverse in glory: you, the glad dawn — she, midnight, with all its stars—’

‘And of the two you prefer — ?’

‘Why, faith, the dawn.’

High carilloned Anne’s laughter. She leapt up, and, with a winged movement of the elbows, and a swaying suggestion of flight — though she was plump — danced to a window, looking out with hands behind her, thinking a moment. She turned again with dimples in her cheeks. On the face of Bonner was the flush of amorousness; he was now a mere plaything in her hand.

‘So you stay?’ said she, coming near.

‘Since I must.’

‘Silly boy!’ Her hand was on his shoulder. ‘What canst expect of me?’

‘One—’

‘Malapert! You forget who I am?’ She fillipped his ear.

‘No; forgive me. But I remember what you told me—’

‘What?’

‘That you are a girl —

‘Brought up in the French Court, eh, Mark?’

‘Perhaps.’

‘But Laura — thou lov’st her, varlet.’

‘You now only — I swear, by Venus—’

‘Thy tastes in ladies coincide strangely with Royalty’s, meseems, Mark.’

“Tis true the King does me the honour to pursue my discarded sweetheart.’

‘And thou his — in my person.’

‘I have outrivalled him with the first — if I could with the second!’

‘So thou hast hope? In what? In thy pretty cherry-lips and Jovian locks, rose-bud? Think’st thou I am so frail.’

‘Oh, in your dear clemency only have I hope! Look into mine eyes — !’

‘Oh, thine eyes. Well, they are large and swimming: but to resist them, friend, it is but necessary for a girl who would not perish in the regarding not to look too long that way, *morbleu!*’

‘That sweet French lisp you have! If you chatter so, I’ll crush you in a kiss!’

‘Try it, then! I’ll brawl right out! You love Laura!’

‘Not I!’

‘You do!’

‘I swear — !’

‘You do! Why else make you now to her sister?’

‘I? Oh, I am but taking her some King’s-letters, which I have here in my slop-pouch.’

‘King’s-letters? Writ to whom?’

‘To my Lord Wolsey.’

‘In truth — to my Lord Wolsey? So, boy? And how came they — ?’

’Tis a long story. You believe now — ?’

‘Wait — not yet. Where is it thou must meet with Bess to-night?’

‘I — should not say, perhaps.’

‘What, not to *me*? Here’s the worth of boys’ devotion, I swear to God! Am I not the friend of the girls, as thou mightest well divine from my knowledge of them? An thou wouldst have me believe half the japing thou spakest but now — then tell me.’

’Twas *true*! I am all on fire—’

‘Tell then.’

‘For a recompense?’

‘I give, Mark, to such as you: I do not sell.’

’Tis under the great chestnut-tree on Mede Down green that I meet her.’

‘When?’

‘One hour after sunset’

Anne had dimples in her plump, firm-fleshed cheeks.

‘*Now?*’ whispered Bonner, bending over her.

Anne leapt up, and with her bird-like flightiness of swaying motion went running round the room, he with encrimsoned visage after her. Once she flung a chair in his path, once a stool; then, pretending defeat, she sank upon the settee whence she had risen, and resigned herself with a sigh. He

put crazy lips to hers; and as for her, one hand round his neck pressed him long to her: the other was in his slop-pouch. It was a bag with a flap, hanging from a leather at his waist.

At that moment Garrett Oge Fitzgerald, come so far from Ross Water in his search for Bessie, stood in the parlour's doorway.

Bonner was found! That fact, and with it a quick leap of joy, at once filled his consciousness; then, in an instant, a stab of jealousy: for Bonner, if not his, was Laura's, and Laura was Bessie's.

‘Why, boy...!’ said he, and in his tone was severe reproof.

Bonner glanced behind him: and, swifter than lightning-wink, new sanity at that instant filled him, and a consciousness of wrong.

‘Oh, God!’ he whispered quick to Anne, ‘say naught of what I have told thee as to Bess. He is mad in love with her!’

He jerked himself straight from his kiss. Anne, under the scowl of Fitzgerald, slipped from the room, and down to the inn-door. She at once took horse for Mede Down, the King's-letters being in her bosom.

At that time Bessie was hasting with beating heart toward the great chestnut-tree on Mede Down green.

As for Bonner, though guilty and trembling, he was yet about to tell Fitz of the rendez-vous, and to set out, when suddenly he discovered that the letters were gone. And now confusion and cowardly shame involved and abashed him. He escaped from his friend, and spent half the night in random, headlong, and bare-headed wanderings in the solitudes of that neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XXIII

EIGHTEEN PIECES OF CANNON



‘SHE WAS A gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like the pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barred.
KEATS.

WHEN Bessie arrived travel-worn, with languished head and aching soles, at the green of Mede Down to await Mark Bonner and the King’s-letters, Harry had already broken camp, and set out further; and no purple pavilion was there.

Nor did Mark come, being abashed by confusion and cowardly shame. But Anne Boleyn came instead.

At an inn-window she stationed herself, and thence presently saw a lonely, meek figure, carrying a small bundle, take stand under the chestnut. It was now night, but a full moon was working through sombre expeditions of wet cloud, and shed some shine.

Anne could make out no face, and curiosity spurred her. She gathered her murrey-velvet riding-dress, and went out.

She took no pains to conceal her interest in the poor toil-worn wayfarer that now sat with slung knee on a stone beneath the tree; but with neck that

revolved backward in proportion to her advance, she passed and repassed several times, like a stepping peacock, near the humble waiter.

Bessie's eyes lifted, and she observed the face of her observer.

'My mother!' quoth she to herself, 'how this lady is for regarding me...'

Also an instinctive enmity, a surge of rancour, quickly repelled, swelled within her against this woman. Anne's face, dim-lit by the moon, was for an instant hateful to her as ratsbane and copperas and the finger of Doom. It was an intuitive sub-consciousness which she had of her worst, her fatal enemy.

Anne had fairly sure hope now of tracking Laura, having found Bessie, not suspecting that the sisters were separated. Bessie stayed there an hour motionless. Anne returned to her station at the inn-window to watch.

Suddenly, in another direction, there happened for Anne a lucky event: a party galloped into the village. They were her emissary, young Percy of Northumberland, arm in sling, with a fresh following of seven. She saw his face pass below, and at once sent down the chamberlain to summon him.

The eight weary horses being a world too many for the little inn's accommodation, the fighters loosed girths, and picketed them to crop the green round the great chestnut. Bessie, sitting with slung knee, like a stone on a stone, was in the midst of horses. Still she waited, and Mark Bonner did not come.

Meanwhile, brisk-eyed, bow-legged Percy broke, all in black armour, into Anne's parlour. His short curls of liquid blonde silk burst, as from ripe cocoon, beneath his steel morion. He caught her bodily in one arm, and boisterously bussed her lips.

'As though thou hadst earned that right, saucy boy!' said she. 'Where is the girl I sent thee to find?'

‘That girl!’ he cried, with snapped finger and thumb: ‘I have stuck five men, and, ‘sdeath! lost nine, in her co neying, and yet I have her not.’

‘*Who*, then, are these her defenders?’

“Sdeath! I know not: but this I trow, that many an armed man is abroad on the count of her.’

‘King’s-men and Queen’s-men all?’

“Sdeath! I know not. It strikes me they be not all nor King’s-men nor Queen’s-men.’

‘Knowest thou, Percy, if my Lord Wolsey hath haply had hand in all this matter?’

“Twere like enough. Methought that first night at the Eastcheap inn I met a Wolsey-man, and, ‘sdeath! I snipped his weasand.’

Anne started. To this moment she had no knowledge that Wolsey was in the hunt. If *his* hand was against hers — ! She ran with her bird-like, uplifted motion to the window, to make certain that Bessie sat still there on the stone. Back she soared with swaying lightness, to put her hands on his steel shoulders.

‘Hast encountered the King’s host, Percy?’

‘Even now I passed by it. He camps to-night not five miles hence, on this side Lee.’

‘Ah, but Francis would beat him in this search, an *I* Hast heard of Francis?’

‘Which Francis?’

‘The Black Knight.’

“Sdeath, yea! Is the Black Knight Francis?’

‘Booby-boy, yes; stupid, fighting, blue-eyed baby, yes. Think’st thou thou couldst fight Francis, and kill him for me?’

‘Francis?’ Sdeath! Am I not a Percy? Francis of France, quotha?’ Sdeath! I’d spit him like a moor-cock!’

‘Art sure, now? He is a true Colbrand in war, thou knowest, and in Love, too — I hear.’ She giggled a little.

‘Hath made love to thee, hath he?’

‘Perhaps! Perhaps!’

“Sdeath! I’d spit him—”

‘Nay, I love thee, booby; Francis thou must not fight, for *my* sake: he’d quench for ever that hot pate in half a trice, I warn thee. But there is *another* whom I would have thee kill for me, this hour—’

‘Hear her! Francis of France?’ Sdeath! I tell thee there is not arrow a one of them can stand one pigeon-dunging’s space before this axe, except—’

‘Well?’

‘One knave. Pah! I spit upon him. But, faith, he fights like ten thousand thunder-claps, Anne!’ Sdeath! he can fight. I love him like my brother.’

‘And who is this warrior?’

‘His name, they say, is Fitzgerald — an Irish louse.’ Sdeath! I’ll cleave him yet.’

‘Fitzgerald? Why, ’tis *he* I mean! You have him now — this hour. He is at the inn at Lee — alone. Percy — !’

Anne suddenly was deadly in earnest; her face reddened. Two hours since, she had left the inn at Lee under the scowling brow of Fitz; and Fitz, this great champion, was (Bonner had said it) in love with Bessie Ford. She feared and hated him.

‘He is there,’ said Anne, now. You have seven. He is alone — go!’

‘But — my left arm is in bandage—’

‘You have seven—’

‘But seven against one — oh, come! ‘Sdeath! fair play and roast ox, Anne—’

She drew herself severely back.

‘Do you cavil, then, at my behests, boy? Hands off, prithee! This Fitzgerald whom I bid thee kill, not one hour since, seized me roughly, and would have kissed my mouth—’

At this lie Percy’s hand fell clapping upon his smooth axe-handle, and his sharp teeth hissed a ‘Sdeath!’

‘Go, go,’ said Anne, pushing his shoulder; ‘no, not one buss, till thou return. And, Percy, leave me here two of thy servitors: I may need them.’

He went prone on new impulse, with busy, bowlegged roll, scattering behind a careless hand-wave, and out on the green called:

‘Hi, Bennett! Hi, Yates — all of you — here!’ approaching, as he called, the tree, where the men, their work of picketing just ended, stood. ‘Quick,’ said Percy, ‘swallow a cold repast: I give you fifteen minutes, watch in hand. Fitzgerald — you know, the fighter — is at Lee inn.’Sdeath! we finish him this self-same night. He is alone. Bennet, Thwaite, and Wright upon him first, and an he lard you three, then, ‘sdeath! three more! Come, line your bellies; ‘sdeath! and to horse—’

They trooped after him to the inn, to feed. And Bessie Ford, who had heard, sat, a stone on a stone, her heart seeming jammed in her dry throat.

He was doomed to die! He was at Lee inn, alone, and eight fighting-men, who hated him, knew! What though he was hunting after her life? In the thought of his death, somehow — she knew not at all wherefore — lay for her a horrid bitterness of world-loneliness. From side to side she slowly rocked, and with her rocking body rocked the woeful knee slung in her clasped fingers.

Only fifteen minutes, watch in hand, for the cold repast! And they were horsemen, she a-foot, sore travel-worn, ready to drop dead with her many griefs.

But she sprang up: she would at least try — though she perished — though he seized and slew her — to warn him. As she went running, in her gait was mixed a limping failure of the left leg.

Anne, from the window, saw, rushed down and out, and followed, sure now of Laura.

Lee lay six to seven miles westward by an undulating high-road, inclining mostly upward, bordered chiefly by bramble-hedge, but at one part traversing an extensive deer-forest — celebrated for a Henry I. anecdote — called Eleanor Wood.

Anne followed with extreme caution at a hundred yards, using the hedges and turns of road, well able to keep pace with the limping runner. But once, when Bessie was at the bottom of a depression, she chanced to look above and behind, and saw a skirt which vanished.

‘By my credit,’ thought she, ‘one might aver that I was followed by a woman...!’

She trotted on at the same pace till the next hill-brow concealed her from anyone behind it, and then, with all her speed, ran down. At the bottom the road abruptly entered the wood; and as she passed into the brooding gloom, she darted sideways into the thickness of the trees, intending no more to use the highroad. Two minutes afterwards, Anne realized that the crafty fugitive was lost to her.

But Bessie had not proceeded half a mile upon her detour when she found it impossible to advance. She had become involved in a jungle of forest-growths, which first confused her sense of direction, and finally barred her way.

‘Oh, my mother!’ she muttered, ‘I am only losing time with my foolishness. Pray, good, kind saints above, give me your hand to guide me....’

She lost five agonized minutes in fumblings, and then refound the curving highway. As she entered it, Anne, who, with a sense of defeat, had languidly continued her way, spied her near, and slipped behind an oak.

The next moment a scream rang through the wood — a scream of piercing joy. Bessie had Laura in her arms.

Laura, with Calvo, was passing along the road in the opposite direction. They two had been led together by Flying Sidney Boleyn, who, in general, knew the whereabouts of everyone in Hampshire; and now Sidney was with them, taking them to meeting with Bessie at Mede Down, where he had secret knowledge that Bessie was.

Sidney was leading his horse, and Laura hers, which was woefully lame. Calvo, in his wanderings, had lost his mule.

‘Come, master,’ said Sidney now; ‘I will escort you to a right fair domicile for the night not one halfmile hence, safe enow, though near, I avouch, to the King’s camp—’

Calvo was grinning; he patted Bess twice on the back as she ate and hugged at Laura; and he said:

‘Well, well.’

They followed Sidney’s lead into the forest. There was here no path; yet he knew his way. Last of all, Anne, flitting from her tree with held-up skirt, dodged warily from trunk to trunk, tracking them.

Sidney’s objective was a vast elm, old as the Scipios and the fall of Carthage, a roomy hollow within. It stood on a grass mound, solitary; and here, sitting, Bessie turned the face of Laura to the moving moon to watch it. She had forgotten Fitzgerald and his doom.

The lovely face was duskily thin now, divinely haggard, like Venus seasick, like Helen in crapes. The Beauty was as frail as beautiful, and did not take kindly to escapades and weariness; she sat languid and sad, and her small left eye drooped smaller, looking out Spanish melancholy.

Calvo, a little distance from the tree, was conversing low with Sidney.

From a village cider-house a quarter-mile away came vaguely a sound of revelry, flute and laugh and virginal, and the twinkle of tambourines: for the King was hereabouts, and money was brisk.

‘And these letters left at inns for me,’ Calvo was saying: ‘art sure they are on the part of my lord Wolsey?’

‘Oh, sure,’ answered Sidney. ‘In each case have they been left by a gallant called Havard, who searches in company with four. And Havard, I wot, is a gentleman-almoner of my lord Cardinal of York.’

‘What can the pork have to say to me?’ mused Calvo.

‘Some favourable offer, I would wager, from the manner of it.’

‘And as to the Black Knight now — finish thy story.’

‘There is but scant to add: pricked by the King’s ensample, he hath summoned to him eighty men from his ship in Southampton Water; and these, now on the march, bring four howitzers, three culverins, five falconets, two sakers, and four mortars, making eighteen pieces of enginry in all.’

‘Well, but the chuffs — with what object — ?’

Here a sharp outcry startled them: a quick ‘Oh!’ from Bessie Ford. She had remembered Fitz and his doom, and ran towards Calvo and Sidney, crying out:

‘Oh, Master Sidney! a poor man at Lee inn stands in sore peril at the hand of eight fighters, who even now hie thither—’

‘What name?’

‘Master Fitzgerald, I think, he is called—’

‘Why, the gallant fighter—’

He was interrupted by a galloping tramp that passed on the high-road.

‘Oh! ’tis piteous — holy Mother! those are -even they!’ went Bessie.

‘Don’t cry, I shall be there within time,’ called Sidney; and, almost as he spoke, he was away, tossing behind, with a shout, a tied parcel of rye-cake and meat.

Calvo, before he was fully off, ran a little, calling:

‘Be here with the morning: I have need of thee!’

Sidney’s animal knew him and the taste of his spur: in three minutes he had Percy’s party behind; five minutes before them he arrived at Lee. He informed Fitzgerald that fifty armed men had sworn to take his life that night; and hot Percy found the inn without a tenant.

Thus did Bessie save the fighter: but as though, in truth, Something was against her, her mercy wrought her woe: for there, behind a tree, lurked the Lady Anne, regarding her.

CHAPTER XXIV

KING AND MAID



‘THEN FORTH SHE rode, clad on with chastity.’ — TENNYSON.

‘How are thy servants blessed, O Lord!

How sure is their defence!

Eternal wisdom is their guide,

Their help Omnipotence.’

ADDISON.

THERE were thus four persons near together in the wood when Sidney rode away. Suddenly there were but two: for Anne, seeing the sisters disposing themselves to rest for the night, stole away to fetch for the seizure of Laura the two Percy-men left at Mede Down for her; and Calvo, too, with slow-planted step, went through the wood, making for the hamlet whence came the sounds of revelry. There, Sidney had told him, a letter awaited him. And, going, he murmured:

‘Whatever can the pork have to say to me...?’ As for Bessie, her head dropped in dead prolapse; though she was famished, her effort to eat failed in a sigh. They two heaped all their clothes in a mass and lay nude together,

wrapped in Bessie's woollen sheet, in the farthest gloom of the hollow elm. Instantly they slept.

In fifteen minutes Calvo returned from the inn. He had with him Wolsey's letter.

If Mauro Calvo, the magister, it said, would visit the Abbey-ruin in the eastern regions of Eleanor Wood any fore-day that week at two o'clock, he would meet there an ambassador of the Cardinal; and he had the word of a churchman and a gentleman that no inconvenience should result to him from the granting of that interview.

Calvo re-read the letter thrice. He saw how easily, in case of bad faith, he might be seized at a rendezvous, or tracked after it. He went 'H'm!', armed himself with some strange-looking objects taken from his bag, and lay down to sleep, some yards from the elm, near to where Laura's lame horse cropped.

He slept placidly till one; then sat up and looked at his heavy Limoges watch of porcelain. The moon had now worked and won her way far westward through a cloudy heaven, whose sombre travel her glimpses whitened in patches of lunacy; some spears of beginning rain spat through the trees; and still there came from the cider-house the vague twinkling sounds of the incessant waking tambourine.

Calvo rose, and walked away eastwards. He had little difficulty in discovering the Abbey-ruins, for they were vast, though their distance from the elm was considerable. Precisely at two there was a rush in the bushes, and Havard, a servitor of Wolsey, draped in a cloak, stood before the sage.

'Mauro Calvo?' he said.

'The same, sir.'

'I come to you with an offer from my lord Cardinal. Sheer frankness betwixt us, methinks, were meet in this our conference: and frank I shall be.

Promise you no less?’

‘Let me hear,’ said Calvo.

‘My lord Wolsey, for his own ends, the which concern neither you nor me, desireth to have in his custody the person of your ward, Laura Ford, and this month near hath so desired. Now, consider my lord’s surprise that a wench like this should through so long weeks thwart his purpose; right or wrong, he attributed her escaping to the potent wit and working of the sage, Mauro Calvo. And since he knoweth that others seek the maiden — the King himself with his troop — two Kings — many warriors — and that there be need for urgent haste in this matter, therefore it is that he sendeth me to you.’

‘I see. He would have me betray this poor girl into his hand—’

‘Nay! not so. But he believes that, without you, she would by necessity be his within some hours only. He would merely have you leave the sisters to their own devices.’

‘And, in quittance, what offers he?’

‘Safety, quiet, staid habitation to prosecute your studies — all that you most desire.’

For some minutes Calvo said not a word. Surely the temptation was strong. He had in mind the doing of a profound thing — ! And for it he needed only safety, quiet, staid habitation.

He was silent, and during that silence Anne Boleyn, stooping behind a broken buttress, clapped her hands noiselessly.

‘Too late, my lord Cardinal!’ she muttered. ‘Trumps, trumps! the girl is mine!’

She had been riding from Mede Down with the two Percy-men to the seizure of Laura, when she saw Havard’s tied horse near the road. Having heard Flying Sidney tell Calvo of the Wolsey-letters awaiting him, she had

divined, from the Cardinal's baretta stamped large on a boss of the horse's trappings, that hereabouts and now was rendez-vous between Calvo and a Wolsey-man. She had bid her men wait, had dismounted, and through the under-wood tracked the signs of Havard's advance to the ruins.

Now, however, noting the silence of Calvo, the tokens of his yielding, she realized that there was need for haste. She rose, and first crept, then ran, back to her horse. And now with plied whip she made, with the two servitors, for the elm.

When Calvo at last spoke, he said:

'I have the Cardinal's promise that no harm be done me, nor trial made to track me hence, whatever my answer. Is't so?'

'You have also my own solemn pledge,' said Havard.

'Then my answer to the Cardinal is this: That I deny not the greatness of his offer; but that I am a fool, and — I refuse.'

'You stick to the maidens?'

'Yes. Say that the great Mauro Calvo — great as King or Cardinal in his way — is doddering to his dotage. He refuses.'

'Tis final, then?'

'Aye.'

Havard bowed.

'There remains but this to add,' said he. 'If at any future time, the girl being not then in the Cardinal's custody, you be moved to accept my lord's offer, then you leave your acceptance in writing at the Thistle Inn, at Halford; and my lord Cardinal's known love for the learned, despite your naughty obstinacy, will still stand you in good stead.'

Calvo was pleased in his recesses.

'Well, now,' he said, when Havard was gone, 'Tis handsomely done. The pork's not altogether a chuff and thick beast, like those other chuffs. And

here is poor forlorn Mauro Calvo tempting the great man's patience, all on the count of that Bess — well, well.'

He took the precaution, in returning, to make a protracted detour, fearing watching eyes. At one time he heard a far sound of several galloping hoofs. It was the sound of Anne and her two.

Within twenty yards of the elm, she whispered halt. Dismounting, she went forward alone to determine that all was well for the seizure.

At the moment when she should need her men, she arranged to run back a little, and utter a yodling summons.

She stole near the tree. It was drizzling steadily; but the opening looked westward, and the moon, now old in fore-day vigil, and westering far in lucid immarcessible silver, was as an aged saint who, after many a cloudy strife, at last in trance spies opening heaven, and a shining smites his face. Thus, every detail in the hollow tree was lit; and as Anne, with picked-up skirt and craning neck, on tip-toe, pried within, she saw — and started!

Laura was not there. Bessie only was there, with limbs tossed in deep-breathed slumber, hardly covered by the tumbled sheet. And, beside her, a small heap of clothes.

An intense sense of defeat — the bitter thought of Wolsey — filled Anne. Had Calvo *already* betrayed? That was hardly possible. Where, then, was Laura Ford? Now she must be Anne's, or never. If not *now*, then was she Wolsey's.

She turned to hunt, and instantly turned again to the tree. There was Bessie — Had she a dirk with her, she would then and there have struck it, in her rage, into the sleeper's bosom. As it was, with the double object of searching further without fear of Bessie's interference, and of doing a wanton turn to the poor, worn dreamer, she stalked prone on balancing tip-

toe into the tree, swooped up the poor little garments on her arm, picked and gathered the sheet with dainty fingers, and was gone.

Through her deep sleep a stab of apprehension pierced Bessie Ford; she shook herself together with a shudder; she turned sharply round, with wild eyes, with groping hand: bitter emptiness — Laura was not there.

Her very first thought was King Harry: the Dragon's camp was near; she knew it; she knew whereabouts; she had heard from Flying Sidney.

The next impulse of her stunned consciousness was toward her clothes; her clothes were not there; she was naked; the sheet was gone. She was a prisoner.

She rushed to the opening. 'Master Calvo!' she called: Calvo was not there.

She was a prisoner — *if* the earth held bands to bind her! *if* the strong social ages, and their strong growth of world-idea and sentiment, was stronger than the fibre of her tough hero-soul!

Happily, she knew where Calvo had his bag among leaves. The bag contained a sharp-bladed knife. She ran, all flurried, to it, and took the knife — for King Harry's bosom, or for the bosom of Laura Ford! — she knew not which, nor cared.

A thought — which was almost a bitter suspicion — shaped itself in her brain: *why* had not Laura, on being seized, cried out?

There stood Laura's nag, cropping. With fluttering hand she girthed him, untied his halter. Having mounted, she moved south-westward.

The rain was not heavy, but steady, and soon trickled from the end of her little plaited 'natte' — long as a man's hand — down her bare back. Her clear, immaculate whiteness, as she moved among the trees under the glimpsing moon, gave her a bluish ghostliness.

Her motion was very slow. The nag was reluctant, and, being quite lame, limped deeply. With vehement powerlessness she beat it with the short halter-end. The nag quickened a moment his walk, and fell back into his stumping limp.

‘Oh go, horse!’ quoth she severely.

Among the trees she wound, always south-westward, to where, according to Sidney, the King’s camp lay.

Even the impulse to beard the Lion in his den was brave; thus to continue doggedly on her slow way was strong, truly: for Henry had acquired in her imagination the vast dimensions and the baneful leer of Satan himself: it was therefore into the jaws of death that she rode, and into the mouth of Hell.

On she rode, on a limping nag through the dark and dripping wood, clad in a string of rowan-tree berries — a knife in her left hand. Her direction, however, was, as might be expected, not precisely that in which the camp lay, since her information was vague. As she came to the end of the wood, she saw that the day was breaking, the sky eastward being already like a field of chrysolite ploughed into fresh, rough furrows of broken gold. And she saw no camp.

For some time she rode at random in open country, with wild haste, with little speed, powerlessly beating the horse’s neck with the halter-end, like a man who fights in nightmare, but his forceless blows fail and faint.

She could not weep, her face was dead white, and had a rigour as of death. She suffered despair, having no doubt that the King really now held Laura, Now she wet her lips with her tongue, and now she looked about with feeble and woeful eyes, saying:

‘By my credit, it is morning—’

Suddenly she heard a clear-calling bugle-sound chortle in the air. As it were mechanically, she turned in that direction, and found that the King's camp lay quite close, behind the shoulder of a hill.

She marked the lofty purple pavilion standing at the end of a street of tents, and blocking the street into a *cul-de-sac*. The camp stood on a gentle hill, strewn with flint-boulders and dotted with trees, the pavilion being higher than the other tents.

Bessie's horse continued its deeply-limping walk, descending the hill-shoulder, and in a couple of minutes was limping up the tent-street.

Now, at that bugle-call the whole little army was awake and up. And Henry, who was ever a stirrer before the lark, was lolling at his tent-door, talking to Charles Brandon.

On went the nag, limping through a double row of eyes that stared in a silence of blank amaze through a full minute. But at the end of that time there was sound: the lame pastern of the palfrey struck a boulder; down he dived upon both knees; Bessie, with a pathetic 'Oh!' clutched at his mane; and at that stumble and feeble, pathetic 'Oh!' of her feeble womanhood, down the two rows of tent-doors, from top to bottom, rose and rang a unanimous shout of laughter.

Bessie rode west; Harry looked east. The first fore-running brilliance of the sun was in his eyes. He shaded them with horizontal palm under peering brows, to see.

At twenty feet from him a yeoman caught Bessie's bridle to stop her. Harry called:

'Let be...! Let be...!'

He had not yet seen quite well, nor realized. She limped nearer. Suddenly, back went his merry head, and he cried:

'Ha! ha! ha! Why, mamie—'

Instantly she was down before him, shivering like the sheeted dead, knife in hand.

‘You are the King,’ she gasped; ‘give me my sister!’

‘Oh, come, mamie, this is a bit strong,’ said Henry, making a ribald pretence of hiding away his eyes from her: ‘by God, ’tis strong, Charles! Ha! ha! ha! ha!’

Charles Brandon was doubling with merriment, hands on knees.

‘Give her back to me!’ she exclaimed passionately.

‘An the Queen were *here* — ,” cried out Brandon, squeaking the last word in a climax of laughter.

‘Mamie, mamie!’ said Henry, with shaking abdomen, ‘I am a married man: there is the Queen to be considered, with her Spanish jealousy — oh, ’tis strong, Charles!’

‘Is she here? Oh, will you not give her to me?’

My mother! believe me, I’ll *kill* you—’

She raised the knife. And now the situation changed: Henry held up averting hands: Charles Brandon gripped the raised arm in deadly seriousness.

‘My sister—’

‘Hold, hold, she speaks of a sister—’ said Henry.

‘Which sister?’ queried Charles Brandon.

‘You know! You know! You have her in the tent there—’

Henry and Charles exchanged wondering glances.

‘No, mamie, we’ve got no sis,’ said Henry with gentle sincerity.

‘What sister speak’st thou of?’ queried Charles again.

‘The sister you’ve come out to hunt and chase; oh! give her to me—’

Now Henry glanced quick at her face, and recognised it. He had seen it in Mauro Calvo’s den, under London Bridge.

“Tis Laura’s sister,’ he whispered at Brandon’s ear; and aloud: ‘Why, my poor dear, we have her not,’

And at that word, ‘*My poor dear,*’ down fell Bessie at the King’s feet, tears pouring on her face.

‘God’s pity!’ said he, ‘it weeps—’

And with the words, he snatched from a stool his riding-cloak, and with face of painful compassion, cast it round her body, stooping to clasp it at her neck.

This new clemency was too much for poor Bess: her heart broke, and in a paroxysm of sobs she spoke bubbling words of lost meaning, while Henry, bending over her, muttered:

‘God’s pity! it weeps! it weeps! Tut, tut! ’tis an honest, brave soul!’

‘Don’t do it’ — at last the words came with some: audibleness from the midst of her choking gasps—’ you declare me that she is not here, and, by my credit, I am believing you. But don’t do it — don’t hunt after her narrow more — don’t you! It is hard on a poor sister’s heart — it is not right — her mother left her to me — I don’t think the angels in Heaven, and the good God — don’t you do it! Sure, there is Something which sees and judges even a King — and hears the sobs of the helpless — and the cry of their appeal — in the day — of their sore — calamity. Don’t you! Leave her be! Oh do! Do now! She has nought but one riches — despoil her not of that! — houses and lands cannot give her back her soul’s stand and quality — and it would Kill me dead, I know, oh my! Hear the prayer of your poor subject, do, great King....’

At that moment the strong will of Harry yielded to the winning power of this girl, and he was truly a King and Shepherd of his people. His one hand lay on her bowed and spasming head; his other dashed a moisture from his eyes. He had a bosom quick and generous, and as he muttered for the tenth

time: ‘Oh, but God’s pity! ’tis an honest, good soul — !’, in his heart he renounced the pursuit of Laura Ford.

It was a mighty moment in the life of Henry — when the choice between Right and Wrong lay definitely before him — and the whole character of his Future, had he known it, depended upon his decision.

Really, one could almost imagine that at such a moment of crisis in a great man’s biography all the potentates of Heaven and Hell do silent battle for his soul in the air about him: something so horribly momentous seems to lie in a human creature’s power of moral choice.

There was a moment, we say, when the great river of that royal will was stemmed and turned by this Bessie. His hand on her bobbing head, his face stooped low to hers, he said:

‘Why, weep not, good Bess — stanch it, stanch it — am I not thy good Father and King, then — ?’

He stopped, hearing a sound: a faint, fluted sound from far away — *a bugle-sound*. At the same time Charles Brandon happened to utter this one word:

‘*Francis—*’

Down came Henry’s foot in a stamp of royal rage, and ‘Away with her!’ he cried with encrimsoned visage. ‘Ha! ’tis to *me* thou darest come, then, with thy whines and paltering pleadings? Charles Brandon! have the wench conveyed from my sight — quick, lad! Faith, she makes a fool of me....’

His words, begun in a roar, ended in a grumble of shame, and he beat a hurried retreat into the pavilion.

Charles followed him to say:

‘Perchance, the girl, if tracked hence, might yield us some trace of her sister—’

‘Oh, don’t be a dirty hound!’ grumbled Henry. ‘Let her begone, and have fair play. Toss her on a sound nag, and send her packing.’

He sat grumpy, leaning back, his head heavy on his hand, his bosom a rumbling cave of silent Sinai thunders, muttering awfully that he was Wrong.

If there be not God, whose is this dreadful, familiar Voice that we hear so close?

As for Bessie, in five minutes she was cantering down the tent-street, wrapped in the King’s riding-cloak.

The King had not Laura! Where, then, was Laura? Wherever she might be, Bessie was no longer in despair. It was Harry, Harry the Dragon, whose defiling breath she feared.

Laura at this time sat at the opening of the elm, wondering after Bessie.

She had awaked in the night refreshed, and heard a persistent twinkling sound of tambourines, far laugh, and virginal, and flute. Her hands had met in a single clap. Her light nature leapt always to the mere sound of dance and free jollity, from which now she was long divorced. She had stolen from Bessie’s embrace, peeped out, seen that Calvo was not there, whisked on her clothes, and gone to lurk and watch behind a hedge which backed the gay tavern-yard. When she returned, wet, Bessie was gone.

Through high day it was that Bessie galloped back to the elm, for fresh search in the forest; and seeing Laura there, and with her, Calvo, she uttered a cry, leapt, ran, trailing far the King’s cloak, and fell almost fainting upon her sister’s bosom.

CHAPTER XXV

WOLSEY'S RAGE



‘ALLOWING HIM A breath, a little scene,
To monarchise, be feared, and kill with looks.’
SHAKESPEARE.

IT had been Calvo’s cynical plan, as we said, to draw and concentrate upon him his pursuers — Francis, Harry, and all — to their mutual destruction, while he escaped to the coast. When on the point of putting it into execution, he was frustrated by his accidental separation from the girls. But the moment he found himself reunited with them, his mind recurred to it.

When Bessie arrived at the elm in the King’s cloak, Calvo was standing some distance from it, looking out for Sidney Boleyn, whom he had bid come to him with the morning. And very soon the pale-faced Rider appeared. He slipped to the ground and stood by Calvo, cap in hand.

‘I am going to confide a thing of great importance to you,’ said Calvo. ‘I trust you, you see.’

Sidney, with hands together, said:

‘My great and good master—’

‘How goes the pain?’

‘For three merry days not a twitch.’

‘Well, I deserve thy gratitude for that. I will tell thee. Thou knowest that there are a number of armed parties out after me and that poor girl’s sister. The sister with the face I could leave to her tholing without a single itch, but for the girl’s self I have, I confess, a sort of care. So now I am serious in my will to baulk these cattle, and my plan is to lead them all after my traces, and, at the last, have them gathered round a house or inn, where I can actually at a casement discover to them the silly face, to the intent that they shall rage with storm and brulziement within, working upon one another mutual havoc in narrow space, while I, with the girl and the sister, by a surely secret exit, do make good my escape. There should, I wager, be some such house or inn in Hampshire: and thy mete now it is to tell me it.’

Sidney pondered, searching the ground with shifting legs. He said:

‘There is the tavern at Baneleigh—’

‘Tell me of it.’

‘It lies six leagues hence, eight stone-throws only from Broughton Castle, and not two miles from my father’s seat. Oh, I know the landlord well; you could steal thither through field and wood, and for me, if you mention him my name, he would sure conceal you till your plan worked to ripeness—’

‘But the exit — ?’

‘The tavern makes part of the old Saxon Abbey of Baneleigh. It was the Abbot’s quarters, and from its cellars there leads an underground passage to the abbey-ruins, by which, as they tell, the Abbots were wont to surprise the jolly monks in refectory, though, more-like, ’twas but a sewer; and in this passage, oft and oft when a boy, I have spent dark days, rolling with pain.’

‘And the ruins are how far from the tavern?’

‘Say a hundred yards or less. The tavern stands by itself near the centre of a flat vale called Broughton Vale. It is made of gray-stone, with stone-

shafted oriels of Purbeck. In front it looks west upon the flat land round Broughton Castle; at its side, to the northeast, are the ruins, covered in forest; and all betwixt ruins and castle, and at the castle back, is store of rich forest-land: so your flight would be well hid.'

'Any villages?'

'Only one within a mile of the tavern; but all about the low hills encircling the valley you have little hamlets.'

'What names?'

'Fletcherfield, Stroud, Cleve, East Hythe, Winton, Little Baneleigh, and Sudbury Rye.'

Calvo muttered after him the names on his fingers, storing them in his bulging hard brow.

'Very good,' said he; 'I dare say it will answer. Wilt accompany me, thou?'

'Alas! I cannot now.'

'How so?'

'I encountered my half-sister Anne, two hours since, at Lee inn. She requisitions me to bear her a letter in haste to London; 'twas even with difficulty I escaped her to come but now to you.'

'Thou canst not say her nay?'

Sidney drew in his breath with a siffle.

'Nay,' said he; 'her anger is most terrible—'

'And to whom is it that thou bearest her letter?'

'To my lord Cardinal,'

'Aha! Well, go thy way, go thy way,'

Calvo waved him languidly off, and Sidney — with an obeisance to him, and a wave toward where Laura, with galloping volubility and hand-

gestures, recounted to Bess her week's adventures — mounted, and was gone.

To Lee inn he went, where Anne was preparing her letter to Wolsey.

The mere fact of her recent discovery that Wolsey, too, was hunting Laura Ford had given to Anne a scare, and upset her nerve. He could have no possible motive but her ruin. As Anne's game was to give Laura into the King's hands, so Wolsey's must be to keep her out of the King's hands, having her meanwhile in his own. And against all the searchers after the beauty Anne would have pitted her wits with an inward certainty of winning, but Wolsey was a different matter.

When she looked into the elm and saw Laura gone, her heart had sunk to her heel; when she searched all the wood and found no trace of her, she had despaired. For Wolsey, the great tempter, was at the ear of Calvo, and Calvo, she believed, would betray.

She despaired — almost. There was yet a hope — a card to play.

She had in her bosom the King's letter to Wolsey which she had picked from the slop-pouch of Mark Bonner. That letter contained the word 'divorce,' and also Anne's own name. Its publication, a hint of its contents to Charles of Spain, would precipitate upon the head of Wolsey a world of trouble with Charles, with the Pope; would dash his secret ambitions; would prepare for his taste a wormwood, and for his back a scourge.

With this knowledge she wrote her letter, casting off reserve, avowing open enmity, being all in a flurry and intensity of feminine scare. Only on the condition that Wolsey would withdraw at once and wholly from the chase of the girl Ford, would she, Anne, tormented, persecuted, and innocent maiden that she was, refrain from using to the utmost the powers which the possession of the King's letter gave. This, on five pages of close-written French, she said.

With the letter Sidney started about noon. Near Odiham he changed horse; at Chertsey he supped; near Staines he stopped late at a mareschal's for a shoe. Far into the night he rode at his habitual pace, crouching like a ghostly monkey on the stretched neck of his horse. At fore-day he reached London. Wolsey was at Hampton.

Off he went again. About nine he was bowing on the airy, flower-jewelled lawn before the great priest-man.

Here Wolsey, in cardinal red, took the air with short, quick-planted step, a little manual held open between thumb and finger; and behind him an old untidy gospeller shambled in black buckram, burdened with large books in pig-skin.

Wolsey, glancing down from the height of his thick stiff neck, saw the handwriting. He put out his hand, his superb coarse lips smiling their eternal smile of insolence. And as he read, he stepped, carrying his bulk in the very manner of a fat and haughty old dowager.

As he read, he smiled, and, having read, he smiled. He turned upon white-faced Sidney.

‘Art tired, poor lad?’ said he.

‘Yea, my lord.’

‘Then get thee through the archway there into the court, and bid a henchman let the carver feed thee full, and stable thy nag.’

He waited motionless till Sidney had disappeared, and twice his bright brown eyes moved from side to side in strenuous, agile, and potent thought.

Then he himself, almost at a run, went toward the palace. And now his brown visage was of the redder brown of passion.

He was a stupendous worker; he worked like the whirlwind. Here, in fact, was his main characteristic: that he worked like the whirlwind.

The travail of ten men through a week he would crowd with herculean rage into a single intense night's vigil.

Long before Sidney was half through his meal, he had set off with ten trusty men for Hampshire, he himself riding in a tylsent frock of simple Dominican black, a black mask over his brow and nose.

Like some frowning thunder-cloud he went, with spinning speed. And as he went, he said to himself: 'To-night, to-night, she must be in my hands....'

Few people lived who could have stirred him to action so furious. But for Anne Boleyn, who was, in truth, his evil destiny, his nature cherished a bitter hate. Her letter of threat had lit into raging flame his whole mine of supercilious arrogance. With spinning speed he went.

He had been kept well posted as to events in Hampshire — the movements of Francis, of Harry, of everyone, by his servants there. Already he knew of Havard's meeting with Calvo in the wood, and its results. He had been content to direct from Hampton the capture of the girl: but Anne's letter altered the matter. It gave him the first knowledge which he had that Anne, too, was a searcher. At once he pierced her motive. And he revered her wits, as she his: her presence on the spot necessitated his also. Expedience, therefore, urged his setting out; but chiefly whipped and flaming arrogance urged him.

The risk, however, of this his expedition was awful.

If Harry should get scent of it — ! and should get scent that his Cardinal's motive was to baulk and thwart him in his quest — ! Then would there be wrath and a stamping of the foot. Wolsey put on a black frock and mask.

He reached Mede Down at vespers, and there he had news of Mauro Calvo; he galloped on to Lee, and there he had news of Calvo; he went on to Halford, and there again he had news of Calvo.

His brow now was working profoundly: in this mere regularity of news his strong insight detected a mystery which as yet he did not solve.

At Mede Down, about noon of the previous day, three forest-keepers in Lincoln green, with buckhounds in leash, and jessed falcons on wrist, were passing through the village to the manor-house near, when a man in skull-cap rode up, and asked the way to Fletcherfield. He volunteered the information that to Fletcherfield with two maidens he was bound. The keepers realized that here was that Calvo for whom eyes were everywhere being kept open on behalf of my lord Wolsey. But before they could seize him, Calvo rode off. And this Wolsey heard at Mede Down.

Outside the village, in thick wood, Calvo had left Laura and Bessie — new-clad by the gift at a farmhouse of a home-spun gown of camlet-cloth — to await him, he being on the horse given to Bessie in the King's camp, and the girls afoot. From Mede Down they had proceeded to the neighbourhood of Lee, outside which, near curfew-toll, Calvo had left the maidens, and ridden into the village in undisguised skull-cap. There some local fête was in progress, for round a merry Maypole, fluttering with bandrols, three minstrels played recorders, sackbut, and kettle-drum. He trotted into the crowd, and asked his way to Sudbury Rye, volunteering the information that thither, with two maidens, he was bound; and while the yokels still meditated upon his face and skull-cap, had ridden off. And this Wolsey heard at Lee.

At Halford, the next matins, Calvo had trotted in and surprised a young inn-wife, who outside the inn-door leant, shouting morning salutations to gossips' windows, parading a brand-new stomacher of mohair powdered with minever. [Notice the rich dress of this woman. The author remembers now, on reading final proofs, that his motive for detailing it was to show the easy way of life of *the common peasant people* of that time, having in mind

the fact that the appropriation of English land by a small number of ignoble Noblemen had not then advanced to anything like the degree of guilty theft with which we are familiar in these our impossible days of ‘phossy jaw,’

‘lead-workers’ convulsions,’ and, gentle reader, ‘potter’s rot.’ In fact, the difference between our Royal Harry and his meanest peasant subject in physique, dress, and manners was very slight, England then greatly resembling France and Spain then, or even France and Spain now. I have read that somewhere about 1460 a Sumptuary Act was passed prohibiting ploughmen and their wives from wearing silver girdles and costly head-dresses — as though, forsooth, Parliament now should start prohibiting our ‘potter’s-rot’ classes from wearing silks and point-lace! The misery of it is, that the curse against Wrong is two-edged, ruining both the despoiler and the despoiled, there being a species of rot in the world even more damned than ‘potter’s rot’ — if we call it dry-rot! Between ‘fatness of soul’ and the ‘fat of the land’ the choice of the present writer is unhesitating.]

To her Calvo spake, begged a piece of pasty, and volunteered the information that ’twas for two maidens, with whom he was even then making for Little Baneleigh. And while she meditated upon his face and skull-cap, he, seeming to take fright, had ridden off. And this Wolsey, that same night, heard at Halford.

That Calvo had designedly published these three destinations, Wolsey divined at once, also that all were false, given out to mislead pursuers, since all could not be true. It was only when he rode on to Lipton, on the western side of Ross Water, that a possible truth in all these differing destinations was revealed to him, and instantly he saw light. Here Calvo had left the rumour that his destination was Stroud. Wolsey perambulated the inn-parlour with agitated, quick-planted step, rustling a *frou-frou* of his black

tylsent frock, masked, hands on chest. A man of fierce countenance was he that night.

‘And where is Stroud?’ he asked.

‘Tis a-top of Broughton Vale, your worship,’ answered the landlord.

‘Broughton Vale — where stands the castle of Sir James Broughton?’

‘The same.’

‘Stay: Fletcherfield — knowest where it lies?’

‘Fletcherfield, sir. ’Tis a village in Broughton Vale, too.’

‘And where is Little Baneleigh?’

‘Why, even a-top of Broughton Vale.’

‘And where is Sudbury Rye?’

‘Why, so God me save, even in that very Vale, at the top, your worship’s honour.’

Wolsey stopped his walk, scowling in thought.

‘Hath any person made search here to-day after this man?’

‘There was a lady, your worship, at the hour of sext, and a party of three about none, your honour’s worship. I gave them to know that his way lay toward Stroud, and for Stroud they went pelting.’

And at once Wolsey muttered:

‘Oh, then, I have the crafty knave.’

He hurried to the door; without a minute’s delay he was galloping with his ten from the village.

He remembered with intense self-complaisance that Sir James Broughton was under his thumb, his man, strongly bound to him. The castle, therefore, would afford a secure place of sojourn for him and his captives for that night at least, without the slightest chance that Henry should get wind of the capture, or of Wolsey’s presence in Hampshire. For

of a capture Wolsey was now certain. Calvo, he saw, was voluntarily surrounding himself with his pursuers, since all the destinations he had given out were round Broughton Vale, and his motive could only be their mutual destruction. To effect that, he must bring them into contact, must himself be in their centre: must have, too, for himself some sure way of escape. Wolsey knew nothing of Baneleigh tavern, little of Broughton Vale, but he divined, long before he reached it, that somewhere about its centre must be a subterranean passage.

Not once did he draw rein till he was clanging the belfry bell at the outer drawbridge of Broughton Castle. There was need for spinning haste, he knew....

Had not a lady called at Lipton 'at the hour of sext'? — a lady, he guessed, with wit as quick as his!

As a matter of fact, Anne Boleyn had all that day been learning at the villages the identical facts which Wolsey learned, and her astute brain had reasoned in his very manner, to arrive at his very conclusions: only with swifter decision, for she had old, familiar knowledge of the subterranean passage between tavern and ruins.

Wolsey's first question at the castle was as to the existence of such a passage in the neighbourhood.

Even as he asked it, Calvo, with Bessie and Laura, were feasting on calvered salmon, and perch in foyle, in the tavern-buttery, where they had been sumptuously received by the landlord on Calvo's mention of his friend, Flying Sidney. It was well past midnight, just that hour when, yonder in the dismal monastery ruins, the ghost of many an ancient monk flitted from dorter to chapel at the alarum of the bell for primes.

Calvo, with full mouth, was impressing upon a hostler at his side the order in which he should forthwith ride to the various villages, pretending

to come from the landlord, with the news that the girls were at the inn.

He knew that, led by his voluntary droppings of hints at villages, Francis, with eighty, now lay in tents upon Sudbury Rye; Henry camped at Little Baneleigh; Alvarada and Sir John Perrot occupied Stroud; Fitzgerald and Bonner, reunited now with Macdonald by the pursuit of a common trail, were at Fletcherfield; Northumbrian Percy, and also some Wolsey-men, were at Winton; Du Ballay and his knights at East Hythe. They lay an almost complete circle of arms and armour around Broughton Castle and Baneleigh tavern.

Calvo, with absolute cynical coolness, was on the point of sending out his messenger to bring them all upon the tavern, when carmine faded from Bessie Ford's cheekbones, and the sage's heart thumped once: for there was heard a furious, imperative battery at the inn-door.

Seven armed retainers from Ormond Hall stood there, hacking at the massive portal, among them their mistress. Anne was forcing the situation, bent upon driving Calvo through the subterranean passage before the moment of his plan was ripe. In the ruins, at the other end of the passage, waited three more of her father's men.

At once, at the sound of that battery, Calvo knew that in his lute was a rift, in the scheme a flaw: and his heart thumped once.

Before the inn-door fell in, the landlord put his head out of window, offering to open; whereupon Anne, leaving instructions with her seven to rush in and scour every nook, took to her brodequined heels, and went running up a holly-lane, splashing her surcoat of crimson velvet engrained, to watch the capture in the ruins.

Anne had risen from a feast at Ormond Hall, two miles off, to effect the capture. She had ready there a room to receive the long-searched fugitives.

But she had hardly run from the tavern-door, when a party of fifteen came up from Broughton Castle, among them Wolsey and his ten. He saw Anne's seven just pelting into the opened inn-door, and cried 'Halt,' divining at once that the lady who had called at Lipton 'at the hour of sext' was saving him trouble.

'Let her pick the apples, and I will eat them,' he thought, bridling with his smile. And he lifted his voice, adding: 'Be ready now to fall upon some caitiffs in the ruins, men. Forward with you.'

And forward through the holly-lane they went at a brisk march.

The lane ended in a wilderness of thorn-bush, trampled at one point into the indication of a path; then came a vista of bright-hued greensward between solemn, gnarled oak and wide-rooted beech; then a fragment of wall, part of the old Cellarer's Building; then three low flagged steps.

The party picked their echoing way up a nave of broken columns, roofless to the moon, and as they turned an angle where once was a corridor of cloister-dalles, and now only bushy growth mixed with stones, Anne, standing by a broken carrel-wall near the old refectory, saw them.

Her first impulse was to run to warn her three waiting men, her next to watch. She slipped behind the carrel, and as Wolsey passed, stepping quick, with an awful start, and a heart of ice, she knew him beneath his mask.

He had beaten her, he with his fifteen, she with her three.... In a craziness of rage she heaved up her clenched hands on high, grating them, and down again she swung them, and, catching a stone, heaved it up, screwing it to powder into the masonry, going, 'Oh, I must kill this man, or die! Oh, I must, I must—'

At the same time she heard three distinct sword-clashes; her three, surprised by the fifteen, had struck once, and run.

The flooring of the refectory had long disappeared, and it was on the cellar-level that Wolsey now entered between two still-standing walls. At one point some steps descended into a paved and pillared gallery, round the opening of which the men fell flat to wait, while Wolsey lurked behind a bramble-bush.

He had not waited a minute, when running feet sent up echoes from below. Calvo, hunted from behind by Anne's seven, was coming — was come. Bessie held Laura by the hand. Suddenly all were prisoners.

Calvo, for a minute, brooded calmly upon Wolsey's bulk through his tumble-down eyes, and muttered, 'The pork!' And Wolsey, for a minute, from the height of his bridled fat neck, looked smiling upon Calvo, and said, 'Now, Master Alchymist, you see....'

Bessie and Laura clung each to the other, held each by a man on either side, till the procession moved, and they were torn apart.

The way led through the forest which still lies between Broughton Castle and the ruins. As they went, Anne Boleyn was behind, tracking them. And no sooner was she sure that the castle was their destination, than sudden new hope leapt in her rancorous heart. The King was near...!

She turned at once and ran like a torn-boy for the tavern. Her seven were even then streaming out. She rushed past them, crying, 'Mine host!' and when he appeared in a corridor, her gasp was, 'Ink! ink! and a pen!'

At that moment she spied Flying Sidney, who had arrived from London, and come hither to see how Calvo fared.

'Sidney!' cried Anne, renouncing her purpose of writing, 'hither! The King's camp is at Little Baneleigh: go thither — flying, thou hearest? — and seek out Charles Brandon. Tell him I say that Laura Ford is now — this moment — in Broughton Castle, taken there by Wolsey. Stay not gaping, fool! Get gone — fly!'—'

Flying Sidney, who cherished a deep terror of Anne, was impelled to obey: and flying he went. But by now he well divined that Anne was, in some way, for some reason, hostile to Calvo, and he reasoned that, if the news communicated to Henry were communicated also to the other parties, whose whereabouts he knew from the landlord, then would the evil he was bound to do to the Master be counteracted.

He had, therefore, no sooner whispered to Charles Brandon the great news than he was off to Stroud, where lay Alvarada; and thence to Sudbury Rye, to the camp of Francis; and thence to Fletcherfield, where were Fitz, Mac, and Bonner; and to Winton, where was Percy; and to East Hythe, where was Du Ballay. And when his hard ride was accomplished, and his reeking horse swayed to drop, he saw a glimmering of morning in the East.

And when, an hour later, the full day broke, it saw the plain before Broughton Castle dotted white with leaguering tents, and champing steeds, and batteries of cannon, and groups of glittering armour — for all had come.

CHAPTER XXVI

BEFORE THE CASTLE



‘HARK! HARK! THE trumpet swells
A deep soul-thrilling strain!’
SIGOURNEY.

THE castle-front looked East, and well to its South lay the purple pavilion of Henry, surrounded with tents; while to the North, a mile perhaps away, close on an edge of forest, a still more resplendent erection of cloth-of-gold of baudekin, raised with flowers-de-luces of bullion-gold, marked the centre of Francis’ camp, a great ensign on its summit shaking from out its shimmering silken folds lazy whispers of War.

Henry and Francis had met — this time assuredly to try a bout together.

The castle was strong, of old Norman building, the front and sides being defended by two parallel curtains bastioned at intervals with those semi-circular bastions called ‘roundels,’ before each curtain being a fosse and drawbridge, and before the outermost drawbridge an outwork barbican with palisades. The donjon-keep was a square pile of smooth stone.

Two of the investing parties, Percy’s and the Wolsey-men, seeing the castle front watched by others, took station at the castle back, which likewise was defended by parallel bastioned curtains, thus to cut off the fugitives’ escape that way: for the Wolsey-men, through Sidney’s crafty

silence, were without suspicion that their master was anywhere in Hampshire.

This was the disposition of things when, at seven in the morning, Sir James Broughton, a burly, bald-headed man of fifty years, broke into the chamber where Wolsey slept.

‘My good lord Cardinal,’ he blurted with opening arms, ‘the whole castle, north, south, east and west, is invested with tents and armed men!’

Wolsey’s start shook the massive low bedstead. There broke from his lips the terrified question:

‘Is *the King* among them?’

‘Among them, yea, my lord! Hark! A bevy of six heralds with pursuivants e’en now approach the outer drawbridge blaring fanfares on horns and bugles! Oh, my lord! — they come from the King with his demands!’

‘Well, let them come.’

Already Wolsey smiled, though with agitated underlip.

‘My lord — !’

‘The King is a naughty child, and sometimes needs the birch, Sir James.’

‘And there is that other one — Francis!’

‘You will not yield.’

‘What! not to the King?’

‘No.’

‘Why, my lord—’

‘Listen to *me*, prithee—’

‘But my neck, my neck, my good lord Cardinal!’

‘Round your neck is the arm of *my* protection, Sir James. The King will proffer his demands in the name of the Golden Knight, I think — yes, I think’ — he was frowning, reading as in a page the secrets of Henry’s

character on the wall— ‘in the name of the Golden Knight. And you know not at all the Golden Knight, Sir James, nor whence he is. You will refuse, refuse. How many men with you?’

‘Some sixty in the castle.’

‘Enough. Myself will captain them. Leave me.’

Sir James hurried away, while Wolsey cautiously levered and lowered himself from the bed.

The horn-blasts were now blaring at the outer castle-gate. The drawbridge there was down, and as they came blowing, their horns hanging big silken bandrols, a rumble of chains announced the rising portcullis. The foremost of the heralds, carrying an ensign emblazoned with argent, a cross, and gules — the arms of St. George — passed the first escarpment — over the bridge — under the dark portcullis-arch; and there, to meet them, came the castle-seneschal, backed by half a dozen pikes and carabines.

‘Embassy, embassy, my masters,’ said he.

Herald - king - at - arms cocked forth one cordovan buskin, held up a parchment, and read pompously:

‘The puissant Knight, who hath acquired throughout all Christendom the style and cognisance of “the Golden,” demandeth forthwith the persons of the three fugitives who, pending and during the night, have taken refuge within this stronghold from the lawful quest of the said Golden Knight: and this under menace of instant storm with arrow, steel, and shot, from the part of the said Golden Knight.’

Not a word concerning Wolsey in this summons; for though Flying Sidney had delivered Anne’s message that Wolsey it was who had seized the fugitives, to Henry this was incredible, and, with wrinkled brow, he had said: ‘This, faith, cannot be....’

But great now was his surprise when his heralds returned with a flat refusal from the castle-seneschal. Sir James Broughton had no knowledge of the Golden Knight; and Sir James contemned the misproud pretension of the said Knight to the person of any person within the precincts of Broughton.

This was an answer dictated word for word by Wolsey; and Henry, hearing it, frowned a most piercing frown, astonished, wondering at the motive of Sir James Broughton, with a thought of Wolsey rising a moment in a back corner of his brain.

He stamped; and ‘Ha!’ cried he, ‘knows he not the Golden Knight, then? But the stupid addle-pate shall know in a banging lesson before — ! Knevet, Nevil, Charles — !’

He was interrupted by a blare, coming from northward yonder across the plain; six heralds of Francis in doublet and hose of gold-cloth, and blue velvet cloaks pounced with *fleur-de-lys* and Venice twists, were at the outer drawbridge.

Henry, hearing the sound, went down a street of tents, and stood looking, surrounded by his gentlemen. The heralds entered the gates. Above yonder on the battlements were signs of unusual stir; burdened men throwing their burdens into heaps near the bartisans, runnings to and fro, a group placing a springal in position, and dream-shouts from afar calling something in the morning sky.

Already it was difficult to observe the movements of the heralds at the drawbridge: for the plain was filling with creatures of all sorts, women with butter and poultry, lazy forage-carts, paniered donkeys, mules with water-butts, ‘sturdy beggars,’ loiterers, samples of all Hampshire, esquires, butchers, publicans, ‘and yonder in serried march a troop of ten ‘martialists,’ retainers of a neighbouring hall, who, having scented the battle

from afar, came to offer their prowess to the seneschal, or to the leaguering camps — little it tided which.

So that now, as it were suddenly, the quiet plain was a-move, by miracle: as when one looks through a glass at what, to the bare eye, was dead matter, and, lo, it is all a-crawl, and swarms into movement Back through this crowd, not yet immense, but thickening every minute into immensity, came the heralds of Francis — and came without the fugitives.

Henry stood looking, gnawing his pout, measuring with a nervous contraction at the cheek-bones, as though he tasted acid, the events born here and now before him for his manipulation.

‘Well, you see, the black-faced’s heralds return with their tails between their legs,’ said he.

‘Francis, sure, will storm the castle, sire,’ said Charles Brandon—’ unless anon you order its surrender in your proper title as King.’

‘Thou talk’st like a — Ha! and have that Goat saying that I made unknightly use of my chance of kingship to out-do him in a strange land? ’Tis what he *would* say, the chattering Ape. Nay, we storm, we storm: here are no kings, Charles, but only knights,’

‘And when we have done all the hard work of storming, Francis slips in, and is off with the girl, sire.’

‘He! off with that girl? He? Oh so! Aha! I tell thee, Charles Brandon, within seven days from the day he touches her, I land seventy thousand fighting-men on the Norman coast to burn and harry all they meet!’

‘Amen, sire, I say. But, meseems, some arrangement must be come to—’

‘Hold — who the pestilence are those?’

‘Those seem like one of the searching parties, sire.’

Henry flew into a passion.

‘Who the pestilence, man, are these searching parties? Searching parties, quotha? *Who* are these lousy rats I hear of? With what motive, and by what right, search they where I search? By God’s light, this is something new to me, you know! Tis a bit strong! Searching parties, quotha? *Who* are they, *where* are they, *what* are they?’

Brandon shrugged his shoulders.

‘Faith, I know not, sire. There is one fellow I have heard of called Fitzgerald; and also I have heard it whispered that my lord Wolsey—’

‘My lord *who*?’

‘My lord Wolsey, sire,’

‘You babble, man, you babble like a daw! He wouldn’t dare — I tell you he wouldn’t *dare* — Ha! and this Fitzgerald, what of him?’

‘He is one of the searchers, sire,’

‘But he should be searching for *me*, the base tyke! If not for me, then for whom? Yet someone declared me that he had been seen to fight for Francis! What *means* it all?’

‘If that be he yonder, as is like from his stature, sire, then he must even be a searcher on his own proper count; for, faith, the effronted knave seems about to summon the castle.’

It was true that up the very gentle slope to the barbican and drawbridge Fitzgerald did, at that moment, saunter; by his side stepped natty Mac; and before him Bonner, having at his scarlet lips a horn, borrowed but now from one of the race of butcher-boys, who, at that time, went their rounds a-horse, with horns.

And, ‘Boy,’ quoth Fitz, as he went sauntering hugely with lazy and laggard swagger, ‘sure thou blowest a herald’s clarion like a flute. Give wind. ’Tis not Laura which thou serenadest, but a castle which thou summonest.’

Bonner, blowing with both cheeks, did not hear.

‘Well, if this be not a hardy thing we do — !’ said Mac, throwing up his head with a laugh.

‘I take it that we be two hardy fellows, Mac.’

‘No chance, Fitz; no chance,’

Fitz ground his teeth.

‘Chance there shall be!’

‘But how?’

‘Pah! I know not. But this I say: ‘ware the man that lays a finger on yon maiden while one last whiff of breath dwells in this carcase. Mac, lad, we have sworn an oath.’

‘Aye — I remember it well. But — I see no chance here,’ said Mac, who looked at facts and saw the future soberly; ‘they are many, we are two.’

‘Two and a herald, Mac — give wind, boysie! — and two who have sworn. And, maugre all, why not a chance? This King and the French champion here will sure storm; and, at the *entrée*, we rush in and take the prize — !’

Here Bonner, with thrown-back long-ringleted head, blew from his bladder-cheeks a final blast as they stepped over the springy drawbridge.

They entered. Bonner pronounced his demand for the fugitives; and the seneschal, having finished his laugh, said:

‘Nay, my masters, better drop the pleasant jape ye play, and come aid us defend the castle against the rest.’

‘You yield them not — ?’ said Fitz.

‘Why, nay.’

‘Then, sir, we take your castle by storm.’

Having said which, the three turned, and walked back to their station between the two royal camps.

This whimsical notion of demanding the girls, under threat of storm with four arms, had arisen in the mind of Fitz in a moment of levity and twinkling eyes; Mac had thrown up his head with a laugh; and Bonner had said: 'Make me your herald, and, as Jericho, so shall Broughton fall, to the blare of a horn,'

But no sooner was the whim in progress of quixotic execution, than the Condé Alvarada, who had taken station two stone-throws from Fitzgerald, found it highly knightly and pleasant to his fancy; so that Fitzgerald was hardly back, when another party of four — Alvarada, Sir John Perrott, and two Queen's-men — one blowing a horn, were on the way to the drawbridge.

And now the contagion of bombast spread. Du Ballay, with four knights, followed, demanding surrender in a fictitious name. The French Ambassador, indeed, had long since discovered the identity of the Black Knight, his master; but his master's purpose in the search being personal, and his political, and antagonistic, he had chosen to maintain his incognito and separateness.

Henry still stood looking at all this blowing and flourishing with a sort of angry wonder. It was high noon, when the Wolsey-men, having got wind of the prevailing passion for castle-summoning, came from the castle-back, blaring a fanfare, marching solemnly through a lane of gapers up to the drawbridge. In a fictitious name their leader demanded surrender.

And last of all, as these went back to station, came Percy and seven Northumbrians, he, with his busy bowlegged roll, bearing the great ensign of Alnwick through a lane of gapers, while from the tense cheeks of all the seven brayed a fervent bravura, whose flagrant, rough blare reached far to Baneleigh tavern.

But at that blast the walls of Broughton did not fall, and Percy came back without the fugitives. And now the lane of gapers disappeared in the swarm of waiting loiterers.

CHAPTER XXVII

HENRY AND FRANCIS



‘THEN THOSE TWO Kings anigh they drew
Withouten Berwick-town;
There were steeds that flew, and trumps that blew,
And pacings up and down.’
‘THE JOUST.’

BUT it was a day of embassies. In five minutes another lane had formed between the camps of Francis and Henry, and down it paced in passmented velvet buskins, and gorgeous cloaks fastened with aiglets of diamonds, six French heralds, escorted by six knights with band-roled lances, on chargers housed and purfled in gold and ermine. And on, blowing a blare, they passed slowly to the purple pavilion, on their banner a cognizance of *fleur-de-lys*.

They bore a proposition from Francis: since the castle was strong, for what cause should not the Black Knight and the Golden amicably unite forces in its attack, up to the moment of its impending fall — in case it fell — thereupon to cease concert, and thenceforth act each for himself in the seizing of the final prize?

Henry packed back the heralds, promising reply; and in half an hour his own six, with pursuivants, accompanied by yeomen with gilt pole-axes,

paced blaring through the lane of gapers to the blazing pavilion of Francis.

Henry agreed, but added a condition. Up to the moment of impending fall, concert — each general captaining his own forces: but then, single combat between the two knights to decide right to the possession of the fugitives; then again, disinterested concert in the taking of the stronghold.

Francis sent back the heralds, promising reply; and in half an hour his six appeared, blaring, pacing toward the camp of Henry.

He agreed. But called the attention of the Golden Knight to the fact that the Black and the Golden Knights were not the only knights, having the same objects, then on the field; and though the forces of those others were not magnificent, yet knightly courtesy was not wholly a dead thing in Christendom — a slap that stung the cheek of Henry to crimson. He proposed in addition: Concert between all the assembled knights up to the moment of impending fall, then single combat between the two leaders who first had arrived that morning on the field; then combat between the victor and the leader who third had arrived on the field, and so on, till each leader had fought; and the final victor should have right to the possession of the fugitives; then again, concert of all in the taking of the stronghold.

To and fro went the gaudy, solemn processions across the plain, blaring always, filling the long day with unnecessary noises. The hot afternoon sun sloped far westward. The great ensign of Francis drooped without a stir. Yonder over the stately battlements of the square donjon drooped, too, the red Broughton standard, blazoned with the house's hatchment, martletts and a patonee, without a stir. A smoke from the midst of Henry's camp galloped straight up, unrolling itself on high into a perfect Prince of Wales' plume, without a stir. The plain, thronged now, festered in sultry swelter. The noise of the morning had died into a low, universal buzzing murmur. A bleating of sheep, and a lowing of oxen, was plainly heard, during each lull of the

flourished trumpets, in the two camps. Ten thousand mouths gaped stupidly at the passing and blaring heralds.

For Henry had refused to recognise the other searchers; and Francis had insisted, the Frenchman's *motif* being partly his native amiability, and partly a pretension to a finer degree of knightly nicety than Henry's — Henry's *motif* a haughty disdain to enter into competition with his own subjects, dogs for whom he intended, when he came to know and seize them, only the Tyburn halter. And so there arose and wrangled an angry deadlock.

It was only toward sunset that Henry, at the earnest prayer of all his gentlemen, gave way: for Francis at that hour sent the threat to make the proposed terms with all the parties, excluding only the party of the Golden Knight, an arrangement which would have combined against Henry at the in-rush a phalanx of skilled force, fatal to his purpose. He dashed down a pen, and stamped, and yielded: for he was in frantic earnest now to have Laura Ford within his tent.

Then came more fanfares and heraldings, as the twilight deepened. Three of Francis' heralds, in solemn deputation with three of Henry's, went seeking the parties of knights. The Wolsey-gallants they found noisily drunk round the vast cave of one of the hatch-mented fireplaces of old Baneleigh tavern; and in the long-dead Abbot's solar, lolling in the embrasure of a stained window, Fitzgerald and Bonner drunk, and Mac sipping mead. But not too drunk to apprehend and assent; for 'Bravo,' cried Fitzgerald, 'for the Black Knight, who is as gallant a gentleman as ever stuck a kern! and long may he live, if not on earth, in heaven; for here, boysie, have I the sword he gave me, and an I chance to meet him, as is like, I'll draw it, boysie, I will —'

Fitz drew the flashing excalibur, and held it aloft.

By this time Du Ballay, Percy, and Alvarada had each received and agreed to the offers of the kings; and there remained only the question of leadership of the united forces. Back and forth through the now deserted plain went still the heralds, lighting the darkness with cressets and pole-torches. The Black Knight proposed the leadership to the Golden; the Golden proposed the leadership to the Black. Neither would yield, and there arose and wrangled a new deadlock of courtesy.

Three of the smaller parties now lay in tents provided them by Francis, all well beyond artillery-range from the battlements, except Percy, whose sentinels watched the castle-back under the shelter of forest-trees. And to all, once again, paced the loud and torch-lit herald-band on the question of Leadership. The Wolsey-men and Fitz at the tavern slept sound, but Macdonald gave his voice for Francis; and so did all, except young Percy, who claimed Henry for general. And so Francis yielded with his smile and bow, and was leader of the siege.

Now the castle-clock tolled midnight, and in the abbey-ruins many a raw-eyed ghost rose at that sound for matins; over the plain the far yelping and whining of some forlorn wolf was heard, and around the battlements the sentries walked like soldiers of wood.

At this hour my lord Cardinal, sitting at a table, and bending his red-veined bastion of a brow over a plan of the castle and its defences, said to a liveryman:

‘Bring me hither that Calvo.’

Calvo and the girls had been placed in three roomy apartments intercommunicating at the castle-back behind a locked portal.

He came in ten minutes walking slow, with a push-forward of alternate shoulders, hands behind.

Wolsey, now quick-stepping about the hall, presently stopped and faced the sage; from the high-tower of his bridled neck he smiled, with pressure of his upper lip, his superior little smile of insolence.

‘Now, Mr. Alchymist, you see—’ said he.

‘See what, my lord of York?’

‘You are my prisoner.’

‘I see, yes, I see. I thought you had more sense.’

‘How mean you?’

‘Is it not rigolo for a man like me to be in such a position with respect to a man like you? Have you not yet travelled so far in thought as to know that I am a better man than your Excellency, since I see more, know more?’

‘You are wrong, sir. The value of an Eye consisteth not at all in what, by much study, it hath seen, but solely in what it is capable of seeing: in other words, not knowledge, but Wisdom, is the testimony of worth, and the core of greatness. Thus, you have more knowledge of chymics than I, but I more wisdom of life than you — and so have made you my prisoner, sir. Come, now!’

‘With ten armed men ’tis not methinks a wisdom so vastly profound to make one man a prisoner!’

‘But, by wisdom, should you have calculated that I have these ten armed men ever at command, and skill to guide them; and so should you have embraced my offer of terms when I made it you.’

‘I did not choose to abandon the girls, that is all.’

‘Are they parents of yours?’

‘No, no, perfect strangers: but helpless without me.’

‘So? Then was pride in your single skill, and a naughty contumacy, the causes of your resistance to my will.’

‘Yes, that was it, that was it, you may be sure.’

‘Was not my offer large and liberal?’

‘Wondrous large and liberal: even for the making thereof I thank and praise you.’

‘Then why refused you?’

‘I chose, that’s all — I chose.’

‘‘Twas pride—’

‘Ah! that was it.’

‘Or was it not rather a good benevolence toward the maidens, meriting praise and honour — ?’

‘What is it you want me for, sir? I prithee, preach not to me: ‘twere rigolo, verily; my heart is hard.’ Wolsey stepped twice through the room; returning to Calvo he held out his hand, intending that the sage should kiss it: but Calvo languidly shook it, with forced politeness.

‘I consider you honest,’ said Wolsey, ‘and my eyes are good. After this siege you may call me patron.’ Calvo bowed low.

‘You wot that there *is* a siege, by the way? Archimedes at the siege of Syracuse invented burning glasses, and destroyed the enemies’ ships for the townsfolk. May we expect something similar from you?’ Here was the real design of this interview, and Wolsey knew how to wrap his flatteries in honey. At the comparison with Archimedes, Calvo was inwardly soothed and pleased, and he said:

‘If I think of anything, I will tell you: and for the kind proffer of your puissant protection I really give you hearty thanks,’

He bowed, and was led away, and locked behind the portal.

And with that idea of ‘thinking of something’ he paced a long time through the three chambers of his prison; ascended by a short ladder-stair to the battlements, and there paced; descended, and paced. The three rooms were exceedingly spacious and lofty, and had once been rich, being

tapestried with light sendal; but now, at one point, the flooring was decayed, and repairs were in progress, for in a corner leant four or five very long planks, with a great basket of osiers containing tools and sawdust. And suddenly Calvo, looking at the silken hangings and the long planks, stopped short and slapped his brow. And after awhile he muttered:

‘Hot air is lighter than cold — *much* lighter even. And why should not that fact be applied to practice? Why not? Seeking hog-wash for the pork, I may have found mainemy-royal for myself.’

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SIEGE



‘THE LOUDEST BLAST

That ever filled Renown’s obstreperous trump.’

KIRKE WHITE

THAT night, for several leagues round Broughton, every inn was crammed, and every village awake with revelry. From far and wide, from many a hall and manor, from many a chase and forest-side, castle and abbey, had come jaunting both lord and lady, keeper and esquire, seneschal and liveryman, tramp and yokel and friar, justice and reeve and martialist. The Bishop of Winchester, gallant prelate of the Order of the Garter, slept at Sudbury Rye; the High Sheriff of the County at Baneleigh tavern.

For their life was easy and jocund, not hopelessly ugly and heavy; and the lust of the eye was fresh.

Even when morning broke, roads were still streaked with trains of horses jogging all toward Broughton Vale: for the fame of this joust of arms had travelled, stirring the tough and merry heart of England.

But when the sun was high the castle-plain was empty, for it was a place of danger now. Only, far back toward the tavern, was visible a region of human heads stretched out wide into innumerable vagueness.

On the plain was a rattle of the old kettle-drums named nakers, pattering to arms; and bugles were calling in the air; and the battlements of the

donjon were lined with men. And now down the escarpment from the outer drawbridge came a trotting cohort to the sally-port of the barbican, among them three of the seven castle-priests, and a fourth priest, not of the castle, who carried his black-robed bulk with quick-planted step, and directed in person the defence.

An early meal was over now in the two camps; and as three batteries of eighteen pieces swept out from the French camp, and galloped with blundering row after ponderous Norman horses south-westward over the field, a battery and a half of nine pieces swept out from the camp of Henry, and galloped north-westward to meet the three. And as they met a shower of arblast-arrows from a bastion of the curtains whizzed in the air, and fell far short. So commenced the day.

And immediately from both royal camps burst two gallant arrays of horsemen, showing pennoned lances and drawn swords, cantering in unanimous phalanx, Francis and his troop raven from their floating casque-plumes to their steel-shoes, and Henry's band winking gaudy as a patch of sunset on a wobbling water. And as the artillery advanced at a walk, these two troops fell in behind it, the troop of Francis containing all the small parties engaged in the quest of Laura Ford, except those watching the castle-back.

Suddenly the barbican barked: a great stone ball from a thirty-three pounder demi-cannon plunged into the earth, and spurted gravel upon the besieging limbers thirty yards away. The artillery horses reared and plunged, and Francis behind his beaver laughed, for he liked that sound.

Down the straight-ruled front of the bristling phalanx he pricked briskly, riding with easy adeptness the choppy sea of his curvetting and caracoling charger, noting the disposition of Henry's men, where were the axes, where the pikes and carbines, and how many, and in what formation; and Henry,

collared with the collar of the Garter, and all a blaze of golden points, eyed him sullenly behind his visor, gnawing his pout. And as Francis began to speak, well he knew that shrill and jocund voice.

‘I propose,’ Francis said in syllabled English, ‘that we attack first the outwork, beginning with cannon, and at the just moment making dash with scaling-ladders, petards, and grenadoes. My aim, you surmise, is not so much the barbican itself, as the expelling of its defenders: an event which will induce the warders of the first drawbridge to lower the bridge for passage of their friends, while we are yet busied on the outwork. Now, a lowered drawbridge is the soldier’s chance, as saith the proverb. Yon archers, you halberds, yon carbines, and the left half of my front-line men, will therefore dismount, now, at the lifting of my sword; and their chargers will be led backward to picket by the rest, to yonder hillock beyond the reach of shot. There will the non-fighters stand, dismounted, to the moment when my clarion from the barbican shall announce the defenders in retreat; and then will they spring to horse, gallop like black-riders, and grip by surprise one — or ha! — *both* of the bridges at the edge of the sword. Artillery — halt! — Knights and warriors — I lift my sword!’

Bustling movement followed his cry: men leaping from horses, snatching at implements, half the host cantering backward with led horses, among them Henry, keenly piqued at a post of inaction. At the same time a puff of gray left an embrasure of the barbican, and another thirty-three pounder from a mortar’s mouth arrived, almost as soon as the report, with smash and fracas upon a scaling-ladder borne on a gun-carriage, crushing a gunner, and thence pitching far down the slope.

The answer was swift: the line of the assailants’ artillery, now within the eight hundred yards’ range of its twenty-four pounder sakers, and seventeen-pounder culverins, opened, at the signal, unanimous fire; and at

once it was as though there had popped above-ground the broad visage of some ogre, breathing fumes, with twenty-seven bleared eyeballs of baleful flame.

The shock was almost like a single hoarse hoot — the ogre's exclamation; and in half a minute the barbican appeared nothing but a drifting cloud of powdered stone. From the cloud, however, came voices, and spouts of fire: and balls of stone played in the air, beyond the skill of juggler's hand. Along the line of assailing cannon black-faced gunners wrought fiercely in a flutter of action, cleaning, spying into muzzles, ramming hard for life; and first done first shoot; so that now the fire was in the quavers and semi-quavers of that thundering organ-board, two notes with quick bang-bang, or three, then pause and minim, then competitive mixed howl and barking chord of many a throat, then quick semi-quaver bang-bang, in twos and threes. And suddenly yonder, half way down the keyboard of gleaming cylinders, there darts into the air a swarm of splintered metal, and flying wood, mixed with smoke and limbs of men; for a falconet, with huge hubbub and detonation, has burst as it shot, as falconets were apt to do. And of the many juggler's-balls in the air, some fall well, cracking carriages, horses and men, or ploughing pebbles that shoot like pistol-shots; two swooping even among the infantry twenty yards to rear, crushing in their midst two chasms of emptiness where full hearts had beat; only Francis, riding between artillery and infantry, and anon ducking with half-playful upward glance, they cannot and must not touch: for the jealous observation of Henry is upon him.

It lasted three full hours, till the sun was hot in the forenoon; and eleven of the twenty-seven pieces of ordnance were burst, and *hors-de-combat*; twenty gunners mangled; the rest parched and nerveless; and the barbican, where Wolsey was the marksman, stood whole.

Francis put hand to side, and blew the bugle-call of retreat. The two troops rode back, bearing seven wounded, each to its camp; the stagnant smoke, which grew like ghost-cotton from all the wide plain, thinned slowly; and the sun stole from noon to hot afternoon amid a waiting silence profound as the waiting silence of the grave.

It was broken by sudden trumpet-call from Francis' camp. This was near two.

Again swept out the two artilleries with blundering row, and the black host, and the golden, to take stand as before, in the same disposition.

And with hope: for the face of the round barbican was now deep-eaten, and battered rough; and at the very first new round, the assailants shouted cheers, for from the top there disengaged itself a cake of battlements and fell in powder; in twenty minutes an irregular breach appeared; and Francis, tossing his bridle to a servitor, went prone, calling, inviting, with forward-pointing sword.

Then came the hot 'dash,' rolled all in smoke, riddled with shot, and galled with arrows, as when one urges blinking, bitter way against storm-dashed hail. Fast now fell the fighters, as they pressed nearer and nearer within range of quarrel-headed shaft, and shot of every size and form, rained not only from the barbican itself, but from the nearest of the first - curtain bastions. Backward through the on-pelting host of the assailants streamed and bickered many a flare of red — pine-torches snatched from the gun-carriages to fire the petard-fusees; and ten scaling ladders, overlying the bent and pushing phalanx, sailed steadily toward their goal; the guns, meanwhile, of both battery and barbican still flashing in demi-semi-quaver bang-bangs, or brawling chords of competitive uproars; while Francis, ever in advance, called and invited, with one prone-bent knee, and wildly-pointing sword.

But though the dash was hot, and costly, and rash, the result was swift. A scalding bouillon of liquid lead thrown freely from window-slit and battlement, and ladders flung backward with all their freight, could not save. Petards and grenadoes, thrown through breach and over battlement, were cracking in an ear-splitting distraction of darting fury, doing red-hot execution everywhere, popping back, some of them, with shout of spouting fire upon their throwers. The erection was divided into two stories, the breach made by the cannon being in the upper; but too high for the defenders on the upper floor to repel the inrush from ladders placed outside that point; and at the intrusion of the shoulders of Francis, a general cry of: '*Sauve qui peut* F' went up to the men on the roof. Down they rushed pell-mell, their leader among them, his face black as his robe; and after a short sword-scrimmage with three of the assailants, they contrived, all but four slain, to scuttle through the trap to the lower stage, and slam down and secure above their heads the iron slab called 'peerplate.'

The assailants were now swarming, all of them, over the barbican, it being part of the *ruse* of Francis to leave the ground quite empty: for in the lower stage the defenders might have held out some time, if danger barred their retreat, since the sally-port was of thick iron-work. Accordingly, the assailants were set to beat upon the peerplate, as if concentrating their purpose upon it, while Francis crouched behind a battlement above. After some minutes, the sally-port opened; then followed an out-rush of the defenders; and as they rushed, the drawbridge moved downward; and as it moved, Francis put bugle to lips.

Now was the chance of Henry. The cavalry, waiting half a mile away, spurred forward. And all the castle, from donjon to curtain, in an alarm of surprise, flew to its self-defence.

The horsemen rode therefore into a pelt of missiles which thickened continually as it advanced; but before the barbican-men were half-way across the bridge, the knights were dashing on foot upon it, their abandoned horses ranging for the time over a plain already sown with carcasses of men and beasts. Here the assailants were not far from the two nearest first-curtain bastions, which poured in upon them a blistering fire; but now the won barbican turned its still-acting guns against its own mother; and the assailants' artillery, too, galloped near, and talked; and all the air was a hubbub of complex war, filled with crackle, and whizz, and boom.

And still on pressed the cavaliers, fresh men against faint, Henry foremost, and after him Brandon, Nevil, and Knevet. Once, at the last moment before the portal, some of the flying barbican-men turned sharp with cocked blunderbusses and horse-pistols, one covering with his muzzle the royal bosom. And they fired. But the weapon aimed at Henry was knocked up by a swift hand — the hand of Wolsey, who hissed only 'Stupid daw!', and rushed on.

The next moment the outer drawbridge was won; the warders slain; the chains axed; and since the inner remained aloft, the fugitives, after a short, unequal, and ever - retreating hand-to-hand struggle against the operating axe of Henry and the knights, flung themselves down the escarpment of the inner moat, to become in the black water the target of occasional wanton missiles from the victors.

The captors of the barbican had now descended to join in the storm. Three of the outer bastions were taken at the sword's edge, and occupied: and to defend the castle there were now left hardly forty men. After the stationing of guards, the clarion of Francis blew. The castle seemed all but won. The sun was low to its setting.

On a planchette within one of the boldly-projecting machicolations near the donjon-battlements sat Bessie Ford, wide-eyed, tightly holding the hand of Laura. Laura, since she had the liberty to ascend a small stair and gain the top, could not be kept from seeing, and constantly clapped a single hand-clap. Bessie had followed to protect, though, in fact, the donjon was as yet safe from shot. She had her chin in her hand, gazing numb through all the long day's loud action and to-do. And the thought in her heart was this:

‘Well, my mother! Can all this affairing be on the count of my sister Laura? Oh, my boding heart! — my heavy, boding, boding heart!’

But, as for Calvo, he was below in their three rooms, working hard, forgetting the siege, Bessie Ford, himself, and all things: fall only of interest in a Thought of Nature, a New Thing which he would do with his brain.

Ever as he worked, he said to himself:

‘Hot air *is* lighter than cold....’

He had cut from the long planks, leaning there, two circles of wood; and in the circumference of these he had cut regular square notches all round, and into the projecting cogs bored holes to admit a wire; then he had set to work to saw with the workmen's saw long laths of planking, and these he had cut up into limber strips an inch wide, a quarter inch thick, very long and pliant, and warily cut, till he had eight of them. At each end of each he bored a hole through the width to admit a wire, for he had left the strips thicker at their ends; and with a stout wire taken from his bag he secured these at both ends within the notches of the two circular pieces which he had cogged and bored; he then took down the light, but strong, sendal-silk hangings from four walls, cut them into strips, plaited them rudely, and thus got a rope some thousand yards in length; he then bored two holes in the two circular pieces, and passed the rope, largely knotted at one end, so that it could not slip, through them. By placing this immensely long double

umbrella firmly in position, and manoeuvring by drawing the rope, he could now open it into a huge orange shape.

The rooms were in a lumber of disorder due to repairs going forward, and he felt no apprehension that the shock-headed servitor who bore their meals would take active observation of his operations. Even an attempt at escape must seem, he knew, beyond all things absurd, the situation of his prison being what it was.

Toward midnight of the first day's siege he had advanced thus far in his intense and silent labours.

CHAPTER XXIX

ARMS AND A MAN



““LO! YONDER THE thane of Crumbauchty!”

The tother woman said again:

Of Moray yonder I see the thane.”

The third then said: “I see the King.”“

ANDREW OF WYNTON.

THE great vague crowd that had watched from a distance the first day’s siege reassembled at a distance with the next foreday.

The sun rose, and the people waited for the loud sounds of arms: but no sounds came. Only, on the plain, in a natural flat cricket-pitch, bordered by rising ground on both sides, and beyond range of castle shot, they saw men driving stakes. By twos and threes, by tens and hundreds, with gathering boldness, they drifted nearer: the men, they perceived, were inclosing the length of the pitch in palisades, leaving open doorways at the narrow ends: they were creating the lists for a tournament of arms. And at once a glad thrill excited the multitude.

But now there broke a blare of horns like the blares of that first day of heralds: and again there came pacing solemn a richly tricked-out embassy, in an emblazoned splendour of gold and taffeta and tissue-cloth, cordelière and egrette and cordon, quite different from the emblazoned splendour of

that first day — differing as one star from another in glory. From the Black Knight they came, and they made for the camp of the Golden.

It was necessary to arrange the minuter conditions of the coming joust, what constituted defeat, the arms, the hours, the marshals of the ceremony, the umpire. Back and fore paced the heralds blaring; a clouded sun climbed from nine to ten, from ten to eleven, and still they paced and blared.

Now a vague misty drizzle, which persisted through the day, began to haunt the air. But the people budged not from round the thronged lists, some provided with pic-nic cheer, most forgetting their stomachs. Hour by hour they stared at the repassing embassies.

At last, before noon, a sign of business was seen: ten mounted trumpeters, red-clad, in mantelets of Venice-gold, rode slowly into the lists and took stand at a corner of the oblong; while from the other camp ten in cloth-of-tissue cloaks raised with pearls of silver damask, took stand diagonally opposite. The heraldpacing ceased: terms had been arranged, and the minor parties formally apprised.

Then came a body of men-at-arms, riding back the multitude from the lists with cries of ‘Field! Field!’, and immediately followed a number of servitors, bearing tents. One they pitched near the north, narrow end of the lists, outside the palisade, for Francis; one at the south, for Henry; three also on the east long side, and four on the west, on the rising ground, for the other fighters: all being as richly wrought and gaudily barbaric as the tents of ancient Asiatics.

Now expectation stood on tiptoe, for the trumpeters blared unanimously as the two marshals of the day entered at opposite ends; and even as the castle clock tolled noon, the crowd fell back both north and south before two galloping parties, one Henry’s, the other Francis’s; and as these

dismounted at their tent doors, there were other gallopers: and soon the seven tents had occupants.

Then occurred an interval, during which the two marshals, one Charles Brandon, the other the Chevalier d'Arcy, met and conferred. To the crowd the moments were hours; and Bessie Ford, peering through a machicolation of the donjon, saw well through a pair of very sound and seeing eyes, but knew not what.

At last Charles Brandon, stepping back, called out:

‘The Knight of Norfolk, and The Seeker!’

Down the lists in opposite directions went he and his fellow at a trot, each crying prone three times: ‘The Knight of Norfolk, and The Seeker!’

And while the trumpets stormed the ear, two horsemen slowly entered the lists, one at the northern, one at the southern, gate.

The first-arrived before the castle was to fight the second-arrived; the victor the third; and so on: this being the order of the day. The first-arrived were the Wolsey-men; and their leader, Havard, having stripped from his horse every cognizance of the Cardinal, had adopted the style of ‘the Knight of Norfolk.’ The second-arrived was Alvarada, and he, under the style of ‘the Seeker,’ advanced now to meet Havard.

He was cased in simple Spanish plate-coat, complete from greaves to neck-piece, a morion on his head. But he wore no visor, and his classic-featured face was visible to Henry, who, at his tent door, sat, palm on knee, sullenly watching. As for Francis, he stood tattling among his chevaliers, casually glancing anon at what went forward.

The lists, five hundred yards long, gave room for impetus: the two riders spurred; the chargers, with frisked tail, spurted to combat; galloping fast, faster, they drew near — met — hacked quick, stretching far sideways, two whistling hacks — and passed.

To spin with swift wheel, and re-engage. Not a breath of sound now from all that intense and tiptoeing multitude of onlookers, while chop, chop, went the clashing steels. But the contest was short: from the first *botte* it was seen that, in this fight, ‘the Seeker’ was dominant, and the aggressor; and at a raising of the sword-arm of his antagonist to strike over-helm, Alvarada deftly inserted his blade into a joining of the cuirass, and pierced the heart: so that Havard toppled dead.

The riderless charger scampered through the lists, dragging him a little by a stirrup, and went spreading a random noise of confused alarm among the furrowed multitude. The trumpets stormed the ear; Alvarada pricked once round the lists, then back to his tent; servitors came and laid the dead on a litter; they covered him with a cerecloth; they bore him thence for ever. While Henry, sitting, tilted his head behind a goblet of gingered ypcras; and Francis was lisping to a chevalier: ‘The English girl is to the French as a peach is to an oyster...

Now again the marshals conferred during an incomprehensibly long interval; till Charles Brandon, stepping back, cried: ‘The Seeker and The Knight-Courtman!’ And down the lists went the two Marshals trotting, crying that thrice.

‘The Knight-Courtman’ was the style assumed by Du Ballay; and into the lists from opposite ends came Alvarada and the portly, militant Churchman, the latter cap-à-pie in heavy plated mail, very minutely arabesqued in silver, his horse also heavy with steel. And the two riders spurred: the chargers, with frisked tail, spurted to combat; galloping fast, faster, they drew near — met — hacked quick, stretching far sideways, two whistling hacks — and passed.

But with swift check, and wheel, they re-engaged. There were seconds crowded with intense mixed chops, — then pause and readjustment of the

two stepping horses — then seconds crowded with mixed chops, in thick squalls and spasms of virulence. At last Du Ballay's heavy blade split the corselet of Alvarada at the collarbone, drawing a stain of red; whereupon the Spaniard reared on his haunches, and as he came down, the horses were side by side, head to haunch and haunch to head. The quicker hand and wit was now the victor: each had the other's nape; and both, almost simultaneously, chopped. But at the instant of the fall of Du Ballay's hew, he experienced a violent cuff on the chest, inflicted by Alvarada's left fist, which had abandoned its bridle: his stroke faltered: at the same time the Spaniard cut twice, quick and deep; and Du Ballay dived over his saddle-bow, blood spurting from his visor-bars, to stretch his bulk on the ground.

Alvarada pricked once round the lists, while the trumpets blared, then rode back to tent.

Fitzgerald, sitting at his door on the wet sward, chin cocked on hand, remarked:

‘That is sure the carle with which I fought at the Bell Inn, Mac.’

‘It is,’ said Mac. ‘A sound fighter that, a sound fighter.’

‘He learned war in his ten minutes with Fitz,’ suggested Bonner.

‘Boysie,’ said Fitz, and laid his hand on Bonner's.

The prostrate knight was removed. The trumpets blared, the marshals conferred. The sun, no brighter than a haloed moon, stood half-way in his setting quadrant. And ever the vague drizzle haunted the air, like the ghost of rain, damping tree, and sward, and mail, and the patient, gazing multitude, and all it found.

Charles Brandon at last exclaimed:

‘The Seeker and George Percy!’

And this having been thrice cried, Alvarada for the third time entered the lists, confronted now with the martial youth of Percy of Northumberland,

who was the fourth arrived. Percy was borne on a huge and rather raw-boned animal of Wold-breed, in shabby trappings. Heavily armoured, his fresh Roman face was yet bare, and under his morion popped, as from ripe cocoon, the bunch of flaxen silk.

Looking short on his big mare, his right palm lay back on her haunch as he went coolly forward at a walk. Anne Boleyn, watching near in the thick crowd, felt a tightening of the heart, for she had loved him. Bessie Ford, too, from her watch-tower, knew him. And Henry, seeing the face, as it passed close, vented from bosom and nostril a low ‘H’m!’ of meditative surprise.

They pricked — they galloped near. Here was a contest between sword and battle-axe. Percy’s bridle-arm, wounded by Fitzgerald, was still sick, but could do its work; on the other hand, Alvarada had in his chest a slash which, but for the tension of that hour, might have laid him on his back.

But he galloped forward with undiminished gallantry, his black eyes bright with the inspiration of a cup of Xeres just drained.

They met; and at once with clattering *brusquerie* and spurts of sparks the engagement commenced, the white and whetted steel of Percy’s slenderly-curved axe-blade operating fiercely, notching the sword of Alvarada, and cleaving his armour, every time. The defect, however, of the axe in armoured combat is its inability to pierce, its effects being for the most part flesh wounds — a defect which gave rise to the invention of the halberd; and at a moment when the cuirass of the Spaniard ran three streams of red, a sudden deft prick in the ribs caused Percy to close his spurs in an involuntary spasm: his mare leapt forward; as his sick left arm tore at her mouth, there was an ooze of blood from the elbow-joint; at that moment, as he turned to hew, the head of the Spaniard’s horse forged forward to his saddle-bow, and Alvarada twice plunged his sword into the other’s hip;

once more Percy's spurs touched his flanks; his axe cleft only air; grinning, with a face of pallid death, he gagged his horse, and turned again to hew; but his eyes closed; his saddle rolled with blood; Anne Boleyn uttered a little cry; the martial boy lay bloodily bloodless on the ground.

Alvarada pricked once round the lists, as the trumpets stormed the ear, then returned to tent. Meanwhile, Henry stood up at the tent door where he had sat, and shook himself. He was the fifth-arrived.

There followed a longer interval than usual. Francis sent from his tent a fresh coat of mail to the Spaniard, with the Black Knight's admiring congratulations. The marshals conferred. The trumpeters set to blaring at a wrong moment, and were hushed with frantic gesticulations by the marshals. At Henry's tent Nevil and Knevet and ten others were nervously and flurriedly busy. There stood the King's horse, a gleaming black, not big, just able to wield Henry's weight, with arched neck, meaningly nibbling the bit, with nods.

When at last Harry was seen to be mounted and waiting, the marshals bustled. Charles Brandon ran, calling some final thing to one body of the trumpeters in a loud whisper; the Chevalier d'Arcy ran after him; Charles turned; they flurriedly whispered something unguessable; Charles turned again and shouted his momentous whisper: and all was ready.

'The Seeker and the Golden Knight!' they shouted thrice, and the trumpets blared.

For the fourth time Alvarada entered by the northern end, Henry by the southern, he being a mere blaze, his horse in latticed trappings of pearled and damasked cloth-of-gold, with buckles and pendants of fine fretted bullion, his sword-hilt red with rubies, the blade a Toledo, damascened with gold.

And under the King was the Man-Boy, with two thick hands, an ardent brain, and good blue eyes.

They pricked, they galloped briskly near, they met. Francis yonder pretended still to tattle and chatter, but his eyes were fixed upon that meeting, and soon the pretence itself halted on his lips. Hold! has the Spaniard lost the trick of victory? Step by step the sorrel is backing, and step by step the black with tossing neck is encroaching, while Henry, with encroaching dominancy, is raining a vehement rain on the stranger's crest. But with damage only to steel, and to one slashed ear: for Alvarada, dumfounded by that onslaught, is yet not resourceless; he spurs in a *demi-volte*, parrying, even as he does it, a descending chop, and is at Henry's flank, disengaged from that rough weather.

The horses sidle, prancing; there is a full minute's manoeuvring into fresh relationship; now the Spaniard's lids are keenly lowered over eyes hawk-like in their close intensity: the two right arms lift, ready, waiting, while the chargers step a little. Chop, chop, twice, comes Henry's sudden blade upon Alvarada's left arm, but upon metal; and chop, once, comes Alvarada's upon Henry's, but upon bone!

Henry is all one tingling pain; with face red under his visor, he drives spurs to ribs, and goes racing, as if in flight, northward, the Spaniard after him, but languidly in comparison. Suddenly, with sharp wheel, Henry is galloping the other way — at really furious speed; and with him, laid in rest, comes a demi-lance of good steel and ashen shaft, unslung from his saddle. The double speed is monstrous and deadly now: they meet, they crash. Alvarada's sure eye does not fail: he actually does strike up the firm-held lance, but too soon, or too weakly; it redescends to its exact *atteinte*, meeting his gorget in the little depression at the centre in front; the steel bends, and bends, till tip-toe expectation waits the pop and shivery clash —

but it does not break. Backward lean man and horse — backward still more, under that urgent, coaxing impulse: now is the decision of the balance, now the moment, the overthrow: over, with abandoned shock, thumps the whole dead mass to earth. Alvarada's nape strikes a stone, and he lies there without movement.

Henry passed once, rising in his stirrups, round the lists, a trotting splendour.

'Now,' said Francis to a knight, showing his little teeth, 'will you see my Heat "*quick quenched*"—'

For the Black Knight was the sixth arrived before the castle: and his turn was come.

As for Henry, alighted at his tent-door, he drank wine, the breath venting in strong audible fan from his stern nostrils.

Upon his burly form the eyes of Bessie Ford in her watch-tower were fastened with mesmerised stare, fascinated as a bird's upon a snake. She would have known him under all disguise, or felt the horror of his presence in the thickest midnight. Also she had a consciousness that all this bouting at arms was somehow for the possession of Laura. And *he*, so far, was victor: her hands were clammy, and the space beneath her eyes jaundiced and haggard.

Clammy, too, were the hands of Anne Boleyn, as she saw the lank, close-armoured form of Francis saunter into his tent: for she knew his arm, and had fear for her Queenship and ambitions; and clammy were the hands of Wolsey, looking from the donjon, for he had a secret love for this Harry, his King-Servant, and knew him to stand in fearful peril now.

Yonder, at the side of the lists, lying at lazy length with propped chin on the drizzled sward, Fitzgerald resettled to comfort his great athletic limbs, remarking:

‘I bet on the Black, Mac.’

‘A sound fighter is the Golden,’ said Mac with judicial nod, ‘a sound fighter.’

‘Goes too earnest to his work,’ criticised Fitz, ‘nor light enow. A fighting-man is not a woodman felling oaks, now. I knew an Irish kern who pricked off twelve Pale-men together, whistling the whilst. A furious levity — that’s it. A great fighter must be a man of humour, born so. Faith, I bet on the Black.’

‘Oh, Fitz, Fitz,’ cried Bonner, ‘if thou wilt quench them all for me, Black, Golden, and all, under that smothering sword of thine, two kisses shall I give thee on each hacked cheek! for then shall Bessie be thine, and Laura mine!’

Fitz pressed the hand of his boy.

The interval was long. The sun began to in-gather the blurred hues of his setting. Even the trumpeters at one time deserted the empty lists. And always the enwrapping drizzle acted, like a law of nature.

Then there was movement and revival. The clarions, for some reason, blew. Suddenly all felt that the moment, the crisis, was here. Brandon and D’Arcy laid mysterious heads together. And presently, amid a great vague tumult of the multitude, like a noise of far waters, Francis and Henry were sighted mounted at their tent doors.

The marshals went trotting, bawling thrice to the four winds:

‘The Golden Knight and the Black Knight!’

And at once, even from the gates, the two horses burst at full speed, plunging like buffaloes at the grinding spur; and with them flashed two lances in rest.

In that minute Henry’s face was a savage crimson, and the teeth of Francis grinned.

Here was a meeting of rivals — the final decision — all life crowded into one bursting and tip-top moment. And Fitzgerald, gazing, threw behind him a ‘Look! there flies Style on horseback, an you like it!’, for Francis bounds lightly as a flower jaunting on the billows of some rushing flood: and Mac whispers ‘Sh-h-h!’, just as the two steeds meet with horrid check, slipping on their wrinkled and struggling haunches, and the two steels, with chilly shrill clash, splinter on the two helms. But the sherds have hardly reached the ground when two swords have leapt: they cross and lounge and chop, the Black Knight sitting straight-backed on his saddle, the Golden standing on his stirrups, reaching prone. The management of both horses is perfect: they step and move as by instinct, in nice steady relationship: there is no pause: the blades continue their desperate parley, their ticklish intercourse, a minute, two, three. Francis, in a movement too accentuated of his horse — a movement half-voluntary on his part — receives at the bottom of the neck-piece a chop which penetrates, and draws blood. At that moment his eyes glow like two bright black moons behind his bars: for now, at last, he sees his way. As the sword of Henry descends quick to the same spot again, and rests on solid, Francis, with his excalibur, hews it fiercely. It falls in jangling sherds; and as Henry curses Heaven, Francis feints an over-helm chop; Henry bridles sharply upon his haunches; Francis plunges his blade deep into the chamfron of the charger — deep, deep into its brain. Henry is already ready with battle-axe as the animal lowers dead from its rear, and dives crashing. Out goes the heavy King’s right arm, like some reaching swimmer’s, as he pitches prone, tossing far the battle-axe. But he is agile: with swift scramble he is on his legs again — his hand seeks his dagger, seizes it, lifts it a little, and flings it to the ground in writhing

pain and rage. The arm which had saved his fall is dislocated, and he stands *hors de combat*.

He was only a grown and bearded boy, ill-disciplined, ill-bred, obstreperous, half-savage: and he took his beating badly.

As he stamped in shockingly bad form from the field, his visage all impassioned, his nose wrinkled, he hissed with bitter, biting venom:

‘Cursed black-faced Goat! Ugly French Beast! In my own God’s land! But I’ll have her — I’ll have her — *I’ll have her* — so help me — !’

Now, as never half before, he was determined upon Laura Ford, As for Francis, he cantered lightly once round the lists, and returned to his tent laughing.

Macdonald had leapt up. He was at Fite’s charger, stooping, tugging at the bardwise trappings, trying the steadiness of the saddle-bow, smoothing a pastern, muttering counsels into the horse’s nostrils. Fite’s former animal had fallen sick during his period of separation from his friends; and this new horse was a present of the day of siege from free-handed Francis, who had given it with axe, lance, and harness complete.

Fitz with his friends was the seventh, and last, arrived: for they, without horses, had come to the castle on foot.

It was no longer day, but beginning twilight, when he rose from his length on the grass, and shook himself like the mighty gallant that he was. He looked keenly from under his large brows at the castle-front, and remembered that behind it was little Bessie Ford. And she, gazing intently through the grey air, saw his stature, and with fainting heart muttered:

‘Isn’t he a big one....?’

Francis was anxious to finish the tourney before further darkness, so as to proceed to preparations for the taking of the stronghold. He quickly

reappeared, mounted, before his tent, sipping from a cup handed him by a chevalier.

Now the delay was short. The trumpets blared; and as the marshals called, Fitz, with one foot on the stirrup, drew Bonner's head to his side, with fondling smile; and Bonner, nestling it there, said:

‘Fight roughly, Fitz, an you love me!’

To the four winds went the prone cry:

‘The Black Knight and Garrett Oge Fitzgerald!’

And into the lists cantered the champions, Francis from the north, Fitz from the south, he passing close to Harry sitting there, who went ‘H'm!’, and looked with intense secret interest of desperate hope at the coming combat.

The speeds intensify: Francis has given well, like a royal good fellow, and Fitz's horse flies blithely to the spur: Fitz's sword is the gift of Francis, his spear, his axe: and all are very good. He is full of elation as he gallops, like one taking exercise in the element to which he was born: his simple, jolly heart does not think of defeat; he is largely confident; and so, too, is Francis largely confident, for both are Masters, easily omnipotent, buoyant on the roughest tip-top surface — as the Master always is! Fitz, in the nick of time, perceives that Francis as he comes, borne on his bounding flood of flesh, comes with lance in rest: he has just space to dash his sword into scabbard, snatch his lance, and lay it firmly to the *atteinte*. They meet: the two steels shrilly shiver. They draw: and with quick exquisite interaction ply those blades of supremest craftsmanship, whose fellows are not in the world; quick, like the quick winking of sheet-lightning, they ply: and the least fraction of an inch's fault on either side will bring on instant ruin.

They cannot conquer one the other: here Mars has met Ares — each his match. Francis is perhaps a shade the more agile, the iron of Fitz's wrist

perhaps a shade the more inexorable. By the twinkling of a second's space Francis sights an advantage: he chops largely at the collar-bone, and must enter, if he meets it: for Fitz wears absolutely no armour save a steel morion, and a scanty ring-mail habergeon, sleeved to the elbow, bulged by his buxom breasts. But, as the precious blade of Francis descends, it is met with sharp impact by the equally precious blade of Fitz; and click go the two great falchions, split like glass, mutually destructive, and dropping in common ruin.

Now is the regime of the axe — but it lasts not one half minute. The horses step into such an obtuse-angled head-to-head relation, that the destruction of both, given two such fighters, is quite certain. Francis hews at the chamfron; Fitz, a half-second later, farther back between the ears; both steeds dive from their rear with instant suddenness. Of the two men, Francis can hardly be said to fall: by some miracle of agility he is disengaged from his horse almost as it drops; Fitz tumbles ponderously, and rolls once.

Reason enough now has he to bless his lightness of armour; for in a flash the edge of Francis is impending upon him: but that edge meets with the top-ring of his axe-hole, and the next moment he is towering upon Francis, aggressive, urgent, wielding his weapon like Jove; there is a minute during which he raises such outcries from the clattered metal of the French King, that the lists ring with the clangour of it: the front of his own mail-shirt is stained, but Francis' cuirass runs with blood. And 'Gallant Fitz!' hisses Macdonald, shivering on tip-toe yonder, 'hew, fool! hew!' Fitz hews, nor fails. Francis staggers to his back: Fitz, over him, has a dagger at his bars.

'Oh, I yield, I yield,' laughs Francis — leaps up lightly, with light sobbing laugh — falls again — leaps again, trying, with sobbing laugh, to shake Fitz's hand — and faints in the arms of Fitz.

On the battlements yonder Bessie Ford has jumped upright, with bright face, with clapping hands.

‘Oh, by my credit! the greatest of warriors, the chief of gallants, he — !’ cries she.

But the next moment she collapses, sobbing, remembering that he too, even he, is against her.

And Harry, also, at his tent door was upright, with clapped hands. Francis had been vanquished! And Christendom should know it! And Laura Ford was Fitzgerald’s! — and Fitzgerald, and the gallows at Tyburn-hill, were *his!*

CHAPTER XXX

HOT AIR



‘IL AMUSA LE peuple de la ville en faisant sortir toutes les nuits du fonds d’un puits un corps lumineux semblable à la Lune, qui portait sa lumière jusqu’à la distance de plusieurs milles.’ — D’HERBELOT.

OF all this Mauro Calvo saw nothing: he was busy that day and far into the night, like a man who, having found hid treasure, forgets the world in digging.

His operations now were so evident, that, but for the wild pre-occupation which filled the castle, even the stolid servitor who bore him food must have been pricked to curiosity.

For Calvo had now taken down all the dusty sendal hangings in two of the rooms, and had cut them with a knife from his bag into eight equal-sized canoe-shaped pieces; also, lying along the floor of the large rooms, for anyone to see, was his arrangement of eight laths, strung at both ends by wires between the sixteen cogs of two circles of wood. But of this the servitor took no notice, perhaps associating it in his mind with the repairs. He had no thought of the prisoner’s escape: it was, indeed, perfectly easy for Calvo to lower himself by a rope, if he had one; for outside a door which looked upon the castle-back was a stone platform with a coping, in which was a stout staple; but had he climbed down there, he would have descended into the back castle-courtyard, within the bastioned curtains,

where his capture would have been coolly effected. There was not therefore in the mind of anyone the least thought of his escape.

His next work was to cut in the inner surface of one of the circles of wood, near the circumference, a deep round groove, into which the bottom of a water-cup in the room could be firmly fixed; and into this same circle he made, also, near the circumference, a hole to admit the hand. Into the cup he put some coal found half-burnt in a fireplace, with some pieces of shellac from his bag, freely wetting the whole with inflammable naphtha; and he fixed the cup in the groove.

About this time Bessie and Laura came down from the summit: for the tournament was over. Calvo took not the least notice of them. They had for him now absolutely no interest, save as the parts of an experiment.

He next proceeded to cover his framework of eight laths with the eight pieces of canoe-shaped sendal-silk. Glue or gum he had not, but with a small gar, or awl, he bored holes along the length of the lathes, and, with a string of sendal, fastened two edges of the canoe-shapes along each lath, the string running over and under alternately. He was half through this slow work, when he heard, far off, the renewed boom of cannon, and started.

It was now late night. He left his work, ran to the door opening upon the platform, and looked out. It was drizzling, and dark, and bleak. A rough wind had arisen, which moaned round the crenaux and bartisans of the donjon. With inward satisfaction he saw that it blew from the north-east.

Back he ran to his great, doubtful, momentous task; his heart misgiving him; his brain spurring him. The thought that hot air was lighter than cold had become a numb mania with him: he had eaten no food that day: he muttered with his lips.

Swiftly, tremulously, worked now his cunning fingers. Strange, eager, dying sounds reached his ears from beyond the locked portal. Momentary

uproars of distracted petards burst and crackled; there were shouts, and echoes, running feet, and violin-sounds like wails, and still the rare vague boom of cannon. The rushlight which he had stuck near flickered upon a face pallid, and even awful, the lips being pressed tight, sweat beading the bulging corpse-brow, and the calm of the misshapen eyes changed all to wildness.

The edges of the eight canoe-shapes were now taped to the eight laths and to the two circles, and all was fairly air-tight. Where there seemed a crevice, he melted some shellac in the rush-light, and smeared the parts thinly.

As he did this, he heard three strokes of the castle clock through the noise of the two raging storms. It was midnight.

He rushed to the basket lying in a corner, and upset upon the floor the mass of shavings, tools, and oblongs of sawed wood which it contained. He began to tie in its stout rim eight pieces of sendal rope, which he had prepared for that purpose. They were all equal in length, about seven feet.

Suddenly he sniffed, lifted his head, and looked round: the room was pervaded with thin smoke. He ran out to the platform: all the air was luridly red, and far to the west there went out from the building, solemnly informing the night, a stream of sparkling fume. The castle, it was clear, was in flames.

He ran back to his task, crying to Laura and Bessie:

‘Prepare yourselves, you two — !’

They, sitting on the floor in fear, knew not in the least what he meant; but they rose.

He attached all the eight strings to the basket in a fury of haste; then shouldered his slender silken work. The length was great, the weight little. He manoeuvred the turning end through the door, out upon the platform.

Held upright, its top reached well beyond the battlements. A new fear of the streaming sparks beset him, and his movements became intensely flurried.

Leaning the long spar of silk against the battlements, he pressed with his left fist against the lower circle of wood, pulling at the same time, with the right hand, the rope which, knotted largely at the top, passed through the two circles. The straight spar began to bulge into needle-shape; he pulled — it bulged into melon-shape; still he pulled, straining, with reddening face — it bulged into orange-shape; and now a plug of wood plaited into the rope inside met the lower circle; quickly he inserted another plug into an opening left in the plaiting under the circle: and now the orange-shape was fixed. He tied the great globular bag to the staple in the coping. Its rockings and bumps were moderate, the castle's bulk shielding it from the east-wind.

Even there he could hear that the castle was full of shouts. The assailants had, in fact, now pelted into the burning building, the inner drawbridge and fosse having been carried, slaying all they met, Francis and Fitzgerald foremost, and Henry, too, prone in the van. Calvo quickly and firmly secured the eight basket-ropes to the peg beneath the lower circle, and called:

‘Come, come, you....!’

Bessie and Laura stood at the door wondering at this strange, great, light, round monster which rocked and bumped. They could no more divine its purpose than the things that are done on Saturn.

The basket lay on the platform with lax ropes; and Mauro Calvo said:

‘Get in there....’

Laura Ford drew back with parting nostrils, in extreme fear of this new thing. Bessie, lion-hearted, at once said:

‘Come, Laura...,’ and led her by the hand.

The basket was large and deep-rimmed. They sat: Calvo ran with trembling legs, and returned with his bag; ran again, and returned with the shaded rushlight. He pushed it through the hand-hole in the lower circle, and turned the flame to the naphtha-cup. The spirit popped into flame. Calvo undid the rope from the staple, and scuttled into the basket.

He waited. Gradually the lax ropes stirred, straightened, tightened. He waited still in a horror of expectation.

The conflagration of the donjon was now in full swelter, and from many a casement roared a flame, while on high the spangled black gonfalon of Ravine floated through a vault lurid as the dawning of day in Tophet. All in the loud air were tones and sounds, as when men in sleep shout weakly in the centre of the thundering of cataracts.

The ropes tightened — but the basket did not move. Calvo waited, and it did not move, and lift. As when the treasure-digger finds the casket there, but empty, and the world all rags and hunger still, so was the sage's face.

Yet the ropes between basket and silken bag were taut — the bag wanted to ascend, if it could — the hot air within it being lighter than the cold around it: this, of itself, was a triumph for the thinker. After a minute, seeing it, he had a joy in his despair. He threw out his bag, and at once the basket thrilled and creaked; in his mad urgency to watch the fruit of his brain, he got up, stepped over the rim — and was tossed sprawling upon the platform, tripped by the edge of the now ascending basket. Never did fall fill a man with glee so rapturous. He was on his feet in a moment, snatched at the running rope, wrapped it once round the staple, and so held it as it paid furiously out, gazing the while upward with adoring eyes.

From the air there reached him an awful shriek — the shriek of Laura Ford, as she felt the strong aspiring leap of the unknown thing that bore her.

Bessie exclaimed: 'My mother!', and the next moment, white herself, was hushing her sister's loud terrors.

But the bag had hardly reached an elevation of forty feet from the platform when its ascension ceased, it paused, and yielding to the weight it carried, began to sink, rushing all the time at the rate of fifty miles an hour down the north-eastern wind under a canopy of smoke and sparks from the castle.

Those of the assailants who guarded the castle-back saw with straining necks, and the wildest wonder, that floating visitant, that novel moon, lit and yellow, sailing in solemn mystery above their heads. As the shepherds who, tending their flocks by night, were aware of sudden brightness in the air, and sweet preamble of heavenly harps, so these wondered. The last thing that occurred to them was that here was a thing of human making.

It passed over a stretch of forest and bumped with some heaviness on a rising ground some seven hundred yards from the castle. As the girls attempted to get out, they were flung to the ground, and up, with instant buoyancy, it shot again, running away fast with the rope. Calvo, however, by giving the rope another turn round the staple, was able to check its flight; and now, with straining effort, equal almost to the effort of lifting together the two girls, he commenced to draw it in. Once and again he had perforce to pause, holding it by help of the turns on the staple. But after some ten minutes, he at last threw his bag into the basket, himself after it, cut the rope, and shot high.

His course was more adventurous than that of the girls. His weight being less, he was borne upon a far more extended descending curve; also, the wind which entered the silken bag by the hand-hole, at every gust blew the flame into horrid proximity either with the outer covering, or with the cord

that connected the two circular pieces at their centres. Thus it happened that, at a moment when the flame had begun to expire, and the contrivance was descending some mile and a half from the castle, Calvo noticed in the covering a hole rimmed with spreading red. He glanced with horror below: the earth was forty feet away. In another twenty seconds he was crashing through a shubbery: he clutched instinctively at his bag; and the next instant, the air-horse, relieved of the weight, leapt high. He saw the wasting silk shrivel and consume before a writhing edge of flame, till with steep drop it fell among trees ten yards away.

At that time, the castle was being ransacked for Calvo and the girls; and though the exact place of their confinement was unknown to the assailants, it quickly became certain that they were not in the building.

Henry himself entered the very rooms whence the wizard had lately vanished, and he was hurrying back along a corridor rolled in smoke, when before him he saw a sight at which he started: Wolsey coming toward him.

An expression of fury flitted over the King's face: here was confirmation of the incredible rumour that Wolsey was in the castle, had brought the girls thither, was opposing the purposes of the King, had resisted his demand for surrender.

‘How now, my lord Cardinal? You here! *You!*’ said Harry.

Wolsey was large in cardinal red and hat; and with him were most of his ten men. He had been hiding in a locked room, finding all escape cut off, till he was certain that Harry had passed beyond it inward. Now he came stooping forward, an expression of frank gladness on his face.

‘Your Majesty is safe!’ he cried.

‘*You* here, my lord? *You,*’

‘I am this moment arrived from London, Sire. I had tidings that my King was in peril—’

‘From London, say you? This moment, eh? My lord, your arriving is wondrous well timed!’

Henry was regarding him with a most stern brooding underlook of suspicion.

‘You make me the more happy, Sire.’

‘But ’tis said that you were in the castle all the time!’

‘Which castle, Sire?’

‘God in Heaven, man, there are not five million castles! *This* castle.’

‘But — Sire—’

‘You falter, my lord Cardinal! You halt, you falter. ’Tis an ill sign, by Heaven’s light, when a man falters—’

‘But — Sire — hear me—’

‘You *but* me, man — you *but* me overmuch — !’

‘I am at your Majesty’s feet. Sire, if some enemy hath abused your ear with this weird tale, ’twere but due to me to declare me who.’

‘Who, Brandon, was it said that my lord Wolsey was in the castle?’ asked Henry.

‘One Sidney Boleyn, Sire,’ said Brandon.

‘A brother of the Lady Anne?’ queried Wolsey.

‘Yes, my lord.’

‘But, Sire,’ said Wolsey, ‘she is my enemy! — avowed—’

‘Well, that she is no doubt, I admit.’

‘My enemy, Sire!’ said Wolsey, with opening arms, working upon Henry’s generous candour in the presence of facts.

‘Well, I hope I wrong you not, my lord Cardinal — yet ’tis strange, you know— ’tis strange—’

At this point Knevet ran up, crying:

‘No sign of the fugitives, Sire!’

And on the instant the agile brain of Wolsey divined that the sagacious mind of Calvo had somehow saved his skin, and if so, then Wolsey's as well. At once he said:

‘I believe that the ears of your Majesty have been greatly abused by the conceited fiction of an impudent girl. And the proof that the part of it which concerned me was false, is seen by the fact that the other part was false, too.’

‘What other part, my lord?’

‘Sire, there were here no fugitives.’

‘What! *dared* she that?’

Wolsey was sweetly tickled.

‘Sire,’ said he, ‘the whole was concocted. There were here no fugitives, credit me. I have even now encountered Sir James Broughton, who hath given me that assurance. This Mistress Boleyn, Sire—’

‘She shall smart for it, then! My lord Cardinal, forgive me—’

The hands of King and Priest met in a grip of renewed friendship, Wolsey smiling from the height of his proud neck his little superior smile.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN THE WOOD



‘THE VIRTUOUS SOUL pursues a nobler aim,
And life regards but as a fleeting dream.’

GAY.

CALVO, from the castle, had observed the whereabouts of the girls’ fall from the air-car: and within few minutes after his own fall was rejoined to them.

Now their plight was worse than ever: their enemies in hosts beset them round; they were without horse, or food, or coin. They sought out the deepest recess of the forest, peeringly advancing, and there slept.

This vast dark wood, which was called Broughton Wood, was peopled with rabbits and hares: and the next day Calvo contrived a trap, set it near, and waited long, with back turned upon his hope; but the rabbits of the period, wise in that their dim, far-sunken generation, divined the whole mind of the sage, and squatted in their jungled sylvan glooms, content to leave the baitless trap alone.

Laura complained, saying that it was too much to expect of her, at the end of the tale. Calvo’s nose had the wrinkles of fretfulness. About three in the afternoon, good Bessie rose, saying that she would go and beg, they to await her there.

Off, then, she went, winding on a way that she knew not through the sunless shade. The storm of the night had died now to a breeze. All the

forest crackled and sang and squeaked with unseen life. Above, the great ocean of foliage was very good Gileadite, and could say the *sh* in ‘shibboleth.’

And, as she went, sadly meditating upon the bright green-sward, her dress somewhat torn, and her little plait reaching no lower than her low-cut bodice-neck, suddenly, two hands from behind pressed over her eyes, drawing back her head, and two lips shot a fugitive kiss at her ear, and laughed a little.

She was released at once; and, looking, saw a lank strip of body high above her, and a lean brown face. Mournfully she smiled, and, without the least appearance of being startled, said:

‘By my credit, sir, you startle me....’

She knew him at once for the Black Knight, having seen him visored in the lists, and Laura, whom he had seized, had described him. Also, she had heard village-rumours that the Black Knight was none other than the King of France.

But as for him, he had no notion that here was the sister of that Beauty which he coveted. He kissed her ear for the simple reason that she was a girl in the romantic gloom of a wood.

‘And why here, and whither-away, mamsel?’ quoth he.

‘I am faring through the forest, sir, to seek some nourishment for me and mine.’

‘Little English body...’ he said, contemplating her, smiling, pleased with her little way, and English demureness.

‘And whither-away you, my lord?’ said she.

‘I? Why, I seek here — but come, thou art not angry, I think, that I busshed thy cheek?’

‘Why, no, sir! By my credit, ‘twere more than that would anger me, seeing ’twas merry and fairly done. But you *seek* someone, my lord?’

‘La, yes. Hath it not come to thine ears that a goodly number of cavaliers search a gentle special demoisel through this country-side? I, know, am even one of them: and, catching this morning a wind of rumour that she lies concealed within this wood, I with some comrades wander here a-search. La! and now am I in double dilemma, for neither demoisel nor comrades find I. Moreover, I have three sore gashes in my chest, and am faint, *mon Dieu!* An, now, I had that little lap whereon to lay my head, pending but a ten minutes’ space—’

‘Why, sure, sir, an you will it so—’ said Bessie, turning upon him the full regard of her candid eyes. They met a leer not quite fair and good: yet she did not blush, nor turn away.

‘Here, then...,’ he said.

She sat on a swell of sward in brown obscurity under an oak; and lying at his length, with head raised on her lap, he looked up into the breeze-tickled leafage.

Once two babes, exposed in a forest, were found by a she-wolf. There were ten million chances against one chance that she would tear and eat them: but that one chance, which verily exists in the elfin Heart of Nature, worked and won. She suckled them.

Even such was Bessie’s risk in resting here with Francis of France; and she had an instinctive consciousness of it: but her heart was strong, and her eyes candid.

‘Thou hast rencountered none of my friends, I take it?’ said he after a minute.

‘Not I, sir.’

‘Of the maiden which I seek hast heard tell in thy village?’

‘I have heard tell of her, my lord.’

‘How knowest thou I am milord?’

‘Sure, your good and gracious way with a poor maiden bewrayeth you high and gent’ sir.’

He kissed her hand.

‘Thinkest thou I would harm thee?’

‘*You*, my lord? Not you!’

‘Faith, then, I would not.’

‘Why, I wot it, sir.’

‘But as to this maiden — canst give me no guidance? For I could wager she is somewhere in this wood.’

‘An I *could* give you guidance, my lord, think you I would?’

‘La! and wherefore not?’

He jerked up in surprise his hairy head, all about which the breezes toyed.

‘Because, sir, ’tis sure you seek her not for her good.’

‘There you err fondly: precisely for her good I seek her; ’twere my will to lavish round her beauty all the jouissance of life, by Crisscross!’

‘For how long, my lord?’

‘Why, so long as her life, mamsel.’

‘But life is not long, my lord. Sure, you can give her no jouissance in the grave.’

‘Who talks of graves, mamsel?’

Again, as he asked, Francis jerked up, glancing at her, wondering at so broad outlook in village maid.

‘Sure, sir,’ she said, ‘’Tis nought oddish if I talk of graves, for, by my credit, graves are all about us, and near enow; and a life, were it King’s or village-maid’s, is just like last Summer, which lasted not long, and is

evanished now, and buried deep away, no man any more thinking thereon at all for ever.’

‘*Mortbleue!* ’tis true, girl. La — true. Yet while that Summer dured, ’twere well, methinks that it shone blithe and merry, since it so soon passed.’

‘So hold I, too, my lord. And fain am I, I avouch, of flute and tabouret, and dancing under-moon on the green, and the warming of strong ale, and specially of grand Hampshire cider, sir, and sweet lover’s-whisperings above all, my lord, had I — aye me — but a lover, sir! For though I talk of graves, ill were it to me to die, who am full of life, by my credit, too much, perchance. But, sir—’

‘Well, I hearken, I am hearkening. Say it through, say it right through.’

‘Sir, the things of jouissance you would be giving to that poor wench resemble not really the good, brave shining of a Summer, but rather, meseems, flashes of lightning in a lowering sky. Faith, something assures me that I say true. I see well that she would gain a drop, and lose the sea.’

‘What lose, then?’

‘Why, sir, sure there is something in simple innocence that more warms the bones than an ale-house fire at Christmas Eve, and a jig into which the clear heart anon breaks merrier far, by my credit, than galliard, or brawl, or coranto; and a secret *Wine*, sir — ah! nay, I cannot say all I would—’

The heart of Francis burned strangely within him as she so communed with him. Looking up into the moving tree, he lisped dreamily:

‘Say it on — say it on—’

‘Why, sir, sure,’ said she, ‘there is that in the world which speaks, and we hear it, though not with the ear: and like an angel-lover it sings and soothes, or like a storm it brawls. Oh, faith, to act well appeareth a great alchemy, and fine ducket-gold in the pouch, my lord! — for ’tis then with the soul as

though it went jaunting on a grand upward march in good company with the sun and the moon and all the train of the stars — oh, my lord, look out! look out!’

Her words ended in a cry: and out, with swift, protective impulse, rushed her hand over the brow of the French King. The hand was pierced by a small bullet, which penetrated, and drew blood from him also. She had seen a puff of smoke start from a thicket ten yards away, glimpsed a bullet, and acted with the instancy of thought.

Francis in a moment was on his feet, and, with drawn sword, was gone like the wind in pursuit.

CHAPTER XXXII

AT ORMOND HALL



‘DISTINGUISH ALL THE floods that are
Mixed in that watery theatre....’
HERRICK.

THE shot had been fired by a retainer of Ormond Hall, of whom three, with Anne, were in the forest searching for Laura Ford. Anne, looking through bush, saw Bessie, and, to her astonishment, the head of Francis on Bessie’s lap. She was seized with fright, concluding now that Bessie had compounded with the French King — that Laura was in his hands. The thing or man, were he a King, that came between her and her ambition she doomed without hesitation, and ‘Shoot me quick that man!’ she whispered to a liveryman.

Francis, at the pistol-crack, went dashing in search; but pursuit in such a wood was hopeless. He found no one. After a random hunt of ten minutes, he stopped.

He put his hand to his forehead, and took it away red from a flesh-wound. He remembered now that she had laid her hand there, and saved him; must have been herself pierced.

His heart had burned strangely within him, moved and touched by some sweetness of pity in her tones, some dear light in her eyes, or some

profundity of hoary world-wisdom in her words. He ran now swiftly, pantingly, to find her. But he was uncertain of his way. Not till after a half-hour did he come to a tree which he believed to be the tree he had lain by: there were many oaks in the forest. Bessie, however, was not there.

Had he been bespoken by some affable and wise Angel in homely disguise, resting here in the shade mid-way on her high wayfaring betwixt world and world? Some such fancy passed in his mind. He was full of a sense of loss.

The tree to which he returned was indeed the same: but Bessie had now gone forward on her errand of food-seeking. She had sprung up, agitated, immediately after Francis, and had stood some minutes, waiting what should betide. Nothing happened: and when Francis did not come, she went onward.

Anne Boleyn, even in hasting out of Francis' path, had kept her eye on Bessie, who was the key to Laura; and as Bessie moved through the wood, followed, guessing now that since she went forward without Francis, then Francis had not yet Laura.

Bessie happened, without special motive, to take her way north-westward, hoping to come upon cottage, or hamlet, or castle. And half a mile north-westward lay Ormond Hall.

The thought leapt in Anne's mind:

'If now she should go to the Hall, and I hold her safe there under lock and key!'

There was no danger that Bessie should discover her tracker: the anguish of her hand occupied her; anon she held it aloft, shaking it cherishingly as it panged. She had rent a strip of under-garment, and bound the wound.

A thickness in the forest made her change direction, and in the new course she continued.

But Anne was now besieged by the idea of having her at the Hall. It seemed clear that Bessie was not now making for the spot where Laura hid, being now too near the wood's edge; she was therefore going from that spot. To reach Laura, it would be only necessary to search somewhere in the opposite direction. But Anne's first tactical task was the securing of Bessie, if that was possible without scaring her. For this pure sister of her intended victim Anne had acquired an extraordinary detestation, evil as sin; merely to do her hurt was pleasant to Anne. When Bessie changed direction, Anne threw over her face a folded veil of gold gauze, quickly caught up the lowly pilgrim, and passed her a little.

It was in a narrow green-sward between tree-trunks, deep-gloomed and cool. The afternoon was well advanced toward twilight. But here it seemed almost night.'

Anne's dress was very different now from her dress beneath the chestnut at Mede Down: her skirt being of rich cloth-of-tissue, with a surcoat of crimson silk, and plumed cap of white cloth-of-gold. Bessie, as the lady passed, drew back respectfully, and waited. At five paces' distance Anne turned, saying:

'Hast lost thy way, girl?'

Now, for the first time in her life, Bessie heard that voice. It was a deep and rich contralto.

'Why, no, mistress, not that wholly. But—'

'What seekest?'

'Why, a hamlet, mistress, or a hall, imports not which.'

'Thou goest hardly right, then, meseems. Art a stranger? What is thy need?'

'Truth to tell, I go to beg a morsel of food—'

‘Why, poor lost soul, follow me straight, I bid thee! Not five minutes hence is Redmond Castle, where thou shalt be richly regaled, I promise!’.

Anne, a consummate actress, walked on at once, without waiting, and Bessie followed with laggard steps. If her good angel in some remoteness of her consciousness whispered her halt, she hardly heard: for the angels whisper low, thinking our ears celestial like their own, and they are mortal ears — not made by *us*, for that matter.

Ormond Hall was a grey square mass of low building, with a multitude of windows, half of them on fire now with sunset. It stood lonely in the middle of wide lawn-land, which was quite surrounded by a circular edge of forest.

Not till Anne emerged from the wood did Bessie see her well. And at once something — a fear, a memory, an instinct — troubled her. But it was very indefinite: and yonder was the house; and hunger pressed: she followed, continually quickening her laggard steps.

Yet a hundred yards, and Anne was at the house-front, which looked east. She beckoned. Bess came to the long frontage-steps, and halted.

‘Come, come,’ said Anne busily.

‘Shall I not make round to the back, mistress?’ asked Bess, wondering.

‘No — this way! Come,’

‘My mother...’ muttered Bess.

She followed. Anne passed through the antlered and hatchmented antechamber, through a salon, up a wide ‘stair-case,’ along a corridor, into a room. At the door Bessie halted, with panting nostrils.

‘Come, come—’ said Anne.

It was a long room on the first floor, containing three windows in the front of the house and two in an adjacent side. Its furnishing was heavy and august — storied tapestry, ebon chairs, a table for shovel-board, a Spanish

foot-cloth of needlework bound in buckram, a massive beaufet of shining wood, a massive escritoire of oak, Venice mirrors in silver filigree, and at one end an elevated gallery with fat-bellied balustrades. It had two doors, one permanently locked; and a mass of court-letters on the escritoire, and of embroidery on a settee, showed that it was a room of Anne's.

Bessie entered. Anne returned to the door, shut it, locked it. Then she leant her back there, tossed up her thick veil, and with mocking sideward underlook, turned her face upon Bessie.

Now Bessie recognised her, and uttered a cry. And in that cry was not fear alone, but enmity and rage also.

‘Why, lady,’ said she, with white face and opening nostrils, ‘what is your will of me?’

‘Oh, Innocence I’ mocked Anne, ‘chaste village *naivete* embodied, I swear! Canst not guess?’

‘Why, lady, not I!’

‘Yet thou knowest me, I see well. I followed thee once — thou fled'st from me. — Now — is it not so? — I have thee.’

‘Have me? You? By what right have you me, ‘lady?’

‘So, thou hast a pert tongue to question, I see, and art not all village-*naïveté* and chastity, after all! The head of Francis the First, King of France, on the lap of an innocent, sweet village-lass in a forest is sign of far progress in the paths of chastity, for that matter. Oh, by the Rood, thou naughty, naughty Bess!’

Bessie's white face flushed into peony crimson.

‘Prithce — let me hence—’ she faltered, all crushed with shame— ‘oh! your thoughts — your tongue—’

‘Was it not, then, very naughty, Bess? Poor Francis is so frail — thou hast no notion! and hath, 'tis said, a weakness for both of two sisters—’

‘Oh, lady, lady, may I not fare hence?’

‘Why, nay, Bess. The door, you see, is locked.’

The key, however, remained in it.

‘Now may God me keep from doing you hurt with my hands, lady!’ exclaimed Bessie Ford, holding back her stiffly-clenched fists.

‘I hope He even will, girl: for this, you must know, is not Redmond Castle, as I told you, but Ormond Hall, my father’s house. And, an you stir against me, my servants rend you limb from limb; nor, look you, am I myself wholly a wren-chick, I swear to you!’

‘I hear you, lady; yea, by my credit, you have all the strength on your side. But therefore ’tis that you should the less wrong me, who, faith, am a poor creature, sore beset, God wot, come hither to beg of your ladyship a morsel of rye-bread. Wherefore keep, and crush, and madden me? What part hath a lady such as you in my forlorn and woeful estate? Prithee, let me hence! Prithee, prithee! — Who, lady, are you?’ — .

Anne was open, bluff frankness itself when no motive urged diplomacy.

‘Oh, I am the Lady Anne Boleyn,’ she said; ‘now canst guess what I need with thee?’

‘Why, lady, by my credit, nay!’

‘Art dullard, then! King Henry of England, thou seest, was hot to make me his queen this day month ago. Thou must sure have heard. But, being the great mumping fool that he is, he hath flung me clean over, to the intent that he might run agape after thy silly sister, good Bess—’

‘My sister! What have you with my sister, lady? Oh, good mother!’

‘Your sister I seek, that I may have her in my hands, that I may give her into the hands of Henry, that Henry may give into my hands the Kingdom of England, that so on, and so on, in the manner of the House which Jack built, chaste Bess.’

‘Why, woman, you are black with sin!’

‘And would you know precisely why I hold you *now*, chaste Bess? Wait — I will even show you!’

Anne soared to the *escritoire*, which was near the locked door, and scribbled a few words, while Bessie stood with heaving chest, her eyes roaming round the chamber like a new-caged creature’s. They fell at last upon the open *escritoire*. There on the drawn leaf she saw, with a start, a folded paper which she had every reason to know well, and instantly recognised. It was the Kings-letter to Wolsey, taken by her from Fitzgerald’s cloak.

‘There!’ said Anne, leaping up. ‘This, Bess, is a billet to a young nobleman called Percy of Northumberland, who lies rather sick with wounds at Fenley, one three-quarter mile hence. And the billet has it: “Go with seven or eight armed men, sans delay, in an eastern and southern direction from Ormond Hall through Broughton Wood, passing close by the cress-pool on its northern side. The Girl is sure there. I have her sister. Do thou endeavour to go in thy proper person, maugre thy wounds. Francis lurks thereabouts. — ANNE.”’

Now it happened that this note pretty accurately described the real whereabouts of Laura Ford; and as Bessie heard it, hope left her, and her knees were weak.

They remained a minute motionless, confronted, vice with purity, Bessie’s eyes wildly haggard, Anne smiling venomously: till Anne moved to a bell-rope hanging near the elevated gallery, to summon a messenger; and that movement broke the spell of Bessie’s terror.

Crying: ‘*You shan’t*,’, with a swift snatch she had the note crumpled in her own hand.

The venomous smile passed now from Anne's face, and flaming rage was there. Stepping upon Bessie with the menace of a Billingsgate-wife, she cried:

‘That billet, wench! — lest I strangle you — quick — !’

‘Oh, I fear not the stranglings of such a woman as *you*,’ answered Bessie, even as down upon her cheek came the brisk palm of Anne with scarlet smart; and in a moment they were engaged in a panting struggle for the letter. Of the two women Anne was the more largely built, but Bessie Ford was very vigorous and knit, having the vital good sap of England in her birth and making.

She had no intention to yield the paper, and Anne, tugging with bitten under-lip, and gradually-failing force, found a wrist and fist stern as a locked portal. With tottering stumbles, with wild swayings, in an intense silence of effort, save for their fervid breaths which vehemently filled the room, they fought. At the last Bessie, though tortured by her wound, with a strong push of both fists freed herself, and sent Anne staggering to a backward crouch; and at once she slipped the letter into her bosom.

‘Now you die, you little marmot!’ gasped Anne with threatening head-shake, as she rushed anew to the bell.

But here again Bessie was beforehand. With pelting speed she darted to the spot, and, even as Anne's hand rose, leapt, caught the rope, and hung all her weight upon it. It was made of twisted wool, and came away from the metal a-top, dropping in a snake.

And now Bessie ran to the locked door; but before she could turn the key, Anne's hand was upon it. Bessie, with swift craft, in an unexpected jerk, drew the key, and from where she stood tossed it through a window, which splintered, out upon the lawn.

Now, if she was a prisoner, so was Anne. They stood there equal, woman to woman, Anne without help from without.

Bessie's weight had, indeed, rung the bell in a hard clang, followed by two weak tinklings as the rope broke; and this Anne knowing, waited half a minute at the door, expecting coming footsteps. But the single bell-clang had aroused no one. And Anne, crouching agonised, at length commenced to cry out: 'Hi, Bertha! Wallis! Hi!'

But at once Bessie, springing upon her, put both palms to her mouth, and so urged and flung her backward. From her crouch Anne leapt up shivering with passion; and in this passion, now, was a qualm of physical cowardice.

'Look you — girl — if you dare lay — hands on me — !' she panted.

'Hold — your voice, then!' responded Bessie's pant, 'do but lift — it and — I tear your skin — I beat — you blue!'

'Then would you need — your man, Fitzgerald — here to aid you — base gutter-hen — !' gasped Anne, her strong sense all breaking up now into mere childish spite and femininities.

Bessie, in a lower tone of surprise, and transferred interest, said:— 'Master Fitzgerald? sure, I wot naught of whom you mean. Will your wicked tongue be fastening now upon him also?'

'Him I the rottenest profligate that man in all England — !'

Here was feminine arrow shot at random, which hit and pierced.

'Oh, most like 'tis a foul lie, like all you say!' cried Bess with impatient bitterness, harsh as terebinth.

'Corrupted is your tongue, and only evil from its root! And how if I, since you so madden me, since you dare so slander the innocent, do make straight hence to where the King lies encamped, and straight declare him of you; reveal him this your letter lying in my bosom here; point to whom 'tis writ — most like, your paramour; and tell of wherefore you would trap my

poor little sister — of all your unwomanly pitilessness — your foul, unhandsome thinkings — your virtueless and ungentle works — and all your shame! Oh, fie, fie, lewd lady! Nay, and 'tis what I even *shall* do — yea, verily, by my credit, exposed you *shall* be — !'

At this hideous threat out blazed Anne's eyes like a virago's, and showing her grined teeth, she advanced with shuddering opening arms upon Bessie: but stopped, fearing her; and sought with feminine instinct how to stab and slay her with the venomed weapon of the tongue.

'So you would expose me?' cried she with forced hysterical laughter. 'Ha! ha! Anne Boleyn exposed by Bessie Ford! — a theme for the play-house at Southwark, I swear to God, I swear to God! O cameradoes! Then, sure must I call Mark Bonner to witness against you!'

The last words were, in a high degree, hysterical, without special meaning, except in so far as they introduced the name of Bonner with the hope of wounding.

'And what of Mark Bonner now, an it please you?' said Bessie.

'He! O, the accepted lover of the sister! By God, that boy kisses a woman like a trout biting a bait!'

'Who, Mark Bonner? Sure, 'tis some mistake you make, then...'

'A woman mistakes not the man which kisses her, daw! He has kissed and tongued me, that boy — !'

'Mark Bonner?' said Bessie, white as paper: for if Bonner was false to Laura, what hope remained?

'Faith, never was I so hotly tackled!' cried Anne.

'Nay, but *what* a wanton must you be?' went Bessie, faintingly, turning away her shamed face.

'Tis so said. Yet never have I borne in my lap the head of Francis — in a wood!'

‘But have you indeed led that poor youth astray? Oh, have you verily?’

“Twas he led me astray! As *you* have led poor Francis! — whose taste, by the Rood, degenerates of late, thou bosomless skelet!’

‘Oh, then, if this you have done, I could almost curse you! Filthy are you in the regard of honest eyes! I could almost say: may your life fail upon you — ending in as sharp a stroke as now you have — !

Nay, I curse you not, for that were ignorantly done, by my credit! But I do most foully hate, and spit upon you. I do loathe you with my soul as a thing unclean and spotted as snakes! Dangerous and deadly are you; yet, by my credit, I fear you not, for stronger is that better is: and yet may you know it, though now your understanding be a world too dark to scent a truth so bright. And as for the letter that lies there, no right have you to it, I trow, and with me now shall it rest—’

She had cunningly backed as she spoke towards the escritoire, and with a sudden movement seized the King’s letter to Wolsey.

Anne, forgetting every fear, rushed to seize it — for here was her last weapon against the Cardinal. But she was too late: the letter was in Bessie’s bosom, and Anne received a stern thrust-back at the neck, the better here being indeed the stronger.

If the quick temperament of Anne had flamed before, now it raved. There where she stood, she threw back her throat, and she piled shriek on shriek, yelling ‘Help! help! help!’, and as she yelled, foam sprinkled from her mouth, and speckled her nether lip, and her dishevelled face was all like tumbled sunset.

Now she was heard: from some remote region of the great house Sir Thomas came running, as did a dozen retainers.

And still she called and yelled; and as she yelled Bessie Ford, transported too, beat and beat upon her upturned face and mouth, gasping:

‘Hush — hush — or I beat — you blue!’ And even in that moment of hysterical collapse and distraction, Anne remembered the dart, the venom which kills, the poison of asps which was under her tongue. And she shrieked, and sobbed, and jerked, while Bessie beat:

‘You might divine — whence I got — the letter—’

‘Little it tides whence — hold — your voice! Hush — or I beat — you blue—’

‘’Twas from him! He is wild — in love — with me—’

‘You said — it before. I heed not — hush, I say — !’

‘Not him — not Bonner — Fitzgerald—’

‘*Who?*’

‘Fitzgerald—’

‘Oh, you liar! — take that! — take it! — if he loved a filth like you — I’d stab — I’d stab — him to — the heart!’

‘He loves — me mad!’

‘You lie — take it ——— !’

‘’Twas he — that gave — the letter — he gave me when: — he knew — you were — expecting it—’

‘*He,*’ Oh, now you *hurt* — have mercy—’

She swerved back crouching, with covered face, deep stabbed, conquered, sobbing — for the lie was so plausible to her. But now the door was rudely shaken without — there were calls, voices, urging shoulders.

Instantly Bessie recovered herself, and flew to a window to leap — a bold leap of twenty-five feet. Anne, swiftly roused to a sense of the practical, was after her. As Bessie put her shoulders out of window, Anne’s hands were upon them, dragging her back. Now with cat-o’-mountain fury they struggled, with spitting rancour, with rent clothes, their womanhood all naked to its foundations, ugly as harridans. And as in this turbulency of

action they fought, heaving like the angry sea, Anne glimpsed on the lawn two retainers, run round here to see what they could see. At that moment Bessie was all but freed from her; Anne let her wholly go, drove her head out of window, and shrieked:

‘Go to Fenley — a wounded man there — tell him — !’

But Bessie, with visage all inflamed, was by her side again, looking out, too, shouting a passionate monotone, drowning Anne’s words, anon beating Anne’s face. The two men could not hear. Meanwhile, the other party of retainers behind were battering the door with truncheons and quarter-staffs; but of this neither of the women, in the crazy ecstasy of that moment, was actively conscious.

At last, Anne, with a cunning feint, ran from the window to the middle, and thence, with quick spurt, to another window. Before Bessie reached her, she had cried half her message; and the rest she shrieked through Bessie’s shouting, bending perilously prone, with the concentrated rage of the pearl-diver who sees the *prize* near, and his wind is wholly done, yet will he reach, or burst; her throat being now hoarse, and her lips blubber and shiny with blood and serum.

The men at last nodded.

‘Have you heard?’ howled Anne.

They nodded yes.

‘*Then go!*’

Off they went running.

The fury of Bessie Ford now transcended all bounds. The messengers were on their fatal way, and as a mother when the she-wolf is in steep career upon her babe, so was she. Again she leapt to a window, and again Anne was at her. The fierce, loud battery of the door continued, soon now to cease.

But now Bessie Ford had the vigour of quite two, or three, ordinary women. Long, Anne saw, she could not be held. Terribly the fight gasped, and gnashed, and hissed, and swayed. Another window went clattering upon the grass. Three horsemen without were cantering leisurely toward the house across the lawn; and both must have seen them; but seen them like things in another world, unrelated and remote. Nothing in the earth was of interest, save the moment, the gall and lash of their intense Present. Anne fought to her last conscious gasp: but she sighed, gave up, and lapsed upon the ground a disfigured and sluttish heap. At the same time Bessie stood on one of the front window-sills, hesitated, and leapt.

Her feet touched ground as buoyantly as a bouncing ball — her fall broken by two strong arms in which she was caught. They were the arms of Garrett Oge Fitzgerald.

He, with his two friends, being in an unknown neighbourhood, had been seeking an inn to eat at, when they spied the Hall. They had advanced with the certainty of feeding there, such being the hospitable freedom of the age. Fitz, in front of the two, saw a woman hesitating on the window-sill, spurred, leapt, and caught her with such yielding force, that her feet touched ground with quite buoyant lightness.

Then for a moment he saw her face — she his.

She, still venomous, her countenance marred and red, his name still ringing in her ears in the voice of Anne, flung him from her with the impassioned force of a jealous woman, hissing:

‘Beast! — let me go! — filthy, heartless, cruel herd — !’

One might have knocked down Fitzgerald with a feather: so tigerish, unexpected, was her attack. She had run quite ten yards before he started in chase; and twenty more before he perceived that he was hardly gaining upon her, her legs and wind being excellent.

‘Oh, good God,’ he called, ‘hold, Bess! Why, ’tis I — hold, I prithee — sure, ’tis *I!*’

Anguished at the thought of again, this time, losing her, pale with the terror of it — for the forest was not sixty yards thence — he hesitated between persisting on foot, and returning for his animal: hesitated, and was lost. He ran back, crying to Mac and Bonner: ‘After! After!’ But they, behind, had realized not at all what was toward. By the time Fitzgerald regained his steed, and mounted, Bessie was but thirty yards from the wood. The three started together in stretched chase, Mac and Bonner being horsed from the plenty left riderless by the castle-siege. But almost as they started, Fitz perceived that the hunt was hopeless now; also, that *another* figure, in addition to Bessie Ford’s, was before him, whence sprung he knew not, a man flying after her, so close upon her that Fitz had fear to fire.

From this runner, certainly, Bessie could not escape; for he ran with the fleet feet of a slot-hound. As the girl disappeared into the wood, he turned a moment, and sent a random bullet at the riders; crying out a moment afterwards in high falsetto:

‘Stay, mamie, prithee! fly not from *me* — I am Sidney Boleyn!’

Hearing the commotion in Anne’s withdrawing-room, he had suspected mischief to the fugitives, and run to spy the front windows. He had arrived at the hall-door at the moment when Bessie leapt, and as Fitz started in chase on foot, he had started, too, behind. Fitz, running back in somewhat changed direction for his animal, had not seen him, till mounted.

Sidney, since the fugitives’ escape from the castle, had been busy. He had purchased a small house, standing solitary outside the village of Maddox, and he had put within it a stock of provisions: then he had waited, alert for the first hint of the fugitives’ hiding-place.

Now he put his hand on Bessie's shoulder. She led him to the thicket where lurked Calvo and Laura. The shades of evening were now gathering; and the three went cautiously through the wood, following the good leading of Sidney.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FRANCIS AND BESSIE



‘NOR KNOW WE anything so fair
As is the smile upon Thy face.’
WORDSWORTH.

MEANWHILE the two messengers of Anne were hasting to Fenley. It was a fair-sized village, with a street which contained two inns.

In one of these Percy had lain with a grievous hip-wound; but at noon that day, when signs of delirium supervened, he was taken by his men in one of those horse-litters called ‘charres’ to the town of Alresford, where was a mediciner.

An hour afterwards Alvarada, Sir John Perrot, and their two, arrived at this inn, Alvarada’s handsome face being of the colour of weak coffee-and-milk, and his hurts serious. He went at once to sleep on the inn-parlour bench.

About half-past five Francis returned to the other of the two inns, which he had left that noon to go a-search in the forest. He had met none of his chevaliers, who, having set out with him, had scattered in the wood; nor were they yet returned. His camp lay back of the village in a field; his ensign, from a window, drowsed over the winding and muddy street, domain of speculative ducks. On entering, he washed the blood from his brow, and, being faint, threw his long lean body on a short settee, to dream

a vague dream of that fugitive Angel who, on her high passage, had spoken to him of life and death, of good and evil, eternal words.

The two messengers were sent to 'a wounded man at Fenley': so Anne, in her haste, had described Percy. At the porch of Alvarada's inn they found an old woman: sitting there was she in gammers coif, and as the sun without rest nor haste went down, so without rest nor haste she sewed.

And 'Gammer,' said one of the men, 'is it that a wounded man lies in this inn?'

'Why, yea,' said she, nor ceased to sew, 'here lies a wounded man. Aye, and at the Wheatsheaf yonder also lies a wounded man.'

In her proneness to speech lay perplexity. And said one of the men:

'Which will it be, coz?'

And the other replied:

'Faith, that I wot not.'

But the first, being by nature profound, said:

'Fail we cannot, an we give to *both* the message.'

And this, as soon as uttered, seemed an axiom, though, like axioms, it was very wrong. And so one ran down to the Wheatsheaf, while one entered the Lymington Pot.

Francis was quickly aroused, and a horse alone; but it was not till some fifteen minutes afterwards that Alvarada, more grievously hurt, set out with his three.

They could not doubt the description: it was explicit: south-eastern from Ormond Hall through Broughton Wood, passing north of the great cress-pool, which was a feature of the wood: and both concealed their surprise at receiving it, divining a lucky mistake.

Now Fenley lies south-west of Ormond Hall: and to reach Ormond Hall from Fenley (if one does not go through the forest), one travels by a road

which leads directly north for half a mile, and then turns sharply eastward. The north-and-south road goes on beyond the turning in a footpath to Maddox village, where Sidney had the empty house for Calvo: and so it was that as Francis galloped north, he saw four persons before him on the road, not far from the turning, their backs toward him.

Sidney was now leading the fugitives to Maddox; even as the messengers of Anne were delivering their message, the four had hurried through fields past Fenley.

Hearing the hoofs, they looked in terror behind: and at once Francis knew Laura's face; moreover, slung on Sidney's shoulder was the bag of Calvo — one of the clues to the fugitives. And 'Hi, friends! halt there!' shouted Francis.

Escape now was not for Laura: except on the one condition, that the four scattered running, and Francis should pursue the wrong girl: an improbable contingency, since the gloaming air was yet clear transparent purple. Other hope, however, was none, for all around was open field. So Sidney wildly whispered:

"'Tis the Black Knight! An we run divers ways—"

On came the impending hoofs. Calvo looked round once, and, flying recognition by Francis, said: 'Well, do it — !', running to the right from the road, while Laura spurted straight northward, Bessie and Sidney obliquely to the left, but haltingly she, with head continually turned to watch the rider.

In a minute it was clear that Francis was not deceived, he keeping his onward course after Laura, not turning across-field after Bessie. He was thirty yards from his prize — he was twenty-five — he was twenty. Bessie Ford stopped her halting and backward-hankering flight; she turned; she ran with desperate speed — back toward the road.

She reached it at a moment when the horse was not six yards from her. It was a mere country-path, not broad, intermittently bordered by bramble-hedge. There in the middle she stood, with spread arms, facing the galloping charger.

Francis, astounded by this wildness of audacity, saw that she must inevitably be trampled, and passionately shouted: '*Vide! Vide!*' in self-unconscious French.

At the same time he pulled at the bridle; but the impetus could not now be checked. An instant before he was upon her, he recognised her — the girl of the forest, who had infected him with fancies of weird sweetness: it was she — the resting Angel — this time barring his impious way, not with flaming sword, but more irresistibly with her bare bosom and simple high devotedness. With all the force of his straining tendons, with his whole grinning energy of effort, he tore, he tugged, he reined. The heavy animal reared — immediately above the head of Bessie. But as it rose, she rose with it, wielded aloft with horrid shock by the snatch of the head-harness, to whose wrenching impetus she clung by one frail left arm; and down with it again she swung to her back, white and wincing, but alive.

Francis' eyes were given up to her, fastened fast upon her. There was no chance that he should sight the flashing steel that was winging straight, as a swallow darts with folded wing, for his left side. It was a dagger hurled with good aim by Flying Sidney; and now Francis wore for armour only a simple shirt of ring-mail. And again the pierced palm of Bessie was rent. She leapt a little with lifted arm, and touched the weapon as it flew, the four sharpened edges slitting the thin bandage and skin. The dagger, deflected, lightly struck the flank of the horse, which started, with twitching ribs.

'Again?' said Francis, bending low, gazing playfully, with solemn smile, 'what, *again!*'

She, too, smiled, very sweetly through her pallor.

“Tis the second time, my lord,’ quoth she, and held up two fingers, with a head-shake.

‘But you are very brave! La! *are* you not very, very brave?’

‘Am I, sir?’

‘This galloping charger — by the prowess of a Coeur-de-lion! And the dagger! — prithee, prithee, let me see your hand! Crisscross— ’tis a-bleed!’

He leapt down in a flurry, and was on a knee before her, bending upon the wounded hand.

‘How may I ever thank, and enow extol, this little hand? La! little hand — little, little martyr-hand — !’

He fondled it; he kissed it.

‘Nay, ’tis not so much as that, my lord,’ quoth she. ‘By my credit, I’ve been athwart worse than that!’

From a portmantle at his saddle-bow he whipped a square of broidered silk, and tied it mincingly round the hand, going:

‘Little princess-hand! — wilt come with me to the land of France? Why, prithee! Then shalt thou demurely instruct me every day how highly to live “in the company” — what was it?— “of the sun, and the moon, and all the train of the stars.” La! that were strange, new beginning of life for poor rotten Francis, by our holy Mother!’

‘But the girl is running away all the time, my lord,’ said Bessie, with bold self-confidence, and confidence in him.

‘Which girl?’ he asked quickly.

‘Laura Ford, my lord.’

Up he leapt.

‘La, by Crisscross, I had forgotten her! Mamie, and thy motive for arresting me thus boldly in this my pursuit?’

‘She is my sister, my good lord.’

He smote hands, and drew back a step, gazing at her for a full minute, struck dumb. When he spoke he said:

‘Now, may every blessed saint forgive me!’

Bessie smiled.

‘Sure, my lord,’ said she, ‘you take it too loudly—’

‘’Tis *thou* that art the sister?’

‘Why, by my credit, yea, my lord! She will declare it you herself, an you will it,’

‘Good angel! gentle girl! I pledge thee, on the honour of a knight, that I knew not what I did,’

Bessie with uplifted voice called ‘Laura!’, beckoning. Her good insight into men had perceived that open confidence in Francis touched the best in him, and warmed his chivalry; but Calvo, from the field, heard her call with angry surprise.

Laura, wondering, hesitating, came; while Francis, his back turned upon Bessie, stood with lifted arm, and bowed head. He was silently swearing that no man, he being alive, should take from this girl her sister, not himself, not Henry, no man. And as he swore, and turned, Laura, panting, with coquettish underlook, was before him.

Again he started: for she was beautiful. He shaded his eyes with horizontal palm, pretending dazzlement, bowing largely, while Bessie smiled.

But his mood was, for the moment, turned and changed. It was Bessie now, and not Laura, by whom he was won and enraptured.

Undoubtedly in the world there is a something more beautiful than Beauty itself — more ravishing far than a perfect nose — and touched more with Aurora and the weird tints of Grace than the rose of the loveliest lip.

Call it Wisdom — or call it fair Virtue — Francis cared not: but, for the time at least, the worldly King did certainly catch a bewitching glimpse of it in the clear spirit of Bessie Ford.

And he lisped, bowing:

‘My adoration, mamsels. Paris, the Greek, gave his apple to Venus; his modern namesake, the city, proffers in the person of me, its King, asylum to Minerva. Will you accept my protection? Will you sail with me? — wilt *thou*?’

‘Why, my good lord — this were too gracious of you!’ cried Bessie.

‘Oh, gracious of *you*, an you accord it. Would’st trust the sister to a darkling, God-forgotten rogue like Francis of France? I am a King, wot you? Yet, if so thou honourest me, prouder were I than of sceptre and diadem. And here in your England is naught of safety or escape for you, be sure, be sure! Henry... la! Wilt sail with me? Say!’

‘Sure, my good lord,’ answered Bessie, who searched deeply into his glowing eyes, and thought she saw honour there, ‘there is naught that Master Calvo, and myself also, could more desire—’

‘Calvo?’ said Francis, ’is *he* with thee—’

But before he received answer, he was surprised by a sound of galloping hoofs. Alvarada, Sir John Perrot, and two Queen’s-men, were coming pelting, Francis, from afar, recognised Alvarada.

‘By Crisscross!’ he cried, ‘here come some of your seekers, with which I must anon cross sword: one, two, la, — four! And since one against four hath end uncertain, faith, ’twere best you take straight to running, mamsels! But stay, where meet we?’

‘Oh, sir, I know not! Prithee have a care! Are you not faint with wounds — ?’ cried Bess.

‘La! not too faint to pick a cuirass or two, Minerva, I warrant thee! Where meet we, say? Whither now away?’

‘We go now to Maddox. See, they pelt near, my lord — !’

‘I see, I see: I keep one constant eye upon them. Maddox? Ah yes, I know. What place, or house?’

‘‘Tis a house, sir; but I wot not the name.’

‘Wot not the name. Well, I will tell you where — yes, I see they come, I see — Maddox. Now, in two days my ship were ready to sail, my camp to pack; this, then, being Thursday, I meet you Saturday eve at compline — at compline. Fear not — I see — through the corner of mine eye. Let them come on. North of Maddox is a wood with a cascade; near the cascade a road; from the road there goes an old stone wall; on still, a pool lies; and beyond the pool, a shed. In that shed, o’ Saturday eve, at compline, I meet you for a prompt start coast-ward. ’Tis agreed?’

‘Why, yea, my lord! yea! Look out!’

‘Now, away!’

The girls, hand-in-hand, went running northward, Sidney and Calvo, who had kept their distance, running to join them.

Francis remained yet some seconds standing: then sprang to horse, and with drawn sword galloped to meet the four.

And as they met, Bessie Ford was looking backward, trotting lingeringly the while, to see him do battle for her.

In reality the fight was but one to three, for Sir John, wounded by Macdonald, had his sword-arm slung, his only weapon being a pistol. As Francis dashed near, Sir John sighted steadily along the two silver sights: there was the jar of cocking, the trigger clicked: the percussion - cap, as was its way, did not explode. Again cocked Sir John, and as he pulled again, the

sword of Francis, with a chop of disdain, swept upon his hand, and, in a backward slash, upon his horse's head.

Then, during a minute's space, plied the King's blade with that easy, triumphant nimbleness and graceful Achillean rage which characterised him. Alvarada, indeed, could hardly fight, being sorely sick: but he inflicted upon Francis' back a slash through the mail, at a moment when Francis was eagerly engaged with the two Queen's-men. In a wink, however, one of these dropped, run through the heart; and a moment afterwards Alvarada was vomiting blood on the grass, carved to the lung. The remaining Queen's-man, left alone, turned in flight, but Francis, overtaking him, stabbed his horse in the groin, and, contemptuously leaving the man, went at a grave walk in the gathering dark toward Fenley, so faint, that anon his brow fell to rest on his horse's mane.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DEVIL AT MADDOX



‘THE RILLS OF pleasure never run sincere;
Earth hath no unpolluted spring.’
WATTS.

‘In the territory of Istakhar there is a kind of apple, half of which is sweet, and half sour.’ — EBN HAUKAL.

ALVARADA was now grievously wounded, but not fatally.

It seems certain that in martial ages, when wounds were a commonplace of life, the body received them with less gravity and despair. This trick of Nature scientists call ‘adaptation to environment.’

Sir John Perrot, whose horse was slain, and himself quite *hors de combat*, contrived, with the help of the remaining Queen’s-man, to recapture Alvarada’s, and place his comrade on its back.

‘Whither now, Count?’ said he.

‘On to Maddox,’ said the Spaniard.

He had definitely seen the fugitives take that way.

Maddox is one of the loveliest embowered villages at the foot of a wooded mountain-face. Before it, runs east and west a rapid and angry stream, called the Winney, with irregular broken banks of mossy rock and

large pebble, where wives wash clothes aloof, in cosy sequestration. Nothing could be sweeter than the vast mournful plume-waving of the rich mountain-face, where peeps an ancient windmill, a wooden black old water-mill, a hanging long cascade, perched manse, and, at the top, some grey castle-turrets. It resembles a corner of Granada.

It was a cottage thus embowered on the mountainside that Sidney Boleyn had procured, and stocked, for the fugitives. And thither, by a roundabout path, he conducted them in safety, and left them, on the understanding that there in perfect isolation they should abide, never to venture from the cottage-door.

That night, as they ate, Bessie and Calvo discussed the offer of Francis.

‘Dost trust that chuff?’ asked Calvo, with cynically raised eyebrow.

‘By my credit, Master Calvo, I do,’ said Bess.

‘Ah, I know him better than thou, thou seest. Fair enow, doubtless, he means to-day — but next month, next year? Yet, perhaps thou hast reason — perhaps thou hast. There is good hi some of these cattle—’

He drank largely of good malvoisey.

‘Why sure, Master Calvo, is not this proffer of the King like sudden light in a dark place? By my credit, ’tis to me like the plain working of the hand of God. ’Tis hope so strange. ’Tis salvation, sir!’

‘Well, well,’ said Calvo, ‘have it thy own way,’ and he drank again.

Calvo was not enthusiastic, on his own account, as to Francis’ offer, though, for Bessie, he perceived inwardly that it was a very great thing, and the one way. As a matter of fact, his motives and thoughts were now corrupted by the offers of Wolsey, and tinged with selfishness. For one thing, he wished to maintain in the mind of Francis the notion that Mauro Calvo had verily announced Laura to the King by virtue of his star-gazing: to be seen in the company of Laura were hopelessly to dispel that

superstition — and Calvo, vain, was touched with charlatanism. Moreover, if he could possibly live in England under Wolsey, he preferred England. France he had tried, protected by Francis, and yet had run from the strong Church. The civil arm of Wolsey was many times stronger than the 'French King's. He preferred England — he wanted Peace to do a thing.

But, on the whole, he fell in with the offer of Francis, which was immediate and tangible, and drinking Sidney's malvoisey, he patted Bess on the head.

Here and now he tasted happiness: he was in a house, unmolested. Taking hardly the time to finish his meal, he hurried to a little bowered pantry-portico at the back, and spread the contents of his bag on a table. He began to plan, to do.

The next morning he rose almost with Bessie, and set to work, as busy as she, who went to and fro preparing their nooning. Laura, lying abed, well-fed now and content, saw beaming sunlight, and heard a mavis at her latticed casement. And 'Oh, 'tis minion!' she grinned, and went to look. The rollick laugh and aspect of the wooded world pleased her well. The hour was blithe with revel, birds screaming with glee, the tickled trees, the wedding-morning smell and freshness, and all the gala ostentation of Summer. She threw on her clothes, looked long with considering undertook into a small mirror, and crept on tip-toe down the stairs.

Her whims were imperious, and, having a whim, she was a mere mule in prone obstinacy. Nothing could bar her. Now, luckily, Bess was busy. Laura, knowing that it was forbidden, went out.

Her steps led her through the multitudinous forest towards the sound of the cascade; and here she saw that, by stepping on some rocks in a swirling pool, she could enter a cave immediately behind the falling flood. And this she did.

Sitting on a rock in the cave was a man, who rose and said: ‘Pardon ‘; adding immediately to himself: ‘This should be she.’

It was Alvarada. Once before he had glimpsed her at the Bell Inn, in Eastcheap, but only for a second’s space. He was not absolutely sure that here was the girl he sought; but he had a kind of surety. In England it was improbable that two things so passionately fair could breathe, and heave the breast.

‘I will — leave you—’ said he, bowing.

Laura, who had a natural eye for perfect bowing, was charmed.

‘Why, nay,’ said she, ‘it is rather I, sir, who am at fault...’

Here was invitation, and an opening of the arms of welcome, for Alvarada.

‘Yet, if you go, then shall I be desolated,’ said he, and bowed.

‘Why, then, sir, I will stay, since you so speak,’ quoth she, with coy dalliance.

Alvarada, who could hardly stand, and had crawled without to heal his wounds with morning mountain oxygen, sat again in thick moss, while she, too, leant upon a verdant slope, wrought into rich mosaic with violet and hyacinth. Before them the cascade, robed like a bride in frothy frippery, rushed chaunting down, shouting that same sound of the moving trees, the mysterious ‘sh’ of Nature’s shibboleth. The continual dust-spray, haunting here, watered into a greenery fresh as the limpid emerald of a cat’s eye both trembling maiden-hair and plushy moss, acanthus, and many a bowering odorous shrub, and bright-eyed flower. And when the Spaniard heaved a sigh of half-real, half-pretended swoon, Laura, who was happy here, said:

‘Sir! — you are sick.’

“Tis nothing, lady,’ said he; ‘I — I was attacked two nights since by brigands, and wounded. ‘Twill pass — an you will but lend me your hand.’

His carved nose was the picture of hers; his eyes were a mournful dead black; his coffee-colour made him handsomer. When she gave him her hand, the thought struck him that he might have Laura Ford, if this were indeed she, without the employment of force: and since he had little force at command, against force he decided.

His tongue was polished and glib; he told her frankly that he was a Spaniard, and a man of high estate; he told of Spain and Europe; he recounted adventures, the dress of ladies, the things of Courts. After half an hour, she allowed him to kiss her.

‘Oh, I must go now,’ she said, agitated.

‘To-morrow morning at this same hour?’

‘Our Saviour, I cannot! I have a sister!’

Now Alvarada was certain.

‘But you dwell where?’

‘Down yonder in a house apart.’

‘That yonder whose thatch appears?’ She nodded.

‘I shall come and see you there this very night!’

‘Our Saviour! you would not! Nay, you could not! You forget my sister!’

‘Fear nothing: she will sleep. I will come — can I help it? Oh, I will come! You, awake, will hear me mouth a recorder, and show your face, lady; your divine countenance, dearest girl!’

At this threat of passion she was filled with both horror and pleasure. Holding herself from him, she kissed him bent, and ran. She entered the cottage noiselessly.

At eleven that night she heard the soft complaining flute. At the cottage-back in a bowery wilderness, bridal with flowering vetch and fairy jasmine, he stood. Trembling lest Bessie or Calvo should hear, she worked herself

from the bed, tossed round her her outer garment, wrapped her head picturesquely, and looked out.

No moon shone, but she could divine his stretched clasped hands of adoration, and his serenader-pose. 'Will you come?' said he.

'Sh-h-h!'

'Oh, come!'

He called it with unnecessary loudness. And now she was at his mercy — he could make '*the sister*' hear.

Putting up a confidential hand, bidding wait, she turned inward, arranged her dress, and crept down to him. She opened the little lattice-door, robed in honeysuckle and white briony, of the pantry-portico appropriated by Calvo: and into this room she admitted him.

They were a long while there, Alvarada holding her hand, murmuring continually, speaking this time seriously, she listening with divine bowed head, and hair-draped face. He made her large offers, chateaux, menials, and last of all, marriage, though he was married. He asked her if she would run with him.

She made the same extraordinary reply which once she had made to Fitzgerald:

'Only by force could I be won, sir.'

This merely meant that she willed, but was afraid. And Alvarada understood, and rose to go.

In doing so, he put his left hand to the table to lever himself, being very weak. And that hand sank into a buttery mass which Calvo had there, a mass which shone feebly in the dark.

Having gone out, he noticed afresh the unclean sensation, and put the hand to his face to smell it; and the hand accidentally touched the face.

His little inn was on the other side of Maddox: it was necessary, in order to reach it, to pass through the village, long since fast asleep.

But it happened that the village-priest, accompanied by the sexton, was precisely then wending homeward, bearing the elements of the holy supper from a dying bed, just visited; and these saw Alvarada's face — his face and his left hand alone.

That face and hand shone with an unearthly faint luminosity in the dark night; also, the phosphoric butter with which he had touched his nostrils affected his breath, too, which came from him in two divergent hazes of white and wannish fire.

The priest, aghast, struck a cross, muttering a '*Vade retro Sathanas.*' The sexton struck a cross. And there was a huge sensation and to-do in Maddox that very night. For even as Alvarada slipped unperceived into his inn and to bed, the church-bell was calling and clanging loud alarum. Maddox started terrified from dreams, and pelted to the church. The priest, with fainting breath, announced that the Devil had been authentically seen in the village that night. He sprinkled his entire flock with holy water.

And with amazing rage and rapidity that news spread, from village to village, through Hampshire, like a fire. Satan had been authentically seen at Maddox.

The very next day Henry heard it, for the news, like the air, was everywhere. Anne Boleyn heard it, Fitzgerald, Du Ballay's party, Percy's party — all heard it. And all these instantly concluded that with such a phenomenon the alchymist must in some way be connected; that Calvo, undoubtedly, must be in or near Maddox; and upon Maddox without delay they all proceeded to move.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE ABANDONMENT



‘FRIEND AFTER FRIEND departs.’...
MONTGOMERY.

IT was on Friday night that Laura Ford said to the Spaniard, Alvarada:

‘Only by force can I be won, sir.’

It was on Saturday eve, at nine — the then hour of compline — that the fugitives were to meet Francis in the hut, to fare under his wing to French land.

The Saturday was spent by Alvarada’s Queen’s-man in riding five leagues to procure a pillion; and by sunset this was affixed to the haunches of the Spaniard’s fine horse.

At this time, all the parties of search, except Percy’s, were about Maddox; some tents of Henry lay in a depression between hillocks on the other side of the stream — the south side — Wolsey being now with the King. Anne Boleyn was moving patiently all among the boscase of the mountain-face, spying evilly as Satan when he peered round Eden. Du Ballay’s party, shunning attack from other stronger ones, were in the prior’s-solar and guesten-hall of a Carmelite friary, on the yon side of the mountain, but near; on the yon side of the mountain, too, at a hamlet, were Fitzgerald, Macdonald, and Bonner. And all, in their various ways, were full of search, thrilling at trails and rumours which were false.

It was not a night propitious for quests and clues. Almost as the sun set, it was dark; a wind arose, and blustered; and rain dashed down in spasms, like bursts of tears, and almost ceased, and dashed again. The stream, which had all the day been angrily swollen, rolled now higher, and went rushing free in noisy soliloquy, like a delirious Cassandra with brawling torch, its loamy billows almost splashing the two plank-bridges which spanned it near Maddox.

About eight Alvarada had his wet horse in a thicket at the fugitives' cottage-back. He blew a long soft flute-note, which only a listening ear would detect. Laura flew to her lattice. Bessie was giving her finishing cares to their evening meal.

"Tis useless — O, I must not come, sir!" whispered Laura.

Alvarada had no time to waste in words.

'Dearest girl,' said he, 'haste you, I beg! All is ready; the horse waits yonder a-hind the bush. Prithee, prithee, haste! Else must I enter the house —'

The moral courage to have her intrigue revealed Laura absolutely did not possess. She considered the argument of force final. Stooping low, she whispered loud:

'Then must you wait yet a while...

She had spent the day in writing clandestine short notes to Bessie; as:

'DEAR SISTER: I am gone off with a Spanish nobleman, which is very rich, with five castles, and menials. He will marry me. I will be sending thee a collar of balasses like the King wore. — Thy dearest sister, LAURA FORD.'

And this, after a while, she tore, and wrote:

'MY DEAR SISTER BESS: I hope thou wilt not be angry with me, for I have gone off with a mighty, great Spanish nobleman, with seven castles,

and menials. He will marry me. Thou knowest I love thee, Bessie, but it was too much to expect of me, at the end of the tale. If ever thou seest Mark Bonner, tell him I love him until death. I will be sending thee some collars of balasses like the King wore, and some armlets pounced with diamonds and sapphires. — Thy loving sister, LAURA FORD.’

This she had torn, and written another, and another.

Turning now from the lattice, she heard the voice of Bessie call her below. She held the rushlight, and saw her white face in the mirror, and ran down.

They three sat, Calvo, as he ate in shirt-sleeves of Holland linen, leaning an elbow on the table-edge, brooding.

‘Well, is all ready for this rencounter in the wood?’ said he.

‘Yes, sir,’ answered Bess.

‘Aha! And how feelest thou, girl, at this prospect of embarking for strange land which thou knowest not?’

‘By my credit, sir, I feel bold and spree, for sure the good hand of God has led me, and will lead—’

‘See what you have brought upon the sister, you with the face,’ said Calvo, with a fillip at Laura’s hand.

That face of Laura was very sallow. She half-rose, and sat again; and, after a minute, rose again, and said weakly, with a throat-cough of agitation:

‘I will return...’

Bessie looked after her, as she went toward the latticed pantry-portico, supposing that she went for a bodily office.

Within the minute she was on the pillion of Alvarada, having dropped her final note to Bessie upon Calvo’s table.

After a walk, the horse broke into galloping, making for the spot where, higher up the mountain-side, Sir John Perrot and the Queen’s-man waited

the Spaniard.

Five minutes, eight, passed; Bessie awaited Laura, glancing oft at the door. Laura came not, but instead, a man dashed in, wrapped in a drenched riding-cloak, which hooded his wan, thin face. It was Flying Sidney.

‘My good master,’ he broke out, ‘great and momentarily is your peril! Wot you that your pursuers are crowded round you? Also, Mistress Anne — woe’s me that I could not come afore—’

‘Know they where I am?’ asked Calvo.

‘Not the house; they divine, nevertheless, that you are at Maddox, since the priest and sexton saw yesternight the devil—’

‘But *I* am not the devil, lad.’

‘Nay, but a man they saw with face showing shine in the dark, and breathing haze like Milky-way—’

‘Why, that must have been phosphorus.’

‘And something so they all have guessed, saying: who hereabouts but the alchymist could be so daubed with chymic essences? Have you not been abroad from the cottage, good master?’

‘I? — not I. But stay — but stay — Some derangement I did observe this morning in a pot of amalgam—’

‘Then hath one entered the house!’

‘Nay, lad, none.’

‘So I hold, sir! Prithee haste you now to gain the shed where you have rendezvous, or all were yet lost! Not a house on the mountain-side but will be spied. My half-sister, Anne—’

‘Bessie, come!’ said Calvo with promptitude, ‘we set out this moment. Call the sis, call the sis. Why, lass, what have you?’

Bessie stood with deathly face in the doorway, holding in one hand a lamp, and in the other a letter.

Spurred by growing unrest she had peeped into the adjacent pantry, and seen the paper on the table.

Read she could not, but she knew the look of Laura's writing, and her boding heart divined some horror.

Without word she handed the letter to Calvo, standing bolt, with stern white face, as he slowly read aloud.

When he finished, she tossed herself sideward to a stool, dropped her head, with its little up-sticking plait, upon her arms over the table, and wept there, her mouth stretched back like indiarubber in the poignant strain and tension of her piteousness.

Calvo was walking to and fro in a great passion. For poor Bess in that hour he had no mercy. The burden of the iniquity he put equally upon her poor little shoulders, involving both sisters in a common anathema; and said he, washing his hands of them:

‘Well, I have done now — I have done. Enow have I had of you both, and, God wot, more than enow. This is the very last of all. Now, certes, ’tis finished, by God! You seem to forget, both of you, that you are perfect strangers to me — that all I have done and suffered for you was done in pure doddering and dotage kindness of heart. And yet you dare do this! Well, my God! Sidney! shoulder that bag! Aha!... so this is the meaning of the devil in Maddox! — that marmot, your sister, hath e’en lured a man hither, and he hath dared meddle with my physics! And you see the result? Your persecutors surround you afresh, this time, most like, without reprieve — I hope so. Art proud of thy Laura, now, eh? Art proud of the slubberdegullion? I told you how ’twould be — but hear you would not. Thou wouldst cling to thy Laura, eh? Thou wouldst cling, and cling, and cling to the silly daw with infatuated bigotry, with blind-struck, wilful obstinacy: and now thou seest what she was — a silly slut, a putrid hop-

heels, a run-away wanton — nay, shake not thus thy head! faith, I could smite thee on the cheek, girl! Defend her, were it but by one motion of the head, and I promise thee I souse thee smartly on the cheek! Oh, 'tis a bit too much! Well, may you fare well. As for me, I am off—'

This rage of Calvo, though he did not know it, was complex. His mind and motives, we have said, were corrupted by the offers of Wolsey. He preferred England to France. But in order to abandon Bessie Ford, he needed the sweep and impetus of a passion. Laura gave him the excuse for heat, and his own lash whipped it to whiteness. The heart knows not the full secret of its own impurity.

When he threatened to smite her on the cheek, it was in loud answer to Something in his bosom which, with tongue in cheek, was slyly whispering: 'Thou deservest, Calvo, that she should smite thee on the cheek!'

Sidney had Calvo's bag. The whole interest of this lad in the fugitives was concentrated in Calvo alone: for Bessie and Laura he had no special care. Yet he looked with a lingering pity on the bowed head, as he preceded the Magister up a sanded step, through a passage, to the front door.

Bessie Ford lifted her head, and was alone. The Desolation of her life scared her. She leapt up, and ran.

An over-branched foot-path led her to the road. This, with undulations, went rather steeply up the bushy mountain-side from Maddox. She ran desperately downward, a sound of 'Oh-h-h...' coming from her. After a few minutes she heard steps before — Sidney's horse, and Calvo's voice. The night was quite black, and washed with gusts of rain.

Wolsey's instructions were explicit: If the Sage should decide to adopt the offered patronage, he should leave his acceptance in writing at the Thistle Inn, Halford. The journey to Halford Calvo resolved to begin that very night, openly, not now fearing capture, or its effects.

Near Maddox-village he heard a voice close behind:

‘Master Calvo!’

He turned angrily.

‘Well, now, what is it?’

‘Don’t you leave me, sir — !’

‘Now, away with you and your tears, my girl! Faith, ’tis finished now.’

‘Oh, don’t you, sir — !’

‘Why, you talk like a child! Is it not your own fault? Certes, ’tis not mine.’

‘Master Calvo, *for Christ’s sake* — !’

‘Stop it, stop it. You are trying to work upon my feelings, and you wot as well as I that you cannot. Your own fault, your own fault.’

‘I admit it, sir! But don’t you leave poor Bessie Ford!’

‘You see, you weep, you weep. I told you not to weep. Bide I, or go I, what have you to hope? The fool of a sister is gone past recall.’

‘Yet don’t you be leaving me, Master Calvo, don’t you.... When we set from London, I told you, sir, I *told* you, that naught feared I, I said, were you with me. And so it has been. Sure, many a trouble, many a scathe, have I passed through since, and well escaped, for you were by me, sir, my good right arm you were, good kind father that you have been to me and mine — oh my, oh my. And even yet, an you stay with me, even in this last black darkness, who knoweth but that the good hand of God—’

‘Bide I, or go I, ’twill be the same to you, the same to you, I promise you.’

‘Why nay, sir! I tell you nay! My sure talisman and good fortune are you for ever, whilst you bide. But go you from me, then all, all, all, all were lost! Oh! I swear it by the Cross of Christ, Master Calvo! Something tells

me — something here in my panging bosom, sir — a lumpy pang like the last pang of death, my master — oh God, sir, God, God, God....’

She choked utterly with sobbing. Her eyes were a fountain of tears. In that her hour, which brooded black upon her as Gethsemane, she saw the vision of her life all palled in crape, and fore-felt its final tragedy with presage of bane dark as a rayless universe.

There was silence: only her sobs were heard mixed with the rain.

‘Come with me, an you like,’ said Calvo.

‘Why, sir — now?’

‘An you like.’

‘But, sir, must I not go meet the foreign King in the wood?’

‘To what end? Laura is gone. You desire not to go to France alone: nor do I.’

‘But I must sure go tell him—’

‘Tell him, no! Let him go to the devil.’

‘Faith, what would he think of me, which made most faithful rendezvous — ?’

‘Very good, you choose him, you see, rather than me. Your own fault all thorow. Farewell, farewell.’

‘Master Calvo, you abandon me!’

Her cry wailed high and far on the night-wind.

And the answering words rose to his lips:

‘Why, I’d liefer abandon life and all it holds, you little fool?’

But, instead, he only said:

‘You may go to the devil!’

Such a brutal pleasure lies in self-torture, common, apparently, to many men. Thus, a kind man may anon be murderously cruel, because his cruelty

he feels to be a cruelty to himself also. He revels venomously in his own pangs: so dark and subtle is the heart.

With Calvo it was so. He said ‘the devil ‘when he meant ‘my darling.’

He moved on; she followed him: and again she cried:

‘Master Calvo, *you abandon me,*’

‘Well, you can come, an you like,’ he said.

And as he said it, she stood fixed. She would not go. Her excuse, which she thought real, was her rendezvous with Francis: but her motive was subtly complex: in reality, she cherished a secret obstinacy of reluctance to leave the spot whence Laura had gone, without first knowing whither she had gone; a secret hope that she might not be far, a secret desperation of fidelity, a vowed and passionate waywardness of loyalty, which only the snatch of wild horses, or the opening of the earth, could have overcome.

Onward went Calvo, she following with stops and runs. He reached one of the two bridges. Here she finally stopped, and would no further go.

There was a sound of galloping hoofs. The sage was half-way across the bridge. Close beneath his feet the swollen Winney rushed free with Bacchant feet, a brawling soliloquy.

In the south distance, whence sounded the hoofs, were seen lanthorn lights, which slowly moved.

‘The King, sir, must have news,’ said Sidney —

‘hither, meseems, come some of his riders.’

At that moment from the other side, Calvo heard in the air the high, calling voice of Bessie, piteously calling.

‘Good-bye, Master Calvo, sir!’

‘Fiendly cattle — fiendly, cruel cattle!’ muttered Calvo, with shaken fist at the approaching horsemen, venting all his secret self-bitterness upon them, ‘to hunt a poor, forlorn, and we-ridden lass like a wounded leveret!

Be ye man or be ye devil? If devil, how now if I send you pelting to your place, ye herds! Sidney, here — quick — my bag! And get you with your horse off the bridge till I come.'

Calvo's bag had in it a slender saw, abstracted from Broughton Castle. He took it, stooped, and began to saw the bridge.

It was simply a plank not three feet wide, with a rude rail, supported by a single pile at the centre.

He sawed furiously, till the riders were close. Then he sprang, and ran, and hid within a near grove of elders.

They came well lighted with horn-lanterns, trotting; and Bessie, even as she halted on the verge of running, saw and realised what happened.

All saved themselves by a halt upon their haunches, except the first two. These, entering confidently upon the bridge at a quick walk, plunged with the sawed plank into the stream.

The others went along the bank, watching with held-up lanterns the death-struggle of horse and rider. And as they went so down the stream, they sighted the second bridge, which Calvo did not know, or had forgotten; and, with precautions, they passed over.

Meanwhile, somewhat more than half of the sawn bridge was left intact on its supporting pile.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ANNE AND BONNER



‘WHEN FIRED BY fever’s phantom chase,
We fling aside the curtain’s fold,
It shows a face — a pitying face—’
BETHUNE.

ALVARADA, with two comrades, galloped up the mountain-road, Laura sitting on a pillion behind him. At this time Fitzgerald, Macdonald and Bonner were also *en route*, having heard from a yokel the empty rumour that the devil, breathing Milky-way, had been again seen to stand, not one hour since, at a door above Maddox: whereupon they had rushed to horse, and were away to the Maddox-side; and, some minutes later, to Du Ballay’s party at the friary the same news was carried: and these, too, pelted to horse.

And anon, as Fitz and his friends galloped up to the hill-brow, they heard ghosts of hoof-beats behind, and were aware that a cavalcade of knights were after them, and knew whom, and why. They stretched their steeds to topmost speed, giving rein, and whip, and spur.

Bonner bore an agitated lanthorn, so did Mac; also Alvarada’s Queen’s-man bore a torch to light his way, which winked and flinched from the rain.

There was but one road: the going and coming parties could not miss encounter. Before Fitzgerald saw her, he heard the scream of Laura; then he saw her, and drew rein and sword together.

Mac flung his lanthorn to Bonner, and drew; and the affray was almost momentary. Alvarada, weak as he was, had the effrontery to hack once at Fitz, at the same time lifting his horse with spur and rein to a sideward leap over a bordering hedge-row. But the animal, chopped at the moment of effort, and without impetus, merely dived into bramble, pitching all its freight overhead; and while Fitzgerald leapt to snatch the girl from the *mêlée* of hoofs, Sir John, incapable of combat, overrode, as he fled, his prostrate comrade, who cried out in torture; and the Queen's-man, after two passes with Macdonald, received a wound, and disappeared with Sir John down the hill.

From the down-rush of these two a solitary wayfarer who was toiling up the hill drew aside a moment. It was Bessie, bereft now of Calvo, and of all.

Above, the Queen's-man's torch, flinching, where it had dropped, from the rain, flickered upon a lovely face contorted with pain. The left hip of Laura was sprained. Fitzgerald held her up under the arm-pits; she could hardly stand.

‘Where is thy sister Bess?’ he asked.

‘Lower down,’ she gasped, ‘there is a side-path—’

‘By Heaven, Fitz!’ cried Mac, ‘there is need for haste here, lad! There are those above which pelt down upon us I’

Fitz sprang to horse, and plucked up Laura before him. They started at risky pace down the steep wet road.

Bonner held up a lanthorn, and said: ‘Why, Laura — and smiled.

And she, too, smiled a smile of pain.

Yet a minute, and he lifted the lanthorn again to her face, and said again: ‘Laura —

And as he so held the light, there shrilled from the road this passionate cry of bliss and terror:

‘Laura,’

Bessie saw her in Fitzgerald’s arms.

And there, with a valour reaching now the divine, she stood with outstretched arms in the path of the spattering prone stampede of hoofs.

Aided by her cry, they discerned her in time, and drew rein.

“Tis Bessie!” whispered Laura to Fitzgerald.

He knew it.

‘Here, good Bess,’ cried he with quick breath, ‘take her, take her, she is lamed — and get you quickly from this path, I bid you, for others come, and we return anon to fight — !’

Her soul reeled within her. Bewilderment was the world. But this one light-beam shone steady in that wheeling mist: it was *he* who had brought her Laura! he, the warrior of warriors, was — somehow — for some reason — on her side! he was not against her any more!

At the moment she was crazily distraught, caught in the sweep of tempest emotions. As he lowered Laura to her arms, she, with thrown-back head, was showing a drawn and witless grin. And hardly conscious of any meaning in her act, she put hand to bosom, pulled out a letter, and held it up, flaunting it like a trophy, with twisting wrist.

It was the King’s letter to Wolsey, snatched by her from Anne’s escritoire. The dim meaning in her consciousness, as she so flaunted it, was this: ‘It was not you, really, who gave it to her! It could not have been! My surmising heart divines you, and dances!’

To Fitz this held-up paper had no significance, nor did he even recognise it; only Bonner, standing near with the lanthorn, recognised it with a start.

Small space was there for speech! Fitz and Mac threw their horses round. Distinctly now from above came the sounds of hoofs.

They were off, Fitz, in the urgency of the moment, forgetting to make rendezvous with her.

She called after him.

‘Master Fitzgerald!’

He did not stop, but advanced only at a walk, she trotting bedraggled after him, leaving Laura to stand as she could.

‘You are on my side!’ she cried.

Fitz, twisted backward, with a palm on his animal’s haunch, screwed his face into listening effort, with showing top-teeth.

‘What say you? Quick!’ he called impatiently.

‘You are on my side!’

‘Why, sure—’

‘Whither go you?’

‘To fight.’

‘Where meet we?’

‘I wot not — hereabouts say.’

‘Higher stands a wall to the right hand, still on, a pool, and then a hut: there shall I be awaiting you, Master Fitzgerald!’

‘Good — good. Away, Mac — !’

Away went the three riders, unaware against what odds.

Alvarada, lying with slow, regular groans by the roadside, heard them gallop past, and still up.

Then, five minutes later, he heard other steps and loud sighs, the wincing sighs of Laura in her effort to limp. A groan came from him.

‘My mother! ‘someone is here in pain,’ said Bessie.

‘Oh, my hanch, my hanch!’ sighed wincing Laura.

‘Water, water!’ groaned Alvarada.

The lashed rain-pour could not quench that mortal thirst. Bessie made a step that way, and groped — for the Queen's-man's light had flinched ever smaller into final darkness — and touched a face.

‘Ah, I am very poorly,’ said the Spaniard.

‘Can you not stand, my master?’ asked Bessie.

‘That can I not, alas!’ said he.

“Tis, sure, Bess — the Spanish nobleman — who would have — taken me — by force,’ moaned wincing Laura.

‘Ah, ’tis you,’ said Alvarada; ‘and with your sister. So ’tis well. Have you no water, no water?’

Bessie's palm rested across his brow.

‘Naught, sir,’ said she, ‘can I do for you now, since my sister is lamed. But her will I place in safety, and return anon.’

Helping the limper with a hand round her body, the other beneath her arm, Bessie continued some ten yards up-hill, peering close on the right for the massive green-grown wall — supposed to be Roman — which ran at right angles from the road. She touched it finally, and went by a quite dry, foliage-covered foot-path along it, skirted next a deeply-sombrous pool, and, at its furthest end, found a one-roomed hut of thatch and wattle, standing with tumble-down slant on a knoll, but rain-proof in the shelter of a den of greenery.

Francis had not come, though it could not now be far from the hour of compline. Bessie deposited Laura upon dry leaves, kissed her, and closed the door upon her. But the door, hinged with hide, hung askew, and, as soon as released, swung sullenly back.

Off she set running, her feet shod with Mercy, to refind Alvarada. About the same moment Anne Boleyn, hasting up the mountain-road, stumbled

over the Spaniard's legs, pshawed an 'Oh, silly!', and continued her eager upward way.

That Laura Ford was in the neighbourhood of Maddox Anne was absolutely certain; that many men were seeking her all that afternoon she knew; she herself, with maniac energy, had searched inn-cellar and forest, cottage and dingle and hut. That one or other of the searching parties would now find was, she knew, highly probable; that the finder might be attacked was also probable. When, therefore, she heard two pistol-shots, and saw lights and flashes far up the road, she ran toward the *mêlée*, her eyes eager as gimlets with inquisitive lust.

This noise of *mêlée* which she heard arose at the meeting of Fitz with the Du Ballay party, five in number, Du Ballay himself, wounded at the Broughton-joust, being absent in the farmery of the Carmelite friary.

Mark Bonner, seeing his friends thus out-numbered, being in high-wrought state at the fresh sight of Laura, rushed with desperate heart and drawn sword into the fight, the very first incident of which was his headlong tumble into a grassy depression by the way-side, he well wounded in the loins.

But the two warriors of Bessie Ford proved hard nuts to these her enemies. Mac, with set lips, fought with the resistance of bluffs in a sea-storm, and the high aggressive valour of the arm of Fitzgerald nothing that night could withstand. He was near his hope: he fought with a laugh.

One of the French knights he cleft, through ring-mail, from shoulder to heart; one he stabbed through the mouth; a third, wounded by Mac, himself wounded by a bullet, turned and fled up the road with his two comrades. But in the dim lanthorn-shine, it was not seen that this third man was wounded: and the flight of three before two was suspicious: Fitz feared further trouble from them — though, in fact, their flight was merely due to

lack of motive for strenuous combat, in the absence of their commander. But Fitz and Mac gave chase.

As they galloped away up the mountain, Anne reached the spot. Lying there, doubling over with torture, she saw Bonner in the light of two overturned lanthorns.

She peered upon him, and he saw her face, pretty yet foul, a lady's yet a hag's. Her hair sprawled in muddy streaks to her hips; in her cheek were no killing dimples, but ugly exhaustion; her eyes glared; her voice was cracked and hoarse.

Seeing him, she had a throe of joy.

‘Why, Mark—’ said she.

‘Faith, I am dying,’ he said, and writhed.

‘Dying, no. Wounds slay not, Mark, save those from ladies’ eyes—’

‘Faith, I am sore wounded. Oh, the sword went right in — oh.’

‘Did it? Did it?’

She whispered it, kissing him evilly, stooping over him.

‘Oh, you are the Lady Anne. How came you here? Faith, you are very good. You have no idea — faith, I am sore wounded—’

‘Whine not, whine not, boy. See, I kiss you. Tell me, *where* is Laura?’

‘Oh, ’tis bitter — the bitter, bare, cold steel—’

‘Why, you whine like a girl! Like you my kisses, Mark? Love you them, sweetard? Do tell me now — darling — *where* is Laura?’

‘Why, you are very good. But Laura! Nay, I would not tell you for all the world. Gar — it aches — it aches—’

‘Doth it? Why, poor ousel. Shall I not kiss the place and make it well in a pigeon-dunging’s space? So you wot, then, where Laura is? Then wherefore refuse to tell?’

‘Because — why, ’tis too unthinkable! — the outrage of the cold steel upon the soft, warm flesh, lady—’

‘A truce to the soft, warm flesh! Tell me! — wherefore refuse? Am I not Laura’s good friend and helper?’

‘Oh that can I not now credit! Did not you abstract from my slop-pouch the King’s-letter I bore to Bess? Ah, sure, a wound is a fearful thing — a wound, above all, above all, in the loin—’

‘Abstract! the King’s letter! I? Yea, but did I not abstract it in order to give to Bess? Sure, you had no horse, and I one. By Christ’s Cross, Mark, I gave it her! sure, Mark, I swear I gave it her, I did, I did, I swear to God! Prithee, tell me, boy — tell me!’

‘Faith, it pangs, lady — it pangs too close and biting! Oh, say you so. ’Twas *you* gave the letter to Bess?’

Continually writhing, he remembered now that but lately he had seen the letter flaunted by Bessie’s twisting wrist.

‘Oh, you wot, then, that she hath it?’ answered Anne, incessantly kissing him: ‘and whence, think you, dear, could she have it, but that *I* gave it?’

‘Oh, then are you verily her good friend and helper. Faith, kiss me still — so — it dulls the pain. Wot you? — it went right in, right in. You pity poor Mark Bonner, don’t you? Kiss me still — that soothes so nicely — I like it. Her good friend and helper, I swear — oh!’

‘Poor fellow! Let me rock thee in mine arms — so. Likes it that? Now tell me — *where* is she?’

‘I wot not precisely — oh! I heard Bess tell Fitzgerald — there is a wall — then a pool — then a hut: and in the hut are they — oh!’

Anne knew wall, and pool, and hut! In the hut had searched thrice that day! As the words passed Bonner’s lip, with brutal callousness she flung his head from her lap, and was gone into the darkness.

She took not the trouble to descend the road to find the wall, but plunged at once into the forest, making obliquely, south-eastward, for the hut. In such a darkness, however, with her imperfect knowledge of the wood, such a course was over-bold. The line she took was not precisely right. She passed the hut and went beyond.

With hideous self-intolerance of impatience, she ran fumbling about, spitting a thousand blasphemies. Soon she lost all sense of direction, and the north became to her both the west and the east. Well divining that the moments were precious, she reviled earth and Heaven.

At last, after some minutes, her hand, groping blindly, and led by the fate which doomed her life to hateful tragedy, touched woven dry wattle. And now as a cast-away who, a sail in sight, cries 'Saved!', so was she.

She groped round to the door-way, and felt the opening. She stood listening — no sound. She peeped within, and could discern nothing.

Her heart sank horribly; she believed that she had failed. But when, before turning away, she intruded a cautious hand, and felt a buskin, then she was as the cast-away who sees the stalking regiment of approaching oars. She waited yet a moment, and detected now a breathing. Weakly-built Laura, exhausted and shocked, was asleep.

Now Anne ran; but only a few steps, then stopped. She had lost sense of direction. She looked for the pool, and did not see it. Nor did she remember whether the door, just left, looked toward the pool or away from it. She ran on at hazard, not knowing whither, though, in fact, the direction she chose was practically right.

At this time Bessie Ford was bending over the Spaniard at the other extremity of the pool. The weary load of Alvarada she had drawn and borne and manoeuvred on her little shoulders all the way hither, toward the shelter of the hut, from the road. But now all the Spaniard's self-help failed, and

she failed, too. He lay on the grass, she over him, her hand in his. His breathing was very rapid and feeble.

With quick fan his breath said:

‘Girl, I am dying—’

There was silence. She pressed his hand.

‘Art verily the sister of Laura Ford?’ said he.

‘Yes, master,’

‘Wot you that I am one of her chasers? That ’tis I which this day bore her off from you?’

‘By my credit, sir, ’twere ill talking of that now. Sure, repentance is as wise and fair as spotlessness, though ’tis later wise; and since you so talk, my master, think you I give you not all my heart in this your hour?’

‘Dost thou?’

‘Why, sure, I *do*.’

‘And I all *my* heart to thee — all, all! Could I but live two days, my arm, my life—’

‘Prithee, speak not, sir, but compose your soul. Oh, sure, ’tis a mighty, fair, and wondrous thing to die!’

‘Give me thy lips that I may kiss them, Bessie — so. Sweet, and wise, and merciful art thou, girl, and very fair to me revealed in this my dying hour — very fair — very fair. Now turn up my steel shirt at the bottom.’

She turned it up.

‘Now intrude thy hand beneath my silken girdle.’ She did so.

‘What find’st thou?’

‘A key, sir.’

‘A key — ah, my moment is come — is come, fair Bess. A key. I seem to see a whole universe of slowly-sailing moons volving in an emerald twilight. The key — ah, yes. It opens a coffre-fort, which lies for me in the

keeping of mine host of the Bell Inn, in Eastcheap. Thou seest, I fail — I fail. The coffre-fort contains 27,000 golden rose-nobles — they are thine. The wyvern at my collar is pledge agreed for their delivery. Take it quick, lest thou despoil, despoil — a dead man—’

With his own feeble hand he tore the pledge from his collar, and gave it her. A minute afterwards she felt and knew that he was dead.

Her reverent hand rested on his brow. He was dead. And death was — what? A minute she sat wondering. Was it verily a multitude of pallid moons volving slow in an emerald twilight? Her fancy saw the innumerable wan orbs, and the most weird and glowering green glamour. Much lately she had fallen into thinking of that very thing — of death — she, a girl in her nonage, full of tough health. And now with her thought of death was all mixed up the thought of her new riches: she had the key, the silver cognisance. She was rich, by my credit. Twenty-seven thousand gold rose-nobles she had — a sum not measureable, King’s-wealth, quite infinite. She would go sometimes and visit them in their mighty great mansion in France, the married couple, Master and Mistress Mark Bonner! No longer she believed Anne’s tale of Bonner’s kisses: Anne, who had lied as to Fitz, might have lied as to Bonner also, to madden her. There, sitting, she had a brief happiness, and a tear of gratitude fell from her upon Count Alvarada’s brow — a tear, sure, which must have weighed well for the Spaniard at the bar of Heaven. But the sudden thought of Calvo — her sure talisman, gone now — spurred her. She leapt up.

To hurry to the hut. And as she moved three steps, someone going the opposite way brushed by her: a woman — Anne.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE ORDEAL



‘I HEAR HIM in the mighty roar
That rusheth through the forests hoar,
When winds are raging loud.’

ANONYMOUS.

ANNE, feeling that someone was near, stopped; she was hopelessly bewildered as to direction; and she said:

‘Oh — are you of the Maddox folk? I have lost my way!’

Even as she spoke, Bessie, without fail, knew her in the roots of her consciousness — knew her bitterly. And this fact branded the girl’s soul like the scorch of a hot iron: that Anne came from the direction of the hut wherein Laura lay; also that Laura was lame, and could neither run nor walk.

It was in a voice strange, unlike her own, yet not simulated, that Bessie answered:

‘Whither would you go, lady?’

Anne, famished and over-driven, her wild spirit spinning now on a tip-toe of crazy ecstasy, was no longer capable of cautious, retarding thought. Her conduct was precisely the conduct of a lunatic, sane on one point: and in answer to Bessie’s ‘whither,’ she replied:

‘To the King’s camp across the river.’

There was a silence, horrible enough there in the dark and dripping wood: a murderous stillness: and in a voice hoarse, and evil as sin, Bessie Ford said:

‘I will lead you, lady, an you follow my steps.’

Instead of turning west to the mountain-road, where Anne would at once have recognised her whereabouts, Bessie turned south, so to gain the river through the wood. In a voice hardly audible, guilty as crime, she repeated:

‘Follow my steps....’

She it was not who remembered that Calvo had sawn through the Maddox bridge! but something in her brain which thought it for her, and said: Do it, do it, I bid.

Onward she went through the utter dark, not admitting to herself that the bridge was sawn, not thinking at all, nor conscious at all, except of this one thing: that *Hell* led her, as she led Anne, lifted her feet, and planted them for her — always in the same direction — and that this was sweet, though awful.

Anne was going to the King, and Anne was coming from Laura: the inference was clear that Anne was going to bring the King to Laura. But Bessie did not infer anything, nor consciously reason. Only, her spirit was taught — with even instantaneous certainty — by the dark doom-voices that admonish souls, that if now she did not do to Anne the thing which she was bid, then would Anne, without fail, heap upon her head a horror of woe.

Onward she went, quite numb, through the utter dark, her face pinched and ghastly, her teeth anon chattering a little. But so small a thing as her robe caught in a bramble sufficed to prick her mind. She stopped to disengage it; and as she again went onward, muttered:

‘Now, may the good God keep my hands from evil....’

But the prayer was without force, or faith. It was self-hypocrisy added to murder, and blasphemy to crime.

She hated Anne: even with viperous venom, and the rancour of cobras thrice distilled she hated her — as only females hate. But now, not even hate was it that led her, for she was without sensation: it was the strong thing that moved her feet, and set her going like a wound clock.

As a man receives a stroke of paralysis, or shock of apoplexy, so he receives a stroke, or shock, of crime-mood. The moral nature collapses: a squall leaps out, smites the little sail, and with just the easy suddenness of a wink over goes the skiff. To every infamy, as Goethe says, each man is liable. Happy the well-built craft that rights herself — with a shudder from keel to pennant.—’

The night was dark, the forest thick-wooded, and here was no path. Hence the clock-work figure that led Anne to her death met obstructions, at each of which mere mechanism, incapable of advancing, found thought essential. And so the habit of thought grew: till, near the end, Bessie’s spirit, with angry impatience, was ejaculating:

‘Oh, save me, save me, from this!’

But she prayed as one struggling in nightmare, bound hand and foot; and persistently she advanced, without haste nor rest, and Anne followed her sounds.

Now the Winney, its bands forgot, running free between its banks (as an athlete spurts light with elbows close), began to surround them with its growing shout. To Bessie it noised like some weird river in the pale Kingdom of Death, its wash filling the world, mingling with the beat of her blood, welling and swirling within her ears.

Always her grinning teeth-edges met in chatterings like bird-peckings: but now she was actually reasoning to herself in a species of lucid lunacy.

‘This woman,’ she thought, ‘whom, sure, I have never wronged, how hath she hunted and beset me! I hate her, for first hath she hated me. I will choke her life in the water, and hear the glad bubbling cry of her agony, for first willed she to choke my every good hope in shame and horror. I will not stop — no, I will walk straight on to the bridge, the ghastly bridge. I can hear the water shout, and I know precisely how she will feel at the instant when her foot steps on air, and the world turns all into unsolid rushing floods to her. Sure, I am not a bad-hearted girl, meaning fair and well to everyone, and how hath she hunted and beset me! How hath she hunted and beset me!

I hate her with rage and bile, and the bitterness of aloes and verdigris, for first she hated me. God will sure not judge me harsh, for now, if I lead her not to the ghastly bridge, and choke her life in the unsolid rushing flood, whose shout grows and fills the whole pale Kingdom of Death in mine ears, then will she still hunt and beset me, and now, *this night*, will work me final woe. For what one knows, one knows: and this I know. Well and fair have I meant, God wot, and if I love my little girl, is that my fault? By my credit, who could help to love her? She should have let me be, that woman, she should not have kindled the flaming malice of Hell in my bosom, who, sure, am a well-meaning girl in my way; nor should she have hunted and beset me, nor hated me first. I will not stop — no, I will walk straight on to the ghastly, ghastly bridge. ’Tis God — perhaps — who hath wrought it so to a chance most wondrous rare, and given her into my hand, just when she would work me final woe, that I might choke her life in the unsolid rushing flood, and be for ever rid of her, rid, rid of her, that woman. My mother! how the shout of the great pale waters grows, and fills one’s poor ears! I hardly can hear the sound of her feet behind me. Sure, we are near now — we are not far off. Oh, save me, save me from this....!’

At this last heart-cry — a real emotion now — she tossed her face upward with irritable and impious impatience. The smitten boat, well-built, was straining, in vain, to right itself. It was a question of Time.

She did not stop, but moved steadily in the tow of a Power. And the Power said: ‘Do it! Laura is *lame*,’ and thy chance is wondrous rare, one in a thousand thousand millions: thou wilt not touch her even with the finger: she asks the way, thou guidest her right: the bridge is there: *thou* knowest not that it is sawn — how *could’st* thou know?’

It was a question of Time: but they drew very near the bridge. The forest ended, and they were slushing through a muddy field. Here Anne said:

‘On, on, — faster, good woman!’

Bessie quickened not her steps: but on stolidly, without pause nor haste, went she. They passed through a lane of six dark and slumbering houses of scattered Maddox: and now they were on the river-strand.

And here, at once and suddenly, Bessie Ford’s prayer was answered, her temptation solved: and she was saved from murder. Anne panted hurriedly:

‘I give you thanks — now I know my way — —’

For yonder across the water gleamed lights of Henry’s camp.

Anne bent forward into running, knowing the position of the bridge relative to the lights. But she stopped, remembered the good woman’s guidance, returned, groped, and scrambled a crown into Bessie’s hand: and Bessie took it, and said nothing.

She was saved from murder, she saw! Anne ran toward the bridge in voluntary suicide. Bessie, sure, had not led her thither: the bridge was quite ten yards along the strand from where she stood.

But she ran after Anne, not knowing why, her teeth now chattering a steady tattoo.

Anne reached the bridge, and entered upon it with hurried, prone gait. Bessie Ford at the end, one foot on the plank, stood and peered, her soul focussed in her eyes.

‘Go not on!’ she tried to cry, but the words choked in her throat.

Her responsibility was gone: the voice which had said ‘Do it!’ no longer spoke, since nothing remained to do. But now the test of her integrity was a millionfold heightened, it being no longer a question of virtual Murder, but of active Mercy: not of negatively refraining from wrong, but of doing positive good. And so complex in its generous operations is a noble mind, that she who had found the easier negative hard, rose naturally and gallantly, like a swamped life-boat, to the height of the positive harder.

She was in time, as the virtuous are. She irritably cleared her raucous throat, and pitching her voice to a triumphant cry of passionate valour, she halloed:

‘Why, woman, go not on! *the bridge is broken...*

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE CAPTURE



‘AH, I MAUN crush amang the stour
Thy slender stem:
To save thee now is past my power,
Thou bonnie gem.’
BURNS.

THE Voice which whispers with lover’s languishment, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’ is full of honeyed promise and consolation; yet, certainly, it may be heard amid the intensest earthly misery.

Bessie, having uttered her cry, and run north from the bridge, heard the good Voice; but none the less, her frame trembled in a continuous jerky ague of boding anguish, as she made her way up the mountain-road: an ague which hardly left her to the hour of her death.

The situation of her affairs, viewed rationally, gave no *prima facie* reason for this extreme mental agony: for she knew instinctively that it must be past the hour of Compline, and her defender, Francis, should even now be at the hut awaiting her; Fitzgerald, too, according to promise, should be there — her warrior! With these four arms alone, the most potent in Europe, she should be strong. But she did not view her situation thus rationally. Her heart, knowing its own secret, boded, boded waywardly; and the strong hand of a continuous ague shook her frame, and chattered her teeth.

And, in fact, when she reached the hut, neither Francis nor Fitzgerald was yet there; only Laura breathed heavily in sleep on the dry leaves; and Bessie, sitting, took knees in arms, and shook there with bowed head and sideward-leering eyes, listening in terror, waiting in craven collapse.

Anne, meanwhile, having heard the warning cry, had turned, and found her guide vanished. She was puzzled: this disappearance, and something in the tone and manner of the cry, made her think of Bessie Ford. But she dismissed that notion easily. ‘Sure, *she* would not be the daw to warn me!’ she muttered.

She knew that there was another bridge lower down the stream, and toward this with flying heels she ran, found it, made her way cautiously over it, and so over hillock and plain to Harry’s tents.

She approached them at slower pace, and stealthily. There were five, one of considerable size, four smaller, under trees. From all, at the flaps, gleamed ruddy streaks. The largest, which was Henry’s, she avoided, and stepping on tip-toe to the nearest of the four, lifted an edge of flap, and peeped. Some men lolled on the ground among harness, saddles, and arms, playing backgammon, and eating a mess of cowheel-and-bacon. She went on to the next, lifted a flap, and saw what she wanted: Charles Brandon nosily dicing on a chest-top with Knevet, a brass-work cruse-lamp between them, a flagon of Lachrimæ in Charles’ grasp. She put in her head, and whispered:

‘Charles....’

‘Who goes?’ said he.

‘Anne — Anne Boleyn.’

‘Anne! you?’ cried Charles, half drunk, in the loud voice of surprise.

Now, from the apex there fell a curtain, dividing the tent into two equal parts; and on the other side of the curtain reclined my Lord Cardinal,

writing; and he heard Charles Brandon, in the loud voice of surprise, say: ‘Anne! you?’

He was not therefore slow in slipping through the flap-door of his side, and creeping half-way round the tent. He heard the momentous, breathless news: the description of the whereabouts of the hut in the wood; Anne’s whole gasping passion of tidings. And even as Charles Brandon cried, ‘Knevet, we have the girl!’ and darted towards Henry’s tent, Wolsey was carrying his bulk at an earnest trot toward another tent near, where lay seven of his own men.

He intruded his head, and hissed: ‘Burrows!’, and when a man ran to him, he whispered with intense haste and emphasis:

‘To horse all of you, secretly and instantly! At a noiseless walk go hence ten yards, then gallop like devils! Up the mountain-road, a wall to your right, a pool, then a hut. In the hut the two girls. Whip them off to Baneleigh Tavern! Two of you there remain in guard, the rest return in secret. Burrows, Burrows, be swift and silent, I charge thee! No light take: and remember the demolished bridge. Nothing forget — all do. Be gone—’

Wolsey, having dropped his whisper, trotted his bulk clandestinely back to his own tent, reclined, took pen in calm fingers, and wrote as before.

And, in fact, quite ten minutes before Henry — whose very extremity of heavy flurry retarded him — the servants of Wolsey were galloping toward Maddox.

Bessie Ford, meanwhile, sat by the side of sleeping Laura on dry leaves, knees in arms, ague-shaken, with bowed head and sideward-leering eyes, listening in terror, waiting in craven collapse.

Waiting for Francis, waiting for Fitzgerald, waiting for doom! And Francis and Fitzgerald came not: but doom came.

Both Francis and Fitz, however, were coming at tearing gallop, Francis accompanied by six of his knights. He was, in reality, the soul of punctuality, the French King. But the narrow foot-way which leads from Fenley to Maddox had been lost by the cavalcade in the darkness; they had gone askew, and found it necessary to return on their steps, losing twenty minutes.

As for Fitz and Mac, they had pursued the three Du Ballay-men quite up to the mountain-brow, and beyond it, without overtaking, though every moment pressing them harder. Now, however, the agonized heart of Fitz, thinking of Bonner lying wounded by the roadside, would let him no further advance. They turned and degradingly at break-neck pace the mountain-side, till they came upon the wounded scholar: and here was more delay.

Finally, after some minutes, the wound was bandaged with a belt; and Bonner, uttering querulous complaints, was before Fitz on his charger. And now, bound at last for Bessie and the hut, they set off 'down the hill. They had not, however, proceeded ten yards, when the thronging spatter of near up-galloping hoofs startled them; and since the unknown party was without lights, when in a moment or two it met the three comrades, it seemed to burst out of the dark upon them.

The wary prohibition as to lights was, in fact, the weak point of Wolsey's enterprise. The wall, except to one who knew its *locale*, was not an obvious landmark: and the Wolsey-men, expecting something obvious, had galloped up well past it.

The two parties met. Fitz, as he drew, dropped Bonner with what gentleness he could, and Mac, flinging aside the lanthorn which he carried, tackled Wolsey's Burrows. Fitz, whose aim was to hack his way through the six now left to his one arm, and so fly to the hut, entered the fray with grand and terrible impetuosity, his sword thrashing like flails. But the Wolsey-

men, who had at once known him by the lanthorn-shine, offered a dogged resistance: and four he had cut down before he found his path open, and himself free. And now, abandoning Mac for Bessie, he spurred downward at rushing pace. But his head dropped like a nodding sleeper's, his eyes closed, and he moaned in dream. After some yards, he toppled forward, then heavily sideward, crashing into bramble. He was deeply chopped in the back over the left lung.

At the same time, the Wolsey-men, pressed to do their errand, went on their upward way, leaving stubborn unconquerable Mac alive on his two legs, with several wounds. At the same time, also, Henry, with five, turned, lower down, from the high-road to the right, going along the wall.

Bessie Ford, sitting with continuous moan and shiver, heard the approaching hoofs: and knew with as clear an assurance as though she saw them, that here were the sounds of neither Francis nor Fitz.

She did not rise, nor move. She sat, and rocked her body and knees, with continuous moan and shiver.

Then light was in her eyes. Henry entered first, and with that chill horror which she had of him, she felt his presence, and flinched gnashingly, as when through a man's flesh a razor slowly moves.

It was some minutes before her eyes would lift a little: and then she saw that Henry was supporting Laura round the waist with the right arm, while with the left fore-finger he held up her chin. And a man near lifted a lanthorn to reveal the lovely face.

Laura Ford's eyes were bashfully cast down, and her lips were — smiling.

At that moment, a man with wild, blood-washed face, and drawn sword, dashed through the King's gentlemen at the hut-door: a sturdy, tough spirit,

he, who had sworn to defend Bessie Ford, and did not forget. It was James Macdonald.

The words which he cried, with a jerk of the head, were:

‘Have them you shall not, while I live, Sir King — !’

But Henry spoke in time.

‘Cut me down this mad dog,’ said he.

And at the doorway itself the swords clashed. Stubbornly, in his stolid, firm-lipped, rock-browed way, though quite weak now, Macdonald defended himself against five blades during two full minutes’ space. Then, washed from head to foot in blood, he gave in, and drooped, and fell dead.

And seeing him fall — so gorily, and so tragically, and so loyally — Bessie Ford lost her woe in swoon.

CHAPTER XXXIX

BESSIE'S GREATNESS



‘ON HER NOW

A curtain, blacker than the night, is dropped

For ever!’...

ROGERS.

THE girls were captured by Henry at twenty minutes past compline on a Saturday night.

They were at once taken to the King’s tents, a separate guarded one being assigned them. And it was not till five minutes afterwards that Francis, with three, arrived at the hut — three of his six having been precipitated at the broken bridge into the Winney. He found the hut empty, save for dead Macdonald lying there.

At five on the Sabbath morning, a party of ten, led by Charles Brandon, set out from Henry’s tents, bound for London, the two girls, well mounted — though Bessie was in a condition of agued debility — being in their midst. And at London, at two in the dark Monday morning, they arrived safely. Meanwhile, Henry, with Wolsey and some twenty, had rejoined the larger portion of his camp lying at Fletcherfield, and with his whole following set out for London, which he reached about noon on Tuesday, the serene array of horses rolling through the streets a long rattle and pattering fracas of showering hoof-falls, the expedition over, the war won, and the boys strangely here again.

As for Fitzgerald and Bonner, their wounds, though grave, were, none of them, what doctors call ‘dangerous’; and in a week’s time, Fitz and Bonner were occupying a little garret between the Old Wool-market and Almoner’s Yard, Westminster, where lay Caxton’s press. And these two, sleeping three or four hours in the twenty-four, were searching London for the sisters.

Francis, too, was assured by the departure of the English royal camp that Henry had the prize. And spurred by many spurs — by love and veneration for the resting Angel who had bespoken him in the wood, by gratitude to her, by intense jealousy of Henry, by the spirit of enterprise — he had sent back his camp to ship in Southampton-water, and accompanied only by the Chevalier d’Arcy, prosecuted in a strict disguise from a solitary house near St. Botolph, beyond the city-wall at Bishop’s Gate, a strenuous search for the sisters.

Wolsey, too, never despaired. Even though Laura was within the adamant grasp of Henry, he still searched — and with infinite secrecy, complex skill. But he found them not.

Anne Boleyn, returned to London, knew of these efforts, and smiled. She said to herself: ‘Now that Henry hath her, no power in earth or heaven will rob him of her, till he wants her no more.’

All this time Bessie and Laura were in a Bank-side house, the personal property of Lord Thomas Howard.

‘Bankside’ at this date was a swelling hill-land, scrubby and blasted, at the back of Southwark High-street, extending, we imagine, from the south end of London Bridge, where stood St. Mary Overie, quite as far as Lambeth Palace. At its east end, overlooking the river, were Rochester House and Winchester House; and a little back and west of these, a collection of slum-houses of the old timber-frame sort, called ‘The Stews.’ Still west of The Stews, at about six stone-throws, stood, on a plateau of

risen ground, a very ancient house, low and black, the summit only of whose roof, and a turret-top, was visible behind a square enclosure of battlemented wall. It was called Rain (Reine?) House, was in the mortmain of the Dukes of Norfolk, and now Lord Thomas'. And behind the gloomy secrecy of these walls lay the sisters.

For a week nothing happened. But at the end of that time, Fitzgerald, Wolsey, and Francis had, each on his own account, decided that here was probably the hiding-place they sought.

Wolsey knew with perfect assurance that Henry had not yet seen Laura since her arrival in London: for his hundred eyes were upon the King. It was not therefore too late for enterprise.

Francis and Fitz both divined that Henry, for many reasons of shame, of secrecy, of slow courtship, would not act hastily; and hoped that it was not too late for enterprise.

On the eighth midnight, Fitzgerald was over the battlemented wall. He made his way through a wilderness of unkempt vegetation to the old wood-building. He broke a shutter, leapt through a low lattice, struck light to a rush. He proceeded to search through the vacant, brown, and dust-exhaling halls. He had come certain of death, expecting an opposition of overwhelming force. But he was met only by a little woman in undress, bearing a lamp — a buxom, dimpled woman of middle-age in pinked porringer, who perked, and seemed greatly surprised; and behind her peered an elderly man, who frowned fatherly reproof. They seemed the comptrollers of the old deserted mansion.

Fitz said: 'Yield me the two maidens ye hold, lest I run you thorow instanter.'

They seemed very alarmed. No maidens, sure, held they there, they swore, and offered to lead him through the house, what though he merited

the Marshalsea for infraction. And this they did: and Fitz went away sure that his suspicions had misled him.

Two hours afterwards Francis and d'Arcy effected forced entrance, met the same experience, and went away sure that their suspicions had misled them. And the next midnight a body of Wolsey-men, masked, entered the close through a wide-opened portal, searched the house, and went away sure that their suspicions had misled them.

The girls were in a turret connected with the house by a wooden causeway. Each of the searchers, having entered this turret, had found themselves in a large square apartment, with floor and vaulted ceiling of stone. The turret was not high, and the infallible impression conveyed was that all above this ceiling was only solid masonry. A secret slab, however, removed from the flooring, would have revealed a narrow stairway, which, after descending, mounted in the thickness of the wall to an iron portal, and to two low rooms, above.

These two rooms were separated by a rude wall, containing a Gothic oaken door, iron-studded, very thick and ponderous. In this door was a great key, projecting outward toward the little iron portal by which entrance was effected from the stairs. At every curfew the buxom dimpled woman in pinked porringer, having watched their evening repast, led Bessie Ford to bed in the inner room, and locked the door of communication, Laura sleeping in the outer, or stair-room. After the third day, however, Laura noticed that the key was never withdrawn; she hated loneliness in the dark; and thenceforward, as soon as the woman retired, the sisters were reunited, and slept together in Bessie's bed, till they judged morning come.

There was no window, and no sunlight. Candles burned in iron sconces all the day. Bessie Ford was deadly sick, and, in general, sat wrapped in her arms, cowering in an ague.

Laura, on the other hand, thrived in this dark confinement and stuffy air. Here and now she fared sumptuously, and with steady appetite: here was venison pasty and ypocras jelly, here halibut engrailed, godwit, and heron, and peacock. She fattened like a duck, and her loveliness swelled royal and authoritative. But Bessie, a poor mean-clad figure, incongruous with the rich-velveted chair where she sat and cowered sideways, only moaned and shivered, and hardly ate.

On the ninth day they were led down and out into the jungled close, and here they breathed deep of the free air; the buxom, dimpled woman in pinked porringer followed, making herself hideously pleasant, with many a perk and knee-curtsey, and praise of the beauty of Laura: — It was a broad and glorious summer-day, though into the rank close the light came like light asleep, like shade a-trance in far and magic lands, where lady-birds sail the Arabian air, and boozy coccinellæ, cruising, trawl a musing boom. At the portal, through gratings in a wicket, they could see the glistening river, flitted with small-sailed craft, like muscae in the sunlight; or anon a nobleman's barge glided, low and long, like a gondola, with high in-curved prore, toward the King's Stairs. There landed the cloaked nobleman, passed beneath the Clock Tower of Old Palace Yard, by Westminster Hall, by St. Stephen's Chapel, and so to the Palace, to disappear full of purposes which seemed momentous, and were not.

Yonder, eastward, rose visible the high needle of St. Paul's; visible, too, the mouth of the little rapid Fleet, and the Queen's Bridewell Palace, and the frater-roof of the Grey Friars; the turrets also of Savoy Palace, fluttering flags, and Somerset Place, and St. Mary's Hospital, and Durham House, and the Whitehall of Wolsey. To a little opening in the land near came an open punt with horses, here being Stangate Horse-Ferry. The pinnacles of the Westminster Palace waved six flags in gala polychrome of yellow and blue

and crimson, fluttering small in the vast Walhalla-hall of the vacant and jubilee heaven.

There are days when the conspiracy of the unseen Powers to vulgarise man's life in his own eyes fails: and the world is perceived to be, in truth, an elfin world, musing through region after region of romance; an earth set in a far nook of the universe, where haunt gnome and kobold, faun and peeping sylph; lit by a rabid day-star; and swooning at the angelus-bell in the lazuli grot of Fairy Night through a lamp-lit bazaar of stars.

Such was this first day of the sisters' airing; but as they so stood, looking upon the bright world, something black and ominous molested them.

Laura stepped back with the cry:

'Our Saviour..... 'Tis sure token of Death....!'

Three crows, with rough and stertorous caw, had rushed low by the portal, flapping so palpably close their raven augury of ill, as almost to strike the arch.

The buxom woman, also, saw it, and took them each by an arm. After an hour's breath, they were conducted back to the turret.

Now they were regularly led out every noon. Laura grew nothing less than gay, and would grin beautifully at a caught butterfly, with an 'O, 'tis minion...!' Bessie waited, watchful, surprised at this grace, never ceasing her chronic shivering.

Why did not Henry come? It was because, like men at a great crisis, he was being pulled two ways. He remembered the divine face of Laura Ford, and would come; and he remembered the divine voice, and words, of Bessie Ford, and would not.

He was intelligent — in comparison with other Kings; and he was conscientious. His crime loomed almost so monstrously large in his eyes as, in fact, it was. Day after day he passed in lonely, ever-repeated agony,

forgetting tax, forced loan, and Council Chamber. Bessie Ford had called him '*Father*,' and her tone was in his ears. She had said: 'Don't you do it — *don't you*,' And one day, deeply disguised, he had taken boat at the Palace Stairs to go, and quite near Stangate Horse-Ferry on the Surrey side, had ordered the bow round again.

'By Heaven, 'tis an honest poor soul...', he had whispered from the depths of his struggle.

If he was not, in truth, the 'Father' of a poor little storm-tossed subject of his Kingship like Bessie Ford, what was the good of him?

But never once, had he known his own heart, did he really, in the deeper depths of his Purpose, give way. For, lo, 'he was a prince of most royal courage; and sooner than miss any part of his will, he would endanger one half of his Kingdom.' So said Wolsey of him.

About the twelfth day, the buxom, dimpled woman in pinked porringer said to Laura, the three sitting on a bench in the deep shade of an ivy-tod:

'Will you come with me, dearie? *I would show you a thing*'

This woman and her wheedling ways Bessie Ford had grown now to abhor. She started.

'Shall I not come with my sister, Mistress Haliday?' said she.

The woman, dimpling, said:

'Why, no harm meant, my faith, to your sweet, sweet sister, girl. Lord's light, how pretty she is looking to-day, too! Her lips are as soft as butter, I swear, and her eyes shine like a bullock's! No, troth, I'd liefer she came alone—'

'Yet will I go with her.'

Bessie stood up.

But as she stood, the elderly man of the house appeared by miracle through the bushes, put a rough hand on her shoulder, and sternly said:

‘Such demeaning of yourself, girl, is not meet, and can further you nothing! Here you tarry!’

She fell helpless to the seat, face in hands, while the woman, taking Laura by the arm, said:

‘Come, you darling.’

The intenser woe of the situation here lay not in the fact that the sisters were in the grip of a Force which could do with them what it would: but in the fact that Laura did not *resist* the Force. After a reluctant shake of the left shoulder, she went with the pinked porringer, curious to see what that thing was which would be shown her.

She was led toward the mansion, and was away from Bessie twenty minutes.

The two were then led back to the turret, and left alone.

There was a silence. They sat side by side in cushioned chairs in Laura’s room. Bessie waited for Laura to recount. Laura said nothing.

‘Well, Laura—’ said Bess.

‘Darling Bessie,’ said Laura.

‘What led she thee to see, Laura?’

‘Phew! ’twas some gallant who would be for courting me — phew!’

’Twas King Henry the Eighth, and this Laura knew, but said nothing as to that.

‘A gallant, Laura Ford? And what said he to thee, Laura?’

‘Naught but a heap of blag and stupid folly! Our Saviour — I paid no heed to what he said!’

Bessie’s reading eyes were upon her face.

‘And what did he, Laura?’

‘Oh, naught did he. What could he, Bess? Thou knowest gallants’ foolish play — he only touched my cheek with his finger-tips.’

‘Did he, Laura? And, Laura, thou lettest him do that?’

‘I? Phew! not I! I knocked his hand right away—’

Bessie, in her woe, felt a solace, and inward charm. She went to kneel by her sister, and adore.

Again the next day Laura was taken away for twenty minutes, while Bessie, guarded in the ivy-tod, waited. But that day the answers of Laura, on their reunion, were not so satisfactory. There was confusion in her looks.

And thenceforth every day, for three days, the sisters were separated, each day for twenty minutes. And on the third day Laura returned with a face encrimsoned as morning.

What now was eating into the heart of Bessie Ford was the canker of a mad jealousy. Laura’s answers had become vague, irritable, sometimes self-contradictory, obviously false. With the horror of Bessie’s great Fear now mingled a rage, and a yellow gall, and a world-hate which seemed to parch her soul within her. There were moments when she distrusted her sister with jaundiced spleen, and distrusting, detested her. But, ten minutes afterwards, she would be sobbing out her heart upon Laura’s bosom, imploring, even for Christ’s sake, her love and loyalty.

In this state of crazy, flaming jealousy was she on the fourth day that Laura, with hardly any pretended vexation, was led by the pinked porringer to the mansion. Bessie sat on a bench in the shade; and the elderly man, by her side, had his restraining hand on her.

She could no longer bear it: of the identity of *the gallant* who daily saw her sister she had acquired a suspicion which was like a red-hot dagger in her flesh: her necessity now to *see*, at whatever cost, was absolute. This day, she suddenly wrenched her arm from the man, and took to her fleet heels — towards the house.

The man, in great scare, was after her: but she distanced him easily.

Approaching the one-storied mansion at its side, she saw before her in a little gable a Gothic door, consisting of two parts, upper and lower. The upper swung open; and leaping over the lower, she latched the upper within, shutting out her pursuer: and she darted forward.

In two minutes, running, she had traversed a complexity of sombre and cob-webbed halls and passages; antic triangular rooms, little stairs of three steps, dark-arranged tiring-rooms, rotting bed-chambers: an intricacy of deserted and ghost-haunted oddity of ancient building; till, having run along a corridor of some length, she was about to turn into another, when, at the corner, she saw, and stopped, and gasped, cold as death.

This second corridor was dim, but a lattice at a far end diffused some twilight: and she could see.

Laura and a man stood in the middle there. His two hands rested on her shoulders; he was speaking earnestly to her, underlooking a little: for her head hung quite down, her face shaded with draping hair.

A black mask which the man wore had been lifted, and now stuck above the horizontal from his forehead. Bessie, with a deathly failure at the knees, saw well that it was Henry.

Oh, without fail, it was he....!

There were the shapely legs, tight-clad, one projected; the sculptured protrusion of the knees; the thick body in girdled black-velvet jerkin. She noticed the look of complicity here: the earnestly confidential face of the self-sure and masterful lover.

Low, low, hung Laura Ford's head, draped in hair; and her face now was pale.

Bessie saw the bent head nod slowly once: it seemed a nod of consent. Then the earnestly confidential lover spoke a minute, and she saw the bent head nod slowly once again: and it seemed a nod of consent....

But now a sudden hand was over Bessie's mouth, clapped from behind, and she was hurriedly dragged round the corner by the buxom woman in pinked porringer.

That day the sisters, when rejoined in the turret, did not speak, and shunned each other's eyes. About midafternoon the woman brought up a basket containing a repast: and Bessie, with jealous rage, observed that now Laura ate with no effusive approval of the good things, and little appetite. Laura was subdued, and mused.

Between angelus and compline came another repast. Laura ate not at all; but when the woman handed her a goblet of Tokay, she nodded royal consent, took cheek from hand, and drank largely.

Both beds that day had been relaid with clean stiff covertures, sheets of cambric, and down-coverlets of basted white silk. The woman, now, as she looked finally round before departure, inspected like a backing drill-sergeant the bed of Laura from the judicial distance of her held-back head; then tugged finishingly at here a corner, there a cambric-edge. And this poor Bessie Ford saw with still under-look.

The woman said 'Come' to Bessie. Bessie kissed Laura on the brow. The woman led her into the inner room, put out her lights, shut the door, and turned the key. That night, for the first time, she did not put out Laura's lights, and kissed Laura with fussy benediction on the cheek, and backed away with curtseys, Laura palely smiling with one shoulder-shrug.

Now each sister was alone, Laura with two lights, Bessie in dead darkness. It was Laura's nightly custom, after some minutes, to rejoin her sister. But this night Bessie waited, and Laura did not come.

Laura was in her bed, sitting up; Bessie crouching at the door, silent, waiting.

Poor abandoned heart, in that hour she tasted all the inhumanity of man, and the bitter cold of the world. Laura did not come to her. It was just as though there was no God in Heaven, and no care anywhere for a poor honest soul wanting help. If a good man or woman is not stronger than a stupid King, or a locked door, how can there be a God? She wept there, shuddering, shuddering, tasting all Gethsemane, kneeling on her knees, her arms thrown up against the strong oak, and her bent head sweating great drops.

But a certain greatness of mind which was hers, that invincibility of high spirits, saved her from utter collapse. She rose after an hour, and began to pound at the door.

Laura heard, and started with a terrified whisper of ‘Our Saviour!’: but she did not open, having the excuse that the sounds were faint.

Soon, however, came other sounds, loud bangs, produced by a stool which Bess, with fierce brow, was hurling against the door. With every bang Laura’s heart thumped, and her body started, as though struck by the operating stool. This mean-clad woman who was her sister the beauty had in genuine awe, and feared with a deep-seated fear.

After a while, no longer able to withstand that strong summons, Laura cast up her eye-whites, stealthily hurried from the bed, and turned the key. Very lovely was she that night in her nudity, pale, her hair well turned and built.

She met the eyes of a judge there.

‘Wherefore earnest thou not to my bed to-night, girl?’ said Bess.

‘Sure, Bess,’ said she timorously, ‘I fell asleep—’

‘Asleep, girl? Asleep? And wherefore opened’st not when I knocked?’

‘Our Saviour! thou knocked’st so soft—’

‘So soft, so soft,’ moaned poor Bess, covering her face, weeping with stretched-back lips.

But she pulled herself together; and she looked steadily at Laura, who looked on the ground.

‘To-night,’ said Bessie, ‘I will sleep in thy bed, thou in mine,’

‘Why, nay, Bessie, nay!’ protested Laura. ‘Be reasonable, do— ’tis too much, you know, at the end of the tale—’

Royal was Laura’s beauty that night: but here not she, but her sister, was the real Queen and Sovereign. Bessie Ford stretched her forefinger.

‘Do it, girl,’ said she, ‘do it, do it. You see that stool? There where you stand I brain you therewith, an you do not now my will!’

A push at the shoulder sent Laura into the dark room. Bessie closed the door, and turned the key.

After a time she put out the two lights. She went to bed.

Like a boat’s sail ruffling in the wind’s eye, so, lying there, she shuddered.

Later, she heard that the key of the small stair-portal moved with stealthy creakings in the lock. Then she felt that someone was with her in the nether blackness of the room. And after a second or two, a hand was on her shoulder.

‘Laura... pig’s-eye....’

Bessie Ford gasped this word:

‘*Sire....*’

That most chill horror which she had of him shook her now with strong fundamental shudder.

But as a lamb led to the slaughter, so was she: not one sigh of pain, or groan of mortal shame, escaped her lips. Only, her upturned, martyr eyes appealed to God....

CHAPTER XL

TWENTY-SEVEN THOUSAND NOBLES



‘THEN FORTH THE chest he brought:
They pressed the secret spring:
With pearls ’twas fraught and broidries wrought,
And many a gleaming thing.’
OLD BALLAD.

SOMETHING like what she had hoped really came to pass. She had the inward certainty, like a consciousness, that this sacrifice of her girlhood would lead to her sister’s liberation and ultimate salvation. And so it was.

The next morning at ten the woman in pinked porringer entered the room, and saw Bessie Ford lie in deep, oblivious sleep, there where she thought to see Laura; she took note of the look of the sleeper’s face: and she clapped a hand upon her mouth.

Here before her, she well perceived, lay a tragedy.

And the tragedy was due to *her* laxity of discipline. The key, on that night, at least, should have been removed from the separating door.

Her dimples vanished, her face paled. That this event must become known if the girls remained was certain, and, with terrible consequences, it would be ascribed to her. After many doubts and trepidations, she decided that their immediate escape would be the lesser of her two evils.

Accordingly, when at noon the prisoners were led down for air in the close, they found themselves alone in the neighbourhood of the portal, and

presently perceived that this was open. Bessie caught Laura by the hand, and, with what of power remained to her, ran from that evil place.

South-eastward they ran across barren fields, past The Stews, and so into Southwark High Street, and up it, till, at a sombre archway, Bessie pointed, saying:

‘Wait thou there,’

The manner of the elder sister was now calmly grand, irresistibly authoritative. This day, to the bottom of her soul, Laura feared and shrank from her, almost as from some risen spirit, or superior essence.

The arch was some steps only from the carved frontage and barge-board roofs and gables of Chaucer’s Tabard Inn; and under the hoary pendants and quaint finials disappeared Bessie in haste.

She would speak with mine host in private: and for ten minutes she spoke, part of that time on her knees. After which, she ran for Laura, and the two followed the good man to a gable-garret overlooking the street. He had promised her silence and shelter; and she locked the door upon herself, and sat waiting.

Except those three words: ‘Wait thou there,’ she had not spoken that day to Laura; and now, too, they sat silent, dim-lit beneath the low roof, Laura Ford slinking mouse-quiet, dreading to make a sound or move a finger.

Bessie waited for darkness. Her one hope now was to get Alvarada’s twenty-seven thousand rose-nobles from the Bell Inn, find Mark Bonner — and die.

Very good now seemed to her the grave, and sweet the oblivious clods of the valley. But so far, she had conceived no method of self-destruction, nor had even formally thought of that. Only, she felt that sure there was some natural working in the Loom of the World which would not deny her death also, and, somehow, must bring it to pass.

After curfew she went out, locking the door upon Laura, without saying anything. She passed by the inn's back over deserted Bankside, took ferry-boat at the water's edge, and landing at some stairs near Old Scotland Yard, passed through Holbein's Gate, and by the tower of Charing Cross into the Strand-fields. A lonely and lowly figure went she, her plait reaching no lower than her rowan-tree necklace and low-clad neck, seeming not great, nor important, though she was both. And now, crossing the Fleet-bridge, through the Ludgate she passed, and at the Bell Inn went down the side-passage, and entered the court-yard at the back.

Mine host himself, her great-uncle, opened to her knock at a buttery-door, and his eyes were round.

'Bessie Ford!' went he, "Tis thou. And many a searching of heart has been mine these weeks for thy poor mother's child, my troth! Wherefore leavedst thou me, girl, without congee or farewell word?"

'By my credit, Master Somers, that were long in the telling, sir,' said she. 'Prithee, let me sit me here a moment.'

'Art sick, then, girl?'

'Not so quick and hearty as I have been, sir.'

'Goes all not well with thee, Bessie Ford?'

'Not all, Master Somers — not all, sir.'

She had lowered herself carefully to a stool, while he, with parted legs and round blue eyes, stood regarding her. After a minute she took from her bosom Alvarada's key and silver wyvern, and presented him the wyvern.

'The Spaniard's pledge!' cried he.

'The coffre-fort is mine, Master Somers, an so be you will deliver it me.' Somewhat askance he eyed her.

'Bessie, thou hast come honestly by this, my girl? Honest a man was thy father as ever breathed, and as to thy mother—'

She rose impatiently.

‘Honestly enow, Master Somers. The gentman who gave it me is dead, and gave it with fair and good intent in dying hour. Prithee, deliver me the box.’

The light was dim, and mine host observed not the ghastly apprehensive pallor of her face. He hesitated, taking a turn or two through the room, and there was need for haste: for one no less than the Queen of England was at that moment hasting in a close whirl-cote eastward to seize this very coffre-fort of Alvarada. However, there was no gainsaying the Spaniard’s pledge. Mine host finally led the way upward, and in Alvarada’s once bed-chamber on the first floor, dived into a chest, and produced an iron box, green-painted, of massive weight. Bessie put in the key, and in a moment saw gold pieces lie thick as flaking wafers.

‘Heaven’s mercy, here’s riches!’ said old Somers; ‘girl, girl—’

He trembled; but now Bessie was calmer, and less pale.

‘Master Somers,’ said she, ‘you are parent of mine by the mother’s side, and sure, to boot, my good friend. In this matter, I wot, you will even help me. All this wealth you here behold is verily mine: but bear it about with me I cannot. What, then, must I do, sir?’

‘Why, Bessie, here thou mightest leave it, girl, to use as thou hast need, an so thou will’st it.’

‘Nay, Master Somers, for myself this pile of gold were useless, by my credit: for my case is this, that I have an ailing, sir, and an aching, which, sure, in brief space must take me from the world, somehow, some ways. But you wot that I have a sister, Laura? She is here in London now, and her I hope to marry before I die, if, sir, I can but find the bridegroom for her. And for them, since I would not have them live in London after I am gone, I

would lay up the money in some ceremony-place, whence they could draw it with surety—'

'Why, then, a banker of Lombard Street would do thy affair, girl.'

'Of Lombard Street — a banker. Why, yea, sir, there you just hit my meaning; and since I would not be in the streets by day, would you, Master Somers, place the money in the banker's hand in my stead, giving afterwards into my hand his acknowledgment?'

'Why, that will I. When see I thee again, then?'

'In two days — three — an come I can. Sure, my way is hard and beset. There are those that seek me, I wot well. An I cannot come—'

'Where bidest thou?'

'Oh, 'tis secret, Master Somers, 'tis secret, sir! An I tell you—'

'By bread and salt, with me 'twere secret as the grave.'

'We bide at the Tabard, sir, in Southwark. If I return not in nine days, you bring to me the acknowledgment, asking after me in the name of Stanley—'

'Fair and good, that will I. But, Bessie Ford what is this talk of ailing, and aching, and dying, girl? A young sprig like thee, now—'

He stopped with a start, the lamp's flicker falling at the moment upon her face: he saw an ineffable face, as it were of lightning, weird with the pale grandeur of suffering past, like the risen Lord's.

She took from the box ten of the coins, and not till she was about to close it, noticed that, built in a corner of it, was a smaller box, closed by a lid half-hidden by the coins. She raised the lid, and saw some papers. Judging them private papers of Alvarada's, which the Lombard Street banker need not see, she put them in her bosom, locked the coffre-fort, and gave to her uncle the key.

On each cold cheek with strangely tender reverence he kissed her then, as she went away.

Eastward still she fared in moonlight, hugging every shadow, till she saw the White Tower, and, on the Place of Execution, the cubical erection, and beyond Great Tower Hill, the Postern Gate. A few paces northward led her past Allhallows Church, Barking, to the Crutched Friars.

She passed down an alley to the bell-cot of the southeastern gate-house; and she rang. The friary-bell was even then tolling its forlorn monotonous call to compline.

Bessie leant with weary abandonment upon the portal, till the door-keeper brother came peering.

She said that she would have speech with the good Brother Bruno, and was admitted.

Through the burial-ground path she went to the narrow friary-parlour between chapter-house and calefactory, where on a stone bench she sat, till Bruno, summoned from the garth, came heaving his puncheon mass past the south transept, along the east cloister, by slype and chapter, to the parlour. With a hand on her head, he said:

‘Now, what hast thou?’

‘I am sister to the girl which once you were for marrying in Master Calvo’s elaboratory, sir,’ said she.

‘Ah, I mind, yes. That lovely child, yes—’

‘Could you tell me, sir, where Master Calvo is now?’

‘Not I, no. He suddenly left the Bridge — by’r Lady, not I, no.’

Her heart sank bitterly. Brother Bruno made always a stertorous kind of asthmatic throat-groan at the end of each sentence, which, as he said: ‘Not I, no,’ his throat dwelling grievously on the ‘no,’ hurt her in her deathly strait like a cruelty of indifference.

‘Oh, could you not tell me, sir?’ cried Bessie Ford. ‘Not I, no.’

Her hope was that both Calvo and Bonner had returned to London: in which case, Calvo would know the whereabouts of Bonner, his disciple and messenger. Her one plan of finding Bonner lay in her finding of Calvo.

‘I thought you would know, sir,’ said she, ‘being such a friend of Master Calvo.’

‘Not I, no, not I. Hast thou done?’

He turned, thinking little of her, and much of supper and convent routines.

‘I had also to pray you, sir,’ she said, following him, ‘that you do the needful offices to the speedy marriage of my sister, Laura Ford, with Mark Bonner — say, the morrow, or the morrow after — I offering a donation of fifteen rose-nobles for the prior’s camera, and fifteen more for a mass.’

Brother Bruno started at this munificence.

‘Why, thou?’ said he. ‘Fifteen *plus* fifteen is nineteen, twenty, twenty-five — thirty! Yes. Whence — ?’

‘I have it, sir: little it tides whence.’

‘And, the names?’

‘Laura Ford—’

‘Ford; yes.’

‘And Mark Bonner,’

‘Bonner, yes,’

‘All will be preste and ready, sir, when I come?’

‘All, yes.’

The bell ceased its plaintive and forlorn calling, and Bruno hurried away. Bessie Ford set out to retrace her steps to Southwark.

At this very time Queen Katherine in person was alighting in great flurry at the Bell Inn. Only one hour since had she heard at Bridewell of the death

of Alvarada from Sir John Perrot, just arrived with many a bandaged wound; and, hearing, she had wept.

But with a start of scared suddenness had her tears been arrested, she exclaiming:

‘But — found you not on his body a key and wyvern?’

‘No such thing,’ had said Sir John.

And the Queen had almost fainted.

She well knew, for Alvarada had told her, that in his coffre-fort were collected documentary evidences of Henry’s frailties, of his cruelties toward his Queen; documents which Alvarada had promised to deliver to Katherine, lest they should meet the eye of her nephew, the Emperor Charles. Also, in that collection were letters of Katherine herself to Charles, written in hours of spite and passion: which, now that she had hope of winning back Henry from Anne, she would not, for ten kingdoms, have reach their destination: which, once seen either by Charles or Henry, must, without fail, result in conflagration, perhaps in the consummating of that thing whose name had already been whispered and written — Divorce.

But as she threw round her head a thick veil, and with Sir John and five attendants made haste eastward, the papers were already in the bosom of Bessie Ford.

The expedition was on the very point of setting out, when Anne Boleyn hurried down to the palace-hall, and whispered to Flying Sidney, who, having accompanied her return to Court, sat there among retainers:

‘You see the Queen’s whirlcote in the yard there. Follow it, Sidney! and fail not to give me in my bedchamber to-night whither it goes.’

Sidney, following on his fleet feet, saw it stop at the Bell Inn.

Here old Somers, trembling, surrounded by these sudden visitors whom he perceived to be great as they were sudden, led them to Alvarada’s room.

He dared not refuse to produce both coffre-fort and key.

The Queen fumbled the fluttering key, and could not insert it. Sir John having opened, she pounced upon the coffre-fort, upset the gold, and groped distractedly; then lifting the lid of the now empty little box in the corner, she uttered a cry of failure, and fainted.

The fist of big, ferocious Sir John went out, threatening Somers, whose knees were weak as he flurried for water to dash the Queen's face, muttering: 'Not a coin, not a coin has been touched....' But even as he returned, the pallid lady opened her eyes, sighing out:

'Sir John Perrot, no hope, no hope?'

'Why, that,' answered Sir John: 'too desperately takes Your Majesty the outfall. Let us question our good-man here, and, look thee, Master Host, answer as thou lovest thy skin's entirety: who was't, as thou sayest, opened this box but now?'

'Even my niece, Bessie Ford.'

'How! the Beauty's good sister?' asked the Queen, looking up with new interest, like a sad sun through pausing rain.

'Aye, she is a good lass, and hath a sister,' answered Somers.

'And she it was which duly presented the wyvern-pledge?'

'Even she, lady.'

'Said she that she had it from the Count himself?'

'In his dying hour, lady.'

'Why, the good Alvarada! how it was I see well now. Won by her virtuous demeaning, the kind heart would have left to her the gold here, while the dying head forgot the papers. But, Sir John, if the maidens are indeed in the privy custody of my lord King, how comes Bessie Ford here but now?'

'She hath even escaped, then,' said Sir John.

‘But she will be recaptured, sure, Sir John, by the King! And she hath these papers upon her person — God give me strength—’

‘Marry, is the girl then a King’s-prisoner?’ asked Somers aghast. ‘Sure, now I see light — for hence grew her strange talk of dying—’

‘Of what, sir?’ said the Queen.

‘Of dying within few days, lady. For, quoth she, “An ailing have I, and an aching”—’

‘Oh, here is worse on worse!’ exclaimed Katherine with clasped hands of terror— ‘for this of dying, Sir John, but betokens that, the King having performed his evil, evil will upon her sister, the poor good child hath it now in mind to make away with herself! And, an she escape the King’s recapture, then will the writings be found upon her dead body, making my woe sure either way — ill-happed Queen and woman that I am this night!’

‘And thou wottest not at all, mine host, the girl’s lurking-place?’ asked Sir John.

‘Not I, my lord,’ replied Somers, with scratched head.

‘But, at least, thou canst declare which way she passed hence, varlet!’

Now, after his effort of reticence, Somers, oppressed, spoke truth.

‘I saw her go Leadenhall and Aldgate way, my lord.’

‘How long since?’

‘One half-hour—’

‘Sir John — after with speed?’ cried the Queen, whereupon Sir John, with three attendants, rushed down to gallop eastward, the Queen, with a lady-of-honour and one cavalier, returning to the palace.

Bessie Ford, on her homeward way, had nearly reached the great quadrangle of Leadenhall, when she was aware of the approaching hoofs of Sir John. Being in a state of morbid suspiciousness, conceiving the world against and after her, she stopped scared, glanced about, and saw an open

doorway, into which she pitched. It was the house of a solid haberdasher of the Jewry, over whose doorway burned a lamp. She was, therefore, seen to run, and Sir John sent after her an excited roar of his gross voice.

The riders, before they could halt, passed the doorway, and three, dismounted, were running back to enter it, when Bessie, having found no hiding-place, spurted out, like a hare started from covert, almost into their hands. Doubling, however, southward into a near bystreet, she summoned all her failing powers, and ran well, while behind her she heard both shouts and pelting feet. Happily, this part of London was thickly housed in a complexity of short, steep, or winding streets, which now were desert, save for the occasional lanthorn of the night-watchman and his tolling tread. Her instinct led her, darting from street to street, in a direction rather east of south, where the building was denser. But in spite of her dodging agility, they tracked her during five minutes, till, near Billingsgate, she spied the deep-embrasured arch of a yard, where, bathed in moonlight, stood timber-stacks. Her pursuers now were desperately near, though hidden, and, bolting, she hid in a nook, black between two timber-stacks, her body rowing shudderingly in quick-repeated dying efforts to breathe.

Here she lost the pursuing sounds; waited some minutes; and ran again, judging the yard too obvious a hiding-place.

She came out, running, upon the river at Billingsgate, slipped with a cry foot-long down three slimy ladder-steps, and on a strip of moon-lit strand hid in blackness under a pile-propped cellar, open to the wash of high tides.

But everywhere in the world seemed to her moon-lit and obvious: and hearing echoes that ran, she, too, ran again, westward now; until emerging from a street upon Botolph's Wharf, she hasted far out to the end, down the five steps, and balancing along a tide-washed horizontal beam, sat there in darkness among old green-bearded piles.

A strangely long time she sat there, her bursten buskins hanging in the water. All among the aged timbers sluggishly flopped the moving river, and in a language of sobs spake with dumb and sloppy tongue. Here were odours, dreams, suggestions. Some boats and barges lay by the wharfs side in the land-opening there, and were at rest: for Day was done, and great Night, wherein no man can work, was in and over all. At rest, at rest. Only, afar, like a passing bell, tolled the watchman's tread.

Bessie Ford put her hand in the water, and raised some, and let it trickle through her fingers. Here, here, here, was Rest....

But with a start of horror she roused herself; stole stealthily up and away; ran till she reached St. Magnus; then, at a less guilty pace, crossed London Bridge, and so by the Bridge House, St. Mary Overie, Suffolk House, reached the Tabard after midnight.

CHAPTER XLI

THE CIRCLES SPREAD



‘EAGER AMBITION’S FIERY chase I see;
I see the circling hunt of noisy men,
Pursuing and pursued, each other’s prey.’
YOUNG.

DURING those very days Anne Boleyn knew that the fate of her ambitions and Queen-ship was being worked out: and she lived on a tip-toe of activity.

Even while the Queen was sighing ineffectually at the Bell Inn, she was ardently intriguing with Charles Brandon, whom she had summoned from Westminster to rendezvous in a little room opening upon the close of the Bridewell Palace.

‘Charles,’ said she, ‘you no longer please me; and you should, for I am going to be your Queen.’

Brandon, a languid gallant, with dreamy blue eyes, which yet could be shrewd and hard, stretched his legs, and throwing a weary sideward look, said:

‘You are already my Queen, dear Anne.’

‘Nay, but I mean *really*, Charles: a Queen at which you will bow, you wot? and not yawn.’

‘Royal little woman—’ he said, drawing his palm down her cheek, for long since had she given him these her easy favours.

‘Only fools are modest, Charles. Am I so o’er-confident? Doth not my little star twinkle bright and minion? Laura Ford is in Henry’s hands, young sir!’

‘What of that?’

‘Never yet was male man who could see, I swear! — except that pork they call Thomas Wolsey. Laura Ford in Henry’s hands meaneth sure and certain return of Henry’s heat for me day after the morrow, without fault!’

‘You make me deadly jealous of my King, dear Anne.’ Faith, I’m serious, you do. But art so sure?’

‘Sure? Is not my sister the King’s paramour, ninny? From her alone, if from naught else, I’d know Henry of England. Possession with him meaneth instant surfeit; his whim unfinished, a latent flame. Dost not yet wot that, ninny Charles?’

‘I suppose you have reason. Abstract thinking bothers, Anne. Women are made to think for men, and men to think of women. But, being so sure, what more would’st have?’

‘You wot! you feign the imbecile! There is always the eternal Wolsey against me.’

‘I hate Wolsey: talk not of him.’

‘But because I hate him, therefore I talk, talk, talk, of him, till I do pierce and slay him with my tongue-tip!’

‘Then, o’ God’s name, talk of him, I care not: though I have known thy tongue-tip pierce, and yet not slay, sweet Anne—’

“Twill slay *thee*, and yet not pierce, an thou palterest when I bespeak thee at the pitch and acme of seriousness, Charles Brandon. Listen — there remains *Wolsey*,’ Before thy poor friend can touch greatness, Wolsey must lose credit, hope, estate. And ’tis not so hard, I swear to God, Charles Brandon! He hath his weak spot — his Spain. And because he would be the

friend of Spain and Pope, and have the friendship of Spain and Pope — therefore hate I both Spain and Pope, and would court their enmity.’

‘Enmity of Spain meaneth union of Spain and France against England, Anne.’

‘I wot it, and I care not!’

‘A sorry patriot thou, Anne, Anne.’

‘But an egregious Boleynist, Charles! Are you not with me, Charles Brandon?’

‘I am always with thee, Anne. But I have a sort of scurvy liking for England.’

‘England is all right! Countries take care of themselves. But you perceive, don’t you, that there must be a *row*, Charles, a row between Henry and Spain, before he can be led to the nice and definite point of divorce. And this row I have it in my hand to make — an you would but help me! The King’s letter to Wolsey, in which is that very word “Divorce,” lies in the bosom of Bessie Ford; and you wot where she is, and this week gone have I prayed and prayed you therefor, and yet I have it not! Charles, *where* are the sisters?’

‘No; that I tell thee not, Anne.’

‘Charles, *tell* me!’

‘No.’

‘I’ll give thee—’

‘No, Anne, no. ’Tis the King’s secret, pretty.’

‘But, ninny, am I not on the King’s side in this matter? What a thing is a male man! What harm? *Tell* me!’

‘Oh, no — no. I could not.’

‘Then keep thy stupid secret, and I will make thee suffer. But tell me this: — Has the King yet gone — has he done—’

‘Yester mid-night.’

‘And has he revisited to-day?’

‘No.’

‘What, so soon distasted? Ha! ha! But, Charles, *now* is *thy* chance to visit the hiding-place, and have the letter from the wench. Promise, promise. Tonight? Oh, promise! I will do for thee what thou darest not hope, when — look, Charles, deep into mine eyes. Dost promise, then? For the sake of thy love for me, of thy hate for Wolsey — say yes!’

‘Well, I promise,’ said Charles, and shook himself, and rose, having as yet no knowledge of the sisters’ escape.

An hour later Anne had from Flying Sidney the news of the Queen’s visit to the Bell Inn: and stealing from the sleeping palace, she made her way eastward, accompanied only by Sidney, who roused the Bell landlord about midnight.

In a secret interview Anne plied old Somers with gold, and got from him the whole story of the documents taken by Bessie, of the Queen’s fainting agitations, and, most momentous of all, of Bessie Ford’s talk of death. Only the old man kept in his bosom that word: the Tabard Inn.

Often had Anne, with hissing malice, invoked the death of Bessie Ford: now, with all the intensity of her soul, she desired the prolongation of her life.

Like the Queen, she divined that this talk of death portended suicide: and suicide meant the loss, or the falling into wrong hands, of both the King’s letter, and the Alvarada documents.

Quickly on her return to the palace she sent Sidney packing with a letter to Du Ballay’s palace, standing near in fields between Rolls Place and Fetter Lane, composed then of but six houses.

The French Ambassador's objects differed only from Anne's in that they were two-fold: firstly, the alienation of Spain from England; and secondly, the union of Spain and France against England. But in this they were at one: the alienation of Spain. And hence the political friendship and collaboration of these two.

The next morning, Du Ballay, still stiff with wounds, awaited Anne between two ivied side-turrets of St. Bartholomew the Great, where Anne that morning piously attended *missa matutinalis*; and presently she came running, her large-kerchiefed bosom a-heave, her back poised far forward on her haunch, plumb as a Nubian water-carrier's, and her veil lifted to the nose-tip to show her carnal smile, above being some scratches of Bessie Ford's hand.

She spoke with gossipy volubility:

'My lord Bishop — others are with me — in the church — we make hasty conference — one half-minute! Tell me, my lord, yea or nay — is Francis in London?'

'*Must* I say?' smiled Du Ballay.

'But yea! Are we not — ?'

'He is, then.'

'I thought so. Then, my lord, you will whisper him anon that in the bosom of Bessie Ford lies a letter of strong unfriendliness against Spain and the Queen, writ by Henry's hand; also some documents of Alvarada, at whose loss the Queen swoons, I swear, like a yawsey hen; tell him, my lord Bishop, that Bessie Ford has escaped from Henry; that she momentarily plans her own death — momentarily, my lord! that, if he loves his hopes, if he detests Henry, then he must find this girl before either her death, or her recapture by Henry, or her capture by the Queen, who also, this very day, be sure, be sure, will be hunting through London after her. My lord Bishop, be

prompt and urgent, I implore! You yourself will seek the girl, and I, and Francis, above all — I have done—’

She awaited no answer, but ran, with lifted skirt, her torn-boy run, back to the façade, and into the church, which in some minutes she persuaded her companions-of-ceremony to leave.

As she passed through the Bridewell fore-court, Flying Sidney whispered her:

‘Charles Brandon awaits you in the vestibule of your withdrawing-room....’

She ran up without inquietude, expecting only that Charles had come with the stale news of Bessie Ford’s escape. But he had other tidings.

On hearing at Rain House from the pinked porringer the surprising tale of the girls’ escape, his hard-headed shrewdness had divined a purpose, and a secret: and with his sword at the woman’s breast, he had won from her fears a confession of Bessie Ford’s sacrifice of her girlhood for her sister.

‘Anne,’ said he brusquely, on Anne’s entrance, ‘the girls have escaped.’

‘You are nine months late, Charles,’ she replied, unpinning her cap, ‘like Lady Westcott marrying on the day of her first-born’s birth. I knew.’

‘But this you know not, Anne — Bessie Ford has cheated the King, and Laura is gone intact.’

She frowned, paled, and heaved the bosom, saying:

‘What say you?’

He explained, and as he explained all colour vanished from her skin; she swayed as if to fall, and she sighed the self-contradictory words:

‘That all-cunning strumpet....! This, then, explains the threatened suicide...!’

The next moment she was on her knees before Charles Brandon, smoothing his hands, down and down. ‘Charles I knows the King as yet?’

‘No.’

‘Then, Charles, you will not be telling him! Pity me, boy! All, all, all, were to recommence again, an you do! He will love this Laura more crazy than ever, an he hears. For me, Charles, do it not, my son! Look you, that girl has in her bosom letters of the Queen to the Emperor, as well as Henry’s to Wolsey, which I have but now told Francis of: Francis will be seeking, and more likely finding, the girls, than Henry, and an Henry have not Laura—’

She was interrupted by Brandon, whose face had flushed.

‘What!’ cried he, ‘is Francis in London?’

‘He is,’ said Anne, and immediately regretted having said, for Brandon stamped.

’Tis insolence!’ he cried; ‘this is not his country, the black goat! Wherefore goes he not back to his own country to play his japes there? The rank impudence of it! Henry will storm into a fine passion when he hears of this—’

She smoothed his hands, down and down.

‘But, Charles, you will not *tell* him this — for me I’

‘Tell him I *will*,’

‘Oh, addle-pated male! But of Bessie Ford’s act — you will not tell him, Charles? Oh, you dream not what I will *do* for you! Promise, dear, dear Charles!’

‘As to Bess? Well, I wot not. God! ’tis a grand girl that — a grand, noble, all-sufficient creature. Think of it, Anne! what a superb thing!’

‘Superb fiddlesticks! Will you *promise* me — ?’

‘Wot you, Anne? you’d swear that ’tis Bess, and not Laura, with which the King is in love, an you heard him these last days. For myself, I swear I have the thought to seek the girl out and marry her — I were capable of it!’

‘Capable of devil’s lunacy, Charles Brandon. Listen to me — listen. Will you *promise* — ?’

‘I’ll consider it.’

‘Promise.’

‘No.’

He had a will of steel, the loose gallant, and would not promise, though he was himself reluctant to tell Henry of Bessie’s act. Anne, indeed, trusting in her power over him, and judging from his manner, believed that he would not tell. But the same day, in telling of Francis’ presence in London, he told all: of Bessie’s sacrifice; even of the documents which she carried; of her probable suicide.

The effect upon Henry was astonishingly different to Charles Brandon’s expectation. For when the King heard what the girl had done and suffered, and how she had taken up her cross, and how she had given herself in meek resignation, not counting her life dear to her, then he fell, and, with his arms cast over a table, he was rived by sobs and the loud bursting gasps of a strong man throed with bitter pity.

And she would die, he heard: she was near to die. It seemed to him then that if she died, then he, for grief, must die also.

He was thus better than Anne’s divination of him. Not of Laura, at that moment, did he think with lust, but of Bessie with sobs. The same hour he had twenty men searching London for her.

An hour afterwards Wolsey knew all from Knevet, whom Brandon had told, Knevet being secretly in the counsels of Wolsey. And by evening Angelus, Wolsey, tremblingly eager to have these papers in his possession, had some score of men searching London for Bessie Ford.

The quest of Laura had ceased; the quest of Bessie begun.

Anne, meanwhile, had written to Du Ballay a spurring letter, explaining the motive of Bessie Ford for her supposed purpose of self-destruction, and the urgency of the case: and Du Ballay galloped through Bishop's Gate with the news to Francis.

The French King, hearing what had been done to his little friend of the wood, spake nothing. He was profoundly moved, and dashed a tear from his eyes. Presently rising, he lifted his arm, and muttered, with deep frown:

‘Now, may the great God who ruleth in heaven, and mixeth Himself with the rolling of the world, give to my arm strength to avenge this most ugly, inhuman, and filthy crime!’

By compline, including men sent out by the Queen, Anne, and Du Ballay, there were some seventy persons engaged in the search for Bessie; many, from Chelsea to the Tower, keeping watch in line by the riverside to guard against the expected suicide.

CHAPTER XLII

FRANCIS AND CALVO



‘THE HOUSEHOLD OF continuance.’ — HOWARD.

FRANCIS had no knowledge that the skull-capped man’ whom, as the companion of the sisters, he had sought in Hampshire was the sage, Mauro Calvo, whom he knew; but had thought that Calvo was in London, and genuinely by means of his ‘science’ had announced to him Laura Ford.

And soon, on learning the news of poor Bessie Ford, of her act, her awful sacrifice, her impending death, his mind, urged to invent, thought of Calvo.

An hour, with arms folded on chest, he paced the room. And, ‘Poor Minerva,’ he muttered mournfully, ‘how have the fates and the powers conspired upon thee, and storms wrecked thy little bark! La, what an offering up of herself was here! — worse to her, as, I divine, than many deaths. Yet “Ill were it to me to die,” said she in the wood that day. And — what was it? — something about “jaunting on a grand upward march with the sun, and the moon, and all the train of the stars,” said she. Poor Minerva! My heart bleeds intimately for this rent lamb: for, by Criss-cross, a bloody sacrifice, a foul incestuous pollution, was there! And with what a sweetness of simplicity trusted she Francis of France, too, rotten Francis, bad old Francis. And what now for her can Francis do? Even as I loiter here, she may taste the last bitterness of death.

And “Ill, by my credit,” said she, “were it to me—”

Faith, what a day was that! To my fantasy it appeareth the one holy day of my life: there beneath the tree I lay, my head on Minerva's lap: and 'tis wholly like a dream of blessedness, the gentle breezes, the waving tree, my musing doze, and the fugitive girl whose words for ever will infect my memory. Calvo! yes — I will discover the seer's place, and invoke his science to her discovery....'

To discover Calvo's former abode was not difficult: for London knew it. But on learning it, Francis learned also that the sage had left it.

And now his mind was left blank and deviceless.

But his necessity for action was absolute. That night late he was on the Bridge; and passing by the spot described as Calvo's den, he entered the dark house-passage and jerked down the black stairs, though without hope.

But behind the portal upon which he butted, he heard sounds; and when he knocked, the door opened. To his surprise, he saw before him the skull-cap, the bulging brow, the goggle eyes, which he knew.

In fact, Calvo had decided that the place from which he was known to have been driven was precisely the most unguessable place of tranquility and hiding. Not that he was any longer in pressing fear of disturbance: for on a finger he bore an intaglio" of a biretta, a ring of his new protector, Wolsey.

The sage started as Francis, with a laugh, raised his mask — showed the dry, brown face — and entered.

'You knew not that I was in this city, I perceive, Signior Calvo,' said Francis.

Calvo coughed.

'I — divined it, Sire,' said he: 'but your visit, I avouch, startled me. Pray, seat yourself on this little stool.'

'Pest! your work-shop stinks like a badger's burrow, Signior.'

“Tis the odour of Knowledge, Sire. In the mouth ’tis bitter, but in the belly sweet.’

‘Well said. Now, I come to test and consult your science. Your letter with regard to the lovely, gent and amiable damsel, Laura Ford, I had, and came, as you must wot, to England in her pursuit. La, in this I failed. The King of England hath caught them — her and a sister, Bessie. But they yesterday escaped him: and this Bessie, in special, I now seek. I seek her ardently: I would resign, Signior Calvo, five years’ revenue of my kingdom to discover her. I seek her for her own sake; and I seek her for the sake of certain most momentous State-papers which she bears about. But chiefly I seek her for her own sake. Can you, Calvo, reveal me where she is — yea, or nay?’

Calvo, wholly charlatan at the spur and surprise of that moment, possessed by vanity, answered:

‘Why, yea — I hope it.’

‘Well said, very well said — and when?’

‘I must first consult, and work, and elaborate.’

‘Consult — work — and elaborate. I see. Then — I wait. My abode is the Grey House, outside Bishop’s Gate, at Saint Botolph. There will I await your news. La, do this, and your guerdon shall be what you will. Only — be speedy, be speedy: she meditates suicide.’

‘Who?’

‘The girl — Bessie.’

‘Suicide?’

‘La, I fear, I fear.’

‘But you said, Sire, that she had escaped this King. Sure, you said that, Sire!’

‘I did, yes. But, by Criss-cross, a most foul outrage has been accomplished upon her—’

‘Upon *Bessie*?’

‘Yes.’

‘By Henry?’

‘Yes.’

Calvo’s wan forehead burst into sweat. He could hardly hide his agitation.

‘God—’ he muttered.

‘Had you no hint or intimation of her fate from your science?’ asked Francis.

‘Science? I? Oh, I see your meaning — none, none — that is to say, a vague indication I may have fore-had anent a near parent of the girl with the face—’

‘Well, I say you *bonsoir*,’ said the King, rising in haste, ‘and speedy success to your vigils, Signior Calvo.’

He fumbled his way up the steps, stooping prone his lank body, and did not reach his bed till four o’clock lauds were singing in the London convents, and the silent workings of earliest dawn were in the east.

CHAPTER XLIII

ANNE'S HINT



‘EA SERPENTIUM POPULATUR ova, gratissimamque ex his escam nidis suis refert’ — SOLINUS.

LEFT alone, Mauro Calvo, standing with his foot on a stool, elbow on knee, propped his brow, and so for a long time mused, while something which boiled shouted and fussed over, unregarded.

He had abandoned her: and she had been caught. Bitterly had he abandoned her: and she had suffered wrong.

‘Master Calvo, sir, you abandon me?’ That cry he heard again, close, as it were, in his ears.

Still, Francis’ story was singular — almost incredible: he hardly believed it.

‘Well, well,’ sighed he with a start, rousing himself. He rushed now to the shouting brew. But even as he rescued it, he lost interest. That night he could not work.

He threw round him a voluminous cloak with capote, hiding his face, and went out.

‘Whither,’ he thought, ‘should she go, having escaped, and having no money, save to the Bell Inn?’

So to the Bell Inn he went, and in an interview with old Somers, played the wizard, pretending to more knowledge of the facts than he had, and so

won from mine host an account of Bessie's visit. But Somers, remembering Bessie's injunction, kept that secret — the Tabard Inn.

Thence Calvo went westward to Almoner's Yard, where he knew that Bonner, who had visited the London Bridge den on his arrival, had a garret with Fitzgerald. And having called down Bonner, he said:

‘Bessie Ford has escaped from the King—’

‘Oh, happy vein!’ cried Mark.

‘Hold thy enthusiasms, and listen,’ said the sage; ‘she hath been to the Bell Inn to her uncle there: and him have I bespoken. Where she now is he swears that he knows not; but know he doth, for I am not blind. The hope of finding her therefore must lie in a strict watch upon the Bell: for either mine host will pass to her, or she to him, he having in his custody a pile of money, left her, says he, by a Spanish count. So you, Mark, and this Fitzgerald, by turn, will watch from some coign the Bell exits and entrances every moment of every hour of the twenty-four—’

‘My troth, Fitz will even dance for joy!’ cried Bonner.

‘Ah... let us hope it. Go now, one or other of you two, to the Bell. Come to see me every day. And remember my counsel,’

The sage paced home to a troubled pillow, and Bonner that night watched the Bell.

But the watch, maintained steadily for eight days, resulted in nothing.

Meanwhile old Somers lived in a flutter of apprehension. Bessie did not come for the banker's acknowledgment, though her money had been duly deposited at Lombard Street.

Bessie all this time remained cowering in her locked garret at the Tabard. The chase through the East-Thames region by Sir John Perrot on her very first going-out had scared her from a second attempt. Daily when the landlord, faithful to his pledge of secrecy, tapped at her door, she had from

him tales of many men who, below, sought news of two sisters. The whole world seemed to hunt and beset her.

As the days passed, hope in the business that remained to her to do left her. Where to find Bonner she knew not at all, since of Calvo's whereabouts she knew nothing. Through the days a sickly inertia of fear possessed her, and she sat silent, hugging herself like one shivering in Arctic cold; and Laura, mouse-quiet always, regarded her stealthily, as one might regard with interest the movements of a ghost. Only toward midnight Bessie would go out a little, creeping thievishly down the stairs, to the back-court, and so, lifting a gate-latch, out upon Bankside. A stone's-throw from the inn, at the bottom of a depression, lay a sedge-pond, stagnant and green, inhabited by frogs, and watched by three blasted willows. Here, for a long time, at the very water's-edge, would she crouch, and pore, and gloat.

This hydrophilia had rapidly grown with her into a mania since that night when, under Botolph's Wharf, she had soaked her buskins in the Thames. A sinister fascination for water-sides, for the sight, the neighbourhood of *water*, informed and led her by the nose. Laura, who furtively watched her every movement, observed that from these expeditions she returned exhausted, with a more emaciated pallor, her buskins soaked, her clothes bedraggled. And the notion of horror took rise and grew in Laura's brain that one night, having gone, she might never-more return.

Here was not a modern, but a sixteenth-century, mind. A modern girl, all rationalized, having performed such an act as hers, with motive so pure and high, would feel clearly that the act itself was of no importance, involved no real stain, and was, in fact, itself ennobled by the motive. But in such a century as the sixteenth, glamour was the world. The act, the dogma — apart from reason — whatever the circumstances — was the point. In her heart Bessie must have heard stifled whispers of the approving Voice; but

across her brow the staid mind felt branded, in characters of shameful and shocking red, that word: Polluted. And the river became her lover.

Poor hunted girl, she did not even suspect the weak point in her hope of resting yet some days at the Tabard: for now she was incapable of connected thought. On the ninth day old Somers was to come to her, as she had bid him, with the banker's acknowledgment, and old Somers was being watched, not alone by Fitzgerald and Bonner, but by five or six other men as well, each of her searchers reasoning that if she had gone once to the Bell, she might again go.

Toward evening Angelus of the ninth day, old Somers set out, and made straight across the Bridge for the Tabard, stolidly unconscious of the watchers who, at various distances, loitered before and behind him. Two had risen from the Bell bar-parlour on his departure; two had run down from windows opposite the inn; Bonner had followed from the shade of a manger-arch near. All saw him enter the Tabard.

When they, too, entered, Somers was not there, nor the landlord. The inference was not obscure: Somers had been led by the landlord to his niece.

And now, the spies, one after the other, with all their legs, ran their various ways — to Henry, to Francis, to Wolsey, to Du Ballay, to Anne, to Katherine, to Fitzgerald.

Bonner was the first of them to rush from the inn, his quicker wit being the first to realise; also he noted the unusual number of men who entered the Tabard in that minute. And as he ran toward the Bridge along Southwark High Street, he spied a one-stirruped butcher-boy's nag stand with empty saddle, and gaze into a casement. He was not slow to spring to its back, drive heels to ribs, and be away.

In fact, he reached the Wool-market and Fitzgerald some minutes before the nearest of the seekers had heard the news. Their spies reached Anne, Katherine, and Du Ballay's palace about the same time; but Du Ballay was at court at Westminster, and Anne and Katherine, radiant at the discovery, each believing herself alone in the secret, lost something like an hour without action, Anne at that very time having to keep rendezvous with Brandon.

Henry, Wolsey, and Francis were practically equidistant from the Tabard: but Wolsey was at vespers at St. Margaret's; and the race lay between Francis, Henry, and Fitzgerald.

Fitz had just awaked from brief sleep, when Bonner rushed in with the panted news; and he had hardly heard, when he was pelting down the stairs, with doublet hung askew, as one who, prone to fight, half jerks off his coat. At the bottom, he saw the butcher-boy's nag, and flung a leg over it: but his swinging toes touched the ground, and he felt the little nag throe indistinctly under him in a kick-out. He slid off, and ran a-foot river-ward.

Now, just beyond the Gate House of Old Palace Yard, there stood in an angle of the wall a street-pulpit of lovely marble, sculptured corbel and crocket, flute and fruit, a cornucopia of chiselling; and from it, at this hour, a jocular Austin friar was preaching a succession of jests to a little giggling and answering crowd. And said he:

‘But to leave laughing, good folk, and to come to what is rather matter for tears — for tears follow upon laughter, as a wroth husband upon a busied wife, or as scurvy Monday morning upon jolly Sunday night—’

‘Bah!’ cried Charles Brandon from the crowd, ‘since thy laughter maketh us weep, good friar, sure thy tears will but make us laugh—’

‘Now, here have you a Corinthian,’ exclaimed the friar, ‘which, an I mistake not, is that very scion of the Brandons which—’

‘Come, no more,’ said Charles to two young gentlemen of the King’s bed-chamber who, with him, had stopped to hear the friar’s jibes: ‘I have a rendezvous.’

‘Near?’

‘But here.’ He put his mouth to the ear of one, whispering: ‘*Anne!*’

But as he spoke, he started, and with quick breath hissed close and pantingly:

‘There — there — is the knave, Fitzgerald! Quick — follow — ! we must have him — Henry would be hanging him — !’

Fitz was running at the moment through the Gate into Palace Yard to reach the King’s Stairs, and the ferry there: and the three were after him.

They were close upon him, at the other side of the yard, before Brandon cried: ‘Halt, fellow!’ and Fitz had hardly time to stop, twist to guard, and draw, when he was confronted by the three active blades.

There are, however, mental conditions when the spirit rises easily above material obstruction, as if proving that it, and not matter, is master here: so that Fitzgerald regretted this attack only because of the delay, since no blades could long check him in this his quest. And cried he: ‘Why, sirs, look out for your pates, then...!’ and began to ply and operate.

The Yard was deserted, and the shuffling feet and mixing swords sounded in dumb echoes. Thrice Fitzgerald shifted his ground, retreating always. At the third time, he had the three rapiers in the exact position which his fencing had designed for each: one lifted to hew to the left, one thrusting before him, one cutting at the right. The first weapon he sent wheeling five yards with the hand that held it, the second he parried, the third he struck downward, receiving a deep horizontal slash in the thigh — all in one triumphant movement of his blade. An instant more, and he had

the second of Brandon's friends spitted through the throat, and springing backward, cried to Brandon:

'You yield?' Brandon, famed as a swordsman, did not yield. With rash enterprise he came on: the two edges, edge on edge, jostled and jarred lingeringly, with slide and pause, till Brandon's wrist gave with a jerk to the urgent compulsion of Fitzgerald's blade, and the gallant sighed, staggered with lifted sword-arm, and fell heavily upon the pavers, well ripped in the breast.

As Fitzgerald turned, he saw a lady, peering nearer with dainty step. At the same time she knew him and recognised Brandon, his faintly-smiling agony: and she uttered a little cry.

It was Anne come to rendezvous.

She ran to stoop over Brandon, but even in the act, her face flushed with malicious rage against this all-conquering warrior of Bessie Ford; and she turned to him as he moved, and touching his shoulder, said:

'Master Fitzgerald, will you, then, kill all one's friends with this your sword? And always for the cause of the same fantasy? Is it that you still seek Bessie Ford, then? Spare yourself and desist, an you take my hint. She is at this moment the King's mistress — Bessie, remember, not Laura.'

His ears heard the words, but hardly with realization. He frowned a moment upon her; his lips muttered something. Then he ran: he had no time....

But at the King's Stairs he saw the boat half-way across, going. He had to wait ten minutes.

A strange sickness took him. During the row across, he leant over the tilting boat, and vomited: it may have been his wound, which left a stain on the boat's thwart; or the words of the slanderer....

On the other side, he set off running toward the Tabard across Bankside;
but he was a world too late.

CHAPTER XLIV

AT THE TABARD



‘BUT WAE THE thane which bears the bane
O’ waeful maiden wronged,’
OLD BALLAD.

THE first, in fact, to arrive at the Tabard, was Henry, who, at the whispered news, had flung from a sitting of Council composed of the Lord Chancellor, Suffolk, Surrey, Gardiner, and Fisher; and meeting Thomas Howard waiting in the Lobby of the Chamber, had, with him alone, taken boat at the Palace Stairs, and, both deeply disguised, landed at Stangate Horse-Ferry on the other side.

They entered the inn-yard at the back, and Howard having run in and summoned the landlord, he came out, and stood on the flags before Henry. The twilight was now darkening; and the yard, not large, was made obscure by the low eaves of mangers and outhouses. Old Somers had, some time since, gone home to the Bell.

‘I require thee straightway to deliver me the two girls thou hast here in hiding,’ said Henry.

There was some tone in that voice which abashed mine host. But he was staunch, and said:

‘Girls, my master?’

‘Silly addle-pate, come, come,’ said Henry, and lifted his mask a moment.

Now mine host trembled, and led the way through a passage and upward. He tapped the agreed tap at a tiny, wry-hanging door.

Bessie opened. Henry and Howard entered.

Here it was so dark that, for a time, they saw nothing. But soon Henry perceived that Bessie Ford was standing drawn up to her height as far as possible from him, her back against the one perpendicular wall, holding Laura by the arm. Looking at them, he lifted his mask.

Bessie had an instant of the intensor pallor of death; but it passed. Her neck was erect and proud.

‘So, mamie, thou rannest away from me?’ said Henry.

There was no answer. Laura Ford’s head hung, and her heart beat thickly. She thought that he spoke to her, but it was to Bessie that he spoke.

The difference between a good and a beautiful woman is even this: that the beauty of the good symbolises eternity, being constant through the day and night; but the beauty of the beautiful symbolises time, depending upon the sun, and ceasing at midnight.

Here so simple a thing as the dimness of the garret abolished poor Laura, but Bessie it left intact and potent.

The King, with sideward, cajoling head, said:

‘I fear me, alas, that I am fallen into the bad graces of mamie. Stands it not so?’

No answer.

‘Tell me now.’

No answer.

‘Well, thou wilt not be gracious, then. Thou seest I come pilgrim and penitent.’ Faith, sweetheart, I grieve for thee, and have grieved; and taking

all into account, I praise thee, Bess, I extol thee more than words. Come, now, I have said, and we are friends again. Speak to me — stands it not so?’

No answer.

‘Why, then am I in thy bad graces, in troth. Is it that thou hast yet fear for the sis? Nay, but have it no more. Even as Christ offered an all-sufficient offering in our stead, so, believe me, hast thou for this the sis. Henceforth is she safe from me, and from all: I myself will be her protector.’

Now Bess was moved to speech.

‘*You?*’ said she.

‘Why, even I.’

‘Now, may every saint forefend!’

‘Ah, thou seest, thou keepest bile, thou keepest bile?’

‘Sir, since here you come with soft words, I pray you tell me wherefore. My sister, you say, you would no more pursue. Then what have you with me?’

‘Now would I be thy Father, mamie, in every good office—’

‘Father and ravisher in one were evil mixing!’ she said spitefully. — N

‘Ha! thy tongue can bite, then, girl. Yet once only have I wronged thee, and hath not Christ enjoined forgiveness till seventy-times and seven?’

Here Thomas Howard tittered, and Henry, turning, said: ‘Silence, Howard!’ even as Bessie Ford exclaimed:

‘Oh, talk not of Christ with your tongue, sir...!’

‘Aha! now thou showest open naughtiness. Yet, I swear, I pardon thee, seeing that the roots of all noble valour are in thee, girl. And, maugre thyself, I will be to thee what I have said, thy good friend. Thy sister, I vow thee, I wed to one of my own gentlemen. And thyself I place high, among the great of this land, where is thy due and proper place—’

Bessie Ford interrupted him with a wail, covering her face:

‘Oh, cannot you let me die in peace — oh, prithee, let me be! let me be!’

‘As to that — no!’ answered Henry. ‘Thou comest now with me.’

She left her place by the wall and fell upon her knees before him with supplicating hands.

‘Pity me — if only for the sake of what I have been to you — !’

He took her hands, and kissed them, and raised her by force.

‘Come, come, Bessie,’ he said.

There was no resisting. The four left the room, she with rigid face, but without tears. Above the first landing was a window; and the light streaming in suddenly re-created Laura. Henry, overwhelmed afresh by her face, started, with the murmur:

‘Christ! ’tis a luscious bit...’

His repentance had been more emotional than profound, and nearness with Bessie Ford dulled his sense of her pathos. Christs, seen near, with broken boots, lose glamour.

They had half descended the back-stairs, when they heard an altercation below between a man and mine host, who sought to bar his way; the stranger’s voice was raised shrilly, and the instant that Henry heard it, he paled.

The next moment his face rushed into crimson rage, and his sword leapt ‘Back — back to thy chamber, and there await!’ he whispered to Bessie; and to Howard: ‘The French goat below! God’s light! in my own capital city — we stick him now!’

Down rushed the two men, so prone that Francis and d’Arcy, standing in the passage near the backdoor, had but time to pitch recoiling into the yard, d’Arcy being wounded in the shoulder before he could draw.

But in another moment, the four sprang to guard, Henry engaging Francis, Howard d’Arcy.

Three of the combatants fought with prone impetuosity — heavy, earnest Henry having his bottom-lip between his teeth; only Francis, easily calm, showed a broad smile below his mask, parrying attack, rather than attacking. And with constant chink, chink, for the space of two minutes, without incident, interacted the four blades, Howard and d’Arcy almost stationary, Francis’ gawky legs skedaddling over half the yard in spasmodic rushes and manœuvres. And presently, his edge is fitted to the edge of Henry in slippery, sliding, jostling wedlock; a moment he grinces hard with red-faced effort, and instantly smiles again — for now he would do a feat. Every incident, not of his own duel only, but of the other also, is marked by him, as though his ears were eyes. And suddenly Henry’s urged sword slips sideways, and in a moment his mask is spinning high, while the blade of Francis, without break of sweep and impetus, comes down upon the nape of Howard, whom he has observed near: and Howard drops. And now, seeing with his ears that d’Arcy is turning to his aid, Francis calls: ‘*Laisse! laisse,*’, for alone he would ‘quench quick’ that heat before him, and abash that bleeding face. Nor is it now difficult, Henry being quite demoralized by the snatch-away of his mask and the fall of Howard. With wilder and wilder earnest come his *bottes* and hews, till Francis’, with a perpendicular chop, bangs his sword to the ground, and at once strikes him between the breast and left shoulder. Henry, in his heavily bad form, drops gasping:

‘God! the beast has killed me....!’

Not a moment tarried Francis now; in, past the landlord, who stood gaping paralysed at this fray, he rushed, in eager earnest to secure this time his little friend. In two minutes he had every nook searched: but the girls were gone.

Seizing her chance, Bessie, holding Laura, had run down by the front way into the dangerous High-street; and wildly she ran north-eastward

toward London Bridge, wildly, blindly, knowing not wherefore.

Passing by the Bridge House, she heard galloping hoofs behind, and doubled her panting pace, almost dragging Laura, who was much less fleet. Whither to fly, she knew not; she thought of Botolph's Wharf; but the hoofs, which, in reality, had no relation to her, hunted near. Suddenly, she caught sight of a doorway with which she was familiar, doubled, and darted in. It was the doorway above Calvo's den.

She ran along the passage, and scuttled down the steps, where in the complete darkness she might find temporary hiding. And here, sitting, they panted, and presently Laura began to cry and sob.

The thought that Calvo might be behind the dark door there never at all occurred to them. But at Laura's sobbing the door was pushed back; they saw light; a peering form was before them.

Bessie leapt toward him with a sob, and Calvo, pleased as Punch, his arm around her, patting her head, said:

‘Well, well.’

Thus, by the Powers that led her, was she led to him.

CHAPTER XLV

CRUTCHED FRIARS



‘WHOSE YIELDED PRIDE and proud submission,
Still dreading death, when she had markèd long,
Her heart gan melt in great compassion,
And drizzling tears did shed for pure affection.’
SPENSER.

WHEN Calvo told her that he knew where Mark Bonner was, her heart felt ease. All that remained to her to do seemed easy now.

Calvo appointed them his chamber in the garret, and manoeuvred a narrow settee down the dark stairs for his own bed.

By the time these works were finished, Laura complained of weariness, and was led to sleep. And for a long time, in the den, Bessie and Calvo conversed.

‘Well, we have sought thee far and wide, all and some, girl,’ said he.

‘Me, sir?’

‘Thee in especial,’

‘And who, sir?’

‘Francis for one, which is in London, has sought thee; and because thou hast with thee certain papers, others among the great have sought thee; also myself, Bonner, Fitzgerald—’

‘Master Fitzgerald, sir?’

‘Why, sure—’

‘What would he with me, Master Calvo?’

She asked it with opening eyes of fear.

‘Why, hath he not sought us all through our Hampshire wanderings, since the day that thou confessedst to him in Colnbrook Church? and we, silly cattle, knew not that he was for us—’

‘But *wherefore* was he for us, Master Calvo?’

‘Why, an thou askedst me, girl, I’d say he was mad in love with thee.’

‘With *me*, sir?’

‘Why, yes.’

‘Oh, not with *me*, sir!’

‘Even with thee, Bess, Why, the carl’s face is grown hollow and haggard —’

The effect upon her of these words was a panting terror. She rose, gasping:

‘I must go hence, anon....!’

‘Why, what hast thou now?’ asked Calvo, astonished. ‘Oh, God, sir — you wot not, you wot not — this man may find me here?’

‘Well, and what an he doth?’

For answer she coffered her face, melting for sheer self-pity into tears, wailing inaudibly thinly:

‘Oh God, sure Something must be against me, sure....’

He loved her! — she heard the strange, glad tidings with her ears! — and across her brow, branded visibly, was the Stigma of her taint.

She was obstinate: no pleadings, no threats of Calvo, no fears for Laura, could hold her. When it was dark, she went out, leaving Laura behind, having appointed a place where she would meet Bonner the next compline.

When she had gone, Calvo stood a long time silent, meditating.

‘Can it be,’ said he, ‘that that King hath verily done her hurt...?’

He could not understand, nor credit it: the ‘wrong’ hinted at by Francis was, he had decided, improbable. ‘Not Bessie, sure,’ he said, ‘but Laura, was what Henry was after....’

As for her, she sat shivering an hour that night under Botolph’s Wharf, and later found an obscure lodging at a watchman’s, whom she followed to his house by the water east of Billingsgate, resolved that no one — not Laura, nor Bonner, nor Calvo — should know her hiding-place. Worse than she had ever dreaded Henry she dreaded now Fitzgerald.

In the lane leading steeply to Botolph’s Wharf she met Bonner the next compline. He came jauntily, having but lately drunk of Laura’s lips, and hair, and eyes at Calvo’s, all the world showing rose in his eyes.

Bessie Ford considered long his face before she spoke, remembering Anne Boleyn’s accusation of him. But of this she said not a word. His large, swimming eyes had a look of grave sincerity: sure, if he was weak in his nonage, he was yet honest.

She appointed the next evening after vespers for the marriage. And she said:

‘The morrow morning after terce, prithee go thyself to Brother Bruno, and acquaint him, appointing one half hour before compline as the time, and enjoining his secrecy. It is my will, Mark, since King Francis hath so shown himself my good, kind friend, that thou, and thy wife, and the great wealth that thou hast, do fare with him to the land of France, an so he be still of the same kindly mind to me and mine. And know, Mark Bonner, that I palm not off upon thee a wife tainted and touched, and unworthy thy mating, but one equal to any queen, boy, pure as snow! And cherish her, boy, cherish, cherish her, for Jesu’s sake — all thy life — I prithee, Mark—’

She turned her face from him, her mouth working.

‘But,’ cried Mark, ‘Fitz will himself come to France, an so thou will it, and therefore thou also, good Bess!’

‘What art talking about, Mark?’ she asked, with that scared look, as of one prone to fly and hide. ‘Art, then, distraught?’

‘How! wed’st thou not with Fitz at the same altar with me and Laura?’

‘Oh, thou talkest but destructive folly...’ she said faintly.

‘Why, Bess, sure I thought Master Calvo had told thee all. Know, then, that Fitzgerald loves thee, and with no common passion, but even with idolatrous and heroic flame; he wastes for thee; faith, he perishes for thee. Oh, Bess, and anon he swears that thou lovest him, too, thinking of that night on the mountain-side at Maddox, and thy calling after him; and anon he swears that thou hatest him, thinking of thy leap from Ormond Hall, and thy beating upon his face. Sure, an thou sawest and heardest him, thou couldst not help but pity the great-hearted childish giant that he is; and sawest thou his big frame sob, sure thou must even die of love—’

‘What, *sobs* he for me?’

‘Aye, and very care and sighing doth nip his faded cheek, good Bess.’

‘My mother! the pity on it — !’

‘Dost pity him, Bess?’

‘Aye — aye.’

‘His eyes are wan and worn with vigils for thee, good Bess—’

‘The pity, the pity on it!’

‘Then will I tell him that thou, too, lovest—’

‘Why, no! no! Do but *dare*, and I hate thee for ever, Mark Bonner! Listen! And bear what I now tell thee to this man...

Then she recounted her shame, not hiding her virtuous aim, but dwelling upon the act, the dogma, the ineffaceable shame. Never, she said, would she have this man address to her word or message more.

But Bonner kept the tale of shame in his own bosom, and that night told Fitz only that Bessie kicked against marriage, and must be won by force and strategy, though she loved.

‘But will she not even once see me?’ asked Fitz. ‘Not once,’ said Bonner; ‘and not Laura, not Calvo even, knows her hiding-place.’

‘Why, pity me, then, boysie, for a wrecked soul! Oh, the dear hope that I had, how like a bladder is it burst!’

‘But, nay, Fitz, the case is not wholly so, I pledge thee. Bessie *loves* thee, my brave—’

‘Oh, then, wherefore — ?’

‘She is even in a weird and crooked temper which, anon, will pass. Wot you, Laura has told me that she had fears but lately that Bess would be making away with herself — in the river—’

Fitzgerald paused in his uneven swaying tread about the room, frowning into the soul of Bonner. ‘How!’ cried he, ‘make away with herself?’

Somehow, his mind connected these words with those wild and crazy ones of Anne’s, sown like a rank weed there: ‘Bessie Ford is the King’s mistress....’

‘I but say it, Fitz, to reveal thee the wayward unevenness of her present temper,’ said Bonner soothingly. ‘Faith, lad, Bessie loves thee well.’

‘Sayest thou?’

‘She loves thee well.’

‘Art sure and certain?’

‘Faith, Fitz, I do swear it.’

‘Oh, then, God bless thee, boy, for thy ravishing mouth! And how looks and speaks she? Hath she yet the little plait upon her bare neck, and the active half-turn of the little body when she speaks?’

‘Oh, ’tis ever the same neat, good Bess.’

Fitz lowered his voice.

‘But art sure they both escaped unscathed that King...?’

‘Oh, sure and certain, Fitz,’ said Bonner, swinging a sheepish leg, averting always unpleasant things.

‘An it be not so...!’ went Fitzgerald, jerkily poking the air and imaginary King’s-bowels with venomous sword-point, a savage *thoo!* hissing from his teeth.

“Tis so, verily, Fitz,’ said Bonner. ‘Faith, all is clear and plain enow. A little force — a little strategy. The morrow compline I wed Laura; to the good friar I give warning of a double marriage; as Bess assists at my joining, *thou* appearest, and, will she nill she, wed her. Thy arms once around her shy neck, and I know — I am certain — that she is thine.’

In this Bonner spoke honestly, and divined with good insight. The sight of Fitzgerald’s haggard cheeks, the sensation of his enfolding arms, could hardly fail to overpower the gentle heart, assuage its terror, and calm its anguish of self-loathing.

Fitz leapt at the suggestion, crying out:

‘Boy, I will!’

“Twere easy as reading Cæsar, or misunderstanding Plato,’ said Bonner.

‘But sure and secret to work, boy! Not a word to her!’

‘Why, no, not a word. Moreover, I shall not see her till the marriage.’

But he did. The next sext he received a message from Calvo, bidding him come to the den to receive new rendezvous with Bessie. He then heard that Laura had taken the whim to be married in velvet brodequins, a stomacher and placard of wrought black velvet, a cap of crimson velvet, and a surcoat of murrey sarcenet: nor could all the eloquence in the world dissuade her. The woman of the house had undertaken to procure them for

Bessie, who had come to the den on leaving Bonner the previous night. But all this could not be done in a day.

At compline, therefore, Bessie and Bonner met again in the Botolph Wharf lane. Bessie told him that the marriage should be for the next night: but this he knew from Calvo: and now it was not clear why she had summoned him to meet her. She herself knew as little as he.

The deeper vague purpose in her poor heart may have been to hear him speak, if for the last time, of her adored.

And presently Bonner, after a silence, said:

‘Bess, I told Fitz....’

‘Prithee,’ she answered with her scared look, ‘speak not to me of this man: I have naught with him....’

‘To see him now were to pity him, Bess!’

‘What hath he?’

‘Sure, the poor man is blighted and undone; anon he paces the room with mutterings; anon he tumbles prone, and groans; or he would be ripping his breast for very woe...

‘Is he so low?’

‘That is he. To see him were sure to pity him. Wilt see him?’

‘That will I never.’

‘Oh, do!’

‘Didst tell him explicitly of my fall, Mark?’

‘Why, sure. But that to him were equal, if *thee* he hath—’

‘Said he that?’

‘Why, sure.’

‘Art certain sure?’

‘Why, sure. Many, many, many times he said it.’

‘Yet me he cannot have, shall not have, as I loved, and love, him!’

She said it in a cry.

‘There ’twas a Bess that spake!’ exclaimed Mark—’ “ as I loved, and love, him!” Now hast thou openly betrayed thyself! And shall I tell thee a secret, Bess? — he means to have thee, willy, nilly.’

‘How?’ She started back in affright.

‘The morrow compline he will be even at the altar with ready ring to wed thee! He swears it. Escape thou canst not, Bess, Bess, unless thou would’st not see thy Laura wedded!’

At these words, Bessie Ford was as one stricken into stone, and she made no answer, till, suddenly covering her face, she wailed:

‘Oh, he hath not the right, he hath not the right!’

But that night Bonner told Fitzgerald, with just confidence in his divination, that Bessie had consented to be won by force: though perhaps unable to read the secret of her own consenting heart.

Fitzgerald paced the chamber like a pauper to whom the morrow will bring Golconda.

At about ten, Bonner descended and went out, bearing a platter. Near by, at the south end of King’s Mews, almost opposite Charing Cross Tower, a famous fat old woman, known though London as Madame Dessaulx, sold dimly by rush-light at a booth both soused pig’s-feet and cowheel-and-bacon. And to visit her for their supper, Bonner sallied out with his platter.

But Fitz ate no shipper that night. Bonner was returning with his mess, when a charre bearing a couple of ladies passed close by him under a lamp. They were ladies-of-honour returning to Bridewell from attendance upon the Queen, who, in turn, attended at the Westminster Palace upon the wounded King. One of them was Anne Boleyn.

Seeing a bevy of three tip-staves marching westward, she alighted, ran to them, and whispered:

‘You know me — the Lady Anne. That youth yonder — look! you can see him go there — I charge for being mixed in the late wounding of your King. Haste, now, — arrest!’

They were gone, and in a couple of minutes scared and protesting Bonner was in their clutches *en route* for the Marshalsea.

For again Bessie was lost to Anne, and Anne reasoned that Bonner would know, and, were it by means of the rack, could be made to tell.

Fitzgerald waited unquiet as the time passed: but no boy came. Toward midnight he went out to seek without clue. Many hours he searched and roamed, now languid with weariness, now wild with distraction; and only returned to brief sleep when the day broke.

During the day he visited Calvo in vain: the boy was not there. His great strength seemed to fail beneath his load. He visited Bruno in the friary-parlour, and arranged for the double wedlock that night; he bought in the Jewry a ring for his bride’s finger: but languidly — with a boding heavy upon his heart.

After vespers, he was strolling by the Marshalsea, and bethought him to enter. He passed under the great archway into the paved court-yard. Here all was still, save that from two door-ways on the right of the quadrangle came sounds of voices. He walked toward them. Here, he knew, was the room called the Common Room, open to any stroller, where prisoners summarily-arrested were kept. He walked in, and as he walked in, he heard the glad cry of Bonner.

It was a vast, low room, divided into two equal parts by an iron railing forming a series of arches at the top, which nearly reached the ceiling. Everything else was unhewn and window-less stone, so that the light was very dim.

Behind the *grille* were six or seven prisoners, one with feet in the stocks, and before it quite fifteen or twenty persons, gossips, relatives, warders and tipstaves. Two prisoners had their faces squeezed between the bars, shouting ribaldries; and now, also, Bonner was there, ecstatic.

‘Oh, boysie, boysie,’ said Fitz with sad smile, ‘how do I find thee? — a prisoner, save for thy nose—’

‘Oh, Fitz, bitter, bitter have been my agonies!’ cried Bonner, taking himself in deadly serious: ‘here have I been all a night and day, and now ’tis sure already the hour for my wedding.’

‘But how earnest thou here?’

‘Little, God wot, I know of it. Some tip-staves chased me, and the pig’s-feet were spilled, and the platter lost. Oh! ’tis sorer this constraint than the wound I had at Maddox! How is my evil star ascendant! Yet sure, Fitz, I knew thou wouldst come in time to deliver me—’

‘Boysie, boysie, deliver thee! — and how?’

‘Canst thou not, then? Oh, say not that! the hour of my wedding must sure be so poignantly nigh now—’

His face was puckered with anxious care. Fitz gazed up, and round, and down, examining the room. He suddenly whispered:

‘An thou standest on the shoulders of one of thy fellow prisoners, meseems thou couldst reach the railing-top, and leap; and run. Sure, thou couldst! Try it! — consult them — bribe them with this.’

He put the four broad-pieces in his pouch into Bonner’s hand, and for ten minutes strolled unconcernedly about.

Then again he saw the woeful face at the *grille*, and went.

‘They will not hear of it,’ whispered Bonner, ‘not one: for, say they, ’twill bring upon them the public stocks, sure. Oh, Fitz! canst do *nothing* for thy poor boy?’

Fitz looked upon Bonner long, with mournful eyes, smiling faintly.

Some voice within him seemed to howl warningly:

‘If thou miss her to-night, Fitz — ! *if thou miss her to-night* — !’

But his heart was entrapped by this beautiful, weak boy: and shaking his head mournfully, he said:

‘Oh, boysie Bonner! What a thing it is I do for thee...!’

Then, without hesitation, he strode away, singled out a tip-staff, and brought his palm smartly down upon the man’s face.

There arose an outcry — a shout of ‘Clubs!’ Fitz was seized by six hands, and hustled toward the railing-gate; it opened and jangled upon him on the other side.

He signalled Bonner to hold no speech with him, and for ten minutes lay in a far corner. Then, at the dimmest end of the *grille*, when he was unobserved, he stood, and in a jiffy had Bonner flung to his high firm shoulders.

‘Tell Bess why I came not,’ he whispered loud, ‘and run hard, run hard —’

Bonner’s drop startled the whole room, but he was out of the door before he was sighted, and half-way to the great gate before he was chased. Terror and hope were his wings, and his escape was soon assured.

The western portal of the Crutched Church was only separated from the street by the breadth of the Cellarer’s Buildings and the convent-wall, whose north-western gate lay now open: so that even as Mark doubled breathless into the grounds, he could see a party stand in dim perspective before him at the nave-altar. He was late.

There, leaning backward on the credence-table, book in hand, was thick Brother Bruno, looking more widespread in rochet and stole, and there was the sacrist by the bride, and there Calvo with protruding corpse-brow in

skull-cap, and Bessie in her plain garb, but cleaned, and the resplendent bride.

Sure, never was noon-day sun so shudderingly ablaze as Laura that night in the eyes of Bessie Ford. Queen ten times crowned and enthroned was she. Bonner, entering, looked too mean for her valet Bessie, hearing that foot-fall come, looked round in a panic, expecting *another* with it, and missing it, her brain swam in a dizzy and dark universe.

The service was gabbled, Bonner giving his responses pantingly. He had the very ring which once in Calvo's den he would have used, and did not. And still as the ceremony went forward, Bessie Ford, white as the dead, expected that footfall with panic — perhaps with hope.

But when at last she saw her Queen verily wedded wife before her, then she forgot herself, Fitzgerald, and all: and falling to her knees, she clasped Laura round the legs, wailing thin: '*O Laura...*', with stretched-back mouth, and free-flowing tears.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE FLEET



‘THEY PARTED — ne’er to meet again!

And never either found another

To free the hollow heart from paining.’

COLERIDGE.

WEDDED Laura went close-veiled with her husband, in the charre which had brought her close-veiled, to a lodging, engaged for them by Calvo’s house-woman, outside the city-wall, eastward, near St. Mary’s Spittal; and Bessie went home in dark loneliness to the watchman’s house by Billingsgate.

Bonner, in his haste, had forgotten to mention to her the cause of Fitzgerald’s absence... the name even of Fitzgerald....

That night there dawned upon her, for the first time, a baleful suspicion....

In two days it was fairly confirmed in her mind. In the course of time she would be a mother....

Meanwhile, Fitzgerald had been taken before the Southwark justice, charged with ‘striking’: for his complicity with Bonner had not been observed. Professing sorrow, he received a sentence of only two hours in the stocks: and before the prison-wall during that time sat in bulky ignominy in the sun — he, Garrett Oge of Kildare.

Thence he went direct to Calvo, who was jaunty on the subject of the recent wedding, promising that his should be the next, his should be the next. As to Bessie's place of lodging he could say nothing, but he had his plan.

'Her notion,' said he, 'is that the married couple shall sail hence with Francis of France for security from Henry. Now, I know in what house Francis abides, and she knows that I know. She will therefore come to me one night soon to be posted; and on that night shall I make her rendezvous here for another night, when Bruno shall come with book and ring, and yourself also. Never fear, never fear. All shall be well.'

'Now, may God bless you, Master Alchymist, for that word?' cried Fitz.

'Meantime, I feel certain she hides in some nook round about Billingsgate, and 'twere no harm an you search and run her down. What is wrong with her I cannot divine.'

All this while Calvo had communicated no word to Francis of his discovery, by the stars, of the sisters: for the fact that Laura was in his house had a sub-lunar look; and Bessie's lodging he did not know. He cherished a vain and obstinate reluctance to be detected in charlatanry by Francis, his ancient dupe.

Francis, meantime, waiting for Calvo's word, desisted not from roaming London through the night, mostly alone, and chiefly in the neighbourhood of the river, though he well divined that now his life must be in considerable danger. Now, too, all through the East-river region Fitz dallied and roamed by night.

Once, having made her way with elaborate secrecy to the married-couple's lodging, Bessie heard that earlier in the evening Fitzgerald had been there. She rose scared at once, shying now at the mere sound of his name.

Sure, Something was against her! Fitz now was too late. The material reason of motherhood, added to the moral of shame, was not less overwhelming than Fate itself.

Once, he chased a skirt which he fancied might be hers, and was, in fact, hers. She had stolen from her lodgings about midnight to crouch, and pore, and gloat at what was now to her a loved spot: the tressy piles and rotten beams beneath Botolph's Wharf. On her returning he spied her from far, and gave chase: but she doubled, and slipped into her doorway, leaving him without trace.

Three days after the wedding she came to Calvo by night to discover Francis. He did not tell her the house; he appointed two nights thence for the second coming, and on that night the trap of marriage was laid for her.

But that Something which was against her relented not. As she turned on the east side to enter London Bridge, she saw across the street in the dim off-shine of a lamp the great form which she loved. He was turning to enter the Bridge on the west side.

And as though flying from pestilence and hunting ruin, she was gone — instinctly eastward toward her home. And Fitzgerald, calling piteously, was after her.

'Oh, this time I have you, Bess — this time, by God!' he groaned, with ground teeth.

He had an unhealed gash in the right thigh which impeded him, and mixed a limping gait with his run.

Past St Magnus Church she flew, pelted down some steps to a lower street, then back of Botolph's Wharf; and a little beyond, conscious that his footsteps grew upon her, she spurted down a lane to the right, into an open yard-gate, and, mad with terrors, hearing the footsteps come, instantly spurted out again, hissing venomously:

‘Christ! how this man is for following me...!’

Now again he saw her, and passionately called. She was running direct upon the river, where it washed a warehouse flush; and she must have been caught, for no alley opened eastward, had she been unwitted by her instinct of reaching home. But an opening westward presenting itself, she darted into this, running close at the back of Botolph’s Wharf, this time toward London Bridge.

Between the wharf and St. Magnus there lay a very narrow court, closed both north and south, and broken into a higher and lower level by three steps. And she, not knowing the *cul-de-sac*, ran up the steps northward. For the moment the sound of his footsteps was lost; but even as she shocked against the blind wall, she heard him enter the court and run southward. The lampless court was dark, and she stood there, still but for her labouring chest, ignorant that the south end was blind also. Soon, with wildest panic she heard his echoes turn and come — she heard him gasp some oath or prayer — and his feet stumble up the steps. Distraction urged her, and she ran to meet him. To stand still would have been to rend her heart in a shriek.

Close to the wall on her right she ran, in the mad hope of dashing past him; but her flight brought her into impact with an open-swung door; she halted sharp, bolted into a passage, ran, and immediately stumbled and fell.

Here was a smell of tar and ropes, stale odours, fishy brines, and osmæ of the sea. On the further side she could see an arched door, framing vague lamp-light. And stumbling her impassioned way among kegs, coils, nets, and tackle, she came out upon paved street, and saw St. Magnus near.

Now again she ran, with hope, always onward, past the church, past the Bridge, to the back of Fishmongers’ Hall, still westward. And here, as she doubled river-ward for Cold Harbour, she heard again the echoing steps, and that raucous, lamentable call.

‘*This man...*’ she went, with intense breath.

Their love now was touched with venom, and rather resembled hate. For why, he dimly thought, did she not abide, and face, and brave him, with yea or nay? Why divined she not that were she shame clad in rags, King’s-mistress, as the lying slanderer had said, or other horror, instead of the exceeding brightness that she was, still were she to him his soul’s very breath? Sure a man must needs care for his own life! and ’twas for his life he chased her. And why, she dimly thought, divined he not that she *could* not abide, and face, and brave him with a nay; and that ’twas even for *his* sake that she so fled him, and was being hunted down to death, the bitter-sweet.

Round the curve of strand called Cold Harbour she ran, and at its further end came upon a cyclopean wall running north-and-south, where the Steel Yard began. Here, though death were behind her, she could no more fly, and leaning her forehead on a ledge where the wall broadened to its base, began to vomit, with coughs and retches of nausea. Suddenly her eyes, stretched sideways like a wary rabbit’s, saw the long shadow of his head sweep over the strand into the lapping river, and with a groan she was gone.

There was some sort of diffused light in the night from a moon, mostly hidden behind low clouds. But the air was sombrous and stagnant.

Past the Steel Yard westward down a steep paved street, on which the feet slipped, to the Cranes, she ran; and he, blood trickling down his right leg, ran after her.

At the bottom of this street he saw her, only ten yards before him, double riverward again down the alley-bank of the little stream which flowed to Broken Wharf. At that moment two river-men and a night-watchman, passing southward in company, ran into his path to stop him, with a ‘What ho, for a disturber of the King’s peace!’ He, horrified at possible delay,

shouted: ‘O’ God’s name, avaunt...!’ and such a tempest of energy scattered them, two being felled by his fist, that in some seconds he was free again, and prone in chase.

After the Cranes, whose arms stretched sheer over deepish river, the river had strand all along by Broken Wharf to Queen Hythe, where the building again bluffed into the water, till one came to Baynard Castle and the Fleet, where again was a little strand.

At Broken Wharf he heard her feet run on sounding boards, and himself coming out on the shore, could discern her twist northward at Queen Hythe, her passage there along the river being blocked. And now, for some time, he lost both her and her foot-falls. For very breathlessness he slackened pace, inhaling, as it were, through ears and pores. Her wind was as good as his, her body as tough and vital.

Up by Queen Hythe he, too, went, but did not see her. She, with strange fascination, hoping, perhaps, for some wharf such as Botolph’s, beneath which to hide, had once more bolted riverward.

Beneath the rough and frowning roundel-towers of Baynard Castle she dashed out upon a narrow stubbly strand, not knowing the river-side, nor why she came. But she had not run ten yards when she stopped with a cry: before her was only water, where the Fleet, washing flush the west wall of the Castle, hurried down to its meeting with the Thames; she had hasted, like a bird to the snare, into a trap.

Back she ran, and as she ran, with a terror now ecstatic and boundless, she saw him come. Back again she twisted toward the Fleet, some few steps, then back again toward him, then back again toward the Fleet, with steady, headlong run. And now, all suddenly, a shivering fear pierced him, and ‘Stop! I hold...!’ he called — too late. Deaf and blind she ran, she

plunged. He heard the splash; and some half-minute afterwards, he, too, splashed after her.

They were swept out into the near main-stream, where, after some random gropings of whimpering madness, Fitzgerald, who could swim well, discovered her as she rose. But even in the drenched drowse of that Elysium where the half-drowned linger, she fought hard for death, wrestling against him with a venom, and a force, which seemed miraculous. When at last he rose with her on the shore in front of Baynard Castle, he had somewhere in him a consciousness that she was dead.

Up he emerged from the river, bubbling a lugubrious ‘Oh...! Oh...!’ of Tartarus and bleared-eyed Titans damned; she burdening his left shoulder, caught at last. And since he could no further bear her little weight, he went to lay her in the black embrasure of the castle-portal, when he felt his back touched, and heard a high voice cry mincingly:

‘La, rascal, draw for thy life...!’

Francis, straying down hither, had discerned by stealthy peering the face of his little friend, but knew not that she was dead, nor knew of any relation between Fitz and her.

Fitz drew, hesitated, rushed with his burden to the near arch, and ran out again, and fought.

His mind was benumbed — all whelmed, orbless, deaf. Why he fought, with whom, he realized not; he dreamed only that someone would take her from him: and the sword was his habit.

With chink, chink, in the dim night plied the steels, but during half a minute only. For the delicate sword of Francis, Fitz, winded and drowned in tragedy, was that night no match. He made, after some passes, a wild and rash cut over-head, which Francis negligently knocked away. ‘Thy chance,

knave... kill, kill...' muttered Fitzgerald; and Francis ran him through the body.

Even as Fitzgerald fell, and the red sword dropped back to sheath, Francis ran to the archway; peered over her on a knee; and quickly discovered that she was dead.

There a long time he sat by her; and 'O Minerva, Minerva,' quoth he, 'and is it so with thee at the last? And to this have they indeed brought thee down? Oh, I could weep upon thee, Bessie, thou gent and valorous little heart!... How high-born was she in all her works, choosing a royal highway for her little life, and tussling it there with hard stubbornness, to make kings seem serfs and fustian-clad. La! I see it! I see! — now that she lies dead and finished, I seem to see it clear: that Well-doing, though seeming common in the doing, is an illustrious linen garment, smelling of camphor, old cedared chests, and spices, and the furred robes of kings and ladies but wormy rags. Yet to what end thy little hard strivings, O Minerva, Minerva? There now thou liest low enow under baleful star: so weird, so dark, this life of men!—"And ill," quoth she, "were it to me to die, by my credit!"

"Ill, by my credit" — the little thing! La, Henry of England!— 'twas *he* that brought thee hither, girl! Then, by Criss-cross, would Francis not change places in Hell with him! And what this wit and arm can do to avenge thee, Bessie Ford — La! but she hath, 'twas said, some papers in her bosom—'

He searched, found, and kept them. Afterwards he bore her tenderly on his shoulder through the now desert streets to London Bridge, and Calvo's den.

There on the settee, lately brought down for Calvo's bed, they laid her out; and Calvo, kneeling with the working jaw and showing tongue-tip of grief, at last dropped his head upon her bosom, and gave himself to sobs.

‘You abandon me, Master Calvo!’ she had cried....

During silent hours they sat there, King and Alchymist, poring upon her, the horn-lanthorn shining mournfully at her head. Till Francis whispered:

“Tis clear you knew her, Signior.’

Calvo bowed assent.

‘You told me not that.’

‘Because I would not, Sire.’

There was silence again.

Then Calvo, lifting his bleared red eyes, said with hushed voice:

‘But where found you her?’

‘In the arms of a man — a great fighter named Fitzgerald, one of her sister’s seekers, which I slew.’

‘*Slew?*’

‘Why, yes.’

‘But he is Bessie’s lover; and Bessie, I’ll swear, was taken with him, too.’

‘Then here is tragedy, Signior, fourfold; for I who loved her slew her lover.’

‘Was she dead when you met him?’

‘Dead in his arms.’

‘Then— ’tis strange! She must even have run from him into the river. And an she did it, then, sure, what you told me, Sire, of an outrage by Henry of England upon her is most true. Aye — here — *here* was her motive—’

‘Oh, outrage there *was* — I never doubted it.’

Calvo lifted his fist After some minutes he turned upon the King an earnest gaze.

‘And, King Francis, in the name of God and of Chivalry, will you let this crime pass unavenged? — you, a great King—’

‘Not unavenged, I swear, Signior. Wait, you shall see.’

They spoke low, and long silences followed few words.

The night waxed old apace toward morning. Calvo took two tapers from a table-drawer and stuck them, lighted, in their own grease in a nitch near her head. The ooze from her drenching soaked into the straw beneath her, and through it, dripping slow. Upon her, leaning forward on stools, they pored, seeking ever to comprehend, and ever baffled, her calm eternal lids, and popped brow.

The silence was awful there in the depths of the river.

Calvo said low:

‘A spirit, I thought, of uncommon chemistry....’

‘She appears to have been a simple country maiden,’ said Francis. ‘If the country maidens of England are like this, England anon must shine forth as the glory of Christendom.’

‘Many in England are like her, meseems, and yet not she,’ answered Calvo. ‘*She* was infinitely rare.’

She was in no way disfigured, though all the carmine had left her cheek-bones, and her eyelids vaulted. She seemed taller, neither smiling nor frowning, hands folded on breast, stretched in regal sleep. Regal — though her broken buskins were there to see, and the simple little string of rowan-tree berries round her low-clad neck.

Near daybreak Calvo, with lips venomously compressed, said:

‘Ah! I will settle my score with Henry of England yet!’

‘Ah?’ said Francis.

‘I will sit me down, your Majesty, and compose this man a letter frankly writ, were I thereby to resign all — elaboratory, patronage, head, and all—’

‘Under what patronage bide you now, Signior?’

‘Under my Lord Wolsey’s, Sire.’

‘La — rotten! Wolsey will fall — soon, sir. Little malice bear I that great man: yet fall he must whose greatness now bangs upon the friendship of Spain and Pope with England. Take my hint, Signior: I have this very night resolved within me to nip that friendship at any sacrifice, and win to myself alliance with my brother of Spain; and I have here papers, taken from that poor girl’s bosom, which will furnish the very blade I need to the hilt of my intent. La! trust not to Wolsey, man!’

‘Understand I rightly your Majesty to hint me offer of herbergage in French land?’

‘Most heartily, an you will,’

‘Most heartily I accept, and thank your Majesty. The morrow night, after the burial of this martyred saint, I were ready to start—’

‘And I! But Laura — ?’

‘Laura, Sire, is wedded wife.’

‘By Criss-cross!’

‘Wedded some nights since to a youth chosen for her by Bessie. It was the defunct’s will that they should sail with you to France, they having now a great fortune of seventy thousand gold rose-nobles. I may tell you, Sire, that Bessie Ford’s confidence in you, as though she had known you long, was absoute—’

‘Was it, Calvo? Say you?’

‘Absolute, Sire—’

Francis passionately kissed her lips.

‘An, then, you consent, Sire, to their sailing—’

‘La, consent! Why, even gladly, as to that But where, then, is this wedded pair?’

‘I wot where, Sire.’

‘You wot all, Signior. Now, I pose you a query frankly, Calvo, as man to man: were you verily led to acquaintance with these maidens, and knowledge of them, by any aid of thy star-gazing, yea or nay?’

‘Nay, Sire. Lie to you I could not in the presence of that sainted corpse. Nay, nay, not by any aid of the stars, sir. O King Francis, I tell you, the stars give not any guidance to us poor mortal men! To the mariner’s bark on her watery way the Polar-star is compass, and to the Arabian herdsman, halted at mid-night by the solitary desert-pool, the constellations speak. But ah, Sir King, upon the darkling generations that pressing gaze, and gazing founder, in all this lonely Deep and Desert of Time, they wink their lidless eyes in vain, and do seem to strive to tell, yet tell not! Never a word, sir — never, never one word! Their shout across the inter-space — an shout they do — is swallowed in the Wind of the million-distanced Gulf, and hardly a wistful echo, as of sea-shell murmuring, comes to haunt the ear. Oh, Sire, look but upon this poor dead girl, and ask me *why*; or wither your eyeballs with one life-long upward gaze, asking why; or cry question to the raving North-wind that with dumb and shuddering tongue doth seem to strive to tell, yet tells not, and ask it why. Answer anywhere is none, none: and, for himself, poor Mauro Calvo begins to feel that we beat in vain against these prison-walls. Well, well. Ah, well. Faith, I believe ’tis wide day above already—’

He absently wiped a moisture from his worn and goggle eyes: and Francis, having stooped to lay his lips upon the snowy brow, made rendezvous for the evening, and went away.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE CIRCLES SPREAD



‘AH, MARK THAT potter’s wheel — that metaphor!’
BROWNING.

‘Un son nous fait désirer celui qui doit lui répondre, et quand le second rétentit, il nous rappelle celui qui vient de nous échapper.’ — MADAME DE STAËL.

SOME four weeks afterwards, the brow of Henry of England was wrinkled, and anxious Care sat there.

He was like a man driven into a corner, faced by enemies, who has no resource but to fight, or sink.

The strong influence of Bessie Ford, and her Fate, had reached and caught him; and her coils were about him with strangling twine. He had heard of her death: and as he had spared not, so he hoped for no sparing. His heart hardened. With defiance and chafing rage it was that he heard the Voice say: ‘There are Crimes for whose pardon Time is too short: only in Eternity, after the period of many aeons, can they be washed.’ Therefore, with the outward strain and calamity of his circumstances was mixed an inward condition of intolerant, bitter, and arrogant spleen. And each increased and intensified the other.

That day, as always, he woke early: and as he stood between two gentlemen of the bed-chamber, who kneeled assiduous with buckling and

with buttoning, the Lord Chamberlain was admitted. He bore urgent letter from the High Sheriff of Norfolk, which Henry, standing, read. It said that the late disturbances in the Eastern Counties had swelled beyond bounds, and bore now the name of Insurrection, a brigade of the rioters having filled King's Lynn and Fakenham with fire and sword.

To cry 'Ha!' royally quenches no fire: and he swaggered aggressively to *levée* that morning with a heat in his brow, which was destined to grow hotter.

It was at the Westminster Palace. He sat in a square bare oak-chamber on a raised chair-throne canopied with Utrecht velvet, red and stamped; and in his train stood there Gardiner, Norfolk, Sir Thomas Lovell, and a scattering of yeoman-guards.

There was a calling at the door:

'His Grace the Bishop of Bayonne, to have audience!'

Henry started: he knew that the weekly *paquebot* from Calais had arrived the previous noon.

Du Ballay, his face lit up, advanced with homages.

'Well, my lord Bishop, and what of thy master's news?' asked Henry bluffly, though the pink of his cheek mottled, and his under-look was piercingly anxious.

'I bear no letters this time for your Majesty,' said Du Ballay.

'Well, my lord Bishop, out with it, out with it, man, for my day is short. What news?'

'I have instructions to acquaint your Majesty—'

'Aye, instructions to acquaint your Majesty, and the rest of it! Then acquaint him straightway and have it off thy stomach, man!'

'Francis, my master, and the Emperor Charles have signed a Convention of Alliance at Bagnères de Luchon, Sire—'

‘Ha I ha! ha! my good friends and brothers of France and Spain! A Convention of Alliance, have they! *I’ll* ally them, by the Splendour of God — ! I say, you, Norfolk, where the pestilence is Wolsey?’

‘At the White-hall, Sire.’

‘Have him here, have him here!’

Henry rose, and began to stalk and perambulate: with rough fan vented the breath from his nostrils that day.

But Wolsey, after matins, had taken horse for Hampton. It was not till two hours after the King’s nooning that he arrived.

And while Henry awaited him, from an entrance-door there rose the cry:

‘The Condé Ferondo of Spain to have audience!’

It was the Spanish Ambassador: and he bore to Henry a letter from Charles.

It was a scathing letter, Charles averring openly that he had seen Henry’s letter to Wolsey containing that word ‘Divorce,’ and the Alvarada and Katherine documents taken from the bosom of Bessie Ford by Francis. Charles fulminated threats that read like threats of war; and he fulminated something more — the announcement that an Order in Council had been already promulgated for inhibiting the English wool-trade with Flanders.

Here was something vital, and it touched deep. And the news, new to Henry, had five days since been guessed in the City of London, where it created something like panic. Laden ships had returned unladen; expected ships had not come in. At that very hour, an angry mob, swelling as it advanced, and sending before it a gathering roar, was marching westward from the City upon the Palace.

Henry’s frown and flush deepened as he read. And ‘Ha!’ went he, and again ‘Ha!’ But royal ‘Ha’s’ efface no past, and wash no crime.

At last came Wolsey trotting to his presence.

‘My lord, hast heard the news?’ said Henry, glowering.

‘Sire, I have had letters... Sire, Sire....’

‘Well, my lord, you must throw your Spain over! I mean to ruffle it with this Charles, by God! Mark me, my lord, no paltering!’

To and fro stalked Henry, passionately settling his elbows in his sleeves.

‘Sire, what would you do?’

‘Divorce! Divorce! By God’s light, my lord, I’m a dangerous man to drive into a corner! Divorce! He defies me, I defy him! And I wager you my crown that the mere senous threat of it, backed with the Pope’s sanction, shatters this new League to Hell! Henry for ever, by God!’

‘But the Pope’s sanction, Sire? That were difficult, impossible now, he having the strength of Charles with Francis at his back.’

‘Wolsey, Wolsey, you palter! Believe me, you palter, man! By Heaven, ’tis an ill sign when a man palters! Pope’s sanction, quotha? Have I not it already, secretly given, locked fast in yon cabinet?’

(Clement VII. had, in truth, under pressure of some other political juncture, given virtual consent to the divorce four months previously.)

Before Wolsey could answer, Thomas Howard, with scared face, looked in, and urgently craved to speak.

He came with the hot news of the advancing City mob.

‘Let the foul tykes come!’ cried Henry. ‘Ha! there lies worse in store for them than this! My Lord Wolsey, summon me a Council! And, without delay, call me a Parliament!’

He strode from the chamber, and crossing a corridor, was handed a letter, which bore the seal of Francis: and he broke it eagerly open. But it was from Mauro Calvo.

Calvo wrote freely, heading his letter with the words:

‘Concerning Bessie Ford.

‘... Thou God-forsaken wretch.... This the stars say concerning you. Well, you believe not in stars, and you have reason — verily, they tell us nothing. Yet *inner* twinklings of light there are by which the wise be not wholly left without horoscope and augury. And hear this curse and prophesy of Mauro Calvo against thee... thou shalt be hunted by the Avengers of Blood through all thy filthy and corrupted years... from crime to crime shalt thou advance... the fair promise of thy life shall turn to a shame of bloated and ignominious misery... them thou lovest shall hate thee, and in turn be hated of thee... thou shalt stir in thy sleep and curse God every hour, and every hour be cursed by Him... thou shalt die of rottenness...’

As Henry crushed the letter in his fist, the Palace was surrounded by a roar.

But he was not done with the slaps of Fate that day. By far the most momentous came, when a Papal Legate, but new-arrived from France, ushered in by Wolsey, presented the King a letter. It was from Clement.

Under pressure of Charles, Clement now made a complete *volte face*: for no reason, he wrote, could he countenance Divorce, were he even driven to employ in threat such words as Interdict and Excommunication: though he might consent to issue a Commission to try the case.

Seeing himself thus beset at every point, Henry, pricked to ecstasy by the sting of the moment, broke into apoplectic fury, and stalking quick, he poured forth a foaming passion of invective.

‘The Pope!’ cried he. ‘The Pope! Oh, just, impartial, and kind Father of Christendom! Not trembling in his holy aloofness at the becks and grins of Charles of Spain! Oh no! Not licking the stale and stinking spittle of Francis of France! Oh no! The Pope, eh? The Pope? God! and do I bow, and cringe, and stoop to this? I? Oh so? Aha? I’ll toss my crown into the nearest gargoyle-gutter first! You hear me, Wolsey? You, sirrah, Pope’s-legate, or

Whate'er you call yourself — you hear me? Then bear me, you two, witness to the four winds of Christendom: I *defy* the lousy Pope....'

Now, for the first time since the death of the Messiah, were such words, in such tone, uttered by human tongue.

King Henry of England furiously stamped the foot.

And with that stamp Mediæval England ended: and Modern England sprang.

It is probable that as the general Salvation of the whole world needed, and had, its great Martyr, so every lesser epochic movement and salvation, needs, and has, its lesser Martyr, often unknown. If, then, we call little Bessie Ford the Martyr of the English Renaissance...?

For the way of things is so. The Shadowy Hand is never less novel and mysterious than it is awful. As it is said: 'The way of God is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His foot-steps are not known.'

Or as a modern writer, rising once in a grave moment beyond all limit, even to psalmist-prophetic strain, has it written down:

'He steadfast drifts,
and rudderless steers,
an Argonaut blind,
his Bark.'

THE END

The Man-Stealers (1900)



The Man-Stealers was first published by Hutchinson and Co in England in 1900. Hutchinson was established in 1887 by George Hutchinson and later run by his son Walter Hutchinson, who became known for publishing propaganda during the war that designed to generate jingoism and support for the government.

It was between the late nineteenth century and the early 1910's that Shiel experienced his greatest success as a writer. *The Man-Stealers* is a historical fiction novel that is set in 1816, shortly after Napoleon has been defeated for the final time and exiled to St. Helena. The defeat came at the hands of the Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley, at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. It ended a period of French expansion and dominance in Europe and marked the start of long turbulent period for the country as it underwent a series of constitutional change. In *The Man-Stealers*, Shiel imagines a group of French *Sociétés* planning to avenge Napoleon's exile by devising a plot to kidnap the Duke of Wellington.

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CHAPTER I. THE CONFEDERATES



AFTER WATERLOO, BUONAPARTE hurried back to Paris, and the next morning was virtually asked to abdicate by a deputation of the Chamber. This he did; and retired to Malmaison: but the Provisional Government, embarrassed by his proximity, sent General Becker to “accompany” him away to Rochefort and here the trapped little Titan, after a brief vain hope of running the blockade of English ships to America, trusted himself to his enemies, and embarked with his suite of forty on the *Bellerophon*, having first written to the Prince Regent these words:

“I come, like Themistocles, to cast myself upon the hospitality of the British people” — though, of course, Themistocles had never done that: but it was the day of large phrase, and reference to the classics.

Napoleon’s hope, apparently, was some English country-seat, where he might lord and luxuriate a space, till the next lion-spring to France, and upheaval of the world.

What really happened we know: he was not allowed to land: but on the responsibility of the British Ministry was transferred, near Plymouth, to the *Northumberland*, and, with only three adherents, packed off to St. Helena.

Certainly, this was as high-handed a piece of business as possible; it was coarse, it was treacherous, it was savage — and it was wonderfully wise.

At all events, Bony raved largely: “I hereby solemnly protest in the face of Heaven and mankind,” wrote he, “against the violence that is done me. I voluntarily came on board the *Bellerophon*: — I am not the prisoner, I am the guest, of England. I came at the invitation of the Captain himself (this

was true!) to place myself under the protection of England, with full trust in the sacred rights of hospitality. If the Government only wished to lay a snare for me, it has forfeited its honour, and disgraced its flag. An enemy who made war for twenty years against the English people has come spontaneously, in the hour of misfortune, to seek an asylum under their laws; what greater proof could he give of his esteem and confidence? And how has England replied? She pretended to hold out a hospitable hand: but when this enemy gave himself up, he was immolated! I appeal to History!” — and so on.

All this had not the least effect upon the British people, into whose soul the iron of Bony had well entered.

But what he said was quite true: and upon *the French people* it had an effect!

The *Northumberland* was not half-way to St. Helena when Buonaparte, throughout the length and breadth of France, acquired a glamour which was partly that of Romulus, the god, and partly that of Stephen, the martyr.

The Hero, murdered, becomes a Saint; then admiration rises into Awe, and veneration kindles into Religion.

Men said: “How has he been sacrificed — for us!” With this realisation of the sacrificial, the mind has reached out into the transcendent, and is in a state of Piety. There was instituted, indeed, no public worship and apotheosis of Buonaparte, as in the case Buddha, Mahomet, etc.:

but *only* because he was the god of a modern, western nation: and there was *private* worship and apotheosis enough.

By the time he reached St. Helena, at least *seven* Secret Societies had sprung into existence in Paris, at which the members, on entrance and exit, knelt uncovered before a statue of the hero.

The aim of all these associations was either the practical one of getting Napoleon out of St. Helena, or the vaguer one of revenge: and in both cases the mind turned naturally to one man: the Duke of Wellington.

The practical ones said in effect: "Hostage for hostage! let us seize their leader as they have seized ours: then, perhaps, we can exchange." The vague ones said: "Man for man! let us seize their darling as they have seized ours: then, perhaps, we shall be comforted."

For it was true that the Duke at that moment was as profoundly venerated (though less wildly adored) in England, as Napoleon in France.

Associated with those Secret Societies, or members of them, were, it is said, five members of the Provisional Government, six hundred and seventy-four ladies of the *monde* and Court, with old hands like Savary, Bertrand, Las Cases, Lallemand, the Duc de Rovigo, Gourgand, and Jacquiers of the Clarendon in London — Marshals, men with the Grand Cross, naval men, generals, old bed-chamber grooms, men-about-town, aristocrats, *ouvriers*, old Guards, the *demimonde*, every type of France.

It was the age of rough-and-ready "*violence to the person*": in England, Sayer, the Bow Street officer, and the St. James' Watch House, knew well the 'prentice-kidnapping chimney-sweep; at Bartholomew Fair, wives were formally sold for seven-shilling pieces, with a wind-up of Blue Ruin and the cotillon; the Resurrection Men struck openly for higher pay, and "burked" (suffocated) to procure corpses; women abducted young boys and married them; the Prince Regent was playfully stoned in his phaeton, and had his eyes blacked by Lord Yarmouth; Buonaparte was kidnapped by the British Ministry. This conception, therefore, of the French Societies came naturally, was in the spirit of the air. And from the first they set about its execution with fanatic zeal.

In the end nothing of national importance came of it — unless we call “national” the destruction of Raddon Lighthouse. But because the whole incident so illustrates the seven-times tempered spirit of the Duke in that most awfully ticklish ordeal through which he had to pass, we give the details in fresh form.

One of these sworn enemies of the Duke was a young man of twenty-five, named Camille de Verdier, son of the Marquis de la Terville-Rochefoucauld, an *émigré*. The son, a fellow of iron grit, took to Republican views, and after seven years of exile in England, broke with his father, returned to France, and attaching himself to Court, was territorially reinstated. He dropped the *de* of his name, took part in the march to Moscow, was captured at Vittoria, brought to England, refused to be free on *parole*, escaped from the Medway hulk, was in the Staff at Waterloo, and accompanied Napoleon to Malmaison and Rochefort.

He was of strong character, but given to spasmodic passions. During his London life he had flamed for a fellow-exile, one Mdlle. d’Arblay, of Mansfield Street, a young lady of great beauty, once referred to in the *Morning Chronicle* as “that fair female of Family and Fashion whose genteel figure and elegant Paris deportment so adorn the magic Circle in which she shines.” This fair female had a head which thought, and a cold and ruthless heart, which yet could adore: her adoration being first Verdier, and secondly Napoleon, and that Republican France which had chased her parents: indeed, from her lips Verdier had caught a fiercer enthusiasm for the new Religion. She loved him: and on the death of her last parent, followed him to France. But when she yielded to his passion, the restless fellow almost ceased to pretend adoration; and they rather drifted apart.

On the 3rd February, 1816, he visited her at her house in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré. She came to him in the heavy salon Henri IV.,

stooping through a protracted curtsy; she being then a large, beautiful woman of twenty-seven years; Roman-profiled, with a flat forehead, lined from hair to nose with delicate frown; skin dead white; and blackest lax hair; and a plenteous figure of long-legged grace in her bosom-waisted robe.

She was all in black.

Verdier, who had not seen her for two months, kissed her perfunctorily, even while he said:

“Why the deuce are you in mourning, pretty Lise?”

They often talked together in English. “Why are *you*?” she replied.

He glanced at a *brassard* of crape on his left arm — a singular addition to a dandy attire of cut-away demi-surtout, tight pantaloons of stockinette, and splendid shoe-buckles; he being a rather small fellow, knit and agile, firm-lipped, with a wealth of wheaten hair, seraphically pretty, but with a sardonic stare of blue eye, and a habit of breathing a Jew’s-harp whistle through white teeth-edges in a silent moment; and walking, his coat-tails swung freely from side to side.

In some minutes he had learned that Lise was a member of a Society called “*Société du Sacrifice*,” whose members bound themselves to wear mourning till “a certain illustrious Personage” had paid the forfeit of England’s treachery.

He was surprised: for the same reason *he* wore mourning: and deeply as he knew the Parisian under-currents, he was not aware of any other *Société* than his own.

And he had this thought: if there are more than one, there may be more than two! For two months he worked hard, from La Villette to St. Cloud, with a grand idea, and a persistent industry: by the end of that time he was a member of seven Societies: there might be more, but he could glean no hint

of them in casino, bureau, salon, cabaret, club, or Montmartre den. Now, however, he was satisfied. His dream was to amalgamate all those unearthed into a single force which would not fail.

The necessary formalities and precautions were, of course, innumerable, but the task not otherwise difficult; and at midnight of the 17th May, 1816, the first Chapter of the amalgamated bodies, present 1,217, at last took place in the *caves* of a lonely château at Garenne-Bezons, then country, now a Paris suburb. The members bore printed Notice Papers; a Board consisting of Presidents of the old *Sociétés* presided; the Society was named; a Roll read; Resolutions, Statutes, Agenda passed; and Officers elected. In the tangled old walled garden, before the portal, had been placed a stone statue of Napoleon, and in the dark cellar also, at the back of a rough-board *estrade* serving as platform, stood a gaunt crucifixion in wood of the Emperor on a black cross. The walls were draped in black. It illustrates the inherent crassness of the times, that members, in swearing, sipped from a chalice containing mixed blood and wine — a fit Napoleonic Sacrament, certainly; and after each subsequent meeting — they usually lasted till foreday — a veritable Black Sabbath of license appears to have transacted itself throughout the château (it was called Château Beconles-Giroflets, and still partly stands in the grounds behind an *auberge*). The President elected was M. Tombarelle, under the title of “Master” (he had been “Master” of two of the small *Sociétés*, and was a powerful Member of the Chamber); the Master Associate was the historic Lallemand; the Duc de Monflanquin was named Treasurer; Verdier’s reward for his organising energies was the post of “Administrator”; the Secretary’s name is somehow lost, but M. Albert Dupin, a gigantic naval man, who had been sub-lieutenant at Trafalgar, was made Sub-secretary and “Recruteur” (Recruiter?); Lise d’Arblay, with two others, were elected *Soeurs Supérieures* (the whole thing having a semi-

religious character); while at the third Chapter, a man called Danda, a half-Spaniard, with a good deal of madness in his composition, was named Ship's-Captain.

By the end of June the Society was exceedingly wealthy; it had acquired the bleak Château Durand, seven miles from the Norman Coast near Montreuil, for *its* St. Helena; also, by secret purchase from the Government, it owned a splendid frigate-built two-decker of 1,080 tons, carrying 50 guns of 2 to 5,000 lbs. on spar and main deck, with a 500 lbs. weight of broad-side, and a twelve-knot speed. All the while, a Committee of Management was selling to members "Relics" of Napoleon — a piece of soap, a shoe, a brush, fetching prices like 25 to 40,000 francs — and funds accumulated beyond the possibility of use.

On the midnight of the 5th of August occurred the most sensational of the Chapters of the Society. In the midst of a speech by the Master, Verdier rushed with flushed brow into the room, leapt to the *estrade*, brushed the speaker aside, and waved before the members an English- printed sheet.

It was the *Court Circular*, and had been sent over by Jacquiers of the Clarendon. It contained the gossip that the Duke of Wellington meant to "escape from the no inconsiderable turmoil of the Life and Fashion of the Town during the whole month of September next, and had accepted an invitation of the Marquis and Marchioness of Elwell to pass four se'ennights in the placid and elegant Seclusion of Grandcourt."

Grandcourt, Verdier said, was only twelve or fourteen kilometres from the South Coast! This was the awaited opportunity: and a scene of wild excitement ensued, till the assembly broke up on the Motion for an extraordinary Synod that day se'ennight, when drawings and plans would be submitted, and Resolutions adopted.

This was accordingly done; and by the end of the month, Verdier, Lise d'Arblay, big Dupin, the Marquis d'Artois, and three others, had chartered at Calais one of those sea-blue luggerprivateers used in the war, and passing through Dover, had installed themselves in London. They were the delegates of the Society: and to the brains of Verdier and Lise d'Arblay, in particular, the minuter planning of the undertaking seems to have been committed.

CHAPTER II. THE PLOT



IN THE *MORNING Post* of the 9th September appeared these words:

“ — the amiable youth of Quality and Fashion, who has lately took the town by storm — who already has been satirised by a Rowlandson, and oded by a Walcot — whom Mr. Creaton, the auctioneer, must needs bless, Wigley’s extol, and Tattersall’s laud — the patron both of Cordiality and the Arts, etc.”

This panegyric referred to Verdier, who by this time was everywhere, and knew everyone. Long since, in London, he had acquired the knack of drink, and at the fifth of hock or port, with his sardonic smile, would see his man under the table. This alone made him something of a King. It was an age of notorieties, little social rags and alarums, easily gulled and dazzled. Verdier had set up for the Prince of Dandies (great Brummell had just gone under). He had £6 dinners at the Clarendon or Stephen’s, followed by largesses of £1 bank-tokens for “perquisites” to waiters. He readopted his father’s titles. He had denny, curricule, tilbury and chaise, and largely trotted his milk-white Hanoverian four-in-hand. He lounged at Owen’s, the Bond Street pastry-cook, and danced at Almack’s, and played macao at Brooke’s, and whist in “the charmed circle of White’s.” In three weeks he had fought two duels, and each time gallantly spared his man. One day he spurted, the admiration of the *beau monde*, on a gilt hobby-horse from Johnson’s Repository in Long Acre to Bayswater, and back again to his rooms in

Bolton Street, next door to Whattier's. Twice he did the 104 miles to Brighton and back in eight hours, breaking seven whips: and to what he did he took care to have witnesses. In the "Squeeze" at Rotton Row he went meteoric, siffling through his teeth-edges, amid the salutation of the *crème de la crème*. He was a man-about-town, to be met in the print-shops, at the Academy in Somerset Place, and where the new bibliomaniacs bid high, and at Miss Linwood's Leicester Square Exhibition of Needle-work, and at the Panoramas, and at Mrs. Salmon's the wax-works, and at the cock-pit, and the bull-baiting, and the prize-fight.

After three weeks, little transpired in the upper life of London which he did not hear; and into what friendship he chose he could enter.

His French associates, too, made a figure in the town, but not on the same scale; and Verdier appeared not to know them. As for Lise d'Arblay, she lay low in a house in Sweeting Alley near the Royal Exchange, only venturing out deep-veiled in the shade of an Oldenburg poke.

On the 4th September, at 9 a.m., the Duke of Wellington left Apsley house in his own travelling-coach and four, bound westward. London, then a large family (there were twelve millions in all Britain), knew, and came to howl: 'prentice and yoked milk-woman, the prevalent gipsy and the little coster-cart dog-drawn, Covent Garden basket-woman, wigged doctor, wigged parson, and the dandy who meant to return to bed till two, and an escort of light horse. And these, at the first sight of the curving beaver, roared and roared. He tipped a dry nod at the crowd, spoke some last words, foot on step, to a certain Lieutenant Opie, and, accompanied only by his host, Lord Elwell, was away, to be left by his escort-of-ceremony near Chiswick, but to be met at every station by the gentry and yeomanry of counties.

In the crowd, close by the berlin-door, was Verdier. They had not met, for the Duke was one of a set, of very high rank, who never frequented the Clubs, but would congregate in crony-circles at hotels, like naval Fladong's, military Stephen's, clerical Ibbetson's, and so on; and his habits were so regular, that a man in his "world" could readily avoid "knowing" him. So that, when the berlin rattled off, Verdier, with deep reverence, and out-waved hat, muttered: "To our better acquaintance, your Grace."

But he was secretly uneasy: plans remained unmaterialised: and the time was at hand. However, that night, late, he knocked over a City beadle, lanthorn and all, with his racing curricule; and on a Sweeting Alley first-floor, solid with bourgeois mahogany, rushed, rather tipsy, into the presence of Lise d'Arblay.

"Victory, Lise," he said, covering her face in his cocked hat where she sat at an old Antwerp harpsichord: "we have the whole."

"You stifle me!" cried she, "I thought you never got fuddled."

"In the legs, Lise, in the legs: never, damn me, in the head. I have been at that vile turfy hole of Limner's, and had three of port, two of negus, and four of gin-punch — give us a kiss, girl—"

"Faugh! you deteriorate in London," said Lise: "could the Marquise de la Terville- Rochefoucauld hear her once *chaste* Camille, her most *pious* and *intact* Camille, recounting his gin-punches, what an ejaculation she'd let!"

"Be good enough to let the Marquise de la Terville-Rochefoucauld sleep sound in her grave, Lise. 'Tis all part of the game, is it not? Hark you, we've *got* this same illustrious Personage."

"Real news?"

"Why, yes. The man who will take down to him the War Office despatches I now *know*."

"Good, good," went Lise softly.

“With him I have been tippling, and playing Under and Over Seven half the night.”

“Well, thank the good God, then! Who is he?”

“Lieutenant James Wootton Opie, of the Guards Artillery, Companion of the Bath, though never you’d dream it, Lise, Lise, I swear; a lout of lubberly demeanour replete with rodomontade and ‘Odd Zookers!’; drinks purl and Sampson by the bumper as you water, my adored, and wears a tousled wig, and breeches-and-leg-boots, and a long face, and a big nose: so you have his portrait. I left him sitting in Limner’s coffee-room, one leg sprawled to the devil in the air, his mouth bawling, his tongue lolling—”

“How did you discover — ?”

“He was the last man the illustrious Personage spoke to on departing this morning: that gave me the thought, and at the Marchioness of Hertford’s ball to-night, I pumped Lord Sidmouth and *he* told me; then I unearthed the fellow himself at the London Tavern and ‘Dash my wig! ‘cried he, when I slapped his back, ‘I thought I had killed you some years ago. By Goles, aren’t you my friend Thingumbob, what’s-his-name? eh, by Goles, damn me?’ Well, I took him in tow, and *he* himself; told me he is despatch-officer to you know who. If once we get those despatches *from* him, you have the introduction you need.”

“But would this Opie be easily knocked on the head?”

“If necessary, I suppose. Is it necessary? We might get the papers *from* him somehow, and then lock him away somewhere till all *is over*. ”

“But what a useless risk for no reason!” said Lise, with surprised eyes. “Locked away men escape, write, do a thousand things, I suppose? Dead men tell no tales.”

Her needle clicked *in* embroidery during a silence. “Ah, well, I suppose you are right,” said Verdier. “Knock the man on the head.”

“Never that, you know. We are not assassins, pretty. We can kill him in a duel, if necessary. The first thing, of course, is to know the day and even hour of his departure. Lise, you must make him your slave. Use the face and the smile, and twist the eyes about, eh? No need lying low any more: the great Personage is gone. Come out and shine for a week, my sibyl, and make the town talk. By the way, let’s see the Grandcourt map: suppose we pass the night over it? time is going, going, Lise! You will need spend at least a se’en-night down there, before our men dare land. I want you to know every pebble from Grandcourt to the sea. The nights of the 19th and 20th will be moonless, one or other of those should be our night, without fault. Lise, Lise, those fair brows of thine have need to knit now to some purpose, and be wise as serpents and harmful as tigers, my Egypt Queen. All depends upon the lovely head — France — History — I. A French planet — how is that to your dainty liking? A Gallic Hindoostan — a Parisian Cathay. Come, there is something worth working for! And you and I can do it, if we like, I swear! Bring the drawing, then, and a tumbler of Jamaica—”

She sailed out, he tossing off a coat *à la guillotine*, low-collared to show stock and collar behind, drew gloves, loosened stays: and he sat siffling through his teeth-edges.

“Now,” said he, when she reappeared with coffee and plan, “we set to thinking, Lise, till our foreheads bladder out like Lord Derby’s. Here is Grand-court Abbey, like a Maltese Cross: this drawing of Dupin’s is certainly not exact, but it will do: here’s the lake washing the south wing; here’s the avenue of sycamores running south from the lake; here, twelve miles south, is the coast. Looking over the lake is the library. Two or three miles from the avenue lies the martello-

tower. As agreed, our men do not approach nearer the Abbey than the martello-tower, inside which they lie hid, till *you* bring the prisoner to them. Your idea of seizing him boldly in the Abbey, and killing every living thing is Napoleonic, Lise: but we must not be blind to the tremendous risk that some servant might escape to the villages, and have us overpowered before you reach the coast. There must be *no* risk. Not the least reason exists *why* the whole thing should not be certain as arithmetic beforehand: it is my will: I must have it so. Our problem, then, is to get the illustrious man from the Abbey to the martello at the right moment.”

“That’s easy done as lighting the gas lights,” said Lise. “Provided you supply me with the Means, I have the whole schemed out in my head, and can have him like a mouse.”

“Say a trapped lion, audacious female. Give me kisses for that cruel, wanton heart. Do you love me still with the old flames, jade?”

“Ah, Camille — no, no. As if you merited such adoration—”

“Don’t I love it, then, the love-sick soul? By Heavens, I saw a little dandyess this morning in the Mall — ! There is something in the English type, after all — But to the business — the Means, you say. What means?”

After a silence she said: “Is this Lieutenant Opie married?”

“Then I go down as his wife, privately married; and as his wife I take the despatches which you obtain from him; my *entrée*, for a definite reason, on a definite business, into the Abbey is the first End: and the despatches are the first Means.”

“That I understand: go on.”

“Has he any relatives, this Opie?”

“One, that I know of; ha, ha! and such an one, Lise!”

“Who, then?”

“Pon my word, I only found it out this afternoon: tis exquisite: look here, Lise.” He reached for his coat, and drew one of Ackermann’s prints from a pocket. It was a drawing by Woodforde of a girl in an Oldenburg poke: but beneath the poke was no human face, but the gross face of a pig. At the bottom appeared the words: “A Pig in a Poke.”

Lise uttered a dainty exclamation, half hypocritical, for the drawing was not new to her. It, and others like it, was then the rage in all the print-shops: and there ran a persistent rumour, and belief; in London that an actual pig-faced lady *was* then existing in some hidden nook of the town. Two or three even knew that in the rumour was truth.

“That lady,” said Verdier, “is the niece of Opie.”

Lise cried out: “Good, good! That is, if you can *find* her—”

“Oh, I know where she is. Of course, the drawing is an exaggeration: she is more like a rat than a pig, poor girl, and a good little soul, I’m told. I had it in great confidence from Willis, the old King’s physician, at Whattier’s. He has *seen* her. She is well-made, he avers, but has no chin, and is an imbecile—”

“Excellent! Where is she?”

“At Opie’s house, No. 11 Bedford Square, next door to Lord Eldon’s.”

“Oh, she is in Opie’s keeping?”

‘He is her only relative, and tenderly attached to her, Willis swears. He had her hidden in the country till the war was over, and then brought her here.’”

“Could you kidnap her?”

“Easy enough. But why?”

“Don’t you perceive what a Providence is in this creature? I have to get the *vir illustrissimus* from the Abbey to the martello: well and good; but that distance is no short one: I could not *ask* him to accompany me to the

martello. I can ask him to accompany me into the long avenue, perhaps: his known gallantry makes that easy done. But from the avenue I could only get him further by evoking some passion of his mind: and I have long decided that that passion should be something in the nature of chivalry: how if he saw a cruelty in the doing and ran out to stop it, and the people committing it ran towards the martello? That is my general conception: the minutiae can be planned as we proceed. But to make certain, the cruelty should be a shocking one, done by people of established ill-fame: and I have had the thought of *gipsies*, bearing a living person in a coffin to bury. But what living person? The best would be a relative of Opie's: for if I told the Duke, from the first, that a relative of Opie's had been kidnapped by gipsies, that would furnish a good reason for Opie's having entrusted the dispatches to me, his wife, since Opie would have gone hunting this lost relative; and also, if that relative had a striking peculiarity of person, and the peculiar coffined form was described before-hand to the Duke by, say, one of the gipsies disgusted with his tribe, then that would furnish an irresistible motive to the Duke to follow the miscreants; since, I suppose, the Duke and Opie are more or less friends—"

"Lise, you are Reason itself! See, hussy, I kiss your hand with kneeling: ah, that pleases her, then! 'Fore God, I do love you, Lise. But my head is full of. great affairs, my dear girl — you can't expect me to play the love-sick swain at such a juncture. It will do, that scheme of yours! I feel and perceive that it will. But the gipsies! — can they be trusted? and how would they behave to that poor afflicted female?"

"Oh, as to that, we cannot afford the luxury of qualms and compunctions, 'tis sure. She takes her chances. Charming, your considerateness, Camille, for all the world — and strange your

mercilessness to *one*. What, you are not going? I am having some milk-punch brewed below stairs—”

“No! I am off. Quick and sure, girl! I have served under a man, Lise, who struck, when he struck, like Heaven’s own Hammer: and I have his trick of Thunder, be Gad! *Au r’voir!*”

“But whither would you be flying at such an hour of the night?”

“Hounslow Heath—”

“The gipsies! But not *now*—”

“Yes — Oh, by the way, instal yourself to-morrow at the Foreign Hotel in Leicester Square, will you? At three I wait upon you there with Opie and some others to drink a dish of tea. Here — three signed cheques on Coutts’. Be sure retain the most genteel suite, with an apartment for carding: everything high-toned and elegant, no silver-plate — gold — and you in your gowns and ostrich-and-diamond headdress. And twist the eyes about, and let ’em see the white bust — *au r’voir!*”

Down he swaggered three steps at a time, and off he set, using the whip and siffling, flicking at everything, oil-lamp and belated staggerer, ward-constable, watchman, and darkling street-brawl. Soon he was careering in open country, and at about three in the morning sat on Hounslow Heath in one of those four-wheeled waggons, with tyres a foot wide, in which the poor, and the gipsy, travelled England. Around him spread a camp of fifty asses, panniers, dying fires, little carts and whiskies, mysterious sheeted masses, glints and streaks of romantic light, a baby-cry, and the free simplicity of the Bedouin. Here, at all times, were to be found three or four gipsy-camps.

Even with forty million inhabitants England is practically an uninhabited land. With twelve, there was “room for wandering.”

Before Verdier a man sat on a box, a sleeping child on each knee, a slipper and stocking on one leg, an ankle-jack and bandage on the other: a broad-faced, dark-bearded clown, whose wild black eyes had yet seen star-visions of which Fox and Selwyn, making yonder for Howard and Gibbs, the Jews, after a hard night at Brooke's, never once dreamed.

He and Verdier concocted and confabulated two whole fore-day hours: till Verdier, rising, said:

"You are certain, then, that you could handle a boat eight or ten miles on the sea?"

"Sure and certain, guv'nor: and done it oft and oft in the Cornwall reaches," said the man. "So it is a bargain?"

"It is, guv'nor."

"You'll be gentle, fellow, with that poor girl?"

"We will, guv'nor, we will."

"Your name, sir?"

"Corrie Lovell, guv'nor."

"Well, I take you, Lovell, for an honest fellow."

"Not much honesty about us poor folk, guv'nor: but faithful enough are we to those that cross our hand with the yellow stuff."

"Very well said: you *are* an honest fellow. And now, the price of the whole."

"Ah, that's it: the price, guv'nor—"

"Name a sum."

"Well, 'cod! taking all into consideration, I say — fifty golden guineas!"

"Tush! you have not to do with a St. Giles's pauper, fellow. Be somewhat less modest, sir."

"Well, 'cod! you talk like a King, every inch: cod! I say a hundred and — *twenty* golden guineas!"

“You are mighty modest, friend! Well, say three hundred golden guineas for the whole, exquisitely done. You see, I am liberal. Here, meantime, are ten for earnest. The rest I hand you the moment that we step from the martello-tower and seize the gentleman: you can have one of your men hiding there, with mine, to receive it. Meantime, day and night from tomorrow, you have a man in waiting at Leicester Square near the Foreign Hotel.”

“Right! Only — here — a word in your ear: our tribe’s been in this lair over a se’ennight, and the younger colts getting frisky to be away moorlanding. The wild blood, you know, and the straying itch, ‘cod! Don’t you keep ’em waiting too long—”

“You cat them into order. Three hundred golden guineas, sir. Zounds, I am sleepy. Till we meet again, Lovell—”

As he went away, he saw the scheme blossoming fair: nor could now even conceive of mishap. It was grey morning. Half-way towards his waiting curricule, he heard a singular sound — the roar of a lion; and turning, saw the square of a travelling-menagerie pitched close by the road.

It was so near him, that, at some spur of curiosity, he went and peered between two tarpaulin- flaps, to spy the animals.

Right before him, in a lion’s cage, he saw a girl stand, whip in hand, evidently training the creature to do something: a darkly-flushed girl, hardly clad, with splendid golden eyes.

Had he not been stumbling drowsy, he would certainly have been adventurous: but he only muttered:

“Beauteous creature,” and went off nodding.

Two days afterwards (she so haunted him), he returned: but the menagerie was gone. It was his lot, however, to meet both menagerie and girl again.

CHAPTER III. THE DESPATCHES



WITHIN THREE DAYS Opie was as much under the spell of Lise d'Arblay as it was the duty of a Man of Fashion to be.

For when a pretty woman shows her ring, what can a poor man do?

Twice daily he visited "the Foreign" — before "the Squeeze," and at night. At the Guards', on his entry now, his cheek-bones, new-rouged, drew from men the groan of "O Lord God!", and the down-turned lips of comic nausea. It was as though rude old Blücher should smell sal- ammoniac, or an elephant wear ball-slippers. Opie's cheek-bones were no longer part of himself — his real self of dislocated teeth, all yellow, and rough exterior. He was nothing but a born soldier. After a wound at Salamanca, he had killed seven men, and then dropped. He could use his sword, he could drink, he could swear and be loud. Under his slashed bosom was, however, a kind and simple heart, and he would shower largesses upon the poor with vociferations, damn me, and curses. The Duke of Wellington secretly liked him, which proves that Opie was a gentleman somewhere inside. Each morning, with perfect tenderness, he would kiss a cheek which never, never received other kiss — his afflicted niece, that puckered, pink rat- face. He considered' it the duty of man to love, and win the heart, of every dashing female, ecod. Lise d'Arblay woke in his brain the lust of Cumberland corsets: but in this matter he achieved nothing: he had too much drunk. However, the lady was clearly his slave: for ogle she gave back ogle: a certain levity in her giggle no old campaigner could mistake: she *intended* to be adorable. Pity only that, after out-works and escarpment carried, he

had to abandon the citadel for a time. On the 9th of the month, at a *tête-à-tête* in the afternoon, he said as much to her.

“My goodness, you are not leaving the town?” said Lise near him on a settee, splendid in tissue gown bordered with silver jonquils, and jewelled stomacher, a painting on satin before her which anon she bent to touch and finish.

“Alas! ’tis Fate’s Decree, madam.”

“Then we part! Well, ’tis ever so—”

“For a time—” he touched her arm comfortingly— “for a time only: a se’ennight, ten days. madam, ’twill but add sauce to the goose when I have the honour to behold you again!”

“I also shall take myself off,” said Lise, weary and woe-begone: “I am sickened of the town.”

“Fie, fie. You wait — a se’ennight — ten days. Whither would you be going, flow?”

“To Bath — Brighton — Margate—”

“Why, damn me — begging pardon before a lady — dull as stale porter, all of them! There you will find *nothing* just now agreeable to your inclinations. Have you seen the fashionable *Brighton Herald*, poking fun at the new gilt blocks of the Regent’s yacht?”

“Oh — but — there is always the elegant Masquerade at the theatre, the novels, the gardens at Dandelion, the Assembly at the Rooms, the sprightly misses and beaux on the Cliffs, Parades, and Piers; at Bath, the pump-room, — “And in town! what have you! Ecod! The Satirical Prints! The Panharmonicon at Spring Gardens, and the Papyruseum at Soho! Vauxhall! why, Vauxhall *alone*, with its illuminations, bands, fire-works, and dancing — and the Park, odd Zookers! and the Clubs! and the fine writing, and the fine feeling, damn me; and the Rank, Fashion, Dash and Style of the town!

— don't you go, now: zounds, you lose all, I swear, and gain nothing, madam."

"I am firmly resolved, sir."

"Then for how long? Madam, the question concerns my most intimate feelings."

"Why, sir, you do me too much honour. I may be away a se'ennight — ten days—"

"Aha! And when do you go, now?"

"When do *you* go?"

"*I* go post the day after to-morrow morning at five by my private coach —" Lise panted.

"Dear me, so soon?" said she: "the day after to-morrow morning at five? That is to say, on *Thursday* morning, the *eleventh* instant — at five? Is't so?"

"*You* have it! 'Tis so."

"Must you go, sir? Heigh-ho!"

"I must, madam, damn me — begging pardon before a lady. You see, I am taking down some Departmental Despatches to my Chief at Grandcourt in Devon—"

"Then, sir, I shall certainly not be here to witness your departure. I bid adieu to London tomorrow morning, without fault."

"Dash my wig!" thought Opie, "the female's love-sick as a mermaid. Why shouldn't I attack *now*?"

He attacked: but was interrupted by the announcement at the door of Lord Archibald Ingram: and soon Opie left the field to the new-coiner.

Ingram, of the Guards, was a fresh, tall, beardless youth, with a lung affection, and a stoop, and protective silk wrappings about the throat and

chest. He was the brother of Lady Elwell, the hostess of the Duke of Wellington.

He had already been present at three of Verdier's choice dinners and all-night card-parties, and his young head and tongue were full of his new friendship with the Marquis de la Terville- Rochefoucauld, and the condescending amiable charms of Mdlle. d'Arblay — the Marquis's aunt.

Lord Archibald's "place" happened to be only twenty-three miles from Grandcourt; and the same hour that Verdier learned that fact, he had himself presented to the Guardsman, though without definite object.

But when he told Lise, she had said at once:

"That might be neatly turned to our account, surely. Would it not be a most desirable circumstance if the Duke were quite alone at Grandcourt, without host or hostess, on the 19th and 20th? It is well worth the trying for, at least."

"Yes — proceed — I don't see—" said Verdier.

"If the Guardsman fell sick unto death at — what is the place? — Market Graddon — about the 17th, only twenty-three miles from Grandcourt, surely his sister, Lady Elwell, would go to him: and her husband might escort her for a day or two, leaving the illustrious guest alone. She at least would go, sure. We should be big boobies if we do not accomplish it."

"Lise, Lise — but how have him sick, there and then?"

"D'Artois understands physic."

Well?"

"Set d'Artois up as a Harley Street quack — nothing is necessary save a wig, and a gold-top stick, for the cow-leech who attended my father had not even an Apothecary's Hall certificate. The Guardsman falls ill while drinking here; we put him to bed and call in d'Artois, who peremptorily orders him to the country, and is prevailed upon to accompany him to

Market Graddon. D'Artois may then be trusted to have him at death's door by the 16th or 17th, and pack a messenger post to summon relatives at Grandcourt. 'Tis too easy to be resisted, and too safe to be neglected."

Verdier sprang up: with a smile not untinctured disgust, he said, bowing:

'Lise, you would be a Richelieu, if you were not a Borgia. It shall be done."

Guardsmen were accordingly inveigled into the Circle at the Foreign Hotel, and played high, and won. After putting Opie to flight on the afternoon of the 9th, the boy dawdled long by the side of Lise, led by her through all the temperatures of passion, and was at last all one glow at the favour of a hardwon kiss, when a rowdy band of dandies, headed by Verdier, noisy, with wit, came up. Five, including Ingram and big Dupin, dined at the hotel, *en famille*; and about eleven, after supper, when Lise was ballad-singing to the new-fashioned Guitar, amid fumes of the new-fashioned Cigarro, some fourteen, all fuddled and gorged, including Opie and Lord Castlereagh, arrived to "spend the evening." Then ensued Cordiality. On the central card-room table was a chased silver urn, with ladle, containing five gallons of Regent's Punch. Thither the men repaired to play through the night whist, faro, chicken hazard, rouge et noir, nap, Opie and Verdier being croupiers, while many and many a rouleau of Portugal gold changed hands, and the soft-footed waiters came and went, screwing and drawing with suavest pop. It was the Symposium.

About one, Opie, with waved glass and shut eyes, was bawling: "Sing Old Rose, and burn the Bellows."

At three, young Ingram, with a start of soberness, cried out: "Oh, my heart!" and dropped forward upon his table, well drugged.

He was borne in the arms of Dupin to a bedroom, and Verdier himself drove to call a doctor. He returned with his accomplice, the Marquis

d'Artois.

At five the Symposium broke up. By eight Lise d'Arblay was in the Exeter Coach, and away westward, her object being a knowledge of the country round Grandcourt, to be gained during the week before the 19th, and communicated to the frigate already cruising in those waters.

At five p.m. on the day of her departure, the Marquis d'Artois stood, watch in hand, over Lord Archibald Ingram, where he lay tossing under white dimity; the doctor had been bleeding and physicking him most of the day, and he said with truth:

“Your lordship is truly sick: and I now perceive that the disorder must end fatally, unless you promptly decide to leave the foetid atmosphere of the town.”

His lordship groaned.

“Why, I have no whither to go,” said he, “if it be not to my little place in Devon—”

“Then repair thither,” said the physician, “the journey will help to dislodge the disorder. If your lordship’s seat is near Plymouth, I know a venerable and estimable practitioner in that town (though, I admit, uncertificated), to whose skilful hands I could recommend you with confidence.”

Verdier, sitting at the bed-head, whispered the sick lad:

“Try to get the fellow to accompany you himself: sound him first as to his fees, and then see. He is a Frenchman, with a certificate from the Faculty of Paris, and more expert than those lubberly country quacks.”

“Well, and what might be your fee to attend me to my little place, doctor?” asked Ingram. “What! and leave a lucrative practice — !” exclaimed d'Artois.

But he was prevailed upon: and the same evening went post westward, with the patient. Three hours later the Symposium reassembled at the Foreign. Opie, who had faithfully promised to spend with Verdier his last night in town, was there. There also, for the first time, were six Frenchmen in addition to Verdier, viz., Dupin, the Sub-secretary and *Recruteur* of the *Société*, an ex-officer of Cuirrassiers named Albert Corot, the artist Tissot, and a grizzled *Grande Armée* Adjutant, named Richepin; also the Duc de Bassano, and Caulaincourt.

The movements of Opie had been watched that day by the gipsy, Lovell. He had been seen to attend the War Office, and come out with a sealed packet, which he had taken home.

The Symposium raged. It struck midnight.

At that moment, some fifteen or twenty gipsies were about Opie's house, No. 11 Bedford Square. A broad-wheeled covered waggon, with four horses yoked in pairs by the collar-hames, and belied, waited round the corner in Charlotte Street. In Tottenham Court Road a watchman's rattle passed. But in the square not a soul but the gipsies; and no sound: only from Lord Edon's first-floor near a drunken solo: also, from between the two white-painted pillars with massive pediments before No. 11, went a low sound of picking and prising. Lovell was there, forcing the lock.

When the door flew back, he whistled, and the band entered and struck light. In a second-floor room they found a slatternly old woman in drunken sleep across a bed, and in the same bed the object of their search. One gipsy struck the woman into deeper sleep with a spiked bludgeon — a blow of which she died after some months. The twinkling rat-eyes regarded them without fear, and the mouth of that aged-young visage wrinkled back in a smile. She rose at their bidding, they flurriedly dressed her, carried her

down, closed the door, hurried her to the waggon, and drove away westward.

Meantime, the Symposium raged. Here was every device for gambling, the E.O. table, black- and-white-cocks, te-to-tum, wheel-of-fortune, dice, cards, prick-the-garter; there was champagne, port, hock, sparkling old punch. Opie, who proposed no sleep on that last night of good company and the upper circles, having the morrow for the coach-corner snooze, was at a faro table with Richepin, the Adjutant, ready for departure, in his pockets being pill-box, flask, light-blue Sèvres snuff-box — and the Despatches. Yonder, at the Mews in Little James Street, his sleepy guard, driver, and postillions were busied about the coach. The china clock on the mantelpiece pointed to half-past three.

Suddenly there pierced through thick layers of punch to the inmost core of Lieutenant Opie's brain, the sense of these words:

“Why, damn me, the fellow is cheating! I say it!

It was Richepin who spoke.

So momentous were the words, that to every fuddled brain reached the shock: and all play ceased.

Opie stared a full minute at the face of his accuser, his eyes all filmed with the vague rheums of fuddlement; then he smiled crookedly, while his freckled right hand slowly moved — toward the table; he grasped a pack of cards; and with strong directness sent them a flighty cloud into the face of Richepin.

Richepin bowed. The others stumbled round. “Had I not to be away in an hour,” said Opie, with a majestic deliberateness of staggering tongue, “I'd carve that rascal like a baron of beef—”

“Yes, *you* go without fighting me,” vociferated Richepin with strong French accent, “and I have you posted over the town for a base coward

before sun-up —

“Gentlemen, gentlemen—” went Verdier.

“What’s o’clock?” muttered Opie, with cool frowning peer at the clock.
“Oh, damn me, I have time—”

“Can *nothing* be done, gentlemen?” said Verdier. “Nothing, sir,” answered Opie.

“Well, take your own way. I have the good fortune to be able to supply you with an excellent pair of swords.”

Below, the square was well packed with waiting phaetons and curricles. The party, after a babel of talk, trooped down. Verdier and Kier, a young beau of the East India College, were Opie’s seconds, Bassano and Corot were Richepin’s.

Richepin, a war-veteran, had besides acquired a Parisian fame for duelling; while Opie was no delicate imbiber of orgeat and forced-fruit at Owen’s, and many a stout fellow who had proved him at boxing or quarter-staff, back-sword or wrestling-match, might have whispered the Frenchman:

“Beware!”

The vehicles set off. The morning was without characteristic, save darkness; clouds, with a vague local smear of moonlight, covering the sky. The fresh air caught Opie’s half-sobered head, and set him singing “Anthony Rowly.”

At tearing rate they went through the quiet streets, most making homewards, unenticed by so commonplace a thing as an affair of honour. Only the seven Frenchmen, Keir, Opie, and another Englishman, went together southwards and eastwards in five vehicles.

Down the Strand — through Blackfriars.

Opie, his head thrown back, his left leg in air, chortled deep and solemn:

“The Prince he would a-raking go,
Heigh-ho! said Rowly;
Whether the people would have him or no,
With a rowly-powly gammon and spinach:
Heigh-ho! said Anthony Rowly.”

They came to St. George’s Fields, about where the New Kent Road now is; and they placed the carriage-lanterns in a ring. Opie pulled himself well together. He handed his coat to his driver, and said:

“In the pocket are some papers for the Duke: if I fall insensible you take them early in the morning to the War Office.”

Then the fighters stood with rolled shirt-sleeves on stubble. Opie was sober and cool, shook his sword testingly, swept a finger round the inside of his shirt-collar, spat on his palm, settled his chin, and with tentative plantings got a firm cock of the leg. The suggestion to drug him before the fight had been mooted among the French, but Verdier had refused.

The two measured swords, and fought, Richepin with great *brusquerie*, Opie with the cautious blade of a very old hand, who had learned to wait. The swords plied with brisk interaction for a space of perhaps three minutes; then they locked and jostled to edge, slipping, grinding, during ten intense and breathless seconds, till Richepin’s wrist jerked aside, and with brisk *passado* Opie ran him through the heart.

“Oh, foul! foul!” cried six French throats, and at the same time Opie was surrounded by drawn blades.

For a moment he stood recoiled, infinitely startled, with averting hands: there was nothing foul about it! But with quick insight, he muttered, gasping:

“What, a conspiracy, you French curs?”

And fiercely bringing down his knuckles upon the eyes of Corot, he broke through, and was gone, the others after him. He reached his phaeton, and galloping off tossed to the ground Dupin, who had caught the reins.

Away he flew northward, to Theobald's Road, to Little James Street, where his coach was making ready; and with eager dispatch he was rattling westward through Piccadilly before 4.30.

"What could they have been after?" he sat wondering, singularly subdued now, and trembling like a frightened horse, he knew not why.

In reality this agitation was a presentiment of death. The Frenchmen had anticipated him on his road, and a little beyond Chiswick, five blackened faces — Verdier being absent — rushed from a hedge into the path of his galloping four-in-hand.

The "gentle thief" — both mounted highwayman and foot-pad — was so common, that when the coachman and two horses dropped shot, and the postillions ran yelling, Opie's first impulse was toward his pocket: but as he popped his head out of window, he received some slugs in his brain. The morning light was just then struggling with a rank and misty fore-day gloom. The lieutenant dropped backward with the sigh: "Well, my God, I am done for—"

They at once rifled his pockets, and one went riding hard to Hounslow Heath, where they handed the despatches to the gipsy, Lovell, for delivery into the hands of Mdlle. Lise d'Arblay at Wyemouth; and the same hour the gipsy-caravan started westward, having with them the despatches, and the lieutenant's afflicted niece.

CHAPTER IV. THE BUSY BEE



EITHER THE 19TH or 20th was the day decided upon for the French attempt, and by the 13th Mdle. d'Arblay had reached Wyemouth, the nearest town to Grandcourt.

On the left bank of the Wye stood the "Busy Bee" inn, which, however, was never busy: a roomy old house, having a large garden-lawn, provided with swings, and material for skittles, bowls, quoits, knock-'em-downs, and gaming. At the south end the lawn overlooked the sea; and in the south-east corner was a grotto of rough stones among tamarisk trees.

To the "Busy Bee" Mdle. d'Arblay, as previously arranged, brought her portmanteau, and took a room; she then hired a stables' horse for a week, and for four days haunted the moor, the villages, the canal, and took note of everything which seemed of interest.

On the 17th Lovell's gipsy-band arrived tardy, and camped in a field a mile north of Grandcourt. Lovell and another at once hurried to the "Busy Bee" with despatches. Lise d'Arblay, anxiously on the look-out, ran down to the bar parlour, and took them to the grotto, where she heard the London news, and bow all had gone well, save the death of Richepin. She at once provided Lovell with money to hire a small sail-boat, giving him the notes she had made of the locality to take to the frigate, which, by arrangement, lay-to each day at three p.m. eight miles southwest of Wyemouth. Lise sent also a letter to Verdier, now on board, in which she definitely fixed the 20th as *the Day*, advising that on the 18th or 19th the seizing party should land at night to make themselves familiar with the ground in darkness, and adding

that on the 20th, as soon as she had seen the Duke, she would send Lovell with a letter to tell them that all was well on her side, and would await the answer that they, too, were all ready, before proceeding to act.

On the afternoon of the 19th she ran from a back door to the grotto to meet Lovell for the last time, and give final directions. Through a little green door she passed into a hut of stones, opened another beyond, and there sitting on an ass under an arbour was the gipsy, his saddle being a wooden hurdle over straw, two bars of the hurdle serving as stirrups, so that his bent-up knees gave him the grotesqueness of a grasshopper bestriding a mouse. Over the animal's quarters were two wicker panniers secured by straps, one stuffed with cloth, trinkets, cutlery, and small- wares; in the other lived a child, sucking gingerbread.

Corrie Lovell pulled a reverent lock of hair beneath his ragged soft felt hat; while Lise d'Arblay took a watch from her bosom, and handed it to him.

"There, sir," said she, "is a recognition of your services, which I give *now*, because you will have good use for it to-morrow. But first, is everything ready?"

"Everything, lady."

"The two gipsies well drilled in their little comedy?"

"Trust me for that. Everything, in fact."

"The coffin ready?"

"Everything, I tell you, lady, and our people only anxious to have it over."

"And the girl is docile? Does she always begin to pound the coffin — lid when she hears the three taps above her head?"

"Oh, she's a glory, lady. You just teach her anything, and she does it. She's just like a little dog or a mouse. She's weak, weak in the head, lady."

Lovell was amused.

“Well, that is all excellent,” said Lise. “Now, listen. To-morrow morning I go to Grandcourt: in the early afternoon I wish to send you with a letter to the frigate, and that letter I will place in a hollow where a stone is missing inside the martello-tower: you will be there to seek it, Lovell, precisely at one p.m. Now, supposing you take six hours at the most to reach the frigate and return to Grandcourt, that makes that you bring me an answer at seven at the latest. Now tell me the hours when you go for my letter, and when you bring the answer.”

“At One, lady; and at Seven.”

“Precise. Now, there are still two more hours to remember. At Nine, sir, your band passes the end of the avenue with the coffined form; at Nine. And at Half after Eight the two gipsies are in the avenue. ou comprehend? Now, what are the four hours appointed?”

“At One I go to the martello for your letter, lady,” said Lovell; “at Seven I bring you answer from the ship; at Half after Eight them two are in the avenue; at Nine the false funeral passes, lady.”

“Precise! And you have a watch, sir. You cannot fail.”

They then parted.

Meantime, the whole country-side was full of the consciousness that the great Duke was in it.

CHAPTER V. MR. GOLDE



THAT NIGHT, THE 19th, was excessively dark. A certain Mr. Godfrey Golde, travelling near eleven from Newton to Seacombe, could not see his hand. Not only was there no moon nor stars, but there was no sky. The interspace seemed stuffed with a blackness like black cotton.

There was sound, however, if not sight: the continuous murmur of the near sea, chasing itself in long-drawn shallow surfs over a shelly bottom. The interwoven fugue and roundelay of their monotone filled the abyss of darkness with a primeval noising. There seemed nothing in the universe save a roar, and an ear.

Mr Golde was alone: and it was the last probability in the world that he should meet anyone. He was a thick-set man of twenty-eight years, with a pale, broad face, round which and the throat ran a bandage of short whisker and beard, the space between bottom lip and chin being nude of hair: a “sympathetic” face — but his grey eyes were prominent, heavy-lidded and phlegmatic, his walk heavy. He wore a snuff-coloured coat with brass buttons, and small-clothes, and “breeches,” with woollen stockings, and buckled shoes.

He was a person of rather timid temperament, and when he received a sudden slap in the face, three paces he recoiled, striking away something that tore his face with claws; till a seaward whirring of wings told of some belated and erring sea-fowl, foundered in the night.

“I wish I was well out of it,” Golde muttered, “if the very birds can’t see, it isn’t likely—” Suddenly this thought struck him: had not he, too, lost his

way? For surely now the sea-roar was nearer than it should be. He stood still, stooped to feel if he stood on path or grass, then looked about, questioning the vanished world.

Seacombe Moor, lying between the villages of Newton and Seacombe and the town of Wyemouth, has the same general characteristics of the great West-of-England moors: treeless, almost pathless, desolate, choked with thistle, bracken, charlock, blue bugloss, the sparse grass near the shore showing interspaces of barren earth. Four miles north of the shore runs the Portland Canal, bisecting the moor.

But that Mr. Golde, a Newton miller, should lose the familiar foot-path to Seacombe, even in the densest night, was singular: he knit his brows, peering: this was not as it should be. Hobgoblins? He believed in them: for witches were still in England, and evil things of the air had been known to entice many a poor wight to baleful dooms on such weird nights — aye, in that very neighbourhood, too. If Golde had seen a ridden broomstick pitch sulphurous athwart the Erebus dark, leaving a trail and lingering sparks, his timorous awe could hardly have intensified. He cleared his throat with nervous effort.

But suddenly his heart lightened, and he resumed his plodding way: he had recognised what had led him astray.

It was *the lights!* Soon after setting out he had observed two far gleams, and though thinking it singular that he should see Seacombe lights from that point, and at such an hour, he had been mechanically steering his way towards them.

Only now he observed that their relative positions had changed, and as he looked afresh, one disappeared a minute, reappeared, and now was certainly in motion. It was not long before he decided that one was the light of a moving ship far out, and one of a stationary boat probably no farther

than the line where the sea began to break into in-trooping surf. Golde said to himself: "They will be smugglers."

He had to be at Seacombe very early in the morning for rendezvous with two farmers, and, already doubtful of a bed, struck off north-eastward with a will, guessing his way.

All at once, the night-airs seemed to bring to his ears from far a sound like laughing in another world, and immediately, a mixture of human voices, jargoning vague as the messages from Heaven heard in sea-shells.

The next moment he stumbled over some obstacle, fell upon his hands, heard a groan; and his hand, groping, encountered a face — all wet. Yet the night was dry.

He bent low. "Can you speak? Who are you?"

A groan. He crouched, and raised a man's head. He felt a beard — then a guernsey — then pantaloons wet to the waist, having apparently passed through the surf.

"How have you got into this, friend?" said Golde with half-a-thought of elf-king, and malign carnivals of mischief in the dark air: "I am afraid I can do little for you, whoever you are. Can't you speak at then?"

"Yes," replied a voice, "soon — a little breath. I am dying, I have something — to say — do not leave me—"

Golde patted his head, saying:

"Very good — take your time, and do not excite yourself. There is no fear of my leaving you.

"Talk low. O God, I do feel bad. Listen — you are an Englishman. Your ear: — there is a French scheme to seize the Duke of Wellington to-morrow, and carry him off. I was in it. Yonder's the frigate, see. I am a Savoyard, I; my name is Dejoie. I have lived in England four years — about this part, too — a groom I was. Before then I was at the storming of Badajoz, where

General Walker fell at the head of his brigade; I found him wounded in the breach, and carried him to our French hospital. He thanked me — gave me his address. Soon after, I was taken at Salamafica, and brought prisoner to Dartmoor. I wrote to Walker, and he got me free. Then I came to Wyemouth — here four years groom to a Mr. Onslow—”

“What, you are not Mr. Onslow’s Jean Dejoie — ?”

“That’s it — yes — damn me, I do feel so bad—”

Golde lifted higher the heavy head. “Is that better?”

“Oh, yes — aha. Talk low. Aha — feel a bit easier that way. Well, it is a secret Society in Paris, to seize the Duke: I joined: and the thing is sure — it cannot fail — can’t explain why, now: ah, I’m going, going, going. . . . I got disgusted, I had rows with Danda, and I said I’d betray. I owe much, much to England. We landed to-night to go over the ground, and I thought to escape in the dark: but they suspected, they suspected: as I ran, God! I was shot—”

“I see, I see, poor lad. And are you the only soul who knows — ?” asked Golde.

“And *you*, now. Another minute — it will be you alone. If they find out that, your life—” Golde felt a chill.

“Well, but they can’t guess — I am revenged. You will be at Grandcourt: let it be before morning, and they are dished. Pah! now I am bleeding in the mouth: that’s damned droll—”

He uttered not one other word, but after a stark throe lay still in Golde’s arms.

“Ah dear, here is trouble come to meet folk,” thought Golde, “the poor man’s dead, I suppose.” This momentous burden of tidings packed now upon his shoulders, his personal peril, and the dark presence of death, all dismayed him: and mixed with all, was the irksome sense of hurry and

bother natural to an indolent fellow to whom comfort and slow routine were matters of importance. He was pale, flurried: and, to ascertain if the man were really dead, he fumbled among his small-clothes, found flint-and-steel box, and, without reflection, dashed them together.

A red wink cut the dark.

And instantly there answered it a shout of several voices not far off. For the French, chary of striking flashes, hiding their presence from the very air, and, of course, without visible lanthorn, were silently seeking the body of Dejoie in the neighbourhood of his fall, which they had seen. They had, however, considerably strayed, till Golde's flash revealed him bending over the body.

And the mere fact that, realising himself as doomed, Golde hurriedly dropped the body, and took, as they soon discovered, to his heels, was enough to assure them that he had the secret from the traitor, Dejoie.

And, first, they halted in a body to make sure that Dejoie was well dead.

Meantime, Mr Golde, who was no runner, ran that night, striking north-eastwards across the open; till at last, after some four hours of panting toil, he saw a line of faintly-twinkling lights, which could be only Seacombe. Surprised at Seacombe awake till now, he guessed some wake or *fête* in connection with the local pillow-lace making and straw-plaiting. He observed, however, that the line of lights was broken by a long gap of darkness in its centre — three lights, then the gap, then four lights; and the reason was soon explained, when he suddenly struck against some obstruction — a waggon which had blocked his field of vision.

He felt the wheels, moved laterally to avoid it, but came upon another, and another — a line of waggons. To make short work, he lifted a hanging canvas-flap, dived under a waggon, lifted another, and came out on the

other side. And now, when he looked for the Seacombe lights, they all, to his mystification, had vanished.

He went groping, but felt nothing: by an indefinable sensation, however, he knew himself no longer in the open air, and noticed, too, an unusual odour. Then he had a shock: on a level with his own he saw two eyes, lambent amber with sable centres, suspended apparently in the darkness; their luminous gaze held him fascinated, till a sudden innovating voice shocked the silence, pouring forth in waves, shaking the black air with reverberations, while still, with never a blink, the great eyes regarded Golde. The miller cleared a nervous throat. And in a moment his ears were overwhelmed: for that pealing solo was joined by another, and another, and a fourth, till the contagion of thunder, caught from throat to throat, swelled into a chorus — before, behind, around — of roars, yells, voices of maniac laughter, maniac screams, and chuckled jabbering. Mr. Golde should have crossed himself: but was no Papist. In two minutes, however, the Babel subsided into silence, as a child is hushed to sleep; only a tormented howl, like the last sobs, would grow and wail itself away.

And in a flash the darkness was abolished, and Golde found himself in the hollow square of a travelling menagerie, while in the cage of the lion, whose eyes had frightened him, he saw a girl stand, torch in hand. She had entered from behind.

She was dressed in the most frivolous gauze, all spangled, showing white slippers, and a velvet cap with green feather: this to accustom the lion to a special garb during special feats. She fascinated Golde's gaze not less than had the lion; while, her hand on the tawny flank, she said, with firm lips:

“Come, Pol.”

Apollyon yawned a red cavern with stalactites, stretched, and rose. The girl drew forth an ebony flageolet, and blew two sharp notes. The lion

ramped, and took the torch between his forepaws: he began to dance, while she, leaning, blew a soft, slow horn-pipe, he holding the torch-light like a flag, throwing fantastic shadows, and marking the close of every phrase of the melody by a sharp roar, like a shout. He towered two feet above her, round his enormous head floating and flapping a cloud of mane.

Two minutes it lasted, and then, suddenly, the lion, still ramping, stood motionless, like one struck into listening. For from the outer dark and distance of the moor a sound arose and grew. It resembled successive sharp strokes of the bow on the strings of the bass viol: it was the bay of a bloodhound: and the knees of Golde shook.

His hands were red with the blood of murdered Dejoie.

The lion, dropping the torch, fell to his fore-feet, and dashed to his bars. The girl's eyes, following, lighted for the first time upon the dim figure of Golde, standing there. She thought at first that the lion's rage was due to him, and catching up the torch was about to run out behind; but now the near voice of the blood-hound arrested her, and immediately the canvas flap where Golde had entered was thrust aside, the fierce-eyed head of the dog filled the aperture, and Apollyon shook his bars, sending forth a roar of menace that went quivering through the night.

Golde was all wonder at the sight of the bloodhound: for, even in that vague light, he knew it for "Ritter," a dog of Mr. Onslow of Newton: and its presence in the hands of the Frenchmen on such a night produced upon his nerves a sense of the mysterious powers of evil.

As a matter of fact, the dog had been given by Mr. Onslow, about to go up to London, into the charge of a dog-keeper at Seacombe. Ritter had suffered a day of imprisonment, tied to a kennel, and as night drew on had filled the place with howlings, bounding from his string like a thing possessed.

By eleven he was galloping through the darkness, trailing a string, with sideward-glaring eyes, back to Newton.

Golde had just struck flint and steel over Dejoie, when the dog's pace slackened suddenly, and stopped. He uttered a yelp; stood sniffing; and started again, but in a changed direction.

By this time Golde was off over the moor.

The dog, on the other hand, made straight for the body: for that hand, now cold, had fed him. And when the French rushed towards the body, they found Ritter yelping, with thrown-back throat, over the dead man. A glint of flint and steel showed them their chance, and dragging away the reluctant dog, they were soon in its eager tow, it scenting the blood of its old friend on Golde's hand, with the instinct now that it was hunting down his murderer.

The lion-tamer stuck the torch in a scone, and looked wonderingly forth between the bars at Golde and at the hound's head.

"What is it?" she cried, in a shouted whisper. "Oh! I am hunted by the very fiends!"

Golde's hands clasped. At that moment, a third face was added to the group, near the ground, where the hound was, beneath the waggon-flap. Both the lion-tamer and Golde glanced and saw it in the leaping flare.

Those eyes glared; the upper lip was long and perfectly pallid, fitting the inward-slanting teeth; a long chin-beard; greasy-black hair very thick, curled about the ears, in which hung ear-rings. From the shoulders, which now appeared, he was small-sized. This was Danda, the captain.

What happened was instantaneous. The girl beckoned vigorously, slid back the door of bars, and stood aside for Golde to spring within.

The blood-hound was straining at the string; Danda picking himself up preparatory to letting it free. Five other faces meanwhile had appeared

beneath the waggon-flaps.

Golde flew toward the asylum; and Danda, now on his legs, released the hound. The race was furious as it was short. Golde had reached the waggon-stair, when he was aware of something rushing past him — over him — like a shadow — something huge, winged with swiftness — not towards the cage, but away from it: a cloud of bristling mane; a murmur of expectant joy.

Apollyon had slipped through the opening made for Golde.

There was a roar. The blood-hound, cowering in mortal fear, was face to face with the lion. Danda had shrunk back.

Ritter did not attempt to run, but stood whimpering, fascinated. In three perfectly-curved springs the lion had reached him, brooling boastfully. Then its loud glee gave place to a gurgle of vicious anticipation. For fully half a minute he stopped before the hound, without touching him.

Then he lifted, with perfect deliberation his thick paw, holding it over, still without touching. This action had in it something of the meaning of a smile.

Perhaps it inspired the dog with some touch of intolerable horror, perhaps with a spasm of hope — at any rate, he uttered a growl. And the growl brought on his swift doom. Apollyon was upon him.

Bones popped; and the delicious slush of the lion's sideward munch was heard in the stillness; and again the exploding bones.

CHAPTER VI. MARGARET FERRIS



APOLLYON DID NOT stop to finish: but guiltily slid through an opening between waggons, and went roaming the moor.

“You see what you have *done* now,” said the girl, with a resigned shrug, “this comes of being *good* to people.”

Her coolness astonished Golde.

She was of beautiful shape in close-clinging dress, and looked foreign, with black hair, and richly-flushed face, and full lips, and golden eyes. Her name was Margaret Ferris.

“Ah, miss,” whispered Golde, “hide a poor man! These men are acting like demons — they would be killing me—”

Margaret had thrown her back against the cage, looking at her slippered toes.

“Where is one to *hide* you?” said she, “I don’t see what I can *do*. There are only two men in the menagerie now, and they are asleep down yonder, drunk.”

The men rushed back, the captain foremost. Full in the torch-light stood Margaret and Golde; she leaning half-crossly, half-resignedly, he wringing hands.

Danda, his white upper lip intensely set, and two fellows near him, took aim. “Shoot the girl!” cried the captain.

Margaret apparently understood French, for she muttered a hurried “Oh, no, thank you!” and seized Golde’s hand, crying, “Come on, then.”

Golde uttered a cry of pain: a shot had grazed his right arm; but two bullets aimed at the girl smashed against the bars.

She drew the back panel, and dragged Golde through. “A *race* then!” she cried, hilariously; and hand in hand they went running. Golde, a man with a good deal of flesh, was panting.

“Haven’t you a weapon?” she asked.

“No,” he said between two breaths.

“We need not *care* for them. The night is as black as an Arab mare. They can’t *see* us — and their blood-hound is gone.”

“My God!” the white-lipped captain was shrieking, “you have let them go!”

“’Twas the vile bars!” said Dupin, with a gesture of despair.

“You see the torch,” Verdier said, coolly touching his moustache with shapely forefinger. “Why lose time in raving?”

“What torch?”

Verdier nodded toward the lion’s cage. “What about it?”

“You want light, I suppose?”

“That’s no good!” shrieked Danda; “that’ll show us to them, not them to us.” Verdier, with a light spring, entered the cage, and held the flame to the woodwork. The boarding blackened, crackled, flamed.

“Fire — fire the whole!” cried the captain, his brain grasping the other’s idea. “Let it burn!” Two minutes later Margaret and Golde noticed a glimmering, looked backward, and in the midst of a flare saw three shapes following hotly upon their track.

The woodwork was old, and in ten minutes the quadrangle was an undulating sea, sending out from its vivid focus a dusky glare over the moor. The night was rolled back, and every step of Golde and Margaret was now seen.

“It is a question of *running*, you see,” said she, dragging Golde’s hand. “*I* could beat them I know.”

“They have weapons,” he panted. “They will shoot us, however fast we run.”

“They are not such very good *shots*, I think. Two of them hit the bars instead of me, as if one was not big and ugly enough to be hit.”

“But — where are you going?”

“Can’t you guess?”

“To Seacombe?”

“No. They’d have *you* long before you got to Seacombe, anyway. You are blowing like an elephant. Poor old Jumbo — he’ll be burned to death!”

They were now a long distance off: but even here the accumulated roar of the whole hecatomb reached them. The cage-fronts being barred, the French had fired them from the back. The animals, seeking to escape the fire behind, raged against the bars in front, and soon succumbed to the heat and fumes, except two tigresses. These were caged with a tiger, and as there was not room for all in front, a *mêlée* of spitting and tearing teeth ensued, the tigresses at length rushing through the flames at the back from the fangs of the ravening male. They ran different ways over the plain, and, with Apollyon, now made of Seacombe Moor a roaming-ground of the wild creatures of the wilderness.

“But where are we going to?” repeated Golde presently. “Are they gaining upon us?”

“They are six — we are two. Oh, and it seems a frightful distance, too! They will catch us, miss. Over hill and dale they went, and grass and gorse, hand in hand, with slackening trot.

“If that *fire* would only die down!” said Margaret, glancing behind. “It looks as if it were, I think. We should escape then, sure.”

“They are gaining on us, I know,” panted Golde. “As soon as they gain a little more, they will fire.”

“I should fire now, if I were in their place. We will beat them yet.”

“But that lion — suppose it meets us?”

“Pol wouldn’t hurt me. He might make a short meal of *them*, if he came across them, once. I wonder if those two drunken brutes got burned in the fire, then?”

“I feel confident they are gaining, miss. I don’t know at all where we are either. Seacombe should be over yonder.”

“We are not *going* to Seacombe, I tell you.”

“Well, I leave it to you. Where are we going to?”

“The canal.”

“The canal, miss?”

“I’m hoping that the *fire* may die down, you see. If it does, we’re sure of a barge on the banks somewhere about: then we’re pretty safe, I should think.”

“They will swim in after us! They will get another barge!”

“Yes — you are always *fearing* something, aren’t you? I’ve had worse things behind me than those men, you see. They won’t swim after us if they don’t see us go into the barge. Look! The fire’s dying down.”

And over bill and dale they went, and grass and gorse, hand in hand, with slackening trot.

The sea of flame had died into a mere glow of embers, and the great gloom again lowered with sullen gradualness. Looking, the fugitives could still see the band steadily running them down; but they showed now like shadowy shapes, ready to pass away.

“There’s water!” cried Margaret.

In a minute they were on the shelving, muddy bank, ran laterally, and presently saw in the dark a yet darker mass on the black water — a barge, covered with a tarpaulin, like some sheeted dead giant.

The canal hereabouts is a mere huge, deep ditch, its banks being the shelving ground itself. They heard tramping feet, and a voice give some order.

Margaret entered the water to the breast, and stood waiting.

“They are here!” hissed Golde, shrinking. “You go on, miss! “But aren’t you *coming*, then?” she wailed. “Will you get me *caught*?” He tripped down the slush to her. In a moment they were swimming. The French were on the hillock which formed the south bank, and rushed downward, not knowing their nearness to water. One, well in advance, splashed into the stream, uttering a cry. The others halted short. The menagerie fire was dead.

“It is the canal!” said one. “They are going along the banks,” said Danda: some of you to right — some to left!

“If they are not in the middle of the canal now, on a barge or something — or swum across,” suggested Verdier.

But he was unheeded. Three ran right, two left. Verdier alone, uncertain, walked leisurely to the right.

“Don’t blow so *hard*!” whispered Margaret.

The barge was low, laden with tin boxes closely packed. They found themselves on a deck almost flush, near the stern. Through the piled-up boxes a lane ran, ending at a trap-door, which they were able to see, because a light from some source beneath made of the opening a square of glimmer.

“That is all right,” whispered Margaret: “there are people on board. Let us go down and see.” They crept down by four steps, and found themselves in a space six feet square, the walls being formed by tin boxes, in a brazier

in the centre a few embers, nearly dead, showed cracks of redness under coatings of fluff. Here lay a man on his face, beside him an empty bottle.

Margaret stirred him with her foot. He did not move. She bent to him, her wet hair trickling upon his face, she said: "I thought so. He is stone drunk, like those two louts at the menagerie. There's a 'benefit' at a public in Seacombe, where all our people are gone; and this man's mates, too, I suppose. Those left behind take it out in drink, you see."

Golde, taking his breath, leant against the wall of tins.

"I wonder if we are safe now?" he said. "Unless they sight the barge."

"I've brought you into a fine mess, haven't I?"

"You have. Jumbo's dead, certain. He cost 750 guineas in Provence, in France."

"You take it coolly, too. Jumbo's the least of it, isn't he? The whole menagerie's gone — your living's gone. What are you going to do? Your life—"

"Don't *tease*," she said, one hand at her hip, her feet crossed, she leaning; "where's the use of *talking*? The thing's done. I have been in escapades equal to this before now."

"You are a brave lass — did you hear something?"

"A brave lass, and a kind one, and a taking one. If ever I get out of this —"

"If ever you do, I advise you to learn to *swim* faster."

"Well, as for that — pah!"

Golde began sputtering something which, having fallen, drop by drop, to his ear, had collected and trickled into his mouth.

"What is it?" asked Margaret. "Oil — from one of these boxes, I should think."

“How long are we to keep shivering here?” she said, after a minute. Beneath them had formed two lakes, sending out tentative rivulets. From the sleeping man came a snore.

“Those confounded men!” sighed Golde. “Who are they?” asked Margaret.

“They are Frenchmen.”

“I know that. I heard them speak. But what are they *after* you for?”

“They have a secret. They’re bent upon something.”

“What?”

“I don’t see the good of telling you. They killed the man who told it me, and now want my life, and don’t mean to rest till they get it, too. If I tell you, then you will be doomed — hark!”

“I am going to hear it, all the same.”

“Hark! Hark!”

Golde’s breast began heaving again. Verdier was running by, calling after the others in a shouted whisper. A cur’s bark, too, was heard from the bow. He had been lying asleep, and was aroused now by the shouting of Verdier. The other five, who had separated east and west, hearing the persistent staccato of the dog, halted, listened, and started back. Midway they came upon Verdier, who, in disgust, had ceased to call.

“What’s the matter?” said Danda.

“I hope you liked your run,” answered Verdier. “That dog is on board a barge. If they have not swum to the other side, that is where the man and woman are.”

“Into the water!” went Danda, in loud whisper; “board the barge! Dupin and Corot, to the other side.”

Margaret was now leaning over the starboard port-last hearkening. At the first sounds she had rushed upon deck. She heard Danda’s order to board,

and flew to the companion-way.

“Come,” she whispered with hurried breath, “we must get to the other side before them.” By some sense the cur now became aware of strangers on board, and ran aft, filling the darkness with noise. Golde laboured after her along the lane of boxes.

“We couldn’t move some of these boxes, and hide among them?” he panted. “Oh, but that is nonsense. We haven’t a *year*—”

They reached the bulwarks, but Margaret stopped, hearing a close splash. In fact, Dupin and Corot were near the other side to block escape. Verdier remained on the south bank, shirking the plunge. Three swam to board. All the time the cur, perched on the highest point of cargo, continued his querulous barking.

“Oh, they are before us !” — she put her mouth to Golde’s ear. “What are we to *do*?”

“If we could hide—”

“Never mind — come on. We will risk it. They can’t see in the dark—”

But now a roar was heard on the north bank, and eight hearts stopped an instant still. Margaret, however, quickly recovered herself.

“Don’t be frightened,” she whispered, “it’s only Pol. Come along.”

“No, miss, no, I’d rather not,” said Golde.

Now the voice of Danda was heard. “On board the barge! Every man!”

The lion had been wandering over the moor, returned to his burned cage, roamed again, and been attracted by the yelps of the cur. But the hearts which quailed at the first outbreak of his voice, quickly understood his impotence on the further shore. The five began to swim towards the barge.

“I hope you are satisfied,” said Margaret, calmly. “It is only a matter of moments now. I feel that they are coming.”

“I should go alone in your place, as you don’t mind the lion,” answered Golde, all agues; “don’t stop for me!”

She said nothing.

There was silence. The lion had ceased to roar the dog had slunk quiet. “Hark — a splash!” The whisper came from Golde’s chest:

“But what are we to *do*? We can’t stand like children, and be caught! We must *do* something.”

“What can we? The game seems up, miss!”

“*I* know! Have you a knife?”

She rushed down the companion-way, and from the belt of the sleeper drew a knife, and up again she flew.

“Quick, now,” she hissed, “help me with one of these boxes: they are full of *oil*! you tasted it, didn’t you — ?”

She began to tug out a projecting box: Golde, clasping the other end, whispered: “What are we up to now?”

“Come on — they’ve got the wrong ones to *deal* with—”

Struggling, they stepped and shuffled along the lane, laid the firkin on the bulwark; she stabbed the soft tin, ripped downward, prising open the rent. The fluid welled gurgling down upon the canal, where it ran far with nimble feet.

“Another!”

The men began to sputter, wondering in what strange stream they found themselves. In wild activity the two seized upon another firkin, bore it, stabbed, ripped. Golde now grasped her meaning, and toiled like a maniac. Another — in mad haste. Flop went gurgling the sobbing and buxom oil. Another! And plenteous grew the surface with superfluous grease.

“*Now,*” panted Margaret.

She flew down. There in the little brazier lay the cinders. She lifted the whole, ran up again, and cast cinders and brazier far.

Instantly the canal cried “Ho!” — an exclamation of shocked surprise — and burst — far and wide — into flame. From bank to bank, to east, to west, the nimble oil had run, and now lit the night with one vast lamp.

At the shock Margaret and Golde were thrown back; but recovered themselves, and stood looking.

Apollyon turned tail at the explosion, ran up the bank, and there halted, glaring back in half- defiant wonder. On the other bank stood Verdier — siffling.

The five had been swimming with one arm, the left holding aloft a pistol, and through the exclamation of the canal was heard, with telling clearness, the detonating pistols, as one after another banged at random in the fire, four harmlessly: but the fifth shot Corot, who sank.

“*Down!*,” cried Margaret. In the clear lamplight, Verdier, on the bank, was taking steady aim; but the bullet passed over their heads.

By now a gaudy spectacle presented itself on the water. The yellow flare-up, having lasted only an instant, subsided into an ethereal low conflagration of languidly curling and coiling gases, presenting a vast ball-room and carnival of fairy: zephyrs of fire, auroral sprites, rainbows, moving dreamily in infinite minuet, purple and rose, emerald and azure: and in the midst of phantom flames and volatile tints, four black heads, whose eyes must have been eaten away by the lazy lick of fiery tongues, but that by diving to the cool, and swimming, then rising for a hot breath, and diving, they reached the bank with burned and blistered faces.

Verdier hardly glanced at them, as, one by one, they came dripping up in dejected defeat, hands over faces, his eyes being fixed on the head of Margaret peeping, in the coloured lights, over the taffrail. He could see

distinctly the broad arch of pencilled eyebrow, richly-flushed face, and alert eyes.

“She is a mighty clever girl, surely,” he said under his breath: “my beauty I saw on Hounslow Heath. I am not going to have her killed by these fellows. I take her back with me—”

Suddenly everyone uttered an exclamation; the fugitives sprang up.

For the flames, licking round the tar-seamed sides, had set the barge alight; and a fire, encompassing her shape, flared from the water’s edge, looking a perfect ship of flame risen out of the lake of flame. Only, the ship burned a murky red, the lake melted into ever-varying visions of aquamarine and vivid green, vermilion and gold.

On the north bank Apollyon, who had run, and then stood glaring proud surprise, caught sight of Margaret as she sprang when the barge began to crackle. He uttered a cry like joy, ran, and commenced to trot backward and forward a little way, near the flame, whimpering, ducking his hairy head, looking always at her, longing to be near her again.

It was now a question of minutes before the fire should eat through the wood, and reach the barge-load of liquid conflagration.

Margaret’s wide eyes flashed round: she rather pale, and scared. Golde was white as dough. They ran along the lane, she first.

“We must swim through the fire, that’s all,” she said hurriedly, looking back. “We can. *They* did it.”

“Yes — get on — for God’s sake, miss!” panted Golde. “My face will be ruined, though. My hair—”

An exclamation from Golde: “Oh, but there’s that poor man down there —”

They had nearly reached the port bulwarks.

“We can’t *stop!*” cried she. “He is drunk — we shall be blown up—”

“Wait — wait. We can hardly leave the poor man to die in that way.” Golde rushed, the breath wheezing through his short throat. He plunged down: there in smoky glare lay the sleeper.

Golde shook, lifted him. The head dropped back. The man was more dead than alive.

“So much for you!” panted Golde, and rushed up once more.

“Quick!” cried Margaret, as he hove in sight. “Here’s *luck!*”

The flames were now visible above the bulwarks; the air grew dingy with reek. Golde believed that he had parted with “luck.” But she pointed: there, floating for’ard, lay a boat, her rope burned away, almost as high as the laden barge, around the boat also being a boat of flame.

To run over the cargo, and leap the fire-rim was not difficult. Margaret went first, having handed to Golde the knife of the drunken man, alighting clear in the centre. Then Golde’s weight dropped clumsily, making the boat crank steeply. She righted herself with one scorched side almost quenched.

They rowed towards the north bank, every stroke sending the flaming water wheeling in a fairy dance of hues.

“Only look at Poll” cried Margaret gaily: “he’s mad with joy!”

The lion was trotting by the water’s edge, backward and forward a little way, whimpering like a dog, seeing her come. The nearer she came, the quicker, the shorter the runs, the thinner his whimpering cry.

Golde said nothing. He glanced at the lion, uncertain which was better, to be blown to the sky, or eaten by the wild beasts of the desert.

The French stood waiting the event. They had seen the leap of the fugitives, but thought it a leap into the water, the barge hiding the boat.

“It is useless to wait,” said Verdier; “they will gain the other side as you gained this. What you should do is to run along until you come to where the

flame ceases, and there swim, and intercept them. You have plenty of light, at any rate. Stop — oh, they are in a boat! That girl — !”

He had drawn back, and seen the boat about to arrive. “Quick!” he cried, “they will escape you yet.”

“Fiends!” went Danda, his white upper lip set, chin-beard singed to stubble— “this way!”

“That lion—” muttered Dupin.

All started eastward along the hillock which formed the bank.

Apollyon, seeing Margaret near, dipped a thick paw into the water, and drew it back quicker than he put it in.

“Poor Pol!” she said, looking backward all the time at him.

Now a hole appeared in the bottom, and in reeled singing the inflamed water; Golde’s oar parted, burned away at the thole-pin: but immediately the bow struck. Apollyon was frantically stepping above Margaret’s head.

She leapt, knelt, an arm round his neck, head buried in his mane. Springing up, she remarked coolly.

“That barge hasn’t gone off yet, then.”

But Golde did not hear, having already run some distance up the hill. “He is *queer*,” said Margaret to herself: “is he a coward, or what? Ah, but he ran back to save that drunken man at the risk of his own life, all the same. I can’t make out — Come along, you—”

She grasped a lump of mane, and started after Golde, the lion trotting meekly by her. But Golde, with that tender regard for his skin, kept his distance, ever and again glancing backward.

The French had now swum across, only Verdier remaining on the south bank.

The fugitives ran, conscious of a good start, believing that the French would wait till the canal- fire burned out. They struck at random over the

moor, by ill-luck, somewhat easterly.

Golde was therefore amazed, on glancing sideways, to see four men running to intercept them. He waved, pointing them out, and pricked his run off to about north-west, she following.

The race recommenced: the French now without the power of shooting, their faces burned, one of their number dead, and the fugitives with an auxiliary worth ten men.

It was four to three: and the odds seemed in favour of the three.

But now something happened which changed the situation.

A chariot of flame was seen to rise and ride towards the sky; and immediately there burst, in heart-appalling detonation, a bang which caught and shook the earth of Seacombe Moor. The barge had gone to heaven.

Apollyon wrenched his mane free, and scuttled, his tail between his legs.

But while the ghost of that hubbub still hummed in the shocked ear, he stopped, looking back toward the source of sound, with lifted head; and doing so, saw the four French, standing paralysed by the shock.

All at once they moved; and as they moved, he roared.

“My goodness!” said Margaret to herself, “Pol is going to eat those men, as sure—” The lion, with beautifully-curved bounds, was at them, they showing vague in light now like a lamp which has watched all night, and smoulders dim toward morning.

At his approach the four scattered, like a globe of glass which receives a blow. The biggest was Dupin, and him the lion singled out Dupin ran his utmost The lion’s blood was up. He sent out roar on roar.

The sight was too much for Margaret’s high-strung inquisitiveness. She ran towards the scene a little way, forgetful of everything; ran, stopped, ran, holding her chin high to look. Golde halted, wondering at her rash approach to the French.

Apollyon was in a valley, Dupin on the top of a hillock about to descend. Lion and man were near now. The race had lasted five minutes. The lion bounded up the rising ground.

When he reached the top, he stopped baffled. Dupin had disappeared.

He thrilled the air with roars, ran this way and that after new prey, scouring a limited area, attracted first by one, then by another. At last he fixed upon Danda.

Margaret, excited, ran nearer to look.

Danda flew toward the canal: but the lion was at his heels: he turned, with wild eyes, with drawn sword; and a fierce fight ensued.

An "Oh!" burst from Margaret. The man was on his back. She ran nearer to look, stopping, and running. But before Apollyon could even scratch, he fell back with languid yelp. A bullet had entered his neck: for Verdier, at the first roar, had at last plunged from the further bank, knowing that his friends' pistols were useless.

"Oh, Poll" cried Margaret, woe-begone.

There, not twenty paces off, was she. Instantly, with intensely rapid run, Verdier was after her, and she flying. Golde, a longish distance off, also began to run slowly, looking over his shoulder.

"Stop! or I fire!" cried Verdier.

He had still one loaded pistol. But she did not stop: and he did not fire. Yet, swiftly as the light-limbed fellow covered the ground, she was surely stealing from him, when — suddenly — she stopped. Right before her she saw standing, as if waiting to receive her, Dupin.

Dupin had just picked himself out of the gorsy hollow into which he had plunged from Apollyon. He rushed to seize her.

But Verdier's arms were around her. He just touched her cheek with his lips, and laughed a little through panting breath, with the word:

“Caught!”

The others ran round. Danda, in his white-hot impetuosity, without even stopping to kill Apollyon outright, had run to join the hunt.

She faced round, hot and defiant. “What is it you *want* me for?” Danda’s scorched face wore a smile. Verdier whispered:

“No one will hurt you, you know.”

“But the man! After him!” cried Danda. Golde, a good distance off, stood looking. His face was sad.

“What’ll they do with her, I wonder?” he mused. “Foolish woman. It is her own fault—” He added: “Still, I can hardly allow her to be taken away — alone—”

Now he saw three men running toward him, and ran, too, but tentatively, in a backward- hankering trot.

“I could hardly be expected to let myself be caught,” he murmured.

Verdier had handed his remaining pistol to Danda, saying:

“You and two others shoot the man; I’ll remain by the girl.”

The pistol was heard; but Danda, shooting as he ran, fired wide, and Golde guessed that the shot represented the last of their dry powder. He changed direction, bearing round nearer to Margaret.

“A man’s first duty is to himself” he thought. And then again: “O dear me, I could hardly leave her like that.”

He fingered the knife taken from the drunken man. As he neared her, he saw her wave him away deprecatingly. He was then steering his run on a hillock-top indirectly towards her.

Had she implored his assistance with cries, Golde would have debated the risking of his skin; as it was, he made a bolt with a suddenness which startled himself straight upon girl and captors, knife in hand.

“Don’t mind! Go *back!*” cried Margaret.

But Golde, in steady career, bore down upon the group. His knife slashed Verdier's shoulder, but his heel slipped at the arrest of his impetus, and in a moment Dupin was kneeling on his wheezing chest.

"Your sword into his throat!" cried Danda, running up.

But Verdier touched Dupin, saying, "Do not kill."

"I should not have him killed here," he said to Danda aside. "There is already one body on the moor, and there is the burned menagerie. Our ship, if seen from the coast, will be thought to be connected with all this, and the more so the more mischief we leave behind."

"But—" began Danda. "Listen to *me*. We must not leave a dead body so far inland. Our secret may be scented. We must take them on board, and throw the man into the sea."

"And not the girl?"

"I do not see the necessity."

"As much as the man — as much as the man."

"Oh, the man! he would be simply a year-long danger and burden. But the girl might act as attendant to the Duke on the voyage—"

Danda, always subservient to the cunning of Verdier, turned, saying: "Do not kill. To the ship. All forward!"

A man held Golde by each sleeve; another Margaret by the left arm, whilst Verdier walked by her right, arm around her waist. In front marched Danda with measured rhythmic step, as to sound of timbrel and flute. The canal flickered its last.

There was a stoppage — a protest from Margaret.

"I will not go," she said, in fairly good French, "if this man does not take his *hand* from my waist."

Verdier withdrew his hand, bowed, and smiled.

They came in a few minutes to the north bank. Some miles farther east was a canal-bridge, but in their scurry across the moor they had lost the whereabouts of everything.

They therefore swam across: and the march recommenced, the tramp of four miles over grass and gorse, with steady plod. Every now and again Verdier said something in English: but Margaret did not answer.

Suddenly there was an outcry in the night: a “Hi! Hi!” of several voices. The French stopped in alarm. Margaret understood, and sent out her voice, screaming:

“Help! Help! Help!”

“That cursed woman! Run!” hissed Danda.

Verdier covered her mouth. With the *abandon* of a naughty child, she let herself down on the ground saying:

“I will go no farther! Help! Help!”

“Hi! Hi!” came faintly, as if in answer.

It was the bargemen returned from the “benefit,” hailing their mate for the barge-boat. But boat, and barge, and mate had long since reached the land of No-Return.

Margaret shrieked. But the bargemen, after leaving Seacombe, had crossed the canal-bridge: the canal therefore intervened. They were, moreover, drunk, and did not even hear.

Verdier, though hardly taller than she, took the girl strongly in his arms. She struggled, but his grip was iron.

They set off at a trot. In less than an hour the lights of boat and ship appeared. At the water’s edge they three times struck flint and steel — a signal. A faint grey of morning mingled with the east.

CHAPTER VII. THE FRIGATE



BEYOND THE REACH of shallow surf the boat lay. Again Margaret resisted Verdier's attempt to lift her, and all forded through the swarming and loudly-rumouring froth.

In twenty minutes the boat reached the frigate, which barely forged through the water under jib and fore-topsail: a long raky craft, low amidships, two-decked and three-masted, port-holed for a battery of thirty-six guns on the main-deck, four in the stern, ten in the spar-deck; sharp in the bows and beam-sheer; built for speed. Up from her nose shot the steep bowsprit, like a boar-tusk. Under full spread of plain sail and courses she had the overcrowded look of a little girl who has put on a man's jacket.

The two-sailed pinnace ran alongside, and they stepped up the black-and-white side. Some fifty men leant on the long line of bulwark, looking. Danda sprang up, calling:

"Give her the sails, Anciaux. Must be well out by day-break. In half-an-hour hands to the *Culte Napoléanique*."

Trumpeted shouts began to sound. From flying jib to spanker, from top-gallant to deck, she put on her array of whiteness, and began tripping briskly through the dark. Verdier had charge of the prisoners.

Here all were equals, all fanatics, not a quarter real sailors. Only so much discipline existed as was necessary for working the ship.

Verdier conducted Margaret down to the main deck, others bringing Golde. "What are we going to do with them?" asked one.

"Shoot them."

“Drown them.”

“Make them walk the plank.”

This suggestion met applause. It was the age of Avignon Massacres and Peterloos, a cruel age.

“The girl is to be saved,” said Dupin, winking; someone who knows a pretty face—”

The hint was shrugged at, Verdier here being the first among equals.

The cabin was very large, divided into apartments on both sides of the main corridor. Verdier pointed down a side-corridor:

“I should take the man down there. I caught the girl, you know, and shall look to her. All right, laugh, then. . . . Make the man walk the plank, if you like — if you have the sack. . . . I suppose it is wisest to kill him, if you decide so, poor wight. Personally — well, do as you choose!”

He bowed before Margaret, indicating the opposite passage, and she walked down it with him, the others calling “ *Bonne chance!*” while Dupin said:

“You, Faguelin, run and look for a sack.”

Verdier led her to an apartment with couches and rugs, a swing-lamp creaking in the centre. Her brows were knit. To “walk the plank” — What was that? It had something to do with “a sack.” Some kind of death, blind-folded, without air. She sat on a couch, her buxom perfection of form obviously fitted to and filling the stuck wet gauze, he beside her.

“Now, I want to be your friend,” he said, in English. “I am glad of *that*,” she answered, her manner changed almost to gentleness. “Did the man tell you our secret?”

“Is that true?”

“I very seldom tell *lies*. ”

“Have you a sweetheart?”

“What is ‘walking the plank’?”

“Have you a sweetheart?”

“Tell me first.”

“No, I sha’n’t tell you. Are you going to have *me* for a sweetheart?”

“I don’t know you. That depends.”

“You are adorable, and I adore you.”

“Why should you be cruel to that poor man?”

“Are you fond of him?”

“I hardly *know* him. He isn’t my sort, I think. But why should you kill him?”

“I will tell you. We are patriots, devoted to France: and the man has a secret which, if divulged, would hurt France.”

“You can keep him a prisoner, as you keep me.”

“We keep you because you are adorable, and we like you. But in the case of the man, we have reasons.”

“You say you like me. Well, I am not what you *take* me for. But I will think over it — if you spare his life.”

“You are fond of him, then?”

“No, I tell you! *No!*” she said angrily. I don’t *know* the man!”

“Well, but I can’t spare him. You must be reasonable. The other gentlemen would not hear of it. I am not the master of the expedition.”

“Do spare him!”

“Don’t be unkind. I can’t.”

“Then, you do not really *want*—”

“Don’t I? But I do. I am *devilishly* love-sick — those eyes, eh? — gold-coloured, with the wild look, eh . . . ?”

He was sitting sideways, bent forward, gazing at her face; she somewhat averted, with modest eyelids drooped, a faint smile concealing her absolute

cunning.

A bell sounded through the ship. "I must go," he said, "to prayers," and laughed. "To what?"

"To prayers! We have a kind of worship here, you see. Our religion is a hero-worship, and—"

"I care nothing about your prayers."

"Then, an *revoir*. I sha'n't be ten minutes gone. But I must lock you in, you know."

She leapt like lightning. "You talk about being *sick* for me — !" her lips curling. "Well, aren't I, then?"

"You do not *show* it. You do everything to prove that you are telling lies."

"Mustn't I lock you in, then?"

"You can, if you like. I don't care. But do it once — only once — and I never *talk* to you again."

"What will you do, if I leave you at liberty?"

"What can I *do*? Except I jump into the sea! And I have had enough cold baths for one night, thank you."

"Very well: I am your slave. Will you remember that?"

He took her hand, and kissed it; and overcame, and kissed her mouth: and she did not resist. He ran then, leaving the door ajar.

She peeped after him. From a door in the opposite side-corridor she saw men troop. The last turned the key. There, then, was Golde.

She began to walk distractedly. There was a port-hole in the apartment: she might jump through: the shore could not be far. But Golde?

She resolved, peeped out. The corridor was deserted. She stole along it swiftly. The men meanwhile had assembled in a good-sized round room,

having a raised recess opposite the door. Danda was kneeling on one of the steps which led to this, a rapt stare in his eyes.

Here was the — Apotheosis. Daily, near sunrise, the frigate-crew, with the lack of humour characteristic of Frenchmen, celebrated the Prime or Matins instituted by the Paris Society called *Culte Napoléanique*.

Around hung “relics”: a spur, a gold epaulette, a handkerchief, a green uniform with red facings; in the shrine, most precious of all — the Waterloo coat, with the stains of the bitter flight. In the centre of the room stood a wooden crucifixion; and back against the boards, a bed. It was intended that here the Duke should sleep, under the stern and anguished brows.

The rite was simple. Danda, on the steps, intoned in a rapid guttural a kind of psalm, of which little more than the ever-recurring Name could be heard. The crowd stood with bent, uncovered heads, till, the canticle ended, every sword flashed from its scabbard. Instantly they fell into a procession two deep, taking up the refrain of the dirge, their tramp keeping time with the rhythm. Three times round they marched, then the inner file debouched inward, the outer outward; each of the inner, as he passed, placed his sword at the crucifix-foot; each of the outer put the coat in the shrine to his lips. Then, with perfectly-timed evolutions, singing the refrain, the files changed places, each repeating the action of the other; till, one by one, they filed out by the door.

Meantime, “*Quick!*” whispered Margaret, as she opened the door, “we can escape—” But where was Golde? The room was dim. Not there! Her hands met, wringing. There was a cupboard or store-room at a corner. She flew to it; looked in. Not there! Then — all at once — she knew: that was he — in the sack: a sack, reaching far below the feet, with running-string.

“It’s me!” she panted, drawing the sack-mouth open: “we can *escape!*”

Golde stood before her bewildered.

“Come!” She took him by the hand.

Footsteps, voices were heard outside — the men returning. Retreat was cut off by sounds of laughter, bets as to whether Golde would reach the end of the plank before he fell.

Margaret glanced at the cupboard, pointed crazily, pushed Golde toward it. “I—” he stammered— “you go in!”

“You *shall* be saved! — when they are gone — the opposite passage — last door — a port-hole — jump into the sea. You have their secret — I — it doesn’t *matter*—”

He hardly knew anything — his wits all gone — only he had a consciousness that some heroic drama was being enacted before his eyes: suddenly he was in darkness; the cupboard-door closed upon him.

As the men trooped in, Margaret settled to stillness within the sack. “Get it over quickly, sirs,” said Verdier.

“Tie up below his feet,” said Dupin.

One, not noticing the running-string now looser, drew it, tied it many times round the mouth. The sack, thus considerably shortened, yet remained longer than the body.

“Make him walk to the deck,” said one. “Lift him,” said Verdier; “get it over.”

“Hurry him away!” was heard the voice of Danda.

On deck, raw twilight preceding day was come. Things near were light, distance dark. The frigate walked steadily through smooth sea from the lessening coast.

About 10 ft. of a plank rested on the gangway, about 8 ft. projected over the sea. Here was the sport of the old buccaneers, flibustiers, marooners, and caravaleros, of Mansvelt, François l’Olonnois, Montbars, Morgan, Kidd, Avery. The sack was laid at the inner end of the plank, its inmate on

her feet, without notion where she was, what was to happen: she knew that it was death. The French crowded round, chattering, two on the plank to steady it.

“Now — this way — walk, sir—”

Verdier guided her a few steps, and let her go. She continued to walk with cramped, staggering steps, thinking herself on the deck. There was hushed silence. Midway she stepped slant-wise on air, and fell with muffled cry.

Golde, on the main-deck below, had crept from his hiding-place, out into the corridor, and now crouched, looking through the port-hole of which she had told.

And the cry had hardly died, when his shoes and outer garments were tossed through the hole, and himself in the midst of the sea.

The sack sank far in the impetus of the fall. The ship forged forward in the twilight. Golde swam about in the region of the splash, with a wild sense of bereavement, of terror, and utter loneliness.

The weight of sack and occupant proved precisely the same as that of the water, and diving, he saw a vague wobbling five feet below the surface. He tore after it. Frantic were the struggles within the agitated bag: it rose a little, sank, rose, jerking and bulging in a hundred swift convulsions. Golde dived to the foot-end, and pushed it upward, gnawing wildly at the tense string; till he had to ascend, all gasps. It was now, however, or never. Another dive, and again he raised her; and selecting now one whorl of twine, with patient rabid gnaw of the dog-teeth, while the death-struggle above went on, he severed it. By now he had the crazy consciousness that the struggle was over, and again he was pumped: but with his last bursting effort, he tore wide the mouth, and shot up, rending the bag from her. He

saw her sink from him, bluish face, and shut eyes: but in a moment had her at his breast.

By now Verdier, returned to Margaret, had found her vanished. The noise went abroad in the ship that she was hiding, and a search began.

They were ten knots from land; the morning of the 20th June — *the Day* — grew clear; the ship, crowded with sail, yet hardly leaning, moved through brindled water south-west.

The lay of the land hereabouts is, in general, also in this direction. Bounding Seacombe Moor on the west rises a chain of cliffs, which also forms the sea-front of Wyemouth, and overlooks the striking scenery of Wyemouth Sound. St Jude's Island, now fortified, lies in front; beyond, rising green from the water's edge, is Mount Eton Park, with masses of noble wood. Here and there along the coast the land juts in rocky points, some capped with forts and batteries; whilst, beyond all, lies the magnificent breakwater, midway between the bluffs of Spedding and Raddon Points, boldly interposing between the swell of Wyemouth Sound and the long ocean waves rolling in from the Atlantic. Ten miles out from Wyemouth, stands — on its black and jagged ridge of foam-frequented rock — Raddon Lighthouse.

This series of gneiss crags is the very home of tempest. Sometimes the sea shoots white up the lighthouse column, to leap over the lantern-cupola; more often than not the lower half of the shaft is buried in a chaos of surf.

But that morning the sea's motion in the neighbourhood of the rocks was a mere sway and swing.

Margaret lived, opened her eyes on Golde's breast, looked into his face, saw yonder the grey ship steal away in mist — and understood. She glanced land-ward, saw St. Jude's Island, and knew that they could not swim half so far; though the water was warm.

She rapidly recovered. There, half-floating on the heave of the gently-breathing sea, lay the sack. She glanced at it, and again into his face, and smiled.

“You got away, then?” she said.

“I have to thank you for that, miss, as for one or two other little things,” answered Golde. “We must try for *the lighthouse*.”

The rocks were three hundred yards away. The two struck out, side by side, breasting the lazy effort of the swell, while Golde’s chest laboured. Suddenly the sun was up, flooding the sea, and almost immediately Margaret, glancing sideward, saw a regiment of oars stalking over the water.

“*Look — !*” she cried out.

From the tops spy-glasses had detected the two heads toiling at the bigness of the sea, and a yawl was flurriedly lowered. As she dropped astern, Danda called orders that the frigate should continue her course, but not lose sight of the lighthouse.

The long oars went out, and it seemed a question of minutes before the fugitives sank riddled with shot.

The sky was a great spread of azure; but on the south-western horizon appeared a coppery cloud: and, as it were, a whisper of darkness ran round the world.

To the straining fugitives the distance seemed not less than infinite: there came a moment when shots began to hiss about them; but they reached a rock, clambered, ran upon slimy green, and had a moment’s breath, where a ridge hid them. Then round a curve, and up the side of a sloping plateau of rock, on which stood the lighthouse. Here, once more, they were exposed, but the men, still at some distance, spent most of the shots upon the reef.

“This way,” panted Golde, and dashed up some little iron steps that led ten feet up the solid base of the lighthouse.

They came then to a trellis-work landing before a door, made like Egyptian doors, narrower at top.

They tried it by the handle. It was locked. A bullet smashed against its casing.

They began to bawl for help, beating madly. At the same time, they could not but be surprised, even in their dismay, at the sinister appearance of the sea: with perfect suddenness it began to swirl, and fret, and whiten among the rocks; the boat, near now, was pitching with quick agitations; and the shots went all over the rocks and lighthouse. That brazen cloud in the south had spread amazingly, and was now flying wide-winged. The day darkened.

From a window, seventy feet up, a face looked.

A minute later the door opened: the fugitives rushed in, and the man who had opened fell back, shot.

Golde banged the door. They were in a narrow, short passage, just high enough to admit them, made of oaken blocks, with courses of Cornish moor-stone, dove-tailed, and joggled, and cramped with iron. Two yards inwards, they came to a dark well, rising twenty-two feet, four feet in diameter. Up this ran steps, scelled into the well, and leading into the lowest of the four stories.

These stories consisted of the lower store-room, the upper store-room, the living, and the sleeping-room.

The lighthouse had the form of a long truncated cone; the period of its erection was 1760, a time when one or two stone lighthouses, like Smeaton’s, had been built; but when men still shook the head, believing that nothing but wood could withstand wind and wave.

At such a time compromise was natural: and Raddon Lighthouse was, in fact, like Rudyard's at the Eddystone, a composition of both wood and stone. The solid base was formed of squared oak balks, firmly fixed to a series of iron branches which were keyed into the rock of the reef; but to increase the weight and vertical pressure, numerous courses of stone were introduced.

Outside these solid timber-and-stone courses, strong upright timbers, scarfed together — i.e., with sides overlapping — were fixed, and continued to the roof. Outside these again, came another layer of stone from foundation to corona, constructed of circles of hewn blocks, all joggled and cramped together. The lighthouse had, therefore, the appearance of a stone structure from without, though it was lined with wood, and, in reality, contained more wood than stone in its make-up.

The place was perfectly still. They two seemed alone in it with the dead man. They mounted the well-steps, holding to a hand-rope. Half-way they heard bangings at the outer door.

The French were besieging.

Two now held the boat beyond the region of the eddies and sea-dash. The others clamoured round the door, and crowded on the outer iron stairs.

A storm was brewing. The sky grew busy and dark with clouds; the sea began to lash and sound; some leaden rain-drops fell.

CHAPTER VIII. THE SIEGE



THE LIGHTHOUSE DOOR was cased with iron: iron panels, iron bolts. All the force of many Frenchmen could not avail to break it in.

“Back to the ship!” cried Danda; “batter the hole with cannon!”

But the frigate had vanished in gloom, and the yawl they could hardly still discern far from the white circle of reef, which now resounded to the thumps of the sea; spray, struck high, smartly stung the face.

Verdier said to one who was a mariner: “What of this storm?”

“It looks bad,” the sailor said. “You see the moon there, looking out . . . ghastly! — and the tide is rising. We shall have it — but I don’t think for long. How about this door?”

“The lock: you will never get through by banging and violence: pick the lock.”

Danda, hearing the suggestion, flew to his knees, digging with his sword. The point broke off. “Let *me* try,” said Verdier, and knelt with a thick dirk inserted, probing and prising.

“Now push — hard!” he cried, scarlet-coloured.

Danda and Dupin urged, and they, with the portal, tumbled inward.

A “Bon, bon!” was answered by a clap of thunder, a lightning-wink. They trooped inward, Danda first, with drawn sword, and began to climb the well-hole steps.

Golde and Margaret were in the lower store-room, kneeling, peering over the edge. They could hardly see down the dark depth, but knew that the

French were there, and coming. No light from the darkened day, though the outer door clapped to and fro. A wind came souging up the well.

The flooring of the lower store-room, on which knelt Golde and Margaret, was 32 ft. above the rock; the bottom of the well about 'o ft. above it; the part below the well being the fundamental solid, outside which ran up the iron steps to the door. In the lower store-room the full shock of the billows was not felt, and there, usually, a dim light filtered through the thick red glass of two square little windows. Now it would have been quite dark, but for a lantern deposited by the dead light-keeper on the floor, by which Verdier, climbing, saw the head of Golde, and leaning aside to avoid Danda, who was before, fired in awkward pose. The bullet embedded itself in the upper store-room flooring.

The two leapt from their fascinated gaze of terror. Danda was not 6 ft. below; his left hand held his pointless sword.

“What shall we do?” she whispered. “Up — the stairs—”

“The *slab!*”

It was a circular trap-door of iron, near the great hinges being an interval between slab and flooring large enough to admit the fingers. One on each side, they strained at the weight. As it yielded with reluctant shrieks, the wild eyes of Danda loomed above the darkness. Slowly up and up, then faster, it rose at the tugging jerks. It reached the perpendicular — there was a second's poise and uncertainty — they had too soon let go; but a quick touch slapped it above the ducking head of Danda upon his twice-snapped blade.

They looked at each other, trembling at recovered life. Then she, arm akimbo: “You will *know* me again when you see me!”

“It was a narrow shave, lass.”

“Somebody or other has got that *slab* on his head! I saw the eyes.”

“And a good thing, too,” remarked Golde. “But what is that — *cannon*?”

“I felt it before. I shouldn’t wonder if the men on the ship are at the place with cannon-balls.”

“But, stop! listen! that can’t be it.”

It was the shock of waves, hurling themselves upon the lighthouse, as if with malice. Above, a door slammed, windows rattled; the structure vibrated to its base.

Then a rumbling was heard above, like Titans moving furniture about for a house-flitting.

“That’s thunder,” said Golde. “There is a big storm outside, if we could only see it. I wonder what those men will do next?”

“What can they *do*? They can’t move this slab from those steps, with us standing on it. We are *safe*!”

“There is a staple, I see,” said Golde, “and a hasp. We should fasten it, I think.” He went away to look for some small object to place in the staple, and now Margaret felt the slab jerk up a little.

“They are trying to lift it,” she called.

Golde ran back.

“Why trouble?” she said; “they are only wasting their strength—”

“You are very brave and confident,” he said, looking about again. “I shouldn’t mind if I had your pluck and go.”

“You are brave, too,” she answered, dropping her eyes; “but you have lived all your life in a *house*, I should think: you never had any call to show it. And you think too much of yourself, I daresay. I, now, have lived among lions, tigers—”

“I am a miller by trade, and my name is Golde.”

“Well, one does not require much pluck to grind the golden corn — Just listen!”

“It’s the sea, I firmly believe,” said Golde.

“I like *thunder*: just hear how it rages a little, like Pol, and then goes muttering things in its throat”

“I can’t help thinking of that poor man,” said Golde, returning with a long nail, found among square parcels piled to the ceiling, containing huge candles for the lantern.

“What poor man?” she asked.

“That light-keeper down there. He came to an untimely end, too.”

“Well, we were nearly as bad, you see. Isn’t there more than one of them?”

“It’s funny: there are usually three on a lighthouse, I believe. But the others haven’t put in an appearance.

There had, in fact, been three: but the second had gone ashore to procure a doctor for the third, who now lay dying in the top room.

Verdier, eyes flashing, with long hair whiffed, was calling: “Who has more to spare? Pile it up!”

In his mind was this thought: “To outwit *me*! Well, we shall see—”

Two more flasks poured gunpowder upon a heap already made in the well. “Now, some string,” said Verdier.

One handed him twine. He laid a bit on the powder-heap.

The rest hurried away over the dead light-keeper. Verdier struck a flash, and saw an end of twine well lighted: as the other end was on higher level, the hemp burned rapidly upward. He rushed, slammed the door after him, and fled down to the rocks, where all stood clinging and drenched.

The picked lock was not ruined, and still fastened firmly. A small space, hermetically closed, was thus created. Either the walls must burst, or the slab at one end of the space, and the door at the other, must fly.

And presently the lighthouse shuddered, and the men saw the door dart from its fastenings, knock away the railings of the trellis-work landing, and plunge.

They hastened up the outer stairs, rushed into the passage, stumbling over the blackened light-keeper, looked up the well. The slab was gone.

They went — Verdier foremost, sword in hand — climbing the ladder-stair.

Yonder in the ceiling was a nearly circular dent where the iron disc had bumped into the wood. But little could now be seen: the slab had fallen back upon the lantern. From below they had been able to see the slab gone, only because the room was less utterly dark than the well.

They looked around, with swords ready to kill: but the fugitives had escaped to the upper storeroom.

“Let us pull up the stairs after us!” Margaret had said.

They, too, were a mere ladder, broad rungs slanting in broad uprights. Golde, kneeling, saw that they were fastened to a beam by hook-and-eye, knocked out the two hooks, and pulled. But they were also fastened to the flooring below.

“Stop, I will go down,” he panted.

He slid down. Voices and hurrying feet came up on hoarse soughs of the tempest fuming vehemently up the well. He groped on the floor. Ever and again the heavy ordnance of the sea shocked the lighthouse to its base.

To his intense relief he found the stair-foot not clamped, but fastened with hooks-and-eyes. He knocked out one hook, but the other was fixed in rust. On his back he kicked at it.

“Quick!” he heard Margaret’s loud whisper.

The hook yielded. He scrambled up, and the two were able to draw it, step by step. The alarm which had widened Margaret’s eyes while he was

below alone died out. They closed the hinging, oblong, wooden trap, and while they fastened the hasp, the besiegers swarmed into the room below.

The storm was now, perhaps, at its climax, and, without and within, day was turned to night. An octagonal ship's clock hung in the sleeping-room above, but the dying man there could not see it. Its hands pointed to eight.

The pursuers went striking flint-and-steel, searching among the candles, searching for the stairs, searching the ceiling. Golde and Margaret crouched near the trap-door listening.

"If we only had two *pistols*," she whispered. "It would be a good thing," assented Golde. "Let us go and look."

They crept away. The room was divided by a partition, in which banged a door at every blow of the swinging sea. They butted against it in the dark. From far away reached them the wails of the dismal wind — lamentation and a voice in Ramah. This, and the rattling windows, and the banging door broke the perfect silence of the lighthouse. The men below spoke no word in intentness of search; the click of clashing steels was lost in the whoops of the wind tumbling up the flute of the well. Dupin had torn the wrapping from a parcel, seen candles, and lit one; but it was at once extinguished.

Verdier called: "*There* is the trap-door. Ah, they are above, then; they have drawn up the steps."

"What shall we do?" bellowed Danda from the other end, above the organ-voices of the hurricane.

"Storm the door," sang out Verdier's tenor.

"But how?"

"Splinter it with shot."

"With shot!" cried Danda like an echo. "Hands this way." They had reserved powder from the explosion to serve in case of need. Flint-and-steel

struck until all had noted the position of the trap, and detonating pistols began to punctuate the cannonade of the sea and sobs of the wind.

“You, Dupin,” cried Danda through the din; “try to reach with your sword.”

Dupin, the tallest, made a sweep on tiptoe: but the sword cut a free curve, drawing him as it came down. The ceiling was 14 ft high. Meanwhile, the door was being riddled: but the wood was thick, though old. Ball and slug sank into, without ripping, it.

“Here, Huguenin, get upon Dupin’s back,” called Verdier, “and hack the thing away. Danda snatched Huguenin’s sword, mounted upon Dupin, and began hewing and driving. But his fury defeated itself: Dupin was now a quivering water-carrier, and now plunged and staggered: the under-surface splintered, but no more.

Verdier had meanwhile gone running, and returned burdened with a parcel of candles wrapped in thick blue paper, and tied.

“Come, help me,” he sang out, and to and fro they ran, piling parcels beneath the trap. Standing on the pile, they were now able to hack with ease. But only at first: for wrappings and candles began to break beneath their tramps, and soon they were slipping in a slushy bog of tallow, the separate candles stamped into a mere filth of fat, with hard base. It bore, yet did not bear: they floundering, picking themselves up, bumping together, but hacking with desperate steadfastness.

From without, the lighthouse at this time would have been seen deep-planted, like a tree, to half its height, in a steady bank of dashing foam.

Golde still carried the flint-and-steel by which he had seen the dying man on Seacombe Moor, and the two went searching the upper store-room. Here, once more, were piles of candles, with coils of rope, odds and ends of ship-tackle, biscuits, and tinned meats, and bags of vegetables; leaning in

the inner room, the figure-head of some craft wrecked upon the rocks; there a fragment of spar; a pile of firewood. The place had a stale and settled stench, like the holds of rank old ships, redolent of bilge-water and fishy odours of the deep. A washing-tub contained clothes, but no water; bones, and the *debris* of fish, and empty cans, and cauldrons of pitch, and blocks, and casks, and lumps of putty, and kegs. In a cupboard at a corner of the inner room, Golde found three long knives; and, on a shelf Margaret two coils of twine, ending in copper-wire and large fish-hooks.

She put her mouth to Golde's ear with the word: "*Fisk-hooks!*"

And she handed him a coil of twine; he handed her a knife. They stole back with a certain glad and meaningful guiltiness to their station by the trap.

The clock in the sleeping-room above pointed to nine. The dying man listened to the tempest, to the noise below, and wondered placidly, with musing eyes.

The battery of the door grew slack, and ceased, a round splintered cavity in its under substance, but the upper surface intact.

"This is no use!" cried Danda. "A carronade of round-shot and canister would have banged the whole building to hell an hour ago — but for this cursed storm."

Verdier smiled. He had in his mind a far more effective method than round-shot: but he feared danger to the Scheme; and, secondly, his Will was set that Margaret Ferris should acknowledge him, Camille, Marquis de la Terville-Rouchefoucauld, and be his slave.

"Some of you lay that slab there on the grease," he cried. "The grease!" shouted Danda, like an echo.

Some ran and bore the blasted slab, which dropped with thick flop upon the slush. This, and the candles, were the only things in the room: yet with

good generalship, Verdier had converted them into a perfectly-adapted engine.

“Now off with the shoes!” he called, that sweet tenor making chorus with the piping winds. Above knelt Margaret, with fishing-line and knife. The contest was resolving itself into a contest between the girl and Verdier for the life of Golde.

The men toiled, dogged, in silence, with stroke on stroke. On the upper side, some splinters cracked; and through a hole a sword-point stuck.

“This door will soon be gone,” said Golde, who heard the splinter crack: “hadn’t we better try the room above?”

“We have *time*,” whispered Margaret: “we will fight them inch by inch, if it comes to that. But how do they do it? They must be on one another’s backs.”

Thick fell the blows, and rapidly did the circular hole gape wider.

“Keep your eyes close,” whispered Margaret, “and make short work of their *fingers*.” This part of the upper store-room was not all blank darkness, like its inner chamber: for a crack in the trap-door above was filled with a light burning in the living-room, diffusing a glimmer: fingers, therefore, could be seen by the two, provided they looked close.

The hacking ceased. The middle piece of the door had dropped splintered; the remaining two pieces, fastened by hasp in front, and hinges behind, were narrow.

A clap on the floor told that fingers were there. Golde chopped tentatively: the hand vanished; a sound from the slab announced the backward drop.

“*Sapristi!*” said a voice, “they are slashing with knives.”

Golde, however, not a man of blood, had cut with reluctant nervousness. She, as if she divined, sidled to him, and loudly whispered:

“You must cut *hard!* Get their *fingers* off!”

Her heart was now hardened against these men to a perfect cold cruelty. Through the new opening, the wind came up vocal from the outer door, bearing all the noises of the storm, peals of thunder. Ever and anon the lighthouse swayed and trembled to the bombardment of the sea.

“Up!” sang the high voice of Verdier: “scale in a body — all together!”

“Together!” echoed Danda.

But in vain: they became aware, nearly all, that some diabolical thing was among them, a spiteful witch, with nails of steel — tearing at scalp, lips, cheeks. It came and went, bloodily, remorselessly, in mystery. The room was full of oaths, flights, hissing breaths, deep groans. Margaret was fishing — apostolically.

She knelt like boys who kneel with thread-and-pin for sprats, her body held backwards from reach of shot: and to every swing-out of the wire she had her catch of flesh or cloth, and in, with strong tug, she drew the prize, and out flew the pitiless hook again.

Once, as it went seeking, it met the palm of Verdier, who was wondering at the confusion, and came back ripping from thumb-root to middle finger.

He, a man intensely high-strung, could ill bear pain. He ran shrieking. But at once he understood.

“Back!” he called— “can’t you see? they are fishing at you!”

They rushed back, rent hands, nostrils, lips, and gathered round him.

“Now, listen to me, sirs,” said he, speaking only just above the tumult of the elements, “one, or both, of them has a fishing-hook flying there; one, or both, a knife. Well, if we scale in a body, one of us will have his eyes torn, one his fingers cut. But the rest will be perfectly safe, if we be quick. We have them, then. When I say *One* — then rush.”

There was a pause. “Ready?”

“A moment,” said Huguenin, fingering a half-ear. “Ready now? — then — One!”

There was a swift, silent dash, and five pairs of hands on each side caught the flooring. The space would hardly admit of more, and Danda, niad with impatience, found himself jostled out with others. The ten heads rose above the planking.

But Verdier had miscalculated, or else been purposely optimistic. Margaret dropped line, took knife. Two on her side, in quick succession, dropped back, stabbed through the temple, dead. The men had no foothold for the swinging feet — little enough hand-hold. They heaved with curved back, feet struggling upon emptiness — while Golde’s knife chopped the fingers, ending in horizontal sweep like the guillotine, and Margaret’s merciless blade sought the temples.

It was done in some instants: six dropped, with wounded hand, or dying groan. Of the ten, four only were left; but now, on a sudden, four new men, Danda among them, appeared at the edge.

Margaret’s knife at that moment was in prone career for the head of Verdier. He already had one knee on the brink. . . . Down came the knife: but he caught her wrist with his bleeding hand. The others, on that side, were almost landed.

An intense agony of struggle ensued between man and girl. She writhed like an eel. “*Beast! let me go!*” came in the faintest hiss, like a snake’s, from her lips. They swayed, she on both knees seeking to thrust him back; he, with one knee sideways on the edge, the other leg dangling in the void, the other hand clinging convulsively.

Thrice, with frantic vigour, she jerked him backwards, and still he held her like fate: then she tugged upward the hand that gripped the floor, jerked at him again, and now felt him going, and herself going with him.

But her outward thrusts affected the direction of fall; the opening was not wide; and her clutching hand caught Dupin's shoulder, just appearing above the opposite side.

A man less powerful than Dupin must have been wrenched away, or a grip less fierce than Verdier's: but Dupin clung struggling, Verdier, with grinning teeth, maintained his grasp, and the three wriggled a chaotic bundle, till Dupin's hold began to give, when Golde, stooping near with busy knife, realised the situation, and quick as instinct had his blade in Verdier's wrist: whereupon there was a cry of pain, and Margaret's hand was free.

And now that agility, by which she could leap to her toe upon a racing circus-horse, came to light. Like cat-o'-mountain, she nimbly scaled the struggling body of Dupin, skipped above his head, stabbed his shoulder, and he dropped.

"Come . . . !"

High rang her cry: for now several had gained the flooring, she almost among them: but the fugitives were nearest the stair; and up they flew, Margaret first, then Golde, then, in a moment, the French.

"Shoot!" shrieked Danda.

One only had ready pistol, and fired: but he stumbled in the dark over the steps of the lower room drawn up by the fugitives, and his slug buried itself in the floor. A moment afterwards there was dusky light, for Margaret had lifted the trap above: she gained the higher room; and Golde threw himself after her, the pursuers being still hardly half-way up.

The repinings of the storm came up, augmented now in fervent sighs and fluted voices, through the well-hole of the lighthouse.

The trap banged down. Golde fastened it. They looked long into each other's eyes. "You are hurt, I see," he said, taking her hand.

It was covered with blood. "I don't *feel* hurt," she answered, looking at it. It was blood from Verdier's torn palm. "That was a narrow—"

"Well, yes, it was. But some of them have got their sleeping-draught *this* time."

"It is what they deserve, too," remarked Golde.

"Listen! They are hacking at *this* door, now. And they've got the stairs to stand on this time." All had now come up from lower to upper storeroom, save five dead. All were wounded. But now, through a crack above, they had a glimmer. The stairs, however, were narrow, making it necessary to recline in file in awkward poses, away from the trapdoor: nevertheless, the siege recommenced.

This trap seemed less massive, and soon began to feel the assault of stroke on stroke; but, being smaller, it was more awkward to get at. The clock in the sleeping-room above pointed to ten.

"That is where the light downstairs came from," said Margaret, pointing to an open ship's-stove, whose smoke a tin tube carried away. On the fire stood a kettle, placed there by the dead light-keeper. This room was not divided by any partition. It contained a table covered with black oil-cloth, three canvas stools, a canvas easy-chair, a little shelf with the Bible, Prayer-book, Defoe, Bunyan. There were two telescopes, odd boots, a tin of biscuits, a hanging fitch, a pan of egg-shells, pipes, and stains of tobacco. All in the air was still the odour of old ships, and bitter old yeast, and the inveterate sea. A red-painted ship's-bucket, with coals, stood by the lowglowering stove, and two little pokers. The sills of the four deep, small windows were lined with peeling lead.

Margaret went looking about, while below Verdier, too, left the assault, and striking flashes, rummaged through the two apartments.

In the inner he found two fragments of spars, and running back, handed them to the two strongest Frenchmen, calling:

“Leave off swords!”

The two, half-reclining, began to pound upwards, steadying themselves with one arm. But their posture was so inconvenient, that the trap merely bounced to each bump.

Verdier stood contemplative. “Is it going?” he queried.

“Can’t get at it,” answered one.

“Come down, then. Remove the steps!”

“The steps!” echoed Danda, like swift-responding Echo. Down ran the men, struck out the bottom hooks, and lifted the stairs., trying to get the top hooks clear: but failed. Danda ran up to free them, forgetting that, if he succeeded, he would fall fourteen feet. But he could not: between the *two* side-pieces at the stair-top was a board at right angles to the steps, back of which were the hooks; and as the board nearly touched the trap-door, the band could not get at them from above; on trying, by placing the hand *under*, Danda could only touch the hooks with straining finger-tips, but not move them.

“The door is in the way!” he cried.

They were now in an *impasse*, unable to remove the stairs while the door was there; or to batter the door while the stairs were there.

Now, at the first sound of the club-blows, Margaret had started.

“They have got something besides swords now,” she said. “I *thought* they wouldn’t keep on. But what shall we *do*?”

“We have knives,” answered Golde. “The knives nearly got us *caught*. Have you your fish-hook still?”

“No, I left it below: which was a forgetful thing, too.”

“Yes, stupid. I left mine, too, in the flurry. That door will soon be *gone*.”

“These men seem more like devils than humans.”

“Look! the *kettle*—”

“What of it?”

“Oh, you do ask . . . we pour the boiling water upon them!”

She ran, took the kettle, and looked in — with an exclamation of disgust.

“It is dry!”

Some flat lime-stones rattled in the bottom. “Here’s a bucket of water,” said Golde.

She looked round, ran to him, and, mouth at ear, whispered: “*Boiling lead!*”

Golde did not answer: but as she hurried to a window, muttered:

Well, all’s fair in love and war, they say.”

She, meanwhile, reached up, feeling, but the window was beyond her height. “Please — lift me up,” she panted.

Golde ran, ponderously embracing the waist, holding her before him, face to window. “Wait — I am too heavy that way,” she said: “some girls have got no *limbs*, but *I* have, you see. I will get on your back.”

And riding him, she cut two squares of peeling lead, ripped them from the tacks, slid down then, cut them into slips, put them, in the kettle, on the fire. And the two pokers, too, she put into the fire.

Below, the voice of the tempest still came tumbling up the flute in wails and volleys of sighs; but the sounds of thunder had ceased; and the lighthouse seemed to tremble less to the massive swing of the sea: the climax had passed. In the room above the clock pointed to half-past ten.

“Take hold of the stairs!” called Verdier.

His own ripped palm and stabbed wrist were wrapped in his stock. They lifted the stair-foot. “Now, move! — that way, towards the window.”

They strained with the stair at right angles to its length. There was a creaking, a silent moment, then a pop, another, and the upper end fell in tumult.

“That’s easy done,” muttered Dupin, fingering the spot where blood trickled and thickened on his woollen tunic.

“*Fichtre!* what’s *that?*” someone called suddenly.

Chancing to look up, he had noticed a glowing something, big as a thumb-end, hang in the ceiling, and vanish.

“Place the two stairs one over the other,” called Verdier; “then stand on them, and batter up with the clubs!”

But one stair was hardly in position, when again that cry, “There it is!”

Under another spot the thumb had made its appearance, and vanished, having shed a momentary glow through the dark. All now stood agape, to look: and again they saw it come, and vanish, and yonder again, and vanish; at three spots in the ceiling, at two in the trap: a disappearing visitant, a finger of flame.

This will-o’-the-wisp was produced by the ends of two hot pokers, with which Margaret and Golde were burning holes. A “Quick!” from Verdier sent the French hurrying back to work; but while bent at the task of placing the second ladder evenly over the first, flame shot out of the middle of a man’s back, lighting up the room, and a howl burst from his breast. He was followed by another, and another, the kettle of Margaret pouring a brew of inebriation, yet not of cheer. They scampered with howls, questions, curses.

Their headlong cries were audible above: when they scuttled the hot trickle ceased. Verdier, at flying speed, had rushed into the inner room. A flint-flash revealed part of a ship’s figurehead lying there — a flat wooden mass, boldly curved on one of its three edges.

He heaved it up, and ran toward the ladders, now in position. His footfalls made no sound, for all shoes, slippery with tallow, had been taken off below. A glow from the stove made faintly visible the five holes, and sticking his sword into the figure-head, he held it flat against the ceiling, under the holes.

“Now!” he sang out— “all together! Charge! with club and sword!”

The contest had resolved itself into a contest between this fellow and the girl for the life of Golde.

They rushed thundering upon the trap. But for two of the holes the shape of the figure-head did not afford covering. In three, as Margaret poured her murderous tea, the shining fluid rose, scummed with dross, throwing out little flame-jets; so at the free holes, kettle in hand, she knelt, in graceful pose, pouring — not as a matron freely pours, in the afternoon, for her guests, but as a nurse measures out, lest she overcharge the dose, and hurt her care. As bang on bang raged upon the shuddering door, so howl on howl burst from the men beneath. With every drip — a flame; with every drip — a howl of bitterness: so sore the galling *bouillon* rankled, ravening like a lion, trenching and eating, with stench and smoke, the yeanling flesh.

As the door shattered upward, Margaret cried:

“Come! let’s go in time, *this* time!”

And they were not too soon. The tortured French leapt with the agility of cats over the splintered wood, rabid for vengeance. But they saw the sleeping-room trap-door close upon them above, Margaret still with kettle in hand.

“Name of a dog! how many more of these doors and stairs?” cried Dupin, twisting.

“Get at them!” shouted Danda, a brand of red scar and blister on his cheek, “wrench the stairs away!”

They swarmed round the stair-foot, looking a ragged, defeated mob, most naked, all spotted and scarred by that plague of heat. But in the wild eyes of all was resolve. In a minute, they had the stairs from its fastenings, then piled chairs, and whatever they could find, upon it; and on these, recommenced the battery, with club and sword. It was eleven o'clock.

The fugitives stood by the dying man — a long-faced, pallid man, with long red beard, and cavernous eyes. Stooping, they could make out his features. He lay watching with wide and languid eyes, beholding Heaven open.

There were two more bedsteads like his — iron truckle-beds, without head-pieces, on castors, covered with rumpled bed-clothes.

Golde said at the man's ear: "Are you ill?"

He did not answer: his wide, placid eyes looked afar at the Vision.

Golde turned to Margaret.

"Look here, lass, how long is this going to last? Here is this poor man dying, you know. It wouldn't do for us to have him killed, would it?"

His voice had decision. He spoke pretty loudly. The thickly-battering clubs thundered upon the door.

At first Margaret did not answer: then she said: "I don't know what you are *talking* about."

"This is my meaning," said Golde: "there can't be many more steps for us to climb: my belief is, there is only one more. We've got to be taken, any way. And there is this poor man, dying here—"

"What *about* him?" said Margaret, pale and panting. "It's me they're after, you know, it isn't you they want. I'm going to put a stop to this." She did not answer. But she laughed a little low laugh, bitter and scornful.

Golde dropped to his knees, took the long, wasted hand.

“Look here,” he said, “I want you to try and understand what I am going to say. That noise you hear there is made by some French devils who are storming the lighthouse, because they are after me. Can you understand? Try and let me know, now.”

The man nodded assent.

“The reason they are after me, is because I have found out a secret of theirs. And the secret is like this: they have a scheme on hand to get hold of the Duke of Wellington, and carry him away to France as a hostage. Can you hear me?”

The man nodded. “Very well,” said Golde, “*you* have the secret now: and if you get a chance, you will give warning of the matter to those on shore. The Frenchmen are not likely to hurt you, if they don’t suspect that you know. So be careful, in case they find you. I do hope you will get strong and hearty again. Good-bye.”

He rose: but Margaret confronted him with clenched fists drawn threateningly back by her side.

“I am going to give myself up, miss—”

“You *sha’n’t*!”

Her face was all inflamed, eyes ablaze. “Be reasonable, now,” he said: “you have no right to prevent me—”

“I *have*! Why have I *suffered* all this — ?”

She began suddenly to cry into her hands.

“I shouldn’t cry: though it’s good of you, too,” said Golde, “and a touching thing. But as we ye got to be caught, anyway—”

“We *haven’t*! I have thought of it. On a dark day like this there ought to be a *light* on the lighthouse: but there hasn’t been anyone to *light* it, you see. The people on shore will know there is something wrong, and come off. We *needn’t* be caught, if we only gain time—”

“But no one could land on the rock—” began Golde.

There was a sharp crack in the wood-work.

She caught his arm. “*Promise* me — see, there are the two beds! we can keep them back — for an age—” She ran toward a bed, dragging Golde. Her intensity — her quick reasonableness — thawed his decision. He helped her trundle a bed to the trap, castors upward, then the other, so that two sides of the beds met over the middle of the trap, the two outer resting on the floor. The sounds of battery came up muffled.

Blow on blow: but when the door was partly shattered, they came upon thicknesses of cloth, which the swords could merely pierce. They had, however, the stove-light: and Verdier, after an upward peer, leapt and seized a sheet, which came down. Soon others were leaping: the bare mattresses appeared: and they set to piercing them, straw whirling about.

“Fire the straw!” cried Danda. “No — stop!” sang out Verdier; “batter away the whole door Stroke on stroke. It was half-past eleven. The mattresses thinned and disappeared, leaving squares of laths, and two iron sides.

They hacked at the laths with shrill janglings, but no other result. The squares were too small for the swords to play within. Margaret tried the kettle, but the lead had solidified. One man leapt, seized an iron side, pushed the other away, and got his rash head between. But he fell back convulsed, Margaret having smitten the two about his skull.

The jangling ceased then, and the French stood round Verdier near the fire.

“Every man off with his sword-belt,” he said; “when I give the word, everyone throw his belt over one lath, and hang his weight upon it — only let it be *together*: they have knives.”

The assault was soon over: at the weight, the laths bulged downward, and split from their fastenings, so that the two had only time to cut three sword-belts, when the bedsteads clashed into one chaos of shrilly jangling and vibratory laths. The next moment they were hasting up a narrow iron ladder, and the French clambering hotly over the opening. Margaret pushed at the door above: it would not yield: it was of metal; but when Golde helped, a light-ray came in, and they were on the other side before Verdier had dashed to the ladder's foot.

They fastened the trap, and found themselves in the lantern: an octagon eight feet high, stinking of the burnt candles of half a century. The roof, made of beams and massive planking, was covered with a crust of soot, and the whole was sere with the old heat of the lantern.

Margaret looking over the blue and white sea, said:

“We are at the top.”

Then beneath, and cried suddenly: “We are *safe*! That door — an *army* of Frenchmen couldn't beat it away.” Verdier, lying back on the stairs, had his head close beneath the door, tapping it with his knuckles.

“We can do nothing with *that*,” he muttered. Well, let her die then!”

And down with free swing he swaggered in haste crying in high rollicking tenor: “Back, sirs, we can do nothing with that! Fire the lighthouse!”

A cheer arose: the long up-hill task was over: and down pell-mell they leapt from sleeping to living-room, where was the stove.

Verdier, the last to leave, dimly discerned the light-keeper, stooped, and was met by the wide eyes. He was both annoyed, and touched with compunction. As he stood uncertain, his flushed face bent low, up trickled a streamlet of smoke. He put his arms under the man's, and running, lowered his feet, singing out:

“Hi! some of you take this man.”

Two received and dropped him in careless haste, the long-haired head bumping audibly. Verdier dropped into a smothered room, full of coughs and tears, the grey reek stained at three points with flame-jets. The hacked beds and straw had been piled near the wooden lining, with table and canvas-chairs, and kindled.

The tempest was practically over: but the viols of the winds, finding now free vogue through the four open valves came vehemently vapouring up the long flute in fervent voices and votive sighs, routing the smoke up and down and about. It needed only the opening of the summit trap-door for the draught to go pealing like an organ through the chimney, carrying with it the steady roar of the upward-bickering flames in which all was soon to welter.

Verdier cast flinching eyes around, surprised at the spread of the fire. “Better hurry down!” he called.

The whole interior was nothing more than a skilful piece of ship’s-carpentry; the wood-work, moreover, was seasoned, and, toward the top, mere touchwood, on account of the nightly heat. The fire was no sooner kindled than it was raging, and the roof hot before the flames were near it.

Danda was heard through smoke and confusion: “Block up the trap-door! They will try to descend!”

“Absurd!” shouted Verdier: “look round you—”

Already the frantic fire had enveloped the room, climbing like a frightened monkey; and downwards too, with deliberate step, it walked.

Verdier, about to leap, once more noticed the light-keeper’s face, now in brilliant light, and stooped to him. But something in the way in which the weight lay upon his effort caused him to glance: and now, with a low

exclamation, he deposited the body. It was dead. He dropped hurriedly: the floor was crackling.

Already in the upper store-room they could see flame at the top of its tarred sides; and as the last man dropped to the lower store-room, down upon the floor of the upper tumbled the floor of the living-room.

And now was swift destruction, and noise, and trickling lead, and crackling glass, and dropping bolts, and holocausts of tallow, and the huge crash and downfall of flaring timbers. The body of the light-keeper was seen to come tumbling, and hang like a guy half-over the doorway of the upper store-room; again it had to fall; and again, as calcined bones, down the well.

Into the mouth of a Frenchman waiting his turn to descend the well, fell broth of pewter; and yelling he ran. And now an upward rage of draught proved the roof pierced, and down on a sudden tumbled roof and iron slab, lantern, and sleeping-room floor, one mass of ruin, upon the upper store-room floor; and down immediately fell this upon the lower store-room floor, filling the well with flame. But the last of the French had passed out to the exterior.

The fallen flames quickly kindled the casing at the bottom, while the upper flames stole downward with steady step. The rapturous meeting of the two was speedily accomplished, and immediately the whole tall interior was one furnace of liquid conflagration, uproariously brawling skyward at the blast of the thundering draught.

The gale, however, was over, and the lighthouse no longer half-planted in a mound of foam. But it remained far too rough for approach, and the French were prisoners.

They did not even trouble to look if any vestige remained of Golde and Margaret, their whole anxiety being now about themselves, for their boat

could not be seen.

Up through the lighthouse top a clear column, plumed with smoke, flamed high. It shed a far glow through the sombrous day, its hot breath drying the clothes of the two fugitives.

When they had felt the roof hot they had understood, and looked into each other's faces, realising that now, at least, they were doomed, not knowing of any egress; till Margaret, running about, discovered a hook in the lantern-woodwork: outside ran a two-foot balcony, bounded by a railing in the massive corona: and instantly she was on it, Golde after her, the heat being now intolerable to him, who had only stockings.

Round the open space they ran, looking down the outer slope; as a jet shot up within the lantern, Margaret uttered the high cry:

“Come!”

To Golde's ineffable wonder, she legged over the railing, and vanished, seeming to hurl herself into the sea.

But running he saw her seated on a cornice-beading four feet down, hardly five inches wide, where to his flurried senses it seemed impossible that any creature could remain one second. The crackling lantern, however, was contributory to comprehension, and another glance showed that Margaret's weight hung chiefly, not upon the cornice, but upon a rod: the lightning-conductor.

It ran through staples, admitting an arm between it and the wall. Golde, hunted from behind, stepped over the edge, trusted his weight to the rod, reached the cornice, and with his arm above Margaret's, on the other side, clung on, sitting. But the rod, feeling unusual weight, bent its free top slightly outward. They felt it yield with a chill of intensest horror. Neither spoke. By this undecided stay they were held from the abyss of foaming

rocks: and they avoided each other's eyes. Above them roared the stammering tongue of flame.

Unmeasured hours, full of shivering Hopelessness, like an Arctic Hell, passed over them. Afterwards, they were aware of voices, men hooting up through arched hands, shouts which the vague vogue of the wind through the gutted lighthouse would not let them discern. Margaret, vaguely conscious, heard Golde shouting in answer: but he, too, was incomprehensible to those he answered.

By now the interior of the wall was ink-black, dead, without a spark. The sea was almost as calm as it ever is round Raddon, and the French had long since reached the frigate.

The men who shouted had come from the shore, as soon as they considered that the falling tide would permit a landing. Among them was the light-keeper who had gone to procure a doctor.

But the shouting ceased; and the two despairing hearts saw the boat make again for shore. Hope, which had sprung at this human neighbourhood — though formless and unconscious how help could reach them pinnacled there so dizzily — died now.

“Well, my friend—” said Margaret with pale smile. “Ah, lass,” answered Golde.

More and more the lightning-conductor had given to their weight, the bend being obvious now. Their limbs, moreover, could not long hold on for very torpor. To be able to move but a muscle — this was their longing. But, as time passed, all longing resolved itself into a growing drowsiness. Though sleep were death, yet must they sleep: and for a long time their whole souls were centred upon a slumbrous effort to restrain the leaden weight of their eyelids, and cling on still.

But after two hours a strange wakefulness of hope revived in them. There again was — the boat. They saw it, unless it were the last sweet dream. And this time there was no shouting. The men landed quietly, and entered the lighthouse.

The two waited, wondering, till they were startled *by* a whizzing hubbub which went fussing up, up, through the lighthouse-top. There was an aspiring light in the air — a silent burst of fire — a cascade of hues: it was a rocket. Its flight ended, it curved upon itself in the height, and plunged downward, to smite upon the lighthouse side. The stick-rope struck, in its slap against the wall, upon the cheek of Golde.

It was Margaret who, with slow trepidations, made the first descent, the men paying out to her weight. Her hands could just sustain her: and she, and then Golde, arrived at the ledge where the conductor met the reef.

To the hundred questions of their rescuers, they could return no answer. The muttered word “Frenchmen” was, however, at that day, almost an explanation. Some brown-brandy was poured down their throats, and they leaned foredone with drooped head upon the gunwale.

At four in the afternoon they were landed at Wyemouth.

CHAPTER IX. THE "BUSY BEE"



ON THE WYE-BANK was an embankment, through which three steps led into the garden of the "Busy Bee."

Here the boat shipped oars, and one shook Golde, another Margaret. Their heads rested upon their arms: and they slept deep.

By much coaxing and shouting, they were got through the bowling green to the inn, moving with closed eyes, dragged feet, and hanging heads, each supported by two men, while some midnight murmurs came from a corner of Golde's mouth.

"Now, Mother Higgins, get us two beds for this lot," said one of the men, arrived in the parlour. Mother Higgins, a stout old widow, asthmatic, with a redundant wealth of buxom chins, put a hand behind an ear, and said:

"Two what?"

"*Two beds!*" shouted the waterman. "Oh, two beds. Who are they?"

"They are from the burnt lighthouse."

"The what?"

"*The lighthouse!*"

"Oh, the lighthouse. They will pay for themselves, I suppose."

"Now, Mother — is that a question, now? You know Mr. Golde, the miller, at Newton, don't you?"

"Mr. Who?"

"*Golde! Golde!*"

"Oh, Golde. Well, Sarah, give the girl the back room on the first story, and put Golde into the empty a-top."

Sarah led the way, and the two sleepers were pushed and manoeuvred up the stairs behind the bar. To Mrs. Higgins a stair was a feat not lightly to be undertaken; but Sarah did the kindly office of undressing Margaret of her still damp flimsies, and put her naked to bed like a sleepy child. Above, as the boatmen did the like for Golde, another murmur, like chloroform mumblings, came from his lips: but without articulation. In two minutes the pair, who, through a night and day had braved together a host of perils, together slept peacefully.

But not for long. The vitality of the girl arose. A thought, deep in her consciousness, shook her slumber. At about six in the afternoon her eyes opened. She lay in a state of vacuous languor. Her arms went up, her hands clasped over her head, and a while she lay so, profoundly meditating upon nothing. Then a stark jerk of the body; and a coarse free yawn: and a swift twist; and she lay now sideways, lithe as a panther, a perfect animal. One of her arms, dropping in lassitude from the stiff stretch, fell over the bed-side, and the palm met a chair. On the chair was a paper; and upon this her fingers unconsciously closed.

She was restless. Thought, as yet unborn in her, was working to birth. She stiffened arrantly again, and up went the paper in her out-shot fist. As she again relaxed, the fist fell into her left breast, grasping the leaf. Soon she became conscious that she held something. She looked at the crumpled ball, smoothed it out, and listlessly lifted it before imbecile eyes.

In a moment she was awake. Thought, recollection, rushed back upon her. She sat up. The paper was a leaf ruled in red, torn out of an account-book: and on it a bill for a week's board to someone called *Lise d'Arblay*: and it was *the French name* which had so acted as a shock.

She set to shouting. The housemaid, Sarah, a tall wench, came in. "Oh, I am *famished!*" said Margaret.

“So I should suppose, too, by accounts,” said Sarah. “What will you have? We have turkey poult, murinade pork, some mutton casserole, some turbot-and-smelts, an apple-tart, green peas, brocoli, endive, and potatoes.”

“I’ll have all. Oh, do get it to me “Sha’n’t be a minute,” said Sarah. “What is to become of Mr.—” called Margaret. “Golde?”

“Yes.”

“He’s upstairs asleep.”

Sarah presently returned with a heaped mixed platter. Margaret began to gorge, everything together, as was the fashion, plate on legs.

“You had a French female staying here, I think?” she said with full mouth.

“We had a female,” answered Sarah, “I don’t know if she was a French one.”

“She spoke English?”

“Oh, yes! such a dandizette, clearly of the upper circles, more like a princess, my dear: her gowns, her worked pelisses, and the magnificent way she dispensed the regents! And for supper, seven-and-six port, dear me! And withal a most condescending polite lady of fashion, I’m sure—”

Margaret guttled industriously, silent. Then, across pork, mutton, turbot, peas, pickles, brocoli and potatoes:

“What was she *doing* here?”

“Don’t know, I’m sure.”

“How *long* was she here?”

“Just a se’ennight.”

“When did she go?”

“This very morning.”

“In the *storm*?”

“Yes; but she is coming back: she left a portmanteau behind.”

“What did she *do* with herself while she was here?”

“She went a considerable deal on horseback. Would go about the moor every day; she frequented the neighbourhood, in fact.”

“But what *for*? Did she talk to anyone?”

“Not a creature hardly. Some mornings, at a certain hour, she used to go to the grotto down the garden, and—”

“Well?”

“You know the gipsy-men: two of them called once to see her; and in the grotto, after that, she used to talk to one—”

“A dandizette of fortune talking with *gipsies* — ?”

“She told me she was taken with gipsies, they being such interesting poor creatures.”

“Did you know that the Duke of Wellington is at Grandcourt Abbey?”

“Oh, everybody knows that. A deputation of the Rank and Fortune of the County, with the Sheriff, a detachment of the S. Devon Militia, and the Plymouth Volunteer Cavalry waited upon him yesterday.”

“How far is it away?”

About a seven mile from here.”

“Was that the way the lady went this morning?”

“Was that the way? I think so — yes.”

At the last word, Margaret in one leap, was out of bed. “Quick!” she cried, “you have to lend me some *clothes*.” Sarah stared, but once pushed away, quickly returned with a bundle — shoes, linen, and a brown gown, ankle-long.

“What’s it — ?” she began.

Margaret was at once breathlessly at work. “Didn’t Mr. Golde *say* anything to anybody about the Duke when he landed?” she panted.

“Oh, he! — he was fast asleep. No, he said naught. We do not even know the history of your escapades, or anything—”

“Then run — quick — and call the post-master for me!”

“She— ’tis a female — can’t come up — you oughtn’t to exert yourself like that: you haven’t had any rest to speak of—”

“Can’t you do as I tell you? *Call* her! Stop — where is it Mr. Golde has his Mill?”

“At Newton.”

“Is that nearer Grandcourt than here?”

“About a three mile nearer, I should say.”

Margaret caught up the bill, rushed half-dressed to pen-and-ink on a table inside the big fireplace, and wrote:

“If I want you, I will come to your Mill for you. — Margaret Ferris.”

“Don’t wake him,” she said, “his hunger will wake him. Put this on his pillow, so that he will see it. And now — *quick* — the post-mistress.”

Another push sent Sarah through the door. But Margaret was dressed and flying down the stairs, before Mother Higgins, all sighs, had toiled in uphill travail half their height.

“Are you the hostess?” cried she, with hurried breath, hardly stopping— “then you’ve got to tell everybody that *some Frenchmen* are trying to kidnap the Duke of Wellington, in as mean a way as possible.”

And down she flew through a side-door, across the fields, running.

Mother Higgins, on the stairs, stood staring where the phantom of the girl had been, quite bewildered.

“The Duke of Wellington?” she murmured: “trying to entrap the Frenchmen — as many as possible? — what in the world has that to do with

me? The young female's crazy!"

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! — Mother Higgins was deaf. She descended the steps in calculated detail, hoping that Mr. Golde was prepared to bear the charges of the fugitive girl.

CHAPTER X. THE SNUFF-BOX



BY NOON OF that same day, the 20th, at a time when Golde and Margaret felt the lighthouse-top heating beneath their soles, Lise d'Arblay was at Grandcourt, it being still very dark, though the climax of the storm was passed.

News ran then so slow, that when it was heard, as it were from nowhere, it seemed to proceed, in Homeric phrase, Ὡς ἅετις — from God. Post-chaise, mail-coach, stage-coach jingled merrily between inn-station and inn-station; but at the stations themselves, guard, driver, and “boys” took life leisurely, fortifying against the next bit of road. The poor outside passenger mingled democratically with the four or six inside fares in the parlours, and only when all had attained to glairy eyes and hot joy in the stomach, was the journey resumed.

The Duke of Wellington was hourly expecting Opie and the despatches: for no part of England, except the London region, had heard anything of the murder of the officer, and the disappearance of his niece, when the band of gipsies, with forced travel, were already at Seacombe Moor.

The Abbey lies twelve miles from the coast, seven from Wyemouth, in a garden of fertility, contrasting with the barren Moor three miles off. The sombre pile, cross-shaped, stands on a terraced lawn of artificial waters and flower-beds; the horizon being park and upland forest. The South wing, looking towards moor and sea, closely approaches the park, between the two being a tarn whose wavelets lap the darkly-mossed old stones, and from its south bank an avenue of sycamores leads away and away, directly

southward through the park, the procession of trunks meeting at a far vanishing-point.

The Duke was alone with the servants: for Lord Elwell, his host, had two days previously accompanied his wife over the hills to Market Graddon, she having been summoned to the deathbed of her brother, the young guardsman, Lord Archibald, who was under the care of a French physician, D'Artois. When Lord Elwell demurred to go, the Duke had said:

“Very well, if you stay here on my account, I shall have to run off.”

And since those lips never uttered words which they did not mean, this threat settled the matter. His lordship went, and was not expected back for yet two days.

The Abbey Library overlooks the lake; and there, amid the double procession of busts and stained old glass, the Duke sat reading by lamplight when, at noon, “Mrs. Opie” was announced.

He ordered her to be admitted. When she appeared, he rose, with bows.

Now glints of silver, though few, mixed with his light hair: but he was never in fuller vigour, erect, without an ounce of flesh on that aquiline visage of blue hawk-eyes, which retained a singular boyishness. He had on a blue cut-away coat with silver buttons, light “trowsers,” a throat-wrapping of brown stock.

“I have the honour to be the bearer to your Grace of despatches on behalf of Lieutenant James Wootton Opie,” said Lise, seated near him, she in very telling Kendal bonnet, and rolloed travelling-gown, gold-clasped, which she held up, and patted with a riding-whip.

As she made her announcement, the steely eyes of the Duke, and the bold eyes of the woman met.

“So, then, what is become of poor Opie?” said he.

“Lieutenant Opie is in the greatest distress, your Grace. Your Grace may possibly have heard of his poor niece, who has the misfortune of a disfigurement of face?”

“Well, I have heard something. I thought it was rather a hoax of those newspaper-fellows.”

“A hoax? Why, no. It has been my pious task to watch over this interesting girl, in her seclusion, for some years. Lieutenant Opie, I may say, is devoted to his relative, in spite of the misfortune, or, perhaps, because of it. She has, alas, lately disappeared.”

“Is that so?”

“I had only left the house for an hour. When I returned, she was gone. So far, all search has been useless. It is credibly supposed that she has been kidnapped by a band of gipsies, for the purposes of exhibition about the country.”

“I am very sorry. Opie is a gallant fellow. So, then, he is looking about for the lady?”

“He is run wild, your Grace, with grief and rage, and has gone tearing harum-scarum into Bedford-shire, which is the chief haunt of the gipsies. He has asked me to present a thousand apologies at your Grace’s feet for his incapacity to bear the despatches in person. With me, he felt, they were safe as with himself.”

The Duke was wondering what was the relation between Opie and the lady before him. She had called herself “Mrs. Opie”: she might be Opie’s brother’s wife, or something. He would not ask. But she volunteered:

“I should have informed your Grace that I am Lieutenant Opie’s wife.”

The Duke bowed, but his eyes twinkled. A gold snuff-box came from his waist-coat pocket, and a pinch went up.

“So, then,” he said to himself “Opie had a wife hidden away somewhere, unknown to all of us. Or else, for some reason or other, the woman is lying like the devil to me.”

He said aloud:

“You and I may have met somewhere, then. I am getting rather an old fellow now, and the memory almost looks as if it wanted to be off. Still, I have a way of keeping a lovely face in my head, when I see it.”

That made her throw the head sideways, coquettishly, saying: “H’m. Your Grace is too indulgent to my poor face.” Then, in serious tone: “I should perhaps tell your Grace that I have been married some five years: but there are reasons — family reasons — which make it desirable that Lieutenant Opie’s marriage should not, for the present, be known beyond a strictly limited circle.”

“Do not mention it,” said he. “Opie is by so much a luckier fellow than we all thought him. Well, now, but tell me — how did you get here?”

“I arrived by coach at Wyemouth this morning, and have rode to Grandcourt.”

“Then you must be very tired.” He pulled a bellrope. “I am rather in a difficulty, however. They have all gone away, and left me by myself: so you will have to put up with me for host.”

“I return, your Grace, to Wyemouth, at once.”

“I cannot let you do that, you know. I know those shabby coaches too well: they knock one up more than a day’s march. I shall keep you here at least three days, then. Or since they will not let a man be host to a lady, why not let me instal you as hostess for the time being, and then you can consider me your guest. How would that do?”

He said it playfully. Lise smiled. A lackey entered.

“This lady will be here as mistress of the house for some days,” said the Duke: “just put her in the right hands, will you?” Then to Lise: “What I should do, would be to take a good big tumbler of mulled port — you will find an excellent cellar here — and then turn in, and have a good siesta.”

Lise sank and curved into a profound curtsy; handed him the despatches; and went after the lackey.

“She is French” — he tapped the snuff-box bottom— “the cut of the face, and something or other in the accent. So that fellow Opie had a wife hidden away from everybody.” He applied the aroma to one sideward nostril, then to the other. It was a mixture moistened and mixed by Fribourg & Treyer of the Haymarket, invented by that connoisseur, Lord Petersham, an exquisite secret, a breath from Arabia: and the box was most choice, of fretted gold: at this point the iron man and duke tended to luxury. “And a wife in rather good taste, too,” he said disjointedly between two inhalations. “Well, now—” He broke the Government Seals, and commenced a long study.

Outside Lise said: “Do not have my horse unsaddled for the present. I shall ride him presently.”

She made a pretence of eating, but took no siesta that day. At One, she was a-horse again, galloping for the martello-tower, two miles from Grandcourt. There she placed in the dark niche agreed upon with Lovell, the gipsy, this note:

“In the martello-tower this night (Wednesday), at half after nine. I must receive word not later than seven that all is ready on your side. — d’Arblay.”

She returned to the Abbey, and spent the interval between two and six at a bedroom window looking upon the lawn, and the sombre, windy day. Quiet, patient, she sat, hatted. Her cream- white was tinted now with yellow. *Fear* was at her — a Doubt huge as Being; at about six she became restless, and began to pace furiously, kicking her skirt before.

At about six, too, Margaret Ferris, in wild haste, started out from the “Busy Bee” across fields, big with her momentous warning. Lightly sped the swift limbs on their errand of good-will, her feet beautiful as the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings. She guessed that no attempt would be made, save under cover of night: and had hope. Besides, she had left the great news behind — the country-side would rise. She did not dream that the precious words, dropped into Mother Higgin’s ears, were as lost as though shouted into some vague well.

But she would be in time! Unless some scheme, more subtle than she could conceive, were even then in working. “That man they call *Verdier*—” she muttered, panting. Verdier’s cunning loomed terrible now in her eyes — she had felt it.

As she ran, a galloping ass passed her: on its back two panniers, and, with grasshopper knees, the gipsy, Lovell. He was making for Grandcourt, returned from the frigate, with Danda’s notice to Lise that all was ready: and he was in haste, being late.

“A gipsy in a hurry?” thought Margaret: “who ever saw that? But a *giptsy* — !” She remembered the French lady’s intimacy with gipsies. And this one took the way to Grandcourt — in a hurry. A fervent eagerness to reach the place before him arose in her. She dashed forward. She cried, “*Stop!*”

The man, perfectly stolid, did not turn his head, though presently his gallop slackened into a shuffling amble. She, running hard, could hold her

own; but her splendid wind began to fail.

The road wound near Newton village, half-way between Weymouth and the Abbey: and just here she saw patient under a tree a raw-boned butcher-boy's horse, a commonplace of that time, with meat-tray strapped to the one-stirrugged saddle. The boy had alighted for some purpose: and she, instantly on its back, urged forward the hack. The ass began to gallop again, but she, plying the stick, gained slowly, though it became evident that not much of a victory could result for either. The gipsy seemed to have become aware, without once looking back, that he was pursued, and the little ass went clattering into its bravest gallop. After about a mile they were nearly abreast, when she saw a bright something stick from a stuffing of cloth in the pannier nearest her. With quick wit, and circus-agility, she stooped and drew it — a knife.

She slackened pace; the ass forged ahead; and now, keeping to the other side of the path, she dashed once more into full speed. Catching up the ass again, she stooped, and with a slash, cut through the three pannier-straps on that side of the haunch: as it dropped, she caught it by a strap, and let it gently down. With an adroitness so swift was it accomplished behind the gipsy's back, that he had no notion of anything: and they had galloped a mile onward before Margaret, looking back, called out:

“You have dropped the basket with the *child* in it — behind!”

The gipsy, glancing at his haunch, uttered a mad exclamation. He turned, and flew backward, belabouring his animal, screaming a gibberish of imprecations, fist in air.

Margaret now counted that she would reach Grandcourt twenty minutes before him. But she had hardly started into fresh gallop when two roads opened before her; and down the one which did *not* lead to Grandcourt bolted the butcher-horse. She tore at his mouth of brass; she fought and

whispered, flogged and coaxed: but in headlong career the old nag held his dogged course. This was his way home; and this his hour of rest from the day's toil.

CHAPTER XI. "THE MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE"



CONSCIOUS OF HER influence over animals, Margaret clung on in the desperate hope of getting that stubborn mouth round: and in one final effort she pulled with hard backward strain: but now the old reins snapped.

Whereupon the wheezy nag, in free career, went scattering the muddy road homewards. No device could now check him: and in a great leap she alighted with elastic ease on the grass.

Backward she hurried to the Grandcourt road. The gipsy was still behind, and already late for the rendezvous at seven. Her feet grew light with the joy and rage of contest: if he beat, he would not beat by much, perhaps! She knew how to *run*, at any rate!

She was not, however, far gone, when the rotatory, clattery, spattery tramp of the donkey behind her was heard on the roadway. The gipsy drove straight to ride her down, and as he dashed past, leant back, shaking his fist and jargoning. A bend of hill hid him; but soon there rose before her the woods of Grandcourt.

The Duke had sent to ask Lise d'Arblay if she would join him (everyone dined early, about six), but she had declined on the ground of *migraine*. As the hour for Lovell's arrival drew on, her feverish solitude became intolerable; she descended into the grounds; when he was *late* she knew the anguish of the rack. It was twenty minutes to eight before, on the agreed west side, she saw him come galloping. At that moment Margaret was running up the avenue; but she had a longish *detour* round the lake.

Lovell handed to Lise Danda's note, and at the same time said:

“Is there anybody has any suspicion of this matter of yours, lady?” She glanced quick surprise. “No, I hope not Why so?”

“A woman gave me chase on the road, you see. She isn’t far off, either. She’s coming here certain. She cut off my basket with the brat, and made me late, you see. ‘Cod! you should be careful, lady.’”

Lise turned upon him a blanched face. “There must be some mistake. . . . No one knows—”

“Well, I tell you what I saw, lady. Is everything right for to-night?”

“Everything: Lovell, be punctual, I charge you, Lovell. You are sure she is coming here?”

“Sure, lady.”

“Well, we shall see. At half after eight, remember, — and *nine*. How does she look, this woman?”

“A young woman she is, active on the legs, and a brune, lady.”

Lise turned one way, Lovell the other. She walked across the lawn, and spoke to a footman in the hall.

“If a young woman comes, wanting to see the Duke, or having any message, send her into that room yonder to me. He will be unwilling, I think, to see anyone to-night, being busy with Government affairs.”

“Very good, madam.”

Lise was the mistress of the house. “Has the Duke returned to the library since dinner?” she asked. “Yes, madam.”

Lise, in a little arrased music-room near, touched a harpsichord, an oboe, then a little piccolo, her own, brought from London, and played a bar. She then laid a book upon her placid lap, and waited ten minutes: and now before her appeared the face of Margaret, its hot damask flush parching three half-dried streamlets of sweat, the golden eyes, and wild.

In contrast, her own creamy face lay in profiled repose on the red-cushioned chair.

“You have been exerting yourself,” said she, “one sees that. Sit down, will you? Something is the matter.”

“Are you Lady Grandcourt?”

“There is no such person. There was a Lady Elwell, who is dead. Tell me —”

“Are you the mistress of the house?”

“Yes.”

“Can I see — the Duke of Wellington?”

“I am *afraid* not”

“Oh, don’t say that, pray, pray. I do so *want* to see himself.”

“He is busy. But he might see you, if the matter is important. Tell me—”

“I am *foolish*, you see. I suspect everybody and everything, just as if — But that man is so *artful*! That is why I want to see himself—”

“To which man do you refer? Tell me.”

“Some Frenchmen, who have a plot to kidnap the Duke—” A slim cry escaped Lise. Her lower lip trembled a little. But in a moment she was herself. “But that is rather a wild story, is it not? Whereabouts are these Frenchmen?”

“I don’t know where they are *now*, but I know that they were on shore last night, because I’ve good cause to *remember* them! And I know that they mean to do what they are trying for.”

“You encountered them, then, last night?”

She told her whole story in outline, ending with the “Busy Bee,” the name “Lise d’Arblay,” the gipsy.

“There certainly seems something in what you say,” mused Lise. “You shall see the Duke and recount him all this — if I can persuade him to see

you, that is. He is so careless of himself, you know. But we shall see. What is your name?"

"Margaret Ferris."

"Well, will you wait here? I shall go straight now, and see. Meantime, be sure to say nothing to the servants, till you see the Duke — he would not, I know, like the house to be thrown into a state of alarm. You may have to wait some time, you know — an hour — two. It is quite an undertaking — Margaret — to put the wheels of that great machine into action. Meanwhile, I am going to send you some cake and wine!"

With friendly condescending nods she stepped away, holding the travelling-skirt. Margaret sat waiting. Something troubled her, something. With the first glance at Lise, a mistrust which had vanished, an instinctive enmity which had passed, had arisen in her. And now that she was alone, a feeling remained as if she were losing ground — and time. Something was awry, disturbing.

This something was the French accent of Lise, a thing so fugitive that one might hear it, and not know that one had heard it.

A footman entered with wine: and she, hardly knowing why, said:

"What is the name of the lady who was speaking to me just now?"

"Mrs. Opie," said the man.

"Thank you. She is the mistress here?"

"No — well, yes; just for the time being, you know."

"All right. I thank you."

She waited at a window, looking out upon the lawn northwards. The evening grew from greys to browns: the day of summer storm was over; and the definite premonition of night was here.

CHAPTER XII. THE COFFIN



BUT AWAY IN the West the sky was still tawny with lights and paints; and there in outspread, changing spectacle, as in some world-theatre, was enacted a great drama of colours and tragedy of hues. It was the one place of tints in the drab, and dun, and utterly still evening, in which not the pipe of a bird, or the breath of a wind, was heard.

The Duke had spent the day in reading the despatches, and making notes, less one half-hour in the great groined dining-hall over Regent cutlets and port. Soon after eight the coloured light in the vast cedared duskiness of the library failed. He laid down the magnifying-glass through which he had been tracking the words. At the same time his strong lips curved into a smile of pleasure.

He was fond of music: and a piccolo had begun to warble the Spanish *Palama* just beneath the library-window nearest him.

“Well, that is rather handsomely done,” he said to himself; and he took the snuff-box; and he tapped it; and he inhaled through alternate large holes of satisfaction; and the spice mingled with the melody in a charm.

He went presently to one of the narrow gothic mullions, and opened a half, peeping out. The lake lay beneath, lapping the wall. Among the cushions of a skiff he saw Lise reclining, flute at lips. He took his oak stick, and his curving low beaver, and through a corridor outside passed on to a marble platform in the lake.

This was even better than the hope of Lise d’Arblay. Far yonder, in another wing, Margaret waited, watching the darkening day.

Lise ceased her music, and laughed. Her paddle touched the water, and the shallop came grazing the landing-place.

“I had no idea that I was overheard, your Grace,” she said; “I have been spying about, and found this elegant lake, and this adorable wherry, too tempting. So I brought my piccolo.”

“You have brought me as well, you see: and I have heard both Mrs. Billington and Catalani, too, in my time; but that is siren-music.”

“Ah, your Grace, Ulysses did not listen to the sirens. He stopped his ears.”

“Well, but I am not Ulysses. And, besides, the fellow only managed to escape because the sirens did not play with piccolos.”

She threw back her head:

“I owe your Grace, then, to my piccolo: I must overlay it with gold.”

“Well, shall I step in?”

He stepped in. Lise had the paddle. The wherry glided out, curved languidly about, then almost reached the other side, near the avenue. A lazy species of flirtation went on meanwhile within it.

“I have been adoring the avenue,” said Lise. “I do not think I ever saw one so sumptuous.”

“Yes, it is supposed to be rather fine,” said he.

“But so bare! On a French chateau, from every opening would peep white nymph and faun, Pan and Sylvanus, satyr and hamadryad. Here, except the file of tree-trunks, there is — nothing!”

“There you are wrong,” he answered. “My friend, Elwell, has in quality what he lacks in quantity, you will find. A little way down one comes upon a rather fine thing by Turnerelli; then, farther on, there are some Graces by Nollekens; and if you keep on, you get to a thing by Chantry—”

A little cry . . . “*Chantry*, your Grace?”

He nodded. "He is my ideal! — my darling! I *should* like to see it"

"Well, the only way is to go to it, then. That is easily done, too." Is it far down?"

"Not too far. We will go."

So they stepped out upon the south shore, and Lise furtively looked at her watch; and there was the leisurely walk down; and the halt before the Turnerelli; and the halt before the Nollekens; and the adoration of the Chantry. And out from the West faded the tragedy of hues, leaving only burnt-out emptiness and grey oblivion, as when a tragedy is past The night was nearly come.

It was before the Chantry that Lise remarked:

"Your Grace — I found this morning, on arriving at Wyemouth, that your Grace is quite the subject of gossip among the cronies.

"So? What is it about?"

"It appears that a wonderful rumour has got abroad that your Grace is to be kidnapped by a club of Frenchmen, who are connived at by their Government, and then kept as hostage for the release of Hero."

"Ah, it would be rather a gallant thing for them to do," answered he: "I wonder some of them have not their thought of that."

She glanced at the angular face, admiring that perfection of *sang-froid*. "But they seem so monstrous serious!" she said. "They even forked out details, — and *names*! I heard that the plot is already in full go — the Frenchmen being in a ship off the coast — and assisted on shore by two English people: one, a female, called Margaret Ferris—"

"Ah, I had a Commissary General in the Peninsular called Ferris. It is really an Italian name, which they have turned into Scotch."

"Remember it, your Grace," she said, and laughed— "Margaret — Ferris. If ever you meet her, you will know your sworn enemy."

Lise all the time was full of secret trouble at the thought of the girl waiting, waiting yonder: for who could tell what Margaret might take it into her head to do?

Suddenly, as if springing from the ground, two gipsies, a man and a woman, appeared a little farther down the avenue. They were very ragged, the man's clothes wet with blood. The woman, half-crouching to her knees, held out a supplicating palm.

"Oh, they are gipsies," said Lise.

"Well, and how came you here?" asked the Duke. He took a listless step in their direction. The gipsies ran a little way, as if in fear.

"Don't run away," he called, seeing their distress: but as he approached, they kept backing diffidently, slowly, half-crouchingly.

"The rascal is afraid of my stick, that is clear," said he, taking a groat from his purse.

"Do you want to tell our fortunes?" called Lise. The gipsy-woman nodded enthusiastically, but kept backing. They were not far now from the end of the sombre avenue.

"Do you know," said he, "they say that Buonaparte has great faith in the sayings of these rascals?"

Crow's-feet, just beginning to gather at his eye-corners, wrinkled up into amusement.

"Some people consider that one of the marks of his greatness," said Lise.

"Ah yes, a great man," he answered musingly: "but the charge I bring against him is that the fellow is not a gentleman. Here, you — what is it you want?"

The gipsy pointed to his belly, meaning hunger: to his blood-stained clothes. "Well, then, here is a fuppenny."

The gipsy, leaning far forward, gingerly took the coin: then backed away. “And what is all the blood about?” asked the Duke.

The man began to pour out a voluble tale of wrong, keeping his leisurely-advancing from camp by the old woman; he had been beaten, robbed, and pursued by them nearly to the avenue.

And what was it all about?

It was because he would not consent to the burying alive of a poor weak-headed lady whom the tribe had stolen in London — a poor thing with the face of a rat —

The Duke glanced at Lise with concern. She was feeling, with tingling pleasures, the perfection of the gipsies’ acting.

A few steps more, and they would be at the avenue-end.

Suddenly a perfect hullabaloo of jabbering gibberish, tongues contending in volubility, burst upon the ear: and immediately there passed by the avenue-end, along the open road, a crowd of apparently excited gipsies, evidently carrying some burden like a coffin, for in their midst was a longish space.

“There are they!” cried the gipsy-man to the Duke— “those are them, guv’nor! They are carrying her now to bury!”

He, with stick grasped tight, trotted prone at once. He raised his voice, calling “Stop!” At the sound a silence fell; every gipsy glanced backward: and distance all the while before the couple. He had been driven gipsies of his tribe, he and his in a body, they took to their heels. The Duke was after them.

Lise and the two gipsies came running after, she holding up her habit-skirt.

The band, either with design, or because of their burden, did not run fast. The Duke, hat pushed back on head, with uplifted stick, gained slowly upon

them. But *his* run, too, was more leisurely than intense; and the road was winding. When the crowd was still twenty yards ahead, he was clean hidden from Grandcourt by a cliff-side. All the time he could hear a beating and kicking against boards, and divined the death-struggle in the coffin. When at last he was within striking distance, he had run a good way, and the noises in the coffin had ceased. As he was about to drop a blow, suddenly the whole band scattered like chaff, in swift flight over ditches, fields, hedges, dropping the melancholy burden at his feet.

He bent over a coffin of rough boards, at a loss what to do. The noises had ceased! And he had no means of opening the lid.

While he stood in doubt, Lise and the two gipsies came running. The male gipsy, marvellously well prepared for the exigency, held out a short poker.

The Duke with unexpected ease prised up the lid, threw it off, and saw death before him. There lay a young woman, absolutely chinless. He realised at once that this could only be the stolen niece of Opie; and a strong emotion of pity and indignation stirred his heart. In the gathering darkness he bent over the dead face, silently.

The girl had been taught to make a noise at a sound of three taps above her head: but the taps were never given: for, before the signal, the frail creature had begun to pound the boards, stifling, and had quickly died.

Lise d'Arblay put her hand on the poor slanting forehead, smoothing back the hair. But not a film dimmed her eye.

"And they've all her jewels and things in camp, and a pile of money and papers which they stole with her," remarked the gipsy-man.

"Is that so?" said the Duke. "Yes, guv'nor."

"How far is the camp?"

"About a two mile off — on the yon side of the martello-tower."

“Then we will go.”

“They be many, guv’nor — we but two.”

“Well, but you are a host in yourself, sir. We will go.”

He bent once more over the body, replaced the lid, and pushed the coffin from the path, “I must look into this matter,” he said to Lise. “I think I should return to the house, if I were you, and get them to remove the body. You, sir, lead the way.”

The gipsy-man and he went on together, followed by the gipsy-woman. Lise stood there, her hands clasped cold and tight before her.

The Duke and his guide advanced through country which was a complete solitude. He might have been bound or murdered anywhere hereabouts with perfect security: but it was too near the Abbey for the cautious plans of the French.

After a time the gipsy said: “Yonder is the martello-tower.”

He pointed to a black truncated cone of masonry.

“Ah,” said the Duke.

It was nine-thirty o’clock. And down came brooding a night dark as the raven’s wing.

CHAPTER XIII. EN ROUTE



THE DUKE BENT over his watch. Something disquieted him, a vague trouble: for it was nine-thirty, and precisely then it was his way to take a twenty-minutes' arm-chair snooze, a kind of *horsd'oeuvre* to the night's sleep. He hated all departure from the routine of things.

"You say the gipsy-camp is on the *other* side of the tower?"

He spoke over his shoulder.

But he received no answer: he looked round: gipsy and gipsy-woman had vanished. A foreboding of something strange came to him then. He under-tapped the snuff-box with the middle-finger nail, and held the pinch suspended, thinking.

"Ah, I might have guessed that the fellow meant to be off," he said. "Well, then, I must tackle the other rascals alone."

He walked forward. The martello-tower lay some yards from the roadway, a squat rough-hewn chimney, black and scabrous and old, with Norman slits for windows and door. It stood the very symbol of ancient solitude on a heath sparse-grown with stubble. Around it, in the long past, had been a palisade festooned by chains, and three of the posts still stood, black with rot, to one hanging four eaten red links; beyond the posts a fosse, shallowed up almost to the level ground,

and choked with bracken, bramble, furze. A shelving hill-brow met the heath thirty yards beyond. It was between hill and tower that the Duke supposed the camp to lie.

He left the path, and commenced to traverse the stone-encumbered stretch of stubble. On loneliest Pyrennees, among wilds of Assaye, he had not imagined himself in solitude more complete: yet eyes regarded his every step; and on his appearance at the turn of the path, twelve men had crept out of the tower, crawling on the belly, into the shrub-choked fosse.

In his passage across, he walked quite near the ambush: and, in a moment, was surrounded. Up leapt the stick, and backward poised his body, and out cocked a leg; and, for a moment, the wild and gallant stare of the war-horse in action flashed round terrific upon the Frenchmen.

But only for a moment. The men had kept respectful distance. The stick dropped; his eyes resumed their calm. He said:

“Well now, what is it you men are after?”

All in a circle uncovered. Verdier stepped forward, bowing, polished, fashionably-dressed, hat in neatly-bandaged hand.

“Your Grace,” he said, and stopped, and began again: “your Grace — we are Frenchmen, members of a Society which might be called national, originally formed some twelve months since in Paris, with the chief object of securing your Grace’s person as a hostage for the safety, and the release, of our Sovereign, Napoleon I. Your Grace’s presence among us here and now represents the initial success of that enterprise. We need hardly point out to your Grace that resistance would be useless, in face of the numbers around your Grace; nor do we think it necessary to assure your Grace that your Grace has nothing but homage and consideration to expect from us, if your Grace will deign to accompany us. We are all your Grace’s servants.”

“Well, and where is it you mean to take me to?”

“We have a frigate off the coast, and a boat near the shore. The only serious inconvenience to which we shall be compelled to subject your Grace will be a short ride through the surf on the back of one of our men.”

“Ah, and how far is it?”

Something over twelve miles, your Grace.”

“Well, then, let us be going.”

He stepped forward, pulling his hat a little over the eyes. The men formed in pre-arranged order about him, Verdier by his side, a head shorter than he. Before all marched little Danda with scorched beard, blistered face, stepping rhythmic, triumphal, as to sound of flute and tambour. Already the night was very black.

The road did not lead directly southwards, but east-and-south. And along it, in silence, with steady tramp, they went — with here a stumble, there a splash. One man behind carried a hamper of eatables, with which it had been thought that it might be proper to refresh the Duke, should opportunity offer on the road; another carried a half-veiled lanthorn, which hardly shed light.

In the Duke worked the resentful consciousness that the hour of his snooze was past. After a time, he said to Verdier:

“So, then, this is the gipsy-camp?”

“Your Grace will pardon the little ruse,” said Verdier, smiling in the dark.

“Ah, I was warned of you fellows, and should have looked out. But I do not say that it was not rather gallantly done. I must now set about and see how I am to get away from you.”

“No doubt your Grace will find that difficult.”

“Well, then, so much the better for your side.”

There was silence; and thinking that, in truth, he *had* been warned, he thought next of the warner, and frowned.

“Do you know a Mrs. Opie?” he said. “No, your Grace.”

“On your honour, sir?”

“Mrs. Opie, your Grace? No, sir.”

And now he was a little self-angry for suspecting a lady: and concluded that her presence with him in the avenue must have been mere coincidence.

As for Lise d'Arblay, sure of his capture, she had hurried back to the Abbey; made for the line of stables northward; found the crib where she had seen her horse stalled, left saddled by her directions. The livery-men were at supper. All was still. Soon she went cantering the lawn, making the detour for the avenue. She had to embark with the party, having followed on horseback behind: for, till the shore was reached, it was not judged prudent that she should be known to the Duke in her true character, so that, in case of mischance on the twelve-mile journey, she might be useful.

But as she went cantering the lawn, Margaret watching in growing weariness, saw her pass dimly, like a shadow, athwart the deepening night. Two hours she had waited. Most solemnly still the vast house was I — soundless within, soundless without. The world seemed mere uninhabited gloom, the haunt of ghosts. She had peeped into the corridor, but now not even a footman was visible. She stood her sentry-guard at the window, looking out, waiting. All of a sudden, she saw the shadow canter — and started. She could discern that it was a woman — and she knew what woman — she had no doubt. All her vague suspicion leapt now into rage. That woman had kept her waiting these hours, was supposed to be arranging an interview for her, and was out riding, away from the Abbey, in haste. A train of doubt, of thought, flashed through her: and she had an impulse, and was away — along the corridor — to the hall, spying about, meantime, for a servant: but the mansion seemed desolate as some enchanted castle. She flew after the horse, bent upon following. Her legs were still good for a run, anyway. She tracked the hoof- tramp to the avenue; and quite half-way down it her excellent powers availed her to run at utmost speed.

Hence she could discern that the horse, now at the end, turned to the left: but when she too, reached the open road, Lise was lost to both eye and ear. Margaret, still running, panting, but without conscious aim now, followed to the left.

As Lise cantered near the coffin, she pulled short, stricken with surprise. There, bending over the body, stood a man, a lanthorn-shine on his face.

He was very old, but stalwart, large-boned, tall; a mist of white hair floated from his uncovered head; his beard reached his middle. He looked like a prophet, or a madman. He had on nothing but a blanket, fastened over the left shoulder, from which a lank arm hung out.

Wondering at what produced upon her the impression of a vision, Lise galloped past, while two pipes of blunderbuss-slug, shot at her head, whizzed over the horse's haunches.

When Margaret, twenty minutes later, reached the spot, no aged man, and no dead body, were there.

CHAPTER XIV. CASTLE DEBONAIRE



THERE ARE TWO roads which, between them, clasp the domain of Grandcourt like two arms. By one, the southern, the Duke had gone to the martello; the other, the northern, runs round the north of Grand-court Park: and these two meet in a single road, half a mile beyond the tower. Along this single road the party walked a mile, and here the road again split into two, one of the branches being a mere footpath. This perhaps was why, on coming to that point, not noticing the footpath (their right way), they walked along the other some fifteen minutes.

Then the voice of Danda was heard: "Stop! we have come wrong somehow."

A mass of masonry had confronted him at a turning. No such building, he knew, should be met on the right way.

A halt was made. The man with the lanthorn ran forward, and came back crying:

"It is some old castle."

"What has happened is this," said Verdier, "at the meeting of two paths we have taken the wrong one."

"Back!" cried Danda.

"We might use the castle," said Verdier; "it is the 'Castle' in the Report sent us: it has been deserted for centuries. Your Grace, we have taken the precaution to bring for your Grace's refreshment, and our own, some victuals. Might I ask — ?"

"Very Well, if that is so. I am rather hungry," said the Duke.

It was the day of impossible “suppers” after dinner, and heavy ones. The party moved forward. “That is, if we can get in, your Grace,” said Verdier.

But there was no difficulty, both bridges being down over bush-rank ditches. The building was baronial Norman, mostly ruins. One portcullis hung yet in the inner-curtain arch, but all trace of portals was gone. They traversed a courtyard of dislocated flags, then the donjon-gate into a corridor littered with *debris* of fallen walls, floorless rafters above, then a complexity of decay, seeking some table, or bench, or block, for the meal. The extent seemed specially vast for an ordinary castle: but after some minutes of ascents, descents, and wandering, they stood on some flat marble steps before the west-looking nave of an Abbey-chapel, a long-drawn lane of broken groins and compound-columns. It was now clear that they were in one of those religious establishments whose priors had been first barons, and ecclesiastics after: in which case the way to the frater was obvious. They therefore picked their way east to the chancel, then through the remains of the south transept, then by the east cloister across the standing walls of calefactory, slype, chapter-house and parlour, all well defined, and finally turned west into a large room which must have been the refectory: and here, certainly, in the centre, was a small table.

But the table was surprising: it did not seem old, and was made of rough logs; and as the lanthorn was deposited upon it, it was impossible to doubt — those were *crumbs* between the logs!

The French exchanged glances. One, with the lanthorn, examined the chamber. It bore unmistakable evidence of an occupant. Here and there hung carcasses — rat or rabbit, dog or cat. Along one wall, near the ceiling, ran a gallery of short stone balusters bellying almost into mutual contact: and over the balustrade hung — a blanket!

They saw, too, that the walls had been pierced by several holes, within which lay rusty muzzles of fowling-piece, musket, or blunderbuss, while from three larger orifices near the floor protruded a 24-pounder saker, a 17-pounder culverin, and a 33-pounder demi-cannon.

A clang — a click — a bolt pushed into its socket — and the blood went rushing to every heart. They had entered by a doorway still fitted with a door of old iron bars, facing which, in the opposite wall, was another similar door. It was this opposite door that now clanged.

And instantly, from the *other* door (of their entrance), a rich voice sang out: “Hands up! And out with your purses, or you are dead men all!”

Prompt upon this cry, from the opposite door a very different voice, a deep bass, shouted: “Up draw-bridge! Down portcullis! The castle is invested with tents! At them, my merry men! Harry — harry — the foe!”

“Well now, we are in for it,” said the Duke of Wellington.

Wild confusion ensued. One of the French fell dead; the Duke’s hat went flying, shot away; and the man at the grating who had cried, “Out with your purses!” dropped a corpse.

These three shots came all from behind the door opposite the party’s entrance, and were fired by an old man clad in a blanket, from which the lank arm stuck.

The man shot behind the other grating was a leader of highwaymen, who, passing over the desolate country-side towards Wyemouth, had happened upon the castle, and, some time before the French, had entered it to “spend the evening. Highwaymen” proper they were not, being without horses: they were called “foot-pads” or “wolf’s-heads,” and were common in the country.

There was a quarter of a minute’s silence, while everyone in the smoke and half-darkness wondered what was toward: when forth again from that

bare arm flashed a pistol, of which some dozen lay loaded at his feet. And out again he cried:

“Harry, harry the foe!”

The minuter facts about any locality can only be acquired by residence in it: so that when Lise d’Arblay reported the situation of Castle Debonaire, she had stated that it had been long deserted: yet few residents in the country-side were ignorant of the hermit of the castle. He was said to be the last of the Debonaire race, and, from youth, had been deranged. For sixty years the castle had been his home, and for sixty years he had lived in the belief that it was in a state of siege, and his garrison suffering famine. The rock-boulders round represented to his frenzied eye the camp of a leaguering host. The old muzzles which pointed upon the refectory were parts of the battery which threatened invaders. Daily he sallied forth at the head of foraging party, or flying squadron, in search of provisions, and the carcass of rat or dog on the walls each represented the triumph of some *sortie* in the teeth of overwhelming odds. Woe to the peasant who encountered the hermit on these excursions: the shot which he had fired at Lise d’Arblay being his habit. He lived from a plot of potatoes and another of rye inside the outer curtain, and had laid up stores of unleavened cakes.

His shot at the foot-pads was supposed by them to be the Frenchmen’s answer to the demand for money, and when out cracked the hermit’s fourth shot, wounding another foot-pad, they, with rage in their shout, threw open the grated door, and rushed into the refectory, resolved upon war.

They were fifteen.

And at once the chamber was a hubbub of detonating pistols, smoky confusion, clashing swords, contending shouts: above all, the brazen-lunged bellow:

“White are the fields with tents! Harry, my merry men! — batter! — slay!”

Round the Duke had gathered a number of French, partly to protect, partly to guard him, Verdier among them. He, in their centre, stood, hatless, his gossamer hair lifting a little at the agitated air, eyes campaigning round, taking the measure of every detail, a certain light in them — like the light of battle.

“Well, we shall all soon be done for, if we do not look out,” he said.

Danda, in white-lipped intensity, was hacking furiously with others among the foot-pads. Bang, bang, the fire-arms before, and bang, behind, rang the hermit-shot.

And it was well for the Frenchmen that at that moment the leader of armies definitely ranged himself on their side.

“I sha’n’t run off you know,” he said, “at least not just now. I will tell you what to do, if you like.”

Out above the tumult sang Verdier’s tenor: “Follow the Duke’s orders!”

And out like an echo the cry of Danda: “Duke’s orders!”

CHAPTER XV. THE IRON MAN



AND AT ONCE, where dismay and random ecstasy had reigned in the heads of the French, orderly obedience to a dominant mind supervened. The Duke was in command, leading, for the first time, a French brigade into action.

He stooped, and speaking low to two, said in French:

“You see the table: just lay it against the wall yonder on its side, and get behind it with your pistols.” And before they could move, he said to two others whose pistols his remarking eye had noted still undischarged: “Those two fellows at the end there — just cover them with your pistols, and pick them down the moment I give the word.” And before these could stir, he said to a fifth: “Just toss your coat over the lantern.”

At once the room was in darkness: for the foot-pads’ light was in the dorter where they had been carousing, they having stolen down in the dark, on hearing sounds; nor had the hermit his lanthorn; for, arriving in his room, which opened on the gallery, he had spied the party over the balustrade, and descended in quivering haste to riddle them.

And quick, to the two commanded to level pistols, the Duke said:

“Now take me off those two rogues.”

He had calculated that the effect of the sudden darkness would be a momentary motionlessness of shock: and, in fact, the two targets marked to die fell together.

Meantime, two were able to drag the table unharmed, and crouch behind it.

A knowing eye, measuring the chances, would have discerned that already the few words of the Duke had rendered the battle hopeless for the foot-pads.

“Now,” he said, in confidential whisper to Verdier near, “just get quickly and quietly to the door there, and run your sword into that old man’s belly.”

The shots had again begun to detonate at random from hermit and foot-pad. But a fearful shriek quickly announced that Verdier had done his work, and the long war of the hermit’s life was warred.

“Three of you,” said the Duke, laying fingers on three shoulders in quick succession; but, as he touched the last, the man dropped shot. “You, then” — he touched another — “creep up yonder on the left ten paces toward the door, and get out your swords till I give the word. And you,” he said to another, “stand near the lantern till I say ‘uncover,’ then uncover, and run away behind the table.”

Three of the nine French were left. To these he cried, raising his voice:

“Well, now, you three, follow me up the right-hand steps to the gallery! And mind you don’t break your necks.”

There were two narrow stone stairs against opposite walls, but in such ruin, that it would hardly have occurred to another to attempt their scaling. But the sagacious eye had seen, not only the possibility, but that the right flight, as one faced the gallery, was the better preserved. Up, then, they climbed, hands, knees, and feet, the brittle stone falling in powdery masses, shots whistling.

They had nearly reached the balcony, when he called: “Now then, the lantern: uncover!”

A man snatched the coat and scurried behind the table; the room burst into light; and now the foot-pads, if they had eyes, must have seen the position untenable: for there, for frontal attack, were three in entrenched

post behind the table, muzzles pointed; outflanking their right, a light-brigade with swords; above, behind the bellied balusters, three threatened their left flank.

“Well, now, I think we may begin,” said the Duke.

But the robbers, twelve to nine, were disposed to fight like Britons: and four dashed upon the three swordsmen, with knives, with butt-ends, urgently, meaning business.

“Pick me that fellow down,” said the Duke to Danda, indicating one: but the fellow had spattered a French brain before ever Danda had fired, and missed.

Meanwhile, the men behind the table were not idle, and the foot-pads fell fast. Three, observing the other ruined stairway near, climbed with such frantic agility, that they nearly reached the top unnoticed: till the Duke said to his own three:

“You see those three: send them to the devil.”

They ran to the gallery-end to obey; and in a fierce conflict the French, being uppermost, played havoc with the scalers. Meanwhile, below, a general *mélée* took place, the other foot-pads having made a rush for the table; but they were now outnumbered, five to three, and swordless. The contest was short. The bodies of the scalers dropped. Below, the last two foot-pads took to their heels, covered with wounds.

But the fact of the situation was this: that the Duke stood alone near that gallery-end at which he had climbed, behind him an open door — that through which the hermit had seen the party. It was partly with an eye to it that the Duke had climbed the gallery.

Stealthily, unnoticed in the heat of fight, he felt behind the door-post, up and down; then behind the door. There was staple, there was socket. He examined the door: it was fairly stout and new: the handiwork of the hermit.

He waited till the last foot-pad scuttled. Then he lifted his voice, and spoke.

“Well, now,” he said, “I have saved the lives of some of you fellows. I think it would be only fair if I get off.”

Before they could recover from that stupor of amazement, he was gone.

“Shoot — shoot his legs!” shrieked Danda, but he was a century late.

“*Sot!*” went Verdier, his lips curling. At the same time the men below, running in confusion, happened to overturn the lantern on the floor, and tread it into darkness. The Duke bolted the door.

“It ought to take them half an hour to get through that,” he said, his eyes twinkling with mischief. The door was of logs, round on one side, flat on the other.

His arms went up in a stretch; his mouth opened in a sleepy yawn.

Whither to go? Already the battery had commenced. A few steps over some very shaky flooring, and he came to a doorway on his right, opening into a kind of alcove in faint light, shed partly from a lanthorn’s wick, turned low, and partly from dying embers in a grate. He entered, and to his delight discovered the form of a mattress, heaped with blankets. The hour of his nap being long past, he was desperately drowsy.

In furious haste hacked the swords.

“The fellows cannot get in for half an hour, let them beat about as they like,” he said. “Well, then, I think I will turn in, and get some sleep.”

He took off his coat, and spread it before the fireplace, propping it with his stick and some firewood twigs there, his object being to hide the light, should his time-estimate prove inaccurate.

He came to the bed. To his chagrin, in the middle lay in stiff sleep a body, which, peering, he instantly recognised — the afflicted girl, which the hermit had brought as rich trophy-of-war and laid upon his bed.

In furious haste hacked the swords.

“Well, then,” said he, “we must be bed-fellows my poor girl. You have had worse, I think, and I also.”

So he lifted her to the farther edge, and he extinguished the lanthorn, and he lay by her side, covering himself. And in an instant, he murmuring:

“Twenty minutes,” they were asleep together, quick and dead.

But his estimate proved wrong. Before half an hour, in little, more than a quarter, the French had gained entrance. As they fell in, with shouts, with clamour and heat, a nasal sound of midnight slumber came long-drawn from the living sleeper.

CHAPTER XVI. THE TWO ROADS



IN RUSHED THE French in the rayless dark, past the alcove-door, without suspecting its existence. Their whole effort, indeed, was to get upon the road again, to put swiftness and the ecstasy of chase into their legs, not dreaming that he could be hardy enough to linger there an instant, supposing him already hasting to Grandcourt.

Hasting or sauntering: for they remembered his coolness, his contemptuous way, with hope: and the way was long: one impassioned chase, and again he might be theirs.

But they were now fearfully handicapped, since their lanthorn lay shapeless in the refectory. With occasional flashes they made to some broken stairs, down which they stumbled. In the complexity of the ruins, they had lost the direction of the drawbridge, and now wandered at random in a wilderness of stone, just managing to keep together. At last Verdier, in advance, emerged upon a lane between guesten-hall and donjon leading to the courtyard. It was then seen that the abbey-garth must run at right angles to the court, whereas they had imagined the two in the same straight line.

Verdier sang out: and over the draw-bridge, and away along the road they dashed. The night outside was about as dark as within the ruins.

To the point where road and footpath met they ran, and thence along the single road, before it splits into the two roads embracing Grandcourt.

At that time, coming along this single road was Margaret Ferris, breathless, hasting she knew not whither, sure only that this way Lise had galloped. She running, and they running, in a minute she must have butted

amongst them, but her light ears detected a multiple sound of feet on wet road, and immediately heard some words — in French!

They were these: “What if the Duke is in the castle all the time — behind us!”

That tenor — she knew it. She had only time to swerve, and stand still, when the men rushed by; but one, near the hedge, brushed her, and before she could start into flight, pulled up, and caught her arm.

“Here is someone,” he called— “halt!”

They came, surrounding her. The man said: “It is a woman.”

“Let me *go*! Let me *go*, will you?” cried she, struggling. Something in the voice caused Verdier to start.

But the bones of Margaret, he was certain, were among the lighthouse ashes. “Be quiet, you! no one is going to hurt you,” panted her custodian. Someone struck steel-and-flint, and she stood lit: but at the first sound of preparation, she had half-turned, and with swift wit, thrown skirt over head with her free hand. Her dress now was different to the gauze and spangles worn on the frigate, nor, in the momentary glint, was she recognised.

“Where are you from?” asked Verdier, in English. “The way you are going,” she answered, sullenly.

“Did you meet anyone?”

She had not. The glad possibility of misleading them occurred to her. “Someone passed me,” she said; “I think it was a man. He had a man’s voice.”

“He spoke, then?”

“Yes.”

“What did he say?”

“He asked if he was on the right road to Grandcourt.”

“How far back was that?”

“Not far. About five minutes before I met you.”

“*Come on!*”

Off they darted, leaving her there.

So, then, they had had him, and *he had escaped!* this she gathered from the words overheard: “What if he is in the castle all the time — behind!” That, then, was where he really was! for if on that road, she must have met him. But where was “the castle”? She knew not: she had been only three days in the country-side. She had to find out, however, meet him, guide him from them: else they would lurk on the road, and retake him. At all events, she was going right, the castle being “behind” the French. She must trust to her luck, her wit. She had gathered herself to set off, when — a galloping tramp. She thought of Lise— “that Mrs. Opie” — as the invisible sounds galloped past. She started in the opposite direction.

As for Lise, she had made no mistake, like her friends, where the road divided into footpath and castle-road, but galloped along the footpath with keen outlook for the lanthorn, till surprise grew in her at their incredible rate of travel; finally she reached a point impossible to them on foot. By some unspeakable chance, she reasoned, she must have passed them, or they gone wrong, or — something. She had then turned back in headlong urgency, eyes wide in apprehension.

The French had nearly come to where the road splits into two to embrace Grandcourt, when her hoof-sounds overtook them.

“Lise, Lise, don’t ride us down,” called Verdier.

“In the good God’s name, what *are* you doing here?” she gasped, drawing up among them.

“My dear, raving will not help,” said Verdier. “Still, the news is not cheering. The prisoner has escaped, that is all.”

“Then, O my good God, I pity you! Nothing will ever wipe out your shame! You have betrayed France!”

“So I say, too!” cried Danda, “so I say, too!”

“But *I* say,” retorted Verdier, “that it is not a question of raving, but of recapturing the man.”

“That you will never do!” said Lise.

“A feminine view,” he answered. “We may. He is certainly not far ahead now, if he is ahead at all. The only question is—”

Without pause they had been trotting on, and came now to the point when the two Grandcourt roads meet.

“Halt!” said Verdier. “Well, what is the question?” said Lise. “This: supposing him to be on ahead, which of these two roads has he taken?”

“Divide your men, and send one party along each road.”

“A brilliant idea, Lise, but impossible. Six of our best fellows are gone. There has been a row — a fight. There are only six of us left.”

“If three go the north road, and three the south—” said Lise. “Three are no good. The Duke of Wellington is not going to allow himself to be ordered about for ten miles by three men. And we have no lantern: it was smashed in the fight. One party would never find the other, if we separate. We must stake all on one chance.”

“But you are losing time! Try the north road, then! As you came by the south, he is more likely to take the north now — I, meanwhile, will go by the south—”

“Good! I agree with you. The north, then! Come on — this way!”

Off, then, they rushed, Lise taking the southern road, past the martello, on to the avenue, then up it, all ears, head held low on her mane: no sound but the hoof-falls: back then she turned, galloping hot, scouring the road, past the martello, past the meeting of the ways, on by the single road.

Margaret now was not far from the meeting of footpath and castle-road, when again she heard the sounds of the on-coming horse behind.

“What does the woman *mean*?” she said to herself. And this time she felt absolutely that she must speak, must know more.

“Is that you, Mrs. Opie?” she shrilly called. Lise’s horse reared, so sharply she reined — with alarm more than surprise: for she recognised the voice.

“Yes, it is Mrs. Opie,” she said— “and you, Margaret?”

“I waited for you, but you did not *come*.”

“My dear girl, a dreadful thing has happened—”

“Oh, I dare say!”

That tone of scornful rancour was convincing. “So, then, Margaret suspects, suspects me,” Lise thought: “let me remember that.”

“I suppose you know that your story of the Frenchmen has come true, Margaret, and that the Duke has been got away by them?”

“Yes, I know. I met the Frenchmen, you see. Haven’t you sent any of the *servants* of the Abbey out looking for him?”

“I? No — I haven’t had time.”

“I see.”

“But I, too, met the Frenchmen, Margaret, and overheard some of their talk. It appears that the Duke has escaped.”

“Everything you tell me I know already.”

“Then do you tell me something which *I* do not know. Where is the Duke now?”

“I can’t say, I’m sure.”

“Are you out looking for him?”

“Are you?”

“But yes, Margaret. Why else? other of us may find him.”

“I hope *one* of us may, yes.”

“Well, if *you* do, let me give you a hint. You know where the two roads meet near the martello- tower?”

“Well?”

“Well, the Frenchmen have gone by the *north* one, and there are lying in wait for him. So if you meet him, be certain to take him the south way, in order to cheat them.”

Lise, with absolute cunning, argued that Margaret, suspecting her now, would do the opposite, and, if she discovered the Duke, would not fail to lead him by the north road into the arms of the French.

And, in truth, Margaret only needed this counsel to be convinced that the north was, in fact, the road of safety: and said at once to herself:

“I would make him go the north road, all the same.”

“And where are you going now, Margaret?” said Lise. “I don’t know, I’m sure.”

Where she was going to was— “the castle.” She had this knowledge which Lise had not: that the Duke had been to some “castle”; for in the galloping dialogue between Lise and Verdier had been no mention of the castle, whereas Margaret had overheard those words: “the castle behind.”

“I am going to turn back, Margaret,” said Lise. “Further on this way seems useless.” She started back in the direction of the martello; Margaret the other way, at a run. When she came to footpath and castle-road, not seeing the footpath, she kept still the wide road, and rapidly approached the castle.

CHAPTER XVII. IN THE COURT-YARD



PUNCTUALLY AT THE end of the twenty minutes assigned himself the Duke opened his eyes, expecting to hear the French still hacking: but all was silence.

He lay for a time, then rose, and put on his coat. A draft in the coat-covered grate had blown the embers into a babbling whip of flame. With this he lit the hermit's lanthorn, covered the dead girl, went warily, and descended some stairs.

The French were still in the ruins, fumbling for an exit. Sounds reached him. He found a space between two walls, piled with *debris* at either end; over one pile he climbed, and crouched waiting, the lanthorn under his coat.

He knew exactly where lay court-yard and drawbridge, for he had noted all the changes of direction in the passage through castle and abbey, and summing up these, concluded that the chapel and frater would lie at about right angles to the castle.

He did not know that the French had been less observant, and having waited and heard nothing, he climbed from his hiding-place, and set out, steering his feet toward the court-yard. A little sooner, and he must have been caught: for, when he emerged, they had hardly run down the outer escarpment, and from the roadway some ordering voice came up faintly.

"Ah, they think I am off before them," he said. "They have more zeal than discretion, I see: good soldiers, but bad generals. Well, then, I must only wait here till they get away."

On a block of masonry near the donjon-portal he sat with bare head, hiding for a time the lanthorn between his legs.

He could wait as greatly as act. He sat elbow on knee, thumb and forefinger holding his chin, smiling a little, while thirty minutes passed. The lanthorn stood now before him, its light on his face.

“They will not come back,” he reasoned: “when they do not find me on the road, the natural thing for them to think will be that I have got home; then they will run off to their ship in a sweat, lest I have them taken up.”

Another fifteen minutes, and in, with feet of pelting swiftness, came Margaret.

With infinite surprise she saw him, open to any eye, the light on his lean visage. “My lord—” she panted— “are you the Duke?”

He dropped hand from chin, sat up leisurely, looked at her. He never forgot a face: and, as he did not know her, had never seen her. But he knew her name! This was that Margaret Ferris, the English auxiliary of the French, against whom he had been warned by Mrs. Opie.

“Well, now, Margaret,” he said, “what is it you are after?”

She started.

“I am glad you know my *name*, my lord,” she answered— “you have got to come with me at *once!*”

“Is that so? And where is it you want to take me to?”

“The Frenchmen — the Frenchmen — are on the south road — there is a north and a south road — and they are on the south road, going after you! You have got to come — quick — to the north road, and get home, before they come back.”

“Well, but suppose I like to remain here instead?”

“You *mus’n’t!* They will come back and take you!”

His face, his heart, hardened against her. He had just reasoned that the French would not return.

“You know all about them, then?” he said. “I know, yes, my lord! They passed me on the *road*! I heard one of them — the most artful one, too — doubt whether you were ahead of them at all! He said that perhaps, all the while, you were hiding in the *castle*! It was that made me come here. They will be back and take you *sure*, if you do not *hurry*!”

“Ah, and who is that ‘most artful one’ you tell me about?”

“He is a man they call Verdier. They do everything he *tells* them.”

“Is that so? You know them all personally, then?”

“Haven’t I *cause*, my lord? Didn’t they chase me all over Seacombe Moor last night, and take me on board their ship with a man named Mr. Golde, and drive us up in the *lighthouse*, and burn the lighthouse down?”

“Is that so? Which lighthouse?”

“Raddon Lighthouse, my lord.”

This was categorical statement, chapter and verse. He disliked to have to doubt a woman’s word.

“So Raddon Lighthouse is burnt down, then. I have not heard that.”

“You have not had *time*. And we are losing time now, sir.”

He looked at her, almost with admiration. “Well, now,” he said, “you are a very bold young woman.”

“I don’t understand what you *mean*, sir.”

“Why not desert the enemy and come over to my side, Margaret?”

“I don’t understand what you *mean*, my lord.”

“I knew your name, you see.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And what does that imply to your mind?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“Well, it implies this, you know: that I have been told all about you.” Still she had no notion what he was driving at. She said: “Won’t you come now, my lord?”

“No, Margaret, certainly, I won’t come *now*. It looks as if you were rather wasting powder and shot. And what is more, I won’t let *you* go, either.”

What *did* he mean? Her hands met wringing. “Well, now, you see, you are distressed,” he said: “but it is your own doing. You have over-run into the enemy’s lines. Sit down here.”

This he said with some sternness. She sat down at once by him, mouse-quiet “I do not call you a good actress, you know,” he went on after a minute. “You are very bold, but you show too much distress and eagerness.”

“I can’t *help* it!”

“Well, that is an open confession. I like you; but then, when I had once told you that I had been warned against you—”

Now she understood —

“Oh, my lord! my lord!” she cried.

Surely in that cry was sincerity! It had the true ring of pang, of reproach, of wounded loyalty. “Have I pained you?” he asked, with sudden gentleness.

“My lord, my lord, *who* has been doing this?”

“Well, but I cannot tell you that.”

“But I *know*! It is that Mrs. Opie!”

“You know her, then?”

“Didn’t I go to the Abbey, my lord, and tell her of *the plot* this evening? And didn’t she leave rue waiting while she went to get you to see me? And while I was waiting, didn’t I see *her* out *riding* on the lawn? And didn’t *I* just meet her on the *road*, riding about?”

“You don’t mean to say that she is against me, and on the side of the Frenchmen?”

“Yes, my lord, that is just what I do mean!”

“Ah, I thought there was something,” said the Duke.

He had to choose between the two women, and his mind was swinging round to faith in Margaret, and something like distrust in Lise.

“Well, now, Margaret, I am in a fix, you see,” said he. “That lady, a guest in the house where I am staying, tells me that you are a naughty girl, and you tell me that she is naughty. I am afraid I shall have to disbelieve one or other of you. And it is rather difficult to choose. There are points that look black against you both.”

“But, my lord — look at me!” — her eyes filled with innocent tears — “do I *look* like one—” She could not go on. The words perished in her throat. She turned aside her head. He patted her on the shoulder.

“Never mind. We shall see. Suppose I cast in my lot with you, and say I will trust you?” She jumped up. “Oh, thank you, sir!”

“You won’t betray me, then?”

“Oh, my lord — !”

“Well, then, let us go.”

He rose. Margaret brushed a sleeve across her eyes, and in a moment was all activity. She caught up the lanthorn. They moved towards the drawbridge.

“Well, now,” he said, “I am in your hands. You shall do with me whatever you like.”

“You are good, my lord. I always *heard* that you were good.”

“You are very likely good, too. I am sorry now that we quarrelled. You know why I did it, and you will forgive me.”

“Oh yes, sir!”

“And you are a mighty pretty girl, Margaret. Will you give the Duke a kiss?”

“I don’t *like* to,” said she, pouting, with a reluctant movement of one shoulder. “Well, then, I must go without. But we will hold hands, if you like. The road is rough and wet.”

And very lovingly they went, hand in hand, she slightly in advance, dragging him a little in her greed, swinging the lanthorn over the receding path.

“You remind of a very pretty French girl I once met near Toulouse. There was rather a flirtation between us, I can tell you, Margaret. You are not French, are you?”

“Oh, my lord — !”

“No — don’t be angry. I never do things by halves: I trust you entirely, having trusted you. The question was only accidental.”

On, over receding puddle and rough road, they went, to where castle-road met footpath, and on by the single road to where the two Grandcourt roads meet.

“And about these two roads?” said he. “You say the Frenchmen are on the south one.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You are quite sure?”

“Oh yes, sir.”

“How do you know?”

She knew that they were on the south, because Lise had told her that they were on the north: she had perfect moral certainty. But she felt that the reason that convinced her might not convince him: and it was urgently necessary that he should be convinced. The French by this time must be hasting back. She feared delay — and told a lie.

“I know, sir,” she said. “I *saw* them on the south road.”

“Very well, then. We will take the north.”

And along the north they proceeded.

CHAPTER XVIII. MARGARET'S GUIDANCE



THE FRENCH HAD gone in eager hunt right to the north park-gates, four miles. They halted fatigued. Since four that afternoon, they had travelled over twenty miles.

“He is behind us, then,” said Verdier.

“But what of the man, who, according to the woman on the road, was ahead of us?” said Danda: “we should have met him.”

“He must have gone the south road: in which case, Lise will be able to tell us something of him.”

“Ah, but where is she? Back! we search the country till we find him! We burn and sack the Abbey — !”

As they set off again, there sounded approaching hoofs — Lise, who, after parting from Margaret, had taken, this time, the north road.

They warned her, and she drew up among them. “O my good God, he is nowhere on the south road,” she said. “Did you meet a man?”

“That is strange. A woman on the road told us there was a man.”

“Oh, that was Margaret Ferris. She lied.”

“Margaret Ferris. You ought to have *killed* that girl. She will ruin everything yet — if everything is not already ruined.”

“But we have no idea what girl you are talking about.”

“Oh, nonsense! the girl you took on board the frigate last night.”

“But — are you in earnest? It is impossible that she is not dead!”

“She *would* be dead if *I* had had a pistol a short while ago.” The men were stricken silent. Verdier bit his lip. “Come on! let us be on the move!”

said Danda. The others went on. Verdier stood with hand on the horse's wet neck.

Lise," he said, " I cannot think that he has reached home. He had only some fifteen minutes' start, and unless he ran hard, we must have overtaken him. He is on the road now — or in the castle—"

"What castle?"

"The old castle — we were there—"

"My good God, you did not tell me that! I might have gone there! What a mess a set of men, if left alone—"

"Do not rave, my dear girl. I think it is you who have now gone wrong in leaving the south road. He may go that way."

"I am going back. I was so sure that you had him—"

"Better stay about here, and keep guard; we are now going into the south to wait. And don't go galloping about in that way: the hoofs make a row."

He went running to join the others.

At that time Margaret, her right hand in the Duke's left, her left swinging the lanthorn, said "Stop! I thought I heard something, my lord!"

He glanced at her.

Your ears are light, in that case."

"They have *got* to be. Didn't you hear anything, sir?"

"No. What was it like?"

"I don't know. It was something."

"Well, we must not allow ourselves to be frightened by 'something.' There is nothing to fear, if your story is correct."

But the whole of her story, she knew, was not correct. She was a little doubtful, frightened. "They may have split up their men into two lots," she said, "and posted one lot on each road."

“No, they won’t do that. There are only six of the fellows left. And they very likely guess that I won’t go with three without some fisticuffs. They are all, therefore, on the south road where you saw them.”

She was guiltily silent; then said:

“Suppose they have come over to this road, sir?” Again he glanced at her. She was pallid. Her hand trembled in his.

“You must not be afraid,” he said. “They would not do that, you know, without some reason. And if they were far gone on the south road when you saw them there, I think they would not have time to be here by now. *Were* they far gone?”

“Pretty far,” she said, and threw up her eye-whites in demure appeal, thinking: “Lord help me with this man this night!”

“Well now,” remarked he, “ I think we are getting on very well for the Abbey.”

“I don’t like this *lantern* alight,” said Margaret irrelevantly.

“There again you are not yourself, Margaret. This now is the third time you have said that. If there is nobody to see us, by all means let us see ourselves.”

“You are very obstinate, sir,” she said with a sigh.

And through his mind, for one instant, passed the shadow of a questioning whether all these timidities were not mere cloaks to cover some hidden intent. Yet they had the look of genuineness. The half-thought passed. His pressure tightened in friendship on her hand a moment.

And on they went, approaching the approaching French: till Verdier, with intense hiss of exultation, whispered:

“*There he comes!*”

In the lanthorn-shine they saw him plod with calm deliberate step. The five flocked round Verdier, hanging breathlessly upon his whispers.

“Quick! Dupin, Carhaix, and Huguenin, on that side, under the hedge, well apart — twenty paces. When I whistle, run out and close. Come, Danda and Carnot — you and I on this side.”

They went crouching. And the lanthorn swung nearer; and nearer grew the wet squelch of feet. The Duke walked silent. He had trusted all to her, confident only in her tones, her frank glance. Yet he was a born aristocrat, with faith first in his own class; and in trusting the work-girl he had given a lady the lie, one against whom he could allege nothing, who had actually warned him against the guide he was blindly following.

Yet, in spite of inbred instincts, the simply human was strong in him, too, the frank good-fellowship of the hour, and broad trust in the heartiness of man. He struck a compromise within himself: and without distinctly charging Lise, contrived to rest confidently in Margaret.

Suddenly, the whole slow-built fabric of his trust collapsed. She had snatched her hand from his: a fatal movement. He could not but think it predestined. Yet was perfectly involuntary — a gesture of panic, of frenzied terror.

Verdier’s whistle had sounded — a quick succession of shrills.

They ran out, closing round the Duke. Up went the stick some inches, but dropped. He stood still in their midst, faint night airs musing among his uncovered hair.

She, in her fright, by an impulse of self-preservation, had stepped backward beyond the circle, and stood peering, the lifted lanthorn-shine luridly illustrating a face of distorted pallor.

For a minute intense silence. Then the Duke: “Well, I was behind you all the time, you see. You were after the deer before he broke cover: and gave yourself, and me, a walk.”

But now a low sobbing and lamentation was heard in the night, as Babylonish maidens, with dole and plaint, lamented upon the dead. Margaret's hands were over her face, the lanthorn hanging by a finger. And bitterly she sobbed:

“Oh, my dear lord, forgive me, sir! Oh, what shall I do, my lord, my lord? Forgive a poor girl, sir — Oh, I wish I had never laid eyes on you this night, my lord, my lord!”

But the face of the Duke was like white iron, and the granite rock.

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CHAPTER XIX. THE FOOT-FALL



THE FIRST MOVEMENT was by Verdier. After a minute's tense suspension of silence, broken by Margaret's lament, he spurted at the girl, she not four yards from him. But prompt, with the alacrity of startled roes, she was off, having sighted him between her fingers. In an instant the source of her tears was dry, the streams paused on her cheek, and her soul was in her racing legs. Away they flew, on tip-toe, in impassioned run, a whirlwind of straining effort, Verdier intensely resolved, she desperate. Long it could not last: he felt himself fail, and her getting away from him, in spite of her quarrelling and flapping skirts and wildly-swinging lanthorn: he put hand to belt: a shot in the leg, low, in the calf. He steadied himself, ready to fire; but to her, too, thought by this time had come: away over the hedge, tossed awkwardly askew from the left hand, went the lanthorn into darkness. And she was ten yards ahead, lost to him now. He did not even fire.

The Duke was puzzled. Was it *genuine*, the race: and Margaret, after all, true? Crudely practical, he judged by results, and the results of her guidance were enough for him: he would never have given her the privilege of a second thought in his brain for ever, would have blotted her from his book of life, but for the race. It *looked* genuine: and there were the hearty sobs of the girl, her vivid grief . . . yet it seemed incredible that Verdier, if in earnest, should not shoot. The girl, if against them, would be a constant peril on the long tramp. Verdier's lovesick hesitation to shoot he could not divine: and when Margaret flung away the lanthorn, he decided that the object might be to keep the march dark, without insult to him, by a natural-

looking ruse; when Verdier returned alone, without having once fired, the Duke smiled. Before the judgment-seat of his severity the girl stood damned. He banished her quickly from his thoughts.

It was dark, the Frenchmen few. Verdier therefore whispered two men to hold the prisoner's sleeves. The Duke felt the grips, and for a minute walked on so. Then he said:

“Well, you will have to behave like gentlemen, you know; or I shall knock some of you on the head.”

“Can we do anything for your Grace?” asked Verdier. “These fellows will have to let me go.”

“But, your Grace—”

“Let me go. I won't run off.”

“We have your Grace's promise?”

“No, I won't run off.”

“Let go his Grace's arms,” said Verdier.

But Danda grumbled in his throat, doubtful and ill-content.

On they went, the Duke in the middle, three on each side, with respectful interval. Nothing could be seen. They only knew his presence by the steady sound of his tread, and the ear grew to recognise its accustomed beat among the other sounds. No one spoke.

In this way they tramped to the meeting of north and south roads, and on, eastward, by the single road.

Margaret had stopped her flight, and stood uncertain, wild-eyed, listening. She heard the on-coming march, and drew back breathlessly against the hedge. When they passed her, she followed timorously, keeping the sounds of the march within her ears.

Lise, too, from behind had seen the lanthorn-light, the capture, the short chase. She followed a good way behind Margaret, lest her hoof-sounds

might reach the party.

Near castle-road and foot-path, the French began to strike flashes to avoid a second mistake. The foot-path went winding south a considerable distance between alternations of meadow-grass, cliff, hill-slope, and swamp. And along it, with steady tramp, went the party.

It was too narrow for triple file: so now three went first, then the Duke, then three, in single file, Danda leading, his short legs stepping in the dark their rhythmic, triumphal step. Behind Margaret came Lise, with lax bridle.

The brain of the walking girl grew busy. What was she to *do*? what *could* she? To walk tamely, with tears and weakness, to the shore, and see them accomplish their work, would help nothing. When she remembered that this was *her* doing, up she flung her hands, and let them drop, in an agony.

She wondered if Golde still stupidly slept: if not, he would have read her note, and be at his mill, awaiting her. She could very well guess the direction of Newton, but not how far it might be. The wonder was that the Abbey servants had not missed the Duke — but even so, they could guess nothing: they might even suppose him sitting up, writing, maybe. Her hope was, that parties of men, without knowing of the seizure, had taken gratuitous interest in the matter, spurred on by Golde, perhaps, or deaf Mother Higgins, and were out doing something.

But, meantime, her necessity was to act, she herself, Margaret. If she could retard their progress, that might be something: some delay, somehow — her thoughts began to centre upon this: it was well past midnight: if she could keep them on the move some hours. A morning which found them far from the shore would dawn full of hope.

But to keep them? That could only be done by making them wander, by turning them somehow from their path.

It looked impossible: but, in contradiction to this conclusion, just then the party actually did miscarry, and go tramping over marsh.

“We are off the path!” called Danda; “it is just there to the left. Follow the sound of my steps.” In a minute they were back.

But this opened her mind to the means by which the troop was guiding itself. She tingled with discovery. Here was no question of sight: the night was too confirmed. Each, except the foremost, walked by the sounds of the man before; the foremost by a species of instinct, the indefinite sensations of the ground, of bordering cliff or hillside. And he, too, was unconsciously influenced by the sounds behind.

Another sound, therefore, introduced among the tramp, continually tempting false, would surely prove a distracting factor, a misleading lure, in the *ensemble* of the foot-falls.

This thought struck her pallid. To introduce herself and mingle as one of them among them! and a stretched-out hand, a flutter of the skirt, would spoil her! And there was Yerdier —

She once caught, she doubted if any hope would remain. But she felt out on either hand, though her will still hung in suspension: two hill-sides shelved to the path; as yet she could do nothing. But she quickened her pace.

At this point Verdier called out:

“It would be better, I think, if each took hold of the man in front for guidance. If your Grace does not object—”

Verdier was behind Danda, separated by a man from the Duke. Margaret, now near enough to hear, was stepping with strained ears, throbbing heart, and at Verdier’s proposal her face had a look of scare: it was just like a counter-answer to her thoughts.

“If your Grace does not object—” he repeated.

“Let us get on,” said the Duke, piercing the thought, without troubling to accuse it, “I told you that I would not run off.”

Verdier had the whim that this would be an inoffensive excuse for making doubly-sure of the prisoner, though, in fact, he had no doubt of the Duke’s word; and at the penetration of his motive, and the refusal, his face screwed into a laughing grimace of self-conscious defeat, as who should say:

“He’s done me!”

The march continued as before. And suddenly, Margaret, without knowing that she had resolved, found herself, with a pang of terror, in the thick of the act which she had only conceived.

Here, on one side, ran hill; on the other, a spread of wet land, half-moor, but sparsely tree-grown, lay dark. Over this she was now hasting, with cat-like care, stalking on intense tip-toe, yet quickly. And now she was abreast of the hindermost; and now of the Duke; and now of Danda, skirt picked high to thighs, her eyes wide with bigness of purpose.

Nearer! — her difficulty being the exact position of the foremost, and the slipping between him and the next. Had she known that the next was Verdier, her daring will might have failed. But by the concentrating of her whole soul, by ears ardent for accuracy, by nerves high-strung, trained to exact achievement, steadily sure, on the acme of alacrity, she did successfully slide between Danda and Verdier. And now, boldly, with strong manly step, outstriding like a soldier, she went marching between.

CHAPTER XX. THE TRUNK



LITTLE BY LITTLE worked the sorcery of that seducing foot-fall, like the “beginning of sin.” There was a mere deviation from the path; then, could it have been seen, a most gradual curve and trend to the right; then, always to the right, a definite excursive drift from the original direction of march; then blank delusion, and complex vagrancy, and mazy error.

Twenty minutes, and beyond redemption they were lost — no real idea of direction left in them, like a stray flock, the pied-piper’s rats flute-led to their drowning, believing in a lie.

She stepped from the curving file which they still formed; and, falling to the rear, no longer cautious, made a dark sound in a puddle. The result was marvellous. The man near heard, and followed it. And *his* sounds were followed by others, and theirs by others. And in an instant, the very spirit of delusion had them, playing with them, leading them by the nose, they no longer walking in file, but in a disorganised confusion, separated by varying intervals, each misled by the nearest sound, and misleading in turn through all the permutations of error; yet believing themselves all the while walking in file along the foot-path, southward.

The Duke was still in their midst, himself deluded. But it presently happened that none of the French were very near him; and it was then that he suddenly came, with a shock, to a standstill, striking an obstruction.

His hand felt up and down, meeting a substance damp, and smooth, and somewhat slimy; too smooth for bark, too soft for a hut-door. He moved a step aside, thinking to get clear, but there it still was; tried again, but it was

there. With hand sliding along the substance, he began to step tentatively. Whatever the thing was, it was pretty extensive; and from the manner in which he was compelled to step, he concluded something circular. At last his sliding hand fell upon emptiness, and immediately struck something which yielded to the touch.

His hand, again put out, met nothing; but the arm, moved from side to side, was stopped by two edges. He now concluded that he had walked into a circular building, was at the door-way, and that what had yielded to the weight of his out-falling hand was the door.

A forward step, and he had this door, which came readily to his pull. Feeling along its surfaces, he found that the inner was soft, and damp, like the surface which had obstructed him, but the outer rough and gnarled.

And now he knew: he had walked into the interior of some colossal and hollow tree. It was an elm, the fame of the county, old as the Druids, and large as a small room, with a door made of its own bark, narrower a-top. It was a recognised resort of pic-nic parties in the neighbourhood.

“Well, now,” said he, “this comes in rather well. Here, I think, we shall be pretty safe.” He pulled the door upon himself. The closure was complete.

Lise had seen the giant trunk, but sent no report of it, it lay so remotely beyond the route; nor did she even know that it was hollow. For the French, without lanthorn, to refind the prisoner in this perfect retreat was impossible, even should they return striking flashes.

But they were now far away, having butted in a body against a stone hedge, before suspecting that anything was wrong. Then, like men awaking out of a dream, they felt that all was lost. A succession of flashes convinced them that the Duke was no longer among them.

“Where *are* we?” cried Danda, stamping furiously.

“We are where you have led us,” answered Verdier. I congratulate you, m’sieur.” He struck a flash, looking at a pocket compass.

“We have been travelling due west instead of due south, that is all,” he said.

“But the prisoner! the prisoner!”

“The prisoner is probably sleepy, m’sieur, and going home to his bed.”

Danda’s white lip set. “Then it is your fault! it is *you* who believed an Englishman’s word! it is *you* who said he was not to be held! Does he call himself a man of honour?”

“You are an idiot,” said Verdier coolly, “Something or other has happened. Gentlemen, whether they are Englishmen or not, do not break faith. He has not run away. He has missed us somehow in the dark. While we have been doubling about, he has perhaps gone straight. Something must have happened. He can hardly be such a *cur* — !”

He stopped: his brows knit: it was hard to conceive what *could* have happened. “But what are we to do now?” said Danda.

“We are to go back, at a swift run, till we find the foot-path again, then run northward. it is there, if anywhere, that we will meet him.”

And at a run they started back, but obliquely, passing some distance from the elm: the Duke, within it, did not hear their foot-steps.

Margaret at the first flash of steel-and-flint, had fled beyond ear-shot of their talk, and believed the Duke still in their midst. When they started back, she followed, thinking that her *ruse* had not kept them long astray, after all.

In fifteen minutes, stopped by a hill-side, they recognised the foot-path: and away northward they sped, silent and swift. Lise d’Arblay, meanwhile, was stepping contentedly southward on her nag, not suspecting the deviation.

The Duke fastened the door with a hook-and-eye, more secure here than in his Grandcourt bedroom. He leant, his legs crossed, tired, listening, smiling.

So he reclined a longish time. The French had already run back past the tree, before he started violently upright. Suddenly he remembered. . . . He had promised. . . .

“Well, this will never do,” he said.

He made at once two steps towards the door. But stopped. *What* had he promised? He remembered the very words:

“Let me go. I won’t run off.”

The question which confounded him a moment was whether his accidental entrance into the tree, and the mere act of remaining there, could be called “running off.”

“Running” it certainly was not, nor was it even “off”: if he stayed, therefore, he would be well within the letter of his promise.

And the character of the persons to whom the promise was made did not escape his reflection. While half-recognising their gallantry, he judged them with all the severity of his austere mind. They were outrageous, they were criminal, they deserved to be hanged. In reality, they were a mere low rabble, vulgar brigands.

But his hesitation, his reflection, were only momentary. Soon he was at the door, and out, and away. . . .

He was rather scared, rather frightened. Suppose he could not find them? He called aloud. His memory, surely, had played him an odd trick: he must, in truth, be getting an old fellow. His perfect calm forsook him. Perhaps for the first time in his life — he was agitated.

There was a spirit as well as a letter: a man should be honest. . .

He ran calling, with bare head, in the same direction as his approach to the tree, thinking the French must be there, in advance. Finally, he, too, butted upon the stone hedge which had stopped them.

“This will never do,” he said again, severely.

He was wholly lost. How he had come to enter the tree at all, they travelling in single file along a foot-path, was more than he could comprehend. And where now was the foot-path was all a mystery. He had no compass, no flint-and-steel. He stood shut in, in the close prison of the darkness, his great heart anxious, wrinkles of trouble across his brow.

“The only way, then,” he said, “will be to run about and make a noise. These fellows will think . . .”

Again he started into a trot, calling, backward towards tree and foot-path. When he reached this, he was stopped by the hill on its further side, and understood: this then, was it. By a wise guess he determined which was north, which south, and southward he turned, not dreaming that they were making rapid paces northward on his imagined track.

Now he quickened his trot, stick out-held obliquely in hand; and ever as he went, he called: “Hi, there! Hi! Hi! Hi!”

CHAPTER XXI. THE HOOFS



NOW, LISE, AFTER a time wishing to have some guiding sound, had quickened pace; then, hearing nothing, had gone yet faster; and now had arrived at the certainty of some calamity. She reined and sat troubled, and terrified, and angry, and puzzled.

Suddenly — behind her — she heard afar the dark Hi! Hi!

Of all the crazy improbabilities and distracting surprises of topsy-turvydom this, to her mind, was the most crazy. She knew the voice! Here was the Duke of Wellington, evidently alone, hurrying after his captors, calling anxiously for them!

Nearer grew the dark voice, with a “Hi, Frenchmen, Hi!” and a “Hi! Hi! Hi!”

Before this paradox reason succumbed. But one thing was clear: he believed them before, and she had decided that they must be behind.

It remained to her, either to reveal herself and tell him to change his course, or to hurry after her friends. Upon this latter she resolved, and, making a detour with noiseless slowness, re-found the footpath, and set off galloping northward.

The French were again near the meeting of footpath and castle-road, when Margaret, hanging behind them, all wonderment at this northward flight, drew out of the way of the cantering hoofs.

“That woman again,” she muttered: “now, anyway, he’ll know the beast in her true colours, I should think!”

The French hailed: Lise drew up. “What *has* happened?” she asked.

“Happened!” replied Danda. “Your friend here let go hold of the man on his parole, and the English fox—”

Lise,” said Verdier, “ I think I told you not to make a row with your horse’s hoofs.”

“Nonsense!” she cried angrily— “turn back — and fly, fly — he is on the road behind you — calling for you — !”

They were off southward, brushing past Margaret, unsuspecting, came to the point of their deviation, and on, with continuous sharp trot, beyond. From this point the path curves to the right, and loses itself in Seacombe Moor. The Duke had gone to its termination, then, meeting untracked bush, turned back, walking now, tired, hopeless of finding them. Occasionally still he lifted his voice in a ‘Hi!’

“Well, then,” he muttered at last, “if not to-night — to-morrow.”

But presently afterwards on-coming feet reached his ears. He smiled. “Ah, I thought they would be looking up again somewhere,” he said. They were quite near before he said coolly:

“I am here, you see.”

Verdier stepped forward with invisible bows.

“We are most sorry, your Grace, if, by any blundering of ours, we have caused your Grace anxiety.”

“Well, now,” the Duke said to himself, “this fellow is a gentleman.”

He added:

“No, it was rather my own fault. I got into a hollow tree somewhere, and stayed in it too long.” He was among them again. But as the march reformed, he said:

“But my promise no longer holds good. Understand that I mean to run off, if I can.”

“Then may we now take hold of your Grace’s arm?” said Verdier.

“No. I mean to say, if an extraordinary chance happens, as happened just now. Otherwise I shall stay with you. Let us be going.”

The march recommenced: three, then the Duke, then three; then, behind, Lise; then Margaret. They reached the Moor, and now the Duke walked in the middle of a narrow circle. Anon Verdier would strike a flash, and look at his compass. The course was south; eight miles, then the shore, then the boat, the frigate, and victory.

Abreast went Lise and Margaret. Anon a sound, dark and ghostly, broke the silence. The Duke faintly heard it, and wondered; Verdier heard it, and was angry; Margaret heard it, and it became intolerable to her.

It was the strike of a walking hoof against some stone, an occasional tramp on hard earth. Lise now kept nearer, resolved not to lose them again, guided by rare glints of Verdier’s flint; and her hoof-sounds were heard, — always singly, and most vaguely, seeming to come from the depths of space, the bosom of nowhere.

Margaret they affected with irritation and a growing rancour; broke in upon her agonised effort to think; molested and embarrassed her. For now again the thought, “What am I to *do*?” tormented her. All the old hopes, of Golde, of rescue-parties, recurred, and turned to despairs. It was well on in the small hours: but long, long, before a ray pierced the blackness, the party would be on board the frigate. The shore couldn’t be far off, and the boat: for here was Seacombe Moor. And she was following just like a little child, or an old woman, feeble, without wits in her. But *something* she would do, she vowed: straightway would run and do it. Only what? The possibility of again misleading them, in the then order of march, was gone. There was the boat — if something could be done to that! This was her thought, when again the hoof-sound from nowhere threw her into confusion.

“If I could only find out where *you* are, I would soon do for *you!*” she said, with shaken menace of head.

The boat! Again she began to think of this — And again a hoof-sound: but this time she knew where and how to make it cease for ever. The nag had neighed. The previous ghosts of sound were a different matter to this definite whinny: and Margaret turned to the left.

Lise had no idea that Margaret was now near the party. The cracking of a twig would have aroused all her suspicion: but Margaret approached with absolute caution, lifted skirts, dainty step. Soon the regular hoof-sounds were in her ears, a snort, then the laboured breathing. He passed close before her. Her warily-stretched hand touched his haunch.

And Lise only saved herself from a backward fall by a clutch of the lax reins: the horse, in a spasm, had reared straight, Margaret having buried in his haunch the knife from the gipsy’s pannier.

Where her blow fell, whether into Lise or the horse, she did not care, nor know. But she was not long in doubt: out, as the nag dropped from the curvet, went its hind-legs in a kick of agony; and away went Margaret with them, and lay sprawling, moaning low.

CHAPTER XXII. THE BOAT



WHAT CAUSED THE curvet Lise did not know: the nag settled into its former walk, and she went unconscious that thick gore oozed from a profuse wound behind her.

Onward, over grass and gorse, with steady tramp, went the men.

They crossed the canal by a bridge perilously near Seacombe: but Seacombe lay in nepenthe profound as the last sleep.

A long way behind sprawled Margaret, half on her face, a hand on her hip, where the kick had fallen like a swung club. She was crying, but it was rather from rage, and soon the tears dried, and she began to think again, reverting to the boat: but it lay motiveless in her brain; then to Golde, and he lay motive-less in her brain; then to the boat, in vain. Suddenly she sat straight with a cry of pain, of joy: she had connected the boat and Golde, and had invented.

She blessed herself for having written to him that night. It would be impossible, she knew, to reach Wyemouth before the French the shore. Even of Newton she was not sure — how far it was, how far the shore was. But she sprang up, tried to estimate directions, and determined upon a course. She set out slowly, with limping difficulty, started into a forced run, had to stop, ran again, and found it now less painful. Finally, in virtue of that natural power of mind and body to rise to the necessity of the case, she was able to run continuously, though with distress.

Now, Golde, about midnight, had awoke ravening. A lamp burned in the room, and the first thing he spied was Margaret's note: he was to be at his

mill. But a stronger reason urged Golde: the vacuous hole within him. The inn was silent: and though Newton meant a yearning trudge of three miles, yet a certain oyster-patty, neat's tongue, and veal-surprise at the mill offered speedier satisfaction than the process of rousing the inn. With the lamp he crept down, undid a back door, and went across fields. The mill stood well outside Newton on a very steep ground, timber-framed Elizabethan, dark with age, and had the look of madly struggling to keep its perpendicular, as a man tripping too fast downhill, tries to stop, projecting a leg. It had been added to, altered, and added to again; and salient bits and gables, oriels and tiny turrets with finials, made it an eccentricity almost droll. Within, the rooms were antic as possible, triangular, pentagonal, numerous, comically tiny; everything seemed to slant; things hung askew; door-bottoms did not run level with the flooring, nor either with the ceiling. At the back the old green wheel, and the works.

Golde uttered an "Ah!" after a crowded meal, and sat back lazily throeing with digestion. He had known how to enter and provide himself with light, food and porter, without waking his old housekeeper. When Margaret, guided by his light, began pounding at the door, he sat thus alone; and down he went.

Now her sustained fight against the sprain collapsed; and she almost fell upon him. He bore her up the inconsequent, crochety stairs, laid her in an easy-chair.

"I am sorry, miss," he said, "to see you in that way."

"The Duke — is *taken*" — her nose and forehead screwed together for pain.

"You don't say that, miss."

"He is! By now he is not far from the *sea*. There isn't any hope left, unless you get there at once, as fast as ever a horse can take you."

“There is no horse,” he said, “there’s a little ass—”

“Oh, don’t say you haven’t a horse! An ass can’t carry us *both!*”

“Wouldn’t it be better if you stayed still, and rested, miss, a bit? You seem in pain enough, too.”

“That is nothing at all! A wretched nag kicked me. Can’t you get a horse — ?”

“We could, yes, by going into the village and knocking it up. Let me see — it is near two o’clock—”

“That’s no use! we haven’t an *age* to spare! You must go alone on the ass, then”

“I tell you what we might do,” said Golde, whose slow mind now hit upon the right thought: “do you know those new-fangled hobby-horses that’ve come up?”

“Yes! have you one?”

“I have, miss.”

She jumped up. “Can it carry two?”

“Just what it was made for,” said Golde. “I bought it a bargain at the sale at Wyemouth two months since. And warmish exercise I have found it, too.”

“Be quick, then, Mr. Golde, do!” said Margaret. “Can it go as fast as an ass?”

“Equally, I should say. But what is it we are going to do when we do get there?”

“I will tell you. Bring a lantern, that’s all.”

Golde got a lanthorn, descended to an old cellar, and came dragging the hobby-horse. He settled Margaret on the saddle in front, holding it upright, swung the lanthorn to the handle-bar, and sprang astride to his seat, making a backward dab at the ground with his toes. They were off, in long spurts of

motion, Golde leaning far forward to the handlebar, spurning the ground with alternate feet, his legs going at a terrifically wide angle of urgency.

The light of the boat came into view, steady, and dainty, and clean. “Try and hide the lantern,” said Margaret.

Golde threw over it a red handkerchief.

“And how do you take to this kind of travelling, miss?” he said on heaving breaths. “It does jerk,” she answered.

For the bicycle — without crank, pedal, chain, or rubber tyre — was devoid of undulancy, and with every backward thrust of Golde’s toes at the scrubby ground, the sudden spurt and spasm of the hobbyhorse shook them with strong jolt, like rowing on very rough sea with oars that ply, not together, but alternately. A faint light, however, from the covered lanthorn revealed the rudest spots, and guided a career of some six miles an hour.

Margaret said: “I did not think you took to sports and fashion, Mr. Golde.”

“It isn’t so much that, miss,” Golde panted, “but when a man lives all alone by himself—”

“You don’t mean you are not *married*?”

“No, miss, strange to say. It never happened to me, somehow. I suppose it is that no one ever took a fancy to me.”

“They will *now*, when they hear all you have gone through, and how you saved the Duke with your hobby — horse.”

“Ah, now you are joking!”

“No. A woman likes a man who has been through things, and seen adventures. You will have all the girls at Wyemouth and Newton wanting to live at the mill, Mr. Golde.”

Golde was intimately tickled.

“And much good they’ll get of their wanting, too,” he said sheepishly. “The chances are that the one I should like won’t have me.”

“Oh, but that’s faint heart. Send me to her, and let me tell her of the *lighthouse*, and how you saved me out of the sack, and see.”

“You wouldn’t have to go very far, then, miss.”

“Stop it, Mr. Golde! There is no need for that, you know.”

“I am serious, miss.”

“You are like all the *men*! The first thing that comes to the tongue.”

“Well, I don’t know. I look upon you as a most brave lass, and a shrewd one, and a taking one. I should be a happy man to-morrow—”

“Hark! I hear the sea!”

“We are not far from it now.”

“Keep straight for the light, will you?”

“And what is it you propose to do when we get there?”

“Don’t you see?” she said. “It is very *late*, isn’t it? The Frenchmen have been wandering: they lost the Duke twice. The men in the boat must have expected them hours ago; they must think that something very bad has *happened*. If they see a false light in-shore now, going one way and another, like a boat tacking, and getting always nearer to him, what will they think?”

“Well, and a good plan, too,” said Golde. “They will think that a craft of some kind is coming to take them. Is that your meaning, miss?”

“Yes — and they will think that they must be a long way farther out than they supposed, and a long way nearer their *ship*. There can’t be many in the boat, because a lot have already landed. And they won’t know how many are coming to take them. It will be madness if they don’t put out their light, and take a short cut to their ship.”

Now the frigate’s port-light, too, very small, like red Mars, appeared; the hobby-horse was in the midst of the loud rumour of the frothy surf; and

opposite burned the steady boat-light.

The strategy began: Margaret, in one hand, held high the uncovered lanthorn, that the vessel feigned might seem bigger; and Golde, spurning with alternate toes, sent the hobby-horse running obliquely eastward; then, with large-curving tack, westward; then eastwards, approaching always the shore. Before they reached the region of dry sand, the boat-light vanished. But they continued the alternate career till Golde's toes sank into wet sand, and Margaret quenched the lanthorn under her woollen shawl.

She had estimated with some accuracy the mind of the boatmen. They were only three: they had long been anxious: and they could not doubt that the tacking, growing light, which infinitely puzzled them, was hostile. Her estimate of their courage alone was at fault: they did, indeed, make for the frigate, but only in order to return with another boatful of armed and desperate men.

A mile inland with steady tramp, the Duke in their midst, came on the belated Frenchmen.

CHAPTER XXIII. TO SEACOMBE



THE LIGHT WHICH the French saw, and thought their boat-light, was the lanthorn held high by Margaret.

Danda cried out: "We are there at last!" A moment after, they noticed the movement with amazement, their boat being sailless. Then the light *tacked!* and, their stupor at climax, — vanished!

"They can't be far off now," Margaret said: "we had better get out of their way. We have done for them now, anyway."

Golde rode towards the moor. "Hark!" whispered she. Then, with certainty: "Yes! here they come. We must get off this thing, Mr. Golde: it makes a noise."

They dismounted and stood still. On came the sounds, and passed them close in voiceless tramp. Then from the shore vague words came up to them rolled in the noise of the waters.

There is nothing for them to *do*," said she, not careful to whisper, since the surf filled the French ears, "even if the boat is there, the men in it would hardly hear a hail in the noise. And they're *afraid* to hail; and the boat, I think, isn't *there*."

"There I agree with you, miss," said Golde. "They are in a bad way, certainly. I could almost pity the poor brutes."

Yes, *I'd* pity them!"

"I pity the poor Duke, anyway. He'll have a poor night's rest of it. They'll simply keep him a prisoner till the boat puts in an appearance again."

“If we *let* them, you mean!” cried she, exultant and flushed: “just let them wait there an hour, and see if they don’t get some *bullets* in their head!”

“It would be what they deserve, too,” remarked Golde. “And there is no doubt, miss, you have no lack of schemes passing in your head. What may the next be, if I might ask? I am ready for it, whatever it is.”

“How far is Seacombe from here, Mr. Golde?”

“I should say about a four mile.”

“It is the nearest town, isn’t it?”

“Yes, much.”

“Has it got a church in it?”

“A church and a chapel.”

“Well, then, let us go and ring up Seacombe quick, and bring it out upon these French beasts!”

“I am with you, miss. That is, if the boat doesn’t put in an appearance while we are gone, and take them off.”

“But if it did, we couldn’t do any good by *standing* about here. Let us go at *once*.”

“I don’t know,” said Golde, “but it looks to me as if I saw a light out yonder a moment since. “I don’t see any.”

“No, nor I now.”

“Come on, then — make your *hobby-horse* go, Mr. Golde! It’s a race: and they’ll have to look sharp, or we have them sure!”

Golde helped her up, mounted, and went rocking and toeing in the direction of Seacombe. But it was a race in an unsuspected sense. For, some feet off sitting stock still, Lise d’Arblay had heard every word, and, hearing, understood the cause of the boat’s disappearance. Margaret had done this. Margaret had been with them all through, the secret cause of all their woes!

Margaret was with them still, alert, hardened against them, bent upon their ruin! And she would succeed, too: only she had Lise to reckon with! Down upon the horse's haunch dashed her whip, and the panting nag was away.

Horse, then, against hobby-horse: and Seacombe was the goal. From the lanthorn Margaret soon took off her cloak, and the light was a guide to Lise behind. With quick invention, Lise had already decided what to say, what do, if she could reach the village three minutes in advance. Bitterly now she reproached herself for lacking some weapon, for the possession of which she would have forfeited her fortune, or a limb.

Upon the toiling bicyclists stole the galloping hoofs.

"It is clear, miss, that someone is after us on horseback," panted Golde's labouring chest.

"Yes — I know who it is," answered Margaret. "It is a beast of a woman who is the cause of all."

"Well — a woman!"

"Yes. It is her horse that kicked me. She is the wife or mistress to that Verdier. He calls her *Lise*. The Duke thinks her name is Mrs. Opie, but it is D'Arblay."

"It looks, miss, as if she will be beating us."

"You mustn't *let* her! Do, pray, Mr. Golde!"

"I don't seem to see what she could do at Seacombe, even if she does put us behind a bit."

"She is a vile woman, that. She will do *something*! She must have heard what we were saying in the *dark*!"

"Mightn't it be a good thing to cover over that lantern, miss?"

"It might. Why?"

"We offer a very fair target for a pistol, don't we?"

"But would you be able to *see*?"

“No, you are in the right there. Still, I think I should cover over that lantern, miss.” She covered it.

On came the spattering hoofs. Five minutes from the start Lise was two hundred yards behind; in seven they were abreast, and Seacombe three miles ahead. Side by side, ten yards apart they sped, Lise’s whip plying, Golde spurting with all his careering legs, each a constant unconquerable presence with the other.

“Don’t let her beat us!” Margaret tossed the hiss behind her.

A moment, and she was rolling on the ground, Golde with her: he had run into a gorsy depression. Ahead, as they lay, they heard the lessening hoof-beats.

She leapt up. “If we had had a *light*, you see — !”

Her first care was the lanthorn: it had been jerked some distance, but still burned.

“Ah, that was a nasty bit, miss,” said Golde. “I hope you have not met with an injury. We might still be able to get there within four or five minutes of her.”

“Come, then!”

And again they were up and off, this time lit, Lise being a thousand yards ahead. But something was wrong with the horse: she felt that. He no longer answered to the whip, save on his left haunch, when a throe beneath her, a slight kick-out, was the response. She began to know that her speed was slackening: there was a sense of failure, as if he yielded beneath her weight: she was not strongly and bravely borne. Yet he could not be so tired! she whipped and whipped. Once there was a tottering gait an instant; later he stumbled, nearly lifting her over his head. But he continued to run: and always the whip went.

It became clear to Margaret that they were rapidly gaining upon her. Never was Golde so in earnest: in his unconscious eagerness to gain her smile, his short power of wind seemed to multiply itself; and with widely-careering legs, in alternate rock and rush, navigating the encumbered heath, he went toiling on the toiling hobby-horse: toiling — for ominous creaks, and presently, as they stole near Lise, a singular clack of metal upon metal, were heard at every backward toe-thrust, the machine swaying in the middle at the jerk of each repeated impetus, like a thing protesting against the work demanded of it. But they were well within a mile of Seacombe. Golde, conscious of some weakness, did not relax, but even, with a certain merciless vehemency, put forth his last reserve of vigour; and while on this pitch of effort, once more heard the galloping hoofs abreast, heard them struggle an unconquerable presence, heard them yield defeated behind. He found breath to say:

“We shall leave her out on the moor yet, miss!”

And farther receded the hoof-beats during three minutes, till the hobby-horse quietly parted into a front and a back wheel, the front lying over Margaret. And Golde was at her side, lifting her, and she, with bruised arm, was saying: “It cannot be far off now; on foot, then!”

And before Lise reached them they were off the lanthorn with them. And when Lise dashed past, Golde knew that Seacombe could not be half a mile, and panted:

“We shall be there within five minutes of her yet!”

But even this final estimate proved wrong: for Lise had hardly cantered by, when her horse shivered through a horrible long heave of the flanks, tottered, dropped dead. He had been bleeding through the wound of Margaret’s knife for nearly two hours. When the race began his eyes were glazed; his head hung low. It had hastened the end.

He fell upon Lise, who for some time lay shocked and fettered. The two ran by, believing her well on towards Seacombe. But three minutes after they began to run down the long street, Lise was still out on the moor.

So Golde and Margaret won the race of horse against hobby-horse from Wyemouth coast to Seacombe village.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE ALARM



BUT THEY DID not know their victory: and with prone run down the silent street, made paces for the church.

It stood in meadow at the end, small but rich, Edward II. Decorated. Golde knew its position exactly. They passed through a gate up the steps of a frontage pierced by a rich and deeply- recessed Norman arch under a gable-niche containing a statue of St. John. Here Golde hoped for entrance. But, holding the lanthorn, saw only the brass knocker by which criminal fugitives gained sanctuary, and the locked keyless door, though the short iron bar hung unsecured.

“We shall have to knock up the *sexton*, ” said Margaret.

“No, this way, miss, please,” answered Golde. “There is a door around there in the vestry, which it is more likely—”

Round they ran through old slant tomb-stones.

The vestry stuck out sideways, a cubical box against the church-wall. Golde found a small door, secured by a hook and eye, ran through a little north chantry of dainty Perpendicular, past a pulpit of corbel and crocket, and over storied grave-slabs in the nave floor. By an inner handle they opened and flung wide the portal for the entrance of Seacombe.

Not a sound in the village: it was past three; and the faintest breeze arose, premonitory of day. “This way, miss, for the steeple,” panted Golde.

It was square, battlemented, at the south corner of the façade, the only thing crudely modern in St. John’s. One entered by a door within the church. They looked about for the ropes, and not seeing any, climbed a

ladder-stair to the stage above; and here, through holes in a higher floor, came three ropes. They deposited the lanthorn near the door, and took each a rope. Suddenly Seacombe was awake, staring scare. Loud went jargoning the turbulent bells in affrighted clamour through the night. Fire! And out looked a thousand wondering heads, the savour of snoring beatitudes still fresh in the nostrils, to find for answer only darkness and the insistent alarum of the bells.

High through the reverberations, cried Margaret:

“I wonder what that *woman* is doing flow!”

“It remains to be seen!” bawled Golde.

It remained not long: before the first sound Lise was hasting down the street. She had visited it before, but was uncertain of the position of the church, when forth clashed the innovating clangour upon the timid silence. She flew, entered, passed the font, the line of blue mosaic beyond which women once might not advance, looking, spied the turret-door, peeped in. Light streamed down. She hurried up, not even careful to go soft in the tumultuous verberations which brayed through the narrow tower. She was at the door; looked in; the backs of both were toward her. She introduced an arm, straining to reach the lanthorn: it was too far; she entered, stood there with them an instant; and they did not see her.

Suddenly Margaret cried, “*Look!*” — but too late.

Lise was gone; they were in darkness. The door was closed upon them, and fastened outside. The turret was littered with rubbish, dust, ancient refuse. On the lowest floor stood in a corner a dust-heap of old torn documents, shavings of repairs, bits of cloth and wood. When Lise saw this, she smiled: it was what she needed. By armfuls she heaped it at the stair-foot, then held the lanthorn-dip steadily to the pile. A flame shot up. Outside were remote sounds of a crowd. The bells had ceased. She threw the

lanthorn upon the burning heap and slipped out quickly, locking the door by a bang behind her. Into the church now streamed old and young, slovenly women half-nude, children. No fire, certainly, was in the village, and none knew what to make of the *reveille*. In some minutes the building was the thronged focus of the village: Babel reigned — a tempest of tongues. In rushed a plump rector, red-faced from his winey slumber, with one stocking, his night-dress bagging at the breeches-waist under small-clothes. Who had rung the bells, and for what, became the question. When the sexton entered, belated and dazed, and could give no account of things, it began to seem as if Beelzebub himself was abroad. Women screamed guesses across the church-breadth one to another. Parson and bell-man, apothecary and “post- master,” dignitaries all, assembled near the altar-screen. The object of Lise was time: a minute more or less might be everything. Only when the ferment grew superlative, and there was a movement of investigation towards the steeple, did she run up the pulpit-stairs, and in the circle of lonely marble stood.

Clustered pillars of Purbeck and carved bosses, fan-traceried roof and panel walls, all was a vagueness in the ruddy clair-obscuré of chance lanthorns snatched by hurried hands. Only half observed Lise, till the parson roared “Silence!” and there was silence, and vacant mouths.

“My friends!” she began, filling the church. “It was *I* who rang the bells!”

Here was light, the beginning of light. The murmur hushed; she proceeded. It was essential, my friends, that I should arouse you. You know, don’t you, that a menagerie has been on the moor, and was burnt down last night by some accident?”

“Aye! ’tis so! go on!”

“You think perhaps that all the men in it perished in the flames, or are gone where their business calls them—”

“No! no! — three of ’em are here now!”

This was a nonplus. She hesitated: but proceeded: “At any rate, there are two others of them, to my knowledge, not only alive, but near you now. I happened to be passing over the moor a while since, my friends, as I have to be at Lessing, nine miles hence, by early cock-crow; as I came along, I heard two people in the dark; I stole toward them, and heard their talk — a woman and a man they were. They averred that the menagerie had been set fire to by you Seacombe folk, and they were coming straight here to give you tit-for-tat,

by burning down Seacombe while you were in your beds, friends, beginning, they said, with the church. They found out that I was listening, and chased me, friends. I know they can’t be far off, if they have not already set fire to something while I was ringing—”

At this point there was sensation, commotion: for now, in truth, the church was perceived to be full of a thin smoke.

Again arose the outcry of fire. Through the uproar screamed the voice of Lise:

“Friends! you see I told you true! and the incendiaries are in the village still! The only way to secure them is to form a cordon round the village, all of you, and wait for hours — till morning — to block their escape—”

But this suggestion was mostly unheard, the people now being turned toward the turret- door, where fast came oozing dark smoke from every cranny; when some rushed to open it, they found it locked and keyless; the sexton was impotent: the key had stood there for years, nor was there a duplicate that he knew of. The air thickened every moment to a darker grey, the lights showing lurid, the crowd jostling between and over the pew-

backs, shoes falling off women fainting. Now a stout farrier shouted above the din, bidding some follow him: these crushed their way to the frontage, and ran down to the smithy, seizing upon crow-bars and sledges; hastened back then, made to the turret-door, and a vigorous bombardment began.

Lise, seeing this, and fearing the rescue of the two, coolly doomed the whole village, and hasted out.

And soon strange panic was added to the turmoil by a crush at the front, by a heart-startling rumour: the portal had been barred on the outside, and now a man came bellowing from the vestry that there, too, escape was barred, while above the turmoil and short-winded *mêlée* of the blinded people out clanged once more, with mystifying unexpectedness, the noisy bells, adding to distraction sound. For a real fire this time rang Golde and Margaret: for, as the sledge-men with unlooked-for quickness crushed a hole through the turret-door, the interior sent forth a belch of sparks and redundant smoke, hurling the crowd into a backward jam: and immediately it was seen that the inner surface of the door was well alight, and the steeple in flames.

Now it was the turn of the portal, blows thundering upon lock and wood-work, and at the vestry-door a thunder of blows; and above, the quarrelling bells; and within a hubbub of voices, gasps and screams. When the pent-up crowd at length streamed forth, a great mouth of flame had opened within between church and turret.

Outside, they assembled before the façade, filling the churchyard, spreading up the street, gaping at an up-gliding cloud of flushed smoke, through which thronged processions of sparks and flashes from turret-top and window-slit. Far it disparded the solemn dark with a scintillating mist, till a tongue of bright flame shot, and the fire-dawn was turned to red day.

Some talk had been going on about forming the recommended cordon: but before any movement could be made, two shapes appeared to the astounded crowd scampering round the turret-top. (Lise had long since disappeared, no one knew or asked whither.)

The man, seeming to stretch down arms of appeal, was answered by a shout of execration. The eyes of both were wide in panic. It was impossible to misunderstand the nature of the shouts below.

“It does look, miss, as if we were down for this time, and no mistake either,” heaved from Golde’s short breast.

She was running round, he behind her, looking for the lightning-conductor, remembering the lighthouse. But lightning-conductors were not common: here was none. The turret was, however, covered from top to bottom with ivy, and this fact occurred to the girl’s swift mind.

“Down by the *ivy*, ” she panted, “it will break our fall.”

“Our necks, I think, you mean, miss,” answered Golde; “and a very safe way of doing it, too. Do, pray, don’t think of that!”

“’Tis better than *burning*!”

“’Tis quicker, yes; and just as sure.”

Golde, as always, clung to life for as great a number of seconds as the heavens would grant it him: the turret was nearly eighty feet high.

“I am going — !” she called. “Oh, miss, miss—” cried Golde.

Her leg was actually over the top, but she stopped: for she had chosen the shortest side, separated from the church by a platform low down seven feet wide, but just beneath her was a Gothic window pouring out processions of sparks, and these had thinned the ivy above. At the sheer precipice her heart failed: and as she paused, she noticed what caused her to tingle: the window was on a level with the church-coping. If she could leap from one to the other — but the window was too small to admit a standing

body the only possibility seemed to lie in the placing of a bar or a beam across, so to furnish a bridge.

With this thought, without a word, she flew down scorched stairs into thick smoke brightly lit by a streak of flame, which had even shot through the roof on one side. There hung the three bells.

The moment when the bell nearest the flaring side would drop to the very bottom was not far. In the burning room she looked wildly around: but no bar or beam met her sight: only the doomed and silent bells, waiting. She saw a ladder, indeed, but its three steps were only four feet long. Foiled, she ran back, to be met by a stone from below which cut her temple.

In the heart of the mob was not one gentle throe. A dramatic Providence, it seemed, was here at work, burning those who had thought to burn. And when humorous old Steve, the fiddler, he of the sharp face, bright eyes, and fumbling toothless mouth, hit upon the idea that Providence was weak alone, and threw a stone, this inspiration caught the whole mob. It chanced that a conical heap of broken stone for paving lay near, and this, once discovered by another genius, began to grow less, and went showering upwards, falling mostly short.

But a few reached, one cutting Margaret, and immediately another gave out a clang, striking on metal: and this sound drew her interest, and inspired her invention.

“Mr. Golde, here!” she cried: “let us see if we can move this—”

It was a rod, round above, square at bottom, ten feet high, at its summit a weather-cock glancing now with creaks at the gadding of the morning breeze.

Golde, without question, set to work at her bidding. They laid hold of the rod with desperate wrestle. It did not budge, being embedded in the masonry, and clamped to it by two rectangular cramps.

They desisted. The fire spread. Now a stone flew by.

“Well, miss, there is nothing in that,” panted Golde. “It is the only thing *left*,” she wept. Suddenly she vanished again, flew down, placed the ladder-steps beside the smallest of the bells, and with cheeks hot from the near flame, was about to mount, when the mass of metal disengaged itself from the eaten roof, and down with huge clatter tumbled, rending with it all the flame and burnt flooring in that corner. Back she leapt, dismayed by the bigness of the downfall; but in a moment was under another, mounted, and with furious effort disengaged the tongue from its socket. Faltering under the 85 lbs. weight, she again reached the top.

“Now, drive at that thing, Mr. Golde!” she cried, “and drop the bell-tongue on these *people* when you’ve done.”

Whereupon Golde, with this ponderous sledge, did drive, and the mason-work began to spatter, and the flaky old iron to fly, crack, and writhe and presently there were no cramps there worth mentioning, and the bar was nodding in a dusty hole.

“Now, miss, I think it will come to a pull,” gasped Golde, winded.

At their upward strain it yielded, and, one at either end, went rapidly down, and out at the Gothic window. The farther it went, the greater the strain to keep its outer end, though the lighter, up to the coping-level; but by the bell-tongue and their own hung weight, the other end rose and rose with jerks, and fell, with a push, upon the coping, a bridge secure.

The flooring was half consumed, three sides aflame, and as Margaret clambered to the sill, down crashed bellowing another of the bells. She let herself down at full length, and commenced a hand-walk across, a hollow space of fifty feet below. But now the mob, missing them, had edged round, and a rain of cruel missiles surrounded her, striking her back, her head, or flopping spent in her skirts, amid hoots and ribald jeers. Now Golde, too,

trusted his weight over emptiness, going astride, clasping with the arms, winning himself along with slowest caution. When he was half-way across, Margaret stood waiting on the leads behind the coping. He reached her with bleeding jaw.

And now was the run, no longer from the fire, but the stones, round the coping, in search of descent. There were buttresses, but without foothold. They went balancing in close flight along the coping-top, making for the chancel-end, where it was dimmer, till Margaret cried:

“The vestry!”

Its flat roof lay thirty feet below — a deep drop: but here, too, covering vestry-roof and church-wall, grew thicknesses of ivy and white briony.

“Just let me try first, miss,” said Golde, “and see how it treats me. If it wasn’t for those foolish men and women down there—”

“I may as well go first, Mr. Golde—”

“No, lass — remember your sprained leg. Just let me go, and receive you as you come.” He stepped hesitantly over the edge, and in a moment went clutching and tearing at the yielding masses of tendrils, bumping to a seat astounded as a fat monk from beneath whom, about to sit, the chair is pulled. And now came Margaret, all a disarray of wild skirts, and Golde, as he caught her impetus, fell with her, and together they rolled a little in the ivy there, tightly held, and lingeringly. Here they were secure from pebbles, and for some minutes sat so among exuberance and leaves, watching the square flame-pyramid at the turret-top.

“That boat must have come back by this, lass,” said Golde, and laid his hand on hers: “I have an idea that this is a bad business.”

For answer she jumped up, and at once went down the vestry-wall, tearing at the tendrils, in a drop of twenty-five feet. She alighted upon soft ivy-grown mould; and looked up to discern Golde hesitating: and soon he,

too, was with her, a much-bumped man. They found themselves in the midst of the rough-handed and noisily-vengeful villagers of Seacombe.

CHAPTER XXV. THREE CHEERS



“DRIVE UN BACK into the turret — let un burn!” cried the snuff-man.

“Take ’em round to my shop, let’s gi’ ’em a pill a-piece!” said the apothecary. “Under the pump with them, and quench some of their fire!” cried the rough-nosed rector. “*You silly fools!*” shrilled Margaret.

“No, no, lass,” said Golde, who, meanwhile, was being roughly hustled, “listen to me, folks, please. You have got on the wrong track somehow—” he backed towards the vestry-door, and lifted himself on the step. The dusky light of lanthorns shone here and there on a rude visage, leaving vague interspaces of heads; while in buttress-recess, in the shadow of oak, or church, was the very blackness of darkness, though broad overhead the sparkling fume solemnly informed the night. “On the wrong track somehow — We are two perfectly innocent people—”

“Oh, aye — us’ll show ye innocent soon!”

“Well, but you will give a man a chance to talk, I hope,” proceeded Golde: “violence is not likely to help you to the truth, and it’s the truth you want, I daresay. You are thinking, I shouldn’t wonder, some of you, that it was we who set fire to the church: and nice people were they that did it, and much luck may they expect, too—”

This was too ponderous for the occasion. The mob would not stand it.

“Oh, come on, ye it wur right enough: under the pump with ’em, as passon says!” cried some. But Margaret had no taste for the pump. She leapt to Golde’s side. Her tongue went flying.

“I haven’t got any *patience* with silly fools like you!” she screamed—
“to believe the first lying Frenchwoman that comes and stuffs your head
with a lot of lies, as if you oughtn’t to have more *sense*! Whatever it was the
woman told you wasn’t *true*, can’t you understand, not a word of it! She
chased us across the moor because she heard us saying we were coming to
get you to rescue *the Duke*, before *the boat* came back, and it was she who
stole our lantern, and set fire to the church, and you have got to get ready
now, the whole of you, and come with me and Mr. Golde to the shore to
catch *the Frenchmen* who have kidnapped the Duke, that is, if we are not
too late already, after all this time, just through your silliness in believing a
lot of lies of a lying Frenchwoman, Englishmen like you — !”

But she spoke to brains already captured and prejudiced by Lise. There
was a burst of derision, a movement of menace, shouts of contemptuous
query:

“Which Duke?”

“Which boat?”

“What about the menagerie?”

“Which *menagerie*?” screamed Margaret. “What has the menagerie to
do with it? The Frenchmen—”

“Ben’t ye two from the menagerie?”

“No!” cried one of the menagerie-men staying at Seacombe: “the girl is,
but I don’t think she’d set fire to a church. The man don’t belong to us.”

“The man is Mr. Golde of Newton Mill!” cried a woman, who, having
heard Golde’s name, had peered and recognised him.

Well, here was contradiction, and no knowing what to believe. But the
minds of the boors were hopelessly preoccupied by Lise’s nicely-plausible
story.

“What about burning down the whole of Seacombe?” bawled Steve, the fiddler. “I don’t know what you are *talking* about!” Margaret cried. “Listen to me a little, can’t you? The Frenchmen have kidnapped the Duke—”

“Which Duke?”

“But this is stupidity! The Duke of Wellington, of course! What other Duke does anybody care anything *about*? Can’t you understand, some of you? A lot of Frenchmen have come in a vessel to take the Duke to France, and they have got him from Grandcourt, they have him now at the shore, only they’ve no *boat*, because Mr. Golde has frightened away their boat with his *hobby-horse*; and we came to you to rescue him, only the vile French-woman shut us up in the tower, and set fire to the church—”

At last, here and there, a boorish mind opened to her earnest, prone, shrill pleadings. The crowd divided into a minority in favour of her improbability, and a majority in favour of Lise. The danger of the pump at any rate vanished. The parson adopted Margaret’s side, for the pleasure of becoming alarmed at public affairs; the apothecary and the fiddler led the opposition. There was an interval of general noisy jargoning.

Then Margaret had a thought. “But where is that Frenchwoman?” she cried. “I don’t suppose you have been silly enough to let her *go*!” Where was Lise? That became the question. It was soon known that she had disappeared, and this suspicious circumstance brought over adherents to the right side. Out went the rector’s hand, shaking Golde’s in a warm grip; some old dames came to tears with murmurs of “Poor thing! and to think, after all—”

At this point there was a clatter of broken chancel-windows heard, and out swarmed a belch of rufous smoke, throwing the crowd into backward rout. Margaret, running, too, was full of rage and inward fret. Everything

seemed conspiring to delay the end for which, with so much strain, they had come to Seacombe.

But the rector lifted his sacred plumpness to a tomb-stone, and there was a speech. He said:

“I venture to address to you, dear friends, a brief, but pointed, discourse on this occasion. It would be folly, and an insult to the Understanding, if we refused to credit that there is some iota, or tittle, of Truth in the evidence of these witnesses, nor should we be either sensible or polite. Two, it has been wittily said, are better than One. And though it would be folly to deny a certain vagueness in these reports as to ‘Frenchmen,’ ‘Frenchwoman,’ and ‘the Duke,’ yet I, for my part, am ready to hold out to them the right hand of fellowship. Mr. Golde, it seems, is a Man of Respectability in the neighbouring Parish of Newton, and his Companion is known to the homeless men staying among us. While, therefore, deploring the great catastrophe which has resulted in the destruction of our dear old Church, let us beware lest we punish the Innocent for the Guilty. I therefore give my voice for investigating their Report. Let us go out. If there is, in truth, a Rescue to be effected, let us effect it. The French have felt the weight of British arms before, and run like curs before it; let them have a taste of Seacombe men to-night, if it be indeed true that they are near us. I myself, late as is the hour, offer myself as a volunteer—”

This was cheered. “But it won’t be any good,” shrilled Margaret, “if you don’t go *now!*” The rector took no notice of her impassioned cry.

“All who have fire-arms,” he went on, “let them—”

Truth is, there ain’t no Frenchmen there,” shouted the fiddler: and this, too, was cheered. “No?” cried Margaret, “and who burnt down *the lighthouse?*”

This was very plausible. It won conviction.

They had been wondering at the cause of the lighthouse fire. "Those who have fire-arms," went on the rector imperturbably in his slow gross bass, "let them assemble at the end of the street forthwith—"

"But *which* of us has fire-arms?" asked the fiddler.

There was no answer: a rusty match-lock leaned in the rector's kitchen; otherwise there was no gun in Seacombe.

But a humorous idea occurred to the fiddler. "What about the cannon?" he called. A full cheer, mixed with laughter, went up: and instantly, like wild-fire, a contagion of devilry spread through the mob of boors, the suggestion blending well with their humour of apathy and half-belief hardly one realising the affair as momentous.

At the mention of "the cannon," they became volatile, rowdily adventurous, eager for a sortie, caught with laughter. Seacombe stood on the edge of a low cliff, and "the cannon" were three sakers which had lain on rotten carriages pointing from the cliff seaward since Armadadays, the jest and pride of the village, utterly disintegrated, light with age. But the rector was no longer heard: the mob had rushed to a decision, like the decision of a single man. A detachment ran off toward the cliff, some stopping to procure ropes. In a minute all were hastening different ways about the street and alleys. "Don't forget them flags, Tom!" shouted the butcher to the postmaster, who, after Waterloo, had decorated the tavern with two ensigns. "And, mind the flute, Steve!"

"And don't forget that drum o' yours!" With these exhortations they dispersed, while the main body ran toward the village-end to wait.

A few minutes, and the rescue-party was ready, the rector in their midst, near him Golde and Margaret virtually prisoners, she sternly silent with rage and contempt. There were first three ringing cheers, and defiance to Frenchmen; and with lanthorns, and two flags flying, and the drum and flute

making holiday, and three lads rattling galas on tin-pots, with a horn, two dust- bells, a watchman's rattle, and two of the cannons trundling behind, they started down the incline to the moor, a moving, junketing hubbub.

And it was thus that Seacombe set out toward four o'clock in the morning to confound the wiles of the French.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE CLIFFS



THE MORNING CAME slowly, and there was still no sign of it when Seacombe arrived at the point of coast indicated by Golde and Margaret. Of Frenchmen now, however, there was nothing to be seen: and no wonder: for Seacombe had come out as to carnival, with drums and hilarities.

And there, as they stood, confusion of tongues ensued. Margaret alone was fixed in silence, pale lips tight, her brain all conflict and guesses. That boat, anyway, had had plenty of time to return, and take them. "They are gone, sure!" she muttered, the words cutting her heart like the keenest personal pang. If the boat had not come back, then the Duke, she reasoned, must be free! for he would refuse to run with them at the sounds of Seacombe, and they were too few to carry him, without a good fight! But she could not hope: *nothing* conceivable could have prevented the boat's return: the Duke, she believed, was asleep in the frigate's cabin.

But to make sure?

"You see," the rector was saying, "we have put you to the proof: but here are no Frenchmen!"

"Stop — just lend me your lantern," she said, snatching a lad's. "You have to follow me, all of you! We shall soon know—"

She went along the high-water mark, the lanthorn held over sands light-coloured, shelly, and toilsome. The villagers trudged behind with bent backs, examining the strand. But though silent now, they were well lit up to anyone in the darkness above. After a time Margaret fell eagerly to her knees, with the cry:

“Here is their track!”

This was a dry band of footprints in shapeless *mêlée*, a mere indication of feet. The villagers peered, but with blank minds. At all events some party of men had been here, and their faith in Margaret grew.

A gleeful outcry from her: “They are still on land!”

The inference was hasty, but not groundless: for having edged farther down to the fallen tide-edge, in wet sand she saw three distinct foot-prints, the heels toward the sea.

She jumped up, crying: “It is *that* way they are gone!”

She pointed between west and north, following the direction of the trodden band. The whole company of smock-frocks, eager now, was ready to be off over the moor. “But stop,” said Margaret, “it is no good running about the moor, where they wouldn’t have any business. If they are on shore, they are near the *sea*—”

“Along the sands, then,” said the rector. “But we don’t want all those lanterns,” she went on; “why can’t you put them out, and have some sense, and keep quiet like decent people?”

Seacombe was now more subdued; out went its lights, and in silence it followed Golde, who went swinging the lanthorn in front. The loud surf was in their ears: the talk by the track had been uttered in shouts.

For ten minutes they trudged. The wind was freshening, and a gentle rain began to fall. And now, once again, Margaret, with a cry, fell upon her knees: she had come upon another oblique track; and this time there could be no doubt: the toes pointed seaward, losing themselves at the line where the surf came gently rolling.

The significance of this was felt by the dullest yokel. Even higher up the drizzle had given consistency to the foot-prints. From end to end of the

track hurried Margaret, her bosom crouching low, eyes shrewd as gimlets. There was a momentous silence. Golde, close to her ear, said:

“Miss; are they gone?”

“No!” she screamed, leaping from her scrutiny, “they are here somewhere! This is a *false* track! All the prints are the same *size*, made by a woman’s shoes! She wants to make us think that they have gone on board — and they are here!”

Amid the silence which followed, a strange sound was heard: a splash, three splashes, quick- repeated.

“You hear?” cried Margaret— “*there* is the woman. Come — quick — this way — to the cliffs! All went after her, still westward, but also somewhat northward.

The splashes were made by Lise, who, standing on the bank above, and hearing Margaret’s outcry of discovery, had started into a run to reach her friends. Treading in her riding-skirt, she had splashed, half falling, into a salt-water pool.

On returning from Seacombe she had run straight, and to her amazement found the French still by the shore, with no sign yet of the boat. Approaching them, in a deep man’s-voice she had said: “*Camille!*” and when Verdier joined her, related what had happened. He determined to move away, told her where they would await the boat, and bid her hang behind, in case of danger from the village. The clamours of the yokels had soon reached her, and half the way from Seacombe she had followed them.

When they reached the first track, she was on the bank above, and when they surmised that the French were still on land, she ran forward, and made the false track by stepping back and fore without turning, so that her foot-marks pointed all sea-ward. Here she had waited, and on Margaret’s

discovery of her ruse, started towards the cliffs, with a three-fold splash which revealed her whereabouts.

She flew — they after her. It was essential that she should reach her party before the Duke could catch sound or sight of another soul on *the* moor. The cliffs, two miles to the west, were the aim of both pursued and pursuers: a mass of Portlandstone, rising abruptly from the moor, and following the coast-line, till you come almost to Wyemouth. Their eastern wall, a mile long, runs north and south over the moor, sloping down toward the north, till it gently meets the plain. The two faces, the south and the east, meet at right angles, the south or sea-face being honeycombed by a succession of roomy caves; while in the east face overlooking the moor there is also one hollow, known as “Scobble’s Cave.”

It was towards this east face that the race was directed. But it was soon over. Lise ran north, making voluntary noises, and when the rescue-party was well started, shot off in a silent, gingerly run toward the high end of the cliff, where her friends should be waiting. The divergence was rapid, and soon the rector began to blow; the cannons, indeed, left behind, no longer impeded them, but the run, by common consent, slackened to a trot, and soon to a discontented walk.

“I shouldn’t fret, miss,” said Golde, with a pat on Margaret’s shoulder: “there is nothing for it but patience, and plenty of it, too.”

“Let me alone, Mr. Golde,” she answered wearily. “What patience can anybody have with people who can’t run a yard?”

Lise now had approached the cliffs with flying heels, then slackened, listening eagerly for a sound of the French. They were to wait close against the cliff-face overlooking the moor, near the shore. But in the dense darkness preceding dawn she actually butted upon the sheer rock: whether they were north or south of her was uncertain: and every instant so

precious! She began groaning "*Camille! Camille!*" in low guttural, walking warily. The drizzle fell heavily now.

"Thank the good God!" she gasped presently, as a sound reached her strained ears. The Duke had said:

"You see, now, it looks like coming to rain. You should have brought some tents with you, if you meant living out here on the moor."

"*Camille!*" groaned Lise.

In a moment Verdier was with her.

"Another minute," she said, "and all is over! There are men, many, many, searching for you — from Seacombe! Camille! For the good God's sake—"

She was livid with fright. "Isn't there a cave, or something, about here?" he asked.

"Yes! it must be further north — a little. Scoble's Cave — it is your hope — run — run!" Verdier pelted. He took a sudden interest in the rain.

"Your Grace," he said hurriedly— "If your Grace will walk quickly with us this way, I think we can find your Grace shelter from this shower."

And northward, in rapid walk, they moved, Verdier's hand groping against the wall for the narrow cave-mouth; while behind came Lise.

CHAPTER XXVII. SCOBLE'S CAVE



UP TO NOW, neither sight nor sound of the rescue-party had reached the Duke: a short distance from the cliffs a series of hillocks blocked the general level of the moor from sight, hiding Margaret's lanthorn.

When therefore Verdier called: "In here — to the left," the Duke walked into a long passage hardly wide enough to admit three abreast.

They went in file, Verdier last, then Lise.

"There is a pool of some sort," she whispered at his ear, "you must not hesitate — you must go right through, and hide on the other side, far off. They will be certain to come in here."

"A pool?"

"Yes — it comes abruptly — walk fast, and you will be into it before you know, in the dark—"

"But— 'tis rather too much to expect of him, you know. He won't go through."

"You must make him somehow!"

"Don't be absurd, my dear. He is getting frightfully moody and angry, as it is."

"You must make him! If he could once be got well in — you must make him run — now."

"And how, pray?"

For answer she slipped by him, and ran rapidly, but silently, cringing against the wall. Once, twice, she stumbled, with echoed sound. But she slid

swiftly beyond the foremost, and beyond still ten yards: then stopped, and lanced a shrill cry of piercing distress.

The whole party, with mixed impulses, ran forward, the Duke eager as the rest. "Lise has wits," muttered Verdier.

But Lise's cry was not all simulated: in it being mixed a note of real surprise, dismay. Suddenly, as she stopped her dark run, there had appeared before her — light! Terror seized her lest she should be seen, though, in fact, a bend hid her, and the light was of a kind which hardly revealed an object near it.

Still, as the Duke rescued himself from a stumble — his third in the short run — he was momentarily conscious of a female form, — Margaret's he was sure — rushing like a phantom in the opposite direction. The next moment they all dashed, spattering and struggling, into a morass.

Lise had called it "*a pool*", had said that the pursuers would be "certain to come in"; had spoken of it as being "in the dark": and in each case there was misstatement, due to the fact that, in spite of her Intelligence-Department scrutiny, she did *not* really know the country-side. She had visited Scoble's Cave one day, and seen a black, oily tarn slumbering where the passage ended, and the rock opened in a circular vaulted cavern. The sun, shining up the passage, had shown her that the walls rose sheer out of the unctuous water; and she had noted a fetid ill-odour, like garlic and rotten eggs. But she did not know that the fluid surface was only an inch deep, and that far down lay a barelymoist swamp of decomposing phosphoric offal, sea-fowl refuse, putrid fish, algæ, all the carrions and waste-products of the sea; nor that above this mawkish and pestilent mass there arose, in darkness, a luminous exhalation, a white and garish haze of light; nor that, for no consideration would a yokel of the country-side enter this place by night.

At that time, when witches rode, and the mind was in a state ready to believe whatever is extraordinary, Scoble's Cave had a bad name. Individuals, supposed to have entered it, had vanished, never to be seen again. The definite suction of the morass was sufficient to account for this, but the fact itself, together with reports of strange sights seen here, inspired sensations of vague immense awesomeness in reference to the Cave. Wyemouth, however, was a good-sized town, and freer-minded, and the Cave was the stock resort of its fishermen on the way over the moor each Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, in the passage being deposited rolled seines,

creels, oars, logs, hand-nets, etc., while from time immemorial the tarn had been the repository of all the useless fish, and unsold, decaying residues of the hauls. It is doubtful, however, if even a Wyemouth fisherman would have entered the Cave by night; and it is possible that not a living soul had seen the wannish sheen which then emanated from it.

The morass is simply a phosphorus-swamp, precisely similar to that of Spendi, though for some reason less famous, its feeble luminosity being identical with that of a decaying haddock in the dark: for, originally a fish-pool formed by the sea's overflow into the cavern, in the course of ages it became a mere bog of fishy products.

But it was deep; and the French and the Duke were carried by their impetus almost to the middle. Some feet down, the substance is of the consistency of dough, and they were able to take some floundering steps: but then the full horror broke upon them: the insidious doom below, soft but strong, had caught their feet; the higher layers afforded no prise for upward effort; the marsh was sucking them in.

The more they floundered, the quicker the end. Huguenin, the first to plunge, had sunk in an agony of struggle to the chin, had gulped a first

portion of the fatal filth, and was about to disappear. The Duke saw the backward hanging head; and knew that nothing could now save him. Most were still a chest above, he highest; all save him, fighting hard against the foul tomb that held and drew them. He had noted the effect of Huguenin's struggles, for objects within the mist of light were distinct, though all beyond lay dark: and he cried out:

"Don't dance about, any of you. That only makes the matter worse, it looks like." They glanced at him: there he stood in the sickly nebulous glare, slowly sinking, his brow twitching. A minute before he had been weary, languid, sullen; now, in the sudden peril, his eyes lifted with interest, keen, but calm: so keen, that before he sank an inch, he had estimated every possibility of the situation so calm, that the working of his mind was quasi-disinterested, as a mathematician is concerned with his problem for its own sake.

But puzzlement twitched his wry-pulled forehead: the roof was out of reach; the walls were smooth, and out of reach.

Danda, in his angry struggles, was nearly gone. Huguenin had bubbled his cry, and perished.

"It rather looks as if we were in for it," the Duke said to Verdier near him, "unless—"

"Well, your Grace?"

Verdier's cheeks were ashen. "Unless one of you has some twine."

Of all things *twine* seemed the most useless: but one tossed a coil. To his oak-stick, floating near, the Duke tightly tied it, round and round, near the ferule; then, the stick horizontal in his uplifted arm, he oscillated it, taking aim, and cast it. The effort sank him an inch. It flew straight through the middle of the passage, and fell. He drew it back, slowly, with one manoeuvring hand: and back it came to him — but empty, and ineffectual.

And again he cast, and again it returned ineffectual; and then again, and it returned ineffectual: with every hurl he sank an inch.

“Ah,” said he, “the old stick is not turning out so good a friend as it has been. Well, then, we must only keep him on his travels.”

And again he cast with calm accuracy, and again it returned — but not alone. The curved end had caught in a wide-spaced wicker-work, and brought a creel with it.

Something of this kind he had expected, remembering his stumblings over obstacles in the passage, and their softness underfoot.

“Ah,” he said, “I thought there was something. Some more like that, and we shall get on very well.”

He drew in the creel: pushed it towards Verdier, to lift himself upon.

And out, with wrinkled, speculative brow, he cast again: but it returned ineffectual. Immediately, however, five, six creels were cast in swift succession by invisible hands. Lise had stood quivering and paralysed in the passage, till she comprehended the meaning of the stick-and-twine, and flung the creels.

“Well,” said he, “Margaret knows how to succour both her friends and her enemies.” Creel after creel came flying, and with them old sacks, logs, a swab, a tiller; and down as the floating objects sank beneath their weight, so up they won the feet from the reluctant clutch of the slush. In three minutes they were on the other side, no longer seven, but six.

Here was a passage in the rock, nearly opposite that of entrance. But passing through, they stopped simultaneously, gazing in the extremity of surprise: for each saw the other shrouded from neck to toe in a feeble halo, not of light, but of the mere scum and frivolous froth of light, like the shimmering ghosts of huge glow-worms: and so phantasmal, mournful, was

the impression, that when Verdier laughed, it was with a certain nervous tremor.

Through the passage, clearly visible to one another, they came out on a level space between two spurs of the gentle slope at the back of the seaward-looking cliffs.

Verdier here called Danda aside, proposing the ascent of a bill, in order to sight the light or boat or frigate. And up the slope they began to trudge.

By now, Seacombe had arrived at the mouth of Scoble's Cave, and there was a prompt movement to hurry past. It was the rector who called out:

"They may be in there!"

Seacombe did not relish the suggestion. Even Golde did not volunteer to enter. "We had better *look!*" said Margaret; and she entered, followed by Golde and the rector. Lise, having heard their approach, had slipped out of the passage to the moor. They passed through, and the moment the miasma shone before them, Golde cried out:

"Miss, miss, come back — !"

The rector, a local man, gave no second look, but ran back to scarce the villagers with awful news, followed soon by the two. They had seen a fearful thing: the creels and bags slowly sinking under the luminous haze were now barely indicated in dusky vagueness, and seemed the backs of drowned men: while still sticking straight up in the sheen was the right hand of the perished Frenchman.

And Seacombe ran, haltingly, obliquely, away from the cliff toward the shore, scared by the horror that the malicious pool had claimed yet another band of victims. But near the shore, with eyes wide in awe and pity, they stopped, doubtful, excited, and looked back.

And as they looked, an appalling spectacle met their gaze. Poised in mid-air they beheld six forms, like headless phantasms in shrouds, as it were, of

the fugitive pollen of moonshine, wavering in a wan lilac luminosity.

It was impossible to doubt that these were the ghosts of the men lately perished. The French and the Duke stood on the hill-brow just climbed; but any outline of the hill itself was invisible in the blackness, and they seemed to hang suspended in air.

And suddenly, the Duke, for some purpose, raised his luminous stick in what seemed to Seacombe a menacing gesture: and with the action, Seacombe was gone — scattered like chaff — in headlong panic homeward, Golde and Margaret with the rest.

And it was thus that Seacombe, having gone out with timbrils and with dances to defeat the wiles of the French, returned singly and in fear, having seen a sight.

CHAPTER XXVIII. THE SHORE



THE SIX SHIMMERING men looked for the light of boat or ship, but saw only darkness. Here was a mystery before which the French stood aghast and helpless: and the speedy advent of morning, their terror before, became their hope.

Both, they believed, must for some reason be hiding their lights, and could not be distant: with the earliest beams, the situation would change.

They descended, since it rained a little, to take shelter in the west passage of Scoble's Cave, walking in loose order, hardly now keeping any surveillance: for all were visible from the neck downward, and the Duke, the tallest, was distinguishable.

And so they went, till, in the descent, they came to a path between bare cliffs, and now fell into single file, four, then the Duke, then one, at varying intervals. The Duke had designedly stepped into the path at the moment when one only was behind him. His brows were twitching; a smile, half scorn, half mischief, curved his lips; something worked in his mind: he was going to escape.

He was weary now of the adventure.

"I must turn in somewhere," he said to himself "and get some good sleep." His presence here was due to a promise: but it had been qualified by the condition: "unless some extraordinary chance offers." The passage through the luminous morass was that: he decided to use the luminous morass.

His means were simple and sure as possible: he made himself invisible. First, he went treading with studious noiselessness; then, at a sharp turn of the defile, he stood, and quickly, but without haste, threw off his coat, of which the inmost lining was hardly damp, except at the tails, which were wet through by the surface-fluid. With it he covered his legs, lining outward, and was now invisible, save for a triangular spot on his waistcoat, and a hint of light on the tail-lining; so, as the man behind turned the corner, he laid his waistcoat, lining outward, over the sheening tails. He had vanished, the hand which held the coat being behind it. He stood back against the rock over his stick. The whole was accomplished with whirlwind-rage, juggler-coolness. The man behind came, passed, and seeing a longish interval, slightly quickened his pace. The Duke put on his waistcoat, and, the coat still about his legs, followed their sounds down the winding path. He heard them enter the Cave-passage so close was he, and a moment stopped, thinking: Wyemouth should be his aim, and his shortest way over the moors. But he had no intention of being recaptured this time, and the open moor, with his glowing spots, might mean recapture. The shore, on the other hand, was full of possibilities — windings, crannies, caves: and he turned southward into the narrowing interval between two hills, till, through a split, he emerged upon the sands, and walked rapidly westward toward Wyemouth.

It was not till Verdier addressed some remark to him in the cave that they awoke. That he should slip them *now*, when he had stood in garments of light — this added to their stupor a touch of madness, a rage of incredulity. The simple method of the sagacious and many-counselled mind did not occur to them. Danda was like a maniac. Verdier, in prone rush, cried:

“Come on! he can’t escape!”

He ran up the hill-path alone, to the cliff-brow, whence both the hill's slope and a reach of shore were visible; the slope was smooth and treeless grass: the Duke was not there. Along the shore he had already passed behind a bluff: Verdier saw nothing save a lanthorn-gleam near the shore. But it vanished so instantaneously that he thought it an illusion of fancy. He ran back down the hill.

That lanthorn-gleam had vanished under Margaret's shawl. She had not run far from the spectacle of the men shimmering aloof in shrouds of moonshine. Her mind was strongly rational — she was “hard-headed.” She had stopped to look back, panting, but impudent, like a frightened-off dog, which yet rallies and faces round, head erect, ready to fly again. The rest ran on, all scattered, Golde with them, leaving her alone. As she stood looking, rather wild-eyed, frightened, defiant, the French moved to descend: and with their movement the spell broke. She gave forth a little sob, mixed with laughter.

“Bah! why it's *them!*” she said— “they are not drowned — though one of them is. It's that *pool* which makes them like that!”

The French, in their intense scrutiny of the sea, had not noticed her lanthorn.

She remained wondering what she was now to do, once more alone. Her hip, as soon as she found time to think of it, began to pain her again.

“Oh, I do *wish* Mr. Golde would come back,” she thought: “I don't think a man ought to run like that.”

Wearied and at a loss, she stood uncertain; then along the shore, she saw something: two coattails and a walking-stick taking a stroll by themselves — the Duke. She thought it must be a Frenchman sent for some purpose along the beach, and covered her lanthorn.

Soon she saw Verdier appear at the cliff-brow, and again covered the lanthorn. He ran back hurriedly.

“Something must have happened,” she thought, “I am not going to stand here, and do nothing.” And at once she ran to the beach, and along it; by the cleft through which the Duke had passed she entered the level space between two hills, and away yonder to the north saw the French running about like ghosts gone mad, widely separated. Her heart bounded with a vague premonition of good, and, eager to know, she went trotting ever nearer, when footsteps were heard behind, someone dashed by her with heels of furious speed, and sounds of — a skirt.

She, too, doubled her run, treading noiselessly in moist marl.

“Come! come!” cried Lise imperiously, within hailing distance of the French. They flocked round her. She had gone shoreward to spy for the boat’s light, and seen the faint luminosity which promenaded: the Duke had passed close to her, unsuspectingly; she had divined that it could not be one of her friends, and who it was.

“He is gone along — along the shore!” she gasped, in accents of agony, plainly audible to Margaret, her face distorted, pallid as death: “along the shore — quick — by the back of the hills — run — far forward — there are the clefts — wait on the shore — in a cave till he come—”

Without a second’s delay they were gone.

The cliffs and their hills behind are arranged in separate masses, with valleys and clefts, by which is passage from moor to beach. For the French to fore-run and intercept was therefore easy, they running straight along the moor, he walking all the long sweeps of the fore-shore.

But Margaret had heard, and never did her feet put on such shoes of swiftness. The French had hardly dashed into westward race, when she was off southward to the sands. *This* time, anyway, there would be no mistake!

Off then, she flew with the heels of a young hind, laughing to scorn the hip-pain, no longer careful to hide the swinging lantern.

But Lise saw the lantern, and knew well that it represented the weak spot of all their hope — Margaret Ferris. But for Margaret all had long been well, and over. Yet Margaret, this time, must be stopped — else good-bye to everything. And Lise had no gun to shoot her dead.

But she had an instant brain: she could intercept Margaret as the men were intercepting the Duke! running at the back to emerge upon the shore ahead of her — if she were swift! And she, too, went flying.

And somewhat in advance of Margaret she did come out upon the sands, and a minute waited for the on-hasting lantern. It happened low down, near the tide-rim, where the sand was less toilsome. When Margaret was within a yard of her spring, Lise had her, crying in her deep, intense, and panting guttural:

“Not *this* time, Margaret Ferris!”

She might as well have sought to bar the progress of a cyclone. The tussle, filled with the hissing of infuriate cats, lasted not a minute. Down upon the head of the Frenchwoman crashed the lantern: and Margaret flew forward, the other lying weeping in the sand.

CHAPTER XXIX. HOMICIDE



LONG BEFORE THE Duke was in sight, the French were waiting behind a large rock on the sand, till he should come.

He was walking leisurely, not far from the sea-edge. The fine roll of the surf was good to him to hear. He had put on his coat again, feeling fairly secure, thinking of nothing but a bed, and the splendid perseverance of the ever-preaching sea. The morning breeze fanned his hair.

Margaret hasted upon him with furious expedition, then suddenly, at the last moment, tentatively. She was not quite sure of her reception. Unfortunately, she had broken her lanthorn upon Lise, and he could not see her honest face, nor she his.

“My lord—” she said, quite close.

He half-turned his head, continuing his walk. He knew the voice.

“Well now, Margaret,” he said.

“My lord — stop, will you? — there is not an *instant* to be lost.” He walked on, neither faster, nor slower, without answer. Then, all at once, the full tragedy of the situation broke in upon her — the possibility that he might not listen to her *this* time: the one thing that she had not taken into account.

“My lord, don’t you believe what I *say* to you?” she wailed.

He did not answer.

“Don’t you believe what I say, sir?”

“Well, and what is it you say, Margaret?”

“The Frenchmen are on in front, my lord — they have run on in front behind the cliffs to wait for you — they must be in front now, waiting — will you turn back with me, my lord?”

Her head was screwed round, vainly seeking, with agonized interest, to peer into his face. It was as hard as the marble images of it which now frown upon the public places of England.

They walked on a minute, she not knowing what in the world to do. He said:

“It does not look, Margaret, as if your side was going to beat.”

“You are *right*, my lord,” she answered— “it *won’t*, not if you keep walking on like this another five minutes.”

“Is it that you still pretend that you are on my side, then?”

“What other side should I be *on*, my lord?”

“On the enemy’s, I gather. What if I tell you that I saw you in the cave?”

“Which cave, sir?”

He did not answer. He meant the momentary phantom of Lise rushing through the passage. “You never saw me in any cave, sir,” she said; “you might have seen Mrs. Opie. She is lying yonder in the sand now. I’ve *killed* her, I hope.”

“She is not, then, asleep at Grandcourt, Margaret?”

“Will you come with me, my lord?”

“Or out with a party of the servants looking for the Duke of Wellington, eh?”

“Won’t you come? Do, sir! Pray, do, my lord! I promise you — I *promise* you — if you will only trust me, just this once more — my lord—”

“You are impudent. And your impudence makes you rather a bad ally to your friends.”

“Ah, sir, what a man you are!”

“Have you a mother?”

“No, sir.”

“No one dependent on you?”

She was surprised. “No, sir.”

“Well, do you know where I am going now?”

“You are going among the *Frenchmen!*”

“No. I am going to Wyemouth. And I am going to take you with me, to give you a lesson. You have put your own head into the noose, Margaret.”

“I shouldn’t mind if you would keep yours out of it, sir. But I don’t know what noose it is you mean.”

“The noose means the House of Correction, Margaret, and the Constable!”

Saying it, he caught her wrist in an iron grip.

And now she began to cry, suppressing her sobs, lest the Frenchmen should hear. Only, she said, wailing:

“Oh, this is too *hard* of you, my lord! — believe me, I would have *died* to save you, sir!” And in that cry something there was which reached and wounded him — sorely for an instant: and at that moment — once more — in spite of everything, she had conquered him. He believed her.

An instant only: his stubborn heart would not yield. For two minutes longer he walked silent, his grasp on her wrist, hearing the convulsive catches of her breath. Then, all in a moment, she was free and running, her hand wrenched from his: and he a prisoner.

The stick went up, and dropped listlessly.

“Does your grace admit yourself a prisoner?” asked Verdier. He did not answer. He was thinking of something else: of Margaret, mortally angry with her — or with himself. Verdier asked again:

“Does your grace admit — ?”

“Let me see,” he said sharply, “how many are, there of you? — five. Well, very well.” The faintest hint of grey was in the east, but over sea and land darkness; nor as yet could any sign of ship or boat be seen; and to fill the time before the light, they set out to return to the secrecy and shelter of Scoble’s Cave, drizzle still falling.

The Duke walked preoccupied, his head bent. Had he not done her wrong? She had told him right! Perhaps knowing that he would not now believe, and *therefore* persist in going wrong? Was she, then, a Machiavel of craft? or a very angel of kindly purposes? If he had wronged her, he had wronged her quite beyond pardon!

She, all the time, was hanging behind, at safe distance, limping, hands clasped before. She had heard some mention of Scoble’s Cave among the party, and knew that thither they were returning. When they turned into the cleft of the cliffs leading to the Cave’s western passage, she would not venture after them on that side; yet they were like a magnet to her; she could not leave them: and ran round to the Cave’s east passage.

Here she thought herself alone: but two minutes before, Lise having also accompanied the return, but in advance, had run round, like Margaret, to this east passage, to wait and be near.

And so at the inner end of the passage, the two women met; and in the luminosity of the morass saw each other’s face.

Margaret gave a little cry of joy, a cruel cry. In that moment she forgot everything but one. They had come running; and the men, walking very slowly, were still some way off, when the women looked into each other’s eyes.

They wasted no words, feeling the meaning of this meeting. The long contest would end here. The Brahmin doctrine of “the Ferine Soul” found

illustration in their stare. The true hatred — the hatred of hell — is when woman meets woman.

Neither had a weapon: but Nature is always armed: here were the thews to embrace, and the hands to squeeze, and the claws to rake.

Margaret flew at her with the cry of "*Beast!*" and at the same time the lady of fashion became a mere Fury, blood-thirsty, visage all inflamed. They became involved in a mere chaos of distracted intensities, pounding, tearing hair, clothes, flesh, pushing and pulling, tugging at the windpipe, and finally rolling together on the narrow space between passage-end and morass.

The aim of Margaret was to get her enemy into the morass itself. But it was not so easy: both were strongly built: one an athlete, the other large, a woman-of-the-world, and venomous. When they fell an entanglement of womanhood, it was difficult to say which was uppermost. At all events, Margaret made a grand effort to lift herself, and succeeded: but as she rose, Lise rose with her; and as with one heave of the whole frame, she thrust Lise forth, Lise had her still; and together, with simultaneous cry, they splashed, still struggling wildly, locked in maddest ecstasy, a considerable distance from the edge.

Either, by herself, must have perished, choked with filth, unless quick help came; thus desperately locked, all the help of man could avail them nothing.

When their cry shrilled out, the men were in the cave-passage on the other side: all rushed in, and at the edge stood looking, helpless and amazed.

"Let go each other!" shouted Verdier, pale as marble.

He might as well have shouted to the Portland rock. The mire had the women well by the feet; they had sunk to the neck; and still they struggled,

seeking to destroy each other. The minute before the fatal slime must bubble in their gaping mouth was come.

The Duke with the rest, stood looking, his brain working mightily. He was asking himself questions of the most awful abstract import, grappling with doubts as to the relative powers of God and Man in the face of certain eventualities; and, at the very same time, was weighing like a judge, with nicest quick subtlety, evidence as to a host of minute details.

His measuring eye had seen at a glance that no human power could save both women, so fixedly locked. But he could save *one* — *if* he chose: one at the expense of the other. Only, had he the right? That was his bold question: and boldly his capacious intellect expanded to the breadth of it, and answered — Yes.

He would do a murder. “Just give me your pistol,” he said coolly to one.

The man hesitated.

“No — I won’t shoot you,” said the Duke— “*make haste!*” There was need for frightful urgency. The women were nearly gone. Yet when he had the pistol, he, too, hesitated.

For there was *another* question to be solved! The question of — which? One of the women was here doing noble duty; one engaged in an attempt against himself heinously wrong. But which? The wife of his friend, Opie? — or Margaret, who had led him, to his certain knowledge, into the arms of his enemies; who, to his certain knowledge, had lied to him?

He hesitated — and there was need for haste.

It was a terrible moment for him. His soul wrought intensely. To do right *now* — *to* see as the Judge of all the Earth saw — this was his effort, his task. By one of those mysterious travails of the spirit, akin to the operation of Intuition — by the fierce working of that affinity with Truth which is the chief trait of every noble mind — he decided, and decided well.

The pistol sounded, and a shriek rang through the cave. “Oh, Lise! Lise! Lise!” cried Verdier, when the smoke had thinned, covering his face, with passionate sobs.

CHAPTER XXX. "HAIL, HOLY LIGHT!"



IN SPITE OF the relaxing of Lise's arms Margaret was about to perish, her chin already sunken, when, once more, the Duke's action — so intense as to resemble tempest, so calmly exact as to resemble the planetary intercourse — saved her. He threw off his long coat, calling upon the French for theirs. Then, with his own hurrying hands tied them sleeve and sleeve; a moment later a coat-tail fell with nicest calculation before Margaret's face, and as she caught it, they drew her, holding high their end.

The Duke pulled her up, seated her on a block of rock. She was fainting, her colour ghastly, eyes closed. He bent over her assiduously, gently. But it was quite harshly that he said:

"How do you feel?"

She heard that voice and smiled. She knew what had happened! He had killed her enemy. for her! He had believed in her at the last!

"Well, now, how do you feel?"

She *would* not answer; she wanted him to on asking; she smiled. "*Well*, you have gone rather near to it this time, Margaret; you must now set about and come round again."

"Ah, my lord—" she sighed, and smiled.

The voice of Danda was heard. "We must be going! Bring the girl too!"

"*And* why the girl?" said the Duke.

"She is our prisoner, your Grace; our prisoner last night, and escaped Verdier through his paroxysm of grief.

"Is that so . . .? . . . Well, but she can't go now. You must wait."

The white exhalation of the morass was nearly invisible now, merging in vaguest silver into the growing day, as a veiled bride faints upon the bosom of her lord. It was morning. Margaret would not move.

“Now—” said Verdier. “Can you come now?” said the Duke gently.

“Yes, my lord.”

“Well, then—”

She rose bedraggled, with bruises, but erectly tall, a great brightness in her golden eyes. They went out. It was late September, and the morning had come suddenly: already it was magnificently broad and bright.

Southward through the cleft they came upon the beach, and here were startled by the sight of a man some distance away. He ran from them a little, then stopped, looking. Margaret recognised Golde, and waved her hand.

Golde, like her, had not run far from the phantoms: but by the time he recovered himself had lost her. He ran about a little, and, from an elevation sighted the lanthorn-shine: but it disappeared: she had seen Verdier at the cliff-brow and covered it. And since then he had been seeking her painfully over moor and shore.

All eyes now turned seaward: there lay a little fleet of little boats anchored beyond the surf-line, Wyemouth craft, and there all night, unknown to the French, had lain. But of their own boat, of the frigate, no trace.

At this, however, they hardly wondered: for the shape of the bay in which they stood afforded limited purview of the sea.

“We shall sight them from the headland there,” said Danda— “come on.”

“I hope the boat isn’t on the sea at all now,” said Verdier, “she might well get noticed by someone. We can take one of those craft there, as soon as we sight the frigate.”

“Why the devil did the frigate hide her lights?” queried Danda. “There was some reason or other, I suppose,” Verdier said nonchalantly, and siffled through his teeth-edges. Then: “Your Grace must be exceedingly hungry and tired!”

He did not answer. “Ah, well,” whispered Danda, “we will soon give him bed and breakfast,” and his inward- tending upper lip, longer than his chin, tightened viciously.

They walked westward, Margaret and the Duke in the centre. Golde following small, at a perfectly safe distance.

The musical caw of a large snow-white bird, scarlet-legged, was on high; over-sea a flight of gulls swung, skating the air with alternate wingtip dipped in the brine; in the neap-tide surf was a certain quietude now; and down by the water-edge lay rank abundance of brown seaweed twine; and all in the blithe fresh morning was the sea, the sea.

Round the curve of sand they went to a thin promontory, rising toward its end, whence was wide prospect of the sea; and near it the little fleet of boats, useful in case their own were not in sight.

And at the terminating bluff of gneissoid rocks, rugged and seamed with wet algæ, they stood, exposed to possible prying eyes, but no longer careful, since it was beyond doubt that all, at last, was safe.

But for some minutes they looked everywhere, and did not see the frigate.

Murmurs, hisses, curses, arose and multiplied. But to one another they said nothing, nor looked at one another, feeling now the intolerably harsh frown of Fate. Danda’s face, quaint as a bat’s, was a rigid pallor. The boat was not visible: the frigate was not visible. Here was a touch of the Inscrutable: this way lay — Madness.

“Well, your Grace—” Verdier said at last, with a wry and pale attempt at laughter. He was interrupted by a cry from Margaret. She had fixed her eyes, by a natural instinct, upon the scene of her great struggle with Verdier — the lighthouse. There it stood, black and burnt, distant and solitary. Her powers of vision were excellent. And suddenly:

“There — *there’s* their ship, my lord!” she cried, pointing— “oh, my lord, my lord — !” Her jubilant hands clapped with cruel glee. What she called “their ship” was five bow-timbers sticking above the water on Raddon Rocks. For, almost immediately after the boat had returned to the frigate during the night to procure more men, the frigate had run upon the lighthouse rocks.

That guiding light the Frenchmen had themselves quenched. . . .

At that laugh of Margaret, Verdier fixed her with a look of hate.

“Well, certainly, Margaret,” said the Duke, “it rather looks as if our side were going to beat, after all.”

Our side! He coupled her lovingly with him now! A sweet pain, like mixed honey and peppermint, went rankling in her heart.

But Verdier was a fellow of invincible mind, persistent, quick-willed, great in desperation. No sooner had he made out the wreck through screwed-up eyes, than he was resolved. He called Danda aside; whispered:

“I am off to Wyemouth — the French barque that hailed us two days since was bound there — is there now. I shall get her. That cave there — take the Duke: and wait till I send the barque’s boat to this point.”

Turning to the Duke, he said:

“Your Grace, I am going away for a time. But your Grace sees that there will be four of us left. And your Grace is one, unarmed. Will you go with them to save a row? I am dreadfully sorry to put your Grace to all this annoyance—”

“A general should disband his army, and let go his prisoners, when he has nothing to give them to eat,” said the Duke. “Well, but I will go with the four, to see what becomes of you.”

Verdier slipped down and ran along to the sands. Here he sent a flying shot at Golde, who, however, had retreated before him, keeping that safe distance of his. Verdier disappeared through a cleft, making over the moor for Wyemouth. The others came slowly along the headland.

“Do you see that man yonder on the beach, my lord?” asked Margaret.

The Duke, bending down his ear to her, looked.

“Yes, I see.”

“That is Mr. Golde, sir.”

“And who is Mr. Golde, Margaret?”

“He is the man who went through all *the adventures* with me last night, and the night before, my lord.”

“Is that so? Well, then, he must be an admirable fellow.”

“He is not a bad kind of man, sir. But he doesn’t like getting killed.”

“I see that — I see. That is why the fellow is hanging off over there.”

“But I shouldn’t like you to think he is a coward, my lord. There is nobody braver when it comes to the push. And he is very kind-hearted, and good.”

“Well, Mr. Golde is a happy man, Margaret, since you like him so much.”

She coloured.

“But this is what I wanted to say, my lord: that you needn’t be kept bothering with these men any more, because there are three of us now, and only four of them.”

“Well, but I don’t wish to see you and Mr. Golde shot down, Margaret. The four have guns, and we have none.”

“But are we to go on quietly, and do nothing, sir?”

“It is rather a good thing to know how to wait sometimes, Margaret.”

“They say that is how you won the battle of Waterloo, sir.”

“Well, there is something in that.”

“But, my lord — there is that Verdier who has just run off I can’t *tell* you, sir, what a beastly artful man that is.”

“He seems to me rather a gallant fellow. If I had the judging of the rascal, I should condemn him to be hanged, and then go to his funeral afterwards.”

“But, my lord — won’t you listen to me? He is a most *cunning* man, that man! and whatever it is he is gone to do, he will do. I could see it in his *face*.”

“And have you something to propose, then?”

“Yes, my lord! When we get to the cave-mouth, I am going to run. They can’t come after me, because not enough of them will be left to guard you. They can only shoot at me. Will you stand in front and prevent them, sir?”

“Why, yes. But what is it you mean to be after when you have run off?”

“Mr. Golde ought to have followed that Verdier, sir: but he didn’t *think* of it. He is not very much a one for *thinking* of things. I want to run and tell him to hurry off to Wyemouth, and rouse the people against Verdier. I believe that is where Verdier has gone to. He has gone to see if he can get a *ship*!”

“Well, but suppose you get shot?”

“You are not going to *let* them, sir!”

“Well, then, we shall see.”

The four were parleying hotly in French; and so, all talking, they crossed the sands to the cave. It opened in a roomy area beyond a passage ten yards long. They entered in double file: two, then the prisoners, then two. It was

when the last were five yards within the passage that Margaret whispered, without looking at him:

“Now, my lord!”

He saw that the order of march was about as unfavourable as possible; that it would have been better strategy if she had started some seconds earlier; that the passage was too broad. He regretted his consent, perceiving danger: there were four pistols: somebody was going to be shot: he or she. Round glared his strong sure eyes, drinking in every possibility of the instant, and quickly he stooped to her with:

“Don’t go!”

He was the fraction of a second late. She was gone.

The two hinder men shouted an exclamation, one staggering, struck by her rush, she herself falling upon her hands beyond him.

“Shoot!” shrieked Danda, who had been of the van, but now of the rear, all having turned.

As one pointed, the weapon was vigorously struck downward; and by the time the man who had been staggered was prepared to fire, the Duke was before the four, facing them, yet seeing through the back of his head, as it were, the progress of Margaret. There came an instant when he perceived that he must guard her from three different shots at the same time. From one he saved her by a strike-out of the left fist, from the second by a downward sweep of the right hand. Before he could deal with the third, the percussion-cap was exploded, and he knew it; but the round-shot, passing through his right palm, fell spent on her skirt, just as she flew round the corner, and disappeared.

They made a rush to follow: but the Duke’s arms, stretched across the passage, barred them.

“No,” he said, “you may as well let her be off now. If you go after her, I shall run away.” They saw the crucified and sacrificial palm, dripping, the hard glint in his eye — and desisted. He went with them into the interior.

CHAPTER XXXI. THE BARQUE



MARGARET FLEW. AND Golde, seeing her come, ran to meet her — with suspicious glances at the cave-mouth, for he had heard the pistol-shot afar.

“We have got to go to Wyemouth at once, Mr. Golde!” she said: “their ship is wrecked on *the lighthouse*, and that Verdier is gone to get another, you see — oh, I wish we had the hobby-horse now—”

“There *is* a French ship in Wyemouth Roads, too,” said Golde. “I have been hunting for you all the morning, lass.”

“Have you — ? I thought you wouldn’t be far. . . Come!”

They started, steering their run for a cleft in the cliffs not far from the cave-mouth. The earth and its birds, sun and sea, were wide awake now, all blithely brisk, alert; but the men and women were still asleep; the shore was as deserted as at midnight; and far and near over all the land was hardly a human sound.

A little way they ran together, their nimble tread up-borne by the soft and passive sand, till Margaret stopped suddenly short, and with wide and solemn eyes stared into the wide and solemn eyes and bloodless face of Golde.

“O God, Mr. Golde!” she whispered, “what is *that*?”

She did not wait for answer: but flew back to cave just escaped — with winged feet — into the mouth, down the passage.

“*That*” was a multiple roar of wild beasts — of two tigresses, of a lion — the escaped menagerie beasts, which, knowing themselves in inhabited country, had herded within this cave, frightened, for a day and a night,

famished now, mad with pangs. On the entrance of the French and the Duke they saw a meal from God.

Precisely what happened Margaret could never analyse: it was a whirl of frenzy. The cave was crowded with reverberations. One man was already rent to pieces, and close against the furthest wall she saw through the half-dark the Duke beneath the fangs of Apollyon.

At her cry — that voice which, alone of voices, they feared — the three beasts turned upward an emerald glow of eyes, paused in their jubilee, and cowered. But only for an instant: Nature was stronger in them than their fears. One tigress, springing from a wriggling crouch, brought down Danda in his flight, and above all sounds rang the intensity of his dying shrieks; while the other,

wanton for slaughter, daintily discarded her first victim, and instantly had another man beneath ravening claws and hanging jowl.

Now Golde, too, appeared in the *mêlée*, his chest heaving at the weight of a huge pointed rock in his arms; and as one of the tigresses, with instant fastidiousness, dragged the last of the French beneath her talons, down upon her skull crashed the stone, and she fell dead.

The Duke, from the first, had sought the wall, and when he fell beneath the lion's rush, fell only as to the legs, the wall supporting his back. Then Margaret's cry was heard, and Apollyon, more timorous of her than the tigresses, looked up with hurried guilt, and hurriedly turned again to finish, and fly: but the snatch of his teeth carried with it the Duke's stick only: he had lost a moment, and in the next was faced by the eyes of Margaret.

What, at that instant, filled the Duke's mind was the daring of the girl.

"Pass that pistol there," he said, pointing to a weapon on the ground—"then run." She did not pass the pistol: but with a menace of crimson rage dashed her fist into the lion's face, and he, with a throat-murmur ran, and

some distance away stood facing her, half-defiantly. At the same time she beheld the living tigress about to spring upon Golde, and with aggressive stamp, cried:

“Ah, you *Fan!* you *dare!*”

The tigress backed a step, while a shot from the Duke entered its skull. Margaret, seeing him take another pistol from the ground, now said:

“He won’t hurt, my lord — if you will please spare the poor brute’s life — he belongs to me—” Apollyon was backing away towards the wall.

One only of the four French, saved by Golde’s rock, had run out unharmed; and the next day was in the Wyemouth House of Correction.

Golde, Margaret, and the Duke went leisurely eastward across the sands, and northward over the moor toward Seacombe, for a horse to take the Duke to Grandcourt.

“To think that that foolish beast, Pol, should have torn your hand like that, my lord,” said Margaret, pointing to the bullet-wound in his palm.

“Ah,” said he, and smiled, “the fellow mistook me for a Frenchman, you see.” Then, turning to Golde on the other side of him: “That was gallantly done with the stone, Golde.”

Golde was timorously tingling at his nearness to the Great, with a constant tendency in his hand to go up and snatch off his hat.

“It was a privilege, your Grace, to be able to save that poor man’s life. Though they have served me some ugly turns, too, these men — your Grace.”

“Oh, my lord, my lord!” cried Margaret— “there — there — is where Mr. Golde rode the *hobbyhorse!*”

“Is that so? Which hobby-horse?”

As her hand fell, it fell somehow into his: and she told him, while Golde tingled and tingled, of the tacking ride, and of the race with Lise, and of the

polyglot alarum of the bells, and of how Seacombe, having gone out with timbrels and with dances, returned singly, and in fear. It was not a walk, but a saunter through the blithe broad morning, she limping a little, the dry clasp of his hand filling her with comfort, her tongue loosed.

“And oh, my lord, I am so glad you saved Pol’s life! Do you know why — chiefly?”

“No. Tell me.”

“Because when that Verdier goes back to the cave, Pol will make short work of *him*.”

“And it would be little more than what that man deserves, too,” hazarded Golde.

“Ah, but I rather fancy Pol will come off second in that battle,” said the Duke.

He walked looking far away over the moor, with wrinkled speculative brow, smiling all the time. Something he wanted to say, and did not like to say it. At last he ventured bluntly:

“I am coming to the wedding.”

Margaret’s heart gave a big bound — and Golde’s. “Which *wedding*, sir?” she said, her eyes on the ground.

“Well, you have been telling me about it all the time, Margaret, and did not know. You must let me hear. And you, Golde.”

“And thanks to your Grace, too, for saying it!” said Golde.

She did not answer. She was white as a corpse. They were near Seacombe now. And half-an- hour later, when the Duke rode northwards, they two, on the slope of the hill, stood watching. And as he disappeared on the yon side of the bridge, Golde, who held her hand, turned his mouth and touched her lips, most timorously, gently, half-expecting her to spit and hiss like cats.

But she bore it tamely, with cast-down eyes, a little disgust in her nether lip. And presently an awful sigh came from her lifted bosom; and she said:

“Ah, Mr. Golde! I never expected that it would come to this.”

They walked back into Seacombe hand in hand.

It was still early; and about this time Verdier returned to the cave. The Duke’s prophecy proved correct: he had no sooner perceived the half-eaten bodies of his comrades, and the crouching lion, than Apollyon fell dead. At nine o’clock he was sitting out at the promontory-end, legs dangling, a hand supporting his chin, siffling through the teeth-edges, brooding with melancholy under-glance upon the frigate’s timbers on Raddon Rocks. And now, round a point of land came the stately French barque, crowded with white wide sails, like a countrywoman in Sunday-best, all starch and crinoline. Verdier had won her captain by a fabulous bribe: and at the sight of her, he threw back the head, all red, and laughed madly.

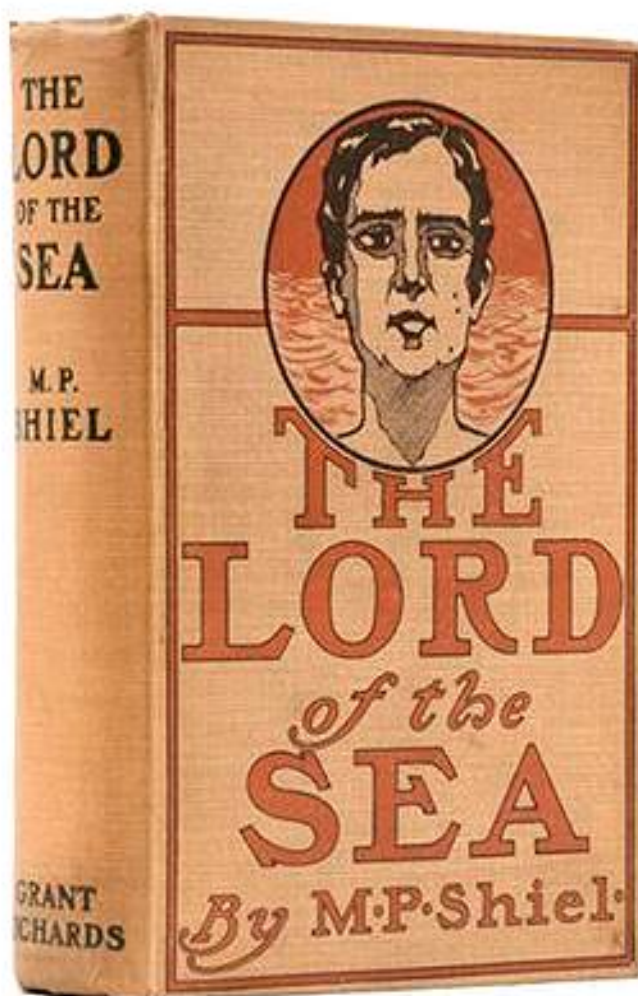
THE END

The Lord of the Sea (1901)



The Lord of the Sea was first published by Grant Richards in 1901 in London. Richards worked for T. W. Stead as an editor and writer at the highly successful *Review of Reviews*, before he established his first publishing company in 1897 at the age of only twenty-four. He would become an important figure in twentieth century publishing in Britain, not least because in 1901 he launched The World Classic series, which is still published today as the renowned *Oxford World's Classics*. Richards published many of Shiel's works over the course of the latter's career and maintained a close professional relationship with him for many years.

The Lord of the Sea is part of Shiel's 'future history' trilogy which also includes *The Purple Cloud* (1901) and *The Last Miracle* (1906). The novel centres on Richard Hogarth, who comes into the possession of enormous wealth via a meteorite stuffed with diamonds. Hogarth embarks on building a series of marine fortresses to become the supreme ruler of the sea and the dominant political force in the world. Shiel uses Hogarth's newly established position and power to express ideas about private landownership and social egalitarianism, based on the theories of Henry George. The novel is heavily plot driven and melodramatic; it involves prison escapes, hidden identities and thwarted romances. Unfortunately, Shiel's depiction of Jews plays heavily upon Anti-Semitic tropes and racist notions of an 'alien' invader destroying Europe.



The first edition

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The publisher Grant Richards in 1909; from a pencil drawing by Henry Lamb

I. THE EXODUS



IN THE CALLE Las Gabias — one of those by-streets of Lisbon below St. Catherine — there occurred one New Year a little event in the Synagogue there worth a mention in this history of Richard, Lord of the Sea.

It was Kol NidrÃ“, eve of the Day of Atonement, and the little Beth-El, sweltering in a dingy air, was transacting the long-drawn liturgy, when, behind the curtain where the women sat, an old dame who had been gazing upward smote her palms together, and let slip a little scream: “The Day is coming...!”

She then fainted, and till near ten lay on her bed, lit by the Yom Kippur candle, with open eyes, but without speech, her sere face still beautiful, on each temple a little pyramid of plaits, with gold-and-coral ear-rings: a holy *belle*. About ten P.M. three women watching heard her murmur: “My child, Rebekah...!”

She was childless, and whom she meant was not known. However, soon afterwards there was a form at the amulet-guarded door, and Estrella sat up, saying: “Rebekah, my child...”

A young lady of twenty-two ran in and embraced her, saying: “I have been to Paris and Madrid with my father — just arrived, so flew to see you. We leave for London to-night”.

“No: I shall keep you seven days. Tell Frankl *I* say so. What jewels! You have grown into a rose of glory, the eyes are profounder and blacker, and that brow was made for high purpose. Tell me — have you a lover?”

“No, mamma Estrella”.

“Then, why the blush?”

“It is nothing at all,” Miss Frankl answered: “five years ago when at school in Bristol I thrice saw through a grating a young man with whom I was frivolous enough to speak. Happily, I do not know what has become of him — a wild, divine kind of creature, of whom I am well rid, and never likely to see again”.

The old lady mused. “What was he?”

“A sailor”.

“Not a common sailor?”

“I fancy so, mamma”.

“What name?”

“Hogarth — Richard”.

“A Jew?”

“An Englishman!”

She laughed, as the old lady’s eyes opened in sacred horror, and as she whispered: “Child!”

Within three months of that night, one midnight the people of Prague rose and massacred most of the Jewish residents; the next day the flame broke out in Buda-Pesth; and within a week had become a revolution.

On the twelfth morning one of two men in a City bank said to the other: “Come, Frankl, you cannot fail a man in this crisis — I only want 80,000 on all Westring—”

“No good to me, my lord,” answered Frankl, who, though a man of only forty — short, with broad shoulders, — already had his skin divided up like a dry leaf; in spite of which, he was handsome, with a nose ruled straight and long, a black beard on his breast.

But the telephone rattled and Frankl heard these words at the receiver: “Wire to hand from Wertheimer: Austrian Abgeordneten-haus passed a

Resolution at noon virtually expelling Jewish Race....”

When Frankl turned again he had already resolved to possess Westring Vale, and was saying to himself: “Within six months the value of English land should be — doubled”.

The bargain was soon made now: and within one week the foresight of Frankl began to be justified.

Austria, during those days, was a nation of vengeful hearts: for the Jews had acquired half its land, and had mortgages on the other half: peasant, therefore, and nobleman flamed alike. And this fury was contagious: now Germany — now France had it — Anti-Semite laws — like the old May-Laws — but harsher still; and streaming they came, from the Leopoldstadt, from Bukowina, from the Sixteen Provinces, from all Galicia, from the Nicolas Colonies, from Lisbon, with wandering foot and weary breast — the Heines, Cohens, Oppenheimers — Sephardim, Aschkenasim. And Dover was the new Elim.

With alarm Britain saw them come! but before she could do anything, the wave had overflowed it; and by the time it was finished there was no desire to do anything: for within eight months such a tide of prosperity was floating England as has hardly been known in a country.

The reason of this was the increased number of hands — each making more things than its owner could consume himself, and so making every other richer.

There came, however, a change — almost suddenly — due to the new demand for land, the “owners” determining to await still further rises, before letting. This checked industry: for now people, debarred from the land, had only air.

In Westring Vale, as everywhere, times were hard. It was now the property of Baruch Frankl: for at the first failure of Lord Westring to meet

terms, Frankl had struck.

Now, one of the yeomen of Westring was a certain Richard Hogarth.

II. THE FEZ



FRANKL TOOK UP residence at Westring in September, and by November every ale-house, market, and hiring in Westring had become a scene of discussion.

The cause was this: Frankl had sent out to his tenants a Circular containing the words:

“...tenants to use for wear in the Vale a *fez with tassel* as the Livery of the Manor...the will of the Lord of the Manor...no exception...”

But though intense, the excitement was not loud: for want was in many a home; though after three weeks there were still six farmers who resisted.

And it happened one day that five of these at the Martinmas “Mop,” or hiring, were discussing the matter, when they spied the sixth boring his way, and one exclaimed: “Yonder goes Hogarth! Let’s hear what *he’s* got to say!” and set to calling.

Hogarth twisted, and came winning his way, taller than the crowd, with “What’s up? Hullo, Clinton — not a moment to spare to-day—”

“We were a-talking about that Circular — !” cried one.

At that moment two other men joined the group: one a dark-skinned Jew of the MoghrabÃm; the other a young man — an English author — on tour. And these two heard what passed.

Hogarth stood suspended, finding no words, till one cried: “Do you mean to put the cap on?”

He laughed a little now. “*I!* The whip! The whip!” — he showed his hunting-crop, and was gone.

His manner of speech was rapid, and he had a hoarse sort of voice, almost as of sore-throat.

Of the two not farmers, one — the author — enquired as to his name, and farm; the other man — the MoghrabÃm Jew — that evening recounted to Frankl the words which he had heard.

* * * * *

One afternoon, two weeks later, Loveday, the author, was leaning upon a stile, talking to Margaret Hogarth; and he said: “I love you! If you could *deign*—”

“Truth is,” she said, “you are in love with my brother, Dick, and you think it is me!”

She was a woman of twenty-five, large and buxom, though neat-waisted, her face beautifully fresh and wholesome, and he of middle-size, with a lazy ease of carriage, small eyes set far apart, a blue-velvet jacket, duck trousers very dirty, held up by a belt, a red shirt, an old cloth hat, a careless carle, greatly famed.

“But it isn’t of your brother, but of *you*, that I am wanting to speak! Tell me—”

“No — I can’t. I am a frivolous old woman to be talking to you about such things at all! But, since it is as you say, wait, perhaps I may be able — But I must be going now—”

There was embarrassment in her now: and suddenly she walked away, going to meet — another man.

She passed through stubble-wheat, disappeared in a pine-wood, and came out upon the Waveney towing-path. On the towing-path came Frankl to meet her.

He took her hand, holding his head sideward with a cajoling fondness, wearing the flowing caftan, and a velvet cap which widened out a-top, with puckers.

“Well, sweetheart...” he said.

“But, you know, I begged you not to use such words to me!” — from her.

“What, and I who am such a sweetheart of yours?” — his speech very foreign, yet slangily correct, being, in fact, *all* slang.

“No,” she said, “you spoke different at first, and that is why — But this must be the last, unless you say out clearly now what it is you mean—”

“Now, you are too hard. You know I am wild in love with you. And so are you with me—”

“*I?*” — with shrinking modesty in her under-looking eyes. “Oh, no — don’t have any delusions like that about me, please! You said that you liked me: and as I am in the habit of speaking the truth myself, I thought that — perhaps — But my meeting you, to be frank with you, was for the sake of my brother”.

“Well, you are as candid as they make them,” he said, eyeing her with his mild eye. “But what’s the matter with your brother? Hard up?”

“He’s worried about something”. “He must have some harvest-money put away?”

“He has something in Reid’s Bank at Yarmouth, I believe”.

“Well, shall I tell you what’s the matter with him? He’s *afraid*, your brother. He has refused to wear the cap, and he thinks that I shall be down upon him like a thousand of bricks...But suppose I exempt him, and you and I be friends? That’s fair”.

“What *do* you mean?”

“Give us *one*—”

“Believe me, you talk — !”

“Don’t let your angry passions rise. I am going to have a kiss off those handsome lips—”

Before she could stir he was in the act of the embrace; but it was never accomplished: for he saw her colour fade, heard crackling twigs, a step! as someone emerged from the wood ten yards away — Richard.

The thought in Margaret’s mind was this: “Father in Heaven, whatever will he think of me here with this Jew?”

Hogarth stopped, staring at this couple; did not understand: Margaret should have been home from “class-meeting”...only, he observed her heaving bosom; then twisted about and went, his walk rapid, in his hand a hunting-crop, by which, with a very sure aim, he batted away pebbles from his path, stooping each time.

III. THE HUNTING-CROP



ALONG THE TOWING-PATH to the farmhouse. He did not look behind: was like a man who has received a wound, and wonders whence.

A pallor lay under his brown skin, brown almost as an Oriental's, and he was called "the Black Hogarth" — the Hogarths being Saxon, on the mantel in the dining-room being a very simple coat — a Bull on Gules. But Richard was a startling exception. His hair grew away flat and sparse from his round brow; on his cheeks three moles, jet-black in their centre. Handsome one called his hairless face: the nose delicate, the lips negroid in their thick pout, the left eye red, streaked with bloodshot, the eyes' brown brightness very beautiful and strange, with a sideward stare wild as that sideward stare of the race-horse; and the lids had a way of lifting largely anon.

He passed through Lagden Dip orchard into the old homestead, into the dining-room, where cowered the old Hogarth, smoking, his hair a mist of wool-white.

He glanced up, but said nothing; and Richard said nothing, but walked about, his arms folded, frowning turbulently, while the twilight deepened, and Margaret did not come.

Now he planted a chair near the old man, sat, and shouted: "Listen, sir!"

Up went the old Hogarth's hand to push forward the inquiring ear, while Richard, who, till now, had guarded him from all knowledge of the Circular, snatched it from his breast-pocket, and loudly read.

As the sense entered his head, up the old man shot his palms, shaking from them astonishment and deprecation, with nods; then, with opening arms, and an under-look at Richard: “Well, there is nothing to be said: the land is his....”

Hogarth leapt up and walked out; he muttered: “The land is his, but he is mine....”

The question at the bottom of his mind had been this: “Does *Margaret*, too, go with the land?” But he did not utter it even to himself: went out, fingering the crop, stalking toward the spot where he had left the man and the woman. But Margaret was then coming through the wood; Frankl had gone up to the Hall; and Hogarth crossed the bridge and went climbing toward the mansion.

It was a Friday evening, and up at the Hall the Sabbath had commenced, two Sabbath-tapers shining now upon the Mezuzzah at the dining-room door, Frankl being of the CohanÃm, the priestly class — a Jew of Jews. As he had passed in, two MoghrabÃm Jews had saluted him with: “Shabbath”; and mildly he had replied: “Shabbath”.

But swift upon his steps strode Hogarth: Hogarth was at the lodge-gates — was on the drive — was in the hall.

But, since Frankl was just preparing to celebrate the *kiddush*, “He cannot be seen now”, said a man in the hall.

“He must”, said Hogarth.

As he brushed past, two men raised an outcry: but Hogarth continued his swift way, and had half traversed a *salon* hung with a chaos of cut-glass when from a side-door appeared the inquiring face of Frankl in pious skull-cap.

“What is it?” he cried — “I cannot be seen —”

He recognized the man of the towing-path, and on his face grew a look of scare, as he backed toward a study: but before he could slam the door, Hogarth, too, was within.

“Who are you? What is it?” whined Frankl, who was both hard master and cringing slave.

Hogarth produced the Circular: but of Margaret not a word.

“Caps-and-tassels, you?” — flicking Frankl on the cheek with a fillip of his middle finger.

“You dare assault me! Why, I swear, I meant no harm—”

Down came the whip upon the Jew’s shoulders, Frankl, as the stings penetrated his caftan, giving out one roar, and the next instant, seeing the two Jews at the doorway, groaned the mean whisper: “Oh, don’t make a man look small before the servants”, crying out immediately: “Help!”

Soon five or six servants were at the door, and, of these, two Arab Jews rushed forward, one a tall fellow, the other an obese bulk with bright black eyes, the former holding a slender blade — the knife with which “shechita”, or slaughtering, was done: and while the corpulent Jew threw himself upon Hogarth, the other drew this knife through the flesh of Hogarth’s shoulder, at the same time happening to cut the heavy Arab across the wrist.

Now, there was some quarrel between the two Arabs, and the injured Arab, forgetting Hogarth, turned fiercely upon his fellow.

Hogarth, meanwhile, had not let go Frankl, nor delivered the intended number of cuts: so he was again standing with uplifted whip, when his eye happened to fall upon the doorway.

He saw there a sight which struck his arm paralysed: Rebekah Frankl.

Two months had she been here at Westring — and he had not known it!

There she stood peering, of a divine beauty in his eyes, like half-mythical queens of Egypt and Babylon, blinking in a rather barbarous

superfluity of jewels: and, blinded and headlong, he was in flight.

As for Frankl, he locked that door upon himself, and remained there, forgetting the sanctification of the Sabbath.

The Hebrew's eyes blazed like a wild beast's. The words: "As the Lord liveth..." hissed in whispers from his lips.

He took up a pinch of old ashes, and cast it into the air.

As Shimei, the son of Gera, cursed David, so he cursed Richard Hogarth that night — again and again — with grave rites, with cancerous rancour.

"I will blight him, as the Lord liveth; as the Lord liveth, I will blight him..." he said repeatedly, his draperied arms spread in pompous imprecation.

As a beginning, he sat and wrote to Reid's Bank, requesting the payment in gold of £14,000 — to produce a stoppage of payment at the little Bank in which were Richard's savings.

Afterwards, with mild eyes he repaired to the dining-hall, and sanctified the Sabbath, blessing a cup of wine, dividing up two napkined loaves, and giving to Rebekah his benediction.

IV. THE SWOON



HOGARTH WENT MOODILY down the hillside to the Waveney, across the bridge, and home, his sleeve stained with blood.

In the dining-room, he threw himself into an easy-chair in a gloom lit only by the fireglow, in the room above mourning a little harmonium which Margaret was playing, mixed with the sound of Loveday's voice.

The old man said: "Richard, my boy..."

Hogarth did not answer.

"Richard, I have somewhat to say to you — are ye hearkening?"

Richard, losing blood, moaned a drowsy "Yes".

And the old Hogarth, all deaf and bedimmed, said: "I had to say it to you, and this night let it be: Richard, you are no son of mine".

At this point Hogarth's head dropped forward: but many a time, during long years, he remembered a dream in which he had heard those words: "Richard, you are no son of mine..."

The old Hogarth continued to ears that did not hear:

"I have kept it from you — for I'm under a bargain with a firm of solicitors in London; but, Dick, it doesn't strike me as I am long for this world: a queer feeling I've had in this left side the last hour or two; and there's that Circular — I never heard of such a thing in all my born days. But what can we do? You'll have to wear the cap — or be turned out. Always I've said to myself, from a young man: 'Get hold of a bit of land someways as your own God's own': but I never did; the days went by and by, and it all seems no longer than an after-dinner nap in a barn on a hot

harvest-day. But a bit of land — the man who has that can make all the rest work to keep him. And if they turn me out, I couldn't live, lad: the old house has got into my bones, somehow. Anyhow, I think the time is come to tell you in my own way how the thing was. No son are you of mine, Richard. Your mother, Rachel, who was a Londoner, served me an ill turn while we were sweethearting, hankering after another man — a Jew millionaire he was, she being a governess in his house; but, Richard, I couldn't give her up: I married her three months before you were born; and not a living creature knows, except, perhaps, one — perhaps one: a priest he was, called O'Hara. But that's how it was. Your father was a Jew, and your mother was a Jew, and you are a Jew, and in the under-bottom of the old grey trunk you will find a roll of papers. Are you hearkening? And don't you be ashamed of being a Jew, boy — *they* are the people who've got the money; and money buys land, Richard. Nor your father did not do so badly by you, either: his name was Spinoza — Sir Solomon Spinoza—”

At that point Margaret, bearing a lamp, entered, followed by Loveday, and at the sight of Richard uttered a cry.

V. REID'S



BY NOON HOGARTH knew the news: his hundred and fifty at Reid's were gone; and he owed for the Michaelmas quarter — twenty-one pounds five, his only chattels of value being the threshers, not yet paid for, half a rick, seed, manure, and "the furniture". If he could realize enough for rent, he would lack capital for wages and cultivation, for Reid's had been his credit-bank.

After dinner he stood long at a window, then twisted away, and walked to Thring, where he captained in a football match, Loveday watching his rage, his twisting waist, and then accompanying him home: but in the dining-room they found the lord-of-the-manor's bailiff; and Loveday, divining something embarrassing, took himself away.

The same evening there were two appraisers in the house, and the bailiff, on their judgment, took possession of the chattels on the holding except some furniture, and some agricultural "fixtures". The sale was arranged for the sixth day.

From the old Hogarth the truth could no longer be hidden...

Two days he continued quiet in the old nook by the hearth, apparently in a kind of dotage doze; but on the third, he began to poke about, hobbled into the dairy, peered into the churn, touched the skimmer.

"You'll have to wear the cap", Margaret heard him mutter— "or be turned out".

As if taking farewell, he would get up, as at a sudden thought, to go to visit something. He kept murmuring: "I always said, Get a bit of land as

your own, but I never did; the days went by and by....”

Margaret, meantime, was busy, binding beds with sheets, making bundles, preparing for the flitting, with a heaving breast; till, on the fifth day, a van stood loaded with their things at the hall-door, and she, with untidy hair, was helping heave the last trunk upon the backboard, when the carman said: “Mrs. Mackenzie says, mum, the things mustn’t be took to the cottage, except you pay in advance”.

Now Margaret stood at a loss; but in a minute went bustling, deciding to go to Loveday, not without twinges of reluctance: for Loveday, with instinctive delicacy, had lately kept from the farm; and to Margaret, whose point of view was different, the words “false friends” had occurred.

Passing through an alley of the forest, she was met by a man — a park-keeper of Frankl’s — a German Jew, who had once handed her a note from Frankl. And he, on seeing her, said: “Here have I a letter for your brother”.

“Who from?” she asked.

“That may I not say”.

When he handed her an envelope rather stuffed with papers, she went on her flurried way; and soon Loveday was bowing before her in his sitting-room at Priddlestone.

“You will be surprised to see me, Mr. Loveday,” said she, panting.

“A little surprised, but most awfully glad, too. Is all well?”

“Oh, far from that, I’m afraid. But I haven’t got any time — and, oh my, I don’t know how to say it, — but to be frank with you — could you lend Richard two pounds — ?”

Loveday coloured to the roots of his hair.

He could not tell her: “Open that envelope in your hand”, for that would have meant that it was he who had sent the £50 it contained; and he had now only one sixpence in Priddlestone.

“That is”, she said— “if it is not an inconvenience to you—”

He could find no words. Some fifteen minutes before, having enclosed the notes, he had descended to the bar to get mine host to find him a messenger, and direct the envelope — for Hogarth knew his handwriting. Mine host was not there — his wife could not write: but she had pointed out the Jewish park-keeper sipping beer; so Loveday had had the man upstairs, had made him write the address, and had bribed him to deliver the envelope with a mum tongue.

“I’m afraid I’ve taken a great liberty—” she said, shrinking at his silence.

Then he spoke: “Oh, liberty! — but — really — I’m quite broke myself — !”

“Then, good-afternoon to you”, said she: “I am very sorry — but you will excuse the liberty, won’t you — ?”

In the forest she began to cry, covering her eyes, moaning: “Why, how could he be so *mean*? And I who loved that young man with all my heart, God knows — !”

Her eyes searched the ground for two sovereigns. Then she happened to look at the envelope: and instantly was interested. “Why, it is the Jew’s hand!” she thought, for the letters were angular in the German manner, making a general similarity with Frankl’s writing.

Curiosity overcame her: she opened, and saw...

“Oh, well, this is *generous* though, after all!” she exclaimed.

And now she ran, coming out from mossy path upon wide forest-road: and there, taking promenade, was Frankl, quite near, with phylacteried left arm.

“Why, sweetheart...” said he.

She stopped before him. “Well, you can call me what you like for the time being”, said she, laughing rather hysterically; “for I am most grateful

to you for your generous present to my brother, Mr. Frankl!”

She had still no suspicion of Richard’s visit of chastisement to the Hall!

“Now, what do you mean?” said Frankl.

“Why, you might guess that I know your handwriting by this time!” she said coquettishly, and held out the notes and the envelope.

His eyes twinkled; he meditated; he had, more than ever, need of her; and he said: “Well, you are as ‘cute as they make them!’”

“But instead of sending us this, which I am not at all sure that Richard will touch, why couldn’t you pay it to yourself, and not turn us out—”

“I let business take its course: and afterwards I do my charity. But it wasn’t for your brother, you know, that I sent it — but for *you*”.

“I must be running—”

When she reached the farm, she gave the carman a secret glimpse of the notes, while Hogarth, who was now there, went to seek the old Hogarth, for whom a nest had been made among the furniture in the cart.

He was found above-stairs in an empty room, searching the floor for something.

“Come, sir”, said Hogarth, and led him step by step.

But as the old man passed the threshold, he fell flat on the slabs of the porch, striking his forehead, printing a stain there.

And the next day, the day of the sale, he still lay in the old chamber, on the ancient bed, dead.

VI. "PEARSON'S WEEKLY"



"ROSE COTTAGE" WAS without roses: but had a good-sized "garden" at the back; and here Hogarth soon had a shed nailed together, with bellows, anvil, sledges, rasps, setts, drifts, and so on, making a little smithy.

He engaged a boy; and soon John Loveday would be leaning all a forenoon at the shed door, watching the lithe ply of Hogarth's hips, and the white-hot iron gushing flushes; while Margaret, peeping, could see Loveday's slovenly ease of pose, his numberless cigarettes, and hear the rhymes of the sledges chiming.

As to Loveday's £50, she had dared to say nothing to Richard, but kept them, intending to make up the amount already spent, and give them to Frankl. Loveday, meantime, she avoided with constant care.

So two weeks passed, till, one day, Loveday, leaning at the forge-door, happened to say: "Are you interested in current politics? The East Norfolk division is being contested, one of the candidates, Sir Bennett Beaumont, is a friend of mine, and I was thinking that I might go to the meeting to-night, if you could come—"

"I invite you to supper here instead".

"Not interested?" queried Loveday.

"Not at all. Stop — I'll show you something in which I *am* interested".

He ran to a corner, picked up a *Pearson's Weekly*, and pointed to a paragraph headed:

"FIVE HUNDRED-POUND NOTES!

"FIFTY TEN-POUND NOTES!!

“ONE HUNDRED FIVE-POUND NOTES!!!” — a prize for “the most intelligent” article, explaining the cause, or causes, of “the present distress and commercial crisis”.

Loveday read it smiling.

“Ah”, said he, “but who is to be the judge of ‘the most intelligent’ article? Pearson must himself be of the highest intelligence to decide”.

“True”, said Hogarth. “But the man who offered that prize has indicated to the nation the thing which it should be doing. If I was able to form an Association to enter this competition — and why not? Stop — I will go with you—”

So that evening they walked to Beccles, and took train for Yarmouth.

The candidate to speak was a Mr. Moses Max, a Liberal Jew; the chair to be taken by Baruch Frankl; and in the midst of a row, the stately great men entered upon the platform and occupied it, hisses like the escape of steam mixing with “He’s a jolly good fellow”. Midway down the pit sat Loveday, and with him Hogarth, whose large stare ranged solemnly round and down from galleries to floor.

Frankl sipped water, and rose, amid shouts of: “Circular!” “Caps-and-tassels!”

He made a speech of which nothing was known, except the amiable bows, for a continual noising filled the hall; and up rose Mr. Moses Max, a stout fair Jew, whose fist struck with a regular, heavy emphasis. After ten minutes, when he began to be heard, he was saying:

“...Sir Bennett Beaumont! Is *he* the sort of man you’d send to represent you? (Cries of: “Yes!”) What is he? — ask yourselves the question: a fossilized Tory, a man who’s about as much idea of progress as a mummy — people actually say he’s *got* a collection of mummies in his grand fashionable mansion at Aylesham, and it’s only what we should expect of

him. (Cheers, and cries of: “Oh, oh!”) And what has he ever done for East Norfolk? Gentlemen, you may say as you like about Jews — Jews this, and Jews that — and every man has a right to his opinion in this land of glorious Saxon liberty — but no one can deny that it’s Jews who know how to make the money. (Cheers and hisses.) They know how to make it for themselves (hisses) — and, yes, they know how to make it for the nation! (Loud triumph of cheers.) *That’s* the point — *that* touches the spot! (Cries of: “Oh, oh!”) Righteousness, it is said, exalteth a nation: well, so do Jews—”

“That is false”, said a voice — Hogarth, who had stood up.

The words were the signal for a shower of cheers swept by gusts of hisses; and immediately one region of the pit was seen to be a scrimmage of fisticuffs, mixed with policemen, sticks, savage faces, and bent backs; while the two galleries, craning to see, bellowed like Bashan.

Moses Max was leaning wildly, gesticulating, with shouts; while Loveday, who had turned pale on Hogarth’s rising, touched Hogarth’s coat-tail, whereupon Hogarth, stooping to his ear, shouted: “We will have some fun...”

“The paid agents of Beaumont!” now shouted Moses Max; “sent to disturb our meeting! Englishmen! will you submit to this? The nation shall hear—”

At that point Moses Max, in his gesticulation, happening to touch a switch in the platform-rail, out glowered into darkness every light at that end of the hall: at which thing the audience was thrown into a state of boisterous lawlessness, a tumult reigning in the gloom like the constant voice of Niagara, until suddenly the platform was again lit up, and the uproar lulled.

And now again Moses Max was prone to speak, with lifted fist; but before ever he could utter one single word, a voice was ringing through the

Assembly Rooms:

“*Where* was Moses when the light went out?”

This again was Hogarth; and it ended Moses Max for that night.

Hogarth had not sat since he had called out “That is false”: his tall figure was recognized; and, with that electric spontaneity of crowds, he was straightway the leader of the meeting, men darting from their seats with waving hats, sticks, arms, and vociferous mouth, the chairman half standing, with a shivering finger directed upon Hogarth, shrieking to the police: but too late — Hogarth had brushed past Loveday’s knees — was dashing for the crowded platform-steps — was picking his way, stumbling, darting up them.

Crumpled in his hand was a *Pearson’s Weekly*.

Now he is to the front — near Frankl.

“Friends! I have ventured to take the place of our friend, Moses, here — no ill-will to him — for with respect to the question before us, whether we elect Beaumont or Max, I care, I confess, little. I’m rather an Anti-Jew myself (hissing and cheers), but it strikes me that the Jews are the least of our trouble. To a man who said to me that the cause of all our evil days is the inability of England to feed these few million Jews I’d answer: “I don’t know how you can be so silly!” Why, the whole human race, friends, can find room on the Isle of Wight — the earth laughs at the insignificant drawings upon her made by the small infantry called Man. Then, why do we suffer, friends? We *do* suffer, I suppose? I was once at Paris, and at a place called ‘the Morgue’ I saw exposed young men with wounded temples, and girls with dead mouths twisted, and innocent old women drowned; and there must be a biggish cry, you know, rising each night from the universal earth, accusing some hoary fault in the way men live together! What is the fault? If you ask *me*, I answer that I am only a common smith: *I* don’t

know: but I know this about the fault, that it is something simple, commonplace, yet deep-seated, or we should all see it; but it is hidden from us by its very ordinariness, like the sun which men seldom look at. It *must* be so. And shall we never find the time to think of it? Or will never some grand man, mighty as a garrison, owning eyes that know the glances of Truth, arise to see for us? Friends! but, lacking him, what shall we do to be saved? — for truly this ‘civilization’ of ours is a blood-washed civilization, friends, a reddish Juggernaut, you know, whose wheels cease not: so we should be prying into it, provided we be not now too hide-bound: for that’s the trouble — that our thoughts grow to revolve in stodgy grooves of use-and-wont, and shun to soar beyond. Look at our Parliament — a hurdy-gurdy turning out, age after age, a sing-song of pigmy regulations, accompanied for grum kettledrum by a musketry of suicides, and for pibroch by a European bleating of little children. We are still a million miles from civilization! For what is a civilized society? It can only be one in which the people are proud and happy! The people of Africa are happy, not proud; not civilized; the people of England have a certain pride, not a millionth part as superb as it might be, but are far from happy: far from civilized. The fact is, Man has never begun to live, but still sleeps a deep sleep. Well! let us do our best, we here! I have here a paper offering a prize to the man of us who will go to the root of our troubles, and my idea in usurping the place of our friend, Mr. Max, was to ask you to form an association with me to enter that competition. There is no reason why our association should not be large as the nation, nor why it should not spread to France and Turkey. For the thing presses, and to-morrow more of the slaughtered dead will be swarming in the mortuaries of London. Will you, then? The understanding will be this: that each man who writes his name in a note-book which will lie at Rose Cottage, Thring, or who sends his name,

will devote sixty minutes each day to the problem. I happen to be in a position to use a chapel at Thring, and there I will hold a meeting—”

At this point Frankl rose: Thring was *his*, his own, own, own; and now his eyes had in them that catlike blaze which characterized his rages.

“Here, police! police!” he hissed low, “what’s the use of police that don’t act!” And now he raised his voice to a scream: “Jews! Shew yourselves! Don’t let this man stay here...!”

About twenty Jews leapt at the challenge; at the same time Hogarth, seeing two policemen running forward from the back, folded his arms, and cried out: “Friends! I have not finished! Don’t let me be removed...”

Whereupon practically every man in the pit was in motion, for or against him, the galleries two oblongs of battle.

As up the two curving stairs stormed the mob, by a sudden rush like an ocean-current he was borne off his feet toward the side, and was about to bring down his sharp-pointed little knuckles, when his eye fell upon the face of a lady who had fainted.

He had had no idea that she was there! — Rebekah Frankl.

She had quietly fainted, not at the rush — but before — during Hogarth’s speech.

Hogarth managed to fight his way to a door at the platform back with her, entered a room where some chairs were, but, seeing a stair, could not let her go from his embrace, but descended, passed along a passage and out into a patch of green.

She, under the dark sky, whispered: “It is you”, her forehead on his shoulder; and added: “My carriage, I think, is yonder”.

Hogarth saw the carriage-lights at the field’s edge, bore her thither, laid her with care on the cushions, kissed her hand: and this act Frankl saw — with incredulity of his own eyes. As he approached, Hogarth walked away.

Frankl mastered his voice to say blandly in Spanish: “Well, how did you get through, sweet child? Who was that man — ? But stay: where are those two fools?”

This meant the two familiars — the Arabs, Isaac and Mephibosheth, one of whom had come as footman, the other as coachman — and, as he went raging about the carriage, with stamps, his boot struck against a body. There was enough light to reveal to his peering that it was Mephibosheth, whom Isaac had stabbed, and fled...

Frankl lowered his ear — doubted whether he could detect a breathing; and though scared, he being a Cohen, and the presence of death defilement, yet he stayed, bending over Mephi several minutes, thinking, not of him, but of Hogarth.

“It is that fool, Isaac, has done it”, he thought; “and if the man be dead —” What then? “*If* he be dead, I’ve got you, Mr. Hogarth, in the hollow of this hand....”

His fingers passed over the body: there, sticking in the breast, was a cangiar which Isaac, in his panic, had left, and Frankl’s hand rested on the handle; if he did not consciously press the knife home, very heavily his hand rested on it, eyes blazing, beard shaking....

Then he drew out the knife carefully, to hide it in the carriage, listened again close, felt sure now that death was there, and now scuttled, as if from plague, guiltily hissing: “Putrid dog...!”

Presently he led his carriage to the station, and made a deposition of the murder.

Asked if he had any suspicion as to the culprit, he said: “Not the least: I left the man alone with the carriage, and who could have had any motive for killing him beats me.”

VII. THE ELM



HOGARTH, MEANTIME, HAD made his way to the front of the room, then vomiting its throng, discovered Loveday, and, deciding to walk home, they were soon on the cliffs.

And suddenly Loveday: “To-morrow will conclude my fifth week in Westring. What, do you suppose, has made me stay?”

“I have wondered”.

“I work better here...Hogarth, you inspirit me”.

“Is that so?”

“It is, yes. Merely your presence is for me a freshness and an enthusiasm: I catch in the turn of your body hints of adventurous Columbuses, Drakes, nimble Achilles; and sibylline meanings in some glance of yours infect my fancy with images of Moses, blind old Homers — prophet, lawgiver, poet—”

They were passing along a stretch of sand, with some lights of Lowestoft in sight, arm in arm; and Hogarth said: “Well, you speak some big words. But my life, you understand, has been as simple and small as possible. I will tell you: my father sent me to an extraordinary school — where he got the coin I could never find out — Lancing College at Shoreham. There I did very well — only that I was continually *getting* it! What was the matter with me when a boy I can’t understand: I was the devil. One summer vacation (I was fourteen) I stole three pounds from the old man, and ran away one Sunday night. Passed through London and soon was apprentice in a blacksmith’s shop in a Kent village called Bigham. But in six months I

had the forge at my fingers' ends, and was off: nothing could hold me long. One day I turned up before the Recruiting Office of Marines in Bristol — just of the right age for what they call 'second-class boys' — and decided upon the sea — that sea there — which, from the moment I saw it at the age of four, caused me a swelling of the breast with which, to this day, it afflicts me. Well, I got the birth-certificate of another boy, scraped through, was entered into a District Ship, and finally sailed in the *St. Vincent* to the Pacific Station.

“However, my trial of His Majesty's ships was not a success: twice I was in irons, once leapt into mid-ocean; nor could the battleship hold me when she had nothing to teach me; so I did to the King what I had done to the old man — cut and ran.

“It was at Valparaiso, and I made my way across the continent to Buenos Ayres.

“I forget now what took me to Bristol: but there I was one day when I happened to see — what do you think? — a girl — sixteen — I a stripling of nineteen, or so — but she most precocious, spoke like a woman — a grating in a wall between us. Ah, well, God is good, and His Mercy endureth for ever. But she said it could never be — she a Jewess: though that, by the way, is nonsense, for she is a Jewess, and a Parisienne, and a Hindoo, and a Negress, and a Japanese, and the man who marries her will have a harem. My friend, I have seen her this very night!”

He was silent. Suddenly he broke out: “I came home raving! The old man was scared out of his wits by my frenzy — I drank like ten men — in a month was the terror of Westring. One midnight, going home through the beech-wood — I don't know if you have noticed a hollow elm-tree which stands to the right of the path?”

“I think I have”, said Loveday.

“We shall pass near it presently; and at the moment when we approach it, I shall feel a little thrill in my back: always it is so with me. But I was saying: that midnight, as I passed the tree, drunk as I was, I saw a naked black man with a long beard run out; I took to my heels; he was after me; till I reached the bridge, when I stopped, faced him, fired a blow into his eyes, and he vanished.

“During the week I continued to see apparitions. My groans were heard in the farm-yard: Lord have mercy upon me! Christ have mercy upon me! I was visited by the Methodist preacher at Thring; and finally I found solace: I became a class-member, a leader, a local preacher.

“For some time I have been conscious of dissatisfaction among the people with my preaching, who say that my God ’is not a personal God’, and that my Christianity is ‘rum stuff’: I am therefore meaning to give it up. But I still preach every second Thursday night.

“It was about that time that, by accident, I found out the power of my hand to cure headache, and things like that, and the sensation among these villagers was enormous, I can tell you, six years ago; now they come to be touched without the slightest sense of the unusual. But what I have done well in was — the farming. I knew little of agriculture—”

At this point they turned into the lane to Westring: and Loveday went with him a little beyond Priddlestone to see the fatal elm.

VIII. THE METEOR



THE NEXT MORNING, after breakfast, Hogarth went down old Thring Street, and spent a penny for a note-book to contain the signatures of his association.

But this was no day for interest in that scheme: for under the projecting first-floor of the paper-shop were newspaper placards bearing such words as:

THE EARTH IN DANGER
SHALL WE PERISH TO-NIGHT?

and Hogarth was soon bending in the street over a paragraph, short — but in *pica*.

M. Tissot, the astronomer, had, at half-past ten the previous night, observed through the 40-inch telescope of the Nice observatory a body which seemed a tiny planet or aerolite of abnormal size. It was sighted at a point two degrees W. of α Librae at an angle of $43\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ with the horizon, and had been photographed, its elements calculated, its spectrum taken. The ascertained diameter was $3^{\circ} 17''$, or about 73 miles, and its substance seemed to consist of ironstone mixed with diamond.

By noon a fresh light was thrown upon the little world, the Yerkes observatory and Greenwich both uttering their voice, the Astronomer Royal announcing that the so-called planet was merely a meteor — not more than 400 yards in diameter, with a low velocity of two miles a second; and its distance was less than a tenth of that estimated by Tissot. The Yerkes

observatory fixed the diameter at 230 yards. All, however, agreed in the opinion that it must strike the earth between ten and twelve that night.

These later announcements so much allayed the panic, that by one o'clock Hogarth, on peeping into the note-book on the box before the smithy, saw six signatures; and a young man who came about six P.M. to sign, cried out: "Hullo! the book is filled up!" on which Hogarth ran out, saying: "Don't run away on that account, I'll run and get—" darting into the house to ask Margaret where a certain account-book was.

"Didn't I throw it into the box of rubbish in the cellar at Lagden, when we were leaving?" she asked; on which he threw off his apron, and was off toward Lagden Dip to get it.

He had almost cleared the village when he was blocked by a crowd before a cottage, from out of which were coming screams — a woman's; and he ran in, found a man named Fred Bates beating his wife, planted a blow on his chest.

The next morning the wife of Bates was found dead, greatly disfigured about the face, whereupon Bates was arrested, and Hogarth, as we shall see, was subpoenaed to give evidence of the beating.

In ten minutes he was at the old farm-house of the Hogarths.

The new tenant was a Mr. Bond, a bankrupt metal-broker, who had two hobbies — farming and astronomy; and, as Hogarth approached the yard-gate, he saw Mr. Bond, his two daughters, his servants, grouped round an optic tube mounted on a tripod. He asked permission to get the account-book, got it, in a few minutes was again passing through, and, as he went by, bowing his thanks, Mr. Bond said: "But — have you seen the asteroid?"

"No — whereabouts?"

"Not quite visible to the naked eye yet: but come — you shall see".

He himself looked through, fixing the sight, turning the adjuster; then with fussy suddenness: “Now, sir—”

Hogarth put an eager eye to the glass.

“You see her?” said Mr. Bond, rubbing his soft old palms; “straight for us she comes — in a considerable hurry by this time, I can tell you! and if she happens to break up in the air, then, pray, sir, that a splinter of her may fall into your back yard — not too big a one! but a nice little comfortable *piece*” — he rubbed his palms— “for you know, no doubt, of what her substance is composed? Diamond, sir, in extraordinary evidence! in conjunction with specular iron ore, commonly called the red haematite, and the ferrous carbonate, or spathic iron. You see her, sir? you see her?”

Hogarth whispered: “Yes”.

There, fairest among ten thousand, sailing the high seas she came; and longer than was modest he stopped there, gazing, then ran, wondering at her daisy loveliness, not dreaming that between himself and her was — a relation.

She broke up with a European display soon after eleven that night over the North Sea.

IX. HOGARTH'S GUNS



AT THE MOMENT when Hogarth was peering through the telescope, a man was loitering before his cottage — one of the Hall's park-keepers; and when Margaret put out her head to look for Richard's coming, the man whistled.

In a moment a note was in her hand.

"DEAR MISS HOGARTH,

"This is to ask you to be certain sure to meet me this evening at 9 P.M. on the towpath. It isn't to-day that you are well aware of the state of my feelings toward you: but it is not to talk sweethearting that I wish to see you now, but about your brother, and the matter is about as important as can be. If I were in your place, I should destroy this letter.

"Yours, with my respects,

"BARUCH FRANKL".

Margaret tore it up, and "My goodness!" she thought, "what is anyone to do? If I only had the money to make up those fifty pounds! May the Holy Spirit guide me now...!"

Later in the evening she stole out, and met Frankl.

He assumed a very respectful tone.

"Miss Hogarth", said he at once, "have you heard?"

"No, sir".

"You have not been told that your brother has been to the Hall?"

"What in patience for?"

"He came — you couldn't believe — to beat me!"

"Richard! I don't understand. When?"

“Yesterday”. (In reality it was four weeks before.)

“But what about?”

“Revenge! Blind, murderous revenge for turning him neck and crop out of Lagden!”

“You *are* in a temper! But I can’t understand a word of it!”

“Well, that is what I had to tell you. He came to my house — And how good have I been to this man! Didn’t I send him the fifty pounds — ?”

“Well, that *was* kind. But I must tell you, Mr. Frankl, that Richard knows nothing of the fifty pounds—”

“Well, then it is *your* fault! Oh, he did not know of the fifty pounds? Then it is your fault entirely, this rage of his against me — He threatened to shoot me dead — thrice he threatened — soon, he said—”

“Not Richard?”

“Yes, Richard! — your nice Richard! But what did I want you for tonight? It was to let you see that I have it in my power to let your brother in for three months hard — not less. But you know, my dear, don’t you, that I wouldn’t do anything to give you pain? That is why, so far, I’ve taken no steps. But your brother must be unarmed. I can’t have my life exposed, after his threats, and all”.

“Unarmed....”

“Yes. I have it on good authority that your brother has guns. I must have those guns put into my own hands by you...”

“But I couldn’t! He would find out...”

“Then I must act, that’s all. Or no — I give you another chance — tell him of the fifty pounds I sent — that may disarm him in another way—”

He was sure that this she would not now do, yet felt relieved when she cried out: “I couldn’t! Not now! Can’t you see?”

“Well, there is nothing to be done, then. I must act, that’s all”.

“But don’t be *hard*! What can I do? Sooner or later he’d be sure to miss them!”

“Poh! he is not always shooting, I suppose? And after a few weeks I’d give them back. Anyway, think it over: and I’ll be here on Tuesday night next at nine to receive them. Good night—”

She looked palely after him, her feet in a net, new to her, woven of concealments and deceit.

At eleven that night she was sitting in their diminutive parlour, — Hogarth at a table inscribing the association’s names received by post that evening; and at last, bending low over her sewing, she said: “Richard, is it true you have been to the Hall?”

He started! “Yes. Who told you?”

“I heard it”.

He looked at her piercingly. “*Answer!*”

“I heard it”, she said with a stubborn nod, quite pallid.

He turned upon her a stare of displeasure; but in that second they heard a shouting down the village, ran to the front, and saw heaven all like cancer and cracked window-panes, for from a central splash of passion the shattered asteroid had shot long-lingering ribbons of lilac light over the bowl of the sky.

X. ISAAC



ON THE TUESDAY was the inquest on the murdered Mephibosheth; ending in a verdict of wilful murder against some person unknown.

The same night at nine Frankl had Hogarth's two guns from Margaret on the towing-path, she now well inveigled into his net, and under his commands.

"I want you", he said, "to meet me-here again on Thursday night, at 7.30".

"But you will tell one why, I suppose!"

"When you come you will hear. And don't let anything keep you away — not *anything*, mind — if you take my hint".

She left him with her head hung, praying for deliverance, but consenting.

The next (Wednesday) morning Frankl was in a high room of the Hall, in a corner of which cowered the Arab, Isaac, and he said in his strong bass in Arabic: "Well, Isaac, well".

A groan broke from the obese heap of grief; down each side of his kefie streamed waves of trembling; on his square-cut beard of ritual flecks of foam.

"Isaac, why did you kill Mephibosheth?"

Vigorously sputtered Isaac, spitting out the ill-omened words. He said: "Your servant did not kill Mephibosheth".

"Well, there was an inquest to-day, the Court decided that you did, and has sentenced you to be hanged by the neck like a dog".

The Arab sprang up, his thick bluish under-lip shivering.

“An eye for an eye”, said Frankl solemnly: “it is written in the Torah”.

“*Mercy* My father served your father—”

“I have remembered that: that is why I have saved you from hanging like a dog at the hands of these *Goyim* vermin: but, Isaac, you must die—”

“God of — !”

“You dare raise your voice! Blood for blood—”

“*Mercy*! — I did not mean to kill — !”

“Blood for blood, you dog! Raise it, and I fell you! Raise it, and the noose sinks into your fat swine’s-throat! Can’t you understand? — you have been tracked by the avengers of blood! and you may swing lingeringly, with a crowd of Christian boys and girls mocking round you, or you may shoot yourself in one painless flash. Which shall it be?”

Isaac, again dropping a-heap, covered his face, without answer.

“Well”, said Frankl, walking away, “I can’t wait all day. The detectives are at this moment downstairs—”

Now the Arab leapt up, and, in a movement of great dignity, with an out-rush of both arms, rent his caftan from the top to its muslin girdle.

“I will shoot myself”, he said quietly.

Frankl took snuff.

The same night he took his secretary’s typewriter, and spelled out the following note:

“SIR,

“Permit me to ask you as an old friend of your father’s if you are aware that your sister Margaret is the lover of the lord of the manor? Everybody seems to see it, but yourself. I have reason to know that the very day you receive this she will be meeting him at about 7.30 P.M. under the old elm in the beech-wood near the Hall-park.

“ONE WHO SHALL BE NAMELESS”.

Hogarth received it by post the next morning.

He had to think, as he worked, of something to say at the service that night on the text: “God’s way is in the Sea”, but the glare of forge and heated metal swam vaguely, a fog of red, about his consciousness. And mixed with those recurring words: “the old elm”, “God’s way”, something with a voice shouted inside him — a name — *Margaret!* Anon his face flushed to a dusky turbulence, and he hurled the sledge high to shatter the earth, like Thor.

Suddenly he had the thought that he would clean his rifle, and, dropping a hot iron which vanished with a stifled cry into black water, he tossed his tongs clattering, and almost ran toward the cottage.

He had not, however, reached the back door when he heard his name called from behind.

And now happened to him the most momentous event of his life — though nothing could have seemed more commonplace.

It was an old fellow named Tom Bates who had called him — father to that Fred arrested for the murder of his wife — a Yarmouth fisher and herring-curer.

And when Hogarth twisted round, with that stare of his large and bloodshot eye, “Here”, said the old man, “take them” — holding out a basket of herrings.

Hogarth seemed not to understand, but then said: “All those for me?”

“Every bloomin’ one!” answered Bates, with the dropped jaw of pantomime, and a far-away look of blue astonishment which he had.

“It is extremely handsome of you. Can you spare all that — ?”

“Spare, *ya’as!* They’re easy enough come by, for that matter. Why, the day’s work of a fisherman gives him enough fish to live on all the week,

and he could lie around idling the other six days, if he chose, only anybody can't live on nothing but fish “.

These words, destined to produce a horror of great darkness, and a cup of trembling of which all the nations should drink, hardly affected Hogarth at the time. He *did*, indeed, shoot an interested glance at the old man, but the next moment his mind, numb that morning, was left dark.

“Here — take them — they are yours”, said Bates. “But with regard to that God-forsaken son of mine: you'll be givin' evidence agen him, I'm told —”

When his sleeve wiped a tear, Hogarth promised to make his evidence mild, and was left alone.

Now his purpose of cleaning the rifle was turned: he went back to the forge, and worked till Margaret, at one o'clock, called: “The dinner is on the table”.

At that table, for a long time, silence reigned, Margaret's eyes fixed on his face, his on his plate.

Toward the end he said: “Are you going to chapel to-night?”

Her bosom heaved; she cleared her throat: she had to meet Frankl by the towing-path.

“I don't think I shall...”

Margaret!

“Why not?”

“I have something to do”.

“*What?*”

Silence.

“*What?*”

“Something” — with a stubborn nod, and pallor— “if I tell you *something* that should be enough”.

“You will go to chapel to-night”.

“That I shan’t”.

“Yes”

Silence.

A little before seven they left the cottage together for the chapel, Hogarth taking his hunting-crop — from habit; he had also a little Bible; in his jacket, tight at the slight waist, unbuttoned at the breast, lay the anonymous letter, and a little poetry-book, neither moon nor star lighting the night, bleak winds swooping like the typhoon among the year’s dead leaves.

The chapel was a paltry place, though in the wall to the right of the preacher was a slab bearing the inscription:

ON THIS STONE
JOHN WESLEY PREACHED
IN THE VILLAGE, ON THE
9TH JULY 1768

And they sang a hymn; Hogarth “prayed”; read a chapter; once more the harmonium mourned; Hogarth gave the text: “God’s way is in the sea...”

Even as he uttered it, he happened to glance toward the “mission-pew” — a square pew rather behind the pulpit: Margaret no longer there.

A paleness as of very death — then a dreadful wrath reddened his dark face.

He seized his hunting-crop; and, without a word, sped bent and thievish down the steps — and was gone.

Upon which Loveday in a middle pew, perceiving here something sinister, like a still wind flew to a back door, before ever the amazement of the people had given place to a flutter like leafage; and running fast, he came up with Hogarth by a stile twenty yards behind the chapel, touched his shoulder.

“To the devil with you...!” shouted Hogarth, running still, and there Loveday stood.

Margaret, meantime, was hurrying toward the towing-path, while Richard, in a direction at right angles to hers, was pelting toward that spot terrible to him — the elm.

At the moment when he entered the deep darkness of the beeches, he heard what sounded like a pistol-shot, rain now falling drop by drop, and through the forest with an uplifting whoop, like batsmen, swooped the tomboy winds.

Now, approaching the elm, again he felt that thrill which the spot had for him, and came peering, at slower pace: no sound but the gibbering rout of the stiff-stark beech-leaves. Some steps more, and now he was at the mound which surrounds the tree: stood, listened: silence, sightlessness: Margaret not there.

One more forward step: and now his foot struck a body.

As he stooped, his hand touched a revolver — which was his own; another moment, and he saw running lanterns borne by two park-keepers, and by their light saw the body of Isaac, who but now had shot himself with the weapon that was in Hogarth’s hand.

The park-keepers had just been urged by their master to the spot, he having, he told them, heard a pistol-shot; and before anyone could speak Frankl himself was there, defiled with the presence of the dead.

He looked from Hogarth to the corpse, and from the corpse to Hogarth, then, snatching the weapon from Hogarth’s hand, exclaimed: “Why, bless my heart, you’ve *murdered* the man....”

XI. WROXHAM BROAD



IN A COTTAGE in Thring Street, marked “E. Norfolk, E. 58, Constabulary”, Hogarth passed the night, having been arrested the moment he returned home from the elm.

A few minutes afterwards Margaret, who had found no Frankl at the towing-path, came home to the ghastliest amazement throughout Thring, so that sleep overcame the village only toward morning.

At 7.30 A.M. Hogarth was marched to Beccles, then after an inquest-verdict appeared before the magistrates’ court, and was committed.

One of the witnesses in the summary-jurisdiction court had been Loveday, who had deposed that Hogarth, on leaving the chapel, was, beyond doubt, in a passion; and mixed with the crowd was Margaret, who, standing thickly veiled, heard that evidence. And thought she: “Is it possible that he can be giving evidence against Richard like that? And smiling, the mean, false thing—”

She had disappeared on the morning after the arrest: and Loveday was now racked by disquiet, wondering how she was living, though she and he were in the same train, unconscious of each other, when he followed Hogarth to Norwich; and, as Margaret stepped upon the Thorpe platform there, a Jew, who was watching the arrival of every train, spied and shadowed her to the old Maid’s Head, this intricate city being now crowded, the Assizes all in the air, mixed with the Saturday cattle-market.

At ten the next morning Margaret learned at the Guildhall the address of her brother’s defending solicitor, and set out to find him, the wretchedest

woman on earth now.

But as she passed by the archway in the tower of St. Peter Mancroft, Loveday stood before her; and she started like a shying horse.

“Good morning” — she went on past him.

He took two steps after her. “Are you in a hurry? Can I come with you?”

“It is quite near. Thank you — I’d liefer go alone”.

He, a delicate being, all nerves, was repelled; lifted the old cloth hat; but then again stepped after her, saying: “But are you angry with me for something?”

“Why should I be? I have no right to expect anything from you, Mr. Loveday”.

“No right? You *have*, a little, I fancy!”

He said it at her ear with such a lowering of the eyelids, that it pierced to her fond heart, and she smiled with a “H’m!” uncertain, half turned to him; but said: “I must be getting on—”

“But it is most important that I should talk to you about everything. Where are you staying?”

“It is some distance from here”, she answered, undecided whether or not to give her address.

“Ah — in that case — but still — will you meet me? Say here — this evening?”

“I will see if I can”.

“At seven?”

“I will see”.

So they parted, she to tread that intricacy of streets round the Market, with stoppages for enquiries, till she found the office, where she presently sat in an inner room, veil at nose-tip, and before her at a grate stood Hogarth’s solicitor.

What, till now, for shame, she had concealed, she revealed: showing how Richard could not possibly have taken the revolver with him to the elm, since she, two days previously, had secretly given it to — someone.

Mr. Carr, the solicitor, frowned, elaborating his nails.

“This is very extraordinary”, he said. “Whyever did you keep us in the dark as to all this before? And to whom was it that you gave the revolver? and why?”

“Am I bound to tell that?”

“No, but you may be sure that the truth will be got from you. Stay — I must ask you to excuse me now. But tomorrow morning at this hour — will you? As for your brother, have no fears at all: he is now absolutely safe”.

Margaret went rapidly away, not knowing whither, only returning toward late afternoon to her inn. As she entered, a letter was handed her from Frankl.

“Dear Miss Hogarth:

“It is only due to you that I should see you at once to explain the mystery of this affair, so as to clear your brother, and as it would not do for me to call upon you for obvious reasons, the only thing for us to do is to meet to-night on Mousehold Heath at 7 P.M. without fail...”

What now was she to do? At “7 P.M.” she had half promised Loveday to meet him.

And what had her meetings with Baruch Frankl, innocent as they were, brought upon her and hers!

Yet Frankl *must* be kindly intentioned, she reasoned — since he had sent them the £50; and she thought of that agony of humiliation when she had asked Loveday for £2, and he had refused.

And he had given evidence against Richard with his down-turned smile.

But he had said a word at her ear — and her crushed heart had leapt. She did not know what to do, fell by her bedside and prayed to be taught which of the two was Richard's best friend.

As she passed over the inn-threshold, she decided in favour of Frankl: and a few minutes past seven was on Mousehold Heath.

Frankl hurried to meet her, and the hand which he held out was rather cold; but she did not take it.

"No, Mr. Frankl", said she, "before I give my hand, it is only what is due to me to hear how Richard's pistol, which I trusted to you, was found where it was—"

"Well, that is only fair", answered Frankl; "that is only fair. But I have a carriage there, let us get into it, and sit as we talk".

She could see no carriage in that dark, yet it stood only some yards away — Frankl's own.

"I think I prefer to stand..." said she.

"As you like. But with regard to the gun, I should have thought that you could have guessed how it was — but no, you always mistrust me instead — the Jew. Don't you know that the dead man was a servant in my house? Well, I left the two guns in my study, and he, wanting to shoot himself, stole one, that's all".

"It was *he* shot himself?"

"Why, who else? You don't suppose Richard shot him! You are as cool as they make them".

"Well, that was how it was! But couldn't you say that at the police-court — ?"

"I am *going* to at the big trial, of course. But I was ill, am ill now, and here have I been running about all day on your brother's behalf, and dead

tired — and ill, and all — and you won't let me have a rest in the carriage —”

“Well, as you put it in that way...” she said.

So they walked to a motor-brougham, sat within, and as they commenced to talk again, the brougham moved.

“Tell me”, said Frankl, “have you mentioned to anyone that you had given the guns to me?”

“I told Richard's solicitor this morning—”

“That was horribly imprudent, without consulting me!”

“I think I have been silent long enough, don't you? I didn't mention your name, but—”

“Oh, you didn't mention my name! That's all right, then! Look here, do you know — ?”

“Well?”

“I believe you love me in your heart. Can't help yourself”.

“Oh, Mr. Frankl, do I look as if I was in the mood for that kind of fun tonight, a poor wretch like me, steeped in misery, my God knows”.

“I love you!”

He suddenly grasped her wrist, his eyes blazing.

“Stop — let me get out of this—” she said.

“Wait! — I give you your chance! — Listen: I am not a man whose mind you can read right off like a book, I twist like an eel, I am deep, I am tricky, and I never yet met the man that I didn't hoodwink. Ninety-nine per cent of what I say is a lie; even when it is the truth, it is a lie just the same. But at this particular moment I am talking the God's truth: I want you! You shall be my little girl! Chuck Richard! — chuck the swine's-flesh! — I'll take you right away — to Paris — this very night—”

She had arisen, alarmed by his hissed fury. “But, you are stark, staring, raving mad”, she said proudly, “that is what you are”.

Frankl struck the side of the brougham, it flew, and Margaret tottered backward with an exclamation. The next moment she sent forth a scream, the grip of Frankl on her wrist agonizing her bones.

“Where are we going?” she cried out.

“I gave you your chance!” was Frankl’s fierce answer.

“Let me get out! — you must be a wretch — to take advantage—”

He put his mouth to her ear till it touched. “Your nice Richard flogged me like a dog! I felt the cuts to the marrow of my damned soul! Now I’ve got him in the hollow of this hand! Why, you helped me! you helped me! That’s good! And I’ve got you, too”.

Blackness and swiftness bound her; a dizziness overcame her. Soon they were by a great pool of gloomy water — Wroxham Broad — where heron, wild duck, and the mast of the darkling boat brooded among bulrush; and now in three minutes more the brougham was sweeping over the lawn of a lonely building, surrounded by walls.

She, peering, saw with joy both lights and a well-dressed man and woman; and, as the carriage stopped, she sprang out with alacrity, Frankl with her, still grasping her wrist.

“Sir”, she blurted out at once, “you will help me, I know. I am a poor unfortunate woman — my name is Margaret Hogarth—”

“We know!” said the gentleman, and, approaching Frankl’s ear, asked in Yiddish: “How long has she had her delusion?”

“Only about a week, I think. She may be violent at first, but—”

“Come in, Miss — Hogarth”, said the gentleman.

Margaret passed the threshold; the doors closed upon her...

XII. THE ROSE



ON THE THIRD morning of his confinement in Norwich, Hogarth was hurried into the hall of justice and the witness-box — in the dock Fred Bates.

Bates had denied — with sufficient impudence, it seemed: for his wife had been found dead, battered and burned about the face, Bates' own hand also burned by the poker with which, *red-hot*, he was presumed to have beaten her.

The same afternoon Bates was sentenced to death: but, having had sunstroke in Egypt, was afterwards reprieved.

And two mornings later Hogarth heard the bar of the prisoner's dock clang behind himself.

The speech of leading counsel for the Crown was short: a letter, found on the prisoner, would be produced, in which some busybody had falsely informed the prisoner that Mr. Frankl would meet his sister under a certain elm-tree: and the prisoner, in a crisis of passion, had hurried from the pulpit to that tree, on observing that his sister had left the chapel (to keep a real appointment with Mr. Frankl elsewhere). Under that tree the prisoner had encountered the murdered man, whose Oriental dress on a dark night would give him a resemblance to Mr. Frankl, himself a Jew. The prisoner had then shot the deceased, mistaking him for Mr. Frankl, and had been found holding the smoking weapon, which he admitted to be his own. It was a painful case; but the chain of inference was not assailable.

“Not assailable” found an echo in the minds of solicitor and counsel for Hogarth, who with growing anxiety were awaiting the coming of Margaret with her story of the weapons. Margaret was where her name was changed to Rachel.

Now was the r  gime of examining counsel for the prosecution. The usher called: “Baruch Frankl!”

A voice in the gallery shouted: “Caps and tassels!” while Frankl, in the witness box, bowed largely to both bench and bar. He put his palms on the red-hot rail, caught them up, put them again, caught up, put them; and still he bowed, while a trembling of the chin gave to his beard a downward waving.

“Now explain to the court the reasons for the state of the prisoner’s feelings toward you”.

“For one thing I had turned him out, because he could not pay his rent; for another, his sister was inclined, my lord, to be a little bit weak on my account—”

“A little bit *what?*” asked his lordship.

“Just a little bit weak, my lord”.

“A *reciprocal* weakness?”

“Well, my lord, you know the world — so do the gentlemen of the jury —”

“And of the Jewry!” screamed his lordship, amid laughter from the merry wigs.

As Frankl stepped down, a name was called at which Hogarth went cold as a ghost: “Rebekah Frankl”.

And in she stepped splendent, to stand like a Nubian woman, with that retreat of the hips, her ears torn with their load of gold, her throat and breast ablaze, she bringing into that English court the gaudy heat of the Orient,

Baal and Astarte, orgies of Hindoo women in temples of Parvati, the pallid passion of Bacchantes. Though not tall, she was lofty, and her ebon eyes had that very royalty of the stare of the bent form in the dock, whose heart throbbed quick like paddle-wheels that thrash the sea, she his wild divinity, wild wife of his wild youth....

At her shocking beauty the Court stood hushed.

She suggested the East: but in her speech was the energy of the West — sharp — a bass almost like her father's.

“You recognize the prisoner?”

“Yes”. She smiled.

“You were present on the day of the 11th November when the prisoner entered your father's house, and attempted to strike him?”

“Did strike him”.

“He did?”

“Yes”.

“Did he seem in a passion?”

“Seemed severe”.

“Severe! But was he not highly excited?”

“He did not seem so. Frowned and flogged”.

“By whom was he ejected?”

“Went of his own accord”.

“But — try to remember. What made him go?”

“He suddenly saw *me*, and fled”.

Laughter droned through the court, in which she naïvely joined, while Hogarth's eyes and hers met one instant, blazed outrageously, and dropped....

That was all. Counsel bowed.

The day grew toward evening, and still the stuffy Court sat.

But Margaret Hogarth did not come; a defending counsel finished examination, counsel on the other side again addressed the Court, and again defending counsel. The judge then held the scales, the jury trooped away, the crowd buzzed.

The light in the room seemed to brood to a denser yellow, and anon to grow dim; the stuffed court festered; voices spoke, but low. The King of Terrors was here.

When the jury came, the judge was called, Hogarth stood up, and the clerk of arraigns put a question to the foreman.

The foreman said: "We find the prisoner guilty: but beg to recommend him to the mercy of the Crown".

"On what grounds?" asked his lordship.

"On the grounds of past good conduct and strong provocation".

The judge then placed on his head a square of velvet and passed the sentence of the Court.

During the reign of stillness that followed, while the court clock's ticking was still loud, something which was thrown struck Hogarth on the arm, a red rose, black at heart, that had lain on the breast of Rebekah, who, when Hogarth looked round at her, was calmly drawing her mass of cloak about her throat.

XIII. OUT OF THE WORLD



A WEEK LATER a governor and a chaplain together entered Hogarth's cell with news of his reprieve.

Eight months later he was being trundled in "Black Maria" to Paddington Station amid a Babel of escaped tongues, when, sitting in his pigeonhole, he heard the unknown voice before him cry: "Well, Jim, we're away to the mountain's brow!"

Jim, nothing but a voice, was heard: "Worse luck! I knows Colmoor, and I knows the Scrubs, and I knows Portland; and of the five I say — give me Jedwood. Who's the guy in front o' you?"

"Hi, you in front there, who *are* yer?" cried the first, pounding.

He was answered by a deep voice, which said:

"I AM WHO I AM".

"All right, keep yer 'air on, if you've any left! It's the Lawd Chief Justice, mate! 'E says 'e's 'oo 'e are!"

"Old on! *I* knows who it is: it's that new-comer, 33. They say he was once a priest—"

But now speech was swallowed up in hubbub, as the van ran battering down a rough street near the station.

Then again Hogarth was whirled into night and space, and, toward morning, after the bumping climb of a van, was bidden to alight on moorland, where he spied, far off, set on a hill, a mighty palace of Romance, all grim, aloof, which was Colmoor.

The next morning while the outdoor gangs were being searched on parade before the exit, Hogarth saw a face which he knew; and “You, Bates”, he said, “I thought you were in Eternity!”

But no: there stood Bates, all capped and arrowed, cropped and neat, not wearing the filthy old scarf of liberty any more.

The neighbor of Hogarth now was a stout man, with black hair, and grey eyes.

He it was who had been — a priest: and in “Black Maria” had given that answer: “I am who I am”.

XIV. THE PRIEST



A YEAR PASSED, during which John Loveday exhausted the resources of civilization, (1)in seeking Margaret, and (2)in investigating the innocence of Richard.

He had, however, a sprightly, adventurous nerve in the mind, and would pull his velvet sleeves busily up — such was his little way. He began to plot.

About the same time the ex-priest, in that far-off world of Colmoor, said one day to Hogarth: “*You* won’t be here long!”

“You jest,” Hogarth answered; “if I had the chance of escape, I should never take it. I am here by due legal process”.

“Tut, if I say that you will escape, it is not because I am a prophet, but a man of the world, and know what happens in it”.

Converse with this deep, world-wise, and fluent man had now become to Hogarth like manna, or rather a vice, like opium: for in those grey eyes of the cleric was hinted anon the baleful glint of the cobra’s.

That day, a Saturday, outdoor gangs were recalled early, to “clean up” for Sunday, and out across the heath rang the great bell, Colmoor being famous for its bell, its tone and great size, larger than even the eight-ton “Mighty Tom” of Christ Church, for though its thickness was only six inches, it weighed, bell and clapper, ten tons, and was seven feet high and seven in diameter.

A busy Saturday afternoon ensued, and whatsoever Hogarth’s hand found to do he did it with his might, though his face now seemed all eyes —

brown, bloodshot, imperially large, morbidly staring.

He was giving the finishing touches of order to his wooden spoon and salt-cellar, his tin knife, plate, and pint cup for gruel, when a Warder Jennings peeped in with, “No. 76 — you are to follow the assistant warder at once”, and Hogarth descended to an ante-room where an official handed him a letter, which had been read and initialed by governor and chaplain.

An event! — a letter in Colmoor, like a shark’s fin on the voyages of old sailing ships.

It was from Loveday, and concluded with a reference to Hogarth’s “poor old grandmother”.

So Hogarth, who had no “grandmother”, propped his forehead to ponder that thing; and presently said: “Oh, it is a cypher”.

And by noting little peculiarities in the shapes of the letters, a double cross to a t, a q like a g, etc., he soon had “flemecops-leftquary” — which he took to mean: “flee to me in the copse to the left of the quarry”.

He smiled with tenderness at the dear heart planning and daring so very much for him. But in his smile was a touch of disdain also, he not intending to “flee”.

XV. MONSIGNOR



HOGARTH'S FIRST THOUGHT, as getting-up bell clattered r  veille through the gallery, was of Loveday's cypher, and by the time the warder came to ask if he would see governor or doctor, a thought of Monsignor O'Hara had somehow mixed itself with the thought of the cypher; when an orderly handed in the day's brown loaf, he was thinking, "Strange that he never told me what he has done"; eating his pint of gruel, he thought: "If I will not escape myself, I might perhaps let another."

"What!" said O'Hara on the march out, "you still here?"

"Where should I be?" answered Hogarth, dull and sullen.

"Where palaces stand open for you, and bank-notes — have you ever realized something very charming in the Helen pallor of a bank-note, Hogarth? And gold-yellow, sparkling gold! Hogarth, I — *love* gold! It is a confession—"

"Is it that love which brought you here?" Hogarth asked with his sideward stare.

Whereupon the priest turned a cold gaze upon him — had regarded Hogarth as a well-bred man, or would hardly have conversed with him.

"I had a motive for asking", said Hogarth, eyeing the face of the prelate — a man of very coarse feature; a small head, made to receive the tonsure, with a low brow; a stern bottom lip, and long upper; a fat neck held majestically erect; and up stuck his double chin. In profile, the part between the sharp edge of the bottom lip and the chin-tip was divided, down near the

chin tip, by an angle and crease; and the lower face seemed too massive for the size of the head.

Nothing could be more exquisite than the contrast between his air of force, authority and importance, and the knickerbockers, the coarse cap, the canvas slop-jacket, which he wore.

Outwardly calm, he was yet very excited by that “I had a motive”; he said to himself: “Suppose this man has some plan! He could invent ten, if he only knew it. And suppose he would tell me it, if I make him believe me innocent! It would be like him!”

When the eleven o’clock dinner-bell rang, and they two were again together, O’Hara said: “Hogarth, I have for some time been intending to give you my story. Have I in your eyes the air of a guilty man?”

“God knows,” answered Hogarth, with a shrug; “you talk nicely, and you know much”.

“So much for the hollowness of friendship!”

“Don’t be sentimental”, said Hogarth: “I never pretended to be any friend of yours; but I do respect your talents, do pity your misery: and if I knew the solid facts of, as you have said, your ‘innocence’, I might—”

“*What?*” whispered O’Hara with a thievish, fierce glance.

“Help you”.

“*In God’s truth?*”

“I might”.

O’Hara said: “I don’t find it so cold as it was this morning. You must have observed a certain peculiarity of moorland climates — the same being true of the Roman Campagna, and of Irish peat-lands — that they are colder than elsewhere in the absence of the sun, and warmer in its presence. This afternoon — *I will tell you—*”

They had reached the great gates, and were marched to parade-ground for the second of the four daily searches; then, after three ounces of fat mutton and forty minutes' rest, the third search, the second march-out.

And immediately beyond the gates O'Hara began: "In order to paint you my life, Hogarth, I must give you at once to understand what has been its mainspring and secret: my passion for my Church—"

He paused, while his lips moved in prayer, and he crossed himself.

"From boyhood my dream was to see my Church supreme in the warfare of the world, I being a King's College and Maynooth man, at twenty-three was Senior Chancellor's Medallist, and seven years later, sent to Rome was quickly received into the Vatican household. It was recognized that I had a future: both gifts and graces; piety; a versatile tongue; a powerful voice; some learning; could dine, I could look august; above all, I knew my man and could talk him over. My great day came when, one morning, in St. Gregory the Great on Mount Coelius, I was consecrated Bishop Coadjutor to his Eminence the Archbishop of Westminster. Now I was on the heights. My life during the next ten years was a life of bustling action — and was led always with one unselfish object. No man ever spoke a greater number of words than I, Hogarth. I have breakfasted with the Prime Minister, lunched with a President of the Conference, and dined with the Bishop of London: between the three meals I have written a hundred letters and pitched into ten cabs. Such a life is very exhilarating, in comparison, for example, with quarrying. Oh, my God what am I fallen! Most of that time I was running over Europe: from Madrid to Vienna, from Rouen to Rome. It happened that the Archbishop of Paris was organizing a scheme of Church-workhouses in France, in the absence of municipal ones, such as we have here.... Well, it was a grand thing, but was falling through for lack of funds: so I, on my way to Rome, undertook the mission to plead the cause before

his Holiness, and succeeded to this extent that, on my return, I had with me a casket from the good old man containing seven diamonds, which I might either dispose of personally, or hand over to the Paris fund. Now, it was during my stay at Rome that that series of events, culminating in the Jewish exodus from Europe, occurred; and on my journey home I was seized with the mighty thought that, since many of the Jews were perishing of want, *that* was the moment to reach their spirit through the body, and add their race to the trophies of the Church. Was it not a thought? You yourself, who are a Jew—”

Hogarth’s eyes opened in surprise.”*I am not a Jew “.*

“No? I should have said that there was a hint of expression somewhere — But to resume. I retained those seven diamonds, and disposed of them”.

“Honest behaviour!”

“Perfectly honest! I acquainted the Pope — he sanctioned it! And now, I, single-handed almost, threw myself into that task. I hired, I built, I begged, I borrowed, I formed committees, I haunted Religious Houses, I sweated, I ran, I wept, I visited dens, I smoked opium, I drank gin, I framed memorials, I learned Yiddish, I read the Mishna and Gemara, I interviewed Rabbonim, I wrote tracts: I was busy. In the midst of it, I had to visit Rome ceremoniously, to assist at an interview between the Duke of York and his Holiness — arrived on the Monday, and on the Wednesday, I remember, attended a Court Ball in the suite of his Royal Highness. That night, when I returned to the Vatican, I found all the Piazza di San Pietro crowded. I do not know if you were free at the time when my friend, M. Tissot, startled everybody by predicting the collision of an asteroid with the earth? Tut, the silly being — he should have known from the body’s response to the spectroscope that its condition was too friable to resist our atmosphere. But I never yet knew an astronomer not imbued with sensationalism they

acquire a certain megalomania from their intercourse with space. But, at all events, the people, dreading the destruction of everything, had crowded toward the Vatican. The Duke of Genoa, I, and some of the College of Cardinals, stood watching from a balcony; and very imposing, I remember, was the moment when a glare appeared — I must stop—”

They were at the face of the rock, and the “halt” and “set to work” parted them.

But again on the final march back at 5.15 when nightshades were falling fast like snow, and the arm now felt the pick a load, O’Hara began his muttering:

“I was telling you about the asteroid”, he said. “Now this body, it was given out, contained diamonds in large evidence, and the mere thought of such a thing bursting in mid-air, and scattering itself about was, I — I confess, a little fascinating to my mind. A man might let his soul gloat upon such a hope till he went lunatic with lust! I — I confess, the thought was alluring to me. Diamond, my son: lucid — But when the body burst, and none of it came my way, I drove it from my mind: in fact, I never heard of a trace of it having been seen — hissed itself into gases in mid-air. Except in one instance — one instance.

“When I reached Calais on my homeward way, stopped there a day, awaiting the coming of Rouen, for whom I had nuncio communications, and in the evening went to visit a cottage where I had once been a great favourite with an old fellow called Sant’A©-you know those Calais fishers, with painted sabots, and ochred trousers. And ‘What!’ said I to Sant’A©, ‘the nets already spread at this hour?’ ‘Nothing to be done to-day, my Father’, he answered, and explained that he had attempted to pick up a stone before his door, and — it had burned him: he showed it me: it had the

appearance of a piece of ferruginous rock, stuck with pieces of dirty glass; and it had burned Sant'Ä© on the midnight of the asteroid's scattering.

"Imagine my excitement: 'The asteroid', I thought, 'may add fifty thousand Jews to the Church'. I asked Sant'Ä© for the stone — Do you blame me?"

"Go on," said Hogarth.

"That day two months I had the diamonds lying polished in a casket in my house. My evil destiny, Hogarth, ordained that the casket was the one given me for Paris by the Pope, the number of the new diamonds the same — seven: and one day, about that time, the Vatican organ, the *Osservatore Romano*, published a dreadful article, hinting that I had applied to my own purposes seven diamonds entrusted me for Paris: the Pope, just dead, must have left some record of his gift. My friend, before I had heard a whisper of the attack upon me, the casket, whose lid was mosaicked with the Papal fanon, was secretly searched by a secretary in my house: the seven diamonds were seen.

"Imagine the horror of what followed: I was abandoned by all — superior and inferior; the story of the meteor was received with sneers. The scandal reached the public papers — the public prosecutor. And here now is the wretch, Patrick O'Hara."

The latter part of this narrative was fiction! The Pope's diamonds O'Hara had duly handed to the Archbishop! and though there was such a man as Sant'Ä©, no asteroid had ever fallen at his door. In fact, O'Hara was "serving time" for an assault upon a lady in a railway compartment between Whitchurch and Salisbury.

But Hogarth spent that night in meditating the pros and cons as to O'Hara's escaping; and, in a moment of destiny, said at last: "If he is undeservedly doomed—" and swooned to sleep.

The very next day was foggy....

On the march out O'Hara said: "Here is something like a fog. On the Carinthian Alps, where you have dense woolly fogs, there is a race of goats, which—"

"Would you like to escape?" whispered Hogarth.

"*Who?*"

"You".

"Hogarth — ! My God — !"

A trembling seized the priest's leathery left cheek, he at that instant seeing a vision of the world — Andalusian wines, hued ices, the opera-house, and great greyhounds of the sea, and a snuff which his gross nose loved at Gorey.

"Hogarth, you are not mocking me?" chattered the priest's jaws, hurrying like a jarred spring.

"I am quite serious. You will have to run for it though".

"*Run!* I am not such a young man! Have pity Hogarth".

"Bah! Be a man".

The priest approached his mouth to Hogarth's ear: "*I should die of fright!* My heart—"

"What would it matter? I thought you had more beans".

"But have you — a plan?"

"Yes. You must run to the copse—"

"I shall be shot!"

"Probably".

"I *could* not—"

"Then, do not".

"Tell me, boy! Tell me, Hogarth..."

“Within the copse to the left of the quarry there is almost certainly at this moment waiting a man who, as soon as you pronounce my name, will help you—”

“You say *almost* certainly”.

“I can’t see him, O’Hara. But I should say he is there on a morning like this”.

“*What* a risk! *What* a risk!” went the priest with lifted eyelids each time.

“You cannot escape from prison without risk. But I, personally, would venture upon ten times as much, if I thought it becoming. There is, however, another risk: that you may not strike the part of the copse where he is. But near the middle it is high—”

“Why, it is nothing but risks!” whined O’Hara with opening arms.

“You are not bound to try it. By the way — can you swim?”

“Yes — I suppose so — yes”.

“Then lift yourself to it, and risk it. I should, if I were you. Think of liberty, activity. Prick your spirit, grip at it, and spring it”.

“Do you think I shall be shot?”

“No! It does not matter! Crush your doubts, martyr yourself to your aim, and your aim will give you the crown of martyrdom”.

“Well — God reward you — I will think of it—”

“*Do* it!”

“I will!”

“In that case, don’t trust to your own eyes — *I* will give you the signal with my handkerchief — so: you keep your eyes fixed on me. Then run, zigzagging. And tell Loveday for me to look after you, and not make any more plans for me. Good-bye, O’Hara! All this is very unselfish of me, for I lose my old talky-talky O’Hara—”

They parted at the rock, and set to work.

As minutes, half-hours passed, the condition of O'Hara became piteous, hideous. His knees knocked together. Like death he dreaded, like life awaited, that signal. He said to himself: "This Hogarth will be my ruin...God deal not with me after my sins...!"

Hogarth was waiting that the warders' morning watchfulness might yield to the influence of use and time; but near nine, when the morning fog showed signs of thinning, he approached the water-can to ask for a drink, O'Hara being then two yards from him, wheeling a barrow.

As he stooped to the water, his huge stare ranged the moor, took in the truth of it, and, after waiting ten, fifteen seconds, he upset the can. As two officers, at the outcry, ran toward the spot, Hogarth, his eyes fixed upon them, waited — and all at once, with a flourish, drew his handkerchief.

O'Hara, with a heavy but impassioned run, was away...

He had not run five yards when a chorus of whistles was shrilling.

And quick, that monotony reels into a very frenzy of sensation: it is no more the same world, the same men. Lo, in the Palace of Continuity is an Event.

33 was off.

Five hundred pairs of eyes lit up, and the flurried warders ran in random dismay to see to it! How if all the five hundred should do the like, simultaneously? — a possibility underlying, through all its breadth, the little social "system" which has produced Colmoor.

But the five hundred, exhorted, stamped at, shouted at, remained quiet, though restive, only the wild eye showing the wild thought, while two of the warders pursued O'Hara who had also to run the blockade of two pickets of the civil guard.

The escaping convict, however, has this advantage: that his mind is strung to a far higher pitch than his pursuers'; and, given a certain ecstasy,

everything can be accomplished.

So O'Hara separately dodged the two pickets, and was making bolt for the copse before three rifles, aimed at a large vague ghost, rang out, and did not hit. He plunged madly into the brambly bush.

Immediately a bleating like a child's trumpet was heard from its midst; and in a few seconds, not one, but *four*, men were seen to rush toward the river, all in convict knickerbockers, stockings, caps, all in black overcoats: and one carried a bundle.

Beyond the river one was shot in the leg — a black sailor, who, with two roughs, had undertaken the risk for lucre. The rest escaped.

XVI. THE ROPE



SOON AFTER THIS Hogarth was taken with vomitings, his heart retching at Colmoor. His dark cheeks jaundiced; those mobile nostrils of his small bony nose yawned, like an exhausted horse's; his face was all a light of eyes.

Whether or not some suspicion of his complicity with O'Hara had occurred to the authorities, he now found himself transferred to another "graft": from quarrying was set to trenching.

Four things are inexhaustible in the earth: the hope of a gambler; the sea; the lip of a lover; and the capacity of Colmoor to be trenched and quarried.

And in Hogarth's new gang was — Fred Bates.

One day, Hogarth, intent upon his work, heard a sob and, glancing, saw that Bates had dropped his spade and buried his face in his hands.

"What, Fred, not giving in?" He went quickly and pressed his palm on Bates' brow, saying: "Patience! Stiffen your back: look how *I* slip into it!"

"Ah, Hogarth, you don't know. I am an innocent man".

"So am I."

"Yes, but *I* was certain in my own mind to be out within anyway, six months; *you* wasn't. That makes a difference, don't it? That touches the nerve, don't it? Ah!"

"And how did you expect to be out?"

"I had a brother-Bob-in the 9th Lancers in Punjab and his regiment was ordered home just a week before I was arrested. Well, the morning after the missus was killed, I went early — for I knew I'd soon be arrested — to a stableman at Beccles — you know old Harris — and I made him swear to

give a letter to Bob the moment Bob put foot in Southampton, and to nobody else. In the letter I told Bob where he was to look for so-and-so, and how he was to prove my innocence—”

“But I don’t understand a word of what you are saying”, interrupted Hogarth.

“I’ll tell you. I did not kill my Kit. The burn on her face, and on my hand, wasn’t any red-hot poker. Did you ever hear such bosh? Look here, you mind, don’t you, the talk that week about the world getting blowed up by some comet? Well, about 3 P.M. on the comet day, as I was walking home through Lagden Dip, an old gent, the same as took the farm over after you, he comes up to me, and he says: ‘If you should happen to see anywhere in your travels’, sez ’e, laughin’ and rubbin’ his hands, ‘a piece of hot iron after eleven to-night, you bring it to me, and I’ll put a cheque for One Thousand Pounds there in the middle of your palm’. Well — I said it was a Wednesday, didn’t I? And Wednesday bein’ the pay-day on the Eastern, me and the missus had a drop o’ beer that afternoon, and you know ’ow you come and caught me a-paying of her — dirty dog that I was those days. But, Hogarth, you hadn’t hardly gone when we made it up between us, and the rest of that evening we was just like — well — two bloomin’, cooin’ doves! kissin’, blubblin’, havin’ drinks, and doin’ our week’s shoppin’ together. Well — stop, here’s Black—”

They were interrupted, and for two days found no other chance.

Two days during which Hogarth received another letter from Loveday, of which one paragraph was as follows: “The fifteen pounds which you left in Lloyd’s Bank I have managed to withdraw for you on the authority of your aunt, Miss Sarah Hogarth”, and at once he scented a cypher, having no fifteen pounds, and no aunt.

When he had unravelled it as before, he had: “Why you failed? Expect — Balloon — Rope”.

He was astounded: and could only conclude that O’Hara had not delivered his message.

And as the image of O’Hara had mixed itself with his thoughts of the corpse, so now the image of Fred Bates mixed itself with the balloon.

It was partly through *his* evidence that Bates was here...!

On the third day Bates, as though he had just left off, resumed his story:

“You know Seely’s, the general shop, at Priddlestone”, said he; “it was there we always did our Wednesday-night marketin’ — nobody would believe what high old jinks those Wednesday pay-days was to us Great Eastern blokes! By the time we reached Priddlestone, we had a quart of four-ale down us, let alone what we’d had before, and, as the saying is, one glass leads to another. By now we was feeling just nicely, thank you, and instead of going to Seely’s, we took a short cut to ‘The Broom’, and it was going on for past eleven when we found ourselves in — you know the beechwood between Priddlestone and Thring — she singing all the time with her head thrown back, at the top of her voice.

“Hogarth, it gives me the creeps to think of! Suddenly it looked as if the whole wood was lit up: there was the sky all cut up with streamers, I saw my Kit quite plain, then all at once there was a whishin’ and a rushin’ among the trees, like steam — and I saw my Kit drop smack. In two ticks my head was sober: but, as I ran to her, I staggered sideways upon my left hand, and I let such a *yell* out of me — had put my hand upon something flamin’ hot.

“The minute I bent over my old woman I knew she was a deader; and I dropped down, and I called of her, and I shook of her, and it was quite two hours before I come to myself properly, by which time the affair what

struck her down was gone out in darkness. Of course, the first thing I thought of was the old gent at Lagden. ‘This should mean a cool thou’, says I to myself. But I knew I should be arrested first thing in the morning, except I told plain out what had happened: and that, you bet, I didn’t mean to do, for if once I mentioned that there piece of iron before I had it safe off the lord-o’-the-manor’s land, I knew it ‘ud be taken from me. But to take it off before another day or two was out of the question — it was too hot. So says I to myself: ‘I’ll *get* convicted; and to-night I’ll write a letter to Bob, telling him where to find the affair, how to get the thou, and *after* he’s got it, how to set about gettin’ the case retried ‘.

“Well, so said, so done. You know that old elm in the beech-wood? I dug a grave at the foot of it, and managed to kick and roll the affair into the grave, then I took up my Kit, carried her home, and by the time I pegged out the letter to Bob, I saw day breakin’. So I made paces for Beccles, knocked up old Harris, and gave him the letter for Bob. By eight o’clock I was arrested—”

At this point the 5.15 recall-bell rang out, and there was falling into line.

The next time that they had speech together, Hogarth said: “And were you such a clown, Fred Bates, as to imperil your life for a paltry thousand pounds?”

“*Paltry* thousand pounds?” answered Bates, surprised: “Hark at this! Didn’t I peril my life ten times more in Egypt for a bob a day? I tell you I was certain in my own mind of getting out in a few weeks!”

“Well, what happened to prevent you?”

“Only this: Bob died on the troop-ship coming home; that’s all”.

“But you could write old Harris to open your letter to Bob, and act on it, or else hand it over to your father”.

“My word, but haven’t I wrote? Old ‘Arris is either dead and buried, or gorn away, or somethin’. I’ve waited a year and nine months — good God! and no answer yet”.

“Poor Fred! I could weep blood for you. Believe in God!”

“More Devil than God about Colmoor, it strikes me”.

“As though *you* knew! Suppose I strike you blind — *now* — with a flash of Him?”

“I don’t take your meaning, sir”, said Bates, with a strange heart-bound and sense of awe.

“Do you remember 33 of the quarry-gang, Fred?”

“Yes”.

Hogarth whispered: “It was *I* who got him off”.

Bates whitened to the lips. “I — I thought as much”.

“There is yet another chance, which *you*, if you like, may take”.

Bates saw heaven opening; but with this vague hope was left two days.

On the third, Hogarth explained what he assumed to be the new plan of Loveday.

“I take it”, he said, “that he will pass over the moor in a balloon trailing a rope, which will have a loop to be slipped under the arms. I tell you, there are dangers in this scheme: you may be shot. Are you for trying it?”

“Trying it, aye”, said Bates, with fifty times the boldness of O’Hara.

And now began for these two a painfulness of waiting days, the sleep of both, meanwhile, being one nightmare of confused affrights, balloons and deliriums.

Ten times they re-discussed every possibility of the scheme, Hogarth giving messages for Loveday, heaping counsels upon Bates. Nothing remained to be said, and still the days passed over the time-worn hearts, till a month went by.

At last something was observed in the sky — afar to the N.W. — in the afternoon turn, about two o'clock, a mist on the moor, but the sky almost cloudless.

Whereupon Hogarth, who first saw the object, stepped, as if looking for something, close to Bates, hissing: “*Goodbye!* Keep cool — choose well—”

Bates shovelled on steadily, as though this was a day like others; but twice his knees gave and bent beneath him; and there was a twitching of the livid under-lip, piteous to see.

It drew nearer, that silent needle, while Bates worked, delving, barrowing, making little trips; plenty of time; and no one noted his lip which pulled and twitched.

Without visible motion it came, wafted on the breaths of high heaven: half an hour — and still it was remote, fifteen hundred feet up. Bates and Hogarth peered to see a rope, but could none.

After fifty minutes it was actually over the moor, all now conscious of it; but the rope was indistinguishable from the air.

Yet it was there, walking the ground, at its end a horizontal staff....Hogarth, with wiser forethought than Loveday's, had predicted, not a staff, but a loop.

It passed twenty yards from the quarry, Loveday no doubt imagining that Hogarth still worked there; but the quarry was some hundred and fifty yards from the trench.

Its course, nevertheless was toward the trench: and on walked deliberately the fluctuating rope, the staff now travelling the gorse ground, now bounding like a kangaroo yards high, to come down once more yonder.

A moment came when Hogarth, with intense hiss, was whispering to himself: “If I were he, I should dash *now*”.

But Fred Bates did not move.

Hogarth suffered agonies not less excruciating than the rack.

“Oh, whyever does he wait?” he groaned.

But now — all suddenly — it was known, it was felt, deep in five hundred ecstatic hearts, that a convict was gone — a man overboard — a soul in the agony — battling between life and death.

Like tempests the whistles split the air.

Where is he? Who is he? What mother bare him? It is 57! And he is *there!* — on high — caught, to the skies.

The tumbling of four ballast bags from the balloon was marked: the balloon darted high, wildly high; and with her, seated on the bar, the cord between his thighs, darted high Fred Bates.

Exultant! the five hundred faces wax fire-eyed, each heart a flame of madness. But yonder is Warder Black taking trembling, yet careful, aim: now the report is echoing from the two Tors, the granite-works; and that smoke no sooner thins than a whole volley of crackling musketry is winging toward that dot under the clouds.

And it was hideous — pitiful — the quailing heart waited and was still to see the dot dissever itself from its rod: he had been hit: was in the middle of the vast and vacant air: and wheeling he came.

A shockingly protracted interval did that fall fill up: the five hundred, gazing as at some wonder in heaven, did not, could not, breathe: the outraged heart seemed to rend the breast in a shriek. Would it *never* end, that somersault? Wheeling he came.

In reality it occupied much less than a minute: and now he is no more ethereal, but has grown, is grossly near, attended by the raving winds of his travelling: is arrived. And the thump of his coming was heard. As he touched the earth he jerked out circular....

Here was a tragedy remembered many a year at Colmoor, and always with feelings of the deepest awe.

XVII. OLD TOM'S LETTER



THE FATE OF Bates filled Hogarth's mind with a gloom so funereal, that now his strength, his great patience, all but succumbed.

One evening, while his broom lay stuck out under the notch of his cell-door in order that Warder Black might count him, he took his tin knife, and began to scratch over the hills and valleys of his corrugated wall some shining letters:

VEN

He was now, after long reflection, convinced that he was the victim of a plot of Baruch Frankl's: yet in his heart was little rancour against Frankl, nor, when he wrote his "V E N", was he thinking specially of Frankl — hardly knew of whom, or what. It may have been of the system of things which had given to Frankl such vast powers over him; but, the "N" finished, he pshawed at himself, and threw the knife down. If something was wrong, he knew not at all how to right it, supposing the world had been his to guide.

But a simple incident was destined to transform his mood — a letter from old Tom Bates, the father of Fred.

And as hitherto we have seen him passive, bearing his weight of pain with patience, after that letter we shall find him in action.

Old Bates' letter was handed him three weeks after the scratching of his vague "VEN".

"DERE MISTER HOGARTH:

“thise fu lines is to ast you how you er getn on, and can you giv a pore old feller ane noos ov that godfussakn sun ov mine hopn they ma find you as they leave me at present wich i av the lumbeigo vere Bad and no Go the doctor ses bob wot you no was in the ninth lancers he dide comen home so ive only fred left out of the ate. I rote to im fore munths agorne, but no anser, no doubt becos i cum to london soon arter, so no more at present from

“Yours trule,

“TOM BATES”.

The old fellow, Hogarth saw, did not know of Fred’s fate: Fred, the last of eight. He would find it hard to answer that letter.

When “beds down” was called, his head was still full of one thought: old Tom Bates; and he could not sleep; heard the bell ring for the change of warders; the vast silence of the prison’s night; and still his brain revolved old Tom.

The stealthy slipper of the night-warder passed and re-passed. Anon a click of metal on metal, and the bull’s-eye searched him.

Suddenly he remembered that visit to the forge at Thring, and the present of herrings which old Tom in his guernsey, had brought.

“Here — take ’em — they’re yours”, old Tom had said.

He had just then, he remembered, been on the point of going into the cottage to examine his guns, when the old man came, and stopped him — a fatal, appointed thing, apparently. Had he actually gone, he would have found the guns vanished, and would never have been condemned....

And what was it that the old man had said about fish, and fishermen, and the sea?

He bent his brow to it, and finally remembered: “The day’s work of a fisherman gives him enough fish to live on all the week, and he could lie

round idling the other six days, if he chose; only anybody can't live on nothing but fish all the time".

Was it true? Yes! He remembered facts of Yarmouth....

But since true, it was — strange.

Was the sea, then, a more productive element for men to work in than the land? No, that was absurd: the land, in the nature of things, was more productive.

Then, why could not *all* men procure an easy superfluity by one day's work, as the fisher could, if he chose to live naked in a cave, eating fish alone? In that case the fisher could change some of his day's-work fish for the shore people's day's-work things, and so all have a variety as well as superabundance.

At the interest of this question, he leapt from his hammock, peering into that thing, and his fleet feet were away, running after the truth with that rapt abandonment that had characterized his hunting and football. This was clear: that there was some difference between land and sea as working-grounds for men. Shore people, like a shoemaker, did not have for themselves enough shoes from even five, or six, days' work on which to live in plenty for a week: and hence would take nothing less than an enormous quantity of the fisher's fish in exchange for a pair of shoes, making him, too, poor as themselves. But since land work was as productive as sea work, and far more so, it could only be that the shoemaker did not get for himself all the shoes which he made, as the fisher got for himself all the fish which he caught: some power took from shore people a large part of what they made, a power which did not exist on the sea. That much was sure.

What was this power, this inherent difference?

He could think of no inherent difference except this: that shore workers paid rent for land — directly and indirectly — in a million subtle ways; but fishers paid none for the sea.

So, then, if shore folk paid no rent, they would have a still greater superfluity of shoes, etc., from one day's labour in six than the fish-rich fisher?

So it seemed. So it *was* — as with savages. He started! But one minute's reflection showed him that it was in the very nature of the shore to pay rent: because one piece of land was better than another — City land, for instance — and those working on the better must pay for that benefit. Civilized land, therefore, was bound to pay rent.

So that the shore people could never have the easy superfluity of the fish-rich fisher — because land was bound to pay rent? And the fisher must buy the shore things so dear with his easy-got fish, toiling, he, too, all the week — because land was bound to pay rent?

The wretchedness of Man, then, was a Law?

Hogarth, confronted by a wall, groaned, and while his body was cold, his brow rolled with sweat, he feeling himself on the brink of some truth profound as the roots of the mountains....

“Land was bound to pay rent”: he reached that point; and there remained.

“But suppose the workers on shore paid the rent *among themselves*....?”

At last those words: and he gave out a shout which begat mouths of echo through the galleries of Colmoor.

“If the workers on shore paid rent among one another” — then they would — on the whole — be in the very position of the fish-rich workers on sea, who paid no rent at all, the nation — as a whole — living on its country rent-free: England English, America American, as the sea human: and our race might then begin to think, to live!

It seemed too sublime — and divine — to be true! Again, point by point, he went over his reasoning with prying eye; and, on coming back to the same conclusion, hugged himself, moaning. At last — he knew.

And away now with the dullness and lowness! That blithe and hand-clapping day! Good-bye, Colmoor! the daily massacre, the shame and care. Men could begin — if in a baby way at first — to think, to see, to sing, to live.

He saw, indeed, that that would hardly have been fair business if he, for example, had paid his rent to the English Nation instead of to Frankl, Frankl having bought Lagden with money earned. But he thought that Frankl would hardly be slow to resign that rent, if once he was shown....

But if Frankl *was* slow — what then?

The oblong of ribbed glass over his flap-table showed a greyness of morning, as he asked himself that thing.

In that case — Frankl could be argued with.

But if he still refused?

Then the question could be gone into as to whether that which is good for forty millions, though apparently bad for Frankl, is not *forty million times* more just than unjust, goodness being justice; also, as to which had the primary right to England, Frankl or the English.

But if he still refused?

Suddenly Hogarth giggled — his first laugh in Colmoor.

That could be arranged....

For him, Hogarth, the great fact was this: that he saw light. Into that humble cell the rays of Heaven had blazed.

After standing motionless a long time, he dropped to his knees, and “O, Thou, Thou”, he said....

An hour later, when asked by an orderly if he wished to see doctor or governor, he replied: “The Governor”.

XVIII. CHLOROFORM



(CAPTAIN BUCKNILL, THE Governor, was making his morning rounds, when he heard that among the convicts claiming to see him was 76.)

A little man, prim, snappy, compact: an army officer, with moustachios stuck upon him, to curve and finish him off.

“Well, what is it, 76?” said he busily at the cell door.

Hogarth struck a hand-salute — his old habit on His Majesty’s ships.

“Sir, I wished to tell you that I have determined to escape from this prison — if I can”.

“Indeed, now! This is a most refreshing candour, 76!”

“I have said what I had to say”, said Hogarth. “You keep a sharp eye on me, and I, too, will keep a sharp eye”.

The Governor puffed a breath of laughter, turned on his heels, walked away, and that day spoke to three officials with regard to Convict 76.

And during a week Hogarth lay deep, chained, in a punishment-cell.

But during its first four days he had invented three separate plans of escape, and had determined upon the one which seemed the surest, though longest.

When he again came up into the light, he was a marked man, under Warder Black’s constant suspicion.

Now, however, his expression was changed: he no longer belonged to Colmoor, though he was there. Sometimes he felt like shouting at the burden of his secret. In his impatience to proclaim it, he pined to write to Loveday — but now his punishment had lost him that privilege.

Meantime, the problem was to get ten good miles beyond Colmoor: a hard one; but his brain had already accomplished a task far harder: and the greater implied the less.

His first thought, when he had begun to plan, had been Loveday; his second, that on no account could he permit Loveday to incur further risk, or expense, for him; his third, that he might yet use Loveday to any extent not involving risk or expense.

At the next weekly "School" he sat near a Thames-works hackle-maker, who, though he could write, was no scholar, and was laboriously spoiling a second letter-sheet, when Hogarth whispered him: "Can I help you? I see it's to your mother. I could get her a quid from a friend of mine".

"Well, I'm much obliged....!"

The laborious letter, after half an hour, had in it:

"If you go to 15, Cheyne Gardens, the gentleman will give you a sovereign which he owed me for cutting down the elm in the beech-wood at Teddington for him".

Now, Loveday lived at 15, Cheyne Gardens, and had only to see those words "*the elm in the beechwood*," to scent a cypher from Hogarth.

He offered five pounds for that letter: but it was two weeks before he decided upon the intended words: "Small chloroform — trenches — rock".

There were several trenches, many rocks: yet one midnight, when a blustering wind huddled the bracken, and the prison stood darkling, wrapped in mystery, a lonely figure in an ulster was there; and under each of three rocks he deposited two vials: for the formation of only three gave the least chance of concealment.

What Hogarth's plan could be he racked his brain in vain to dream, guessing that prisoners, on returning from the moor, must be searched, even to the ears: Hogarth, therefore, could never use the vial within the walls,

and must mean to use it without — a sufficiently wild proceeding. But the finding of the vials, was sure: for the “rock” which Hogarth had had in mind was one of those granite ones common on Colmoor, standing five feet high on a small base; and one day he swept his hand among the gorse under it, and, with a glad half-surprise, touched two vials.

Three days later he again swept his hand among the gorse, touched the vials, breasted his handkerchief, laid the vials on it, and presently contrived to tie them together with a twig.

At his feet now was a wheelbarrow full of marl, and two yards off Warder Black, waiting for him to roll the barrow; but, inserting his spade between a wheel and a side of the barrow, his back toward Black, Hogarth, with a tug, bent the spade: then walked to Black.

“Look here”, he said, “that spade isn’t much good now....”

Black strode to look, Hogarth a little behind him: and at the instant when the officer was a-stoop to lift the spade, Hogarth took the vials from his breast, and laid them upright in the little pocket of Black’s tunic, near his bayonet-sheath and cartridge-box, above the belt.

By the time the matter of the spade was settled, the great bell rang, the gangs went marching over the old familiar level, up the old path in the grass-mound on which the Palace stands, and so, in lax order, like shabby French conscripts, powdered, toil-worn, into the gates.

Then the search on parade: during which, as Black busily searched him, Hogarth said: “Search well”.

They were then led up to cells.

And the moment Hogarth’s door closed upon him, he put his skilly-can on the floor, and, with one stamp, stamped it out of shape; also he broke his cup, and pocketed two fragments of it.

A few minutes afterwards, before cocoa, Black, trotting in heavy haste here and there in the gallery, looked in to say: "Bath to-night".

And Hogarth: "Warder! a word with you! sorry, I have trodden on my can...."

Upon which Black went stooping to look, the can now standing on the low shelf; and as he said "I shall report this", Hogarth, stooping, with quick deftness had the vials picked from the thick pocket.

"Well, fall in", said Black to him; "better take your precious can, and give it to a bath-room warder for the store-keeper to change".

Hogarth, as he passed out, placed the vials on the shelf over his door, where they were secure, since cells were never searched; and, the bathers having formed in single file, five feet between man and man, away they moved and down — away and down — lost in space, treading the journey of galleries, till, at the bottom, they passed up a vaulted corridor, monastically dim, across a yard open to starry sky, and into the door of a semi-detached, steep-roofed building, which was the bath-house.

A row of thirty-five baths; a very long bench for undressing; in the space between bench and baths three warders walking: such was the bath-house: all whitewashed, galvanized iron, and rigour; but for its old record of uneventfulness a scandal was preparing that night.

Outside the door a fourth officer paced, and a cord within rang a little bell in one click, to tell when, the bathing over, the door should be unlocked outside.

After giving up his can near the door to a warder, who laid it on the bench, Hogarth undressed slowly; got off his boots; and now had on only knickerbockers and stockings: he got off his stockings.

And the moment his bare soles touched the floor, he felt himself once more agile on the ratlines, larky for a shore-row, handy in any squall. Let

them all come, therefore! He smiled; passed his palms down his crib of lean ribs.

“Good gracious, why don’t you hurry up there...?” an officer came asking, stooping.

At “there” he saw stars-and-stripes, dropped upon his back: Hogarth was away toward the door, while the bathers started with shouts, though in no bosom arose any impulse to follow, the bath-house being the centre of a maze of twenty unscaleable walls, prison within prison.

But as for Hogarth, in such a dazzling flash did he dash toward the door, that he had struck down the second officer before the outcry of the first, and had pulled at the door-bell before the third could cry “*Don’t open!*” — a cry muffled into his maw by a cuff prompt as thunder.

This third man, however, grasped the fugitive by the middle: and while the overthrown two were running up, and the key without seeking the lock, a short, venomous tussle was waged just near the door, till Hogarth, wringing his naked body free, tossed his antagonist by the knees to slide into the path of the two on-comers; at the same time, catching up his battered can, and smashing it into the face of the door-orderly, who now peeped in, he slipped through, and was gone into a yard, small, of irregular shape, and dim, with one wall-lantern, and but one egress (except the egress into the prison-hall), namely a blind-alley between the laundry and carpet-makers’ building on one side, and stables on the other: blind alley, yard, and all, being shut in by big buildings.

By the time the door-orderly opened his eyes, and one of the inside three had rushed out, Hogarth had vanished; and these two, shrilling whistles to reinforce the bath-room guard, pelted down the blind-alley to effect, as they thought, a sure capture. But Hogarth was not there.

Back they came trotting, breathless, rather at a loss. One panted: “He must have run back into the great hall....”

The other panted: “He’d hardly do that — hiding in the yard still, *must* be. There’s that little nook....”

The “little nook” is a three-sided space in a corner, very dark, formed by one wall of the campanile, or bell-tower, together with a wall of the laundry-house, and a third wall which shuts in the yard; the entrance to it narrow, and one looking up within it seems to stand at the bottom of a triangular well, split at one corner. It is not far from the bathhouse, and into it Hogarth had really darted; but when the officers came peering, no trace of him.

He had, in fact, gone up the lightning-conductor, which runs down a bell-tower remarkably high, Colmoor having been built during the Napoleonic wars for French prisoners at a time when the theory was accepted that a lightning-conductor protects a space whose radius is double the height of the conductor. The tower is a five-sided structure with a Gothic window into which it is impossible to get from the conductor, because a corner intervenes, and it is a feat to swing from the conductor to the laundry-wall coping, and thence, leaping up, to grip the window: at each of which ordeals Hogarth hesitated, pierced with chills; to his observations from afar it had seemed so much less stupendous; but in each case he dared, and reached.

All this time the can was between his teeth.

Arrived on the window, his arms out groping, he felt a slanting beam — climbed it — found it short-mounted upon a horizontal one, all here, as he had expected, being a chaos of beams, raying every way. Thrice he sneezed low, and felt cobwebs in his face.

And groping he went, seeking the great Bell of Colmoor, which he had doomed, hearing sounds of the to-do, echoes that ran below, and the vague

shout of somebody, till he touched the flat top of the bell, clamped to the swing-beam on which he sat astraddle; felt also that along the top of the beam lay an iron bar; made sure that this was in actual contact with the clamps of the bell: and, no longer hesitating, set to work upon the can.

Tugging with his dog-teeth under the upper rim, he got a loose end, and wrenched the rim off; then, tearing along the solder, got the cylinder separated from the bottom; and, opening it out, had a sheet of tin. And now, by the help of his fragments of cup, he set to hack-sawing, breaking, tearing this into strips, no easy thing, in spite of the thin-worn condition of the can: but finally had six strips.

The edge of one strip he inserted under an end of the bar of iron on the beam; then connected that strip with another by loops, slid again to the window, and there lay connecting the six strips by a smith's-trick, with skew loops, non-slipping, getting a tin string five feet long. He then took the leap to the laundry coping, and thence the spring to the conductor, this being all the more ticklishly perilous because he could barely see it.

Hanging away now from the conductor by the left elbow, he reached out the right arm across the corner to catch the tin, which stuck toward him from the window: and he wound its end round the conductor, electrically connecting the bell with the conductor.

And now, standing with one foot on a staple below the tin, he twice sawed the conductor's soft metal with the fragments of cup, cutting and tugging out three inches of it, thus isolating the conductor's point atop from its earthing; then he tossed the piece cut out behind the laundry-coping.

This done, he listened, cast a searching eye below, slid down the rod.

The yard was at present silent, but as he moved to give himself up in the prison-hall, five night-warders with bull's-eyes fell out, still seeking him.

And as he knelt with clasped hands of supplication and bent bare back, like a captured slave, they fell savagely upon him, and cried one: “Well, of all the idiots...!”

XIX. THE GREAT BELL



THE NEXT MORNING Hogarth was not marched out, and near dinner-time was summoned before the Governor. Here he stood in a cage of bars in a room of “No.1” prison, devoted to prison-offences; and before him, at a littered table, sat governor and chief warder, with the witnesses of the outbreak near.

The case was gone into, the report made: whereupon the Governor looked up and down the length of Hogarth, and suddenly gave vent to a laugh.

“So, No. 76”, said he, “this was the threatened escape?”

Hogarth was now all contrition and hanging head.

“I beg for mercy”, he said, with a little smile.

“Oh, I am not your judge...Where were you when the officers were looking for you in the yard?”

“I was hiding in that little nook”.

“Confounded carelessness on someone’s part...And what cut and swelled your mouth?”

“I bashed into the wall in the nook” (The can had cut him!).

“You must have been mad!”

“Yes, sir”.

During the next two weeks he had round his ankles a chain which, rising in two loops, was fastened to a band round his waist; and he was set to turn “the crank”.

Finally, he was led forth to stand before the periodic Director, who, after reading the report, turned to a volume of writing in which was Hogarth's record: good — till lately; and the Director addressed him with sternness, which yet was paternal: he would sentence him to one month in a punishment cell, to two months in chains, and to one dozen lashes.

And two days later he was led to the flogging-hall, which, as he approached it, sent forth screams; the doctor looked at him and consented; the Governor said: "Get it over".

Hogarth stripped to the waist, his teeth chattering: but not with fear. On the contrary, he felt a touch of exultation.

The wrists of his outstretched arms having been bound to "the triangle", the Governor gave the sign, the cat rose, and sang, and fell.

Slowly up, and whistlingly down, rasping, reaping. At the seventh shock he fainted: and thence onward had a long dream, in which he saw Rebekah Frankl in Hindoo dress and jewellery, and she threw at him a red rose black at heart with passion, and her body balanced in dance, and her hands clapped at him.

During the next month he tholed the cold of that same punishment-cell; and during the next was in his old cell, but in chains, picking oakum. All this time, if he was aware of high winds by night, he was in an agony, till the next day the great bell rang its treble.

About the middle of February he was once more trenching in the open air.

But a fear had stolen into his mind: for the string of tin was not strong, and the winds of the last month may have dislocated it. In any case, he might have to wait a year, two, ten....

Occasionally he would redden with suppressed and turbulent energy.

But on the 17th of March, toward evening, England was visited by a storm long remembered, lasting three days, during which the poor prisoners were comforted with rations of hot soup and cocoa.

On the morning of the fourth day when the gangs were once more taken out Hogarth was hardly conscious of frigid winds or agued limbs: for three days the great bell of Colmoor had not rung; and his ears were open.

Of the prisoners, who, by practised instinct, get to know the moment at which it should sound, three presently straightened up, spade in hand, to glance at the prison: and suddenly heard — a sound.

A dull something somewhere — from the prison? unless it was some shock of the wind...Hogarth gazed piteously into the faces near him...No one seemed to have heard.

A few seconds, like eternities...Then he saw a warder look at his watch; then — another! and — they glanced at the prison; and — they approached each other; and — they laid whispering heads together.

Then — joy! — came five officers, wildly running from the prison gates, calling, waving....

And now he knew, and smiled: the babble of that lalling tongue was dumb.

And the very next day, when the afternoon-gangs were marching out, they saw descending from a carriage before the Deputy Governor's house a gentleman with a roll of diagram-paper — a bell-foundry expert, summoned by telegraph from Cardiff.

Hogarth resolved to act that night.

XX. THE INFIRMARY



AS SOON AS the cell-door clicked upon him, he commenced to work: first took off his boots; then felt over the doorshelf for the chloroform; wet his handkerchief with some of it: then inserted the vials across the toes of his boots, which were a succession of wrinkles, far too large; then put on the boots again.

He then lay on the floor, close to the low shelf; and, pressing the handkerchief over his mouth and nose, breathed deep, knowing that in four minutes, when he did not obey the order of “brooms out”, his cell would be opened.

As he sank deeper and deeper into dream, it was with a concentration of his will upon one point — the handkerchief, which, if smelled by anyone, would ruin all; and finally, as he drew the last gasp of consciousness, he waved it languidly from him under the shelf; then, with a sigh, was gone.

He had known that he must have about his body the unmistakable signs of an abnormal condition in order to sleep a night in the infirmary — which was what he wanted. And thither, when shakings and the bull’s-eye had sufficiently tested him, he was swung away, and the doctor’s assistant summoned.

Hogarth’s pupils were hurriedly examined, his heartbeat tested; and the freshman frowned, smelling an odour which, in another place, might have been chloroform, but here was pharyngitis; and he muttered, “Digitalis, perhaps....”

From a table Hogarth was swung to a bed by two of those well-behaved convicts who act as hospital-orderlies, and there two hours later had all his wits about him, and a racking headache.

His first thought was his boots — expecting to find them under his stretcher, and himself in flannels; but he had them still on, and also his work-clothes, humanity to the sick in the first stages not being in the Colmoor code.

He spent half an hour in stealthily tearing a square foot from his shirt-tail; then, weary and sick, went to sleep.

When, soon after 3 A.M. his eyes again opened, all was still. He lay in a long room, rather dim, in the midst of a row of stretchers which were shut in by bars containing locks and gates, and on the other side of the room a row of stretchers, shut in by bars. At a table in the middle, on which were bottles, lint, graduated glasses, sat a warder, with outstretched legs and fallen head: near him, standing listless, a convict hospital-orderly, who continually edged nearer the stove; and, half-way down the room, another.

Occasionally there were calls from the sick-beds — whispered shouts — apologetic and stealthy, as of men guiltily conscious of the luxury of being ill; but neither night-warder nor orderlies made undue haste to hear these summonses. There was, beside, an octagonal clock, which ticked excessively in the stillness, as though the whole place belonged to it.

Hogarth took off his boots under his blanket, and from them took out the vials; then, sitting up, commenced to call the warder, at the same time wetting the torn piece of shirt with some of the fluid.

“All right, I’m coming — shut up!” said the warder, but did not come.

So Hogarth grew loud; and the warder, presently rousing his drowsy bulk, unlocked the gate of that compartment, as Hogarth said to himself: “Do it handy...”

And as the warder stooped, Hogarth clapped the rag upon his mouth and nose. A struggle followed a muffled sob, both standing upright now, till the warder began to paw the air, sank, toppled upon the bed, whereupon Hogarth slipped into the blanket again, and called out in the voice of the warder: “Come here, Barrows — see if this man is dead “.

He had now drawn the warder over him, holding up his chest with one arm, had also poured chloroform upon the rag, and when the convict-orderly came, Hogarth, by means of a short struggle, had him asleep, then seized the warder’s truncheon and keys, and ran out in his stockinged feet.

At that sight, the sick, the dying, the two rows of stretchers, were up on elbow, gazing with grins. To the second convict-orderly who came running to meet him Hogarth hissed: “Not a word — or I brain you with this! If I tie your feet, you won’t have to answer for anything. Come along....”

He was an old fellow, and when he realized the impending truncheon, the menace of Hogarth’s eyes, and the silence of the warder, he permitted himself to be dragged toward Hogarth’s stretcher; and his feet were quickly knotted in his own stockings.

Now again Hogarth ran: but not many steps, when he felt himself tapped on the back, and, glancing in a horror of alarm, saw one of the two patients who had occupied with him his cage of bars — a wiry, long-faced Cockney shop-boy, who had had his ankle crushed by a rock at the quarry.

“Are you off?” he asked.

“That’s *my* business—”

“No, you don’t. Part, or I give the alarm”.

“What is it? Do you want to come with me?”

“That’s about it”.

“But — your foot’s sick, you fool”.

“You’ll carry me in your awms, as a father beareth his children....”

“You are cool! What are you in for?”

“Murder, my son-red, grim, gory murder!”

“Guilty?”

“Guilty, ya’as. What do *you* think?”

“Then you may go to hell”.

“‘*Ell* is it? I’m *there*: and if I linger longer loo in it, you linger, too, swelp me Gawd!”

Hogarth was nonplussed.

“But the foot...”

“Never mind the *foot*. Foot’s still good for a run. Do we go shares?”

“Come along, then”.

“But you ain’t ‘alf up to snuff, I can see, though you are pretty smart in your own way: I’d ‘ave felt the confidence of a son in you, if you ‘adn’t overlooked that wine—”

To Hogarth’s dismay, he turned back to the table, put a black bottle, half full, to his lips, and with tilts anc stoppages set to gulp it, while eager jokes, touched with jealousy, began to jeer from the beds.

“Lawd Gawd, that was good!” said the Cockney with upturned eyes, “and what do I behold? — broth, ye gawds!”

Now a saucepan of cold broth was at his lips; and not till he had drunk all did he run after Hogarth into the other arm of the ward, where one of the keys unlocked the door at its end, and they passed out into the infirmary exercise-hall, now dark, Hogarth dragging the Cockney, who limped, and kept up a prattle of tipsy ribaldries.

Then, emerging upon a platform of slabs, from which the jump into the infirmary exercise-yard is twenty feet, Hogarth leapt. The Cockney stood hesitating on the brink.

“As sure as my name’s ‘Arris, you’ll be the bloomin’ ruin of me...” he said aloud.

“*Sh-h-h*”, went Hogarth, “one more word, and I leave or knock you speechless”.

Now at last Harris jumped, Hogarth catching him, and they ran across the yard northerly, Harris complaining of cold, being in hospital flannels, his feet bare, Hogarth bitterly regretting the burden of this companion, meditating on deserting him. Accordingly, when they had run down a passage, and were confronted by a great gate, spiked a-top, Hogarth said: “I’ll get up first”, and, forcing the small end of the truncheon into the space at the hinges, he got foot-hold from which he caught the top hinge and scaled, a feat of which he considered Harris incapable; and, instead of helping him up, leapt down with a new feeling of lightness, hearing from the other side “Dastardly treachery...!”

Again he ran through dark night wild with winds wheeling snowflakes; and, seeing in the unpaved court in which he now was a clothes-line supported on stakes, he seized both, to run with them to where the court is bounded by the great outer wall: for though it is thirty feet of sheer rock, the mere fact of stakes being found there, and of a vanished rope, would furnish grounds for the belief that he had scaled it: he therefore leant the stakes against it, and kept the rope.

About to turn, he felt his back touched; and, spinning round, saw Harris panting.

“There’s a friend that sticketh closer than any bloomin’ brother, Mr. 76”, Harris said. “Try that game on again, and I give myself up; and where will *you* be then?”

“You silly wretch!” said Hogarth: “before I am free, there’ll be a hundred difficulties and pains. Are you prepared to undergo them? You couldn’t, if

you tried”.

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, it *is*”, said Harris: “with thee by me what need I fear? Lawd Gawd, that wine was good! it’s got into my poor ‘ead, I believe. On, general; where thou leadest, I will follow”.

Hogarth looked at him, half inclined to knock him down, and half to shelter, and save.

“All right”, said he. “Can you climb?”

“Climb, yes, like a bag of monkeys”.

“Come, then”.

He mounted three low steps before four doors at the north end of the infirmary buildings, where, as he had observed from the moor, a spout runs up the wall at its east end; and up this he began to climb.

““Old on!” called Harris: “I can’t do that lot”.

“*Sh-h-h!* — you must! — come—”

Harris made three attempts before he reached the first footrest, and there stuck, vowing in loud whispers that he would no further go, and Hogarth had to come back, and encourage him up. Finally, they went running southward on the leads between the infirmary roof and its coping, and had hardly reached the south end when a whistle shrilled, and they saw a warder run across the exercise-yard with a lantern.

“Stoop!” whispered Hogarth.

Crouching, they stole along the south coping, and thence dropped to a flat cistern-top, Hogarth, with a painful “*Sh-h-h*”, catching Harris as he fell, for the signs of alarm and activity every moment increased.

Up a series of little brick steps, the base of a chimney over the kitchen — then across another stretch of leads beneath which is the tailor’s shop — then, stealing in shadow under the beams of overhanging eaves by a garret window, behind which was a light, and someone moving — then a spring of

three feet between two cornices — then a running walk at a height of a hundred feet along a beading four inches wide, holding on with the upstretched arms — then, with course changed from south to east, along more leads — then a climb of ten feet up a glazed main — and now they were skulking behind the coping of the great No. 2 prison.

Now, contiguous with the back of the bath-house is a wall which runs from No. 2 prison to the bell-tower, dividing the bath-house yard from the bell-yard; but the top is not horizontal, being lower at the bell-tower end, neither is it broad, and to reach it from the prison coping a drop of seven feet is necessary: this Harris refused to do. “Not for Joe”, said he: “I’ve already run my ‘ead into enough perils by land and sea on your account. If this is what you’ve brought me out moonlighting here for....”

Hogarth did not wait, but disappeared over the side: and Harris, after five minutes’ pleadings, followed. They then drew on the belly to the bell-tower; and here again Harris refused the leap to the conductor. When finally he dared, and Hogarth sought to steady him, as he came sprawling upon the rod, both went gliding down, till checked by a staple.

But they climbed again; Hogarth undid the half-fused string of tin from the conductor, swung to the laundry coping, caught Harris, leapt to the window, drew up Harris; and was ensconced far up among the beams in thick darkness in the belfry an hour before daybreak.

At this time the great gates were open, and the moor being scoured for the two.

XXI. IN THE DEEP



THEY HAD NOT been ten minutes in the tower when Harris began to whine of the cold; whereupon Hogarth took off his slop-jacket and waistcoat, and put them upon the Cockney.

As from two sound-escapes far down near the bell some twilight came in, near eight Hogarth descended, working from beam to beam, to find that on one side the bell-metal had been melted into a lumpish mass, its rim shrivelled up, leaving an empty space under the motto *Laudate Domino* (mistake for *Dominum*) *omnes gentes*; and on the opposite side ran a crack from top to rim. Sliding still lower on a slanting beam, he could look obliquely upward into the bell's interior, and see the clapper, a mass weighing eight hundredweight, and so long, that quite down at the bell's rim were two hollows where it had constantly struck. It, too, had been blasted; but the bell-rope hung intact from a short beam at right angles to the swing beam; and, having found this much, he searched where he had left the bottom of his tin can, and clambered back with it into the upper regions.

About eleven, lying along two beams, they could see the portal below opened, and four men came in, looking unreal and small; whereupon the leverage wheel was pulled, the swing-beam swung, the bell struck the clapper, and throughout the tower growled grum sounds: after which the four stood talking half an hour, and went away.

A little later — it must have been after the forty minutes' dinner-interval — about twenty convicts entered with two warders, bearing three ladders.

When these had been fastened together and set up, and the leverage wheel removed, they went away.

It was evidently to be slow work. Not till about four did a solitary man mount the ladder, and take stand, far down under the bell, gazing up a long while, with stoops, and changes of posture. Hogarth thought that it was the bell-foundry expert whom he had seen; but could only guess: for all here was dim and remote.

By now he had sawed the clothes-line into two pieces with the tin, one piece eight feet, the other much longer — had intended tearing his clothes into strips for ropes, but the clothes-line was still better. In both ropes he made knots for hand-hold, a large knot at one end of the short one, and he attached the string of tin to the other end. Descending now, he tied the longer rope round the swingbeam, let himself down to the rim of the bell, and with the right hand pushed the tin into the hole in which the clapper swung, reaching up, until the tin over-balanced, ran, and toppled down beside the clapper; drawing the tin now, he brought the rope down till it was stopped by the knot; and now, by a swing off from rope to rope, could climb into the bell. He then reascended, taking the longer rope, and the tin, with him.

As night fell, he judged that by the next he would succumb. Happily, Harris, who had eaten later than he, was snoring in a nook; but toward morning began to whine again, and sulk, and kept it up all the day. Not a soul now entered, and as the blackness of night once more filled the place, Harris threw up the sponge, with “Here goes for this child....!” Hogarth flew across the space which divided them, and a quarrel of cats ensued, both being under the influence of the fury called “hunger-madness”. It was only when Harris felt the grip of Hogarth at his windpipe that he squealed

submission, whereupon Hogarth threw himself away; and half the night they sat, nothing but four eyes, eyeing each other.

That night what was a revival of the great gale took place, belling like bucks about their heads, and noising through the tower in many a voice. This so increased their sense of desolation, that even the heart of Hogarth fainted, they like castaways on some ocean whose glooms no sunrise ever goldens; and now a doubt arose whether, even if the bell were removed on the morrow, Harris would have strength to cling on during the descent.

However, early the next day hope revived when five men entered, four mounting among the beams to the swing-beam with tools, one at the ladder-head shouting up orders; and Hogarth, when they had gone, whispered Harris: “They have been unscrewing the sockets in which the bell-beam swings”.

“Let them unscrew away”, said Harris, his chin shivering on his hand.

Five more hours; during which only once did three men enter, seeming to do nothing but talk, with upward glances.

But at three it was evident that there was considerable to-do, though above there the row of the winds drowned all sound. A crowd, chiefly of convicts, passed in and out; then twelve men, one after the other, ran up the ladder, and thence climbed among the beams, with six cables. Half went to the east, half to the west, side of the bell; and three of the cables were fastened round the swing-beam near one end, three near the other end; one three were then cast over a beam higher than the swing-beam, to the north of it; the other three cast over a beam to the south of it; and the six ends lowered — operations which Hogarth, lying on his face, could just see; and the twelve had hardly begun to descend, when he saw a lorry backed into the gateway, filling half the area of the tower; whereupon over a hundred convicts were swarming over and round it.

“Now”, said Hogarth; and he hurried down, tacking his way with slides and runs among the intricate beams, tied the rope to a beam above the swing-beam, and let himself down to the bell’s rim; reached out then, caught the knotted rope that was within the bell, and climbed, the clapper now so rough, that hand and knee found grip; and he spent a minute in estimating his power of holding on with one arm, and with both, to its support-shaft.

And now he whispered Harris, and caught and half-sustained the Cockney.

Now they could hear echoes of the tongues below; and now Harris, clinging alternate with Hogarth, arms and legs, face to face, by rope and shaft and clapper, whispered: “But-good Lord-look ’ere-there are some people coming up!”

Four convicts were indeed climbing: but even directly beneath the bell, where it was impossible to come, they would hardly have distinguished the forms huddled in its dark cavern, and their aim was higher, to stand ready, when the beam should lift, to swing it diagonally across the square of beams which had supported it, so that it might find space to descend. And soon the bell-beam stirred at the tightening ropes: the fugitives felt themselves swinging, rising, poised — descending.

They were dizzily aware of shouted orders, the creaking of the toiling, slipping ropes, little jolts and stoppages, two hundred eyes blinking up, not seeing their cringed-up limbs — unnecessary cautious: for the nearer they descended to-ward the half-light, the surer did the area of the lorry make their invisibility. At last they were near; the bell lingered, swinging; babel was around them; the Governor’s voice; a cheer: the bell was on the lorry.

Someone struck the bell with a hammer, there was talk, swarmings round it, then shoulders pushed at the lorry wheels, which squealed and moved

amid a still fussier babel drawn by four horses, and seven yoke of cattle. The fugitives could hear the opening of the great gate, the laborious exit, and, in a moment's pause, again the Governor talking, it seemed far off, to the expert....

Wearily creaked the cart — beyond the moor — to a country road.

Now chattering words came from Harris: "All damned fine! I don't deny that you know your way about—"

"Way out", said Hogarth.

"Yes, a gamesome sort of cock you are in all weathers...but what next?"

"'Next' is to fall upon your knees and worship me, you cur".

"Thou shalt worship the Lawd thy Gawd", chattered Harris; "no bloomin' fear! This is only a new kind of punishment cell. You've got me in; 'ow are you going to get me out?"

Hogarth believed that the lorry was *en route* for the railway, and hoped to escape in the transfer of the bell; but that night lorry and bell slept in a shed outside a village *en route* for the sea.

At four A.M. they were again *en route*, and at intervals during the day, opening their now feeble and sleep-infected eyes, could hear the hoots of the two cattlemen, the sound of winds, the rowdy gait of the crooked-legged oxen, and stoppages for drink or rest, and anon an obstruction, with shouting and fuss. It was night before the waggon came to rest on a jetty, the elaborate day's journey done.

The fugitives were then deep in sleep, and only awoke at the rattle of a steam-crane in action above them, to find the bell beginning to tilt, lift and swing; then they were on a deck; and soon afterwards knew that it was a steamer's, when they heard the bray of her whistle, and presently were aware of blaring winds, and billows of the sea.

Harris was for then and there crying out, but Hogarth, now his master, said: “To-morrow morning”; and they fell again into their morbid slumber.

When they again awoke, uproar surrounded them, voices, a heaven-high shouting of quenched fires and screaming steams; moreover, the bell was leaning steeply, they two huddled together at its edge.

Harris began to bellow: but he was not heard, or not heeded.... There had been a collision.

“If you can’t swim, better catch hold of me”, Hogarth shouted— “there will be—”

But the earth turned turtle, and Hogarth felt himself struck on the shoulder, flung, and dragged down, down, into darkness.

After an upward climb and fight to slip the clutch of the ship’s suction, in the middle of a heavy sea he managed to get off his clothes, and set to swimming, whither he did not know, a toy on mountains of water.

Exultation raged in him — a crazy intoxication — at liberation attained, at the sensation of warmth, at all that water and waste of Nature.

But within ten minutes it is finished: he shivers, his false strength changing to paltriness, the waves washing now over his head; and now he is drowsing...drowning...

XXII. OLD TOM



HE CONTINUED, HOWEVER, to swim after his conscious efforts ceased: for his body was found next morning on a strip of Cornish sand between Gorran and Mevagissey, washed by every sheet of surf.

His rescuer, a shrimp-fisher, occupied one of three cots perched on a ravine; and there on the evening of the second day he opened his eyes on a settee, four children screaming in play around him; he so far having been seen only by a reporter from Mevagissey, and the doctor from Gorran, who, on his wide rounds, had been asked into the cottage.

The same night Hogarth spoke to the fisher: told him that he was not a wrecked sailor, had reasons for avoiding observation, and would pay for shelter and silence: whereat the fisher, who was drinking hot beer, winked, and promised; and the next day took for Hogarth a telegram, signed "Elm Tree", to Mevagissey, asking of Loveday five pounds.

Finally, one midnight, after two weeks of skulking, he reached Whitechapel, where, the fact of his brown skin now giving him the idea of orientalizing himself, at a Jew's, in a little interior behind the counter, he bought sandals, a caftan, a black sudayree, an old Bagdad shawl for girdle, and a greenish-yellow Bedouin head-cloth, or keffie, which banded the forehead, draped the face like a nun's wimple, and fell loose. For these he discarded the shrimp-man's clothes; and now dubbed himself "Peter the Hermit".

For he meant to start-a Crusade.

At a police-station on the third day he saw a description of himself: three moles, bloodshot eye, white teeth, pouting mouth; but over the moles now hung the head-cloth.

For several days he lay low in a garret, considering himself, abandoning himself to sensuality in cocoa, vast buns, tobacco: rioting above all in the thought of the secret truth which lay in his head.

Up to now, not a word to anyone about it; but on the seventh night he spoke.

It was in some “Cocoa Rooms” in a “first-class room”, strewn with sawdust, where, as he sat alone, another man, bearing his jug, came and sat; and soon he addressed Hogarth.

“Talk English?”

“I am an Englishman”, answered Hogarth.

“What, in those togs? What countryman?”

“Norfolk”.

“Know Manchester?”

“I was there one day”.

“Difference between Manchester and London, isn’t there? I am a Manchester man, I am. All the difference in the world. This cold, stiff, selfish city. Londoners, eh? A lot of peripatetic tombstones!”

And so he went on; this being his whole theory of God and Man: that Londoners are peripatetic tombstones, but Manchester-men just the other way — seemed a mechanic, brisk-eyed, small; a man who had read; but now, evidently, down on his luck.

“Then, why come to London?” — from Hogarth.

“Looking for work”, — with a shrug— “looking for a needle in a bundle of hay. What would you have? the whole place overrun with Jews. England no longer belongs to the English, that’s the long and short of it”.

Hogarth looked him in the face. “Did England belong to the English before the Jews came?”

“How do you mean? Of course it did”.

“Which part of it?”

“Why, all of it”.

“But fix your mind upon some particular piece of England — some street, or field, that you know — and then tell me: did that belong to the English?”

“Belonged to some Englishman”.

“But you don’t mean to say that some Englishman is the English?”

“Ah, yes, I know what you are driving at”, said the mechanic, with a patronizing nod: “but the point is this: that, apart from vague theorizing, a man did manage to make a good living before these dogs overran the country”.

“But — a *good* living? How much did you make? — forty shillings a week? toiling in grime six days, sleeping the seventh? I call that a deadly living”.

“Well, I *don’t*, you see. Besides, I made, not forty, but forty-*five* shillings, under the sliding-scale”.

“Yes, but no brave nation would submit one day to such petty squalors after it was shown the way to escape them”.

“There *is* no way”, said the mechanic: “there are the books, and the talkers; but the economic laws that govern the units like you and me are as relentless as gravitation. Don’t believe anyone who talks to you about ‘ways of escape’”.

“But suppose someone has a new thought?”

“There can be no new thoughts about *that*. The question has long since been exhausted”.

“Well, come “ — with sudden decision— “I will tell you a thought of my own “. And he told.

If the English people paid the rent for England to themselves — to their government — instead of to a few Englishmen, then, by one day’s labour in six, Englishmen would be much more rich in all things than a fisherman, by one day’s labour in six, was rich in fish.

The expression which he awaited on the face before him was one of illuminated astonishment; but, with a chill in his nerves, he saw the workman’s lips curve.

“Bah!” said the Manchester man, “that is an exploded theory!”

Exploded!!!

Hogarth was rather pale.

Yet he knew that it was true....Who, then, could have been exploding the Almighty?

“Who has exploded it?”

“Been exploded again and again!” said the Manchester man; “of all the theories of land-tenure, that is about the weakest: *I* should know, for I’ve studied them all. The fact is, no change in the system of land-tenure will have the least effect upon the lot of the masses; would only make things worse by unsettling the country — if it didn’t mean a civil war”.

“I begin to see”.

Hogarth got up, walked home meditating: and suddenly blushed.

It was known! by mechanics in cocoa-rooms! — that secret thing of his secret cell. And it was not believed!

As for him, what was he now doing outside Colmoor? That question he asked himself, as he sat unsandaling his feet; and he commenced to dress himself again: but paused — would first see Loveday.

Accordingly, the next night, the two friends met at Cheyne Gardens.

And a long time they sat silent, Loveday feeding his eyes upon his friend's face, that hard, rounded brow which seemed harder, and frowned now, that gallant largeness of eye which seemed now wilder, and that manly height, which seemed Mahomet's in the Oriental dress.

"But where have you been for five weeks?" asked Loveday.

"Skulking, and thinking. But about my sister...."

"Do not ask..." said Loveday.

There was a long silence.

"Did not O'Hara tell you to make no more efforts for my escape?" asked Hogarth.

"Who is O'Hara?"

"Why, the priest who escaped, instead of me, through the copse".

"O'Hara was not the name he gave me; and no, he said nothing about that. I got him off to America, and only saw him twice. I thought him rather — But why didn't you escape yourself?"

"I thought it improper".

"But you did finally?"

"For a reason: you remember the association which I was forming to answer the question as to the cause of misery? Well, that question I have answered for myself in prison".

"Really? Tell me!"

Hogarth absently took up a water-colour drawing from the table, and turned it round and round, leaning forward on a knee, as he told how the matter was. Meantime, he kept his eyes fixed upward upon Loveday's face, who stood before him.

In the midst of his talk Loveday scratched the top of his head, where the hair was rather thin, and said he, twisting round: "Forgive me-let me ring for some brandy-and-soda—"

Hogarth stood briskly up.

“What I say, I can see, is not new to you?” said he.

“No, not new”, Loveday confessed: “I believe that it is quite an ancient theory; there are even savage tribes whose land-tenure is not unlike what you advocate — the Basutos, for example”.

“And are these Basutos richer, happier, prettier fellows than average Englishmen?”

“Oh, beyond doubt. Don’t suppose that I am gainsaying you: I am only showing you that the theory is not new—”

“But why do you persist in calling it a *theory*? Is the fact that one and one make two a *theory*?” — Hogarth’s brow growing every moment redder.

“What can one call it?”

“Call it what you like! But do you believe it?”

“It is quite possibly true; and now that you say it I believe it; but I have never seriously considered the matter.”

“Why not?”

“Because — I don’t know. It is out of my line”.

“Your line! Yet you are a human being—”

“Well, partly, yes: say — a novelist”.

“Do not jest! It is incredible to me that you have written book after book, and knew of this divine thing, and did not cram your books with it!”

Loveday flushed. “You misunderstand my profession; and as to this theory of land-tenure, let me tell you: it will never be realized — not in England. Anyway, it would mean civil war....”

Again those words! “Civil war....”

And as, for the second time, he heard them, Hogarth dashed the picture which he held to the ground, shattering glass and frame: which meant that,

then and there, he washed his hands of the world and its wagging; meant also his return to Colmoor.

He dashed from the room without a word; down the stairs; out into the street.

As he ran along the King's Road, he asked a policeman the way to the nearest police-station, then ran on through a number of smaller streets, seeking it, till, at a corner, he stopped, once more uncertain, the night dim and drizzling.

He was about to set off again, when, behind him, he heard: "Excuse me, mister — could you give a poor man a penny to get a night's lodging?"

Turning, he saw — old Tom Bates: still in the guernsey; but very senile and broken now.

The fish-rich fisher...! he had come to this...

Hogarth had twenty-eight shillings about him, and, without disclosing himself, put hand to pocket to give them all, just as the old man reached up to his ear to say: "It's the lumbago; I got it very bad; but it won't be long now. It wur a bad day for me as ever I come to Lunnon! I'm Norfolk born, I am: and I had eight sons, which the last was Fred, who, they say, met his death in Colmoor...."

At that word, "Fred", Hogarth started: for under the elm in the beech-wood between Thring and Priddlestone Fred had concealed a thing fallen from heaven, which could be sold for — a thousand pounds.

That would keep the fisher rich during the few days that remained to him!

But the old man could hardly go himself; if he could, would bungle: the thing was heavy — on the lord-of-the-manor's land....

Do a kind act, Hogarth. He would see the old place, his father's grave; and there was a girl who lived in the Hall at Westring whom it was a

thrilling thing to be near, even if one did not see....

“Here are two shillings”, said he, in an assumed voice: “and if you be at this spot, at this hour, on Thursday night coming, you shall have more. Don’t fail”.

Again he ran, and took train, two hours later, for Beccles.

XXIII. UNDER THE ELM



HIS RISK OF arrest here, round about his old home, was enormous, and he drew the Bedouin keffie well round his face, skulking from the station to the “Fen”, northward, where he got an urchin to buy him a paper lantern in a general shop, and now trudged up to Priddlestone, then down through meadows to the beech-wood, the night rough with March winds.

It was not the winds, however, which made him draw close his Arab cloak, but his approach to the elm: there, one night, he had seen a naked black man! there had fallen the Arab Jew.

He stood twenty yards from the tree, till, with sudden resolution, he strode, soon had the lantern ruby, and since the grave of “the affair” had been dug with a piece of wood, for such a piece he went seeking, having thrown off his caftan.

Instead, he found the rusted half-blade of a spade, and commenced to dig round the roots, the lantern shine reddening a face strangely agitated, uncertainty of finding what he sought heightening his excitement: for the earth showed no disturbance, and since three years had passed since that night of Bates in the wood, the object might have been already unearthed. After an hour his back was aching, his hands dabbled, his brow beaded, while the night-winds blew, the light now was commoved, and now glowed a steady red; and still he grovelled.

Presently, as he shovelled in a circle, always two feet deep, moving the light as he moved, he saw on the top of a shovelful of marl — a twig: barkless, black, cracked — *scorched!*

To an immoderate degree this thing agitated him — some whisper in the back of his head — some half-thought: he began now to root furiously, with a frowning intentness.

But suddenly he shuddered: a finger seemed to touch his shoulder behind; and he twisted with wild eyes, caught up the light, peered, saw no black man — nothing: but quite five minutes he stood defiant, with clenched fists; then resumed the work, though with a constant feeling now that he was being watched by the unseen seers.

After two new strokes he struck upon something hard, and, digging eagerly round it, found a quart-can, full of earth. And instantly all doubt vanished: for this must have been the beer-can carried by Bates.

Strong curiosity now wrought in Hogarth, a zeal to lay eyes upon that object which had careered through the heights of space to find that beech-wood and that elm-tree; and during fifteen minutes his little implement digged with the quick-plying movement of a distaff-shuttle, he fighting for breath, anon casting a flying wild glance behind, but still digging.

Now, frequently, he came upon burned objects, twigs, cinders. Even the marl had a scorched look; and his agitation grew to ecstasy.

Something very singular had happened to his mind with regard to this “affair” of Bates: Bates had said that it had fallen on the asteroid night; and O’Hara had told him — falsely, indeed — that a piece of the asteroid, fallen upon the French coast, had had diamonds; yet, somehow, never once had his mind associated the Fred Bates “affair” with the thought of diamonds, but only with the “thousand pounds” which Bates had been promised by old Bond. So at the moment when he had begun to dig, his whole thought was of “a thousand pounds”; but, somehow, by the time his implement at last grated against something two feet down, that word “diamonds” had grown up in his brain.

But diamonds! In the midst of his shovelling the thought flashed through him: “The world is God’s! and to whom He wills He gives it....”

Now at last the thing lay definitely before him: he grated the spade from end to end, scraping away the marl; and it was very rough....

The size and shape of a man’s leg, and red, anyway in the red lantern-shine — his sight dim — he moved and saw in an improbable dream; and when he tried to lift the object and failed, for a long time he sat on the edge of the trench, passing one palm across and across his forehead, till the lantern-light leapt, and went out.

He sprang upright then — awake, sure: they were diamonds, those bits of glass, big celestial ones, not of earth, in hundreds; when he passed his hand along the meteorite he felt it leprous, octahedron, dodecahedron, large and small: if they were truly diamonds, he divined that their owner must be as wealthy as some nations.

About three in the morning he managed to raise the meteorite; refilled the trench; and since it still rained, rolled the meteorite to the hollow of the elm, put on his caftan, and with his back on the interior of the tree, his feet on the meteorite, tumbled into a wonderful slumber.

XXIV. FRANKL SEES THE METEORITE



HE WAS AWAKED by a footstep, and, starting, saw rocking along the forest path one Farmer Pollock, wearing now fez and tassel, and he saw his clothes all clay, and, with a smile of fondness, saw how, even beneath its grime, the meteor dodged and jeered, with frolic leers, in the beams of a bright morning that seemed to him the primal morning, a fresh wedding-morning, swarming with elves and shell-tinted visions, imps and pixy princes, profligate Golcondas.

Going first to the spot where he had digged, to give to the surface a natural look, he trampled the lantern into the mire, threw the tin can far, then, taking a quantity of marl, plastered the meteorite, to cover its roughness; then boldly left it, starting out with consummate audacity for Thring, where everybody, police and all, knew him well.

A singular light now in his eyes, an evil pride; and he had the step of a Prince in Prettyland. Corresponding to an inward majesty, of which, from youth, he had been conscious, he now felt an outward, and had not been awake eight minutes when his brain was invaded by plans — plans of debauchery, palaces, orgy, flying beds of ivory arabesqued in fan-traceries of sapphire, in which Rebekah Frankl lolled, and smiled; and on toward Thring he stepped, prince new-crowned, yet by old heredity, high exalted above laws, government, and the entire little muck of Man.

At one point where the path ran close to Westring-park proper, the park on higher ground, a grass-bank seven feet high dividing them, he saw a-top

of the bank in caftan, priest-cap, and phylacteries, taking snuff — Baruch Frankl.

Hogarth skipped up, and stood before the Jew, having drawn his face-cloth well forward.

“What’s the row?” asked Frankl.

“Could you give a poor man a job?”

“You a Jew?”

“Yes”, replied Hogarth, not dreaming how truly: “London born”.

“A Froom?”

“I keep the fasts”.

“What you doing about here?”

“Tramping”.

“Fine mess you are in”.

“I slept in a hollow tree down yonder — an elm tree”.

“Well, there’s many a worse shake-down than that. Who are you? Ever been about here before?”

“I was once”.

“You put me in mind of an old chum of mine....Well, here’s half-a-crown for you to go on with”.

“Make it a crown”, said Hogarth, “and get me to clean up down there; in a shocking state with mast and leaves”.

Frankl considered. “All right, I don’t mind”.

“I shall want a spade, and — a barrow”.

“Go down the path yonder, till you come to the stables, and tell them”.

Frankl resumed his musing stroll, and Hogarth ran for the barrow.

In twenty minutes he was again at the elm tree, and, with a scheme in him for seeing Rebekah, heaped the barrow with refuse, pushed it between a beck and the wood, till, wearying of this, he was about to get the meteorite

into the barrow, when he had the mad thought that Frankl must be made to see and touch it, so set off to seek him: and a few yards brought him face to face with Frankl.

“Well, how goes it?” asked the Jew.

“There is a weight there which I can’t lift”, said Hogarth. “Then you must do the other thing. Don’t lift it, and you don’t get the pay. What weight is it?”

“It is here”.

Hogarth led him, led him, pointing. Frankl kicked the meteorite.

“What is it?” he asked.

“It can’t be a branch”, said Hogarth; “too heavy — more like a piece of old iron”.

“Well, slip into it. A strapping fellow like you ought to be able to do that bit”.

“But suppose it’s valuable?”

“I make you a present of it, as you are so hard up”.

Now Hogarth, by tilting the barrow, with strong effort of four limbs, got the meteorite lodged, while Frankl, his smile lifting the wrinkles above his thick moustache, watched the strain: then, with arms behind, went his contemplative way.

Hogarth rolled the barrow toward Thring.

XXV. CHURCH ARCHITECTURE



IT WAS ALREADY eleven o'clock, the sun shining in a bright sky, under which the country round the Waveney lay broad to the hills of mist which seemed to encompass the valley; yet, when one came to them no hills were there, but were still beyond. When Hogarth came out from the wood upon a footbridge, to his right a hand-sower was sowing broadcast, with a two-handed rhythm, taking seed, as he strode, from his scrip; and to the left ran a path between fields to an eminence with a little church on it; straight northward some Thring houses visible, and north-east, near the river, Lagden Dip orchard. Only two stooping women in fields near Thring could Hogarth see; also, still further, a gig-and-horse whose remote motion was imperceptible; also the trudging two-handed process of the sower nourishing the furrows. But for these, England, supposed to be "overcrowded", seemed a land once inhabited, but abandoned.

To Hogarth the whole, so familiar, looked uplifted now, the sunlight of a more celestial essence. Westring he would buy — though one memorable night in Colmoor he had arrived at the knowledge that it was not just that Westring should be anyone's; but then what one bought with his own diamonds was surely his own — his name being Richard.

He had passed the bridge, when, glancing to the left, he saw a fifth person in the landscape — a man under a sycamore near the church, gazing up, with hung jaw, at the apse window — dressed in a grey jacket, but a clerical hat, and he had a note-book, in which he wrote, or drew. Hogarth, whose mind was in weathercock state, rolled the barrow to the hill, left it,

went stealing fleetly up, and gripped the man's collar, to whisper: "In the King's name I arrest you".

The man's hand clapped his heart, as he turned a face of terror.

"There is — some mistake — My God! Are you — ?"

"Yes".

"Hogarth?"

"Who else?"

"But you have killed me! My heart—"

"Serves you right. Why didn't you give your right name to Loveday? And what are you doing here?"

"I was just examining this lovely old church, with its two south aisles, and one north, like St. John's at Cirencester. When the church fell in England, architecture was abolished — But as to why I am in Norfolk at all, I am skulking: and here is as another place. Your friend packed me off to America; but for some reasons I should prefer Golmoor — old Colmoor, eh? I fear I am a voluptuary, my son, fond of comfort, and old things, and pretty things. And all that I shall have yet! Tut, O'Hara is not done with the world, nor it with him. As to Norfolk, I once knew — a person — in this neighbourhood—"

The priest paused, regarding Hogarth with a smile, the "person" meant being Hogarth's mother; and he said: "But you are quite the Jew in dress: do you know now, then, that you are of the Chosen Race?"

"Singular notion! This is a mere disguise".

"Ah. But you look quite radiant. You must have come into a fortune. When I heard of your escape, I said to myself—"

"How did you hear?"

"Why, from Harris".

"Harris is drowned".

“Harris is now under that little roof down there — there” — the prelate stabbed with his forefinger: “Harris is my shadow; Harris is my master. He was picked up naked by the ship which ran down your vessel, recognized me one day in Broadway, and threatened to give me in charge if I did not adopt him ‘as my well-beloved son’. Well, from him I heard all, how you called fire from Heaven — it was gallant. But aren’t you afraid of capture down here in your own country?”

“I cannot be captured”.

Those stony eyeballs of O’Hara, bulging from out circular trenches round their sockets, surveyed Hogarth, weighing, divining him, while his bottom lip, massive as the mouth of Polynesian stone gods, trembled.

“How do you mean?”

“I can buy King on throne, Judge on bench, Governor and Warder, the whole machinery. Even O’Hara I could buy”.

“I am for sale! Hogarth! I *smelled* it about you, the myrrh of your garments! And didn’t I prophesy it to you years ago? What a development! That beast, Harris, will dance for joy! Oh, there is something very artistic to my fancy, Hogarth, in the metal gold — brittle, bright, orpimented—”

“And diamonds?”

“Hogarth, have you diamonds?”

“Yes”, said Hogarth, smiling at the effect of ecstasy upon O’Hara.

“Prismic diamond!” cried the prelate: “but how — ?”

“Do you want to enter my service?”

“Do I *want*?”

“Well, I want a tutor, O’Hara; and you shall be the man. Undertake, then, to teach me all you know in two years, and I’ll give you — how much? — twenty thousand pounds a year”.

“My son”, whispered O’Hara, “what a development — !”

“Good-bye. In Thring Street there is a little paper-shop. Come there to-night at seven”.

He ran down the hill: and as he went northward, pushing his barrow, O’Hara had a lens at his eyes, saw the meteorite, and wondered.

XXVI. FRANKL AND O'HARA



MRS. STURGESS, OF the paper-shop, a clean, washed-out old lady, held up both averting hands at her back door, as Hogarth threw back his keffie, finger on lips; but soon, her alarm warming into welcome, she took him to a room above, to listen to his story of escape.

“And to think”, said she, “there is the very box your sister, poor thing, left with me to keep the day she went away, which never once have I seen her dear good face from that day to this. Anyway, *there’s* the box—” pointing to a trunk covered with grey goat’s-hair, the trunk to which the old Hogarth had referred in telling Richard the secret of his birth, saying to deaf ears that it contained Richard’s “papers” — a box double-bottomed, on its top the letters “P. O.”, with a cross-of-Christ under them.

“But, sir”, said Mrs. Sturgess, “you must be in great danger here. I hope” — with a titter— “I shan’t be implicated—”

“Don’t be afraid, Mrs. Sturgess, it will be all right, and, for yourself, don’t trouble about the paper-shop any more, but buy a little villa near Florence, where it is warm for the cough — don’t think me crazy if I tell you that I am a very rich man. Now give me a steak”.

Mrs. Sturgess served him well that day with a pang of expectancy at her heart! Always, she remembered, Richard Hogarth had been strange — uplifted and apart — a man incalculable, winged, unknown, though walking the common ways. He *might* be a “very rich man”...

His meal over, Hogarth threw himself upon a bed, to dream another trouble of bubbles and burden of purples; woke at four; and, with a

procured cold-chisel, hammer, and a calico bag, went to the fowl-house where he had left the meteorite, shut himself in.

Sitting in the dust there, he set to chisel out the gems from the porous ore, and as the chisel won the luscious plums, held them up, glutting his gaze, scratched his name on a fragment of window-pane, and was enchanted that the adamant rim ripped the glass like rag: the whim, meanwhile, working in him to purchase Colmoor, to turn the moor into a paradise, the prison into a palace; where his old cell stood in Gallery No. III to be the bedroom of Rebekah.

To see *her* that very night was a necessity! and when it was dark he set out.

But that plot failed: on presenting himself at the front of the mansion, he was sent round to the back, where he received payment, and was dismissed; and when he again started for the front, intending to force his way in, he decided upon something else, and walked back to Thring.

He reached the Sturgess cottage soon after six, ate, with a candle returned to the lean-to to resume his work, and was still intent upon it at seven, when Mrs. Sturgess ran out to tell him that “the gentleman had come”. He said: “Show him up to my room”.

The first thing which O’Hara noticed in that room was the goat-hair trunk, with the initials and cross, the initials his own.

After some minutes he furtively turned the key, dived into a mass of things, paused to remember the whereabouts of a spring, found it, and, lifting the upper bottom, peered beneath; saw a bundle of papers; and, without removing the band, ferreted among them, and was satisfied — Hogarth’s “birth-papers”.

He presently went to a back window, and saw ruddy streaks between the boarding of the shanty, while sounds of the hammer reached him.

He would go and meet Hogarth: no harm in that; but it was stealthily that he hurried down the stair and carried himself across the yard, grinning a grimace of self-conscious caution, to peep through a cranny.

Hogarth's back was toward him, the iron leg lying near a box in which was a sitting hen, on its top a candlestick, the calico bag, and a lot of the gems: at which the priest's palm covered his awed mouth, and with a fleet thievishness, like a cat on hot bricks, he trotted back to the cottage.

Ten minutes later Hogarth entered, nodding: "Ah, O'Hara..."; and he called down: "Mrs. Sturgess! pen, ink, and paper!"

When these came, he sat and wrote:

"I have escaped from prison, and come into great power. I summon you to meet me at the elm in the beech-wood to-night at nine. I beseech you, I entreat you. I burn to ashes. Rebekah! My flames of fire! I am dying.

"R. H."

He enclosed, and handed it, without any address, to O'Hara.

"O'Hara", said he, "I want you to take that for me. Come — I will show you the place. You ask in the hall to see 'the young lady': her name does not concern you; but you can't mistake her: she is so-pretty. Give the note to no one else, of course: it mentions my escape, for one thing. I know you will do it well".

He conducted O'Hara, till the two towers of Westring were visible; pointed them out; then went back, and in an hour had finished his work on the diamonds.

O'Hara, meantime, going on his way alone, muttered: "You go fast, Hogarth: prelates of the Church your errand boys? But there is a little fellow called Alf Harris...if he had seen what I have seen to-night, you would be a corpse now".

In twenty minutes he was at Westring, which he knew well, for twenty-five years before he had lived in the Vale: but he supposed that Lord Westring de Broom was still the inmate.

He asked to see “the young lady”, persisted, and after a time Rebekah came with eyebrows of inquiry.

The moment O’Hara saw her well, his visage acquired a ghastly ribbed fixity. Even before this, *she*, by one flashed glance, had known him.

But she took the envelope with easy coolness. And, instead of then returning upon her steps, went still beyond, and whispered to two men in the hall: “Do not let that man pass out!”

As she again returned inward past O’Hara, she remarked: “You might wait here a little”.

She travelled then, not hurrying, down the breadth of a great apartment to a side room where her father sat, capped and writing; and she said: “Papa, the man who assaulted me in the train is now in the hall. As his sentence was three years, he must have escaped—” She was gone at once, the unaddressed envelope, still unopened, shivering a little in her hand.

Frankl leapt up, rather pale, thinking that if the man had come *here*, he must mean mischief; but remembering that the man was a gentleman, a priest, he took heart, and went out.

O’Hara, meantime, stood at bay, guessing his exit blocked, while the terrors of death gat hold upon him, the flesh of his yellow jaw shivering. But he was a man of stern mind — stern as the rocky aspect of his face, and the moment he saw Frankl coming (he had seen him in the Court), he started to meet him — stooped to the Jew’s ear, who shrank delicately from contact.

“There isn’t any good in running me down, sir”, he whispered in sycophant haste. “I pledge you my word I came here without knowing to

whom. O do, now! I have already suffered for my crime; and if you attempt to capture me, I do assure you, I strangle you where you stand! Do, now! I only brought a letter—”

Frankl, half inclined to tyrannize over misery, and half afraid, swept his hand down the beard.

“Letter?” said he: “from whom?”

“From a friend”.

“Which friend?”

“A man named Hogarth”.

O’Hara said it in an awful whisper, though not aware of any relation between Hogarth and Frankl.

Whereupon an agitation waved down Frankl’s beard. The news that “a man named Hogarth” had written to his daughter would hardly have suggested *Richard* — safe elsewhere; but, one night at Yarmouth, he had seen Richard Hogarth inexplicably kiss his daughter’s hand.

“Hogarth?” said he: “what Christian name?”

“Richard”.

The agonized thought in Frankl’s brain was this: “Well, what’s the good of prisons, then?” — he, too earnest a financier to read newspaper gossip, having heard not a word of the three escapes from Colmoor.

He said: “Well, sir, generally speaking, I’m the last to encourage this sort of thing; but, as yours is a special case, I tell you plain out that, personally, I don’t mean a bit of harm to you. Just step into a room here, and let us talk the matter quietly over”.

He led O’Hara to his study; and there they two remained locked half an hour, conferring head to head.

XXVII. THE BAG OF LIGHT



REBEKAH, HAVING EXCUSED herself from three ladies, her guests, alone in her room opened her letter.

Glanced first at the “R. H.”, and was not surprised. He had “escaped”, had “come into great power”: that seemed natural; but he “summoned” her to meet him, and she saw no connection between his “great power” and his right to summon her.

She held the paper to a fire, and, as it began to burn, in a panic of flurry extinguished the edge, and hustled it into her bosom; then perambulated; then fell to a chair-edge with staring gaze; then, rocking her head which she had dropped upon a little table, moaned: “He is mad....”

“My flames of fire! Rebekah! I am dying....”

He suffered; and a pussy’s wail mewed from her; but with a gasp of anger which said “Ho!” she sprang straight, and went ranging, with a stamping gait, through the chamber, filling it with passion. “*I won’t go!*” she went with fixed lips, as something within her whispered: “You must”.

To escape herself, she went again to see what had happened with regard to the convict, whose face would carry to the grave the scars of her nails.

There were no signs of any disturbance; and she asked a footman: “Where is the man who was here?”

“With your father in the study”.

That seemed a strange proceeding: she felt a touch of alarm for her father, and, passing again by the study, peeped; could see nothing for the key, but heard voices.

This messenger of Hogarth, she next thought, was a criminal: he might betray...so she stole into an adjacent room, to peep by a side door of the study, and though a key projecting toward her barred her vision, the talkers were near this point, and she could hear.

“The diamond block”, O’Hara said, “is the same which he rolled across the bridge this morning; to that I’ll swear”.

“Then it must be the very same block he showed me”, Frankl said in a whisper; “that thing was worth millions....!”

“Undoubtedly it was the same”.

“Oh, but Lord”, groaned the Jew in an anguish of self-deprecation, “where were my *eyes*? where were my *wits*? I must have been *dreaming*! No, that’s hard!”

“Well — *nil desperandum*! Let us be acting, sir!”

“My own land — !”

“They are still safe enough: come—”

“He may have lost one or two — in his excitement. Thousands gone! He may have hidden some!”

“Tut, he has hidden none”, said O’Hara; “we may have all. Let us make a move”.

“But he is a strong man, this Hogarth. Why do you object to the assistance of the police?”

“What have the police to do with such a matter? Hogarth would simply bribe. And there are three of us—”

“Who is this Harris?”

“He is a Cockney — assassin”.

Frankl took snuff, with busy pats at alternate nostrils.

“What will you tell him is in the bag?”

“Anything — rings — something prized by you for sentimental reasons. We offer him a thousand — two thousand pounds. And he will not fail. He strikes like lightning”.

“And we share — how?”

“Come — let us not talk of that again, sir. What could be more generous than my offer? You divide the diamonds into two heaps, and I choose one; or I divide, you choose; and, before I leave you, you give me a declaration that it was by your contrivance that I escaped prison, and that the gems which I have, once yours, are duly made over to me”.

“And you collar half!” gibed the Jew with an ogle of guile; “that’s about as cool a stroke of business as I’ve come across. You don’t take into account that the whole is mine, if the concern fell, as you confess, on my own land! And just ask yourself the question: what is to prevent me handing you over this minute to the police, and grabbing the lot? Only I’m not that sort of man—”

O’Hara drew a revolver.

“You talk to me as though I was a schoolboy, sir”, said he sternly. “Be good enough to learn to respect me. I am not less a man of the world than you are, and quite competent to safeguard my own interests. Supposing I was weak enough to permit you to send for the police, the moment they had me I should tell of Hogarth in hiding; they would go for him, and he, after bribing, may be trusted to take wing with the stones, leaving you whistling. Or perhaps you would care to tackle him in person? He would wheel you by the beard round his arm like a Catherine-wheel, I do assure you. All this you see well, and pretend not to. Do let us be honest with each other!”

“Well, I don’t want to be hard”, said Frankl, looking sideward and downward, plotting behind an unwrinkled brow, intending to have every one of the diamonds; so did O’Hara, who already had his plot.

“No, don’t be hard”, said O’Hara: “*I* am not. I give you an incalculable fortune; I take the same. Live and let live! Why should two shrewd old fellows like you and me be like the dog which, wanting two bones, lost the one he had? Come, now — give me your hand on it”.

“Well, I’m hanged if you are not right!” cried Frankl, looking up with discovery: “Share and share alike, and shame the devil! That’s the kind of little man I am, frank, bluff, and stalwart — Ha! ha! Give me your hand on it, sir!”

“Ha! ha! you are very kind. That is the only way — absolute sincerity—” and they shook hands, hob-nobbing and fraternizing, with laughs and little nods, like cronies.

“Stop — I’ll just ring for a drop of brandy—” said Frankl.

“No! no ringing! — thanks, thanks, no brandy—”

“Well, you are as cautious as they make them. Oh, perfectly right, you know — perfectly right” — he touched O’Hara’s chest— “not a word to say against that. I am the same kind of man myself—”

“Come; are you for making a move?”

“Agreed. Where is my hat? I suppose a man may get his hat! — ha! ha! — I can’t very well go in this cap—”

“You use mine — with the greatest pleasure. I do not need — Ah? quite the fit, quite the fit”.

“Why, so it is. Ha! ha! why, it’s a curate’s hat, and — *I’m a Jew!*”

“Excellent, excellent, ha! ha!”

So they made merry, and, with the bitter lip-corners of forced merriment, went out, while Rebekah, who had caught a great deal of that dialogue, crouched a long time there, agitated, uncertain what to do.

That her father should coolly look on at an assassination for a fortune was no revelation to her: she had long despised, yet, with an inconsistency

due to the tenderness of Jewish family ties, still loved him; the notion of appealing to the police, therefore, who might ruin Hogarth, too, did not enter her head.

She ran and wrote: “Your life and bag of gems are *at this moment* in danger”; and sent it by a mounted messenger addressed to “The Guest at the Paper Shop”.

But in twenty minutes the messenger returned to her with it, Hogarth having gone to the *rendezvous* at the elm — long before the appointed time.

When, accordingly, Frankl, O’Hara, and Harris arrived at the paper-shop back yard, and Harris had stolen up the back stairs, he presently, to the alarm and delight of the others, sent a whisper from the window: “No one ’ere as I can see!”

And the search for the diamonds was short: for Hogarth had actually left the bag containing them on the trunk, and Frankl and O’Hara returned with it to Westring, holding it out at arm’s length, one with the right, one with the left hand, like standard-bearers.

Hogarth, meantime, was striding about the elm, and once fell to his knees, adoring a vision, and once, at a fancied step, his teeth-edges chattered.

Rebekah! He called, groaned, hissed that name, while his to-and-fro ranging quickened to a trot.

And now, fancying that he heard a call “*Come !*” he stood startled, struck into a twisting enquiry to the four winds; but could not locate the call, ran hither and thither, saw no one.

“Come to me, little sister”, he wailed tenderly, while to swallow was a doubtful spasm for him, her name a mountain in his bosom.

When he was certain that it must be nearer ten than “nine”, he set out in the sway of a turbulent impulse to spurt for the Hall: but as he reached the

point of proximity between path and park, just there where her father had stood that morning he saw her patiently waiting — ever since that “*Come!*”

He flew, and was about to skip up the bank, when, with forbidding arm, she cried: “Don’t you approach me!” — and he stood checked and abject, one foot planted on the bank, looking up, ready to dart for her in her Oriental dress, flimsy, baggy at the girdle, her arms bare, her fingers clasped before her, making convex the two tassels of the girdle, from her ears depending circles of gold large enough to hoop with, a saffron headdress, stuck backward, showing her hair in front, falling upon a shawl which sheltered her frank recumbent shoulders. She did not see Hogarth at all, but stood averted, implacable, unapproachable, looking across the park, while Hogarth occupied a long silence in gazing up to where, like a show, she stood, illumined by the moon.

At last he sent to her the whisper, “Did you call just now? Did you say ‘*Come*’?”

“What is it you want with me, Hogarth? You have ‘*summoned*’ me: but be very quick”.

“I told you: I am wealthier than all the princes—”

“Well, let me inform you that your life is in danger here; if you are a wise man, you will not fail to leave this neighbourhood this night”.

“But no one knows—”

“It is known, Hogarth: your friends are false, and your enemies crafty. You will have to walk with your eyes open, my friend. What will you do with all the money?”

“I will buy the world, because *you* are in it”.

Now she flashed upon him one glance, in which there was astonishment, and judgment.

“You said that so like my father! Hogarth among the dealers? I thought you would be more squeamish, and arduous, and complex”.

“But if a man is famished, he is not complex, he runs to the baker’s. You can have no conception how I perish! And I cannot be contradicted-I claim you-I have the right-I am the lord of this lower world—”

“But you do not see the effect of your words: you disappoint me Richard. How of what the poet sings:

...this is my favoured lot,

My exaltation to afflictions high?

That is more in your line, you know, but you are dazzled, Hogarth-fie. To *buy me*! And how would you like me afterwards, having renounced my obligations? And how would I like *you*-I whose name is Rebekah, who will mate with none but a wrestler, a fellow of heroic muscle? I feel certain that you are dazzled. It is natural, I suppose — But are all the people in the world so happy, that *you* too, can find nothing to occupy you but the market-place, with its buying and selling? And to *buy me*? I am *not* for sale! How dare you, Hogarth?”

With this she walked off; but, having a creepy instinct in her back that he was on the point to follow, catch, and snatch her away, she span round again, crying: “Do not follow me! Mind you! If you like, be at the elm-tree again at half-past ten-and I will communicate with you. Goodbye—”

Now she did not once look back; and he had not heard that fainting “Good-bye”, it had fainted so.

He found himself presently in his room at the paper-shop, and lay biting the bed-clothes, spasm after spasm traversing his body.

Then, turning on his back, he lay with his face now toward the trunk, and a little clock ticked ten more minutes before the fact stole into his consciousness that the bag was not on the trunk.

For some time the disappearance was too stupendous to find room in his brain. He got up and paced, stunned, just conscious of a feeling of unease.

Now he was searching the room mechanically. It was not there....

And again he paced, tapping his top teeth with a finger-nail; and now he called down the stair: "Have you seen, Mrs. Sturgess, the calico bag you gave me to-day?"

"Why, no".

"Has anyone been in my room?"

"Why, *no*, sir! Only myself".

Again he began to pace, and suddenly the grand reality stabbed his brain like a dagger: he was poor....

O'Hara! Where was he....?

His forehead dropped upon the mantel-board, and he leant staring downward there, a miserable man.

But suddenly the man said quietly aloud, raising himself: "All right: better so. O, I have not been myself — virtue has gone out of me — !"

Presently he noticed that it was near the hour of her unexpected *rendezvous* under the elm....

And nearly all the way he ran — wild to see her again — until he neared the tree, when, descrying a female form, he came stooping with humility, but soon saw that it was a girl, her head in a shawl, whom he did not know.

And she, coming to meet him, said: "What is your name, sir?"

"Why?"

"I am Miss Frankl's messenger".

"My name is Hogarth".

"Will you turn this way that I may see your eyes?...All right: Miss Frankl directs me to give you these".

The girl, who had been weighted down toward the left, handed him an envelope, and a steel box.

Never was he so bewildered! On the way home, he observed that the box had three knobs of gold, surrounded by rays, and, inlaid in the top, the letters "R. F."; when he tore open the envelope in his room he found in pencil on one half-sheet:

"Turn the 10 of the right knob to the ray 5; the 5 of the middle knob to the ray 0; the 15 of the left knob to the ray 10: and the box will open".

No more. When he had set wildly to work, and the lid turned back, his eyes beheld the calico bag.

Rebekah had, in fact, before setting out to the *rendezvous* at nine, seen her father and O'Hara return to the Hall, bearing the bag between them; and, she, crouching at the side door, as before, had heard them talk, arranging details. Her father had then said that before he could write any document, he must either ring or go search for paper: and suddenly she had heard an oath, a thud, a scuffle, had turned the key, softly entered, seen the men struggling against the other door, a revolver, held by the muzzle, in O'Hara's hand; and before she had been sighted by the two desperate men, had had the bag, lying near on an *escritoire*, and was gone. She had then sent some servants to the scene, and hurried to her chamber.

Later she had heard that O'Hara had escaped through a window, and that her father was raving below in a sort of fit: for Frankl supposed that O'Hara had the jewels, as O'Hara that Frankl had them; and after tending her father, she had dashed out to the *rendezvous*, the jewels then in her room.

As for Hogarth, he did not neglect her warning: and, having left a note for O'Hara, telling him where to find him, at Loveday's, took a late train southwards.

By what marvel Rebekah had become possessed of the jewels he did not even seek to fathom; but one of his uppermost feelings was shame for having suspected O'Hara of stealing them: and for years could never be got to believe in the bad faith of the prelate, his tutor.

Near midnight, on reaching the obscure townlet of Hadston, he there took a bed — not to sleep.

At the tiny inn-window he made periodic arrivals, looked out unseeing at a cart, a wall of flint and Flemish brick, and a moonlit country, then weighed anchor, and swerved away on another voyage; then arrived anew, looked out, saw nothing, and weighed.

He walked now in the dark of the valley of humiliation, with those words written in flame in his brain: "This is my favoured lot — my exaltation to afflictions high": he had allowed a woman to say them to him, and he went "*I!*"

He, the richest of men, was, therefore, that night poorer than any wretch, brought right down, naked, exposed to death, and he filled that chamber with his moans: "God have mercy upon me! a vulgar rich man...a dreadful contented clown...."

But toward morning he lay calmer, weeping like Peter, and at peace.

Being without money, he sent the next day a small stone to Loveday, asking him to sell it; also to meet old Tom Bates on the night appointed, and keep him till he, Hogarth, came to London.

Four days later he received the money in the name of "Mr. Beech", but the old Bates had not kept the *rendezvous*; and a month later a detective agency discovered that the fisher was dead.

At Hadston Hogarth remained two months, the most occupied man anywhere, yet passing for a loungeur in the townlet.

Here and now he was descended deep into himself, aspiring to greatness, set on high designs; and, as the days passed, his thoughts more and more took form, though sometimes, with a sudden heart-pang, he would flinch and shrink, pierced by a consciousness of the unwieldy thing which he was at; and he would mutter: “I *must* be mad”. Anon he would start and cower at a distinct sound of cannon in his ears.

Usually, during the day, he had with him an atlas, a pair of compasses.

One day he took train, to see the sea.

Another day, happening to look into the goat-hair trunk, he saw that account-book, containing the addresses of the signatories to his old “association”, and was overjoyed. “Quite a little army”, he tenderly said: “I won’t forget them”.

After two months he left Hadston for London, having in his head a new age hatched.

XXVIII. THE LETTER



IT WAS NIGHT when Hogarth broke into the presence of Loveday at Cheyne Gardens with a glad face, crying: "Forgive me, my friend, for being a boor!"

"You are forgiven", Loveday answered with his smile, hastening to meet him: "the broken picture, you see, is in a better frame, and so are we. What could have made us invent a quarrel about — land, of all things!"

"Come, let us talk", said Hogarth: "not long — all about land, and sea, too. I suppose you have nothing to tell about my sister? Never mind — we shall find her. Come, sit and give me *all* your intelligence. You are not interested in land, then? You *will* be in ten minutes — it is interesting. Listen: all the land of the earth is *mine*, and all the sea especially — a good thing, for, for a hundred years Europe, especially England, has wanted a master: the anarchy of our modern life is too terrible! it cannot arrange itself; and now the hour has struck, though none has heard the bell".

"Hogarth! but you gabble like a mad god", cried Loveday. "I am all in the dark—"

"I will tell you".

And he spoke, first going into his discovery at Colmoor, frowning upon Loveday, ploughing the truth into his brow; proving how modern misery, in its complexity, had its cause in one simple old fault, sure as the fact that smoke ascends, or apples fall. And when he saw conviction beam in Loveday's face, he next told what had happened at the elm-tree, and what would happen-soon; whereat Loveday, like a frightened child, clung to his

arm, and once gasped: “Oh no — my God!” and once felt a gory ghost raise horror in his hairs.

An hour afterwards they were bending over a sheet of paper, Hogarth in his shirt-sleeves, writing, Loveday overlooking, suggesting, when two men were announced, and in stepped O’Hara with bows and polished hesitations, followed by his shadow, Harris; and, “Ah, O’Hara...” cried Hogarth, still writing, “who is that with you?”

“A friend of mine”, said Loveday, for O’Hara had introduced Harris to him, and he had adopted Harris as a human study, horrid, but amusing.

The moment O’Hara saw the face of Hogarth, he started, muttering: “He has the diamonds back! God! is he a magician?”

And Harris drawled nasally: “Of course, you wouldn’t know me now, Mr. 76! Were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine, it *is*”.

Hogarth was silent — had not yet decided what to do with Harris.

“This is my tenth call here, Hogarth”, said O’Hara, “in the hope of seeing you, and the streets, you know, are no small risk. You see how I am muffled up, and this gentleman, too. By the bye, I have selected a cargo of books for you—”

“No study for a month”, said Hogarth, “but I shall want you all the same. Just come over here and watch me write this thing. You, Harris, sit right over there”.

Harris cursed, but obeyed, while O’Hara came and bent under the golden glow of the silk shade a brow puckered with a care of puzzlement, as he read.

Then he fell into the work, and was soon the director of it — invaluable! knew everything! remembered forgotten points; explained technicalities; the proper person in each little State to whom the document must be directed, the style of addressing him. Of one sentence he said: “That will never do —

lacks formality”; and of another: “Tut, they will laugh at that — it is provincial and insolent”, distracted between the work and his brandy glass. At last, about eleven, the three brains had produced a letter.

Hogarth laid claim to the sea as his private property, and warned the nations.

XXIX. PRIORITY OF CLAIM



A GENTLEMAN — a Permanent Under-secretary — stood one noon, his back to a fireplace in a bright-carpeted room at the Foreign Office, letting his eyes move over some opened letters submitted to him, and presently came upon the following document, its crest a flag, containing in blue the letters “R. F.”:

“17 LEADENHALL STR., E.G.

“To the Most Hon.,

“The Marquis of Hallam, K.G.,

“Foreign Office,

“Westminster, S.W.

“MY LORD MARQUIS:

“I have the honour hereby to make formal announcement to Your Lordship that I am on the point of setting up in the midst of the world a new Power, whose relations with the King’s Government will, I trust, be relations of friendliness.

“It is my desire that Your Lordship forthwith convey to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty the announcement which is the subject of this Memorandum.

“My purposes and policy in the establishment of the new Power will hereafter appear; and my properly accredited Ministers will, in due course, present themselves at the Chancelleries of the world.

“Hitherto a British subject, it is my will to acquire diplomatic recognition — as soon as such shall comport with the dignity of the Great

Powers — as an Independent Sovereign, under the title of: ‘Lord of the Sea’. (Address: ‘Your Lordship’s Majesty’, or ‘My Lord King’.)

“The domain of my Power will be the sea: and to the sea I hereby set up claim as far as such points of latitude as have been attained by Man, and over all degrees of longitude. Provided only: that nothing in this claim shall be held to infringe upon the prior claim of any nation to a ‘three-mile limit’ round its coasts, nor to any national fisheries whatsoever, nor to any claim of the Kingdom of Denmark with respect to the Sound.

“The validity of my title to the sea must be considered to rest on the same basis as the title of any private owner to any area of the earth’s crust: namely, Priority of Claim. If one is valid, so, necessarily, is the other, this title to land, based on *Priority of Claim*, being admitted in the Law of all civilized Nations.

“This my claim will come into operation on this day three years hence.

“I have the honour to subscribe myself

“Your Lordship’s

“Obdt. Servant,

“RICHARD HOGARTH “.

The Under-secretary, a pale, distinguished man, read this letter with a little lift of one eyebrow, then let it drop from him into a waste-paper basket.

At the German, the Turkish, capitals it met much the same reception. Nowhere did it reach the eye of a Departmental Head. It went to Siam, to the Prince of Monaco, to Ecuador, and was tossed to cumber a basket, or moulder on a file.

But Hogarth, who knew that it would be instantly forgotten, had written it so as to be able to say that he had written it.

At that time he was lodging in a top room in Bloomsbury, and had an underground den in Leadenhall Street, on its doors the words: “R. Beech & Co.” Thither in a brougham he drove daily, lying very low, but holding in that den interviews with all sorts and conditions of men, and feeling his way toward operations of dimensions so immense, that their mere project had a modifying influence upon industry.

XXX. MR. BEECH



DURING SIX WEEKS Hogarth lived that life of daily passage between Keppel Street and his office, unknown to the general world, but spreading a noise of rumour through certain circles of the business world. All day in the den the gas-jets brawled upon him, he not for minutes casting a glance, if a clerk brought a caller's name. And here was no novice modesty in the tackling of affairs; as O'Hara, who would be there, said: "You must have been *born* in the City; you have the airs, the very tricks, of Threadneedle Street, you — Jew". In a day the prelate counted seven hundred and thirteen telegrams from the Terni Cannon foundry, many a diamond dealer, polisher, cutter, the Vulcan Shipyard of Stettin, the Clydebank, Cramp of Philadelphia, the Russian Finance Minister, San Francisco, Lloyd's, metal brokers, the Neva, and one night, the eve of a dash to Amsterdam, he, with O'Hara, Loveday, and five clerks, sat swotting till morning broke, sustained by gin and soda-water. The priest lived with wide eyes at the easy fleetness with which Hogarth rolled off him the greatest affairs: as when on the day after his return from Holland he stood, his thumbs in his waistcoat armholes, with quite the right air of serene City-king, his tallness possessing considerable natural courtliness, and the De Beers' Secretary sat before him, saying, "Well, Mr. Beech, I have spent the morning with your brokers, and have felt that I must see you personally before calling a meeting. This proposition is so tremendous—"

"I only wish I had some time", said Hogarth, "I would invite you to dine upon the matter; but it is really so simple — everything at bottom is merely

twice two are four. And you are not obliged to turn over Kimberley to me: only, in that case, as I have said, I shall be compelled to flood the market with diamonds as cheap as cat's-eyes—”

When De Beers stared, Hogarth shrugged, saying: “I suppose I must convince you—” and, unlocking a safe, he took out an *Ã©crin* which contained three stones. De Beers appeared to see Titania peering in their fairy painting.

“Of stones of this water and carating”, said Hogarth, “we have two hundred and eleven in the Bank of England, two hundred and thirty-eight in other English and Continental banks, and seventy-five in safe-deposit. The carating of these three is 111-1/2; and in the sixties, such as this one” — he took a stone from among coppers in his pocket— “we have three hundred odd on hand, all flawless, and an equal number cutting. When I point out, what you know, that our mine is as yet without the delicate plant of Kimberley, the stones being simply picked from the blue-earth by three inexpert friends of the firm on the spot, you will recognize that the wealth of a mine can no further go....”

He was rid of the visitor within six minutes, and within three weeks, by knack and organization, had gathered into his hands most of the reins necessary to the control of the world's trade in diamonds.

In an outer room sat O'Hara, writing, reading Theocritus, or a little book on mediaeval embroidery, forefinger on cheek; and anon, absolutely without motive, he would rise, creep, and peep through a keyhole at Hogarth, then on stalking, bowing tiptoe, grinning a rancid grimace of stealth, get back to his seat, and read — the tutor falling over head and ears in love with his pupil: one of those passions that end tragically.

One day, as he so sat, the bell *pinged*, the door opened, and O'Hara jumped to find himself face to face with — Frankl, who had come to see the

new diamond king, in the firm belief that Mr. Beech was none other than O'Hara; and, "I thought as much!" said he.

"*Sh-h-h*", went O'Hara bitterly— "for God's sake! he is *in there* — !"

"Who is?"

"*Hogarth!*"

"Well, but—"

"Outside — in the passage—"

They stepped out; and Frankl, his eyelids red, said: "I have only this day crawled from bed with the blow you struck my temple, or I should have had you before this—"

"*Sh-h-h*. Your own fault, sir. *You* played false first—"

"Played false with my own diamonds? You hand me over this day one-half those stones, or I bring a civil action for the whole, hound you to beggary, and drag you back to your convict-cell where you come from".

"Don't lift your voice, I beg of you. Tut, you rave. You can't bring a civil action against a great millionaire who doesn't care to defend; and as for me, I do assure you, I haven't fifty pounds to-day. *It is Hogarth who is Mr. Beech!*"

"*Who?*" — Frankl obtruded a startled ear, frowning his eyes small.

"Hogarth. He has the diamonds back!"

"Which diamonds? How did he get 'em?"

"He is — *in* — *there*: better go and ask him! He got them by black art — by the aid of the legion of mediaeval witches which wait on him — *God* knows how he got them! *You* gave them to him! *I* gave them to him! but he's got them — *in* — *there*! Better go and ask him — don't be afraid — just for the roaring fun of it—"

"Hogarth?"

"Yes — Hogarth, Hogarth".

“Cheated the gallows? And out of prison? And rolling in my wealth, my riches, my diamonds? Oh, no! — is that fair? A dog? Is that how the world is run? God of Israel!”

“There is this to be said for him: that he *deserves* to be rich—”

“Who? So you are taking his part now?”

“Tut — !”

“There is no *tut* about it! You confess that you are nothing more than a penniless hanger-on: well, then, I have *you*! back to prison you go this hour — !”

O’Hara’s cheek trembled; but he said: “A sufficiently vain threat, sir: I am Hogarth’s tutor: he won’t let me be taken. Don’t waste your time, you impotent Jew—”

“Tutor? That’s good! What you teaching him? — murder? *outrage*? He *ought* to have a tutor, he! That’s good! Tutor! Well, suppose I drop a line first post to your nice *pupil* to let him know that it was his *tutor* who stole his diamonds—”

At this threat O’Hara felt himself outflanked; and though his eyes surveyed the Jew unflinchingly during a silence, inwardly he had succumbed.

“A man in Hogarth’s situation”, he slowly said, “is always liable to attack. Why should two sharp old fellows like you and me, whose interests are identical, quarrel?” — and instantly Frankl took note of that surrender, that weak spot, and knew that the man was his.

“Well”, said he, “so true — two old gaol-birds like you and me, eh? So true, so true. But what beats me — who runs Beech’s? Hogarth is only a young farmer: he can’t operate all the big things I hear about this Mr. Beech —”

“Tut, you do not conceive the man as he is at all”, said O’Hara: “perhaps you cannot. High finance, the first day he looked into it, ceased to mystify him, for he goes always to the ground of things, touches bottom, where first principles lie, and first principles are simple as two and two. It was because he had discovered a first principle that he escaped from Colmoor. And he is as nimble as six twisting minnows: what you or I learned in a year he learns in an hour, and if he does not know the usual way, not an instant does he hesitate to invent a way. You know about Owthwaite’s: how the recent shake-out of the market threatened their collapse, like so many others’. Owthwaite’s, in fact, had already declared, when Hogarth decided to help them over. And how? Not Bills! He filled up a call-in of two millions and a half by the India Council, resettled loans and short-discount business, cheapened money, and in twelve hours his *protégés* were off the rocks. And now I hear—”

“But why not buy a chapel, and preach about him? I hate—”

“Stop! O Lord — he is calling—”

“Here’s my card; I want to see you to-night at that address at eight”.

And that night at Frankl’s town-house in Hanover Square Jew and prelate conferred, O’Hara for some time resisting, but finally again taking sides against his saviour. He disclosed that Hogarth, beyond doubt, kept a few diamonds in a goat-hair trunk in his room — enough to make two ordinary fortunes, and also carried two or three, with some hundred-pound notes on his person; and this was made the basis of a scheme for bringing about the arrest of Hogarth, the first step being to get from Hogarth the sum he carried about him, leaving him in a situation where he would find himself powerless to bribe.

This Frankl undertook; and O’Hara promised to lend Harris, and some friends of Harris.

Now, during these weeks Hogarth was living in some fear, haunted by insecurity and a vision of Colmoor; and, remembering the theft at Thring, with a consciousness of Frankl somewhere in him, he went not only with diamonds on his person, but a revolver as well, and a *puñal* of Toledo.

But three evenings after the conference in Hanover Square, he received this letter:

“Dearest Richard:

“It is long since we have met. This is to let you know that I have heard of your getting out, and your coming into great things, which has made my heart rejoice. I, alas, am just the other way about. I am staying for the next two days at Woodfield Cottage, Wylie Street, Finchley Road, N. I understand that you are lying low, so better not come to see me perhaps, but send me something.

“Your loving

“Margaret”.

And at sight of these words such a whirlwind transacted itself in the brain of Hogarth, that he hardly awoke to sense till he found himself in a railway compartment, going northward. It was only then that, reading the letter again, he started.

The handwriting was hers! he was sure. But the words...?

“I, alas, am *just the other way about*”— “better not come to me perhaps, but *send me something*”. There was a tone here not in character. But her handwriting! This was no forgery. If she had written *from dictation* that might explain it.

In this uncertainty he left the train, and took cab, scenting trouble ahead.

The difficulty was to find Wylie Street, which was a half-built street of five cottages in a new neighbourhood of brick, and when what was supposed to be Wylie Street was discovered, the cab had to stop, for across

it lay bricks, hods and barrows in mud. So Hogarth alighted, and, peering, stumbled forward: no lamp; above, a labouring half-moon riding a sky of clouds, like a poor ship riding the bleak morning after a hurricane, her masts all gone by the board: and Hogarth could just see that three of the five cottages were roofless brick, the fourth unfinished, so the fifth, alone on the other side, must be— “Woodfield.”

“Woodfield” was unlighted: and the moment he ascertained this, he felt himself the victim of a plot; but not all the whispers of prudence could hold him now from seeing the adventure through. Loudly he flung back the little gate, with rash precipitancy entered: and as he sprang up the three steps to ring, he was seized.

They were five, three being big fellows, two masked.

His main sensation was gladness that none, apparently, was a policeman; and he set hilariously to work with his knuckles. This, however, could not save, soon he was on his back, striking his head; but when he saw that the object was to rifle his pockets, letting be, he managed to steal out the *puñal* from his breast, and presently with a sudden upheaving and scattering rage, was staggering to his legs. Before he could be stopped, he was making for the gate, but close upon him ran one of the five — a slim man, masked — who fired Hogarth’s own pistol at his legs, but missed: whereupon, Hogarth, with a backward twist, struck at random with the dagger, which entered the man’s breast. But at the same time a whistle shrilled, and from an opposite cottage rushed out at last what he dreaded — three policemen.

These had been placed there on the understanding that it was thither that Hogarth would go, the object of the plot being to rifle his pockets before he was officially taken; and it succeeded to the extent that his pockets *were*

rifled: but he knocked down one officer, and dodged the other two, reaching his taxi; and, having previously arranged with the cabman, got off racing.

But the masked man whom he had struck down was Harris, who for weeks lay raving in fever — an ill-fated stroke, for Harris had a memory.

As for Hogarth, he rushed home to Keppel Street, hurried down the trunk, and was off to Cheyne Gardens.

“Well”, he cried, breaking in upon Loveday, “this phase of our life is up! Look at my clothes: I have had a fight — Frankl, I suppose. I wanted to live a simple life for two years: but they won’t let me, you see. Ha! — then the other thing. From this night we bury our identity under mountains of splendour. It is disgusting to me, this life, skulking, thinking to bribe honest men. Meantime, you must find me some room to hide in with the trunk — mustn’t stay here to-night. And to-morrow you buy me a boat to take us off from some point of the coast — Come—”

XXXI. THE HAMMERS



WITHIN SIX MONTHS Hogarth, as distinct from “Beech”, had risen upon the consciousness of Europe, say like the morning sun: and the wearied worker, borne at evening through crowded undergrounds, might read his name with a listless incomprehension.

He impressed the popular fancy, especially in Paris, where he was best known, as erratic: as once when, by a stroke of financial sleight-of-hand, he got the young Government of Russia into a tight place, then refused them a loan, except on condition of the lease to him of the Kremlin: and for three months squalid old Moscow was the most cometary Court anywhere — acts savouring of a meteorite waywardness which impressed him, more than anything, upon the everyday world; and he won a tolerant wonder.

However, an outcry, led by the *Intransigent*, denounced his acquisition of the site of royal St. Cloud for his Paris residence on the ground that he was a Jew, betrayed by his face — an accusation which caused the buying up of hundreds of thousands of his photographs — and on the ground that his design was to familiarize the people with the idea of his sovereignty, and by a *coup* to seize the Government; at which Paris was in a ferment, and a midnight mob traversed the *Bois* and demolished some of his mason-work. The next day, however, the Minister of the Interior announced from the Tribune that Hogarth was no Jew, but an Englishman *pur sang*; and, on the whole, Hogarth had his way: the noise died down; and where parterres and avenues had stood on the old palace site, there arose one of those

enchancing fabrics, which, from the Bosphorus to London, bore the name of “The Beeches”.

At this time he had dependent upon him a retinue, serving him in multifarious ways from electrical adviser to spy, and from chancellor to recruiter, numbering many hundreds. He knew five thousand faces by sight; in England had two armies — a small one collecting data as to acreages, tenures, trades, scales, wages, prices, crimes, mines, and a large one, numbering five thousand, doing gun-practice in Westring Vale: for, England being for sale, he had bought at thrice its market value that part of it called Westring; and on the sea also he kept a little army of a thousand, borne in old cruiser-hulks bought from the English Admiralty, hulks whose crews, in rotation, changed places with drafts from the Westring barracks.

Once he disappeared from Europe, and when he returned the President of the Republic of Ecuador, thenceforth one of his closest friends, was with him; whereupon, through newspapers in the pay of Beech’s, the rumour commenced to appear that the Ecuador Government was giving orders for coast-defence on an unparalleled scale, in view of probable hostilities with Peru.

In the midst of which activities O’Hara said to him one morning: “You can now be called a mathematician”.

“I have many admirers, and but one teacher, O’Hara”, Hogarth answered: “teach me”.

O’Hara cut a secret grimace.

After the failure of the Finchley Road plot he had had another repentance, and had set himself earnestly to the cultivation of Hogarth’s mind; but the priest’s spirit was not “erect”; he had “falls”; maintained a correspondence with the Jew, whose eye of malice never slept; and once at Cairo, twice in Paris, Hogarth had to use words like these: “I must tell you,

O'Hara, that I have heard of your recent behaviour. Naturally, there are those that see for me, and I do not mean to be compromised by your low revels”.

“Wretch that I am!” broke out O'Hara with smitten brow, and for half a day was on his knees in an affliction of self-reproach. Yet the same night he wrote a letter to Frankl containing the words: “You do not know, *you cannot dream*, the high and slippery road which H. has chosen for his feet: the future is *big* with events. Wait: his sublime path is not without pitfalls....”

Study with O'Hara was in the morning; at night, when possible, that other study of the working world: and often then Hogarth would withdraw from opera in the St. Cloud palace, or from some “crush”, to give an hour to the river of statistics with which he was inundated.

Till these years he had never seen into the sea of things as it is: his life so isolated — had not even read newspapers.

Now he saw and knew. There below him blazed some masque of beauty and majesty, moving under a moonlight of blue-darting jets of electric light all among colossal columns of alabaster robed in vine and rose; or there below some Melba voice, all trembles and maze of wobbly trebles, warbling: and the thronged hall sat tranced; but before *him* — figures: parents killed their children for insurance-money — keeping children in cellars till their flesh grew green, keeping sore the stumps of children's legs; with some trades certain comic-sounding names had got to be associated, “potter's rot”, “phossy jaw”, — enormous horror; each day in England one million people had to seek pauper-relief, many perished; of aged persons 40 per cent were permanent paupers; children were paid 2-1/2d. for making 144 match-boxes; pretty girls (though pretty girls were detestably rare) were allowed to work, nay *forced* to — far harder than any ten savages ever dreamt of working; in Glasgow 41 of every 100 families lived in one room:

fathers, for weeks, did not see their children, except asleep; girls took emetics to vomit up cotton-dust — enormous horror, comic-opera in Hell: and below in the “crush” the voice of the warbler, cooing, shook.

Sometimes he would mutter: “But that can’t be true!” There, though, the figures lay; and presently he would take heart, and say: “Well, not for long now, God help me....”

Whether God helped him or not, certainly Man was helping him: ten thousand and ten thousand hammers — from Spezzia to Belfast — in model-office and mould-loft and rolling-mill — in foundry and yard and roaring forge — were ringing upon metal for him, their clamorous industry clattering over Europe and America carillons of his name.

XXXII. WONDER



ALMOST SUDDENLY THAT noise of chiming hammers reached the general ear.

First in the German Admiralty was wonder when a spy, engaged as a workman at Birkenhead, sent to his Government information that the British Government was up to something: something of a novelty so extraordinary, that as yet he could form no conception as to its object. That it was intended for the sea one must suppose: yet it was evident that nothing of such odd draughtsmanship — of such mastodon proportions — had ever yet taken the water.

He had been clever: had penetrated even the model-office, peered at detailed draughtsman's-plans, developed from the original specifications, as well as at orders for Krupp plates, frames, etc.; had listened in the yard to the talk of four naval men acting as a Board of Inspection; was able to give details of the machining of enormous processed plates to sizes determined by templates, the length of pan-headed rivets, the specific gravity of an average cubic foot, the scarfing of edges, the accumulation of prepared material. The wooden half-model, he said, was a one-ninety-sixth, instead of the usual one-forty-eighth; yet, even so, it was 5 ft. 7-1/2 ins. long, as much broad, and 1 ft. 3/4 in. high. This meant that the structure would measure 180 yards square — over one-tenth of a mile — with a depth of 34 yards. Already the far-reaching chaos of scaffolding had run up eight yards, with stringers and frames to a like level. There were no keel-blocks, for there was no keel — or rather, the keel was a circular plate a yard in

diameter, resting on a single block, the shape of the structure to be a perfect square, along the sides of which four battleships might lie like toy-boats: the bottom, from circular keel to upward bend, having the same shape as a battleship's seen in midship section, only with four faces instead of two. From the knee-bend the sides ran up perpendicular; but at the level evidently intended to be the water-line they struck inward, so that the flat roof was smaller than the area below; the position of this water-line giving a definite clue to the intended displacement; and this again showing that the whole — roof, sides, bottom, and all — would be one wall of Simmons armour — steeling and backing — layer on layer — no less than 4ft. 9-1/4 ins. thick.

Yet this stupendous ark, or citadel — so simple was its plan — would be turned out in less time than a second-class cruiser; and its cost, apart from yard-modifications and groundways, small in proportion.

This, and much else, the spy reported: but the new fact was obvious as the sun; the British and French Intelligence Departments, too, were soon conning it; and a week later it was established that, not one, but at least eleven, such structures were a-building in the world.

There went the rumour: "It is the Government of Ecuador's order..."

This was at the end of April; Hogarth, obeying some instinct which continually drew him toward Asia, then loitering alone in Trebizond tea-gardens and bazaars, buying a braid-bag, mule-trapping, or silver sword of the Khurdish cavaliers; while Trinity House gave the alarm that if ever the steel monsters, whatever their object, were launched, "they would constitute, in the absence of proper precautions, a serious danger by night to the world's mercantile marine", and while Lloyd's, the Maritime Exchanges, the Hydrographic Offices, lived in a species of amazement, and were already putting the steel islands into the gazetteers and manuals; the

newspapers, too, inundated with the views of the public, took sides, maintaining, some of them, that it was the part of Governments to ascertain the objects of the new works, others that any tampering with their progress at this late stage might even mean revolution, so profound was their intimacy with industry. Hogarth, meanwhile, having come to El Khiff, the camp of the Bedouin pilgrims, there spent some days, and then, passing between Jerusalem and Jericho in a caravan of Moabite sheiks, went visiting the holy places of Israel, everywhere examining the country, especially its agriculture, with great minuteness. It was only on his return to Jerusalem that he heard of the agitation in Europe: and at once set off Westward from Joppa.

From his arrival at Paris toward the end of May the wildest legends, originated by him, began to be printed, the most persistent relating to the diamond and banking House of Beech, which, it was given out, had discovered diamonds within the crust of a Pacific rock-island: the new structures, ordered by them, being designed to blast the coast-wall with dynamite guns. Cavillers pointed out that diamonds never occur in nature in this fashion, and that, even so, it did not need a fort made of armour five feet thick to fire off dynamite guns; but so continuously was the thing repeated, explained, and puffed, that when the London manager of Beech partially admitted it, the most incredulous acquiesced; though at the very same period it was proclaimed that the President of the Ecuador Republic, Hogarth's friend, had admitted to the Great Powers that the forts were to his order (as, in fact, they nominally were); and anti-climax was reached when a naval expert, asked to do a hurried article for the Times, made some error in calculation, and came out with the statement that the fort-things would sink of their own weight. This article was headed "Beech's Folly"; and even when the error was detected, the roar of merriment retained its momentum

and rolled: so that, to the hour of the first launch, the enterprise was commonly referred to as “Beech’s Folly”, and scarf-pins, ink-stands, etc., in the shape of the forts, were sold with that superscription: “Beech’s Folly”.

This, translated into French, became that horrible gallicism: *la b  tise Biche*.

Gradually, however, the Ecuador-Beech rage died down the hammers, heard for nine days through the turmoil of the world, were again drowned in it. The scarf-pins ceased to sell. The ‘buses rolled, the Bank cashed notes, the long street roared — and all was as usual.

Only, in the valley of Westring there was drill and target-practice and barrack-life routine, the Westring-eccentricity being associated with the millionaire, Hogarth, the island-eccentricity with the House of Beech: and in the popular mind Beech and Hogarth were two notions. Islands were building in Italy, France, Germany, Russia; in England, Scotland, Ireland; at Maine, Baltimore, Newport News: but the Governments, lacking the machinery, and also the initiative, and judging to-morrow by yesterday, gave no sign from their Olympus.

In June, John Loveday being then at Westring, one morning O’Hara arrived, he, too, having left medi  val chasubles to grind at war, and though he no longer taught Hogarth, a relation persisted between them; and always not far from O’Hara was to be found Harris, living now on the pinnacle of dandy bliss, twisting a dandy stick.

It was on the last night of this visit to Westring that O’Hara at a late hour went with stealth and hesitations along a corridor of the Hall, and finally tapped at Loveday’s door, who, detesting the priest, and reading in bed, disgustedly dashed off his cigarette ash, as he called: “Come in”.

And a long time they spoke of things other than the real object of O’Hara’s visit, till O’Hara said: “But — may I ask you something?”

“Do”.

“Well, now, you are a fellow more in the counsels of Hogarth than another. I want to ask you right out frankly — is it a fact that Hogarth is choosing Admirals for the islands?”

“I believe it is”, answered Loveday with his long-bow smile of amusement: “I already know, for example, that Saltoun will admiral the *Homer* in the Indian Ocean, Vladimir the *Ruskin* in the Atlantic Crescent, and the young Marquis of Erroll the *Justice* in the Yellow Sea”.

“Those all?”

“All I know of. I believe, however, that Hogarth is in the throes of decision as to the rest”.

“I see”.

There was a silence full of Loveday’s smile.

“But”, said O’Hara, “what I meant is this: you know what I have been to Hogarth; without me, what could the poor fellow have done, after all? I have taught him to think, to dance, and to dine. Now, then, I ask you right out frankly — am *I*, my son, in the list of Admirals?”

Loveday, flushing, started upright, and sank back. “No, I don’t fancy that your name is among those entertained, O’Hara”.

“We will see about that. Woe to Hogarth, and to his advisers, if he dare slight O’Hara, my son! What! after preparing myself with toilsome zeal for this post? and after two promises from Hogarth’s own lips — ?”

“I deny the promises on Hogarth’s behalf”.

“Oh, you! Hogarth looks upon you as a plaything. I do assure you, you are not taken seriously, Mr. Loveday. How should such as you know what Hogarth promises or designs? “ — his cheeks trembling.

And, Loveday, smiling again, though pale: “Well, if we admit the promises...but — have you accurately acquainted Hogarth with your past,

sir?”

“Most decidedly, sir!”

“If you have not, I think he should know it”.

“Your threats do not affect me, sir! In three days I shall be in Petersburg with Hogarth, and shall take a pleasure in writing you the name of the island to which I am appointed”.

“In three days I also — !” He stopped: but O’Hara understood.

Now the door rushed open, and in looked Harris in under-vest and drawers, beneath his arm a bundle of walkingsticks, which he had been caring and telling.

And “’Ere”, he drawled, “when are you coming to ‘ave that bit of cold mutton? It’s past twelve o’clock as it is”.

“I am coming, boy”, said O’Hara, rising with brisk obedience.

“Then, come, why don’t you! There were shepherds watching their pretty little flocks by night, but to leave a man watching the cold animal is a bit out. Come along!” — and O’Hara went.

He reached Petersburg twelve hours before Loveday, his reason for choosing that time being his knowledge that Frankl was in Petersburg, and with him Rebekah, Frankl being in a deal with the new-rÃ©gime Minister of Finance.

For, as O’Hara had been asking himself the agonized question: “By what absolute *finesse* can I, *just now*, win Hogarth?” the mere presence of Rebekah in the same city with Hogarth drew him thither.

But the next day, when Loveday came, nothing had been done — no chance of *tÃ¢te-a-tÃ¢te* with Hogarth: and that day was O’Hara an anxious and tremulous man, living on the tip-toe and *qui vive* of lynx-eyed keenness.

The same night at a masque at the Palace of Peterhof Loveday got a chance of dialogue with Hogarth, they seated amid greenery and coloured gleams, Hogarth groomed to the glittering glass of his shoes, his legs stretched, arm akimbo; and presently Loveday led the talk to things of the sea. “What an extraordinary activity! The British Government launches the *Peleus* next Monday at Deptford — the first 28,000-ton war-boat; and seven cruisers on the slips. Then the French, Austro-German, Russian—”

“Ha! — I know. They won’t build long”.

“Still the confidence?”

“You can only ask, my dear boy, because you do not yet see what a thing the battleship really is — much more than half a sham. The march of invention is from the complex to the simple: for simplicity is strength; but to the moment when I began to construct, naval construction had not followed this law: for from the old smooth-bores, aimed with tackle and quoin, to the present regime of electric wires, you have had a continual advance in complexity — always within the same little arc of thought — till now the most complex of things is a battleship; and if you ask me which is the weaker, a battleship or a watch, I answer a battleship — *weak* meaning liability to the injuries which they were built to resist. In such a case as that of the *Maine*, sunk at Havana, one might fancy that the task of naval constructors is to turn out a thing to sink with a minimum of trouble; and you remember the *Camperdown* and *Victoria*, how, playing about together, one happened to touch the other, when down plunged that other. These ships are a compromise between three *motifs* — speed, resisting attack, and attacking: and the first is so antagonistic to the second, and also to the third, that the net result is almost a Nonentity, or No-Thing. Nothing, in fact, could be more *queer*, unfounded, than these ships; and the future will look

back upon them with pity. Hence the simple islands, following the law: and don't think that their efficacy is a thing riskier than arithmetic itself."

"Good", went Loveday. "But, Richard — captain your islands with decent men".

"You have something on your mind: what is it?"

"It is — delicate. Have I your permission to speak?"

"Why, John, yes".

"Well then — is O'Hara to be an Admiral?"

"Old Pat? Hardly, I think. He may. But no — I don't think. Poor old talky-talky. He has worked hard for us, John: and his fund of experience, in one way and another, has been invaluable. Well, I don't know: I have had the idea, but I don't suppose that, in reality — Still, I am fond of him, John. Such a tongue, and such a versatile brain, is he! He was my comfort for many a sombre day in prison—"

Listening near with rancid grin behind some greenery, O'Hara kept nodding emphatic assents of satisfaction to Hogarth's praise.

"But, stop", said Loveday: "do you know why he was in prison?"

"He was innocent".

"Of what?"

"Of stealing some diamonds entrusted him by the Pope".

"Bah! he lies. His trial was a *cause célèbre*, and hence the false name he gave me at first: the moment I heard you say 'O'Hara' I knew the man. He had committed an assault upon a lady in a train—"

"Beast that he is", went Hogarth, while O'Hara's eyes started from his head: "and liar, too, it seems. Ha! — he gave me the most circumstantial story. Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"It was delicate—"

“Beast that he is. Yet how complex is character! the man’s tenderness for his Church is so charming—”

“Fiddlesticks! Look here, Richard, I am come all the way from Westring to tell you this thing. Don’t you give vast powers to that man: it isn’t decent; and I have a feeling that it will be a baleful piece of weakness. And don’t get easy, and tolerant, and fat in the eyes, Hogarth. That is a very significant Bible-story — the implacable disaster sent upon old Eli for no greater crime than a *bonhomme* indolence. And in order to arouse your wrath against this O’Hara, I am going now, against my will, to tell you something: the name of that lady in that train”.

“Someone whom I know?”

“Yes”.

“Who?”

For a moment Loveday’s answer hesitated: and in that moment, O’Hara, with lightning decision, had his mouth at Hogarth’s ear: “Come with me quick — then fall down and worship me for a month! *Someone is in the Malachite Hall!*”

Like sudden death Hogarth’s colour fled his face; in another instant he was a blind, oblivious wight...had known that she was in Petersburg; but not that she was at the masque.

In a moment shrubbery, lights, all life, rushed into transformation for him: and with an excitement of the eyes, the bloodshot left looking bloodier, he went after O’Hara, tossing back at Loveday that fatal saying: “*To-morrow....*”

A little previously O’Hara, having got from Frankl details of Rebekah’s dress, had spotted her in primrose silk, black mask and domino, and soon with Hogarth refound her in the crush: whereas Hogarth went about prospecting over the crowd, with that excitement of his red-veined eyeballs,

once even entered into talk with a group of four diplomatists, but all the time with eyeballs absent in hankering tracking, out prowling after one morbid form, as the stallion's prowls after his Sally.

After an hour she said in French over her shoulder: "Why follow me?"

And as he bowed compliance, she added: "Are you well?"

He said: "Yes", and bowed, and she nodded twice, smiling a little, as they parted.

He, on the wings of exaltation, made haste to salute the Throne and leave the palace, rushing toward solitude to brood upon that smile, those familiar nods, and the gentle "Are you well?" — in his landau with him O'Hara, who persecuted him even to his bedroom; and when, after an hour, the priest at last reappeared in a corridor, the night-lights there shone upon an exultant visage, like a climber's who, after long clamberings, at last stamps on the Matterhorn, and looks abroad.

When he entered his own room, he stood with a hung head, till, sharply looking up, he ejaculated with amazed, realization and opening arms: "Well, it's done! — I've got it!" Now he put forefinger to nose, and cut a beastly face at himself in the mirror-wall.

The next day Hogarth rather guiltily said to Loveday: "Well, I have promised old O'Hara the *Mahomet* for the Straits. Don't frown — I owe him something, and the clever beast got over me in crazy moment".

"Quite so", Loveday coldly said: and thenceforth, the thing being done, was mum as to the name of the lady connected with O'Hara's crime.

He returned immediately to England, having there many occupations, which multiplied as the islands everywhere neared completion, the first of the launches taking place at Spezzia on the 7th of February.

A fortnight before this event the Beech-fever had revived, the coming launch being no secret, and the doubt whether "Beech's Folly" might be no

folly, and the question what, on the whole, Beech's Folly might really bode, filled once more the consciousness of the Western world. By the 1st of February a drop was recorded in many general securities, in "governments", rentes, and consols; in Berlin the bank-rate rose one per cent.; it was stated that specie was accumulating in European vaults; while up leapt futures-cotton in the Liverpool market. At last the First Lord of the Treasury, in a speech at Manchester, gave sign of the Government's consciousness of the new fact, saying that he could only repeat the answer given by the First Lord of the Admiralty to the recent Deputations of the Chamber of Shipping and of Merchant Shippers, that Britain and the other maritime nations would know how to protect the seas from any nuisance. He anticipated no nuisance. The structures popularly known as "Beech's Folly" (prolonged laughter) would be provided with lighthouses: and until they proved a nuisance on the ocean's fairways, the Governments must permit to private enterprise that free hand which was the characteristic of our age; moreover, a recognized Government had avowed its association with these structures.

Nevertheless, the fever heightened. The light-system of the *Boodah*, now included in the usual alphabetical lists of derelicts, was conned by thousands of mariners, while in the crowded captains', underwriters', and committee rooms at Lloyd's discussion buzzed and speechified in every tone of gravity. Suddenly in the F. G. and S. clause marine insurance underwent a profound modification; and it was then that the millionaire, Schroeder, at that time a German clerk in the City, managed to borrow five thousand pounds, and quickly cleared his pile by underwriting on larger F. C. and S. terms. And again raged the sale of the islands as penny salt-cellars, finger-basins, etc.; in broker's and sub-editor's office the tape-machine clicked the hourly progress of preparations at Spezzia; while every by-street was dreadful with that music-hall chorus:

“To Spezzia runs the Pullman train;
The Follies soon their sense will teach;
We’ve Beech, O dear, upon the brain,
He brains upon the beach”.

Meantime, the question of the drawing-room was “Are you going to Spezzia?” and by the 7th so great a pilgrimage of tourists — experts, idlers, cinematographers, special correspondents, ministers of state, Yankees, officers, social stars — had flocked to the scene, that accommodation failed in the town and surrounding hill-country, from Le Grazie on the west, to Lerici on the east of the Gulf.

The morning dawned bright — Italian sky, tranquil Italian sea — and by nine the harbour was alive with small-craft and Portovenere steamboats, all gala with flags; on the land side, too, over the hills, up the old road called Giro della Foce, and before the villages commanding the town, spread a cloud of witnesses; while the multitude in possession of *permessos* for the dock-region stretched across a hundred and sixty acres, perched on every coign, and murmuring like the sea.

And all in the air a fluttered consciousness of the to-come, the present nothing, an hour hence everything — like the suspense of nature before gales, and that greatness and novelty of marriage-mornings: for such a bride that day would rush to the brine as it had never embraced.

There lay the hulk, all nuptial in colours, her roof looking like a *plaza* of Lima or La Paz at Carnival, flags in mountain-ridges round her edges, flags in festoons, in slanting clothes-lines, in trophy-groups, on bandroled poles, bedecking her; some scaffolding still round her; and three running derricks, capable of wielding guns and boilers of 140 tons, craned their shears about her. A temporary stair under flags ran right up to a ledge above the waterline: from which ledge little steel steps led here and there to the roof;

round the edge of roof and ledge running two balustrades, surrounding the hulk; and over that upper portion, four times repeated in white letters ten feet high, the name *BOODAH* boomed itself.

By eleven some seven hundred people stood and sat on the roof — the *À©lite* of Europe, invited to the luncheon after the launch, seeming to the tract of on-lookers quite dainty and visionary there, like objects mirrored in an eye. And they formed groups, of which some chatted, and were elegant, and some spoke the gravest words uttered for centuries.

“What, really, is the *Boodah*?” asked a Servian Minister of a French: “is she a whim, a threat, or a tool?”

“She is too heavy for a whim”, answered the French, “too dear for a threat, and too fantastic for a tool. Time will show”.

But this was no answer at all: something more to the point came from a multitudinous tumult of sledges below — the workmen “wedging-up”.

At last, soon after noon, Hogarth, with a considerable following, was seen ascending the steps, on his arm the Queen of the Ceremony — a little Bavarian Gräfin, famous for her face: he, princely now with that cosmopolitan polish picked up in Courts, bending above her with laughter, making her laugh also, as they paced up. And at once the invited, including the Board of Verification, entered the hull upon a tour of sight-seeing, conducted by a manager of the contractors.

Already the set-up wedges had raised the *Boodah* from her keel-block, and left her resting on the great braced ground-ways; and now down to the sea’s brink the greasers were busy, prodigals in tallow, while, within, the seven hundred trooped from spectacle to spectacle, like a tourist group guided through the Louvre.

An hour, and they anew appeared on the roof, trooping toward that balustrade that faced the sea: upon which the throngs felt the impending of

the event, and intently watched. But there seemed no hurry, Hogarth all gay chatter, anon lowering the lids a moment, as he looked over the water; till suddenly hundreds of glasses detected a champagne-bottle with ribbons in the christener's hand; and the consciousness of the moment come moved the hosts when Hogarth, even as he chatted, disengaged a flag, and let it fall: it was a signal; down it fluttered; and instantly, down there, bustle broke loose, as the call "Saw-off!" went forth, and the saws set flurriedly to fret through the timbers which bind groundways to slidingways.

"Now?" whispered Hogarth at the christener's ear: and, even as he spoke, the voice of a noising arose and droned from Spezzia, its hills, its villages, and its sea; the *Boodah*, only half-liberated, strained in travail; crashed from her bands; slipped down the greased gradient — plunged — and, gathering momentous way, went wading deep, deeper — like Behemoth run mad — amid a wrath of froths and a brawling of waters, into the sea.

There, deep-planted, she stretched: on the surface appeared a reef of steel; and the stirred-up water slapped vapidly upon those flanks, like waters upon the Norway wall.

XXXIII. REEFS OF STEEL



NOTHING WAS EVER so scrutinized as the movements of the *Boodah* during the next two months.

One morning three weeks after her launch three steamers took her in tow, with progress so slow, that at nightfall they were still visible from land; but the next morning had vanished.

Two days later they were met on the Genoa-Leghorn *route*, six steamers then towing the *Boodah*, their course S. by W.

Again and again it was met, that funeral of the sea: the prone, tearing steamers, the reluctant bulk. Sometimes a captain's glass might make out a few men lost on the roof like men on a raft, smoking, seated, leaning over a balustrade.

Southward and westward it swam. On the seventh day there arrived at Ajaccio from Marseilles twenty-five bluejackets; and these, in a hired *speronare*, put to sea, and joined the *Boodah* twenty miles from the coast.

Thenceforth, a smoke would be seen at a point of the roof, indicating that she, too, was steaming: for it was known that she had a screw and a rudder; and so closely was she observed, that her now added rate could be fixed — two to three knots a day.

She must therefore have some small engines about 4,000 H. P.: and since their *motif* could only be one thing, resistance to ocean currents, this meant that the *Boodah* was intended to rest always in one spot: a startling conclusion.

Occasionally a Surveying Service warship would peep above the horizon, watching her.

As she passed through the Straits, seventy-five English blue-jackets put out from Trafalgar, and joined her.

With such reports passed the weeks. Occasionally five or six coal-ships would be seen about the *Boodah*; her number of tug-ships might be as low as two; sometimes nine, ten.

At night she made a fine display, and homeward-bound boats from Cape Horn, from Pernambuco, Para, Madeira, spoke highly of her two revolving-drum lighthouses: for these, from opposite corners of the roof, at the rate of a revolution per minute, poured into space two shimmering comets, like Calais and the Eddystone — rapt spinning-dervishes of the sea that hold far converse with the dark, till morning. And between these two ran a festoon of electric lanterns, Japanese and Moorish, cut in ogives; and festoons of coloured moons drooped round the balustrades, so that the blaze and complexity of it presented to ships a spectacle of speckled mystery, fresh to the sea.

After five weeks a hundred and seventeen blue-jackets put out from Portsmouth in a chartered barque and joined her, she still in tow, making now about N. by W.

But by the time this news reached Europe the eyes of Europe were no longer given up to the *Boodah*: for *another Boodah*, called the *Truth*, was a-tow through the North Channel from Belfast; and she had not reached the Mull of Cantire, when a third was launched at San Francisco, so that the interest of the islands became complicated.

What would they do? What could they? Compared with this question, the riddle of the Sphinx was simple, the supposition that they were going to batter coast-walls in the S. Pacific being hardly now tenable. The *Boodah*

finally came to rest some miles North of lat. 50° and East of long. 20° : and there — just on the northern rim of the Gulf Stream where it divides, part toward Ireland, and part toward Africa — she remained, precisely in the middle of the trade-route between Europe and Boston, New York, Halifax: a *route* covered for fifty miles — twenty-five north, twenty-five south — by her 19.5-inch guns.

It is impossible to describe with how wild a heart, or thrilling a boding, the world heard this thing: eight days later the International Conference of Maritime Nations met at The Hague.

But nothing happened — or the opposite of what was feared: for, as months passed, the *Boodah*, planted there in the ocean, rapidly became the recognized gathering-point of the fashion and gaiety of Europe, thither flocking the socially ambitious and the “arrived” together, and to have been invited to those revels of taste and elegance became a superiority. Gradually, as the names “Beech”, “Ecuador”, ceased to be associated with the islands, the name of Hogarth took their place; and Hogarth had engaged Wanda, sweetest of tenors, to a year’s stay in the *Boodah*, whose orchestra was the most cultured anywhere; Roche, her *chef*, had two years previously been put into a laboratory to devote his soul to the enlargement of his art; and he and that tenor lived in suites of the *Boodah* such as most princes would consider Utopian.

Hardly anything in her interior suggested *the ship*: no hammocks for marines, rolling-racks, sick-bay, lockers, steam-tables, wash-rooms, she being just a palace planted in the Atlantic, her bottom going down to a layer of comparative calm, so that hardly ever, in a storm, when the ocean robed her sides in white, washed abroad her slippery plateau, and drenched with spray her lighthouse tops, did the ballroom below know shock or motion. Into her principal hall, far down, circular, one descended by a circle of steps

of marble, round which stood a colonnade of Cuban cedar, supporting candelabra and silks; and from atrium-pools sunk in the floor twelve twining fountains brandished spiral sprays, the floor being of a glassy marble, polished with snakestone, suffused with blushes at the coloured silks and at a roof gross with rose and pomegranates, hanging chandeliers; round the raised centre of the floor stood two balustrades, three feet high, hung with silks, the inner circle thirty feet across, higher than the outer, forty-five across: a roseate room, strewn with cushions, colours, flushes; but that raised space was empty: reserved for — a throne.

The throne, still unfinished, had been three years making in India.

And during nine months the *Ã©lite* and joyous yachts arrived, not at the *Boodah* only, but at others of the twelve which, one by one, were launched and towed to position; and a round of events transacted themselves in the fortresses: Marie Antoinette balls, classic concerts, theatrical functions by *troupe* or amateur, costume-balls, children's-balls, banquets of the gods, grave receptions. By now there ran right across the *Boodah's* roof, in the form of a cross, two double colonnades of Doric pillars, at the four ends being Roman arches: and here, some summer afternoon, the passing ship would see a bazaar, all butterfly flutter, feminine hues like flower-beds, cubes of coloured ice, flags, and a buzz of gaiety, and strains of Tzigany music — rainbow-tints of Venice mixed with the levity of the AndrÃ©ssy Ut of Pesth. Sometimes a fleet of craft would surround the islands. Besides, to each was attached a yacht, and a trawler which continually plied for it between island and land.

At this time Hogarth was deep in debt, and Beech's living upon credit.

So, gradually, a good deal of the awe which the structures had inspired passed off. On the whole, they seemed mere whimsical castles-of-pleasure. The trains of industrious ships grew habituated to their gaudy brightness by

night, to their seething reefs, or placid mass, by day. On foggy days the mariner was aware of the islands wailing weird siren-sounds of warning. The islands waved common-code signals of greeting to the passer. Trinity House sent them the usual blanks and instruments for recording meteorological observations. Their positions were marked in British Admiralty Charts, in American Pilot Charts, in "Sailing Directions". The great greyhounds, racing to Sandy Hook, raved with jest past them. The islands began to seem a natural part of the sum of things. There they lay, stable, rooted, trite, familiar; and the question almost arose: "How came it that they were never there *before*?" — just that object, of that form and colour, seemed so old and natural in that particular spot. So the frogs hopped finally upon the log that God sent them for sovereign.

Meantime, the more thoughtful of men did not fail to observe, and never forgot, that no ship could possibly depart from, or arrive at Europe, without passing within range of some one of the islands' guns. A row of eight lay an irregular crescent (its convexity facing Europe) from just outside the Straits of Gibraltar, where O'Hara admired the *Mahomet*, to the 55th of latitude, where the *Goethe* lay on the Quebec-Glasgow *route*: these commanding the European trade with the States and with S. America, as well as with W. and S. Africa, and with Australia by Cape Horn; another in the narrows of the Gulf of Aden, commanding the world's traffic by Suez with the East and with S. Africa; another in the middle of the narrows of the Kattegat, commanding all Baltic trade; another, fifteen miles from San Francisco, and another a hundred and fifty miles from Nagasaki, on the edge of the Black Stream, commanding the Japanese-San Francisco, the Australian-San Francisco trades, and great part of the Japano-Russo-Chinese. These were the principal trades of the world.

Like the despair of Samson awaking manacled and shaven, an occasional shriek would go up from some lone thinker, who perceived that the kingdoms of the world had lapsed into a single hand; and in the privy cabinet the governors drank to the dregs the cup of trembling. But their speech was bold, the matter hung long, the peoples ignored and wrought: there was seed-time and harvest; the newsboy brawled; the long street roared. Far yonder in the darkness and distance of the deep the islands flashed and danced, and were fashionable.

Richard Hogarth held back his hand.

XXXIV. THE “KAISER”



IT WAS THE habit of Hogarth, when in the *Boodah*, to rise very early and ascend in flannels to one of the four doors opening upon the ledge — blocks five feet thick, moved by hydraulic motors — and sometimes Loveday would accompany these walks, they always seeing on the plane of the sea some sail, or by a spyglass the fading light-beam of the *Goethe* north, of the *Solon* south; or they watched how the *Boodah's* galaxy, too, waxed faint and garish as some drama of colour evolved in the East; saw gulls hover and swing, fins wander: and marking that simple ampleness of the plan of sea and arch of heaven, their hearts felt enlargement.

One morning, the 3rd October, Loveday was up even before Hogarth, having started awake from a gory nightmare, this altogether not being a day like others: and when the two friends met on the ledge, they walked a long time in silence.

Only after the dayspring began definitely to dabble in its chromatic chemistries Loveday at last remarked: “Did you ever think why I took such pains to get you to come down with me to Lord Woolacot’s last autumn two years?”

“Yes”, answered Hogarth: “you wanted me to see the model farms, and how the young ladies fed the poor, and how the tenants loved their lord, and everyone thought himself happy. Only, I didn’t see what the pastimes of Lord Woolacot’s daughters have to do with the process of the suns, and with the woe of Oldham. Ah, Lord, it is a job, I tell you, pulling this vile thing straight! Of course, the eagle doesn’t blink: but I am only one man, and the

world, and its stupid sins, are a tidy burden. Ha! — never mind. Look at that big *Boodah* of a sun how he blooms: isn't he launched and handled all right? Let us of this desert bend the knee to him like the old Sabāns. There is hope”....

It was known that on that day, at half-past eleven A.M., the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Größste* would pass on her second voyage within some miles of the *Boodah*, this ship being the greatest afloat, having a cargo-carrying deadweight of 45,000 tons, and travelling the waters like a railway-train at 37 miles (32 knots).

So toward noon Hogarth, in a peaked cap, jacket, and white boots, was again on the roof, a glass and book of Costonlights in his hand, while not far off a knot of five officers in frockcoats talked, and near one light-house, where a number of men stood, a flagstaff flew the ensign — blue letters “R. F.” on a white ground, looking Russian; on the northern horizon two fox-tails of smoke; on the western three diminutive sails; between the two, quite real and big, a brig becalmed; and now the *Kaiser Wilhelm*: for that yonder could be only she, with so fervent a growth, from the first moment of her upward climb, did she approach. It was twenty minutes to noon, and she was somehow a little late, that punctual strong wrestler with space.

The officers on the *Boodah* spoke of her in low and stealthy voices; looked at her with queer and stealthy glances.

““As a bird to the snare...”” muttered one.

“She comes all right, but will never go”, said another.

“She will be always near us”, said a third.

“Life is an earnest thing, after all”, said a fourth: “there are wrongs, it seems, which only blood can wash out: it comes to that at last”.

Now Loveday ran up, looking scared and busy, a quill behind his ear, Hogarth now having the glass at his face, while his eyes struggled with the

reek from his cigar-end.

“Is that she?” Loveday asked him.

“Yes, poor boat”.

She was nine miles away; in four minutes she was less than seven, and now distinct: — her three staysails; her four funnels; the stretched-out space between her raked masts; her host of cowls and boats; her high victorious hull, silently running.

And all along her lines were lines of faces thick as dahlia-rows in June — globe-trotters; captains of industry; children; the Wall Street operator who plotted a stroke in Black-Sea wool, and to him time was money — I guess; commercial travellers, all-modern, spinning, prone, to whom the sea was an insignificant and conquered thing; engineers; capped enthusiastic Germans, going forth to conquer; publishers, ladies, lords, all the nondescript prosperous: and all ran there blithe, sublime, and long drawn-out; and they toyed with oranges, nuts; and they looked abroad to see the *Boodah* — ship’s-surgeons and officers with them — jesting, as they munched or sucked.

But the Captain who had often seen the *Boodah*, was log-writing in the chart-room...

As her ensign of greeting ran up her main, her clocks struck twelve, the full noon — like an omen — come; she not then three miles from the *Boodah*.

And simultaneously with the hoisting of that ensign, and the striking of those clocks, the old-worn wheels of Roman Civilization stopped dead.

The *Boodah* ran up the signal: “*Stop!*”

Those who understood rubbed their eyes: it was like a vision at high noon; they could not believe.

At that news the Captain, a handsome fair-bearded man, rushed like a madman from pilot-house to bridge, and the startled passengers saw his lighted eyes. He had some moments of indecision; then down he, too, rang that word: “*Stop*”.

The engines left off; the *Kaiser’s* speed, as from heart-failure, gave in, died away.

By this time all the passengers knew, in a state of tremor saw confused runnings to and fro, and face caught from face dismay; the voyage was spoiled, the record! What, then, had happened to the world? And now again the *Boodah* is signalling: “*Let the Captain come*”.

The Captain’s hands were shaking; he could not speak, could only gasp to the first-officer: “By God, no; O, by God, no”. Then, as great quantities of black-grey reek, wheeling all convolved, were now enveloping the vessel, resting on the sea, reaching away in thinner fog even to the *Boodah*, and as, the day being calm, there was a difficulty in reading the flags, the Captain gasped: “Take the trumpet — ask them — But don’t they pay for this...?”

So out brayed the trumpeted query, and back the inexorable trumpeted answer: “*Let the Captain come*”.

So, then, the *Kaiser* would never reach Sandy Hook? To put out boats! — to parley! — while the earth span with quick-panting throbs, every second worth seven thousand pounds!

“But don’t they *pay* for it...?” so, with a painful face of care, the Captain questioned space.

But he would be mild and patient as a lamb that day! His order went forth: the ship forged ahead; a longboat, hurriedly lowered to starboard, was manned for the first-officer to put off in her, while every heart of the passengers thumped, every face an ecstasy of emotions.

Then a wretched, long interval...

The ship's-officers were received on the *Boodah* in a deck-room containing a number of boats with castored keels, capable of being quickly launched down an incline, where Mr. F. Quilter-Beckett, the Admiral, with some lieutenants, awaited them at a bureau on which lay documents, while in the background stood Hogarth and Loveday, and, "Gentlemen, this is a most damned wild piece of madness!" broke out wrathfully the first-officer, as he dashed up wild-eyed to the level: "in consideration of the guns you have in this thing—"

"But your Captain?" asked Quilter-Beckett, a courtly man, with a dark-curling beard, a star on his breast.

"The Captain won't come!" whined the officer in perfect English: "I suppose you realize the terrible consequences of this stoppage, gentlemen?"

"But you are wasting time, sir. You represent your Captain?"

"Of course, I represent — !"

"Then just cast your eye over this" — that so slighted letter, sent years before by Hogarth to Foreign Offices, claiming the sea as his private manor.

The officer read it half through with flurried closeness; then, "Well, but what is all this?" he broke out: "is it a piece of comedy, or what, gentlemen?"

"It is serious; and the last clause comes into operation to-day: only such ships being held authorized to pass on the sea as pay to the first-reached sea-fort on any voyage a tax, or sea-rent, of 4s. per ton on their registered tonnage, with an additional stamp-tax of 33s. 4d. for receipt, and a stamp-tax of £1 16s. 8d. for clearance. You will see at a glance the clauses of the law, if you cast your eyes over this schedule—"

"Law!" the other broke in: "you talk of *Law*! But doesn't the sea, then, belong by right to all men — ?"

“Not more than the land. Ask yourself: why should it? But I do hope you won’t argue: your time must be so precious”.

Out shrilled the *Kaiser Wilhelm*’s whistle of recall.

“I must go!” said the officer with a worried hand-toss: “I must go. If you give me those documents, I will show them to the Captain — but he is not the sort of man — this is mere piracy, after all! But, good God, gentlemen, if you only dare touch that ship, I shouldn’t put myself in your place this day week for all—”

He snatched the papers, dashed, and his men, in a passion of haste, lay to the oars, the *Kaiser* only four hundred yards from the *Boodah*; and the officer, shaking aloft the documents, pitched up the stair, the centre of five hundred pairs of scared eyes, while the captain bored his way to him.

Two minutes of intense low speech, crowded with gestures: and suddenly the Captain’s face, till now haggard, reddened; out went his shaken fist; with eyes blazing like lunacy, up he flew to the bridge; and now he is bending down with howling throat: “Passengers to their berths!”

Simultaneously, above the engine-room stair a bell jangled; round swung the pointer to “*Full Ahead*”; and ere the decks were cleared of their bustle the *Kaiser*, like a back-kicking hen, scratched up under her poop a spreading pool of spume, which tossed spasmodic spray-showers and spoutings: and she stirred, stretched like a street, churned the sea, and, wheeling to reveal her receding stern, was away.

By which time Hogarth was standing at a cubical cabin of steel on the roof, with him Loveday and Quilter-Beckett, his brow puckered with wrinkles, the sun troubling his eyes.

“I suppose the *chef* is warned?” — he threw away his cigar.

“Oh, yes, my Lord King”, Quilter-Beckett answered.

And Loveday: “She sweats like a thoroughbred” — haggard, but assuming calm: “few things could be more profusely expeditious”.

“Ah, make phrases, John,” murmured Hogarth.... “Well, but hadn’t you better be getting out the boats?”

Upon which Quilter-Beckett stepped into the little erection, touched a button, and in a minute the water round the southern side was swarming with twenty-three boats whose blue-jackets began to row toward the *Kaiser*.

And presently, “It’s no use waiting”, said Hogarth, looking in upon Quilter-Beckett: “I should mine and shell her at the same moment, if I were you; tell them to get it in well amidships”.

Now a few seconds, full of expectation, passed, the *Kaiser Wilhelm* already two miles away: till suddenly space opened its throat in a gulf to bay gruff and hollow like hell-gate dogs; and, almost at the same moment, close by the *Kaiser* a column of water hopped with one humph of venom two hundred feet on high: when this dropped back broad-showering with it came showering a rain of wreckage; and instantly a shriek of lamentation floated over the sea, mixed with another shriek of steam.

For the moment the ship, enveloped in vapours, could not be seen; but in two minutes glimpses of her hull appeared, shewing the bluff bulge of her starboard bottom: for she leaned steeply to port with a forward crank, her two starboard screws, now free, spinning asleep like humming-tops. A six-inch shell, beautifully aimed, had shattered her engines, killing two stokers, and a torpedo-mine had knocked a hole nine feet across in her port beam.

But as the *Boodah’s* boats, meanwhile, had been racing toward her, and as her own port boats were quickly out, all were got off; in fact, she floated so long, that her ship’s papers with £270,000 in specie, and a few hundred-weight of mailbags were saved, and even after the boats reached

the *Boodah* she still stretched there motionless, until, with a sudden flurry, she determined to plunge.

Soon afterwards Hogarth had the Captain in his suite, to tell him that he did not wish any intelligence of the event to reach the world for four days, during which passengers and crew would be his guests, and then be sent on to America, his object, he said, being to impress the loss of the *Kaiser* upon the consciousness of all, by making all anxious as to her fate.

So that night her passengers danced till late, for there was no resisting the hospitality of Hogarth, or the witchery of those vistas and arcades, grand hall and lost grot, *salons* and conservatories, there in the dark of the ocean, or such an enchantment of music, and fabulousness of table; the host, too, pleaded prettily for himself; and now they pardoned, and now they pouted, but always they banqueted, kissed, lost themselves in visions, were charmed, and danced.

XXXV. THE CUP OF TREMBLING



IT WAS BY the merest chance that Baruch Frankl and his daughter were not on the *Kaiser*: for Frankl was the half-nephew of Mrs. Charles P. Stickney, a New York Jewess, and as the marriage of Miss Stickney with Lord Alfred Covern was only fifteen days off, Frankl had made arrangements to accompany the bridegroom across, but had been detained by stress of business; happily for him — for Lord Alfred, the bridegroom, was a dancing prisoner in the *Boodah*.

Early, then, on the third morning thence, Charles P. Stickney, the bride's father, a natty little Yankee, hurried a-foot to the Maritime Exchange: for, to his infinite surprise, the *Kaiser's* arrival had not been in the morning's paper: so the little arch-millionaire stepped toward Beaver Street, sure that the *Kaiser* had come in too late for the press.

Early as it was, he found the place as thickly a-buzz as though it was that feverish hour between eleven and twelve.

He pushed his way to the bulletin-board, inscribed with the hours at which ships are sighted and entered into dock: the *Kaiser* was not there: and with prone outlook he went seeking an assistant superintendent; but, sighting a fellow-operator, come, as usual, to digest the world, from barometer-reports to coffee-quotations at Rio, Charles P. Stickney cried to him: "Funny about the *Kaiser*! Know anything?"

"It's the darndest thing..." mumbled the other, still star-gazing at a blackboard prices-current of American staples: "raise Hell this day, I guess"....

And on through the rooms Stickney shouldered: all in the air here an odour of the sea, and of them that go down to it in ships; pilot, captain, supercargo, purser; abstracts from logs, copies of manifests and clearances, marks and numbers of merchandise, with quantities, shippers, consignees; here peaked caps, and the jaw that chewed once, and paused long, and, lo, it moved anew; Black Books, massive volumes enshrining ancient wrecks; vast newspaper-files in every tongue; records of changes in lightships, lights, buoys, and beacons, from Shanghai to Cape Horn; reports, charts, atlases, globes; the progress of the rebellion in Shantung, and the earthquake last night in Quito; directories, and high-curved reference-books, and storm-maps; every minute the arrival of cipher cablegrams, breathless with the day's Amsterdam exchange on London, or with the quantities of tea *in transitu* via Suez or Pacific Railway; and the drift of ocean-currents, and the latest position of the *Jane Richardson*, derelict, and the arrival of the *Ladybird* at Bahia; and the probabilities of wind-circulation, atmospheric moisture, aberrations of audibility in fog; and in the middle of it the pulse of the sun, the thundering engines and shooting shuttles of this Loom; a tiptop briskness and bustle of action; a scramble of wits; a *mÃlÃe* to the death; mixed with pea-jackets, and aromas of chewed pigtail, and a rolling in the gait.

Into this roar of life that word *Kaiser* stole: and it grew to a chorus.

Charles P. Stickney, butting upon a tearing clerk who was holding aloft a bulletin of icebergs and derelicts, tried to stop him: upon which the clerk, who would not be stopped, cried with a back-looking face of passionate haste: "London message just received — *no intelligence of Kaiser*—"

But he had hardly disappeared, when another man from an inner room rushed, waving something: the Navesink Highlands lookout had wired the

Kaiser in sight! And while the Exchange rang with cheers, Stickney, a colour now in his sere cheeks, went boring his way outward.

The lookout had said it — those blue eyes that never failed there on his watch-tower, he knowing the ships that sail the sea as the Cyclops his sheep, in his heart so knowing them all, that as that sea-glass detected a speck on the horizon, those sea-wise nostrils sniffed its name: for between the *Mary Jane* and the *Mary Anne*, both off-shore schooners, is all the world of difference: if you would not see it, *he* knows. And he had wired the *Kaiser!* — so expectant his outlook: and that day wept like a ruined man.

Swift upon his first wire a second flashed: and one of those craped days of the tragedies of commerce followed, the boding, the loss, flashed everywhere, pervading Europe and America.

The next morning the Exchange, all the exchanges, the Lloyds', the bourses, were crowded from an early hour, but subdued: no news, not a word; but still — there was certainty: for had the *Kaiser* and her wireless been merely disabled, she would undoubtedly by now have been reported: she had foundered.

Foundered! — in the serenest weather in which ship ever crossed the water....

But at eleven the truth came: for the brig which had lain becalmed near the *Boodah* at the moment of the tragedy, and now was nearer England, had flashed the news: “many of the *Kaiser*’s passengers mutilated, many drowned”.

Death, then, was in the pottage of Life; the air tainted with specks of blood....

That day Man, as it were, rent his garments, sitting in ashes, and to Heaven sent up a howl of fear, of anguish, and of hissing hate.

Those who lacked the intelligence to feel the fear, felt the hate: every girl, the shirt-maker, the shopman, feeling himself robbed of his very own; the Duke in the centre of his oak-lands felt it; the burglar, the junk-dweller of the Yangtse, the pariah of the Hugli. Lamentation and a voice in Ramah, wail on wail. For God had given the sea to man, and it had been seized by a devil.

God had also given the shore; and it, too, had been seized: but, as that had been before their birth, they had not observed it — in such a numb somnambulism shambles humanity.

But the theft of the sea was new and flagrant, it, and the air, being all that had remained: and a roar for vengeance — sharp, and rolled in blood — rose from the throat of man.

Accordingly, when Mr. C. P. Stickney during the afternoon wired for information to the White House, he received the reply: “Encourage calm on ’Change. Government in touch with Europe. Great naval activity. Await good news, seven P.M.”

It was about seven P.M. that what the White House would have considered specially good news occurred: for the *Boodah* then telegraphed through to O’Hara’s *Mahomet* at the Straits:

“B. 7651. Begins. After to-morrow (Monday) you begin taxation, as per Order B., 7315, of 2nd inst. But if warships desire to pass out, (not in), permit, till further order. Richard. Ends”.

Which meant that if any Power, or Powers, desired to concentrate force upon the attack of any island, the Lord of the Sea granted them facilities.

The *Kaiser* passengers had now been sent off to New York, the *Boodah*’s halls seemed the home of desolation; and, as the night advanced, Hogarth and Loveday walked on the roof: for they could find no rest, the sky without moon or star, the sea making of three sides of the *Boodah* a roaring

reef, the wind blowing cold, they two wrapped to the nose in oilskins with sou'-westers, lashed by rages of rain and spray.

Yonder, to the north-west, appeared a ghost, a thing, a derelict brig, driving downhill on the billows, like a blind man gadding aimless with a crazy down-look, the rags of her one sail drumming on the gusts; and near, nearer, within a stone's-throw of the *Boodah*, she swaggered wearily, drab Arab, doomed despondent Ahasuerus of the deep, nomad on the nomad sea; and on into the gloom of the south-west she roamed, to be again and again re-created by the rolling light-drum, while Hogarth with a groan said: "If I were only dead! I feel to-night like a man abandoned by the Almighty".

Loveday muttered those words so loved by Hogarth:

"....this is my favoured lot,

My exaltation to afflictions high"....

And Hogarth: "Do you know what is burdening me tonight? It is the curses which the world is at this moment hurling upon me: as when one man, thinking evilly of another, sticks needles into wax, and needles of pain pierce the other..." a sense of evil which was deepened the next day by an ominous little accident, when one of his old gunpractice hulks arrived from Bombay, bearing the throne: for as this was being conveyed into the *Boodah* a front leg was broken.

Meantime, the world's trade went on as before: only, night and day, its ships lay-to, to pay rent with threat and curse: in all only thirteen ships being sunk ere sea and earth had learned the new conditions.

And from the very first day of this taxing a deeper sense of pain and hardship pervaded the world, the Lord of the Sea now taxing at 4s. per ton a world's tonnage of 29 millions, 7 1/2 millions in sailing-ships, 21 1/2 millions in steamships, once in a voyage — a little less than the revenue of Britain.

So one night he received message from O'Hara that "British Mediterranean fleet has passed through the Straits, homeward".

It was not for nothing that the nations had allowed three weeks to pass before avenging the Kaiser: soon enough the Cabinets had been in intercommunication; but in the "Concert" had occurred — a hitch.

Britain had proposed the destruction of the islands in detail, the Powers to contribute weights of metal proportionate to their mercantile marines: as a basis for calculation she had offered her force in Home and Mediterranean waters; and, this having been accepted, by the 5th ships were under the pennant, and outfitting.

Now, all this time, things had been in a pretty whirl: oratory from pulpit, platform, stump, eyes on fire, mobs that went in haste, shrieks of newspaper passion, organized burglary, and a strange epidemic of fires: for the modern nations lived by the sea, and it was seized. Moreover, on the 6th, after a meeting at the Albert Hall, organized by the Associated Chambers of Commerce, our Government— "Liberal", under Sir Moses Cohen — suffered a defeat of thirty-four votes on a division.

And it was during the turmoil that ensued upon this that the German Foreign Office (on the 9th) sent to the new Russian the wireless "*Bion*"-meaning— "Let us meet to discuss the subject of-England".

That meeting took place at Konigsberg.

It was now that a fort-man — formerly a Nottingham shoemaker — landed from the Truth's yacht at Frederikshavn, and thence wrote to the Daily Chronicle, to say, briefly, this: That, supposing the European navies joined to batter away with 15-inch guns and torpedoes at five feet of steel, they might finally succeed in mining a hole in it; but if the thick steel happened to have still bigger guns, "*and other things*", with which, meantime, to batter back at the thin ships, then it would be the ships,

probably, which would get holes in them: it was a question of Time. Also he said that the islands were defended by devoted men, every one of intelligence and high principle, who knew what they wanted, and meant to have it — their shooting average being 97 per 100. He advised his country not to try it, especially in view of certain political rumours which he had picked up in the Cattegat.

This letter, although badly spelled, aroused a sensation. The “high principle” of the fort-men, indeed, met with bitter laughter; but its hearty patriotism, simplicity, technical knowledge, were so remarkable, that now a doubt as to the battleship arose — and with it a gnashing of teeth. The service-clubs, the “experts”, wrote this and that; the public poured forth letters, schemes, plots, inventions — like the brain of the world *versus* the brain of Hogarth. “*Starve Him Out*”, was a title in the *Contemporary*: but the reply was bitterly obvious. And into the midst of this racket burst the news that the negotiations with Germany, Russia and France were at a deadlock.

These Powers had raised this question: “In case of the capture of the islands — what shall be done with those most powerful engines?”

Here was a riddle. For whichever nation took even one would score a vast advantage.

If, now, Britain had had the greatness of mind to declare for the sinking, in any case, of all the islands, the difficulty was solved, but the new-Government brooms would score a point and gain a trick, and they proposed the division of surviving forts in the proportion of fighting-power contributed.

The Continent objected: Britain was “*firm*”; whereupon the French Ambassador sent to Downing Street his withdrawal from the crusade.

And so when — on the 22nd — the fleets assembled at Portland and Milford Haven before *rendezvous* at the Lizard, the whole original proposal had fallen through: for here was neither tricolour nor saltire, only three German ships, only five Italian; the “probability”, moreover, of the capture of a sea-fort by England was imminent: and on the evening of the mobilisation of the squadrons feverish activity was reported from Toulon; a British Legation *attaché*, seeing fit to stroll round the Caserne Pepinière, beheld in the yard an extraordinary crowd of limbers: and, pitching into a cab, from the nearest *postes et télégraphes* wired to London the word: “Angleterre”.

Too late: the British fleets were gone, leaving the Channel and Western Mediterranean desert.

Now the nation awoke to a consciousness of dark skies: cloud of the west rushing to meet a yet lurider eastern — with probability of lightning.

The fleet could hardly return in less than five days — if it returned! Would the hostile nations be good enough to await its return? The lightning would be “near”.

A day of fear, in which flash tracked flash: till at 11.30 P.M. the rumour pervaded the crowd round St. Stephen’s that the new Ministry had suffered defeat: and the drifting ship was captainless.

And early the next morning a number of *Boodah* boats, out running a regatta, came tearing back, all fluttered; soon after which Quilter-Beckett was hurrying into Hogarth’s presence, who was at coffee, to say: “Well, my Lord King, here they come at last — and enough of them, I think”.

XXXVI. THE “BOODAH” AND THE BATTLESHIPS



THE SHIPS HAD gone forth in two lines ahead at ten knots, Admiral Sir Henry Yerburch, K.C.B., being in the flagship *Queen Mary*, with the capital-ships being nearly all of the five mosquito flotillas, and half the Home submarine; though what was the object of the torpedo craft (unless they were to go within 2,000 yards of the *Boodah's* guns) was not very evident.

At that news, Hogarth, putting on a wide-awake, and lighting a cigar with rough perfunctory puffs, ran along a corridor to call Loveday, whereupon the two went out to the ledge and up to the roof.

There, at the south edge, stood a marine trumpeting something at Hogarth's yacht; and, just landing at the *Boodah* from his gig, a fretful Yankee skipper, register in hand with a bag of £900 sea-rent in gold, while twenty yards yonder rode his smoking ship loaded with grain for Rouen; and on the eastern horizon the armada, in crescent at present, moving with fires banked at two knots, a glare hiding them from the naked eye, but the glass revealing them like toys in the abstract, ethereally hazy.

And now the yacht's cones shewed steam, three of her boats making toward the *Boodah*; soon at the landing-place stood Wanda, some interpreters, Mons. Roche (the chef), women, engineers, paymasters, civil servants, waiters, etc.; and Hogarth, seeing them, approached, questioned them, and, hearing that they had been ordered a day's pleasure-trip round the *Solon*, with lifting hat shook hands all round.

By this time some fifty officers and blue-jackets were about the roof and ledge, some discussing, others unfixing lanterns and festoons, with shouted directions. Leaving which, Hogarth and Loveday descended to an office of Loveday's, and Hogarth was just saying: "Quilter-Beckett could destroy a quarter of those warships yonder — *now*, if he chose — without firing a gun—" when in, with flushed face and stretched stalk, hurried Quilter-Beckett, crying: "My Lord King, I thought you would be here — just look — !"

He held out a Sea telegraph-form-from O'Hara:

"F. 39241. Begins. Almost certainty of war: Germany, France, Russia against England. Three corps massing between Harfleur and Rouen, two upon Petersburg, transports at Havre. England undefended on sea. Ministry fallen. Toulon outfitting. Donald, Admiral. Ends.

Hogarth, with an all-gone gesture, handed the telegram to Loveday.

But with lightning energy he was at a desk, scribbling:

"F. 39242. Begins. To Donald, Admiral, Mahomet. Be in half-hourly communication with Beech's Bank, Paris and Petersburg branches. Send hourly bulletins of news. War to be averted by every means. Let Beech threaten. Warn Cattegat. Richard. Ends."

And "Quick, Quilter-Beckett", he cried, "send that! What is the speed of your quickest picket — ?"

"Fifteen knots—"

"Then, go yourself to the British Admiral. *Make* him fly back: he has years to attack me in, tell him — I'll write a dispatch—"

On which Quilter-Beckett telephoned up for a picket, took the dispatch, and was soon away, while Hogarth watched his flight over the Sea.

An anxious hour passed, and by then a line of ships had been sighted to the west — the Americans at last; ten minutes later, the picket, too, was

seen returning.

“Well, now”, said Hogarth, watching her, “I wonder. The ships seem to be coming on just the same. You have no idea, John, how the mind of people in office becomes fixed, like hardened putty in a hole: I am sorry now I didn’t go myself”.

Some minutes more and Quilter-Beckett was pelting up the steps, his face pink as prickly-heat, blurting out: “My Lord King! I have been grossly insulted...!”

“Ha!” went Hogarth.

“I met a dispatch-boat coming to make summons of surrender, and, in spite of my white flag, they took me prisoner! How I restrained myself — and these people in the hollow of my hand! When I got at last to the Admiral — it is Yerburch on the *Queen Mary* — he ‘pirated’ me — but I have no time Yonder, you see, are the Americans. British won’t go back: I doubt if they believe— ‘under orders’, and so on. By the way, you shouldn’t stay there — no longer safe—”

He was away: for the moment was near, the *Boodah* now surrounded with a series of floating squares hanging deep torpedo-nets against submarines, on both horizons effusions of smoke, the ships no more visions, but middle-sized sea-things, seeming fixed in the thick of the sea, though steaming quickly. Hogarth watched them through a hand-glass, while Loveday, ghastly pallid, whispered: “Come, Richard, come”, but still lingered a little, seeing them grow up — like the infant, the lad, the hairy man — toiling at the bigness of the sea, looking stripped, prepared for tempest They were six miles away — five.

Mute lay the *Boodah*; and, surrounding her, perniciously moved the ships at forty-eight revolutions a minute, hardly a cable’s interval between the host of them, they seeming no more the playthings of the sea, but its

masters, each a travelling throne of power; and as they pored so taciturn, with baleful aspect they trained their cannon upon the sea-fort in their midst: not a soul visible on fort or ships.

A long while it seems to last, that noonday stillness, a noonday breezy and oceanic, the sea sharp-edged, hard-looking, dark-blue, tossing spray along its ridges, not rough, but restless, shewing against the ships white foams a moment, which silently glide away.

But their Admiral is signalling: *Let her have it!* and in some moments more yonder to the far north the *Florida* breaks into quick-flashing ecstasy, like quick-winking Gorgon glances; and the north-east catches it in a single boom; and in ten seconds more it is as if Nature, with sudden yell, feels to her womb the birth-hour come and rueful throes: and where ships had been appears in one minute nothing but a ring of stagnant smoke, tugged into rays and out-sticking clouds, flushed with glares and rouges.

And no question of missing: the *Boodah* stationary and huge; every shell told. But, the deluge over, that thunder-marred visage again looked grimly forth, a face new-risen from smallpox, an apparition, roof-houses gone, lighthouse tops, one of her great 19.5 inchers in fragments, in her casemates seventeen dead.

But where now is the one-masted *Hercules*, which but a moment since went trembling at the bale of her own bellowing barbettes? The *Hercules* is in a Nessus-shirt of flame. And whither the *Hercules* is going, thither is the *Idaho* going, and the *Dante* gone, and gone the elongated length of the *Invincible*, and twenty destroyers, and the bow-works of the old *Powerful*, which stoops woefully there, screws in air, as the camel of the desert kneels and waits, while into her beam comes crashing the ram of the poopless *Deutschland*.

Yet the *Boodah* has not fired a gun!

But now she fires: as the broadsides drench her anew, she fires, the hulk — all round the horizon — lowing in travail: and as there is no question of missing on the one side, so on the other is assurance, the *Boodah's* broadsides of 19.5-inchers and 9.5-inchers, ninety-two in all, being fired by the hand of Quilter-Beckett, who sits at a table grim with knobs, buttons, dial-faces, in a cabinet near a saloon where Hogarth, Loveday, and five lieutenants are lunching; and where he sits he can hear the band in an alcove rendering for the eaters Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: hear, not heed: for two gunners in each casemate have sighted a ship through pivoted glasses, whose fixing, disturbing an electrical circuit, prints the ship's distance on an indicator before the Admiral: whereupon he touches a button — many buttons — in intense succession: the *Boodah bawls*: and the thrust-back of her resentment becomes intolerable, the ships just like fawns under the paws of an old lion whose grisly jaws drip gore; the sharks that infest her will fare well of her hand.

Of forty-three ships fixed, thirty-nine are hit, eleven founder: wreckage so vast and swift, that the Admiral, still afloat in a *Queen Mary* pierced above-belt, is like a man stung by the tarantulas of distraction: tries to signal flight — flags cannot be seen; fires coloured pistol-lights: "Retire!" — and soon, all round, the circle is in flight.

But hapless flight: the *Boodah* is an octopus whose feelers reach far, and they, within her toils, cannot escape her omnipresence. She sends after them no guns: yet they are blown to atoms; the sea becomes a death-trap thick with pitfalls and shipwreck; one by one they are caught, they fly aloft like startled fowl, or they succumb, and lean, and stoop, and sink: the sea, for mile on mile, proving a hell of torpedoes-dirigible, automobile, mine.

For in the matter of mines the *Boodah* had all the advantages of a shore, and as to dirigible torpedoes more than all.

Her mines, whose weight was adjusted to the specific gravity of salt water, sank till the pressure at ten fathoms arrested them, they, electrically connected with the forts, reaching out twenty miles; and the whole network, charted to an inch, was coordinated with the range-tables.

The ordinary 18-inch Whiteheads, moreover, were replaced by a longer design running 6,000 yards, the added length being occupied by the flask, whose compressed air runs the engine, they not sinking on finishing their course: so, if they missed, there they lay, a trap of 380 pounds of gun-cotton in the course of the numerous moving foe.

With these three forms of the same plague the *Boodah* hunted the fleeing ships, and drove them stumbling through complicated miseries, amazed and thunderstruck: so that seventy-three only, several of them half-wrecks, reached her twenty-five mile limit; and, there, over the mines of the *Solon*, reassembled.

Amid the throng on his ruined roof Hogarth watched their flight and the ever-coming boatloads of blue-jackets through a mist of smoke and the after-smell of war, while under the sea wide eyes in hosts were a-gaze at a windfall of 2,400 bodies.

About half-past four captains and commanders of the survivors were in the ward-room of the Second-in-Command on the *Orion* — the *Queen Mary* gone — when he, with splendid infatuation, proposed a return to the attack, with a change of tactics to concentration upon one side only of the *Boodah*; but the foreigners pointed out the obvious added dangers; and in the midst of a wrangle a dispatch-boat from the *Solon*, eleven miles south, arrived, demanding the usual sea-rent, by draft, if not in gold; so out, at this unlooked-for incident, broke a new quarrel, the British for a whole hour resisting the inexorable; till the *Solon* Lieutenant, his eyes moist with pleading, explained their helplessness, adding that war between the four

Powers had been declared that day at noon from the Stock Exchange steps: and only then the Vice-Admiral, breaking into tears, yielded to destiny.

Hogarth, meanwhile, was like a wild man, imprisoned, till his yacht returned at dusk with her excursionists; and without delay he was on her, and away for England.

XXXVII. THE STRAITS



IN ENGLAND, MEANTIME, was nothing but dismay.

The Government, whose defeat was accidental, on being hurriedly patched up, threw itself passionately into the work of defence, calling up every enrolled man, while at regimental centres the enlistment of volunteers went forward, Weedon alone turning out 7,000 rifles a day.

But on the night of the Declaration the Under-secretary announced in the House that the Russians were moving down the Baltic, the French toward the Straits: and the next morning dawned with the dreariness of last mornings and days. However, soon after 1 P.M., the Lord of the Sea landed at Bristol, his yacht being one of the swiftest things afloat; there heard the known facts; and thence wired to Beech's London house, to the London Foreign Office, to Cadiz and to Frederikshavn, where he had wireless for the *Mahomet* at the Straits, and for the *Truth* in the Cattegat.

His wire to the Foreign Office was as follows:

"I have come to England hoping to avert European war by fiscal means, not knowing that the passage of ships into open water was of first importance. Since this is so, accept my assurance, there will be no war, except on the part of Britain, which I should much resent. British Government, I suggest, should forthwith allay national anxiety.

"RICHARD".

But the Foreign Office did not publish this telegram, not knowing what to make of it — unless Hogarth were vehemently the friend of England, while every British being regarded him not so much as the enemy of man,

as the special Anti-Christ of England. And how came he to be in England, when he should be at the bottom of the Atlantic? The telegram was passed through the agitated departments, but kept dark....

So the afternoon passed without news: and tension grew to agony.

Hogarth spent the evening in his Berkeley Square house with the Manager of Beech's, examining office-books and specimens of some new Sea-coins, till near eleven, when, being alone, he put on a mackintosh, shaded his face well with hat and collar-flap, and went out into the drizzling night.

Even his Berkeley Square was peopled, and, as he strolled toward Pall Mall, he found it ever harder to advance, till he became jammed. Never had he seen such a crowd, all in the air a sound, vague and general, which was like a steam of thought-made-audible; till presently, while trying in vain to get away, he was startled by a tumult that travelled, a rumour of woe that noised and swelled, terrifying, the voice of the people, the voice of God: and though he did not know its meaning, it keenly afflicted him.

The fastest of the survivors from the battle with the *Boodah* had wirelessly: on that commonplace bulletin at the War Office the news stood written...

But the rumour of that despair had not yet attained its culmination, when another rumour roared after and over it, roar upon roar, like tempest poured through the multitudinous forest, joyance now overtaking sorrow, and a noise of roistering overwhelming lamentation. And all at once a great magnetic hysteria seized them all, and the many became as one, and the bursting bosom burst: men weeping like infants, laughing foolishly, grasping each other's hand, and one cried "Hurrah!", and another, catching it, cried "Hurrah!"

For the French, German, and Russian fleets, in attempting to pass the two narrows north and south of Europe, had been stopped by the two sea-forts there; and though they had been so eager to pass, that they had even offered to pay sea-rent, this, too, had been refused. They had then, at five and at five-thirty in the afternoon, offered battle to the islands: with the result that half their weight had been annihilated before they took to flight. So said the bulletin....

And Hogarth in the midst of the jubilee saw the man who jammed his left shoulder, a broker in spectacles, grip the hand of the man on his right, a ragamuffin, to cry out: “That scoundrel Hogarth! Isn’t there good in the damned thief, after all?”

And the other: “Aye, he knows how to give it ’em ‘ot, don’t ’e, after all! Thank God for that!”

Three weeks later peace was proclaimed by a procession at Temple Bar between England, Austro-Germany, France, Russia, and the Sea.

XXXVIII. THE MANIFESTO



THE LAST EFFORT of Europe to resist the Sea was made on the afternoon of the 14th of October, when the British Prime Minister refused to conclude a treaty of peace.

“Your master is only a pirate — on a large scale”, he said to a Minister of the Sea.

That was on the 14th.

On the 15th there was a stoppage of British trade nearly all the world over.

On the 20th England was in a state of *Ã©meute* resembling revolution.

On the 28th the Treaty of Peace was signed.

Its principal conditions were: (1) The undertaking by the Sea not to raise sea-rent on British ships without certain formalities of notice; and (2) The undertaking by Britain not to engage in the making of any railway or overland trade-route, or of any marine engine of war, without the consent of the Sea. And similar treaties were signed by the Sea with the other nations.

Then followed the rush of the Ambassadors to the *Boodah*, and the frivolous round of Court-life revolved, *levÃ©e*, audience, dinner, drawing-room, investiture; the Lord of the Sea descended from the throne before the Court to pin a cross upon the humble breast of his best shot and give him the title of *PrÃ©cept*, gave fanciful honours to emperors, received them of them — wore when throned a brow-band of gold with only one stone, the biggest of the meteor octahedrons, that glanced about his brow like an icicle in whose glass gallivanted a fairy clad in rags of the rainbow.

Now the old gaieties recommenced, but more Olympian in tone, as befitted the ruler of rulers, terrible now being the lifting of Hogarth's brows at the least lapse in ritual; and only the chastest-nurtured of the earth ever now stalked through gavotte or pavane in those halls of the sea.

The world now lay at his feet. The dependence upon him of England, of France, of that part of Austro-Germany called Germany, was obvious: he could starve them. But over Austria proper, Russia, Italy, his sway was no less omnipotent: for the panic cheapness of scrip which followed the destruction of the *Kaiser* had, of course, been foreseen, and used by him; Beech had bought up, easily ousting the Rothschilds from their old financial kingship: by tens of millions the process had gone on; and still it continued increasingly, for the wealth of Hogarth now, as compared with that of other rich men, was like a ship to a skiff. If he threw upon the market, the bankruptcy of several nations might follow: it was doubtful if the United States could survive; certainly, Austria, Russia, South America must go under.

Nor was the East less his slave: Japan a mercantile nation, China and Turkey in his fiscal net. So, looking round the globe toward the middle of November, he could observe scarcely a nation which he could not, by scribbling a telegram, crush out of recognition.

It was precisely then that Richard Hogarth revealed himself.

On the 15th of November appeared his Manifesto.

This Charter, which everlastingly must remain one of the Scriptures of our planet, simple as a baby's syllables, yet large like the arch of Heaven, has left its mark on the human soul.

On the morning of the 16th its twenty clauses occupied in *pica* a page of every newspaper, and it was posted up big in the streets of cities.

The document ran:

Richard, by the Will of God...I do hereby discern, declare, and lay down: That:

1. What is no good cannot be owned: only goods can be owned.

2. “*Good*” is *well*, or pleasant; goods is *wellth* (wealth) or pleasures: thus, a coal-mine, being no pleasure, cannot be owned.

3. Coal *becomes* goods after being moved, or taken. Moving does not make it good; its nature does not make it good: moving-*plus*-Nature makes it good, ownable. At the pit-head, already, it is a pleasure, fewer pains being now needed to move it to a fireplace. Thus, Nature apart from motion cannot be owned, being no good, as a cave is no good to a caveman outside it: rain is wetting him; if he takes it, moves in, it is good.

Animals and plants, by taking things from the planets presented to them, by moving things, raise Nature into wealth, and own things.

4. For Jack to *own*, have a thing for Jack’s *own*, Jack must by his *own* force have subdued Nature, must have taken the thing by moving the thing’s atoms, or moving something relatively to the thing, or, negatively, by not evading, but accepting, the thing in motion — a wind, tide, light-wave; else Jack must have taken something (by as much work) to purchase the thing from its (true) owner, or accepted it as a favour from Nature in motion, or from its (true) owner. To say “own” is to say “take”; to say “take” is to say “motion”, i.e., the doing of work: “work done” being FD, i.e., Force used into Distance moved-over. I cannot own the air: it is no good; I own the air in my lungs, having taken, moved, it, done FD on it: it is very good; and I own the air which, doing FD, moving to my face, I do not evade, but accept, take: it is very good.

I say to Jack “take a cigar”; he loudly says “yes!”, but does not move it to his mouth, nor moves his mouth to it; instead, he moves a pen to his mouth; this makes me laugh: he has not taken a cigar.

Jack is catching fish in a boat; Tom owns the boat: so Jack gives fish to Tom, until Jack's FD done on the fish is equivalent to Tom's FD done on the boat; and now Jack owns the boat. If "the law" says that Tom still owns the boat, this makes me laugh: for how can Tom come to own two boats' good by the FD done on one only?

Jack is ploughing the sea with a ship: just there he owns the sea, has taken, is moving, it for his good. He does not own the sea before, nor the sea behind, him: for the motions behind made by him have ceased to do good.

Jack is ploughing soil: he owns the soil ploughed, has taken it, and will own it while the motions he has made do good: so that, if Tom who has not moved it says "I own the soil, for 'the law' declares that I have taken it by moving a pen two inches", this makes me laugh. Or, if Jack says "I own it for ever", this makes me laugh. Or, if anyone says "I own both the soil and the site" (relative position), this makes me laugh: for what can one man move to make a relative position good? He can neither move a field toward anything nor move much toward a field. If many men move railways that way, or move things to rear towns round the field, this makes the site good, moving it from outside a community to inside a community; and the many who make it good own it.

5. The site is the field's chief good: so the plougher owes something to those who, making it good, own it, This something is named "rent".

6. Suppose that the plougher, or dweller-on, is an Englishman: he owes rent to the English. And, since the site of England is made good by movements made in America, he owes rent to the Americans.

7. This the mind readily describes to be true: it is a "truism", and is necessarily the Fundamental Principle of Society throughout the universe.

So that, summing up, we may define: “Rent” is “right”, based on truth when paid to those by whose movements a site is made good.

8. One might readily guess (if there were no example of it) that any violation of a Principle so fundamental would be avenged by Nature upon the planet which violated it.

9. Our planet is such an example: for here Two Separate Violations of the Principle appear; each great in itself; but one small in comparison.

10. Accordingly, for the small violation Nature has not failed to send upon Man a small penalty; and for the great violation great penalties.

11. The small violation consists in the claim by nations to have taken, without having moved, sites called “countries”.

12. For this Nature has sent upon man the small penalty of War.

13. To abolish War men must remove its cause.

Therefore let the site-rental of England (i.e., the excess of English goods over what English goods would be, if no other country existed) be handed over to a World Council; and the site-rental of America to the same; and the World Council shall disburse such funds for the majesty and joy of Man: and War shall terminate.

14. This way the Lord of the Sea indicates to the world, though with its initiation he is not personally concerned.

15. Beside the small violation of the Fundamental Principle of Society, there is a great on the earth.

16. The Great Violation consists in the claim by individuals to have taken, without having moved, sites and soils called “estates”, “domains”, “plots”: for, as rent tends to rightness when paid to the fifty millions of a nation, *fifty-millionfold* is its wrongness when paid to one; and as rent is right when paid to the thousand million inhabitants of a planet, *a thousand-millionfold* is its wrongness when paid to one.

17. For this Great Violation of the Fundamental Principle of Society Nature has sent upon Man great penalties: poverties, frenzies, depravities, horrors, sorrows, lowness, dulness.

18. Lowness, dulness: for by far the greatest of these penalties is a restraint on Man's development. Man is an animal, Man is a mind: and since the wing of mind is Pride, Assurance, or Self-esteem, and since the home of an animal is a Planet, and an animal without a home is a thing without Assurance or Pride, so Man without Earth is a mind without wing. Even so, a few, having Assurance, make what we call "Progress", i.e., the discovering of truth — a crawling which might become flight, had all minds but the wing of Pride to co-operate in discovering truth. But Man lacks assurance and foothold, founded home and domain: his sole heritage, though he is neither fish nor fowl, being sea and air.

19. This is a great violation.

20. And with this great violation of the Fundamental Principle of Society the Lord of the Sea is personally concerned. In the name of Heaven and of Earth he urges upon the nations of men to amend it in the month of the promulgation of this Manifesto: and this summons he strengthens with a threat of his resentment.

As the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, I will see to it.

RICHARD.

XXXIX. THE “BOODAH’S” LOCK-UP



THREE DAYS AFTER the Manifesto the marriage of Miss Stickney of New York with Lord Alfred Cown was to take place, this having been put off owing to the *Kaiser* tragedy; and so, on the day of the Manifesto, Baruch Frankl, the Jew, was crossing to a wedding which, even in the midst of great events, had stirred up a considerable rumour and sensation, since the American guests were to consist of the *coterie* known as the “Thirty-four”, all millionaires, while “the cake” was to weigh three-quarters of a ton, each guest’s grub to cost \$500, and for that breakfast the Neva had been ravished for fish and Siamese crabs for nests.

Frankl, however, was never destined to taste those five hundred dollar mouthfuls. It happened in this way: as the *Boodah’s* searchlights, destroyed in the battle, were not yet repaired, in the interval some lawless ships took the chance on dark nights to skulk past with extinguished lights; now, the captain of Frankl’s chartered steamer had that bright idea (being of adventurous turn), when night fell forty knots east of the *Boodah*, so he came to Frankl, and broached the scheme.

“Not for Joe”, was Frankl’s answer: “pay the Pirate his taxes and be done”.

“It could be worked as sweet as a nut, sir!” persisted the skipper, with a watering mind.

“Well, so long as *you* take the risk, perhaps — but no, sir, I’d rather not”.

On which the skipper winked self-willed to himself, and, putting out nine miles from the *Boodah* his three lights, went dashing past.

And the attempt would have succeeded, had it not been for the fact that the night was pitch-dark, and that *another* ship was trying that very venture with extinguished lights. And these two ships met, bow to bow, with such an energy of adventurous smartness, that both sharply sank.

The sea, however, being smooth, all hands were saved; and now, since the boats lay forlorn on the vast, with nothing but the *Boodah's* swarm of moons to move to, for the *Boodah* they started, while Frankl cast twinkling fingers to the sky, and cursed that night, as the oars with slow wash journeyed through turgid murk toward the very den of the devil.

When they reached the *Boodah* they were conducted down to a police-court, and there shivered an hour in a dreary light, till three officials in peaked caps and frock-coats came, sat on a Bench, and, after hearing evidence, pronounced sentence of seven months against the captains, and one against Frankl.

These were led away by police blue-jackets, and Frankl groaned through the night in a box as cold as the cells of Colmoor.

The next morning Quilter-Beckett, making a report in Hogarth's *salon*, mentioned the incident, saying: "Here are the names, with the sentences; I shall send the sailors home..." and Hogarth's eyes, resting on the document, chanced to catch that name of Frankl.

At once he turned pale, for his first thought was: "Frankl must have been going to the wedding, in which case *Someone Else* may be with him".

But her name was not there....

He rose and paced; and he said low: "No one else on either of the ships?"

"No, my Lord King".

Then up lifted Hogarth's brow, alight with fun, and he muttered: "All right, Caps-and-tassels".

He said aloud: “Quilter-Beckett, this Frankl I know. Did you never hear anything about Caps-and-tassels at Westring? *He* is Caps-and-tassels. Now tell me, which is your biggest blue-jacket?”

“Man called Young, my Lord King”.

“Then, have a suit of Young’s sea-clothes put upon this Frankl, and let him be brought before me in the Throne Room this morning after the Audience. He was fond of liveries....”

Accordingly, by half-past eleven Frankl entered the Throne Room, where, as soon as its rosy translucency broke upon his gaze, an “Oh!” of admiration groaned from him, in spite of his weight of misery, he not walking, but being lifted forward in successive swings by his armpits — up the first steps to the outer circle of balustrade, forward to the second steps and the inner balustrade, within which shone the throne, and Hogarth, crowned and large in robes, on it.

The two warders, intent upon portering Frankl, and not noticing the cap which still covered his eyebrows, one now in sudden scare whispered: “Off with your cap, you...!” on which Frankl snatched it off, grasping through superabundant sleeves, he at the same moment a fury and a dazzled man, the throne before him incredible, like a dream which one knows to be a dream, in structure not unlike the Peacock Throne of Akbar, its length fourteen feet, seating thirteen persons in recesses, standing on a gold platform with three concave steps set with rings of sapphire, and consisting of a central part and two wings, the wings being supported on twisted legs (one had been broken), and made of fretted ivory mosaicked with cabochon emerald, ruby, topaz, turquoise, chrysoberyl, diamond, opal, the large central part, with its recesses, being also of ivory, gold-arabesqued, its mosque-shape canopy (of Hindoo enamel-work on the outside) being supported by eleven pillars of emerald; at the top of each pillar a dolphin

(hence the name “Dolphin Throne”) made of turquoise, jasper, pearl, sardius, and at the bottom of each pillar a *guldusta*, or bouquet, of gems; the concave ceiling one mass of stones, representing a sea in which sailed three Dutch galleons, and seven dolphins sported.

But all that Frankl saw of it was its opulence: for his terror lest the warders should let him go occupied his mind.

And precisely the thing which he feared came upon him, for Hogarth said: “Warders, retire”.

And now Frankl, all unsupported, stood in unstable equilibrium, anon stooping to his finger-tips, then straining doubtfully forward with struggling arms from a too backward poise: for not only did the trousers lie a twisted emptiness far below his feet, but the feet themselves were lost in Young’s boots, so he stood like Scaramouch, a mere sack, a working of his chin wobbling down his beard, and there was a blaze in his stare which Hogarth, unfortunately, did not well estimate.

They faced each other, alone, save for the body-guard at the circumference of the room.

“Was it *you* that sent me to Colmoor?” Hogarth suddenly asked in a low voice, stooping forward.

“*Me!*” shrieked Baruch Frankl, pointing a hanging sleeve-end to his breast: “as Jehovah is my witness—”

“Were you about to *swear*? For ever the same? — tyrant and worm? It *was* you. Now tell it me right out: you have nothing to fear: for you cannot be vain enough to imagine that I would harbour enmity against you”.

“It wasn’t me, I say again, my Lord King!” — Frankl trampled a little backward, then stooped over-poised to his finger-tips: “with what motive? Oh, that’s hard — to be accused. They have already given me a month —

my God! a month! And only because I am a Jew. But it wasn't me — that I'll swear to God—”

Hogarth rose to his height, descended, put his hand upon Frankl's shoulder. “Well, leave that. But — *my sister!*”

His hand felt the shoulder beneath it start like fits.

“Your sister!” Frankl screamed with a face of scare: “Why, what of her now?”

“Frankl, you are frightened: you know, Frankl, *where she is!*”

“Me? O, my Good God, what is this! Me, poor sinner, know where your sister is, my Lord King? Why, spare me! spare me, God of Hosts! Why, you've only got to ask yourself the question—”

“Listen to me, Frankl”, said Hogarth, bending his blazing brow low over the Jew: “I have searched for that woman through the world, and have not found her. All the time, mind you, I felt convinced that you know where she is; and you may wonder why — years ago — I did not have you seized. I will tell you why: it was because I had a sort of instinct that God, whom I serve continually with tears and prayers, would not fail in His day to show me her face: and to-day you are here. Do you suppose, Frankl, that you will go away without telling me where she is? And in order to hurry you, listen to what I say to your warders—”

He touched a button in the balustrade, and to the warders said: “If at any time this man should demand pencil and paper, supply them, and take to your Admiral what he writes. To-day his food shall be fare from your own table; to-morrow three loaves and water; from the third day one loaf and water; till further orders”.

Up shot Frankl's shivering arms, while Hogarth, training his ermines and purples, paced away.

That was on the day following the Manifesto.

XL — THE WEDDING



BY THE TIME Frankl's three loaves had become one, that amazement with which men received the Manifesto had commenced to give place to more coherent impressions.

He was not a "Monster"! that was the first realization — no pirate, nor lurid Anti-Christ, nor vainglorious Caesar! And in two days, the first astonishment over, there arose a noise in the world: for the Lord of the Sea had given to the nations one month only in which to do that thing: and the peoples took passionately to meetings.

In England Land Leagues, Chambers of Agriculture, Restoration Leagues, Nationalization Leagues, many Leagues, were organizing furiously, stretching the right arm of oratory; deputations, petitions in wagons, demonstrations *en bloc*, party cannonades, racket heaven-high. Sir Moses Cohen, the Jew-Liberal Leader, appealing to the strongest prejudice in Englishmen, spoke one night at Newcastle of "the interference of a foreign prince in the affairs of Britain"; used the word: "*Never!*", and on this cry secured an enormous following: so that, within a week, he was instrumental in forming the formidable League of Resistance — destined to prove so tragic for Hogarth, and for England.

It was in the midst of this world-turmoil that — on the third day — the marriage-morning of Miss Cecil Stickney dawned; and that same evening Rebekah Frankl, convalescent from influenza, was seated over a bedroom fire in Hanover Square, a cashmire round her shoulders, her sickness cured

by herbs, her physician then hobbling with a stick down the stairs — Estrella of Lisbon — her back almost horizontal now with age.

And as Rebekah mused there, two newsboys below, whose shouts pursued each other, went proclaiming through November gloom as it were the day of doom, crying, even in that uproar of Europe, a private event:

MARRIAGE OF
LORD ALFRED COWERN
AND MISS CECIL STICKNEY
APPALLING TRAGEDY

And soon a girl ran in, gasping: “Miss Frank! — this is too awful — your father—”

The news, having been flashed to Paris by Mackay-Bennett cable, now appeared in detail after the *New York Herald's* French edition, and Rebekah's eyes ran wildly over details as to the “bevy of beauty”, daughters of “the Thirty-four”, and the church of waiting ladies, the carpeted path between palms and exotics, and how the ticket-holders heard the organ tell the Cantilenet Nuptiale and Bennett's Minuet; and then the multitudinous stir: behold the bridegroom cometh! — the little necessary bridegroom of no importance, and then the white entry of bride and bridal train, while the choir knelt to sing “O Perfect Love”.

Perfect love, however, was hardly the order of that day, but rather perfect hate: for in Madison Square — the church being at the upper end of Fifth Avenue — a mob was being harangued on the subject of this very wedding: and when they heard and realized the thing that was being done before their eyes they were swept as by a wind of fire, and under its impulse set out like some swollen Rhone with a rushing sound to pounce upon the church, full of perfect hate: and the choir sang “O perfect love”.

What happened now was described as a nightmare. The same elemental instincts of the Stone Age which had exhibited themselves in the \$500-worth of food wrought in another form, but with no less savagery, in assassins as in victims: and a massacre ensued, bride and bridegroom passing away like bubbles, of “the Thirty-four” five only escaping. The report ended with the words: “The ringleaders have been arrested; quiet reigns through the city”; then a list of the guests, with asterisks indicating those killed.

Rebekah searched for her father’s name, and when she became certain that it was not there, her lips moved in thanksgiving.

But since Frankl was not at the wedding, where, then, was Frankl? She counted the days on her fingers: he could not have been late.

Unless there had been an accident to his ship....

Her brows knit a little; she peered into the fire: and thought of the *Boodah*....

It was possible that when her father’s steamer stopped to pay sea-rent, Hogarth might have heard, and seized him. That notion occurred to her.

And at once it threw her into an extraordinary fever, her bosom swelling like elastic in her heavings to catch breath, though she did not realize the wild thought that was working up to birth within her. She rose and paced, furiously fast.

If he was in the hands of Hogarth?

“He is a British subject”, she muttered: “Hogarth has not the right...Oh, he has not the right...!”

She was fearfully agitated! something fighting up and up within her, stifling her, working to burst into birth; she flung the cashmire from her shoulders, her bosom rowing like two oarsmen. “Because we are Jews...!” she went.

“If he *dared* do that — !”

What then? Say! Rebekah!

“I would go to him myself—”

All at once that thought was born, and she stood shockingly naked to her own eyes, her hands rushing to cover a face washed in shame. “But, surely”, she whispered, “I could never be so *bold*, good Heavens? Why, Never! Never — !”

However, an hour later, with flaming eyes, she was writing a letter to Frankl’s manager.

XLI. THE VISIT



FRANKL'S BANK WAS scanning the agents' yacht-lists for her, when Sir Moses Cohen, who was closely associated with Frankl, placed his own three-master at her disposal; and she set out from Bristol, with her being three Jewish ladies, Frankl's manager, and a snuffy Portuguese rabbi who resembled a Rembrandt portrait.

It was late at night, and Hogarth, who had lately acquired a passion for those Mathematics which touch upon Mysticism, was bent over Quaternions and the quirks of [Proofers note: checkmark symbol] (— i) in an alcove of his *Boodah* suite hardly fourteen feet square, cosy, rosy, and homely: he sitting at a sofa-head, and, lying on the sofa, Loveday, his head on Hogarth's thigh, escaped from office and frockcoat, in happy shirt-sleeves, between sleeping and waking.

Hogarth was interrupted by a telephone bell.

"Well?" he answered.

"My Lord King", from Quilter-Beckett, "Frankl has handed to his warder something written: will your Lordship's Majesty see it now?"

"Yes!" Then: "John! Frankl has yielded!"

Up Loveday started with "Thank God!" while Hogarth: "When does my yacht arrive?"

"At midnight" — from Quilter-Beckett.

"She starts back immediately for England with me and Mr. Loveday".

Now an officer entered to present an envelope, and the two looked together over these words:

“Your Lordship’s Majesty’s sister, Margaret Hogarth, is at No. 11, Market Street, Edgware Road, London. She goes under the name of Rachel Oppenheimer, I don’t know why. As God is my witness, I repent in ashes. Won’t your Lordship’s Majesty have mercy on a worm of the earth? I am an old man, getting on, and starved to madness. The ever devoted slave, from this day forth, of my Lord King.

“BARUGH FRANKL”.

Hogarth ‘phoned up: “Give Frankl food now, and put him where it is not cold....” and to Loveday he said, “Well, you see, she is there: ‘No. 11, Market Street’. And under the name of — what? ‘Rachel Oppenheimer’...John Loveday, do you fathom the meaning of that?”

“No — don’t bother me about meanings, but shout, like her, ‘O Happy Day!’ I say, Richard, you remember that singing? how we would hear her from the forge? All day, washing, cooking — melodious soul! There was ‘O Happy Day’, and there was — By God, how charmingly holy! how English! And, Richard, you remember — ?”

Another telephone bell: Hogarth turned to hear.

“Just arrived in the yacht, *Tyre*, my Lord King”, said Quilter-Beckett’s voice, “four Jewish ladies, a Jewish gentleman, and a rabbi, who request early audience to-morrow; they lie-to, and have sent a boat—”

“Rubbish! I shall not be here to-morrow, and even if I was — Who are they? By the way, no sign of the yacht?”

“Not yet. They are Miss Frankl—”

“Who?”

“Miss Rebekah Frankl—”

“God”, went Hogarth faintly, stabbed to the heart.

“Miss Agnes Friedrich, Mrs.—”

But the rest fell upon ears deaf as death, the teeth of Hogarth now chattering as with cold, that haggard, gaunt yellow, which was his pallor, overspreading his face. So long was he speechless, that Quilter-Beckett asked: “Are you there, my Lord King?”

“Quilter-Beckett!”

“Yes, my Lord King?”

“Will you go *yourself* — for me — to them? *Make* them sleep here, will you? This is most urgent, I assure you. And go quick, will you?”

That night did not the Lord of the Sea sleep: she under his roof...

Nor did he go that night to find Margaret — nor the next day, nor the next, though Loveday chafed: for, gyrating through the giddy air of a galaxy where Margaret was not, he forgot her.

XLII. REBEKAH TELLS



AT THAT TIME Hogarth, personally, was in close relation with the score of Embassies that inhabited the belly of the *Boodah*, these intriguing incessantly for half-hours at his ear, and in communication, meanwhile, with their Governments through O'Hara's *Mahomet*: so that Hogarth had to get up early, and his mornings sweated with audience and negotiation.

The German and Russian Emperors, with the Prince of Wales (then virtually Regent), had hurriedly met at Vienna — presumably for the discussion of the Manifesto; and immediately after it, the Prince, who had the reputation of being one of the most tactful of men-of-the-world, took a step which hinted that the Royal House, as often before, meant to come to the rescue of the country which loved it however the politicians might bungle: Hogarth was invited to accept the Garter.

He accepted: and the ceremony in the *Boodah* was witnessed, as it were, by Europe, King-at-Arms in a new tabard, with his suite, going to invest him, taking the Statute of the Chapter, with the Great Seal of England, and a set of habiliments — white-silk stockings, gold sword Spanish hat, stars, gloves. And the effect was speedy, the other rulers, dumbfounded before, said now: “England will comply with the Manifesto; and, if before us, the taxed sea opens to her...Yield, moreover, we must: let us make haste!”

But to consent was one thing: the *how* another: the mere suspicion of the willingness of Kaiser or Tsar shook their thrones. Whereupon Russia said to Hogarth: “Recently dispossessed, they cling dyingly now to their lands, so I will *buy* the land from them, and *you* will lend me the money”; to which

Hogarth virtually replied: “It is too childish to talk of buying part of a heavenly body from a Russian: have you no sense of humour? You may give the Russian ‘nobles’ some money, if that pleases you: but without my help. If His Majesty the Tsar is more afraid of them than of me, my only way will be to prove myself more truly terrible than they”.

But high words hurl down no hundred-headed hydra: in France — fast, faster — with dizzy vertigo — millions were forming themselves into secret societies, while in England was One only — but stronger than the many of France.

By the date of Rebekah’s pilgrimage Hogarth had so far failed and yielded, as almost to decide that from the *Boodah* nothing could be done, unless he went to the extent of ruining and starving. The other alternative was the fixing upon one nation, becoming its recognized ruler, and there furnishing an example both of *modus operandi*, and of a subsequent state of happiness, which others could not long refrain from imitating.

But this modification was still in the air; and, meanwhile, he listened, weighed, revolved: using men, impressing, convincing, extracting for his use the wisdom of their experience, estimating the exact pressure of the Time, the *timbre* of its roar.

So on the morning after Rebekah’s arrival his Gold Stick became his rack from the moment of the bow from the throne till noon: name after name — cordons, orders, gold-lace, sashes, stars, tiaras; till enter the four Jewesses, the bank-manager, the rabbi, Hogarth’s pallor showing up his three moles and nose-freckles, adding a glare to his eyes, he suffering from the runaway drumming of his heart.

The ladies stoop through curtsies; the men do reverence; Hogarth bows.

There like a Begum of Bhopal stood Rebekah, floridly reflected in the glassy floor, sallow under the eyes, smiling at him, he at her; and very

quickly now, she once in his sight, he recovered comparative calm, and the strength of his heart.

“Your first visit to the *Boodah*, I think?” — looking at her.

“Yes, my Lord King” — curtseying.

“Do you like her?”

“Why, yes: she is solid, and mighty, and rich. In my own, and the name of my friends, I beg to thank your Lordship’s Majesty for your Lordship’s Majesty’s kind and good hospitality to us”.

“Humbugging little beggar”, thought Hogarth, his mind slowly gathering tone, but rushing meanwhile into a species of frivolous assurance after those agitations, his hands still cold.

“Well”, he said, “but you have not seen her! I think I know her fairly well, and I propose to be myself your guide, if that will interest you—”

The Rabbi spoke with trembling voice: “It is gracious, my Lord King. We are here, however, humbly to present an urgent petition to your Lordship’s Majesty. Baruch Frankl, at present a prisoner in the *Boodah*, a man no longer young, and habituated to comfort—”

“Stay”, interrupted Hogarth: “if you have a petition the day and hour must be arranged by negotiation between yourself and my Chamberlain. But surely, meantime, I may consider you my guest? Miss Frankl and I — have met — in the world. Come, ladies — come, sirs — say yes!”

Rebekah, standing averted, flashed a look at him, reading his heart, and Jews and Jewesses laid heads together, whispering a little, until the Rabbi said, bowing: “We bend to your Lordship’s Majesty’s most gracious will”.

“Agreed, then, sir. We might now see the *Boodah*, and if you will luncheon with me — Mr. Chamberlain! direct Admiral Quilter-Beckett to meet me at once in the north corridor”.

He rose, master of his limbs now, descended, unrobed in an alcove, and in a corridor above the circular stair came upon Quilter-Beckett, who, acting as guide, Rebekah's hand now resting on Hogarth's arm, led them about the *Boodah*, now walking, now slipping in little trains over eighty-foot rails, rolled in one heat, laid down the vanishing length of dim-lit corridors floored with white tiles, their frieze of majolica, with rows of ceramics; and they saw the armouries, piles of rifles, cutlasses, pistols; ferneries grown by electric light; great cold-storage rooms that struck a chill, for preserving meats, butter, fruit; the doctors' *environ*, the dispensary, and roomy hospital; watched from a railing the working engines that fixed the *Boodah's* position, Hogarth here saying: "There you have a menagerie of gnome-land: observe those two black beetles, sedately nodding; and there is daddy-longlegs, working his legs gymnastically; and the three pairs of gallant grey stallions, galloping grandly neck to neck; and those two ridiculous beings, rubbing their palms together, round and round: each preoccupied, comically solemn, busied about its own quaint affairs — like a varied gnomeland".

And Rebekah said in a meek tone, like the hen submitting: "Yes, I see now you say it, my Lord King".

Up stairs and down, round semicircles, up lifts, through nooks, corridors: saw the guns, and how by hydraulics everything was done — the hoisting of ammunition, loading, training: guns intact, guns wrecked by the Dreadnoughts; and shimmering kitchens, which reeked a smell of heat, and the dairy-maids, and the line of kine, and the row of prison-doors, and the mechanism of ventilation, fans and blowers, the drainage-system, and the dynamos for lighting, for supplying power to motors, for heating, and for shimmering forth rich in the search-lights; and the central ballroom, the clothes store, the original one-ninety-sixth model, the Ambassador-region, the steaming laundry, and the roof, where Rebekah saw her initials on the

breeze, and the vertical pop-guns under shields for dealing with aeroplane attack, and the cream theatre, and the paymaster's suite, and the bunkers, the Government-offices, and the tax-receiving rooms, the telephone system, and the lady-telegraphists — till all were tired, though half had not been seen. They luncheoned together; in the early afternoon there was an Investiture, and she was there; for "five-o'clock" there was a Gounod concert in the theatre, and she sat in his box; at night the Bulgarian Ambassador gave a ball, and she danced a gavotte with him.

When they parted a dying wind sighed his name: "*Hogarth...*"; and when Loveday before sleeping happened to ask: "When do we set out for London, Richard?" Hogarth with a laugh turned upon him, replying: "When do we set out for Arcturus and the Pleiades? Do give one time to look round him!"

The next morning Rebekah, led forward from a semicircle of courtiers by a backing Silver Stick, approached within four feet of the Throne, and after the protracted humiliation of her curtsy, said ruefully: "Our party have failed, my Lord King, to obtain audience for our humble petition till after four days".

"Is that too long?"

"We could not wait beyond to-night. Our good Rabbi, and my father's Manager — both must hurry back, and we others with them. This being so, *I* appeal to Your Lordship's Majesty ".

"A *personal* appeal?"

"Yes" — poutingly.

"Then, I grant an audience".

"Where?"

"Here".

"Who will be here?"

"Why — you and I."

“No” — very low, with pressed lips.

“I am so sorry”, says he: “it is the only chance I shall have; not for long — a few minutes — I am so busy. Otherwise, you will have to stay four days — and your poor father suffering—”

She seemed unsure now, and his hands in the uncertainty of that moment were moist like melting ice.

“So, then, you accept”, said he: “a little audience — you grant me? Or rather, I grant you”.

“When, my Lord King?”

“At three — No, what folly! At four. Will you? At four? And here? Say at four”.

He spoke leaning keenly forward; and she, with a curtesy of acquiescence, retired.

They were near again, and yet far, in the *salle Ã manger* at luncheon, a function of a hundred guests at small tables, with more of orchestra than of talk; and even as Hogarth and his train entered, and the crowd rose, she saw his eyes, by some power, prowl and find her.

Afterwards there were two hours to wait.

Such a heat of haste now possessed them both! Hogarth locked himself from his attendants into his bed-chamber, and, tumbling a chaos of clothes and uniforms upon the carpet, stumbled bitterly among them, hunting for a cravat whose effect he remembered; wished at the mirror that he had no moles and nose-freckles, or that his father had turned him out rather less black; and anon a delicious chill pang of mingled sugar and peppermint would gash his heart at the thought: “*she consented!*” He broke glass, dropped his watch to fragments, hissing “damn the thing!”; and about half-past three the hands of Rebekah, too, in *her* locked closet, were like the scattering sirocco among powder-boxes brushes, jewel-cases, and toilet-

toys. What a hot haste was here! She too much blued her eyes, and bruised the skin in wiping, intense the contest between poudre blanche and poudre Rachel, violette and germandrÃ©e, she manoeuvring among mirrors to catch each angle of view, but with a blind impatience; and, if she wanted something, she tripped running, breathless: such a disease of flurry, an eruption and conflagration of haste — for nothing; yet, all the while, with a miserable sub-feeling of the penal creeping of time.

At four Hogarth in the Throne-room alone was now afraid that he would not be able to utter a syllable, and wished that she would not come; then, in a minute, began to fear that she would not, and wondered whether he was not a deluded fool ever to have dreamed it, he walking quick, or anon listening like a thief in that half-dark: for few lights were shining, the hall like the after-flush of sunset just before the dark.

At four past four he was aware of a rustling train's rush down the steps, and now was like a man with his neck on the block, awaiting the axe. A moment afterwards she was before him, and two moments afterwards he was collected and hot, and a man again.

"*Dear*", he whispered at her ear, leading her by the hand to an ottoman in a near alcove.

She, in self-defence, was repellent, breathlessly saying with galloping haste: "No — I will not sit: you sit, and I will stand here: do as I say, Hogarth — or I repent and go: I know you, and you know me — or you should. Our talk must be short. You say *dear* to me: that is very gentle, my friend; but it was not to bandy such words that I am here — alone — with you and your strength — Hogarth. I come as a suppliant, to implore you — firstly for the man who is my father — and secondly for yourself, to warn you. You are said to be about to become the sovereign of England—"

“*I am?*” — starting where he sat obediently before her, surprised that she should utter the purpose then forming in his mind: “witch — of Endor!”

“*I am not the witch, but an old lady in whose predictions many Jews believe, who prophesies the return of the Jews to Palestine — through you. Be that as it may, if it is so that you are about to meddle with the institutions of England, oh beware, the resistance will be terrible!*”

“With respect to England I am omnipotent”.

“Yes, you can starve it, but *will* you? You won’t. And listen to your friend: there is now in London a society, enormously powerful I believe, sworn to your destruction”.

“What can they do — assassinate me?”

“Ah! who knows?”

“That would be too childish: I have sown my seed in Time, and it will grow: two thousand little lords could hardly obliterate the ploughing of my wrist. But you know this?”

“Richard, my father is of them”.

“Ha! — I forgive him: his daughter seems to be on the other side—”

“Richard, you would not touch my hand? Ah, my friend, I warn you — ! Now — you have agitated — I have been ill — my father is of them. And who is one of the closest associates of my father — ?”

“Who?”

“The person known as Admiral Donald, whom *I* know very well to be Monsignor O’Hara. I think you might have been more — recondite — in your choice of an admiral, Richard!”

“Ah? — you surprise me”.

“But why? You once sent that man to me as a notebearer: certainly, a singular selection. You must have known that he had been a convict—”

“I thought him innocent then!”

“But you know now — ?”

“Yes”.

“And is it not extraordinary that your ensign bears my initials, while this man is one of your commanders?”

“I confess that I do not see the point—”

“Then you cannot know, I suppose, that it was against *me* that his offence was directed”.

Hogarth’s left lid lowered....

“But my complaint is of the present: are you not aware of the scandal which the *Mahomet* is now creating in the world?”

“Scandal?”

“Thrice lately whispers have reached me of unnameable iniquities perpetrated there — Alexandria of the sixth century, Rome of the second! I believe the rumour is widely spread in London — no woman of the world now lands on the *Mahomet*”.

“It was *you* whom he assaulted...” Hogarth laughed and was pale at once.

“Yes, but observe that I must go now, my friend. I have spoken of the things which I had in my mind: there remains — my father”.

“He shall go with you”.

“I thank you, my Lord King; that must be in an hour: so I say, Richard, good-bye”.

“I do not suppose you can dream how dark—” he went woefully.

Of which she took no notice, but with rapid speech said: “How fair this hall is — one supposes that the art of impressions was lost with Solomon — like some chamber under a lake at set of sun, colour without substance, suspended, flushed — I cannot express—”

“Sad, say”.

“Ah, Richard”.

“Rebekah!”

“Well, Richard, my poor friend?”

“Have pity!”

“Poor Richard!”

“I can’t help it, you are all mixed up with my blood, don’t go from me. If you think it a sin — the Gentile — God will forgive the charity. Come for ever—”

Now he sobbed once, and, as he sobbed, she was on her knees, in pagan posture, at his knees. “Do not—” distractedly— “see, I kiss your hand-do you doubt that I pity my love — as a mother has compassion — ?”

Now were heaving breasts, a vehement fight for breaths, wild eyes, and a live brand in the marrow.

“You will not go! I have you! In God’s name, what a mad thing — !”

“My furious king — you kiss—” the short-winded *mÃ©lÃ©e* of whispers now suffocated in a passion of inarticulate breaths; but at that moment one of Rebekah’s chaperons, wandering out of time and place, stood at the alcove entrance, and they, smitten into two, sprang straight, awaked from trance, Rebekah with half a sob and half a laugh.

And two hours later Hogarth, from the roof, saw the Jewish yacht disappear to the East, on board being the four — and Frankl.

As he descended, he threw up his head with: “Ha! — O’Hara”; announced his immediate departure with only a secretary and two lords-in-waiting, left a mystical note for Loveday, saying that he had decided to go alone in quest of Margaret, and went almost secretly, only the salute informing the *Boodah* as he steamed away. In reality he was in haste to face O’Hara, and the yacht’s bows turned, not eastward, but southward, under forced draught, to arrive at the *Mahomet* in early afternoon. As her flags indicated the Lord of the Sea absent, there was no salute, and, landing in a

panama and jacket, in the Collector's Office he gave the sign of mum, and, led only by a blue-jacket, went spying the depths of the *Mahomet*.

In many parts, noticing a singular odour, "What is it I smell?" he asked.

"Incense, my Lord King", the man answered.

On the fourth floor he entered the loveliest *bijou* chapel, the coenaculum gold-plated, altar flower-piled, frescoed roof, "stations" in oils, where a lonesome Moorish youth slothfully swung and swung a thurible ruby-studded: but in vestments of no *enfant de choeur* — of an ancient Phrygian.

Another descent and Hogarth reached a region of laugh and harping: whereupon, dismissing his guide, he tracked the music into a nook so rare, that he stood amazed — a Court of Love, or Mahommedan Heaven, or grot of Omar — anything old, lovely, and devil-sacred — the air chokingly odorous, near a fountain some brazen demon — Moloch or Baal — buried in roses, over everything roses, bounty of flowers, a very harvest-home of Chloris, Flora in revel; and smooth youths bearing cups for some twenty others, all garlanded, besides those on the marble stage; and on the stage itself a scene of dancing girls, Sevillian, Neapolitan, Algerian, mixed with masked Satyrs, which made Hogarth pale, while at a Herod's-table buried under fruits, wines, flowers and gold, reclined Pat O'Hara, tonsured now, crowned with ivy and violets, gowned in a violet toga; while under a pendulum whose swings left whiffs of incense behind lay Harris insensible.

As Hogarth descended into it, harp and dance ceased; some leapt to their feet: but O'Hara sat still, gazing in a dead silence through glairy eyes, while Hogarth, looking about, spied an electric button in a couch, touched it, and soon a man in uniform stood at a door above.

"Who are you?" asked Hogarth.

"John Souttar, head-telegraphist, may it please your Lordship's Majesty".

“Make haste: tell the First Lieutenant and the Chief Constable that the Lord of the Sea is here”.

By now all the revellers were on their feet; no sound: only, the clicking pendulum voyaged, landed an incense-whiff, and voyaged, like traders.

Then the Lieutenant appeared, mottled and panting, and immediately the Constable.

“Ah, Royds”, said Hogarth: “is it practicable to flood this room quickly with a hose?”

“I — should think so, my Lord King”.

“See to it. First set guards at the exits”.

He turned to the other: “Mr. Chief Constable, I give all present, except, of course, your Admiral, into custody, on a charge of misdemeanour on the high seas. The General Prosecutor will, in due course, forward the indictment to your Summary Court. Have your men here with handcuffs”.

Again silence, till, in four minutes, two men appeared on the steps, ball-nozzle in hand; upon which Hogarth said to O’Hara: “Follow me”, and as the two passed up, O’Hara tottery, care hanging on that ponderous nether-lip, Hogarth whispered the hose-bearers: “Drown the room well — man and woman — do not spare”.

To O’Hara he said: “Lead to your suite”, and, descending, they presently stood in a bed-temple, the bed surrounded with mirrors, and at the other end of the apartment an altar — pyx, six unflickering candles, and flowers, with rail and reredos, and maxims of St. Theresa.

Hogarth said: “Sleep two hours”, and went out, turning the key.

But in half an hour O’Hara had started awake, sober, and, clapping his palms over his face, burst into tears.

That Hogarth might be capable of impeachment before a Court of Admirals, followed by death on the block, he feared; and he rolled,

groaning, tugging his tonsure-fringe, which, on the forehead, lay a thin grey forelock, thinking: “Guilty wretch that I am! putrid, unwholesome, hopeless, I have befouled the holiest: how richly do I deserve to die!”; and even as he groaned and smote, his secret mind weighed up the chances of Hogarth’s action.

He rose, listened, rushed to the door, found it locked, tossed up despairing hands, and tottered to the altar, at which he knelt, all sighs, and dying fish-eyes, and sideward-languishing face, and weary woe. Ah! how great the mountain of his iniquity: if he might be but once more spared, his evil remainder of days he would bury in some Carmelite retreat, with fastings and prayers; but no — he had too much tempted the Eternal patience, the sword was out against him. Yet he implored, he implored with groans: with half an eye, meanwhile, on the door; and, having with regard to Hogarth a piece of secret knowledge which he guarded deep for some possible emergency and use (the fact of Hogarth’s Jewish birth), as he prayed, his brain with complete detachment worked out the question whether he might now reveal this with advantage.

Hogarth found him kneeling, said “Get up”, and O’Hara stood, leaning upon the rail, too faint to stand unpropped, Hogarth contemplating him, tapping the toes.

“Well, sir! I know all: your whole past”.

“Red as crimson — !” went O’Hara faintly, with tossed hands.

“Red enough, Admiral. You are a bad old man: merit death”.

“Ah, God knows it, my Lord King! I do assure you, I am a leprous wretch: and I welcome death — I pray you, I pray Heaven, for it—”

“You should have it, if you were a better, or a younger, man: but I will not stain the Empire of which you were chosen to be a stay, and are the shame, with the blood of such as you. You are beneath judgment: and that

clemency which is our scutcheon I extend to you. Live, therefore, and repent, O'Hara. I, however, you understand, now turn from you for ever. And I discharge you like a menial, sir. See to it that within six months you have your affairs regulated, and send in your resignation to the Government”.

He turned and went; and, as he disappeared, O'Hara straightened, coolly went “H'm!”, and took snuff. He lived, he lived: while there is life there is fun.

Fumbling about, searching for nothing, all relieved and rescued, yet stunned, he suddenly exclaimed: “What a noble fellow is my son Hogarth!”, and knelt again.

Hogarth in the same hour was away for England; and on the fourth evening thence, the street-lamps just lit, stood before No. 11 Market Street, Edgware Road, come for Margaret; his carriage waiting at a corner forty yards away; and though within the last hour he had realized vividly that his voyage to the *Mahomet* had given Frankl time to remove her, or accomplish any devilish device in his power with respect to her, he was now all prospect and expectancy.

The house was three-storied, mean, unlighted, with an “area”; from a neighbouring window a woman screaming down to some playing children; and under her a shop sending out that fishy fume which “drove Asmodeus back to hell”.

He rapped, received no answer, rapped again without reply, then stepped down and back, looking up: and suddenly, faintly, but distinctly, he heard her voice, high up — *singing*.

“O what a pretty place,
And what a graceful city,
Where the striplings are so gay,

And the ladies are so pretty “.

It was she! He ran and banged at the door: no reply.

Back again he stepped; and now a window on the top floor went up, and she, putting out her head, twice beckoned him — listlessly, it seemed, then drew in; and instantly — again — he heard her sing.

As once more he ran to the door, he discovered now that it was open, darted into darkness, up uncarpeted stairs, making for that upper room, vague light through grimy stair-windows guiding his impassioned dash; and on the third floor entered a room with two doors, beyond one of which was the room he sought: but that door was locked.

At it he pushed, fumbled, called: “Margaret!” No reply. And suddenly he heard her singing, not before, but behind him.

“Happy day! Happy day!

When Jesus washed my sins away “...

When he flew to the other door, and now found it, too, locked, gradually in that gloom all colour faded from his face; and the voice sang on: “Happy day! happy day”....

XLIII. THE LAND BILL



THE MANIFESTO'S "MONTH of grace" was passing, yet nothing had been done, second-rate Powers awaiting the Great, while the Great, appalled by the bigness of the demand, fussed and intrigued, consulted, fermented and proposed: but did nothing.

But at last, on the 3rd of December, the First Lord of the Treasury laid a Bill on the table of our Commons — at the end of an Autumn-session!

On the 3rd: and on the 1st the Lord of the Sea had been captured near Edgware Road, the probability being that this Bill was brought forward with a knowledge of that capture.

It consisted of three clauses and two schedules — called The Land Purchase Bill; and it had only to be published to produce the stormiest agitation ever known.

The Opposition was the Jew-Liberal-Labour party; and when the Labour Congress (met at Manchester) denounced the measure, there occurred a "split", a Liberal-Labour cave, the whole body of Jews, numbering 87, retiring to the Government ranks.

The Bill proposed the "purchase" of Britain from its "owners" by the British, the price fixed being 27 times the annual value, to be paid in settled annuities for entailed estates, and in consols for unentailed.

So, then, the Government would buy London alone for 1400 millions and Britain for 8000 millions — a bad lookout for England.

And the authors of the Bill chose a moment when Hogarth was living on bread and poisoned water in Market Street.

It rapidly passed to Committee, and then to the Lords.

But on that night a terrifying rumour for the first time pervaded England: that the Lord of the Sea, having come to London at the beginning of the month, was missing, and that his person had been claimed from our Government by the Sea under menaces.

In fact, when a week, two weeks, had passed, and not a whisper from Hogarth, apprehension had turned into certainty in the breasts of Quilter-Beckett, Loveday, and all: and at a hurried Council called in the *Boodah* on the 19th, when the date of Hogarth's landing at Southampton was determined, and his small train-in-waiting, his coachman, re-examined for the twentieth time, one certainty emerged: Frankl had had time to reach England before him; and the arrest of Frankl was demanded.

Now England in consternation almost forgot the Land Bill; Scotland Yard ransacked Market Street: not a trace of Hogarth; it dissected the country for Frankl: but Frankl was now in the *Mahomet*, safely conferring with O'Hara.

The popular tempest first directed itself against the League of Resistance: and at an attack upon its Offices in Victoria Street during the afternoon of the 21st Viscount Reid (the Secretary), and a girl, were killed by missiles; petitions signed by the nation raining meanwhile upon the Prince of Wales: for, apart from the wreck which threatened, Hogarth's popularity was at present considerable with the masses, whose instincts suspected those above them of knowing more of his disappearance than appeared.

On the night of the 22nd, when things had an air of revolution, fifty-three men met in a house in Adair Street, W. (This runs parallel to Market Street, the backs of the two house-rows facing.)

These were the warders of Hogarth: and the object of that night's meeting was to determine whether he should die, and when, and how; the Land Bill now awaiting the Royal Assent; and on the morrow British high-sea trade to be ruthlessly stopped, failing news of Hogarth.

The room was double, with an arch in the partition, through which ran a rough-board table surrounded with velvet arm-chairs; the floor richly carpeted, though paper peeled from the walls; down the table a procession of silver candlesticks and typewritten notice-papers and agenda; the windows boarded — a second floor; and in a room near, Hogarth, shackled hand and foot, he having been borne through a subterranean way, made for the purpose, from the cellar in Market Street to this Adair Street.

From eight o'clock men began to let themselves in at the two doors in both streets, and continued to arrive till nine, when a marquis at the table-head rose to speak, the others leaning back with downcast eyes, nearly all pale.

The point before them was plainly put by the speaker on the Question: viz., whether they had more to fear from the life, or from the death, of the Lord of the Sea.

“By a strange Providence”, he said, “this man is in our hands: and we have the right to become his executioners. My Lords and Gentlemen, the awful decision rests with you to-night”.

Then, one after another, they rose, they spoke: no two views identical; till at ten it was voted that the question be put, voting papers went round, and presently the ballot-result was announced amid a momentous stillness.

Twenty-eight had voted for the death, twenty-five against.

But in that minute a key was heard in the room door, and in rushed two flushed men: Frankl and O'Hara, just arrived in London from the sea; and Frankl burst into speech:

“I hope this is all right, my lords, my coming like this, and bringing into your very midst a gentleman who is not one of us. When I tell you that he is Admiral Donald of the *Mahomet*, turned away like a servant, how does that make your lordships feel? A house divided against itself can’t stand; and this gentleman has a scheme in his pocket — he will read it to your lordships — which will crack up the Empire of the Sea like an egg-shell! So I do hope, my lords, that you have not decided anything hasty about putting away Richard Hogarth: for unless he is liberated this night, it means sure and certain stoppage of everything tomorrow: and *that* means my ruin, and many another’s beside—”

Now the Master called him to order, and addressed himself to O’Hara, who, in admiral’s uniform and stars, all stately bows, grave smiles, in ten minutes had given guarantees, was a member, and in thirty had read a memorandum of a scheme of betrayal which everyone saw to be feasible.

Then the vote of death was annulled; and when the meeting broke up Hogarth was being lifted with bandaged eyes through the subterranean way to Market Street, where four men deposited him near the house-door, undid his ropes, said to him “You are free”, and there he remained twenty minutes without motion, deadly sick, then rose, and, on finding the door, went wildly with dragged feet, tottered into a cab, and leant brow on hand.

As he entered the porch of his Berkeley Square house, Loveday rushed out to his knees with adoring eyes, having hardly hoped to see again that face of Hogarth, while Hogarth patted the bowed head, saying: “Do get me a meal, and let me hear what has been going on....Oh, I am weary “.

And during the meal he heard all: of the Land Bill, the turmoil.

“Well, my God!” he exclaimed, “is there no drop of generous blood at all among those people? Never again do I trust them to make their own arrangements I When does this precious Bill have the Royal Assent?”

“To-morrow, it is supposed”.

“Really!” — he started: “and whereabouts is the Prince of Wales?”

“At Windsor to-night”.

“Order the motor quick. I’ll go”.

He was soon off, and Loveday, listening to the dark story of Margaret’s appearing and singing, and vanishing, accompanied him under a frosty moon, snow lying on village-street and hedge; but, travelling hard, they arrived shortly after one upon a Prince who, a wakeful man that night, sat conferring with Private Secretary and Attorney-General, he having assented to the introduction of the Land Bill, then been alarmed by the storm, and now was confronted with the responsibility of either giving His Majesty’s assent, and earning execration, or refusing it, and taking a step unheard-of since William III.

In that state of embarrassment he was, when the Lord of the Sea was announced, and “It is with heartiest pleasure that I offer to your Lordship’s Majesty my congratulations on this re-appearance”, he said, greatly and gladly surprised, without at all seeming so.

And the two conferred till three, when a secretary, at Hogarth’s dictation, wrote a document and its duplicate: a contract between Prince and King, giving pledges on each side, private, yet most momentous; and each, having signed both copies, retained one.

The next evening the Clerk in the Lords uttered those unusual words: “*Le Roy s’avisera*,” and the country was thrown into transport by the news of the Royal rejection of the Land Bill, processions singing the National Anthem, bells ringing: and for a month the mention of a Royal name in any assembly brought the people to their feet.

Ministers, of course, resigned; and, as the Liberals refused office, writs for a new House were made returnable for the end of January.

XLIV. THE REGENCY



DURING THE NEXT month England was in a general-election turmoil; at the same time a Land Bill in the French Chamber, and one in the Reichstag, was thrown out: whereupon a *ukase* from the *Boodah* announced the raising of sea-rent to 5s. on all ships over 2000 tons after the 1st February, the month of grace over, the “screw tightening”.

Already distress in England was great, coal being at three-and-sixpence, bread at nine pence; a cry had arisen for the Union of Britain with the Sea; and on the 27th of January a plebiscite among the Trade Unions resulted in an affirmative vote of five millions out of an electorate of nine.

Now, at this time the bulletins respecting His Majesty were of a settled depression: he lived, but languished; and it was understood that the new Ministry’s first act would be the appointment of a Regency.

Then appeared a rumour: alterations were going forward at Buckingham Palace on a scale of splendour new to Western mansions; the Prince of Wales had passed three days, from the 17th to the 19th, in the *Boodah*: and the saying went that, on the night of the rejection of the Land Bill, a compact had taken place between the Prince and the Sea for a three years’ Regency of the latter.

Excitement ensued, the matter becoming an election test: and 180 Labour Members, with 70 Liberals were returned pledged to support a Regency of the Sea.

A definite coalition, meantime, had been announced between the Jews and the Conservatives.

Never was election so rolled in dust and noise, in the result the Jews having the casting vote: and if ever race was looked at askance, it was they now by the British.

The session having been opened by Commission, a resolution passed Lords and Commons that the Prince of Wales be empowered to exercise the Royal Authority; whereupon the Prince at the palace, having heard the Address, read a reply, sufficiently startling to the country, though well foreknown to those present: he laid stress upon the new conditions of the world — that phlegmatic eye, which had seen so much, lifting a moment in punctuation to dwell coldly upon his hearers, then coldly reading again; the difficulties, he said, which he was called upon to face on behalf of His Majesty were not lightly to be undertaken, and his fuller answer would be contained in a proposal which he would make in the Lords as a peer of the realm.

The next night in a crowded House he read a speech distinguished by extraordinary dignity and severity: “My lords”, he said at one point, slapping the table, though those eyes remained royally null: “when will your lordships learn to recognize the facts of life?” and, having proposed His Lordship’s Majesty, the Lord of the Sea, to be Regent during His Majesty’s illness, such Regency not to exceed a period of three years, he recommended a plebiscite.

No plebiscite was taken: for within some days the sense of the constituencies was revealed, and the Leader in the Lords received stern hints from the Liberal Leader, which damped pride: so their lordships abstained from Westminster, their Resolution being passed by just a quorum.

The country wondered at the ease with which the whole went off — not knowing that those who might have led resistance had a thought, and a

prospect, inspired by one Pat O'Hara, which comforted them.

And now a Deputation of Five took boat in the *Prince George*, to wait upon the Lord of the Sea in the *Boodah* Throne Room, where the Lord President read the information that they were a Committee appointed to attend His Lordship's Majesty with the Resolutions of the Houses.

"We are instructed", he read, "to express the hope which the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons, entertain, that His Lordship's Majesty, from his regard to the interests of His Majesty the King, will be ready to undertake the weighty and important trust proposed to be invested in His Lordship's Majesty, as soon as an Act of Parliament shall have been passed for carrying the same into effect".

He then read, and delivered, the Resolutions.

Hogarth replied, reading: "My Lords and Gentlemen, I receive the communication which your two Houses have instructed you to make to me with those sentiments of regard which I ever entertain for your two Houses. Deeply impressed with the necessity of tranquillizing the public mind throughout the world, I do not hesitate to accept the office and situation proposed to me".

So the Deputation departs; five days later twelve British battleships surround the *Boodah*, come to accompany the Lord of the Sea to England; and at eleven on the morning of the 9th, his yacht, borne in on the strong thunders of a royal salute, drops anchor in Southampton Water.

He had set so gorgeous a standard of luxury to Europe, that no one dreamed of making his entry into London an ordinary *fête*; and, as the procession traversed the triumphal arches of Piccadilly, he, swept to the gods in the lap of gallant sublimities, plumes, sabres, showering hoofs, squad-troops, outriders, showed to the Prince beside him and to the Czarowitz before him a miniature of Rebecca Frankl.

Some streets cheered — not all much: but during the illuminated night all London seemed to abandon itself to revelry.

The next morning Hogarth went in state to the Chapel Royal for certificate of Communion, attended by heralds, Sergeants-at-mace, sword-of-state, the Duke of York; and after “the service” communicated under a canopy at the hand of the Bishop of London.

Then, on the 14th, Lords and Commons had a final conference over the Regency Bill, when the Assistant of the Parliaments uttered the words: “*Le Roy le Veult*”; and on the 15th, the swearing-in day, a party of grenadiers with colours and fifes marched into the palace grounds, continuously to play “God Save the King”; while yeomen and ushers, together with servants-in-state of the Lord of the Sea, lined the great hall and staircase, life-guardsmen lining a vista of state-apartments ending in a Blue-velvet Room, recently decorated; by 2.30 P.M. Privy Councillors commenced to arrive, till at 3.45 P.M. the Lord of the Sea sent Admiral Quilter-Beckett to the President of the Council, ordering his presence; and presently was himself seen coming up the vista, accompanied by his own household-officers, to the Blue-velvet Room where he sat at the table-head, the Royal personages on each hand, his own officers ranged on each side of the entrance-arch; and now one by one entered the full-dressed Councillors, with bows which he returned, taking seat according to precedence — Canterbury, then the Lord Chancellor, then York; and last came and sat a certain Mr. Forrest, Keeper of the Records.

Hogarth then rose and said:

“My Lords: I understand that by the Act passed by your Parliament appointing me Regent of this Empire, I am required to take certain oaths, as prescribed by the said Act: I am now ready to take these oaths “.

Whereupon rose the Lord Privy Seal, made a reverence, approached, and read, while Hogarth pronounced after him:

“I sincerely promise and swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King George. So help me, God.

“I do solemnly promise and swear that I will truly and faithfully execute the Office of Regent of the King’s Empire according to an Act of Parliament entitled ‘an Act, etc.’, and that I will, etc. So help me, God”.

He then subscribed the two oaths, and after him the Privy Councillors, the Lord President first, as witnesses. It was then delivered to the Record Keeper, who deposited it in a box, while Hogarth presented his Lord’s-Supper certificate: whereupon the Lord President bent the knee and kissed his hand, then the Royal personages, then the Archbishops, advancing in order on both sides.

It was a week of Hope, the turning over of a new leaf, so the spirit of festival reigned, and was deepened when the evening papers that day announced that a *ukase* of the Sea had reduced rent on British ships by 1s. 9d. per ton, and was heightened when during that and the following nights Hogarth dispensed three millions in fÃ¢ting England: his illuminations having no resemblance to those sickly twinklings, tremulous at their own cost, previously deemed good enough for the jubilee-days of an empire; the people were astonished: ample and planetary his mind, his hand right royal, and London, bursting into light, flashed tidings of our earth to Mars. It was incredible then that any had ever wept, or would weep again; the bitterest foes of the Regent caught the contagion of world-gala; Europe flocked to London; theatres were gratis; the illusion of the comet of the final night was complete, her lurid rays sprawling 2000 feet aloft in stiff portentousness, prophesying Change, the parks all transfigured into universes of moons, crescents, stars, jerbs, Roman-candles, *pots de brin*, girandoles of rockets,

pagodas, marquees, each tree a net of fireflies, while from five hundred and thirty balloons, with silent burst, snowed diverse fires.

The new reign opened with promise.

XLV. ESTRELLA, THE PROPHETESS



FOR THREE WEEKS a Provisional Ministry carried on the Government, confining itself to Supply; till, on the 3rd March, the Lord Regent succeeded in forming a Cabinet; and at 9 on the evening of the 5th for the first time addressed himself to the country in the House of Lords.

That night the world seemed hushed to listen, the peridom of Britain packing the Gallery with rainbow, and the peerdom those benches and cross-benches, red as massacre and the Scarlet Woman, where thronged 580, while to Charing Cross spread the crowd without. He, from the Throne, addressed them, and they, startled by the revelation of a caste chaster far than Vere de Vere, and a pride far more serenely throned than Hohenzollern, acknowledged him high-born... “Your lordships will not fail to perceive my will to invigorate some of our ancient epithets: thus, the First Estate of the Realm shall, during the present Regency, be veritably ‘First’, and in no case last”; anon he blew his bugle: “Let us play the man! — easy to say, hard to do: yet it was first said by an Englishman when the doing, I think, was hard enough, his martyr’s shroud already rapt aloft in flame: *that* was magnanimous, my lords, I declare! *there* was the British Lion”....

That same night a new Land Bill was introduced by Sir Robert Wortley, the Prime Minister — a bill drafted, criticized, and re-altered during two years by the legal experts of the Sea, proposing the “purchase” of Great Britain at a price of twice the annual value for inherited land, and seven times for land held by purchase: this to be paid in two and seven years

respectively, without interest, lands yielding no revenue to become crown-lands from the date of the Bill, which was called: Land Department (Creation) Bill.

It passed first reading; but the question was: would the Jews vote for the second reading? Reluctant enough the Jewish members, but there were rumours that the Jewish electorate were instructing their representatives to repent and vote for.

And now spread far the League of Resistance, so did the Adair Street Society, its secret daughter, of which Admiral Donald (O'Hara) had now been elected Honorary Vice-Master, and whose Roll contained the names of an extraordinary number of Territorial officers.

The Society was busy: had building four yachts, all models of the Admiral's yacht attached to the *Mahomet*, which was called the *Mahomet II*; every dusk companies of 25 to 40 men drilled darkly in the back yard at Adair Street, some of them Territorial officers: in rotation they came, they drilled, over 1000; a top room piled with revolvers, swords, bowie-knives...

For the land-magnates laughed at the notion of submitting to the Bill: rather, said they, "rivers of blood". The mention by Hogarth of Ridley and Latimer they considered irrelevant; their fathers' heroic mood was a detail: not an entail.

In secret they met. Anarchists of the reddest hue.

One night when the Bill was approaching second-reading Frankl introduced Harris as a member; and wide-eyed stood Harris, though still cynical, with elegant walking-stick, hat cocked, and "I sye", he whispered, "are all these real, living lords?"

"Large as life", answered Frankl.

"Strike me dotty! The Lord said unto my lord, sit thou at my right hand"...the reason of this introduction of Harris being a relation which had

arisen between the Army and the Lord Regent, who had been taking a startling interest in this branch of the services, had visited Aldershot, and held five reviews, flattering the soldier by private notice, shifting officers. By an Order in Council of the 3rd March, a reorganization was effected in the Army Board and Consultative Council, of the new men the Adjutant-General being General Sir Merrick Parr, uncle of Admiral Parr of the sea-fort *Shakespeare*, while the Commander-in-Chief and Inspector-General were the direct creations of the Regent, and the whole Headquarters Staff bound to follow him through thick and thin; and that “second reading” was near, which, if the Jews would vote against, well and good for Adair Street, but, if not, there remained either (1) the prompt execution of O’Hara’s scheme without waiting for the four yachts, copies of the *Mahomet II*, which were slow in building; or (2) the knife of Harris.

But, as to (1), when three delegates from the Society had waited upon O’Hara in the *Mahomet* to urge immediate action, O’Hara had replied: “No, my lords, I cannot enter into this undertaking until preparations are complete, since the troops we send would never be allowed to land on the forts, if they arrived in ships not apparently our own. Your lordships cannot be more anxious than I to rid the earth of a devouring lion like Richard Hogarth, I do assure you; but, tut, is there nothing else meanwhile? Just let me introduce to your lordships a little young man whom I know” — he had summoned Harris.

But when the three delegates had gone, he had struck his brow, exclaiming: “Wretch that I am! — that great and good fellow, the fairest of the sons of men!...what a black depravity must be in this heart—” he had underlooked in the mirror, and cut a face; “but ah, Hogarth! this heart is in your net; and I loved the mother, too”....

He had sought the altar, and that night had written piteously to Hogarth, appealing for fresh friendship and reconsideration of his sentence of dismissal.

So, at any rate, was Harris introduced to Adair Street, became its chief minister, and ten days before the second-reading debate had won, by O'Hara's recommendation, an *entr e* into the Palace as servant to a gentleman-usher-daily-waiter: and now he made bright the knife of the assassin, tending its edge as a gardener the tender sprout, the knife being his *m tier* and forte, he despising the noisy, mediate, uncertain pistol, nor could use it, his instincts belonging to the Stone Age. But the days passed, and he could by no means get near to Hogarth.

One night he boldly penetrated to the royal antechamber with the knife under his waist-band, having passed the stairs-guard by a specious official envelope. As it was late, he thought it must be about the Regent's bedtime, having the vaguest ideas as to royal ways and bedtimes, Hogarth being then in a consultation with three of the Cabinet destined to last till morning. And Harris: "Can I see the Lord Regent?" with that lifted brow of perpetual surprise and alertness.

"You? Who are you?" asked a gentleman-in-waiting.

"That's neither 'ere nor there, if it comes to that. I'm Captain Macnaghten's man, then".

"But what is it you want?"

"He told me to give the Regent this 'ere" — showing the envelope.

"Weally! then, give it to me".

"He said I was to give it to the Regent's self".

"Then, go to blazes quickly, will you? and let Captain Macnaghten know from me that he has been dwinking".

Harris could not penetrate the ten-fold barrier; but he lay in wait; watched from some coign every Royal exit and entrance, careful that Hogarth never saw his face; and he cherished the knife-edge.

One night, four days before the debate, he stood by the Green Park railings, listless, smoking, when — he started: saw a hurried figure come out — face muffled — Hogarth! — alone.

Hogarth walked a little, entered a cab; Harris, in another, shadowed him.

Down Piccadilly, the Hammersmith Road, into the Addison: Hogarth alighted; Harris followed.

Now, at this time Hogarth had a spy, who presented him reports of the doings of Rebekah Frankl — a species of literature which the Regent found agreeable; and, as for two days Rebekah had, for some reason, been at a villa of Addison Road, this escapade of the Lord Regent was motivated by his hope of catching there some glimpse of her, the house being small, he having seized his first chance of secret escape from state-affairs near midnight: and behind him, like the shadow of death, stole the assassin.

Hogarth, going soft up to the house, leaned aside from the frontage steps to peer; but Venetian blinds barred him from the least sight of the interior, though he could hear sounds, strange sounds, as of wailing; and, as the villa was in the midst of quite a spacious ground, well grown with trees and shrubberies, he stole round to the back, peered into an open door level with the garden, and within saw a doorway of twilight in the midst of darkness; had hoped to see a servant, who might talk gossip, or even contrive him sight of the Sacred Body; had ready bribe in hand: but nobody there. So, after some hesitation, he entered; and Harris, just then come to the house-corner on tiptoe, discerned him go in, ran on hot bricks to the door, and now distinctly saw Hogarth, who had passed through a kitchen, standing on three

wooden steps before a doorway which framed a faint light in the room beyond.

On which a shivering of eagerness, quick as winking sheet-lightning, shook Harris' right knee.

Hogarth, meantime, having seen the chamber before him empty, in his headlong way had entered, and the guess now in Harris' mind was this: "It's a girl: a night out"....

He hesitated, Hogarth being once within the house and lost to him, but after some minutes dared to follow.

Hogarth, meantime, had seen that the light came from a death-taper, with which was a vessel of water for ceremonial purification, and a napkin, here being all the preparations for *tahara* (washing); and suddenly, in a near room, arose the clamorous dole of *shivah* (the seven mourning-days), Rachel weeping for her children, because they are not: a Jew was dead: "shema, Yisrael...": and this explained Rebekah's stay there, for the bereaved may not leave the house. A peer at the bed — a covered face — pierced him with a compunction like shame: here was *kodesh*, and he a desecrator with his earthy passion: so he turned to beat a retreat by the way he had come — when a faint sound that way, made by Harris; and, instead, he leapt lightly through a window five feet above the garden.

Some moments later Harris, entering on prowling all-fours, and seeing the bed-clothes hang immediately near, stole under; waited: no sound save the singsong lament; and "O Gawd", thought he, cynic even in his palest agitation, "there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth"....But that Hogarth had not come to wail and gnash he felt convinced: if he heard no sound above him, that might be because of the sounds around; so he crawled barely out, and, kneeling, put up a most cautious groping hand, the bed being in the darkest part of the room; someone there: and swiftly as a

dolphin twists to dart and snap, his knife was in a breast and instantly ready to strike its expected bedfellow.

But the breast was alone, the breast of Estrella, the Prophetess, four days dead.

Harris snatched off the face-cloth, peered upon a noble old visage, fixed now in trance, and said: "Well, I'm—"

Now he ran, but in the kitchen stopped wild-eyed. It I might be murder—he was not certain; at least it was out-rage, and he might be traced: there was the cabman who had brought him — his absence from the Palace—"Bah! it can't be proved...." But still, if he were even arrested, and Hogarth got to hear of his presence about the Court — that would spoil all. He listened: all that part of the house a settled solitude, the servants themselves sitting *shivah*; and back he ran, seized upon the little old body, not now stiff, *rigor mortis* having passed, saw that the sheet was unstained, and snatched her away out to the bottom of the garden where shrubbery and holly-hedge formed a jungle.

Now he set to dig with hissing haste; and, even as he hissed and digged, he talked without pause, envenomed, heaping her sanctity with insult: "Old cat you...dust to dust and ashes to ashes, it is....What you want to do that for? under you go in the cold, cold sod....Who arst you to put your little finger in the pie? There's another one for you, fair in the gullet! Now take her up tenderly, lift her with care-and down she goes"....

Such were Estrella's *kaddish* and "House of Life"....As he had only the knife, and the work was slow, and in the midst of it an outcry from the house, the body missed, he stopped, listening, but without acute fear, knowing it improbable that they could dream of seeking in the grounds, and as a matter of fact their minds were a mere paralysis of holy wonder; so

presently he had the little body in a two-foot grave, arranged surface and dead leaves to naturalness, leapt a wall, and got away.

Never did act of assassin have result so momentous: for though the predictions of Estrella had lately spread far among upper-class Jews, it was only on the day after her burial by Harris that her fame reached to each Jew under the sun.

It was given out that divine confirmation had been vouchsafed to her prophecies by the snatching of her body, like Enoch's, into Heaven, or by its burial, like Moses', by Jahvah: for when no explanation but one is extant, the brain fastens upon that, and embraces it.

And as Estrella, who, in life, had guarded her hard sayings for the few, had left papers revealing for her whole race what she had dreamed, like wildfire now ran her message among the Chosen.

Now Temple and Synagogue were crowded: rabbi and pawnbroker and *maggid*, clothes-man and *takif*, were infected; and there spread the cry (for the most part meaningless): "To Zion!"

It may be that the Jewish electorate were now too agitated with the near probability of Shiloh to interest themselves in any mundane question: at all events, it was during that rage that the Government-whips announced the certainty that the Jewish members would vote against the Land Bill.

Hogarth first heard it pretty late at night from the Prime Minister; and "Ha!-the Jews", he went: "so they have dared, these men? I never thought that they would! May God deliver me from His ill-chosen people — !"

"And ill-choosing, it seems, my Lord King".

"Quite so! But, Sir Robert Wortley, is it supportable this thing?" — a brand now on his brow— "an alien race in Britain opposing thus daringly not *my* will only, but the plain will of the people? And have I the air of one who will support it? Rather, I assure you, would I govern without a

Parliament! But stop — perhaps I shall be found capable of dealing with these mischievous children of Israel. Give me a night: and to-morrow at noon come, and hear. Of course, this second-reading business must be postponed “.

And deep and wide, in lonely vigil, wrought the Regent's thought that night, till morning: of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of tendencies, histories, soils, ports, railways, possibilities, race-genius, analogies, destinies; of Rothschild and I Solomon; of Hirsch and Y'hudah Hanassi; of the Jewish Board of Guardians, Rab Asa, and the Targum on the Babylonish Talmud; of the Barbary Jews, the Samaritans, and Y'hudah Halevi; of the Colonial Bank, and the Karaite Jews....

When at dawn he threw himself dressed into bed, he had resolved upon a very great thing: their expulsion from England, Pole and Hungarian, Baron and coster, and the little child at the breast, ten millions.

His eyes had closed toward sleep when, with a start, he remembered a prophecy uttered one evening in the *Boodah* Throne-room, and these words: “Richard, deal gently with my people....”

Two nights later, with a retinue, he hurriedly left England-for Constantinople.

XLVI. THE ORDER IN COUNCIL



THREE DAYS BEFORE that setting-out, O'Hara's appeal for pardon had come under the Regent's notice: and as he had read, his eyes — once more — had softened, as he had thought: "It would be a great crime to forgive him the long list; but never mind — we will see"....

And he had meant to reply, but suddenly the Jews had swept O'Hara quite out of his mind.

He was away hardly two weeks: and when he returned, Palestine and western Armenia were his, all his acts of this period bearing resemblance in largeness and rage to the incredible forced-marches of Napoleon.

If one spreads apart the first two fingers, he sees exactly the country ordained by Hogarth for modern Israel: the first finger Palestine, looking upon the Mediterranean; between the fingers, the Syrian Desert; the second (longer) finger that Mesopotamia, "the cradle of our race" between the Euphrates and the Tigris, this opening upon the Persian Gulf, and the trade of the East.

The then population of this area was only 300,000 (Arabs, Turks, Jews, Greeks) in the Palestine finger, omitting Russian pilgrims to Jerusalem; while in the Mesopotamia finger — all that Hinterland of Palestine called "Turkish Armenia" — not 320,000 Armenians had been left by Khurdish rapine and Turkish atrocity: we may therefore say that the whole was an uninhabited land waiting for inhabitants.

The only things needed (according to modern notions) to make it immediately colonizable were roads and railways, and the Regent had not

returned to Dover when both were making in Palestine, the Sultan, left thunderstruck with a chronic eye of scare by that visit, “lending his co-operation”, consoled meanwhile by a Conversion Loan of thirteen millions out of Sea-revenue; to which add a grant-in-aid of fifteen millions to the emigrants, and the remark of Hogarth’s Chancellor about this time becomes intelligible: “Your Lordship’s Majesty’s expenditure is exceeding revenue by 50 per cent”; so that Beech’s was soon realizing considerably in bonds over Europe, and Hogarth temporarily poor — had stubbornly refused any Parliament-grant for the Regent’s personal establishment.

And suddenly from the blue fell his bolt: at that same table of the Regent’s oath-of-office assembled eighty-seven Jewish lords and gentlemen at noon of the 24th March, the first day of the month Nisan in the Jewish year 5699, ordered, each by himself, to the Royal presence; and the Regent, with the gravest eyes, both palms pressed on the table, in an embarrassment of compunction, rose and spoke with them — Rothschild and merchant-prince, Chief Rabbi, Manchester Chief Minister, Heads of the Alliance Israëℓite, Anglo-Jewish Association, Jewish Board, Jewish philanthropists, writers; and they could not believe themselves awake.

He began by speaking of himself, the fact of his power, with such graciousness, that all were affected, not by the power, but by the gentleness which wielded it: Providence had given him the disposal of the earth, and it was for him to do his poor best — a lonesome, sorrowful post; so that talking could never alter in anything the main point; but it could modify details: and he had called them to invoke their great administrative gift and expert counsel; he told of the exodus which he designed, the home which he had prepared them; recommended a Sanhedrim of Chief Jews to form the Provisional Government of the new State, with the Chief Rabbi as its head under the title of Shophet (Judge); would offer a contribution of Â£

15,000,000 from his Exchequer toward an emigration and colonizing fund, and doubtless emigration bureaus would be at once established at principal centres; he would also hand over a Deed of Gift of this larger Judaea as between the Sea and the Jewish people to the Central Authority as soon as established; also, duplicates of the text of the Treaty as between the Sea and the Ottoman Empire. What he gave he gave, he assured them, with a free heart, without condition; except, of course, one: that no inch of the new land should ever “belong” to any particular Jew: for he gave, as Nature gave the earth, not to a hundred, but to all, living and to be born, occupiers to pay rent, not to any adventurer calling himself landlord, but to the Central Authority, representing all. This done, he would invoke with confidence upon their able race the blessing of Almighty God.

In tones so mellow did he utter himself, that for many minutes stillness reigned, every face pale.

Until a baron stood up with ashen under-lip, to say that such a scheme, it seemed to him, must remain for ever abortive, unless enforced by Act of Parliament —

But Hogarth checked him quick.

“No, my lord, not by Act of Parliament: the how your lordship may leave to me. I dare say you will see it in this evening’s papers”.

It was by an Order in Council!

* * * * *

“DECLARATION of the Court of Great Britain respecting the Order in Council.

“At the Court at Buckingham Palace, the 24th day of March, his Lordship’s Majesty, the Lord Regent, in Council.

“WHEREAS His Lordship’s Majesty was pleased to declare in the name and on behalf of His Majesty the King on the 23rd day of March: THAT if at any time, after the expiration of the three months following, any of the hereinafter mentioned trades, occupations, pursuits, or acts, shall be carried on or done within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland by any person being a person coming within the sense of the term “Jew” as hereinafter defined, THEN and thereafter such person shall be liable to the pains and penalties hereinafter specified”.

* * * * *

No Jew might own or work land, or teach in any Cheder or school, or be entered at any Public School or University, or sign any stamped document, or carry on certain trades, or vote, or officiate at any public service, and so on: parentage, not religion, constituting a “Jew”. Through Britain this piece of Russian despotism sent a wave of quiet gladness, and an epidemic of jest broke out, in club, factory, “Lane”, and drawing-room: “You hurry up — to Jericho!” became the workman’s answer to a Jew; it was remarked that the chimney of train and steamship would furnish a new pillar of cloud by day, and pillar of fire by night, to go before the modern Exodus; they were little to be pitied, for even Heaven was their mortgagor in land, with promise to pay — the Promised Land; a syndicate would be formed to “pool” milk and honey, and either Sharon or Salem would become the new Get-O at any price; being a rather Peculiar People, they would call the new Temple “the ‘Ouse” (of Prey-ers), and make contango-day coincide with Passover....But let him laugh that is of a merry heart: as for Israel, with weary breast and hunted stare he sandalled his foot for the final Exodus: yet not as them without hope. Already — some days before the Order in Council — the disappearance of Estrella’s body, her daring prophecies, had led to the

embarkation of 700 Jews for Palestine; and when the Regent's Edict gave startling confirmation of her prediction of "the Return", in many a million hearts thrilled the certainty: "the Day of the Lord is nigh!"

And with that their stoicism and organizing strength, they mutely turned to follow the finger of Destiny: their *takifs* (rich men), hard upon the unchosen, were, as usual, liberal to their own, the fund swelled, and a Committee left England for the accumulation of stores and implements; at the same time two Parliament Bills were passed in two sittings, empowering the purchase by Government of land "owned" by Jews on Land Bill terms, and quickening the machinery for the collection of debts due to Jews.

Whereupon, "You see", said the Chief Rabbi, "he drives us out: but he makes us aprons — if only of fig-leaves — to cover us. Let us bow to his rod, and thank him, and go: he is God's Minister".

So they went: the world's mercantile marine having been summoned, sea-ports were turned into caravansaries of gabardine and ear-lock: the Exodus began.

In the midst of which it came to the knowledge of the Regent that the house of Frankl was making ready for departure.

And now Hogarth rebelled against Heaven: self-forgetfully he did his best, and it returned and struck him dead: for what good, he thought, would his life do him, she always in Asia, he in Europe?

He wrote to her, a passionate hotch-potch of command and grovelling supplication: if she went, he would curse her; would go mad; would blaspheme God; would throw up everything; would die.

He had promised to go down to Oxford to receive a degree, and as up to the time of his departure she had not replied, he went half-unconscious of himself and those about him.

Now, upon Adair Street the Expulsion had brought despair, the second-reading now assured, the Jews' vote over, and new writs issued; the second-reading debate was actually in progress at that date of the Oxford visit; and though the four yachts, copies of the *Mahomet II*, were being rapidly put together, the Bill, if at all pressed, must get through before they could be ready; nor could the House of Lords long delay its passage.

There remained Harris, so far ineffectual, but not therefore hopeless: so he, spurred, went down to Oxford.

But what Harris could not do was to get near to Hogarth: his task was, as it were, to pluck Venus from the firmament; but he mused, he mused upon her, with musing astrologic eye, with grand patience, fascinated by her very splendours, not without hope. When at 8 P.M. a banquet was served to 250 guests in the Radcliffe Library, the upper gallery being open to a crawling public to see the lions feed, Harris, watching thence the unattainable under the blue of the canopy — blue always in honour of the Sea — thought within himself: "Ah, Mr. 76, you've got it all, ain't you? — for the time being. But 'ow'd you feel if I had a pistol now? Gawd! I can just see him nicely curl and kick. Worse luck, I can't shoot a bloomin' 'ouse".

But the opportunity was so exquisite, that he resolved to try — the exit reached, would run, get a pistol, and return; but at the door itself a hand touched his shoulder, and, with a twist of guilty scare, he saw — O'Hara.

"Good Gawd!" he whispered, "what you want to startle anybody like that for? Don't you know that the wicked flea pursueth every man, but the righteous shall escape his filthy snare?"

"What are you doing here, boy?" asked O'Hara.

"Thick-head! ain't I down 'ere after this precious Mr. 76?" — for Hogarth, if Monarch of the Sun, would have remained for Harris only a

glorified 76, Colmoor being for him the reality of the universe, all else mirage, such stuff as dreams are made of.

“Well”, said O’Hara, “come with me: want to talk to you” — he just come from the *Mahomet* through Spain and France, drawn to Hogarth as moths to a candle, his petition for pardon not yet answered; and he assumed that Hogarth’s wrath still blazed, though, in fact, answer was only delayed by competition of greater interests, Hogarth having forgotten O’Hara; at any rate, O’Hara, with shrinking qualms, had come to Oxford, thinking: “I will try and get at him for one more talk — I am not afraid of your eyes, my son: tut! I’ve seen the great brow in a prison-cap. And the haughty beast still loves old Pat at bottom, I do declare. Be bold, be bold, but not *too* bold....Well, I will! And, if I perish, I perish, and he perishes, too, so help me, God”....

And to Harris, walking by the towing-path, he said: “No, boy, don’t you. Not now. Tut! — those lords: they are only making you their tool. Don’t you understand? Hogarth is robbing from them the land which they have robbed from the British people, and they naturally wish to murder him: but what have *you*, or I, to do with that? Let the thieves fight it out between them, while we enjoy ourselves, if we can. Weren’t we happy in the *Mahomet*, boy — we two? Didn’t you roll whole weeks drunk? That was better than Colmoor, eh, Alfie? And didn’t I have my incense, my grapes, my little Circassian, and ten thousand pounds in yellow gold a year? Wasn’t that all right? Well, we may have it again! — not in the *Mahomet*, perhaps, but somewhere. Do nothing — not yet: till I give the word. If you *must* kill, get a dog, or a horse, or an obscure old man, not the Regent of England—”

“Dirty old swine!” cried Harris, angry, “aven’t I forbid you again and again from making game of me? You’re doing it now! You just try that on, and go up thou bald-head, it *is*!”

“But is this understood between us?”

“Old duffer! you are one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow: there’s no knowing how to tyke you. You’re such a sinful old ‘ypocrite, that you play-act before yourself, I do believe. What is it you do mean? You myke anyone sick of you; your incense and your burnt sacrifices are an offence unto me. This Mr. 76 once put a knife into me, and I mean to put another into him: ‘ow’s that?”

“Not now!”

“‘Ow about your sweet friend, Frankl? I’m under contract with him, ain’t I?”

“Better put the knife into Frankl”.

“Into the pair of you, it strikes me!”

“Well, if you make the least attempt upon Hogarth now, you get not another shilling—”.

“Bah! shut that — !”

But the threat won sullen consent; and when after the Banquet the Oxford guests had driven to see the illuminations, spoiled by boisterous Spring-winds, and when the Regent returned to his chambers, he caught sight of O’Hara amid the throng that lined the stair; upon which, after stepping up past, he stopped, twisted round, to say: “You, Admiral Donald?”

“If I might speak ten minutes with your Lordship’s Majesty—”

“What about?”

Those bold eyes of O’Hara dropped.

“Well”, said the Regent, “I will see. Come to-morrow — about five,” and went on up.

The next morning the Degree was conferred in the theatre, Doctor of Common Law— “an appropriate one”, the Master of Balliol remarked,

“though ‘Surgeon’ would perhaps be the *mot juste*”; and thus at last Hogarth donned cap-and-tassel, though not Frankl’s — a livery which drew from Harris the reflection: “Sweet beauty! — in his mortarboard”. The nip upon the brow of the college-cap peak resembled the nip of the Scotch prison-cap, awaking memories: but the symbolism was different.

Meantime, the Regent’s eye wandered, madness and folly in his heart, and fear, till at four a letter came, he having left Loveday at Buckingham Palace with instructions to open letters and send the One.

She had written:

“What you can expect of me I am unable to conceive. Have you not expelled me? Let us be worthy of our long friendship, and ‘play the man’....’My exaltation to afflictions high’....With prayers for you, I say good-bye: and will remember.

“REBEKAH FRANKL”.

Loveday had added: “She left London at noon for Southampton. Purchas followed to spy. Machray’s other detective waits in Palace for instructions”.

As to the dinner in Christ Church Hall, and the Ball, which were to end the program of this last day, at four-thirty the news spread that the Regent had been taken ill.

“Have you not expelled me?”...Was she angry? Did *she* not know that he meant well? Hogarth, breaking into a rage, leapt up, with, “I swear to God that not one step does she move out of this country — !” and rushed to a bell: a gentleman-usher came.

“What about going?”

“All will be ready in fifteen minutes, my Lord King”.

“I feel bad: say ten minutes; tell the Lord Chamberlain”.

“Yes. I might mention — did your Lordship’s Majesty grant a ten minutes’ audience to Admiral Donald for this hour?”

“*Who?* Yes, I think — Just kick him down the stairs! Or no — say I may see him some day”.

This message, as the usher dashed through, was faithfully dropped at O’Hara’s consciousness; and O’Hara said: “Hoity-toity...!”

Bent-backed he descended to the Quadrangle, with a sense of defeat, rebuff, contumely, rage, but quite sprightly said to Harris, waiting beyond the Gateway: “Well, boy, how can we make a night of it? I feel that way”.

“Seen Mr. 76?”

“Tut, no. Sharpen up that knife for his throat, boy!”

And Harris exclaimed: “Another chynge! Strike me silly! — what did I sye? Give me a new ‘eart, O Lawd, it *is* — you grey-haired old duffer. Chopping and chynging, always the syme — to your old wife Jyne. I’d be ashamed of myself in your plyce. But sharpen up the knife, it *is*”.

XLVII. THE EMIGRANTS



LATE THE SAME night the Regent received at the Palace a telegram about Rebekah: She had travelled alone to Southampton, where a landau at the station had awaited her, in which she had driven to a country-house near the Itchen named “Silverfern”, two miles from Bitterne Manor, in which lived an elderly gentleman, Mr. Abrahams, ark-opener and scroll-bearer in the Synagogue, with his wife and two sons. The passage of these, and of Rebekah, was booked by the *Calabria*, Jewish emigrant-ship, to sail in four days.

Hogarth no sooner heard these tidings than he tumbled into crime: resolved to kidnap Rebekah; to break his own law for his own behoof: one of the basest acts of a King.

He had four days: and by the end of the second four men lay in wait round “Silverfern”, one a sea-fort sub-lieutenant, one a detective, and two others very rough customers: a cottage having been hired by them for the reception of Rebekah in a dell a mile higher up the Itchen.

But something infects the world; and gravity badgers the bullet’s trajectory; and a magnetic “H” disturbs the needle; and “impossible” roots turn up in the equation; and the finger of God is in every pie.

Hence, though the four ravishers lay in wait, and actually effected a seizure, the Regent did not get his girl.

None of the four had ever seen her: but as there was no young lady except her at “Silverfern”, that seemed of no importance, so she had been only described to them as dark and pretty.

But on the night after Rebekah's arrival, there came to "Silverfern" a new inmate: Margaret Hogarth.

Her passage, too, was booked to Palestine.

For Frankl had said: "In expelling the Jews, he shall expel his own sister. Oh, that's sweet, after all!"

At this time Frankl's interest in Land Bill and England was dead, two interests only remaining to him: so to realize his share in the Western world as to reach Jerusalem loaded with wealth; and also, not less intense, to hurt Hogarth, to outwit him, to cry quits at the last.

It was hard — Hogarth being set so high; but he invoked the help of the Holy One (blessed be He): and was not without resource.

Why had Hogarth never had him seized, racked? What restrained the Regent *now*? That was a question with Frankl. Hogarth might say, even to himself, that Frankl was vermin too small to be crushed, that he waited for his sister from God; but lately the real reason had grown upon Frankl: it was because Hogarth *was afraid* of him! afraid that Frankl, if persecuted beyond measure, might blurt out the Regent's convict past, and raise a sensation of horror through the world not pleasant to face. Harris, O'Hara, Rebekah and Frankl alone knew that past, and the motives for silence of the first three were obvious; nor had Frankl whispered that secret even to his own heart in his bed-chamber, conscious of his own guilt in the matter of the Arab Jew's death, fearing that, if the wit and power of Hogarth were given motive to move heaven and earth, the real facts might not be undiscoverable: then would Frankl be ground to fine powder by the grinders. But if he was going to Palestine, what mattered?

Also, there was Margaret: she should go out as a Jewess.

She arrived at "Silverfern" in the charge of a Jewish clerk, and the Abrahams received her as an afflicted orphan, committed to Frankl by her

father; she, like Rebekah, to go under their care.

Well, the evening before the departure, Mr. and Mrs. Abrahams, their two sons, Rebekah and Margaret, all go for a stroll — about nine o'clock, that morning one of the four ravishers having been to the house on some pretence, seen Margaret with Mrs. Abrahams under the porch, and noted her well, her grey tailor-gown, her brooch, her singing; and now, as all walked out under the moon, they were watched, the watchers, surprised at the presence of *two* young ladies, concluding that the smaller — Rebekah — must have arrived later: so upon the large and shapely form of Margaret their gaze fastened, as the party passed near their hedge of concealment, Margaret then remarking: “My name is Rachel Oppenheimer—” and Mrs. Abrahams with gentle chiding answering her: “No, be good: your name is Ruth Levi”.

For during two years at the Jewish Asylum at Wroxham they had tilled into her shrieking brain, “Now, be good: your name is Rachel Oppenheimer”, and one day she had said: “My name *is* Rachel Oppenheimer”, and had been saying it ever since.

In fact, there was a real Rachel Oppenheimer, a dependent of Frankl's, at Yarmouth, who was rather mad, and when it had been necessary that Margaret should be out of the way in order to secure Hogarth's conviction, two doctors had examined this Rachel Oppenheimer, and given the legal certificates by means of which Frankl had put away Margaret; and she during two years of sanity in an atmosphere of lunacy had screamed for pity, till one morning she had shewed the stare, the unworldly rapture, and had started to sing her old songs.

After which, Frankl, hearing of it, and touched by some awe, had got her out, and kept her in one retreat or another.

But in all her madness was mixed some memory of his devilish heart, and every fresh sight of him inspired her with panic, she in his presence hanging upon his eyes, instant to obey his slightest hint: hence her beckoning down to Hogarth from that window in Market Street.

Now, on this last night of England the Abrahams party strolled far, two days like Summer days having come, on hedge and tree now tripping the shoots of Spring, the moon-haunted night of a mild mood: so from “Silverfern” lawns they passed up a steep field northward, down a path between village-houses, and idled within a pine-wood by the river-side.

The moon’s glow was like one luminous ghost: and buttercup, daisy, snowdrop, primrose gathered Margaret, vagrant, flighty, light to the winds that wafted her as fluff, and tossed them suddenly aloft, and back they came to be tangled in her bare hair; and now she was a tipsy bacchante, singing:

“Will you come to the wedding?

Will you come?

Bring you own bread and butter,

And your own tea and sugar,

And we’ll all pay a penny for the Rum”.

“Poor Ruth!” — from Rebekah, an arm about her waist.

“There is such a huge pool which is wheeling”, said Margaret, gazing at it with surprise, “and it goes hollow in the middle: my goodness, it does wheel! and there is a little grey duck in it ranging round and round with it, and this little grey duck is singing like an angel”.

“Do you know where we are going to?” asked Rebekah: “to the land of our fathers, Ruth, after all the exile in this ugly Western world; and it is he who sends us, the fierce-willed master of men”.

“My name”, said Margaret, “is Rachel Oppenheimer”; and immediately, wafted like a half-inflated balloon which leaps to descend a thousand feet

away, she sang:

“Happy day! Happy day!

When Jesus washed my sins away...”

Then, woe-begone, she shook her head, and let fall her abandoned hand; and Rebekah, speaking more to herself: “Did you never hear of Hogarth, the King, Ruth? or see him in some dream in shining white, with a face like the face in the bush which burned and was not consumed?”

But now Margaret laughed, crying out: “Oh, there’s a man riding a shorthorn bull that has wings; white it is: and up they fly, the bull pawing and snorting, all among the stars. Oh, and now the man is falling! — my goodness—”

She stood still, gazing at that thing in heaven.

“Well, what has become of the man, dear?” asked Rebekah.

“I can’t make out....But I should like to marry that man”.

“Ah, if wishes were fathers, we should all have babies, Ruth, to say our *kaddish*”.

“Oh, look — !” cried Margaret.

A rabbit had rushed across a path ahead, and she ran that way beyond a bend....When Rebekah followed she had disappeared.

On Rebekah’s outcry all set to search wood, path, river — she was gone; but after five minutes a voice a long way off in the wood, singing:

“O what a pretty place,

And what a graceful city....”

on which the two youths flew toward the sound, and presently the rest, following, heard a shout, a cry, then silence, till one of the young men came running back, his face washed in blood: he had seen some forms, and, as he

had approached, been struck on the brow, his brother felled. When all came to where the brother lay insensible, no sign of Margaret; nor could villagers and police, searching through the night, find her.

She had gone without surprise with her four captors, who had carried her to a cottage of boarded-up windows: and the same hour Hogarth had the news.

The next morning the four received detailed instructions at the village *poste restante*: the lady-attendant at the cottage was to ask the prisoner if she would go to London, try to persuade her, and, if she consented, make her sign pledge of honour (enclosed) to go without any attempt at escape during three days.

The men were surprised: for that Margaret was deranged they had seen at once, and supposed that the Regent must know it: what, then, could her pledge do? Their business, however, was to obey: and when Margaret was asked: “Will you go quietly to the Palace in London with us?” she answered: “Yes!” and sang:

“Here we go to London-town:
Tri-de-laddie! Tri-de-laddie!
See the King with his golden crown,
Tri-de-laddie, O!”

By noon the Abrahams and Rebekah were being tugged out of harbour, to the hand-wavings and god-speeds of seven emigrant-boats by the quay; but it was not till five that the Regent’s emissaries could obtain a special train on the thronged lines; and not till after seven did they arrive with Margaret at the Palace-gates.

Now, that night the Lord Regent and the Prince of Wales were attending a banquet at the Guildhall, given in honour of sea-rent reduction on British

ships, and at the moment when Margaret arrived Hogarth, already *en route*, thinking of Rebekah, muttered: “By now she is here!”

But since Frankl, on getting news of the disappearance of Margaret, had at once conjectured the hand of Hogarth, as Margaret was being handed from the cab at the Palace-gates, she saw two terrible eyes, and, snatching her hand free, flew screaming down the street — eyes of Frankl, who, conjecturing that hither she would be brought, had taken stand there half the afternoon, knowing precisely the effect upon her of the sight of his face; and said he: “You see, you haven’t got her yet — though you *shall* have her to your heart’s content....”

As she could only run southward or northward, he had posted two motor-cars, one containing a clerk to south, the other Harris, to north, so that, as she ran, one or other should catch her, hustle her in, and dash away.

In fact, she ran north, right into the arms of Harris, her surprised guardians still ten yards behind; and “Quick!” hissed Harris, “come with me, or ‘e’ll ‘ave you!” and was off with her.

Upon which Frankl drove to the Market Street house, where he found Harris and Margaret; and again, with screams, she sought to fly, though her first terrors gave place to a quiet subservience after some minutes of his presence.

“Oh Lawd!” said Harris, “she started singing in the car, you know. Sing me songs of Araby, it *is*. Enough to give anybody the sick”.

“You see this gentleman here?” said Frankl to Margaret.

“Yes”, she whispered: “oh my!”

“Well, it so happens that very likely you are going to live in the same house as him — a big Palace with all gold and silver, where the King with his crown lives, and all. So while you are there, I want you to be his friend

as if it was myself, and do everything he tells you, same as myself, in fact. Do you see?”

“Yes”, she whispered, her large form towering above Frankl’s, yet awe of him widening her eyes.

“What’s your name?” said he.

“My name is Rachel Oppenheimer”, said she.

“All right: come up and dress”.

She followed him up to a back room, where was a lamp, a glass, etc., and on an old settee evening-dress complete, shoes, roses, head-wrap.

“Now”, said Frankl, leaving her, he, too, in evening-dress, “I give you ten minutes to rig yourself out in that lot: a second more, and you catch it”.

And in fifteen minutes they two were in a cab, *en route* for the Guildhall, Frankl, who had invitations for himself and daughter, saying: “You understand? you keep your eye fixed upon me the whole time — never mind about eating — and when I hold up my finger *so*, you rise and give them a little song....”

It was a function intended to be memorable, the Lord Regent going in state, attended by 150 Yeomen, King-at-Arms, six heralds and all Heralds’ College, to be met at Temple Bar by my Lord Mayor, that day made a baronet, with his Sheriffs and Aldermen on horseback; the Guildhall in blue velvet, the platform at the east end bearing rows of squat gold chairs, while a canopy of deep-blue velvet, lined with light-blue sarcenet, dropped ponderous draperies, tied back with gold ropes, over the floor; on the canopy-front being Sword and Sceptre, the Royal Crown of Britain, and the Diadem of the Sea; the canopy table and the other looking like a short and a long wine-banquet of the Magi in Ophir: present being members of the British Royal House, Ambassadors to Britain and the Sea, the two

Archbishops, Ministers, the Speaker, Officers, Fort-Admirals, the Regent's Household, the chief Nobility, the City personages.

Farthest from the short royal table, near the foot of the long, where the dishes were *kosher* for a Jewish colony, sat Frankl, and opposite him Margaret; and that face of Frankl was pinched and worn.

He prayed continually: "May God be my Rock and my High Tower; may the Almighty be my Shield this night...." while in two minutes Margaret had begun to be a wonder to her neighbours — heaved sighs, threw herself, beat plate with knife, hummed a little, yet conscious of wrong-doing, her eyes fixed upon Frankl.

"Oh, my!" her sigh heaved mortally, head tumbling dead on shoulder.

"Are you — unwell?" asked a startled neighbour, all shirt-front, eye-glass and delicacy.

"I see a long table with gold plates", she whined pitifully, "on every plate an eyeball dying...."

Frankl controlled her with a glance of anger.

And in the second course after turtle, with a fainting prayer to Jehovah, the Jew clandestinely held up a forefinger; upon which she, after some hesitation, remembered the signal, and like a dart shot to her feet.

Now every eye fastened upon her, from Regent's and Prince's to the bottom, those near her, who knew her now, feeling a miserable heart-shrinking of shame.

With sideward head she stood some seconds, smiling; and she sighed: "My name is Rachel—"

But soon, her mood now rushing into sprightliness, she stamped, and with an active alacrity of eye, sang:

"Will you come to the wedding?

Will you come?

Bring your own bread-and-butter,
And your own tea-and-sugar,
And we'll all pay a penny for the Rum,
Rum, Rum,
We'll all pay a penny for the Rum".

The Regent had risen, while Frankl, calm now in reaction, gazed sweetly upon his face: the vengeance of a Jew — nor was he half done with vengeance. Certainly, Hogarth was pale: he had sought her long, and found her *so*. "Why it is my own heart", he thought, "and they have made her mad".

One moment a stab of shame pierced him at the reflection: "*Here!*" but in the next his heart yearned upon her, and he rose nimbly and naturally far beyond Lord Mayor and Prince, and the rut of the world. After a perfectly deliberate bow, he left his place, and walked down the length of the hall to her, amid the gaping gods, Loveday, too, and three others, when he was half-way, following.

He had her hand, touched her temple lightly, yet compellingly, healingly....

"Dear, don't you know me? — Richard? — *Dick?*"

No, but at sight of Loveday some kind of recognition seemed to light, and die, in her eyes.

"Will you come, dear, and sit up yonder with me?" Hogarth asked, his face a mask of emotion.

Wearily she shook her head; and "John", said Hogarth, "take her home"; whereupon Loveday led her out, the Regent returning to the canopy.

Half an hour later he found it *À propos* of something to say to the Prince: "That lady who sang is my sister, Your Royal Highness — seems to have been subjected to gross cruelties, and has gone crazy".

The next morning everyone knew that she was the Regent's sister; and a man said to a man: "There is madness in the family, then...."

XLVIII. THE SEA-FORTS



THE SECOND-READING OF the Land Bill had passed by a 59 majority: and it would now have been easy work to hurry through its remaining stages in a couple of weeks; but the Regent had awaited the nation's verdict in the return of the 120 to fill the Jewish seats, sure of the result.

So the 23rd was a great night — the third-reading — the majority 115 at 8 P.M.; and the next day, which was marked by a very brilliant evening, the Bill was before the Lords.

This stage it might easily have reached four weeks before, but had been shelved for the election of the 120: and in those weeks the four copies of the *Mahomet II.* had been launched.

And suddenly — bad news from Palestine: news that there, too, after all the safeguards, the greed of a few was working to plant the old European wrong: for, the Sanhedrim being short of funds for a railway, a syndicate of five merchant-princes had offered to buy from it an estate between Jerusalem and the Jordan, and when the Chief Rabbi had pointed out that the offer was monstrous, in view of the terms of the Sea's Deed of Gift, a fierce discussion had ensued, a schism; and although the syndicate's offer had been rejected by 27, at the next session the defeated leader, like some warlike Maccabæus, had surged with his faction and a hundred Arabs into the Mosque of Omar where the Sanhedrim met, to cast those who did not escape by flight into prison in the Pasha's Palace. In the hands of his clique the Government remained.

Such was the news....

It was followed in three days by a Representation to the Regent, signed by 90,000 Jews in Palestine, the fourth name being Rebekah Frankl's, they imploring him for their sinking ship just launched, calling him "Father".

For though the Jews had been content to see that Europe which they contemned parcelled out among a few, while the mass of men hovered countryless — from this had arisen their lucre — their mental quality was too rich in business shrewdness to tolerate in their own case any such Bedlam: yet they stood helpless before the disaster, and only in the Regent was hope.

On that night of the arrival of their Petition, the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief dined in the Palace, placid men at the moment when soup began, the Regent's sky quite clear, for, though a rumour whispered that the Lords were designedly lengthening discussion of the Bill, this gave no one any concern.

During *entremets*, however, a scribbled card was passed into the hand of the Commander-in-Chief, and, as he read, his eyebrows lifted. Craving permission, he hurried out, had some talk with his Director of Military Intelligence, and returned pale.

Afterwards, as they three sat on a balcony overlooking the lake, with cigars, the Regent said: "I have thought, Sir Robert Wortley, of sending out at once two thousand Tommies under, say, General Sir John Clough, to the help of those poor Jews...."

Here the Commander-in-Chief cleared his throat, and in a strained voice interfered: "That is, my Lord King, if we ourselves have not need of every soldier of the line within the next week".

The Regent deposited his ash with peering eyes, puzzled.

"What does your Lordship mean?"

“Your Lordship’s Majesty, I was summoned from dinner just now to talk with Major-General Sir Maurice Coppleston, who reports movements of armed men, just come to his knowledge, and now going forward on a considerable scale, all northward. He gathers that these can only consist of Territorials and Yeomanry Cavalry, of whom not less than twelve battalions of rifles and three batteries of artillery, officers and men, are now on the way to, or massed upon, York. How widely the movement may actually extend — God knows”.

Silence now: Sir Robert Wortley suddenly whitening to the lips. Then Hogarth, in a very low voice, said: “They do not know me”.

“If I may crave leave to retire at once—” from the Commander-in-Chief; and Hogarth gave consent.

Queer things, omens, doubtings, weird clouds, gathered about Hogarth that night. When at eleven he gave audience to Admiral Quilter-Beckett, arrived from the *Boodah* Quilter-Beckett said: “Strange the fine weather here: at sea it is quite rough, the *Boodah* well under foam, and that old *Campania* pitches so—”

“You have come, then, in the *Campania*?” — from Hogarth.

“Yes, my Lord King”.

“And what about the yacht?”

“Oh, the yacht: in her I have sent the two hundred men to the *Mahomet*”.

“*Which* two hundred men, Admiral?”

Quilter-Beckett stared.

“Your Lordship’s Majesty has forgotten: I had instructions that you desired some interchanges among the garrisons, and had ordered the sending of two hundred of my men to the *Mahomet*, I to receive in return two hundred from her”.

“And you have sent your two hundred?”

“Yes, my Lord King”.

“Have you received the two hundred from the *Mahomet*?”

“They had not arrived when I left the *Boodah*”.

“So that you left only one hundred men in the *Boodah*, with instructions to receive two hundred others?”

“That is so, my Lord King”.

There was silence.

“But suppose I tell you that I have given no such instructions: will your heart — *leap*?”

Hogarth clapped a sudden hand of horror upon Quilter-Beckett’s shoulder.

“My God — !” Quilter-Beckett started like a gun’s recoil.

“Be calm, Admiral: it may be only some mistake....From whence had you this order?”

“From — from the *Mahomet*, in the usual course—”

“Good night, Admiral; I would be alone”.

At that very hour a world-tragedy was being enacted over the dark and turbulent ocean, and the immensest of Empires was sinking into the sea.

Darkly, quietly, with no mighty and multitudinous tumult of man.

That midnight the night-glass of many a mystified merchantman searched the murk for those coruscations with which the crescent of forts had constellated the Atlantic, the mariner’s sea-rent waiting ready, with his ship’s-papers, in his cash box: but no galaxy of lights glanced that night.

To some, before this, they had appeared, but, as the ship approached, had vanished, and it was as though the swarm of the Pleiades had been caught from the skies before their eyes. Long before dawn ships separated by three thousand miles had gained the assurance that this or that sea-fort no longer rode the familiar spot-had been rapt to the stars, had sunk, had somehow

passed from being. Before this monstrous marvel the mariner stood dumb, and it was afterwards said that that wild night the terminals of heaven and earth were lost, that the storm-winds were haunted, in all the air lamentation, sobbings as for swallowed orbs, and the whisper: “It is finished”.

Two days previously a telegram from Admiral O’Hara had gone to all the forts in European waters, commanding an interchange of 200 of their men with men of his own fort; and each officer in command, ignorant that the same instructions had gone to others, had complied: so that by the next morning, the 29th April, 1600 men from eight forts were converging in yachts upon the *Mahomet*. As the fort garrisons, originally numbering 500, had recently been reduced to 300, the others having been mostly drafted into the 2nd Division of the British Royal Marines, compliance with Admiral O’Hara’s order left a garrison of 100 only at each of eight forts.

Toward five in the afternoon of that day, the 29th, 700 men, to the bewilderment of her officers, were in the *Mahomet* two of the fort-yachts having arrived upon a troubled First Lieutenant who was in command, all attempts to see the Admiral since the morning having failed.

But near seven the Admiral summoned the Treasurer to his *bureau* near the bottom, he being in dressing-gown and slippers, very slovenly, seeming either drunk or sick, his mouth gaping to his pantings, and anon his languishing eye shot dyingly to heaven.

“Well, you see how I am, Mr. Treasurer”, he went, “seedy. Pain in this temple, trouble with the respiration, and a foul breath. Poor Admiral Donald, Mr. Treasurer, poor Admiral Donald. The fashion of this world passeth away, sir, and the Will of God be done! Sometimes, I pledge you my word, I almost wish that I was dead. There are things, sir, in this world — Ah, well, God help me; I feel very chippy. I wanted to ask you, sir, to let

me see the books, and hand me over at once all unaudited and unsettled funds in your counting-house, though I'm not fit for affairs to-day, sir, God knows—"

"Sir!" cried the Treasurer, a hard-browed, bald-headed man with a fan-beard, savouring of banks and ledgers.

"Just pass them over, sir".

"Well, this is the most singular order I ever heard of!"

"Obey me promptly, sir, or, by God, I cashier you!" roared O'Hara, his raised lids laying nude the debauchery of those jaundiced juicy balls.

"Be it so, Admiral Donald" — the Treasurer bowed: "but on the understanding that I formally protest against the irregularity, and report it to the High Chancellor".

He retired, and in half an hour returned with two clerks who bore books, himself a carpet-bag containing in cash-boxes £850,000, paper and gold, which he deposited on the Admiral's *bureau*, and, after again protesting before the clerks, went away.

Not far off by now were some of the other six fort-yachts, converging with their 200 upon the *Mahomet*, and as the Admiral had no intention of being put into irons as a lunatic in his own fort, at eight o'clock he stole from his apartments, dressed now, not in uniform, but in priest's robes and a voluminous cloak, bearing in one hand the bag, in the other a key.

Those lower depths of the *Mahomet* were an utter solitude, lit with rare rays; yet the Admiral journeyed through and up peering, skulking, pausing, hurrying, and, if by chance a light caught his face, it showed a horror of convulsive flesh, his body a mass of trembling, like jelly.

Now, the forts had been built to fight; and (since nothing is impossible), if they fought, they might fall into an enemy's hand: to obviate which, there was in a little room on the third floor a handle which opened by hydraulics

a door in the fort's side on the fifth floor below, the existence of this room being unknown save to each Admiral and to four of his lieutenants, and its key kept in a spot known to these. This key O'Hara now had in hand; and as he pushed it into the lock, his jaw jabbered like a baboon's.

Night was now come; the sea rough; Spain lost to sight; the two emptied yachts on the way back to their forts; yonder the lights of the *Mahomet II*. lying-to; two officers in oilskins walking arm in arm, to and fro, on the roof; and said one: "Look at those waves there all of a sudden: they rather seem to be breaking on the wrong side of us".

Then they resumed their talk; and to and fro they walked, arm in arm.

Till now one with sudden hiss: "But-good Christ-just look-why, the roof's *leaning* — !"

At that moment an outcry and runners from below, shouts, a trumpet-call, were borne on the winds to them: for the Admiral had rushed up to the manned parts of the fort, all hell alight in his eyeballs, bawling out, "The boats! The *Mahomet* is sinking!"

In spite of which many perished, the survivors afterwards declaring that the tragedy mesmerized their nerves with a certain awe not to be compared with the terrors felt on sinking ships, the *Mahomet* affecting them like a being of life, like behemoth slowly dying, or some doomed moon. She gave them, indeed, plenty of time, though when the steel portals on two of her sides were opened, the sea washed up the steps, making the launching very delicate feats, and near the last the leaning was so marked, that there was difficulty in standing; and still in patient distress she waited while the waves like multitudinous wolves, trooped to prey upon her.

As the Admiral ran to the outer Collector's Office to embark, he was faced by the Treasurer, revolver in hand, and "Hand me over that bag, Admiral", he said pretty coolly, "or I blow out your brains".

O'Hara's mouth worked: he could not speak.

"Will you?" said the Treasurer: "no doubt you mean to hand it over to the proper authorities, but I prefer to do that myself. Be quick, you old dog!"

Whereat O'Hara, having no weapon, dropped the bag, and trotted wide-eyed forward to the thronged scene of the launchings.

There were more than enough boats, and though on the lowest side of the fort nothing could long be done, all had gone off, when the fort, having settled very low, looking for some time like a brawling cauldron and area of breaking waves coloured by her hundred lights, went down, and was not.

Whereupon the yacht, over a hundred yards away, was caught in the traction of her strong enthrallment, and, like a planet, started into running round a region of sea which wheeled; while seven of the boats, rowing for life, were grasped, and dragged back, with a hundred and nine, into the deep.

"Toll for the brave...."

As to the other boats, they arrived at Tarifa the following evening, with 583; but the Admiral ordered the *Mahomet II.* to Cadiz, where soon after midnight he landed, and, by negotiation with a "*Jefe*", in an hour had a train for Madrid. As he was about to step in, the Treasurer touched his shoulder.

"What, Admiral, off by land?"

"Yes, sir, as you know", said O'Hara, "for you have been spying my movements for the last hour. How childish to imagine that I have anything to fear, or want to escape! Why, I am bound for England — my only object in the land journey being quickness. I even invite you to come with me."

"All right, Admiral, I will....If you be tempted to murder me *en route*, remember these" — a pair of pistols; and they set out at about the hour when the whole crescent of tragedies was over.

At six that evening a yacht, a copy of the *Mahomet II.*, had come to the Cattegat sea-fort to land 200 men who wore the Empire's blue-jacket, the name "Mahomet" on their caps — nothing to show that they were not genuine Mahomet men, though some looked rather sea-sick; but in reality they were young lords, stock-brokers, Territorial Officers, men-about-town, park-keepers, undergraduates, secretly armed with knife and revolver, and knowing, too, where the armoury of the sea-fort lay.

Meantime, three other yachts, all named *Mahomet II.*, were a-ply in the Atlantic, two containing 400 men each, one 600, each of the first two to land 200 at a fort at six, and her remaining 200 at the next fort by eight-thirty, serving four forts, the last to land 200 at each of three forts: so that by 10.30 P.M. each of eight forts, including the Cattegat, contained 200 enemies disguised as fort-men.

And punctually at eleven, in each, began perhaps the darkest massacre of history — no quarter given — and when the alarm went forth, whichever of the unarmed fort-men rushed to the dark armoury found the door fastened against him. Of two men in bed, talking together through an open door, one arose at the stroke of a clock and killed the other; some perished in sleep — all very quietly accomplished: a few shots, a few lost echoes in the vast castles, a few daubs of blood. And in no case did a single one, either massacred or assassin, escape alive: for, in every case, some one or other of the fort-officers — Admiral, Lieutenant, Commander — to prevent capture, opened the inlet to the flood in the very thick of the doom, went down with his muteness and his bubbling, and the sea, a secret in its bosom, rolled over the Sea.

XLIX. THE DEBACLE



ALL THE NEXT day, till near 9 P.M., not one syllable was definitely known of this tremendous fact by anyone in Britain: for though, early astir, the Regent telegraphed the *Mahomet*, all day he waited without reply.

At eleven the Prime Minister said to him: “Things, my Lord King, wear at this moment an aspect so threatening, that I see no escape from civil war, even if it be brief, except by the immediate forcing through of the Bill, and I stand ready — now — to propose you as new peers—”

“Wait”, answered the Regent: “pass to-night the Bill should, but I think I shall effect that by myself going to the Lords, and listening a little to the talk”.

A dark day, with an under-thought always, whatever the business, of one thing — the Sea....

About 5.30, as was his custom, he went up a stair to pass along two corridors to the little cream suite in which lived Margaret, for whom the doctors now promised sanity, her forehead daily seeming to drink-in peace from the contact of his palm, after which she would comb his hair, he lying on a sofa, or taking tea; and, “Well, dear”, he said, this last day of all, as her ladies retired to an inner salon, “how is the head?”

“I have seen you before”, she replied: “what is your name?”

“Dick Hogarth. Come to me, and let me lay my heavy head on you. The heart of your friend bodes to-day, bodes, bodes; but is not afraid: a tough heart, Madge. Do you like me to press my hand upon your head like that?”

Then, weary of his moaning heart that moaned that day like choruses of haunted winds through desolate halls, he fell to sleep even as he mumbled to her, she, seated near his sofa, playing with his hair, his arm around her, faint zephyrs from the window fanning his head, waving down the valenciennes.

But now she tossed the comb away, hummed, became restless, disengaged her shoulders, rose, strayed listlessly, with sighs, and on finding herself in the ante-chamber, opened the door, went out into a corridor, leant her back, eyeing the floor; and next with a great sigh set to gazing upward, droning two notes, one *doh*, one *soh*. All was silent. But now a sound of voices that drew her, she moving into another longer corridor, with balusters which overlooked a hall below, and yonder at the stair-foot were two men in altercation, one a guard, to whom the other was saying “But I tell you the lydy herself arst me to go to her; it’s an appointment, just like any other appointment. Do let a fellow pass!” and with mouth at ear he added: “*It’s an affair of the ‘eart! ‘Ere’s a sov—*”

“Couldn’t, my friend, couldn’t”, the guardsman said.

But now Harris: “Why, there she is ‘erself, so ‘elp-! come out to meet me, as the Lord liveth!” — ran then toward where she looked over to send up the hoarse whisper: “I sye — didn’t you tell me yourself to come — ?”

On which she nodded amiably, smiling, touching a rose in her bosom.

“There you are! What more do you want?” he said to the guard, who now gave him passage: and like a dart he darted, like a freed lark, or unleashed hound, fleet on the feet, with lifted brow.

“I sye!” he whispered her, all active, brisk as a cat, ecstatic— “where’s ‘e?”

“Who?” — she still at her rose, a memory straying in her that here was a friend, whom the Terrible One had bid her obey.

“Mr. — the Regent”, he whispered.

“I don’t know him. What is your name? *My* name is—”

“Oh, you muddle-headed cat! Don’t you know the dark man with the black moles — quick!”

“*Sh-h-h* — he is sleeping”.

“Gawd! is he though? Come, show me! I’ve got a old appointment—”

She led the way: the two corridors — the door — the room, he treading on air, brow up, eyes on fire, knife bright and ready; and eight feet from the couch she put out her forefinger, pointing, smiling, Hogarth’s face toward them, his mouth pouting in sleep, bosom breathing, a breeze in his hair.

From the lips of Harris, in the faintest snake-hiss, proceeded, “Sleep, my little one-sleep, my pretty one — *sleep*—” and with a wrist as graceful as the spring of a tigress he had the knife buried in Hogarth’s left breast.

Some instinct must have pierced Hogarth’s sleep an instant before the actual blow, for while the knife was yet in him he had Harris’s wrist; and the assassin fled writhing, so brisk a trick had cracked his elbow.

And blanched and short-breathed sprang Hogarth, but at once tottered, Margaret, open-mouthed, regarding him, till he suddenly cried out “Ladies!”, and before they came had hurried out, drawing his coat over the place of blood.

In the second corridor he had to stop and lean, but then descended, striking all whom he passed with awe at his face, till he stumbled into his own drawing-room, and, as he fell, was caught by Sir Francis Yeames, the Private Secretary.

The wound had passed along the outer front surface of the second rib toward the scapula, injuring two of the branches of the axillary artery: so whispered the Resident Medical Attendant, while the council of doctors pronounced the condition “very grave”, but not “dangerous” — a case for

“judicious pressure”; and after a long swoon he opened his eyes; in the deeply-recessed series of windows, narrow and round-topped, now dying the twilight; the insignificant bed lost in a chamber of frescoes and vast darksome oils of battles and loves. And, suddenly starting, he asked: “What’s the time?”

“Seven-thirty, my Lord King”, answered Sir Martin Phipps.

“Ah, I remember: I was stabbed. Who did it?”

“It can only be assumed from the evidence of a guardsman that it was a servant in the Palace, called Harris”.

“Aye, I think I saw his face. Does anyone know of the matter?”

“Very few persons so far....The police are after Harris”.

Now the Regent started, understanding that the condemnation of Harris would mean a revelation of the Colmoor-horror secret; and he said after a minute, “John, is that you? Will you go and have the whole thing quashed?....And now, doctor, the wound.”

“The wound is not what we call ‘dangerous’, my Lord King: ah, but believe me, it was a narrow shave”.

“I dare say, Sir Martin: the outcomes of this particular world do arrive by narrow shaves; but they arrive, and life is an escape. At any rate, doctor, I shall be able to go, as arranged, to the Lords—”

The doctor smiled. “No, never that”.

“I shall go”.

And at once he leapt from bed, staggering headlong in the effort, to strike his head against a window corner, while all ran, crying out, to catch him, the doctor thinking: “Those whom the gods destroy they first drive mad”.

So far not a whisper of the stab had reached even the Prime Minister or the Prince; but since the news of moving troops, and the reluctance of the

Lords to pass the Bill, agitated all, London came out to watch his descent upon the Lords.

He went in precisely the spirit of a professor who steps to the chair, smiles, and takes the class; but as he drove down Whitehall, this thought pierced him with a keener point than the steel of Harris: "*The Sea...!*"

He did not know that at last a thousand transmitters, from Tarifa, from Frederikshavn, from many a ship, were thrilling the ether with messages as to the Sea.

Nor did he know that that day Frankl had whispered to some dozen people, with proofs and old newspapers, that convict past of the Regent.

And from his very first entering, when the Lord Chancellor rose, and the Regent made the bow, he was shocked by the scene of open insolence spread before him.

Everywhere the boldest eyes regarded him; he saw smiles of scorn, snarling visages, as, with reclining head and lowered lids, his eyes rested on the House: a hard gaze. Unfortunately, his pallor was perfectly obvious, and its significance, the stab being unknown, was misunderstood.

And up rose a young lord, who stammered unprofundities just below the region of lawn-sleeves to the right; and another with slow step, as if to music, came up the gangway, and spoke at the table; and another after him: and it needed sustained effort to understand what they said; the brain, as it were, would not close upon statement after statement so insignificant. But Hogarth would have endured till midnight, or longer, but for a growing doubt within him: "Am I bleeding? Shall I not certainly faint?"

And there was this other question: "To what greater daring of insolence will these impossible speeches rise?"

Suddenly, at five minutes to ten, in the very midst of a duke's speech, the Regent, with dizzy brain, was on his feet: there was a few moments' gasp

and breathlessness; and then — all at once — it was as though a wind from hell swept through that House, whirling in its vehemence Regent, lords, Gallery, Black Rod, Clerk, Usher, and all; and every face was marble, and every eye a blaze.

The Regent cried: “Your lordships’ eloquence—”

And as he said “eloquence”, a voice that was a scream, a forward-straining form, a pointing finger: “Why, my lords, that man is only a common convict! — reprieved for murder — escaped from Colmoor. And all his forts are sunk!”

It happened that in the midst of this outcry, the Regent fell back afaint, the moles black, the face white.

Now, here seemed simple panic: and like a pack of dogs which rush to mangle a mongrel, they were at him pell-mell.

See now a shocking scrimmage, a rush and crush for precedence, surge upon surge of men jostling each other in a struggle to get near him, sticks reaching awkwardly over heads to inflict far forceless blows, and on his face the fists; a hundred roaring “Order!”, fighting against the tide; three hundred shrieking, “Kill him!” “Have him done with!” “Dash out his brains!”, and pressing to that job. Sergeant-at-Arms, meanwhile, Clerk-attending-the-Table, and the physician, had run to give the alarm; but it was by one of those miracles of wild minutes, when turbulent sprites appear to mix themselves in the business of men, worse — embroiling the embroiled, that through the throng in the street rushed the word that the Regent was being killed: and quick, before any fatal blow had been struck, the rabble were there in that chamber, having brushed away every barrier.

They imagined themselves come to save: in reality they came to kill — were, in fact, too many for the area of the room, so that men succumbed fast as by plague-stroke under trampling feet, and even after twenty minutes

when sixty-seven lay mangled the scene of horror could not be said to be ended.

Early upon the irruption the physician, three policemen, a Reading Clerk, and the Bishop of Durham, had managed to extricate and drag the Regent out; and through the shouting of the outside crowd he was driven home unconscious.

L. THE DECISION



SOMEWHAT BEFORE THIS hour Admiral O'Hara had arrived at Croydon, a lust, a morbid curiosity, now working in this man — having committed the ineffable sin, to enjoy its fruit by hearing what Richard Hogarth now said, in what precise way he groaned, or raved, smiled, or wept, or stormed; for he was cruelly in love with Hogarth.

All the way had come with him the *Mahomet's* treasurer, with his bag of wealth — and two pistols.

So at Dieppe O'Harra had wired to Harris:

“Meet me at Croydon to-night, the 9.45 from Newhaven, as you love life. Most important. Shall expect wire from you at the London and Paris Hotel, Newhaven, not later than six, saying yes”.

But at Newhaven he had found no answer — Harris, in fact, not having received the telegram, having already inflicted his stab, and fled the Palace.

Whereupon O'Hara, in an agony of doubt, had telegraphed Frankl from Newhaven:

“For God's sake find Harris. Make him meet me at Croydon to-night in the 9.45 from Newhaven. Do not fail”.

Now, Frankl knew exactly where Harris was — hiding in the Market Street house. And he said to himself: “All right: it's got something to do with money, and a lot of it, too, with all this ‘God's sake’. Suppose we *both* go to Croydon?”

Hence Frankl missed the joy of seeing the Regent mobbed: for at 9.30 he was waiting with Harris on the Croydon up-platform.

And as the train stopped, they two hurried into the compartment where O'Hara sat alone.

"You, my friend?" said O'Hara to Frankl.

"Large as life", replied Frankl: "I and the boy have already made it up between us for a third each: you a third, I a third, Alfie a third: that's fair; I keep the police off the backs of the pair of you, and you pay me a third. What's the figure?"

In one moment of silence O'Hara plotted; then his tongue yielded to the temptation of the great words: "Eight-hundred-and-fifty thousand, sir".

So after three minutes' talk Harris got out, and, as the train started, sprang into a first-class compartment in which was one other occupant.

Now, it was natural that the treasurer, carrying such a sum, should scrutinize any stranger, but Harris disarmed suspicion: his right arm, twisted by Hogarth, was in a sling, and he threw himself aside, and seemed to sleep, between the peak of his cap and his muffler hardly an inch of interval: so the treasurer, too, worn with travel, settled into a half-drowse.

Harris, however, like many of his type, was perfectly ambidextrous, often using the left hand by preference; and as the train passed Bromley, he darted, plunged his knife, streaked with the Regent's blood, into the treasurer's heart, and huddled the body under the seat.

No stoppage till London Bridge, where, with the bag, Harris left the train, Frankl and O'Hara trotting after his burdened haste; and, after two changes of cabs, the three arrived at the Market Street house.

There Harris laid the bag on the floor of an empty back room, where through a broken window came a little light, and the three stood looking down upon the bag, solemnly as upon a body.

Then suddenly Harris: "Come, gentlemen of the jury, let's have my share of the dead meat: and 'ere's off out of it for this child — only this blooming

arm of mine! it's going to get me nabbed as sure as sticks. Never mind — trot it out, Captain! and don't cheat an innocent orphan, lest the ravens of the valley pick out the yellow galls of some o' you".

Neither of the other two, however, seemed anxious for the division; and after a minute's silence Frankl said: "The third of 850, I *believe*, is 2, 8, 3; how are we going to carry away 283 thousand without something to put it in? I vote, Pat, that we leave the bag here, and come and divide at midnight sharp. How would that do?"

"Yes", said Harris, "I think I see old Pat leaving the lot with me — what O! You know 'ow I'd fondle it for you, and keep it out of the cold, cold world, till you came back, don't you, you bald-headed priest?"

"Shut your mouth, boy. We can't take it away without something, as Mr. Frankl very justly observes. Aren't there some safes, Frankl, in Adair Street?"

"Right you are: and one, as I happen to know, empty. Who'll keep the key?"

"You, if you like, my friend. I'll keep the keys of the room-doors. And Harris will stand guard".

"The very thing", remarked Frankl.

So it was agreed. Harris took the bag; they descended to the cellar; then, striking matches, down three marl steps to the subterranean way made for Hogarth; and along it, forty feet, they stumbled bent, Harris gripped by each sleeve.

Then in the Adair Street Board Room they lit a candle, and in the room next it found the safes, the largest of which admitting the bag, Frankl locked its door, took the key; O'Hara then locked the room door, took the key; and at the stair-bottom locked another door, took the key; so that Frankl could

not now get at the bag without him, nor he without Frankl, nor Harris without both.

Two then went away, while Harris, sprawling cynically on a solitary chair down in the parlour with straight open legs, awaited the *rendezvous* at twelve.

He had not, however, sat very long, when the taper at his feet glared on a face of terror at a sound of ghosts in the tomb that the house was, and he started to his feet, prone, snatching his knife — thinking, as always, of the Only Reality, the police. But he had not prowled three ecstatic steps when O'Hara stood before him.

“Oh, damned fool!” he went with infinite contempt and reproach, “to frighten anybody like that! What's it you are after now? Frighten anybody like that....”

“*Alfie!*” — O'Hara whispered it breathfully as the hoarse sirocco, stepping daintily like the peacock. Tell it not in Gath! If Alfie rammed the knife into the marrow of Frankl's back at the moment when the safe was opened, then Alfie would have, not a third, but a half; and the thing was desirable for this reason: that a half is greater than a third...

Harris saw that: but he seemed reluctant, meditating upon the ground; then walking, hands in pockets.

“Why, boy, he is only an interloper”, said O'Hara: “I meant the money to be divided fairly between you and me. Why should this Jew come in?”

“All right”, said Harris: “I don't mind”.

“And I know a little castle in Granada, Alfie, which we'll buy—”

“All right: you go away. It's agreed”.

And O'Hara hurried away, took a cab, drove for the Palace; while Harris, left alone, sat serious, with sprawling straight legs, and presently muttered: “Blind me, I must be going dotty or something! p'raps it's this arm....”

He had not thought of killing Frankl, until it had been suggested! — some class-habit, or instinct, of honour among thieves (which, however, his reason despised)...But five minutes after O'Hara had gone he started alert, staring, with tight fist, and, "All right, you two", said he, "blood it is!"

He sat again: and again, after twenty minutes, the house gave a sound — Frankl, who had let himself in by the front door, each member possessing a key to that.

"Well, Alf", said he, "all alone? Then, we two can have a little chat between us little two".

And he stood and talked, while Harris sprawled and listened, Frankl's road to his end being more circuitous than O'Hara's, more hedged, too, with reasons, scruples, sanctions: but he reached it, pointing out that a half is greater than a third; also that O'Hara would be a continual witness against Harris' past, whereas he, Frankl, left England for Asia the next morning.

Alfie pretended aversion to bloodshed, but finally consented; upon which Frankl went away, and took cab for Scotland Yard: his idea being to have Harris arrested red-handed in the murder of O'Hara.

The streets through which he drove wore a singular aspect — of commotion, hurry, unrest, two dragoon-orderlies galloping past him at the Marble Arch, in Whitehall the tramp of some line-regiment battalion, and he said to himself: "He is going to fight it out with them, I suppose — Satan take the lot!"

At Scotland Yard he said to the Inspector in Charge, having given his card, that if two officers were placed at his disposition, he might be able to lead them to the arrest of a man long "wanted", who now premeditated another murder.

Meantime, O'Hara was in conversation with Loveday in the Regent's library, nearer the centre of which stood a group of four with their heads

together — Prime Minister, First Lord, War Office Secretary, a Naval Lord; further still, a spurred General, cloaked over his out-stuck sword, writing, with a wet white brow; and, “I suppose he will want to see you”, said Loveday, “if you have anything to say. But the doctors have first to be reckoned with: I suppose you know that he has been stabbed and beaten”.

“Stabbed! by whom?”

“By Harris”.

“No! When?”

“This afternoon”.

“Ah! I did not know”.

“It was by your recommendation, it appears, that Harris became Captain Macnaghten’s servant”, said Loveday with his smile, looking very gaunt and bent-down.

“Tut, sir!” — from O’Hara— “you are not my judge: I am here to see the Lord of the Sea, my King”.

“Ah! — you still give him the title”.

And now O’Hara, drawing his chair nearer to ask: “*How did he take it?*” stretching back the waiting mouth to hear that thing.

“The Lord Regent? Well, at eight-thirty he went to the House of Lords, where they beat him nearly to death on the throne, the gentle hearts, and the doctors forbade me to speak to him of the Sea; but his eyes seemed to question me, so I leant over, and told him”.

“Yes — and whatever did he say?”

He said: ““What, old Pat?””

O’Hara rose to stand by a hearth, black-robed to the heels and tonsured, and at the angle of his jaw some sinews ribbed and moved: not a syllable now from him.

“I am going in now to him”, said Loveday: “if you care to wait here, I will see” — and passing through a palace pretty busy that night with feet and a thousand working purposes, went to sit at the sick bed, the doctors retiring.

“How is the pain?”

“The pain”, said the Regent very weakly, “is nonsense: I am not going to be bullied by doctors, but shall do exactly as I like”.

“And what is that, Richard?”

“There is a Normandy village, John, called Val- e-les-Noisettes — white houses with an extraordinary sound of forest about, one of Poussin’s landscapes, with a smithy under a chestnut precisely as in the poem; and the blacksmith is a charming man. I dare say someone will find me money enough to purchase a share of his smithy: and with him I shall work, starting for him before sunrise, with my sister”.

Loveday, wondering if he was delirious, said irrelevantly: “I have to tell you that by five A.M. there will be 15,000 additional infantry in London, with—”

“Ah, I wish they’d lend them me to send out to those poor Jews, John. But, for myself — I was mad when I gave that order. It won’t do! the world is addicted to its orbit, and relapses. I don’t say that it will be always so, but it is now. As against the Empire of the Sea arises — Pat O’Hara; as against the brushing aside of these rebels arise — Germany, Russia, the hostile world. Consider the rancour of the nations at Britain’s late advantages in sea-rent, try to conceive the scream of jubilation that rings to the sky tonight against her, and against me. Do you think I could *now* start a civil war in England? for the satisfaction of my own pride? I call God to witness that never for my own pride have I done aught, but that the Kingdom of God might come. I know that bitter tears will flow at the fall of the righteous

man — many calling me ‘traitor’ for abandoning those ready to die for me. Yet it shall be. I never thought to fail, to fly, John Loveday, chased by such little fellows: but God has done it. Well, then, the smithy. You and all, therefore, will find enough to do to-night”.

Loveday lifted a face streaming with tears to say: “The man, O’Hara, waits to see you”.

“Really? Well, come, we will see him....” and in some minutes O’Hara was there by the bedside, the eyes of the two fixed together, over Hogarth’s face five oblongs of sticking-plaster, his head bandaged, and at a corner of O’Hara’s mouth a twitching.

“Pat, did you betray me?” asked Hogarth.

O’Hara nodded: “Yes”.

“Well, you may sit and tell me, and ease your poor heart”.

And a long time O’Hara sat, going into the mighty crime, torturing details, revelling in the vastness of the horror, the sickness of the self-inflicted filth, and pangs of the self-inflicted scalpel.

“And why did you do it, my friend?”

“Because I worship you....”

“Well, perhaps I understand you, crooked soul. But what will you do now?”

“We shall see. What will you?”

“I am going to France to live as a private person”.

“Tut, you remain as simple as a child: the earth’s not large enough to contain you, you couldn’t now remain a private person for three weeks. Come, I have discrowned you: I will give you another crown, though I shall never see you wear it. Why not go to your own people?”

“Which people?”

“The Jews”.

“Don’t talk that same madness”.

“My time with you is short, Raphael Spinoza” — O’Hara glanced at his watch— “in five minutes we part, never, I do assure you, to meet again. Listen, then, to me: you are a Jew. I knew your mother — the most intellectual woman, I suppose, who ever drew breath, the only one whom I have loved; and I should have known you merely from your resemblance to her at my first glance at you in Colmoor, though I had more precise data: the three moles, the bloodshot eye, for didn’t I baptize you? haven’t I rocked you in my arms? You know St. Hilda on the hill over Westring, which you found me examining that morning after our escape from the prison? I was priest there, three years, and twice I have confessed her — ah! and remember it! for when your foster-father wanted her to turn Methodist, she wouldn’t stand that, and since she must needs be a *meshumad* (apostate), became a Catholic. Well, now, I once saw at Thring, and once in the *Boodah*, an old goat-hair trunk of yours: what is become of it?”

“I have it—” Hogarth was shivering, his eyes wide, and in his memory a strange singsong crooning of *t’hillim*, heard ages before in some other world over a cradle.

“Did you know that that trunk has a false bottom?” asked O’Hara.

“Yes”.

“Oh, you knew...And have you never seen a bundle of papers under it?”

“Yes — I assumed them to be old farm-accounts....”

“They are all the proofs you need concerning your birth; it is *my* trunk by the way — Ah, I must go!”

At the door he fastened upon Hogarth a last reluctant gaze to say good-bye, but Hogarth, staring wildly afar, did not turn his eyes, and O’Hara, with a sigh, was gone.

He drove to Adair Street, and, as he passed by a mews, Frankl, waiting there with two detectives, saw him by a street-light, but made no remark.

When O'Hara entered the house, he looked about for Harris, but Harris had gone to the lodging of a woman in James Street near, to arrange a hiding-place for the bag, passing out through the Market Street house; and O'Hara, opening the two locked doors, entered the safe-room, where he stood waiting, his forehead low, resting on the steel top; and now a sob throbbed through his frame, and his lips let out "*...so lovely...so great....*"

Count a minute's stillness: and now the man's soul and being foundered in a storm of sorrow, and half-words borne on shivering puffs of breath, and choking groans, broke the stillness: "My Liege! Richard! my King!"

This died to silence; and now he roamed the room with furious steps, and lowering brow, and an out-pushed under-lip, until, deciding, he drew from his pocket a penknife, opened it, leant now one elbow on the safe-top, blade in hand, considered, considered, hesitating, then with lifted chin and the thinnest whimpering like a puppy, pretty pitiful, cut from under his left ear to the chin.

Certainly a hurt so shallow could never have killed, for the hand had been cherishingly restrained, and the thing was no sooner done than the priest, seeing that he did not die, ran horror-eyed, streaming with blood, shouting a hoarse whisper: "Help! help! help!"

But at that cry he sighed, fell back, and effectually died, his heart pierced by the knife of Harris.

And some moments later the face of Frankl, who bore a candle, looked in at the door.

"Is that all right, Alfie?" — in the weakest whisper.

"Come on in, and don't ask any questions", said Harris.

Frankl entered, peered upon the dead visage of the priest; then, the detectives being now behind the parlour-door below, with handcuffs, rose to run to summon them: but, to his horror, Harris was now before the door; he saw in the candlelight those eyes of Alfie fixed upon him: and he knew: before the least threat or movement by Harris, the Jew sent to Heaven a piercing shriek, his hour come....

“...dirty-livered Jew...” striking in the breast, and, as Frankl fell, he gave him one other in the temple, with “Down, down to hell, and sye *I* sent thee thither”; and to dead O’Hara near he gave one in the cheek, with “Go up, thou bald-head, it *is*”: all in two seconds’ space; and he was now about to turn anew to hack at Frankl, when his keen ear heard a creak; and he sprang up a spinning motionlessness — the Reality before him.

And instantly on the realization of that fact, he was submissive, reverent, as before the very Helmet of Pallas, goddess of Blue; and said he with sullen dejection, reverent of the Helmet, but easy with the man: “All right: you’ve beat me...I suppose it’s that Regent-stabbing affair brought you: it was I did it all right”.

When they went down, almost from the door a crowd gathered, pressing close, Harris’ hands and front all red from O’Hara’s throat; and when one policeman, big with the fact, whispered a gentleman: “You may have heard, sir, that the Regent was stabbed to-day — it’s been kept precious dark, but the fact’s so: this is the beauty as done it”, like loosened effluvia that news flew — but distorted, largened — the stains were Regent’s blood! — and beyond measure had the crowd spread ere it reached the Edgware Road.

There at the corner, as the officers looked about for a cab, and one blew a whistle, a man reached out and fiercely struck Harris on the face, while another shouted: “Lynch the beggar!”; and now arose a hustling, huddled impulses, and now in full vogue that grave noising of congregations when

the voice of God jogs them; while Harris, excessively pallid, handcuffed, began to whistle; a number of other police now seeking the crowd's centre, but with difficulty; a cab, too, slowly making a way which closed like water round it: and when this had nearly reached him, Harris, in his eagerness to get in, sprang far toward it — and slipped. He never rose again: the crowd rolled over his last howl, and in the midst of a great row as of hounds, trampled him to a paste.

About that very time that better man whom he had stabbed, in tying up in bed a bundle of old papers, was saying: "Yes, I will go to my people"....

And by six A.M. he was up, in his study, dressed, looking quite owlish with his excess of eyes, which, however, danced at the first news of the morning — the arrival at Portsmouth of the *Boodah II.*, which had raced like a carrier-bird since 8.30 P.M. of the 29th, full of the news of the vanished *Mahomet*: on her being 200 marines.

After that he spoke through the telephone with various Government-offices, early astir that morning, till the Private Secretary looked in with the announcement that his train would be ready in ten minutes.

His last act in the Palace was the sending to the Treasurer at Jerusalem, for Miss Frankl, the telegram:

"Be surprised, but believe: I am a Jew."

"RICHARD".

Of the Household some fifty, catching wind of what was toward, offered, even begged, to go with him; but in general he refused, and set out with a suite of only seven.

They reached Hastings at twenty minutes to ten, where, to the disgust of all, the region of Central Station was found crowded; whereupon Sir Francis Yeames held a consultation with a local rector, and a dash was made to a private hotel near the pier.

There, looking from behind window curtains at eleven, Hogarth saw before a paper-shop:

FLIGHT OF THE REGENT

A minute afterwards he started backward from the splintered window.

Everything was known:

LIFE-HISTORY OF THE CONVICT HOGARTH MARVELLOUS DETAILS

The street, to its two vanishing-points, was one scene of hats, mixed with upturned faces: and it was an aggressive crowd that gave out a sound.

Not till noon did the *Boodah II.* arrive; and then there was no setting out — all the front windows of the house now broken, and in the town a row like the feeding-time of lions, which uttered “coward”, “murderer”, “convict”, “traitor”. Hogarth had been put to bed, the two ladies were in a state of scare, Margaret anon crying on Loveday’s shoulder, declaring that “*He*” (meaning Frankl) was in the crowd, and coming, coming, boring his way: she had seen him.

At last, near four P.M., a portion of the yard-wall at the back was broken down by the party, Hogarth was raised and dressed, and through the breach the party passed into another back-yard, then made beachward, Hogarth leaning on the arm of Sir Martin Phipps; but they had no sooner come to the Esplanade than they were surrounded, and when, on their attaining the pier, the pier-turnstile was closed against the mob, it was impossible to conceive whence so many missiles came. Once Hogarth stopped, faced round, looked at them, but now a pebble bruised his left temple, and he dropped, fainting.

Caught up by Sir Martin, Loveday, Sir Francis Yeames, and Colonel Lord Hallett of the body-guard, he was hurried, a hanging concave with abandoned head, to the long-waiting boat, and it was in a scurry of escape, out of stroke, that the oarsmen rowed away.

Yonder lay the yacht with her fires banked, and was soon under weigh.

She had started, when a harbour-master's motor-boat was observed giving chase, in her an officer from Scotland Yard who bore a bag, found by means of the key in Frankl's pocket in the Adair Street safe; on its clasp the name "Mahomet", and it contained £850,000: so that the yacht went wealthy on her way.

LI. THE MODEL



THE VOYAGE TO Palestine was marked by two events: one the stoppage at Tarifa, where the five hundred from the *Mahomet* were, these, when taken on board the *Boodah II.*, making an armed force of 700; and then, toward sunset of the fifth day, a steamer exchanged signals with the *Boodah II.*, enquired after the whereabouts of the Lord of the Sea, received the reply “on board”, and when she stopped it turned out that she had on board a Jewish Petition urging upon Spinoza to come and throw in his lot with them. And here again was that name of Rebekah, spelled now Ribkah.

For the news of his fall — the fact that he was a Jew — had created a mighty stirring in Israel, of wonder, of the pride of race.

By the seventh day the yacht was off the Palestine coast, and Joppa, seated on her cliffs, appeared over a foaming roadstead. But when a landing was effected, they were to hear that there had been a collision on the Jerusalem-Joppa railway, the line blocked, travel suspended; so, as the filthy town was congested, the Royal party took refuge in a great restaurant-tent, set up by a Polish Jew in gaberdine and fur cap, who vociferated invitation at the door. All was mud, beggary, narrowness, chaos, picturesque woe. Yet work had commenced: between the upper and the nether millstone a woman ground corn at a doorway; the camel passed loaded; the dragoman went with quicker step. In the afternoon Spinoza, wandering beyond the outskirts of the town, saw in an orange-grove, sitting before a roofless hut, six diligent two-handed Jews exhaustively drawing the cord of the cobbler; further still, and saw what could only have been a Petticoat-Lane Jew

ploughing with a little cow and a camel: and he smiled, thanking God, and taking courage — had always loved this land.

The next morning he procured a number of clumsy waggons, with horses, asses, camels, and provisions; and his caravan set out, to travel all day over a plain, a “goodly land,” the almond-tree in blossom, orange and olive, everywhere lilies, the scarlet anemone, he considering himself so familiar with the way, that he was their only guide, though the morning was misty; and through the plain of Sharon they wended over the worst roads in existence, until, passing into a country of rocks, they made out afar the mountains of Judāʾa, whose patches of white stone look like snow in sunshine, on the roads streams of wayfarers, tending all eastward to Jerusalem, lines of camels and waggons, pedestrians with wine-skins, mother and sucking child on the solitary ass, and the Bedouin troop; but Spinoza was all solitary among fastnesses on the third forenoon when he muttered nervously: “I must certainly have lost the way”.

Thereupon he called halt, and the caravan turned back to re-find the road, Spinoza prying on camel-back foremost, clad now in the caftan and white robes of the Orient.

But all day the caravan wandered out of the track in a white sea of mist: no farmstead, nor cot, but the wild vine, and the wild fig, and twice a telegraph-tree, still with its bark on, and the abandoned hold of a bandit-sheik. Finally, near six P.M., Spinoza, finding himself in a valley-bottom, sent out the order to pitch camp: upon which the tents were fixed near a brook, waggons grouped around, and animals picketed to grass. Spinoza, the two ladies, and Loveday, then ate together at the door of one tent; after which he rose and strolled away, thinking how best to handle this crab of Israel.

He noticed that the mist was lifting a little; and suddenly, as he strolled, he stood still, listening: for remote tones of singing or mourning seemed to meet his ear — from the west: and in some moments more he saw the Mount of Olives — to the west, not, as he believed that it must be, to the east, he having, in fact, in losing his way from the coast, passed by Jerusalem to the north; and on the other side of the Mount of Olives, from its foot to the Brook Kedron, spread at that moment over the Valley of Jehosophat an innumerable multitude, covered in praying-shawls, many prostrate, many with the keen and stressful face of supplication lifted in appeal to God, that He would visit His people, and turn again in this latter day to His lost and helpless flock. Every child of Israel who could contrive it, at whatever cost, was there, since it was the prophesied day of— “the Coming”.

But a bold woman, summoning her fainting strength, bracing her trembling knee, stepped a little up the hillside to fling high her hand as a sign — Rebecca Frankl, celebrated now through Israel as the elect of the sibyl Estrella; and at that signal the congregation, gazing keenly into heaven, lifted up their voice in meek song, singing the sibyl’s “Hymn to the Messiah”:

“The oceans trudge and tire their soul, desiring Thee; and night-winds homeless roam with dole, reproaching Thee; the clouds aspire, and find no goal, and gush for Thee, reproaching Thee.”

“Thou scrawled’st ‘I mean’ in rocks and men, in trends and streams; the prophets raved, to sages’ ken Thou shewed’st dreams; Thou shrouded’st dark the How and When in starry schemes, and trends and streams.”

“The jungles blare, the glebe-lands low and bleat for Thee; the generations rage and go, agaze for Thee; creation travaileth in woe, with groans for Thee, agaze for Thee.”

“Adonai, come! with crashing rattle of chariots come; or moonlight-mild, alone, afloat, Messussah, come; with floods of lutes, or thundering throat, but come! O, come! Messussah come.”

“The Arctics hawk-up their haunted heart, and raucous, spue; and north-winds, wawling calls, outstart, to droop anew; the clouds like scouts updart, depart, and truceless do, and droop anew.”

“How long! They breeds have waited fain what sibyls ween; Thou scribbled’st in their secret brain ‘I scheme; I mean’; the constellations stray and strain: Break out! be seen what sibyls ween”.

“The pampas stamp and, nomad, low, reposeless, lone; raging the generations trow, and drudge, and drown; a anguished glance this latter woe throws to Thy Throne, reposeless, lone”...

Before them, above them, as they sang stood — a man.

Hard by a wall of that Moslem mosque, once a chapel which marked the supposed spot of “the Ascension”, he stood, in an attitude of suspense, astonishment, his body half-twisted — Spinoza.

An instant, and he was aware of Jerusalem lying “as a city that is compact” before him — not to the east — to the west! Yet another instant, and he realized that the whole tract of humanity — man, woman, child — was on its face before him.

A faintness overcame him, shame, dismay; then, his blood now rushing to his brow, his mouth sent out the passionate shout:

“Not to *me!* Not to *me!* *I am the Lord of the Sea....!*”

But when the people heard this, saw him, knew him, they remained in adoration....

By a special ship they had sent him a petition to come; here he was weeks sooner than ship or airship could have conveyed him: and they took him as the answer to their supplication, the answer which Heaven willed, in

the sure and certain faith that he would cure their ache, and the ache of the world.

An acclamation like the voice of many waters arose and rolled below him, and on the bosom of that tumult he moved among them into the Holy City, as darkness covered all.

* * * * *

He took the title of Shophet, or Judge, and for sixty years ruled over Israel.

It has been said that the initial “pull” over other nations possessed by Israel (in respect of the sea-forts remaining in the Gulf of Aden, Yellow Sea, Western Pacific) was the cause of his rise as of some thrice-ardent Star of the Morning and asterisk dancing in the dawn’s dark: for the other nations, timorous of one another, made never an attempt to build; but, for our share, we insist that anyway JudĀ’la was bound to become what she became — indeed, sea-rent after the Regency collapse was decreased at the three forts, and suddenly in the twelfth year of his judgeship Spinoza ordered its stoppage.

By which period the University of Jerusalem had become the chief nerve-centre of the world’s research and upward effort: for in creating a “civilized State”— “proud and happy” — Spinoza did it with that spinning rapidity of the modernization of Japan, so that in whatever respects it was not a question of months, it was a question of not many years.

For, as in the soul of the Jewish people abode as before that genius for righteousness which wrote the Bible, and as the soul of righteousness lies even in this; Thou shalt not steal, therefore Israel with some little pain attained to this: whereupon with startling emphasis was brought to pass that statement: “Righteousness exalteth a nation”.

For the promise says: “I will put a new spirit within them”; and this — very rapidly — found fulfilment.

Whereupon others fast, faster, found fulfilment, so that a stale and bitter word was in Pall Mall, saying: “The lot of them seem to have formed themselves into a syndicate to run the prophecies”.

Again the promise has it: “I shall be with them”; and again: “They shall be a cleansed nation”; and again: “They shall fear Him”.

The transformation was rapid for the reason that it was natural, seeing that it had been Europe only that, like a Circe, had bewitched them into bestial shapes, “sharks”, and “bulls”, and “bears”, medieval Jews, for example, having been debarred from every pursuit save commerce: so that Shylock was obliged to turn into a Venetian; and, in ceasing to be a Hebrew, became more Venetian than the Venetians, for the reason that he had more brains, ready to beat them at any game they cared to mention; but the genuine self of Shylock was a vine-dresser or sandal-maker, as Hillel was a wood-chopper, David a shepherd, Amos a fig-gatherer, Saul an ass-driver, Rabbi Ben Zakkai a sail-maker, Paul a tent-maker: so that the return to simplicity and honesty was quickly accomplished.

And now, that done, behold a wonder: at the whirling of a wand the swine of Circe converted back to biped man; whereupon without fail whatsoever he does it shall astonishingly prosper: that succession of wits, seers, savants, Heines, Einsteins, inspired mouths, pens of iridium, brushes from the archangel’s plumage, discoveries, new Americas, elations, sensations — in therapeutics — in aero-nautics-beyond-the-atmosphere — in the powers involved in sub-atoms — in the powers, latent till now, involved in soul...for now each of millions was free to think, free to manifest his own particular luck and knack in discovery, having a country, foothold, not hovering like Noah’s dove, urging still the purposeless wing

not to pitch into nowhere: for the promise says: “Ye shall not sow and another reap, ye shall not plant and another garner”, but in a land of gentlemen ye shall live, as it were to swellings of music, while a noble height grows upon your smooth foreheads, and the sum-total of the blending movements of your bodies and brains shall, as seen from heaven, appear the minuet of a people.

Within forty years mighty works had been done: forts, irrigation of deserts, reclamation of the Dead Sea, passionate temples clapped to the lower clouds about the perpetual lamp, and that baroque Art of the Orient which at the Judges progresses in Summer through the country would draw multitudes of foreigners to gape at so great pomp, at Corinthian cities full of grace and riches which had arisen to crown with many crowns that plain of Mesopotamia, and where desolate Tyre had mourned her purples, and old Tadmor in the Wilderness (Palmyra) had sat in dirt; to gape, too, at a Jerusalem which in twenty years had crossed the Valley of Jehosophat, and might really then be called “the Golden”, a purged Babylon, a London burnt to ashes and rebuilt somewhere else: for the Shophet proved true Duke and Leader, born mountaineer, climbing from pinnacle to wild pinnacle, becking his people after him with many a meaningful gesture skyward and suggesting smile; and Israel followed his thrilling way, hearing always the Excelsior of his calling as it were the voice direct of Heaven. What no merits of his could give, the land which he had chosen gave, Mesopotamia pretty soon proving herself a treasury of mineral riches: here is bdellium and the onyx-stone; and where the streaming Pison, dawdling, draws his twine of waters over that happy valley of Havilah, there is gold — hoard stored from before the Eozoic, as misers bury for their heirs, in mine and friable quarry, rollick rain: “and the gold of *that* land is good”.

Here was not merely progress, but progress at increasing speed — acceleration — finally resembling flight, as of eagle or phoenix, eye fixed on the sun: Tyre by the fiftieth year having grown into the biggest of ports, her quays unloading 6,700,000 tons a year, mart of tangled masts, felucca, galiot, junk, cargoes of Tarshish and the Isles, Levantine stuffs, spice from the Southern Sea; while Jerusalem had grown into the recognized school of the wealthier youth of Europe, Asia and America.

For it says: “The Kings of the earth shall bring their honour and glory unto her”; and again: “She shall reign gloriously”.

And not Israel alone reaped the fruits of his own fine weather, but his dew fell wide. For it says: “They shall be as dew from the Lord”; and again: “They shall fill the face of the earth with fruit”; and again: “All nations shall call them blessed”.

And so it was: for the example of Israel, his suasive charm, proved compelling as sunshine to shoots, so that that heart of Spinoza lived to see the spectacle of a whole world deserting the gory path of Rome to go up into those uplands of mildness and gleefulness whither invites the smile of that lily Galilean.

The mission of “unbelieving” Israel was to convert Christendom to Christianity: and this he did.

We watch the Judge coming down the Mount of Olives in the midst of a jubilant throng all involved in a noise of timbrels and instruments of music: for his life was simple and one with the life of his people. It is evening, all the west yonder a bewitched Kingdom charm-embathed, wherein a barge of Venus bethronged with loves and roses voyages on a sea of dalliance en route for the last Beatific — the last, the seventh, Heaven — whitherward gads all a pilgrim-swarm of enraptured spirits, all, all thitherward, Paul caught up with clothes aflaut, and soaring eagle, Enoch transfigured, green

hippogriff, hop of squatted frog; and thitherward trots with blinkings, bleating, the Ram of the Golden Fleece, the flagrant flamingos flap and go.

The Judge, hoary-headed now, in a robe of cloth-of-silver which rippled, had but now got home from a Pilgrimage; and the time was Simcath Torah, the Rejoicing of the Law, and the carrying of Candles, in the month. Tishri: silver his robe and silver his hair that hung round a brown and puckered skin, but silvery, too, his every tooth still, and his vigour good; and, as down the Mount of Olives he stepped, he saw Mount Sion and that Temple that he had piled, across whose roughened frontispiece of gold glowed in a bow, bold like the rainbow's, in characters of blazing sapphire and chrysoprase, that inscription:

“Y’HOVAH B’KOKMAR YSAD ARETS, CONEN SHAMAIM
B’THBUNAH”

and, as he saw it, lo, buoyancy caught the old man's feet: for the cymballing and music had grown very fiercely hot, so that all the congregation reeled in dance; and as the lasso drops round the astonished prairie-horse and draws asprawl, so dancing caught and drew his foot, and he danced.

And his wife Rebecca, mother of many sons, prying from a window-lattice, writhed odd the eyebrows of the cynic, one beyond the other: for not with foot alone he danced, but his wrung belly laboured in that travail of Orient dancing; and she turned and smiled to Margaret Loveday a turned-down smile, implying shrug, implying girding, her eyelids lowered, yet indulgent of his nature's rage.

And not with foot and abdomen alone he danced, but his two balancing palms danced to the beat of the heat of the music's heart; and with heel and toe he danced. And as he danced, he sang, all apant, filling up with nonsense-sounds when the rhythm's imperative tramp outran his

improvisation; and singing he danced, and dancing sang: with abdomen and arms he danced, and with toe and heel he danced.

And dancing he sang:

My hands,

be dancing to God,

your Guide,

And peal my pipes,

and riot my feet,

and writhe to His Heat,

my tripes.

So fair!

With Rum-te-te-Tum

te Tum,

And Rum and Tum,

and Rum-te-te-Tum,

and Rum-te-te-Tum,

te Tum.

So fair!

This freehold for seraphs free!

That flame! those skies!

and Blest is Her Name,

and blest are my eyes,

that see.

I'll dance,

I'll dance like a ram,

for fun,

I'll smack the sun,

I'll dance at the breeze

I'll dance till I breed
a son.

For Thou!

Thou bringest Thine ends
to pass:

This hump so high,
this lump and her sigh,
Thou lead'st through the Needle's Eye.

'Tis well
the saurians sprawled,
and roared!

'Tis well Thou art!
and well that Thou wast,
and well when at last
they soared!

And well,
O well that Thou art
to be

When seraph hearts
will laugh by this brook,
and break for the love
of Thee.

Thy years
shall still by increase
te Tum,

And dance and dance,
With Rum-te-te-Tum....

so, singing, he danced, and, dancing, sang; and their sounds grew faint; and they entered into the City of Glory, and their sounds failed....

They took him for the Sent of Heaven, nor did the results of his glorious reign gainsay such a notion: the good Loveday, indeed, had the agreeable fancy that our greatest are really One, who eternally runs the circle of incarnation after incarnation from hoary old ages till now — the Ancient of Days, his hair white like wool, quietly turning up anew when the time yearns, and men are near to yield to the enemy: Proteus his name, and ever the shape he takes is strange, unexpected, yet ever sharing the same three traits of vision, rage and generousness — the Slayer of the Giant — Arthur come back — the Messenger of the Covenant — the genius of our species — Jesus the Oft-Born.

The Purple Cloud (1901)



1901 EDITION

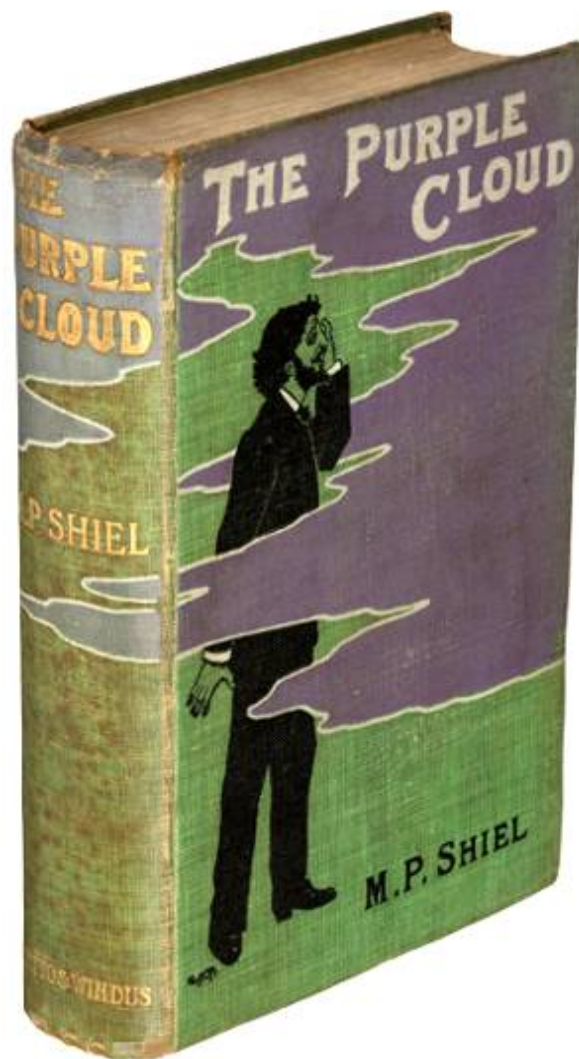
The Purple Cloud first appeared between January and June 1901 as a serial in *The Royal Magazine*, a highly successful monthly literary magazine established in 1898 by Sir Arthur Pearson. The novel was published in book form by Chatto and Windus in September of that year; it was a longer version of the novel than the one released in serialisation. Shiel would alter the text once more in the 1920's, not changing the plot, but making the language more concise. The novel is the author's best known and most critically acclaimed work; it is part of the first series of 'future history' science fiction works published in English and it was greatly admired by H. G. Wells.

The Purple Cloud is a 'last man' apocalyptic novel, which imagines the destruction of civilisation on earth with the exception of one man. The man in question is Adam Jeffson, who goes on an expedition to the North Pole, despite a prophesy predicting that this will result in a terrible fate. He soon discovers death everywhere and sees a mysterious purple cloud engulfing the sky. Jeffson begins to descend into madness, wishing to destroy the last remnants of human endeavour or decency. However, when he stumbles upon what appears to be another survivor of the apocalypse, he begins to view himself and his responsibilities in a new light.

The novel went on to inspire the 1959 American doomsday film, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*, directed by Ranald MacDougall and starring Harry Belafonte and Inger Stevens. It was commercially and critically unsuccessful and resulted in a financial loss for the studio and investors.



The magazine in which 'The Purple Cloud' first appeared: 'The Royal Magazine', 1901



The first edition

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INTRODUCTION



ABOUT THREE MONTHS ago — that is to say, toward the end of May of this year of 1900 — the writer whose name appears on the title-page received as noteworthy a letter, and packet of papers, as it has been his lot to examine. They came from a very good friend of mine, whose name there is no reason that I should now conceal — Dr. Arthur Lister Browne, M.A. (Oxon.), F.R.C.P. It happened that for two years I had been spending most of my time in France, and as Browne had a Norfolk practice, I had not seen him during my visits to London. Moreover, though our friendship was of the most intimate kind, we were both atrocious correspondents: so that only two notes passed between us during those years.

Till, last May, there reached me the letter — and the packet — to which I refer. The packet consisted of four note-books, quite crowded throughout with those giddy shapes of Pitman's shorthand, whose *ensemble* so resembles startled swarms hovering in flighty poses on the wing. They were scribbled in pencil, with little distinction between thick and thin strokes, few vowels: so that their slow deciphering, I can assure the reader, has been no holiday. The letter also was pencilled in shorthand; and this letter, together with the second of the note-books which I have deciphered (it was marked 'III.'), I now publish.

[I must say, however, that in some five instances there will occur sentences rather crutched by my own guess-work; and in two instances the characters were so impossibly mystical, that I had to abandon the passage

with a head-ache. But all this will be found immaterial to the general narrative.]

The following is Browne's letter:

'DEAR OLD SHIEL, — I have just been lying thinking of you, and wishing that you were here to give one a last squeeze of the hand before I—"go": for, by all appearance, "going" I am. Four days ago, I began to feel a soreness in the throat, and passing by old Johnson's surgery at Selbridge, went in and asked him to have a look at me. He muttered something about membranous laryngitis which made me smile, but by the time I reached home I was hoarse, and not smiling: before night I had dyspnoca and laryngeal stridor. I at once telegraphed to London for Morgan, and, between him and Johnson, they have been opening my trachea, and burning my inside with chromic acid and the galvanic cautery. The difficulty as to breathing has subsided, and it is wonderful how little I suffer: but I am much too old a hand not to know what's what: the bronchi are involved — *too far* involved — and as a matter of absolute fact, there isn't any hope. Morgan is still, I believe, fondly dwelling upon the possibility of adding me to his successful-tracheotomy statistics, but prognosis was always my strong point, and I say No. The very small consolation of my death will be the beating of a specialist in his own line. So we shall see.

'I have been arranging some of my affairs this morning, and remembered these notebooks. I intended letting you have them months ago, but my habit of putting things off, and the fact that the lady was alive from whom I took down the words, prevented me. Now she is dead, and as a literary man, and a student of life, you should be interested, if you can manage to read them. You may even find them valuable.

'I am under a little morphia at present, propped up in a nice little state of languor, and as I am able to write without much effort, I will tell you in the

old Pitman's something about her. Her name was Miss Mary Wilson; she was about thirty when I met her, forty-five when she died, and I knew her intimately all those fifteen years. Do you know anything about the philosophy of the hypnotic trance? Well, that was the relation between us — hypnotist and subject. She had been under another man before my time, but no one was ever so successful with her as I. She suffered from *tic douloureux* of the fifth nerve. She had had most of her teeth drawn before I saw her, and an attempt had been made to wrench out the nerve on the left side by the external scission. But it made no difference: all the clocks in hell tick-tacked in that poor woman's jaw, and it was the mercy of Providence that ever she came across *me*. My organisation was found to have almost complete, and quite easy, control over hers, and with a few passes I could expel her Legion.

‘Well, you never saw anyone so singular in personal appearance as my friend, Miss Wilson. Medicine-man as I am, I could never behold her suddenly without a sensation of shock: she suggested so inevitably what we call “the *other* world,” one detecting about her some odour of the worm, with the feeling that here was rather ghost than woman. And yet I can hardly convey to you the why of this, except by dry details as to the contours of her lofty brow, meagre lips, pointed chin, and ashen cheeks. She was tall and deplorably emaciated, her whole skeleton, except the thigh-bones, being quite visible. Her eyes were of the bluish hue of cigarette smoke, and had in them the strangest, feeble, unearthly gaze; while at thirty-five her paltry wisp of hair was quite white.

‘She was well-to-do, and lived alone in old Wooding Manor-house, five miles from Ash Thomas. As you know, I was “beginning” in these parts at the time, and soon took up my residence at the manor. She insisted that I

should devote myself to her alone; and that one patient constituted the most lucrative practice which I ever had.

‘Well, I quickly found that, in the state of trance, Miss Wilson possessed very remarkable powers: remarkable, I mean, not, of course, because peculiar to herself in *kind*, but because they were so constant, reliable, exact, and far-reaching, in degree. The veriest fledgling in psychical science will now sit and discourse finically to you about the reporting powers of the mind in its trance state — just as though it was something quite new! This simple fact, I assure you, which the Psychical Research Society, only after endless investigation, admits to be scientific, has been perfectly well known to every old crone since the Middle Ages, and, I assume, long previously. What an unnecessary air of discovery! The certainty that someone in trance in Manchester can tell you what is going on in London, or in Pekin, was not, of course, left to the acumen of an office in Fleet Street; and the society, in establishing the fact beyond doubt for the general public, has not gone one step toward explaining it. They have, in fact, revealed nothing that many of us did not, with absolute assurance, know before.

‘But talking of poor Miss Wilson, I say that her powers were *remarkable*, because, though not exceptional in *genre*, they were so special in quantity, — so “constant,” and “far-reaching.” I believe it to be a fact that, *in general*, the powers of trance manifest themselves more particularly with regard to space, as distinct from time: the spirit roams in the present — it travels over a plain — it does not *usually* attract the interest of observers by great ascents, or by great descents. I fancy that is so. But Miss Wilson’s gift was special to this extent, that she travelled in every direction, and easily in all but one, north and south, up and down, in the past, the present, and the future.

This I discovered, not at once, but gradually. She would emit a stream of sounds in the trance state — I can hardly call it *speech*, so murmurous, yet guttural, was the utterance, mixed with puffy breath-sounds at the languid lips. This state was accompanied by an intense contraction of the pupils, absence of the knee-jerk, considerable rigor, and a rapt and arrant expression. I got into the habit of sitting long hours at her bed-side, quite fascinated by her, trying to catch the import of that opiate and visionary language which came puffing and fluttering in deliberate monotone from her lips. Gradually, in the course of months, my ear learned to detect the words; “the veil was rent” for me also; and I was able to follow somewhat the course of her musing and wandering spirit.

At the end of six months I heard her one day repeat some words which were familiar to me. They were these: “Such were the arts by which the Romans extended their conquests, and attained the palm of victory; and the concurring testimony of different authors enables us to describe them with precision...” I was startled: they are part of Gibbon’s “Decline and Fall,” which I easily guessed that she had never read.

I said in a stern voice: “Where are you?”

She replied, “Us are in a room, eight hundred and eleven miles above. A man is writing. Us are reading.”

I may tell you two things: first, that in trance she never spoke of herself as “I,” nor even as “we,” but, for some unknown reason, in the *objective* way, as “*us*”: “us are,” she would say— “us will,” “us went”; though, of course, she was an educated lady, and I don’t think ever lived in the West of England, where they say “us” in that way; secondly, when wandering in the past, she always represented herself as being “*above*” (the earth?), and higher the further back in time she went; in describing present events she

appears to have felt herself *on* (the earth); while, as regards the future, she invariably declared that “*us*” were so many miles “within” (the earth).

To her excursions in this last direction, however, there seemed to exist certain fixed limits: I say seemed, for I cannot be sure, and only mean that, in spite of my efforts, she never, in fact, went far in this direction. Three, four thousand “miles” were common figures on her lips in describing her distance “above”; but her distance “within” never got beyond sixty-three. Usually, she would say twenty, twenty-five. She appeared, in relation to the future, to resemble a diver in the deep sea, who, the deeper he strives, finds a more resistant pressure, till, at no great depth, resistance becomes prohibition, and he can no further strive.

‘I am afraid I can’t go on: though I had a good deal to tell you about this lady. During fifteen years, off and on, I sat listening by her dim bed-side to her murmuring trances! At last my expert ear could detect the sense of her faintest sigh. I heard the “Decline and Fall” from beginning to end. Some of her reports were the most frivolous nonsense: over others I have hung in a horror of interest. Certainly, my friend, I have heard some amazing words proceed from those wan lips of Mary Wilson. Sometimes I could hitch her repeatedly to any scene or subject that I chose by the mere exercise of my will; at others, the flighty waywardness of her spirit eluded and baffled me: she resisted — she disobeyed: otherwise I might have sent you, not four note-books, but twenty, or forty. About the fifth year it struck me that it would be well to jot down her more connected utterances, since I knew shorthand.

The note-book marked “I.,” which seems to me the most curious, belongs to the seventh year. Its history, like those of the other three, is this: I heard her one afternoon murmuring in the intonation used when *reading*; the matter interested me; I asked her where she was. She replied: “Us are

forty-five miles within: us read, and another writes”]; from which I concluded that she was some fifteen to thirty years in the future, perusing an as yet unpublished work. After that, during some weeks, I managed to keep her to the same subject, and finally, I fancy, won pretty well the whole work. I believe you would find it striking, and hope you will be able to read my notes.

‘But no more of Mary Wilson now. Rather let us think a little of A.L. Browne, F.R.C.P.! — with a breathing-tube in his trachea, and Eternity under his pillow...’ [Dr. Browne’s letter then continues on a subject of no interest here.]

[The present writer may add that Dr. Browne’s prognosis of his own case proved correct, for he passed away two days after writing the above. My transcription of the shorthand book marked ‘III.’ I now proceed to give without comment, merely reminding the reader that the words form the substance of a book or document to be written, or to be motived (according to Miss Wilson) in that Future, which, no less than the Past, substantively exists in the Present — though, like the Past, we see it not. I need only add that the title, division into paragraphs, &c., have been arbitrarily contrived by myself for the sake of form and convenience.]

[This I intend to publish under the title of ‘The Last Miracle; ‘II.’ will bear that of ‘The Lord of the Sea’; the present book is marked ‘III.’ The perusal of ‘IV.’ I have yet finished, but so far do not consider it suitable for publication.]

(Here begins the note-book marked ‘III.’)

THE PURPLE CLOUD



WELL, THE MEMORY seems to be getting rather impaired now, rather weak. What, for instance, was the name of that parson who preached, just before the *Boreal* set out, about the wickedness of any further attempt to reach the North Pole? I have forgotten! Yet four years ago it was familiar to me as my own name.

Things which took place before the voyage seem to be getting a little cloudy in the memory now. I have sat here, in the loggia of this Cornish villa, to write down some sort of account of what has happened — God knows why, since no eye can ever read it — and at the very beginning I cannot remember the parson's name.

He was a strange sort of man surely, a Scotchman from Ayrshire, big and gaunt, with tawny hair. He used to go about London streets in shough and rough-spun clothes, a plaid flung from one shoulder. Once I saw him in Holborn with his rather wild stalk, frowning and muttering to himself. He had no sooner come to London, and opened chapel (I think in Fetter Lane), than the little room began to be crowded; and when, some years afterwards, he moved to a big establishment in Kensington, all sorts of men, even from America and Australia, flocked to hear the thunderstorms that he talked, though certainly it was not an age apt to fly into enthusiasms over that species of pulpit prophets and prophecies. But this particular man undoubtedly did wake the strong dark feelings that sleep in the heart; his eyes were very singular and powerful; his voice from a whisper ran gathering, like snow-balls, and crashed, as I have heard the pack-ice in

commotion far yonder in the North; while his gestures were as uncouth and gawky as some wild man's of the primitive ages.

Well, this man — what *was* his name? — Macintosh? Mackay? I think — yes, that was it! *Mackay*. Mackay saw fit to take offence at the new attempt to reach the Pole in the *Boreal*; and for three Sundays, when the preparations were nearing completion, stormed against it at Kensington.

The excitement of the world with regard to the North Pole had at this date reached a pitch which can only be described as *fevered*, though that word hardly expresses the strange ecstasy and unrest which prevailed: for the abstract interest which mankind, in mere desire for knowledge, had always felt in this unknown region, was now, suddenly, a thousand and a thousand times intensified by a new, concrete interest — a tremendous *money* interest.

And the new zeal had ceased to be healthy in its tone as the old zeal was: for now the fierce demon Mammon was making his voice heard in this matter.

Within the ten years preceding the *Boreal* expedition, no less than twenty-seven expeditions had set out, and failed.

The secret of this new rage lay in the last will and testament of Mr. Charles P. Stickney of Chicago, that king of faddists, supposed to be the richest individual who ever lived: he, just ten years before the *Boreal* undertaking, had died, bequeathing 175 million dollars to the man, of whatever nationality, who first reached the Pole.

Such was the actual wording of the will— '*the man who first reached*': and from this loose method of designating the person intended had immediately burst forth a prolonged heat of controversy in Europe and America as to whether or no the testator meant *the Chief* of the first expedition which reached: but it was finally decided, on the highest legal

authority, that, in any case, the actual wording of the document held good: and that it was the individual, whatever his station in the expedition, whose foot first reached the 90th degree of north latitude, who would have title to the fortune.

At all events, the public ferment had risen, as I say, to a pitch of positive fever; and as to the *Boreal* in particular, the daily progress of her preparations was minutely discussed in the newspapers, everyone was an authority on her fitting, and she was in every mouth a bet, a hope, a jest, or a sneer: for now, at last, it was felt that success was probable. So this Mackay had an acutely interested audience, if a somewhat startled, and a somewhat cynical, one.

A truly lion-hearted man this must have been, after all, to dare proclaim a point-of-view so at variance with the spirit of his age! One against four hundred millions, they bent one way, he the opposite, saying that they were wrong, all wrong! People used to call him 'John the Baptist Redivivus': and without doubt he did suggest something of that sort. I suppose that at the time when he had the face to denounce the *Boreal* there was not a sovereign on any throne in Europe who, but for shame, would have been glad of a subordinate post on board.

On the third Sunday night of his denunciation I was there in that Kensington chapel, and I heard him. And the wild talk he talked! He seemed like a man delirious with inspiration.

The people sat quite spell-bound, while Mackay's prophesying voice ranged up and down through all the modulations of thunder, from the hurrying mutter to the reverberant shock and climax: and those who came to scoff remained to wonder.

Put simply, what he said was this: That there was undoubtedly some sort of Fate, or Doom, connected with the Poles of the earth in reference to the

human race: that man's continued failure, in spite of continual efforts, to reach them, abundantly and super-abundantly proved this; and that this failure constituted a lesson — *and a warning* — which the race disregarded at its peril.

The North Pole, he said, was not so very far away, and the difficulties in the way of reaching it were not, on the face of them, so very great: human ingenuity had achieved a thousand things a thousand times more difficult; yet in spite of over half-a-dozen well-planned efforts in the nineteenth century, and thirty-one in the twentieth, man had never reached: always he had been baulked, baulked, by some seeming chance — some restraining Hand: and herein lay the lesson — *herein the warning*. Wonderfully — really *wonderfully* — like the Tree of Knowledge in Eden, he said, was that Pole: all the rest of earth lying open and offered to man — but *That* persistently veiled and 'forbidden.' It was as when a father lays a hand upon his son, with: 'Not here, my child; wheresoever you will — but not here.'

But human beings, he said, were free agents, with power to stop their ears, and turn a callous consciousness to the whispers and warning indications of Heaven; and he believed, he said, that the time was now come when man would find it absolutely in his power to stand on that 90th of latitude, and plant an impious right foot on the head of the earth — just as it had been given into the absolute power of Adam to stretch an impious right hand, and pluck of the Fruit of Knowledge; but, said he — his voice pealing now into one long proclamation of awful augury — just as the abuse of that power had been followed in the one case by catastrophe swift and universal, so, in the other, he warned the entire race to look out thenceforth for nothing from God but a lowering sky, and thundery weather.

The man's frantic earnestness, authoritative voice, and savage gestures, could not but have their effect upon all; as for me, I declare, I sat as though

a messenger from Heaven addressed me. But I believe that I had not yet reached home, when the whole impression of the discourse had passed from me like water from a duck's back. The Prophet in the twentieth century was not a success. John Baptist himself, camel-skin and all, would, have met with only tolerant shrugs. I dismissed Mackay from my mind with the thought: 'He is behind his age, I suppose.'

But haven't I thought differently of Mackay since, my God...?

Three weeks — it was about that — before that Sunday night discourse, I was visited by Clark, the chief of the coming expedition — a mere visit of friendship. I had then been established about a year at No. II, Harley Street, and, though under twenty-five, had, I suppose, as *élite* a practice as any doctor in Europe.

Élite — but small. I was able to maintain my state, and move among the great: but now and again I would feel the secret pinch of moneylessness. Just about that time, in fact, I was only saved from considerable embarrassment by the success of my book, 'Applications of Science to the Arts.'

In the course of conversation that afternoon, Clark said to me in his light hap-hazard way:

'Do you know what I dreamed about you last night, Adam Jeffson? I dreamed that you were with us on the expedition.'

I think he must have seen my start: on the same night I had myself dreamed the same thing; but not a word said I about it now. There was a stammer in my tongue when I answered:

'Who? I? — on the expedition? — I would not go, if I were asked.'

'Oh, you would.'

'I wouldn't. You forget that I am about to be married.'

‘Well, we need not discuss the point, as Peters is not going to die,’ said he. ‘Still, if anything did happen to him, you know, it is you I should come straight to, Adam Jeffson.’

‘Clark, you jest,’ I said: ‘I know really very little of astronomy, or magnetic phenomena. Besides, I am about to be married....’

‘But what about your botany, my friend? *There’s* what we should be wanting from you: and as for nautical astronomy, poh, a man with your scientific habit would pick all that up in no time.’

‘You discuss the matter as gravely as though it were a possibility, Clark,’ I said, smiling. ‘Such a thought would never enter my head: there is, first of all, my *fiancée* — —’

‘Ah, the all-important Countess, eh? — Well, but she, as far as I know the lady, would be the first to force you to go. The chance of stamping one’s foot on the North Pole does not occur to a man every day, my son.’

‘Do talk of something else!’ I said. ‘There is Peters....’

‘Well, of course, there is Peters. But believe me, the dream I had was so clear — —’

‘Let me alone with your dreams, and your Poles!’ I laughed.

Yes, I remember: I pretended to laugh loud! But my secret heart knew, even *then*, that one of those crises was occurring in my life which, from my youth, has made it the most extraordinary which any creature of earth ever lived. And I knew that this was so, firstly, because of the two dreams, and secondly, because, when Clark was gone, and I was drawing on my gloves to go to see my *fiancée*, I heard distinctly the old two Voices talk within me: and One said: ‘Go not to see her now!’ and the Other: ‘Yes, go, go!’

The two Voices of my life! An ordinary person reading my words would undoubtedly imagine that I mean only two ordinary contradictory impulses — or else that I rave: for what modern man could comprehend how real-

seeming were those voices, how loud, and how, ever and again, I heard them contend within me, with a nearness ‘nearer than breathing,’ as it says in the poem, and ‘closer than hands and feet.’

About the age of seven it happened first to me. I was playing one summer evening in a pine-wood of my father’s; half a mile away was a quarry-cliff; and as I played, it suddenly seemed as if someone said to me, inside of me: ‘Just take a walk toward the cliff’; and as if someone else said: ‘Don’t go that way at all’ — mere whispers then, which gradually, as I grew up, seemed to swell into cries of wrathful contention! I did go toward the cliff: it was steep, thirty feet high, and I fell. Some weeks later, on recovering speech, I told my astonished mother that ‘someone had pushed me’ over the edge, and that someone else ‘had caught me’ at the bottom!

One night, soon after my eleventh birthday, lying in bed, the thought struck me that my life must be of great importance to some thing or things which I could not see; that two Powers, which hated each other, must be continually after me, one wishing for some reason to kill me, and the other for some reason to keep me alive, one wishing me to do so and so, and the other to do the opposite; that I was not a boy like other boys, but a creature separate, special, marked for — something. Already I had notions, touches of mood, passing instincts, as occult and primitive, I verily believe, as those of the first man that stepped; so that such Biblical expressions as ‘The Lord spake to So-and-so, saying’ have hardly ever suggested any question in my mind as to how the Voice was heard: I did not find it so very difficult to comprehend that originally man had more ears than two; nor should have been surprised to know that I, in these latter days, more or less resembled those primeval ones.

But not a creature, except perhaps my mother, has ever dreamed me what I here state that I was. I seemed the ordinary youth of my time, bow in my

‘Varsity eight, cramming for exams., dawdling in clubs. When I had to decide as to a profession, who could have suspected the conflict that transacted itself in my soul, while my brain was indifferent to the matter — that agony of strife with which the brawling voices shouted, the one: ‘Be a scientist — a doctor,’ and the other: ‘Be a lawyer, an engineer, an artist — be *anything* but a doctor!’

A doctor I became, and went to what had grown into the greatest of medical schools — Cambridge; and there it was that I came across a man, named Scotland, who had a rather odd view of the world. He had rooms, I remember, in the New Court at Trinity, and a set of us were generally there. He was always talking about certain ‘Black’ and ‘White Powers, till it became absurd, and the men used to call him ‘black-and-white-mystery-man,’ because, one day, when someone said something about ‘the black mystery of the universe,’ Scotland interrupted him with the words: ‘the black-and-white mystery.’

Quite well I remember Scotland now — the sweetest, gentle soul he was, with a passion for cats, and Sappho, and the Anthology, very short in stature, with a Roman nose, continually making the effort to keep his neck straight, and draw his paunch in. He used to say that the universe was being frantically contended for by two Powers: a White and a Black; that the White was the stronger, but did not find the conditions on our particular planet very favourable to his success; that he had got the best of it up to the Middle Ages in Europe, but since then had been slowly and stubbornly giving way before the Black; and that finally the Black would win — not everywhere perhaps, but *here* — and would carry off, if no other earth, at least *this* one, for his prize.

This was Scotland’s doctrine, which he never tired of repeating; and while others heard him with mere toleration, little could they divine with

what agony of inward interest, I, cynically smiling there, drank in his words. Most profound, most profound, was the impression they made upon me.

But I was saying that when Clark left me, I was drawing on my gloves to go to see my *fiancée*, the Countess Clodagh, when I heard the two voices most clearly.

Sometimes the urgency of one or other impulse is so overpowering, that there is no resisting it: and it was so then with the one that bid me go.

I had to traverse the distance between Harley Street and Hanover Square, and all the time it was as though something shouted at my physical ear: ‘Since you go, breathe no word of the *Boreal*, and Clark’s visit’; and another shout: ‘Tell, tell, hide nothing!’

It seemed to last a month: yet it was only some minutes before I was in Hanover Square, and Clodagh in my arms.

She was, in my opinion, the most superb of creatures, Clodagh — that haughty neck which seemed always scorning something just behind her left shoulder. Superb! but ah — I know it now — a godless woman, Clodagh, a bitter heart.

Clodagh once confessed to me that her favourite character in history was Lucrezia Borgia, and when she saw my horror, immediately added: ‘Well, no, I am only joking!’ Such was her duplicity: for I see now that she lived in the constant effort to hide her heinous heart from me. Yet, now I think of it, how completely did Clodagh enthrall me!

Our proposed marriage was opposed by both my family and hers: by mine, because her father and grandfather had died in lunatic asylums; and by hers, because, forsooth, I was neither a rich nor a noble match. A sister of hers, much older than herself, had married a common country doctor,

Peters of Taunton, and this so-called *mésalliance* made the so-called *mésalliance* with me doubly detestable in the eyes of her relatives. But Clodagh's extraordinary passion for me was to be stemmed neither by their threats nor prayers. What a flame, after all, was Clodagh! Sometimes she frightened me.

She was at this date no longer young, being by five years my senior, as also, by five years, the senior of her nephew, born from the marriage of her sister with Peters of Taunton. This nephew was Peter Peters, who was to accompany the *Boreal* expedition as doctor, botanist, and meteorological assistant.

On that day of Clark's visit to me I had not been seated five minutes with Clodagh, when I said:

'Dr. Clark — ha! ha! ha! — has been talking to me about the Expedition. He says that if anything happened to Peters, I should be the first man he would run to. He has had an absurd dream...'

The consciousness that filled me as I uttered these words was the *wickedness* of me — the crooked wickedness. But I could no more help it than I could fly.

Clodagh was standing at a window holding a rose at her face. For quite a minute she made no reply. I saw her sharp-cut, florid face in profile, steadily bent and smelling. She said presently in her cold, rapid way:

'The man who first plants his foot on the North Pole will certainly be ennobled. I say nothing of the many millions... I only wish that I was a man!'

'I don't know that I have any special ambition that way,' I rejoined. 'I am very happy in my warm Eden with my Clodagh. I don't like the outer Cold.'

'Don't let me think little of you!' she answered pettishly.

‘Why should you, Clodagh? I am not bound to desire to go to the North Pole, am I?’

‘But you *would* go, I suppose, if you could?’

‘I might — I — doubt it. There is our marriage....’

‘Marriage indeed! It is the one thing to transform our marriage from a sneaking difficulty to a ten times triumphant event.’

‘You mean if *I* personally were the first to stand at the Pole. But there are many in an expedition. It is very unlikely that *I*, personally—’

‘For *me* you will, Adam—’ she began.

‘“*Will*,” Clodagh?’ I cried. ‘You say “*will*”? there is not even the slightest shadow of a probability — !’

‘But why? There are still three weeks before the start. They say...’

She stopped, she stopped.

‘They say what?’

Her voice dropped:

‘That Peter takes atropine.’

Ah, I started then. She moved from the window, sat in a rocking-chair, and turned the leaves of a book, without reading. We were silent, she and I; I standing, looking at her, she drawing the thumb across the leaf-edges, and beginning again, contemplatively. Then she laughed dryly a little — a dry, mad laugh.

‘Why did you start when I said that?’ she asked, reading now at random.

‘*I*! I did not start, Clodagh! What made you think that I started? I did not start! Who told you, Clodagh, that Peters takes atropine?’

‘He is my nephew: I should know. But don’t look dumbfounded in that absurd fashion: I have no intention of poisoning him in order to see you a multimillionaire, and a Peer of the Realm....’

‘My dearest Clodagh!’

‘I easily might, however. He will be here presently. He is bringing Mr. Wilson for the evening.’ (Wilson was going as electrician of the expedition.)

‘Clodagh.’ I said, ‘believe me, you jest in a manner which does not please me.’

‘Do I really?’ she answered with that haughty, stiff half-turn of her throat: ‘then I must be more exquisite. But, thank Heaven, it is only a jest. Women are no longer admired for doing such things.’

‘Ha! ha! ha! — no — no longer admired, Clodagh! Oh, my good Lord! let us change this talk....’

But now she could talk of nothing else. She got from me that afternoon the history of all the Polar expeditions of late years, how far they reached, by what aids, and why they failed. Her eyes shone; she listened eagerly. Before this time, indeed, she had been interested in the *Boreal*, knew the details of her outfitting, and was acquainted with several members of the expedition. But now, suddenly, her mind seemed wholly possessed, my mention of Clark’s visit apparently setting her well a-burn with the Pole-fever.

The passion of her kiss as I tore myself from her embrace that day I shall not forget. I went home with a pretty heavy heart.

The house of Dr. Peter Peters was three doors from mine, on the opposite side of the street. Toward one that night, his footman ran to knock me up with the news that Peters was very ill. I hurried to his bed-side, and knew by the first glance at his deliriums and his staring pupils that he was poisoned with atropine. Wilson, the electrician, who had passed the evening with him at Clodagh’s in Hanover Square, was there.

‘What on earth is the matter?’ he said to me.

‘Poisoned,’ I answered.

‘Good God! what with?’

‘Atropine.’

‘Good Heavens!’

‘Don’t be frightened: I think he will recover.’

‘Is that certain?’

‘Yes, I think — that is, if he leaves off taking the drug, Wilson.’

‘What! it is he who has poisoned himself?’

I hesitated, I hesitated. But I said:

‘He is in the habit of taking atropine, Wilson.’

Three hours I remained there, and, God knows, toiled hard for his life: and when I left him in the dark of the fore-day, my mind was at rest: he would recover.

I slept till 11 A.M., and then hurried over again to Peters. In the room were my two nurses, and Clodagh.

My beloved put her forefinger to her lips, whispering:

‘Sh-h-h! he is asleep....’

She came closer to my ear, saying:

‘I heard the news early. I am come to stay with him, till — the last....’

We looked at each other some time — eye to eye, steadily, she and I: but mine dropped before Clodagh’s. A word was on my mouth to say, but I said nothing.

The recovery of Peters was not so steady as I had expected. At the end of the first week he was still prostrate. It was then that I said to Clodagh:

‘Clodagh, your presence at the bed-side here somehow does not please me. It is so unnecessary.’

‘Unnecessary certainly,’ she replied: ‘but I always had a genius for nursing, and a passion for watching the battles of the body. Since no one objects, why should you?’

‘Ah!... I don’t know. This is a case that I dislike. I have half a mind to throw it to the devil.’

‘Then do so.’

‘And you, too — go home, go home, Clodagh!’

‘But *why*? — if one does no harm. In these days of “the corruption of the upper classes,” and Roman decadence of everything, shouldn’t every innocent whim be encouraged by you upright ones who strive against the tide? Whims are the brakes of crimes: and this is mine. I find a sensuous pleasure, almost a sensual, in dabbling in delicate drugs — like Helen, for that matter, and Medea, and Calypso, and the great antique women, who were all excellent chymists. To study the human ship in a gale, and the slow drama of its foundering — isn’t that a quite thrilling distraction? And I want you to get into the habit at once of letting me have my little way — —’

Now she touched my hair with a lofty playfulness that soothed me: but even then I looked upon the rumpled bed, and saw that the man there was really very sick.

I have still a nausea to write about it! Lucrezia Borgia in her own age may have been heroic: but Lucrezia in this late century! One could retch up the heart...

The man grew sick on that bed, I say. The second week passed, and only ten days remained before the start of the expedition.

At the end of that second week, Wilson, the electrician, was one evening sitting by Peter’s bedside when I entered.

At the moment, Clodagh was about to administer a dose to Peters; but seeing me, she put down the medicine-glass on the night table, and came toward me; and as she came, I saw a sight which stabbed me: for Wilson took up the deposited medicine-glass, elevated it, looked at it, smelled into it: and he did it with a kind of hurried, light-fingered stealth; and he did it

with an under-look, and a meaningfulness of expression which, I thought, proved mistrust....

Meantime, Clark came each day. He had himself a medical degree, and about this time I called him in professionally, together with Alleyne of Cavendish Square, to consultation over Peters. The patient lay in a semi-coma broken by passionate vomitings, and his condition puzzled us all. I formally stated that he took atropine — had been originally poisoned by atropine: but we saw that his present symptoms were not atropine symptoms, but, it almost seemed, of some other vegetable poison, which we could not precisely name.

‘Mysterious thing,’ said Clark to me, when we were alone.

‘I don’t understand it,’ I said.

‘Who are the two nurses?’

‘Oh, highly recommended people of my own.’

‘At any rate, my dream about you comes true, Jeffson. It is clear that Peters is out of the running now.’

I shrugged.

‘I now formally invite you to join the expedition,’ said Clark: ‘do you consent?’

I shrugged again.

‘Well, if that means consent,’ he said, ‘let me remind you that you have only eight days, and all the world to do in them.’

This conversation occurred in the dining-room of Peters’ house: and as we passed through the door, I saw Clodagh gliding down the passage outside — rapidly — away from us.

Not a word I said to her that day about Clark’s invitation. Yet I asked myself repeatedly: Did she not know of it? Had she not *listened*, and heard?

However that was, about midnight, to my great surprise, Peters opened his eyes, and smiled. By noon the next day, his fine vitality, which so fitted him for an Arctic expedition, had re-asserted itself. He was then leaning on an elbow, talking to Wilson, and except his pallor, and strong stomach-pains, there was now hardly a trace of his late approach to death. For the pains I prescribed some quarter-grain tablets of sulphate of morphia, and went away.

Now, David Wilson and I never greatly loved each other, and that very day he brought about a painful situation as between Peters and me, by telling Peters that I had taken his place in the expedition. Peters, a touchy fellow, at once dictated a letter of protest to Clark; and Clark sent Peters' letter to me, marked with a big note of interrogation in blue pencil.

Now, all Peters' preparations were made, mine not; and he had six days in which to recover himself. I therefore wrote to Clark, saying that the changed circumstances of course annulled my acceptance of his offer, though I had already incurred the inconvenience of negotiating with a *locum tenens*.

This decided it: Peters was to go, I stay. The fifth day before the departure dawned. It was a Friday, the 15th June. Peters was now in an arm-chair. He was cheerful, but with a fevered pulse, and still the stomach-pains. I was giving him three quarter-grains of morphia a day. That Friday night, at 11 P.M., I visited him, and found Clodagh there, talking to him. Peters was smoking a cigar.

'Ah,' Clodagh said, 'I was waiting for you, Adam. I didn't know whether I was to inject anything to-night. Is it Yes or No?'

'What do you think, Peters?' I said: 'any more pains?'

'Well, perhaps you had better give us another quarter,' he answered: 'there's still some trouble in the tummy off and on.'

‘A quarter-grain, then, Clodagh, ‘I said.

As she opened the syringe-box, she remarked with a pout:

‘Our patient has been naughty! He has taken some more atropine.’

I became angry at once.

‘Peters,’ I cried, ‘you know you have no right to be doing things like that without consulting me! Do that once more, and I swear I have nothing further to do with you!’

‘Rubbish,’ said Peters: ‘why all this unnecessary heat? It was a mere flea-bite. I felt that I needed it.’

‘He injected it with his own hand...’ remarked Clodagh.

She was now standing at the mantel-piece, having lifted the syringe-box from the night-table, taken from its velvet lining both the syringe and the vial containing the morphia tablets, and gone to the mantel-piece to melt one of the tablets in a little of the distilled water there. Her back was turned upon us, and she was a long time. I was standing; Peters in his arm-chair, smoking. Clodagh then began to talk about a Charity Bazaar which she had visited that afternoon.

She was long, she was long. The crazy thought passed through some dim region of my soul: ‘Why is she so *long*?’

‘Ah, that was a pain!’ went Peters: ‘never mind the bazaar, aunt — think of the morphia.’

Suddenly an irresistible impulse seized me — to rush upon her, to dash syringe, tabloids, glass, and all, from her hands. I *must* have obeyed it — I was on the tip-top point of obeying — my body already leant prone: but at that instant a voice at the opened door behind me said:

‘Well, how is everything?’

It was Wilson, the electrician, who stood there. With lightning swiftness I remembered an under-look of mistrust which I had once seen on his face.

Oh, well, I would not, and could not! — she was my love — I stood like marble...

Clodagh went to meet Wilson with frank right hand, in the left being the fragile glass containing the injection. My eyes were fastened on her face: it was full of reassurance, of free innocence. I said to myself: 'I must surely be mad!'

An ordinary chat began, while Clodagh turned up Peters' sleeve, and, kneeling there, injected his fore-arm. As she rose, laughing at something said by Wilson, the drug-glass dropped from her hand, and her heel, by an apparent accident, trod on it. She put the syringe among a number of others on the mantel-piece.

'Your friend has been naughty, Mr. Wilson,' she said again with that same pout: 'he has been taking more atropine.'

'Not really?' said Wilson.

'Let me alone, the whole of you,' answered Peters: 'I ain't a child.'

These were the last intelligible words he ever spoke. He died shortly before 1 A.M. He had been poisoned by a powerful dose of atropine.

From that moment to the moment when the *Boreal* bore me down the Thames, all the world was a mere tumbling nightmare to me, of which hardly any detail remains in my memory. Only I remember the inquest, and how I was called upon to prove that Peters had himself injected himself with atropine. This was corroborated by Wilson, and by Clodagh: and the verdict was in accordance.

And in all that chaotic hurry of preparation, three other things only, but those with clear distinctness now, I remember.

The first — and chief — is that tempest of words which I heard at Kensington from that big-mouthed Mackay on the Sunday night. What was it that led me, busy as I was, to that chapel that night? Well, perhaps I know.

There I sat, and heard him: and most strangely have those words of his peroration planted themselves in my brain, when, rising to a passion of prophecy, he shouted: ‘And as in the one case, transgression was followed by catastrophe swift and universal, so, in the other, I warn the entire race to look out thenceforth for nothing from God but a lowering sky, and thundery weather.’

And this second thing I remember: that on reaching home, I walked into my disordered library (for I had had to hunt out some books), where I met my housekeeper in the act of rearranging things. She had apparently lifted an old Bible by the front cover to fling it on the table, for as I threw myself into a chair my eye fell upon the open print near the beginning. The print was very large, and a shaded lamp cast a light upon it. I had been hearing Mackay’s wild comparison of the Pole with the tree of Eden, and that no doubt was the reason why such a start convulsed me: for my listless eyes had chanced to rest upon some words.

‘The woman gave me of the tree, and I did eat....’

And a third thing I remember in all that turmoil of doubt and flurry: that as the ship moved down with the afternoon tide a telegram was put into my hand; it was a last word from Clodagh; and she said only this:

‘Be first — for Me.’

The *Boreal* left St. Katherine’s Docks in beautiful weather on the afternoon of the 19th June, full of good hope, bound for the Pole.

All about the docks was one region of heads stretched far in innumerable vagueness, and down the river to Woolwich a continuous dull roar and murmur of bees droned from both banks to cheer our departure.

The expedition was partly a national affair, subvented by Government: and if ever ship was well-found it was the *Boreal*. She had a frame tougher

far than any battle-ship's, capable of ramming some ten yards of drift-ice; and she was stuffed with sufficient pemmican, codroe, fish-meal, and so on, to last us not less than six years.

We were seventeen, all told, the five Heads (so to speak) of the undertaking being Clark (our Chief), John Mew (commander), Aubrey Maitland (meteorologist), Wilson (electrician), and myself (doctor, botanist, and assistant meteorologist).

The idea was to get as far east as the 100°, or the 120°, of longitude; to catch there the northern current; to push and drift our way northward; and when the ship could no further penetrate, to leave her (either three, or else four, of us, on ski), and with sledges drawn by dogs and reindeer make a dash for the Pole.

This had also been the plan of the last expedition — that of the *Nix* — and of several others. The *Boreal* only differed from the *Nix*, and others, in that she was a thing of nicer design, and of more exquisite forethought.

Our voyage was without incident up to the end of July, when we encountered a drift of ice-floes. On the 1st August we were at Kabarova, where we met our coal-ship, and took in a little coal for emergency, liquid air being our proper motor; also forty-three dogs, four reindeer, and a quantity of reindeer-moss; and two days later we turned our bows finally northward and eastward, passing through heavy 'slack' ice under sail and liquid air in crisp weather, till, on the 27th August, we lay moored to a floe off the desolate island of Taimur.

The first thing which we saw here was a bear on the shore, watching for young white-fish: and promptly Clark, Mew, and Lamburn (engineer) went on shore in the launch, I and Maitland following in the pram, each party with three dogs.

It was while climbing away inland that Maitland said to me:

‘When Clark leaves the ship for the dash to the Pole, it is three, not two, of us, after all, that he is going to take with him, making a party of four.’

I: ‘Is that so? Who knows?’

Maitland: ‘Wilson does. Clark has let it out in conversation with Wilson.’

I: ‘Well, the more the merrier. Who will be the three?’

Maitland: ‘Wilson is sure to be in it, and there may be Mew, making the third. As to the fourth, I suppose *I* shall get left out in the cold.’

I: ‘More likely I.’

Maitland: ‘Well, the race is between us four: Wilson, Mew, you and I. It is a question of physical fitness combined with special knowledge. You are too lucky a dog to get left out, Jeffson.’

I: ‘Well, what does it matter, so long as the expedition as a whole is successful? That is the main thing.’

Maitland: ‘Oh yes, that’s all very fine talk, Jeffson! But is it quite sincere? Isn’t it rather a pose to affect to despise \$175,000,000? *I* want to be in at the death, and I mean to be, if I can. We are all more or less self-interested.’

‘Look,’ I whispered— ‘a bear.’

It was a mother and cub: and with determined trudge she came wagging her low head, having no doubt smelled the dogs. We separated on the instant, doubling different ways behind ice-boulders, wanting her to go on nearer the shore, before killing; but, passing close, she spied, and bore down at a trot upon me. I fired into her neck, and at once, with a roar, she turned tail, making now straight in Maitland’s direction. I saw him run out from cover some hundred yards away, aiming his long-gun: but no report followed: and in half a minute he was under her fore-paws, she striking out slaps at the barking, shrinking dogs. Maitland roared for my help: and at

that moment, I, poor wretch, in far worse plight than he, stood shivering in ague: for suddenly one of those wrangles of the voices of my destiny was filling my bosom with loud commotion, one urging me to fly to Maitland's aid, one passionately commanding me be still. But it lasted, I believe, some seconds only: I ran and got a shot into the bear's brain, and Maitland leapt up with a rent down his face.

But singular destiny! Whatever I did — if I did evil, if I did good — the result was the same: tragedy dark and sinister! Poor Maitland was doomed that voyage, and my rescue of his life was the means employed to make his death the more certain.

I think that I have already written, some pages back, about a man called Scotland, whom I met at Cambridge. He was always talking about certain 'Black' and 'White' beings, and their contention for the earth. We others used to call him the black-and-white mystery-man, because, one day — but that is no matter now. Well, with regard to all that, I have a fancy, a whim of the mind — quite wide of the truth, no doubt — but I have it here in my brain, and I will write it down now. It is this: that there may have been some sort of arrangement, or understanding, between Black and White, as in the case of Adam and the fruit, that, should mankind force his way to the Pole and the old forbidden secret bidding there, then some mishap should not fail to overtake the race of man; that the White, being kindly disposed to mankind, did not wish this to occur, and intended, for the sake of the race, to destroy our entire expedition before it reached; and that the Black, knowing that the White meant to do this, and by what means, used me — *me!* — to outwit this design, first of all working that I should be one of the party of four to leave the ship on ski.

But the childish attempt, my God, to read the immense riddle of the world! I could laugh loud at myself, and at poor Black-and-White Scotland,

too. The thing can't be so simple.

Well, we left Taimur the same day, and good-bye now to both land and open sea. Till we passed the latitude of Cape Chelyuskin (which we did not sight), it was one succession of ice-belts, with Mew in the crow's-nest tormenting the electric bell to the engine-room, the anchor hanging ready to drop, and Clark taking soundings. Progress was slow, and the Polar night gathered round us apace, as we stole still onward and onward into that blue and glimmering land of eternal frore. We now left off bed-coverings of reindeer-skin and took to sleeping-bags. Eight of the dogs had died by the 25th September, when we were experiencing 19° of frost. In the darkest part of our night, the Northern Light spread its silent solemn banner over us, quivering round the heavens in a million fickle gauds.

The relations between the members of our little crew were excellent — with one exception: David Wilson and I were not good friends.

There was a something — a tone — in the evidence which he had given at the inquest on Peters, which made me mad every time I thought of it. He had heard Peters admit just before death that he, Peters, had administered atropine to himself: and he had had to give evidence of that fact. But he had given it in a most half-hearted way, so much so, that the coroner had asked him: 'What, sir, are you hiding from me?' Wilson had replied: 'Nothing. I have nothing to tell.'

And from that day he and I had hardly exchanged ten words, in spite of our constant companionship in the vessel; and one day, standing alone on a floe, I found myself hissing with clenched fist: 'If he dared suspect Clodagh of poisoning Peters, I could *kill* him!'

Up to 78° of latitude the weather had been superb, but on the night of the 7th October — well I remember it — we experienced a great storm. Our tub of a ship rolled like a swing, drenching the whimpering dogs at every lurch,

and hurling everything on board into confusion. The petroleum-launch was washed from the davits; down at one time to 40° below zero sank the thermometer; while a high aurora was whiffed into a dishevelled chaos of hues, resembling the smeared palette of some turbulent painter of the skies, or mixed battle of long-robed seraphim, and looking the very symbol of tribulation, tempest, wreck, and distraction. I, for the first time, was sick.

It was with a dizzy brain, therefore, that I went off watch to my bunk. Soon, indeed, I fell asleep: but the rolls and shocks of the ship, combined with the heavy Greenland anorak which I had on, and the state of my body, together produced a fearful nightmare, in which I was conscious of a vain struggle to move, a vain fight for breath, for the sleeping-bag turned to an iceberg on my bosom. Of Clodagh was my gasping dream. I dreamed that she let fall, drop by drop, a liquid, coloured like pomegranate-seeds, into a glass of water; and she presented the glass to Peters. The draught, I knew, was poisonous as death: and in a last effort to break the bands of that dark slumber, I was conscious, as I jerked myself upright, of screaming aloud:

‘Clodagh! Clodagh! *Spare the man...!*’

My eyes, starting with horror, opened to waking; the electric light was shining in the cabin; and there stood David Wilson looking at me.

Wilson was a big man, with a massively-built, long face, made longer by a beard, and he had little nervous contractions of the flesh at the cheek-bones, and plenty of big freckles. His clinging pose, his smile of disgust, his whole air, as he stood crouching and lurching there, I can shut my eyes, and see now.

What he was doing in my cabin I did not know. To think, my good God, that he should have been led there just then! This was one of the four-men starboard berths: *his* was a-port: yet there he was! But he explained at once.

‘Sorry to interrupt your innocent dreams, says he: ‘the mercury in Maitland’s thermometer is frozen, and he asked me to hand him his spirits-of-wine one from his bunk...’

I did not answer. A hatred was in my heart against this man.

The next day the storm died away, and either three or four days later the slush-ice between the floes froze definitely. The *Boreal’s* way was thus blocked. We warped her with ice-anchors and the capstan into the position in which she should lay up for her winter’s drift. This was in about 79° 20’ N. The sun had now totally vanished from our bleak sky, not to reappear till the following year.

Well, there was sledging with the dogs, and bear-hunting among the hummocks, as the months, one by one, went by. One day Wilson, by far our best shot, got a walrus-bull; Clark followed the traditional pursuit of a Chief, examining Crustacea; Maitland and I were in a relation of close friendship, and I assisted his meteorological observations in a snow-hut built near the ship. Often, through the twenty-four hours, a clear blue moon, very spectral, very fair, suffused all our dim and livid clime.

It was five days before Christmas that Clark made the great announcement: he had determined, he said, if our splendid northward drift continued, to leave the ship about the middle of next March for the dash to the Pole. He would take with him the four reindeer, all the dogs, four sledges, four kayaks, and three companions. The companions whom he had decided to invite were: Wilson, Mew, and Maitland.

He said it at dinner; and as he said it, David Wilson glanced at my wan face with a smile of pleased malice: for *I* was left out.

I remember well: the aurora that night was in the sky, and at its edge floated a moon surrounded by a ring, with two mock-moons. But all shone very vaguely and far, and a fog, which had already lasted some days, made

the ship's bows indistinct to me, as I paced the bridge on my watch, two hours after Clark's announcement.

For a long time all was very still, save for the occasional whine of a dog. I was alone, and it grew toward the end of my watch, when Maitland would succeed me. My slow tread tolled like a passing-bell, and the mountainous ice lay vague and white around me, its sheeted ghastliness not less dreadfully silent than eternity itself.

Presently, several of the dogs began barking together, left off, and began again.

I said to myself; 'There is a bear about somewhere.'

And after some five minutes I saw — I thought that I saw — it. The fog had, if anything thickened; and it was now very near the end of my watch.

It had entered the ship, I concluded, by the boards which slanted from an opening in the port bulwarks down to the ice. Once before, in November, a bear, having smelled the dogs, had ventured on board at midnight: but *then* there had resulted a perfect hubbub among the dogs. *Now*, even in the midst of my excitement, I wondered at their quietness, though some whimpered — with fear, I thought. I saw the creature steal forward from the hatchway toward the kennels a-port; and I ran noiselessly, and seized the watch-gun which stood always loaded by the companionway.

By this time, the form had passed the kennels, reached the bows, and now was making toward me on the starboard side. I took aim. Never, I thought, had I seen so huge a bear — though I made allowance for the magnifying effect of the fog.

My finger was on the trigger: and at that moment a deathly shivering sickness took me, the wrangling voices shouted at me, with 'Shoot!' 'Shoot not!' 'Shoot!' Ah well, that latter shout was irresistible. I drew the trigger. The report hooted through the Polar night.

The creature dropped; both Wilson and Clark were up at once: and we three hurried to the spot.

But the very first near glance showed a singular kind of bear. Wilson put his hand to the head, and a lax skin came away at his touch.... It was Aubrey Maitland who was underneath it, and I had shot him dead.

For the past few days he had been cleaning skins, among them the skin of the bear from which I had saved him at Taimur. Now, Maitland was a born pantomimist, continually inventing practical jokes; and perhaps to startle me with a false alarm in the very skin of the old Bruin which had so nearly done for him, he had thrown it round him on finishing its cleaning, and so, in mere wanton fun, had crept on deck at the hour of his watch. The head of the bear-skin, and the fog, must have prevented him from seeing me taking aim.

This tragedy made me ill for weeks. I saw that the hand of Fate was upon me. When I rose from bed, poor Maitland was lying in the ice behind the great camel-shaped hummock near us.

By the end of January we had drifted to 80° 55'; and it was then that Clark, in the presence of Wilson, asked me if I would make the fourth man, in the place of poor Maitland, for the dash in the spring. As I said 'Yes, I am willing,' David Wilson spat with a disgusted emphasis. A minute later he sighed, with 'Ah, poor Maitland...' and drew in his breath with a *tut! tut!*

God knows, I had an impulse to spring then and there at his throat, and strangle him: but I curbed myself.

There remained now hardly a month before the dash, and all hands set to work with a will, measuring the dogs, making harness and seal-skin shoes for them, overhauling sledges and kayaks, and cutting every possible ounce of weight. But we were not destined, after all, to set out that year. About the 20th February, the ice began to pack, and the ship was subjected to an

appalling pressure. We found it necessary to make trumpets of our hands to shout into one another's ears, for the whole ice-continent was crashing, popping, thundering everywhere in terrific upheaval. Expecting every moment to see the *Boreal* crushed to splinters, we had to set about unpacking provisions, and placing sledges, kayaks, dogs and everything in a position for instant flight. It lasted five days, and was accompanied by a tempest from the north, which, by the end of February, had driven us back south into latitude 79° 40'. Clark, of course, then abandoned the thought of the Pole for that summer.

And immediately afterwards we made a startling discovery: our stock of reindeer-moss was found to be somehow ridiculously small. Egan, our second mate, was blamed; but that did not help matters: the sad fact remained. Clark was advised to kill one or two of the deer, but he pig-headedly refused: and by the beginning of summer they were all dead.

Well, our northward drift recommenced. Toward the middle of February we saw a mirage of the coming sun above the horizon; there were flights of Arctic petrels and snow-buntings; and spring was with us. In an ice-pack of big hummocks and narrow lanes we made good progress all the summer.

When the last of the deer died, my heart sank; and when the dogs killed two of their number, and a bear crushed a third, I was fully expecting what actually came; it was this: Clark announced that he could now take only two companions with him in the spring: and they were Wilson and Mew. So once more I saw David Wilson's pleased smile of malice.

We settled into our second winter-quarters. Again came December, and all our drear sunless gloom, made worse by the fact that the windmill would not work, leaving us without the electric light.

Ah me, none but those who have felt it could dream of one half the mental depression of that long Arctic night; how the soul takes on the hue of

the world; and without and within is nothing but gloom, gloom, and the reign of the Power of Darkness.

Not one of us but was in a melancholic, dismal and dire mood; and on the 13th December Lamburn, the engineer, stabbed Cartwright, the old harpooner, in the arm.

Three days before Christmas a bear came close to the ship, and then turned tail. Mew, Wilson, I and Meredith (a general hand) set out in pursuit. After a pretty long chase we lost him, and then scattered different ways. It was very dim, and after yet an hour's search, I was returning weary and disgusted to the ship, when I saw some shadow like a bear sailing away on my left, and at the same time sighted a man — I did not know whom — running like a handicapped ghost some little distance to the right. So I shouted out:

‘There he is — come on! This way!’

The man quickly joined me, but as soon as ever he recognised me, stopped dead. The devil must have suddenly got into him, for he said:

‘No, thanks, Jeffson: alone with you I am in danger of my life....’

It was Wilson. And I, too, forgetting at once all about the bear, stopped and faced him.

‘I see,’ said I. ‘But, Wilson, you are going to explain to me *now* what you mean, you hear? What *do* you mean, Wilson?’

‘What I say,’ he answered deliberately, eyeing me up and down: ‘alone with you I am in danger of my life. Just as poor Maitland was, and just as poor Peters was. Certainly, you are a deadly beast.’

Fury leapt, my God, in my heart. Black as the tenebrous Arctic night was my soul.

‘Do you mean,’ said I, ‘that I want to put you out of the way in order to go in your place to the Pole? Is that your meaning, man?’

‘That’s about my meaning, Jeffson,’ says he: ‘you are a deadly beast, you know.’

‘Stop!’ I said, with blazing eye. ‘I am going to kill *you*, Wilson — as sure as God lives: but I want to hear first. Who *told* you that I killed Peters?’

‘Your lover killed him — with *your* collusion. Why, I heard you, man, in your beastly sleep, calling the whole thing out. And I was pretty sure of it before, only I had no proofs. By God, I should enjoy putting a bullet into you, Jeffson!’

‘You wrong me — you, you wrong me!’ I shrieked, my eyes staring with ravenous lust for his blood; ‘and now I am going to pay you well for it. *Look out, you!*’

I aimed my gun for his heart, and I touched the trigger. He held up his left hand.

‘Stop,’ he said, ‘stop.’ (He was one of the coolest of men ordinarily.) ‘There is no gallows on the *Boreal*, but Clark could easily rig one for you. I want to kill you, too, because there are no criminal courts up here, and it would be doing a good action for my country. But not here — not now. Listen to me — don’t shoot. Later we can meet, when all is ready, so that no one may be the wiser, and fight it all out.’

As he spoke I let the gun drop. It was better so. I knew that he was much the best shot on the ship, and I an indifferent one: but I did not care, I did not care, if I was killed.

It is a dim, inclement land, God knows: and the spirit of darkness and distraction is there.

Twenty hours later we met behind the great saddle-shaped hummock, some six miles to the S.E. of the ship. We had set out at different times, so that no one might suspect. And each brought a ship’s-lantern.

Wilson had dug an ice-grave near the hummock, leaving at its edge a heap of brash-ice and snow to fill it. We stood separated by an interval of perhaps seventy yards, the grave between us, each with a lantern at his feet.

Even so we were mere shadowy apparitions one to the other. The air glowered very drearily, and present in my inmost soul were the frills of cold. A chill moon, a mere abstraction of light, seemed to hang far outside the universe. The temperature was at 55° below zero, so that we had on wind-clothes over our anoraks, and heavy foot-bandages under our Lap boots. Nothing but a weird morgue seemed the world, haunted with despondent madness; and exactly like that world about us were the minds of us two poor men, full of macabre, bleak, and funereal feelings.

Between us yawned an early grave for one or other of our bodies.

I heard Wilson cry out:

‘Are you ready, Jeffson?’

‘Aye, Wilson!’ cried I.

‘*Then here goes!*’ cries he.

Even as he spoke, he fired. Surely, the man was in deadly earnest to kill me.

But his shot passed harmlessly by me: as indeed was only likely: we were mere shadows one to the other.

I fired perhaps ten seconds later than he: but in those ten seconds he stood perfectly revealed to me in clear, lavender light.

An Arctic fire-ball had traversed the sky, showering abroad, a sulphurous glamour over the snow-landscape. Before the intenser blue of its momentary shine had passed away, I saw Wilson stagger forward, and drop. And him and his lantern I buried deep there under the rubble ice.

On the 13th March, nearly three months later, Clark, Mew and I left the Boreal in latitude 85° 15'.

We had with us thirty-two dogs, three sledges, three kayaks, human provisions for 112 days, and dog provisions for 40. Being now about 340 miles from the Pole, we hoped to reach it in 43 days, then, turning south, and feeding living dogs with dead, make either Franz Josef Land or Spitzbergen, at which latter place we should very likely come up with a whaler.

Well, during the first days, progress was very slow, the ice being rough and laney, and the dogs behaving most badly, stopping dead at every difficulty, and leaping over the traces. Clark had had the excellent idea of attaching a gold-beater's-skin balloon, with a lifting power of 35 pounds, to each sledge, and we had with us a supply of zinc and sulphuric-acid to repair the hydrogen-waste from the bags; but on the third day Mew over-filled and burst his balloon, and I and Clark had to cut ours loose in order to equalise weights, for we could neither leave him behind, turn back to the ship, nor mend the bag. So it happened that at the end of the fourth day out, we had made only nineteen miles, and could still from a hummock discern afar the leaning masts of the old Boreal. Clark led on ski, captaining a sledge with 400 lbs. of instruments, ammunition, pemmican, aleuronate bread; Mew followed, his sledge containing provisions only; and last came I, with a mixed freight. But on the third day Clark had an attack of snow-blindness, and Mew took his place.

Pretty soon our sufferings commenced, and they were bitter enough. The sun, though constantly visible day and night, gave no heat. Our sleeping-bags (Clark and Mew slept together in one, I in another) were soaking wet all the night, being thawed by our warmth; and our fingers, under wrappings of senne-grass and wolf-skin, were always bleeding. Sometimes our frail

bamboo-cane kayaks, lying across the sledges, would crash perilously against an ice-ridge — and they were our one hope of reaching land. But the dogs were the great difficulty: we lost six mortal hours a day in harnessing and tending them. On the twelfth day Clark took a single-altitude observation, and found that we were only in latitude $86^{\circ} 45'$; but the next day we passed beyond the furthest point yet reached by man, viz. $86^{\circ} 53'$, attained by the *Nix* explorers four years previously.

Our one secret thought now was food, food — our day-long lust for the eating-time. Mew suffered from ‘Arctic thirst.

Under these conditions, man becomes in a few days, not a savage only, but a mere beast, hardly a grade above the bear and walrus. Ah, the ice! A long and sordid nightmare was that, God knows.

On we pressed, crawling our little way across the Vast, upon whose hoar silence, from Eternity until then, Bootes only, and that Great Bear, had watched.

After the eleventh day our rate of march improved: all lanes disappeared, and ridges became much less frequent. By the fifteenth day I was leaving behind the ice-grave of David Wilson at the rate of ten to thirteen miles a day.

Yet, as it were, his arm reached out and touched me, even there.

His disappearance had been explained by a hundred different guesses on the ship — all plausible enough. I had no idea that anyone connected me in any way with his death.

But on our twenty-second day of march, 140 miles from our goal, he caused a conflagration of rage and hate to break out among us three.

It was at the end of a march, when our stomachs were hollow, our frames ready to drop, and our mood ravenous and inflamed. One of Mew's dogs was sick: it was necessary to kill it: he asked me to do it.

'Oh,' said I, 'you kill your own dog, of course.'

'Well, I don't know,' he replied, catching fire at once, 'you ought to be used to killing, Jeffson.'

'How do you mean, Mew?' said I with a mad start, for madness and the flames of Hell were instant and uppermost in us all: 'you mean because my profession — —'

'Profession! damn it, no,' he snarled like a dog: 'go and dig up David Wilson — I dare say you know where to find him — and he will tell you my meaning, right enough.'

I rushed at once to Clark, who was stooping among the dogs, unharnessing: and savagely pushing his shoulder, I exclaimed:

'That beast accuses me of murdering David Wilson!'

'Well?' said Clark.

'I'd split his skull as clean —— !'

'Go away, Adam Jeffson, and let me be!' snarled Clark.

'Is that all you've got to say about it, then — you?'

'To the devil with you, man, say I, and let me be!' cried he: 'you know your own conscience best, I suppose.'

Before this insult I stood with grinding teeth, but impotent. However, from that moment a deeper mood of brooding malice occupied my spirit. Indeed the humour of us all was one of dangerous, even murderous, fierceness. In that pursuit of riches into that region of cold, we had become almost like the beasts that perish.

On the 10th April we passed the 89th parallel of latitude, and though sick to death, both in spirit and body, pressed still on. Like the lower animals, we were stricken now with dumbness, and hardly once in a week spoke a word one to the other, but in selfish brutishness on through a real hell of cold we moved. It is a cursed region — beyond doubt cursed — not meant to be penetrated by man: and rapid and awful was the degeneration of our souls. As for me, never could I have conceived that savagery so heinous could brood in a human bosom as now I felt it brood in mine. If men could enter into a country specially set apart for the habitation of devils, and there become possessed of evil, as we were so would they be.

As we advanced, the ice every day became smoother; so that, from four miles a day, our rate increased to fifteen, and finally (as the sledges lightened) to twenty.

It was now that we began to encounter a succession of strange-looking objects lying scattered over the ice, whose number continually increased as we proceeded. They had the appearance of rocks, or pieces of iron, incrustated with glass-fragments of various colours, and they were of every size. Their incrustations we soon determined to be diamonds, and other precious stones. On our first twenty-mile day Mew picked up a diamond-crystal as large as a child's foot, and such objects soon became common. We thus found the riches which we sought, beyond all dream; but as the bear and the walrus find them: for ourselves we had lost; and it was a loss of riches barren as ashes, for all those millions we would not have given an ounce of fish-meal. Clark grumbled something about their being meteor-stones, whose ferruginous substance had been lured by the magnetic Pole, and kept from frictional burning in their fall by the frigidity of the air: and

they quickly ceased to interest our sluggish minds, except in so far as they obstructed our way.

We had all along had good weather: till, suddenly, on the morning of the 13th April, we were overtaken by a tempest from the S.W., of such mighty and solemn volume that the heart quailed beneath it. It lasted in its full power only an hour, but during that time snatched two of our sledges long distances, and compelled us to lie face-downward. We had travelled all the sun-lit night, and were gasping with fatigue; so as soon as the wind allowed us to huddle together our scattered things, we crawled into the sleeping-bags, and instantly slept.

We knew that the ice was in awful upheaval around us; we heard, as our eyelids sweetly closed, the slow booming of distant guns, and brittle cracklings of artillery. This may have been a result of the tempest stirring up the ocean beneath the ice. Whatever it was, we did not care: we slept deep.

We were within ten miles of the Pole.

In my sleep it was as though someone suddenly shook my shoulder with urgent '*Up! up!*' It was neither Clark nor Mew, but a dream merely: for Clark and Mew, when I started up, I saw lying still in their sleeping-bag.

I suppose it must have been about noon. I sat staring a minute, and my first numb thought was somehow this: that the Countess Clodagh had prayed me 'Be first' — for her. Wondrous little now cared I for the Countess Clodagh in her far unreal world of warmth — precious little for the fortune which she coveted: millions on millions of fortunes lay unregarded around me. But that thought, *Be first!* was deeply suggested in my brain, as if whispered there. Instinctively, brutishly, as the Gadarean swine rushed down a steep place, I, rubbing my daft eyes, arose.

The first thing which my mind opened to perceive was that, while the tempest was less strong, the ice was now in extraordinary agitation. I looked abroad upon a vast plain, stretched out to a circular, but waving horizon, and varied by many hillocks, boulders, and sparkling meteor-stones that everywhere tinselled the blinding white, some big as houses, most small as limbs. And this great plain was now rearranging itself in a widespread drama of havoc, withdrawing in ravines like mutual backing curtsies, then surging to clap together in passionate mountain-peaks, else jostling like the Symplegades, fluent and inconstant as billows of the sea, grinding itself, piling itself, pouring itself in cataracts of powdered ice, while here and there I saw the meteor-stones leap spasmodically, in dusts and heaps, like geysers or spurting froths in a steamer's wake, a tremendous uproar, meantime, filling all the air. As I stood, I plunged and staggered, and I found the dogs sprawling, with whimperings, on the heaving floor.

I did not care. Instinctively, daftly, brutishly, I harnessed ten of them to my sledge; put on Canadian snow-shoes: and was away northward — alone.

The sun shone with a clear, benign, but heatless shining: a ghostly, remote, yet quite limpid light, which seemed designed for the lighting of other planets and systems, and to strike here by happy chance. A great wind from the S.W., meantime, sent thin snow-sweepings flying northward past me.

The odometer which I had with me had not yet measured four miles, when I began to notice two things: first that the jewelled meteor-stones were now accumulating beyond all limit, filling my range of vision to the northern horizon with a dazzling glister: in mounds, and parterres, and scattered disconnection they lay, like largesse of autumn leaves, spread out over those Elysian fields and fairy uplands of wealth, trillions of billions, so that I had need to steer my twining way among them. Now, too, I noticed

that, but for these stones, all roughness had disappeared, not a trace of the upheaval going on a little further south being here, for the ice lay positively as smooth as a table before me. It is my belief that this stretch of smooth ice has never, never felt one shock, or stir, or throe, and reaches right down to the bottom of the deep.

And now with a wild hilarity I flew. Gradually, a dizziness, a lunacy, had seized upon me, till finally, up-buoyed on air, and dancing mad, I sped, I spun, with grinning teeth that chattered and gibbered, and eyeballs of distraction: for a Fear, too — most cold and dreadful — had its hand of ice upon my heart, I being so alone in that place, face to face with the Ineffable: but still with a giddy levity, and a fatal joy, and a blind hilarity, on I sped, I spun.

The odometer measured nine miles from my start. I was in the immediate neighbourhood of the Pole.

I cannot say when it began, but now I was conscious of a sound in my ears, distinct and near, a steady sound of splashing, or fluttering, resembling the noising of a cascade or brook: and it grew. Forty more steps I took (slide I could not now for the meteorites) — perhaps sixty — perhaps eighty: and now, to my sudden horror, I stood by a circular clean-cut lake.

One minute only, swaying and nodding there, I stood: and then I dropped down flat in swoon.

In a hundred years, I suppose, I should never succeed in analysing *why* I swooned: but my consciousness still retains the impression of that horrid thrill. I saw nothing distinctly, for my whole being reeled and toppled drunken, like a spinning-top in desperate death-struggle at the moment

when it flags, and wobbles dissolutely to fall; but the very instant that my eyes met what was before me, I knew, I knew, that here was the Sanctity of Sanctities, the old eternal inner secret of the Life of this Earth, which it was a most burning shame for a man to see. The lake, I fancy, must be a mile across, and in its middle is a pillar of ice, very low and broad; and I had the clear impression, or dream, or notion, that there was a name, or word, graven all round in the ice of the pillar in characters which I could never read; and under the name a long date; and the fluid of the lake seemed to me to be wheeling with a shivering ecstasy, splashing and fluttering, round the pillar, always from west to east, in the direction of the spinning of the earth; and it was borne in upon me — I can't at all say how — that this fluid was the substance of a living creature; and I had the distinct fancy, as my senses failed, that it was a creature with many dull and anguished eyes, and that, as it wheeled for ever round in fluttering lust, it kept its eyes always turned upon the name and the date graven in the pillar. But this must be my madness....

It must have been not less than an hour before a sense of life returned to me; and when the thought stabbed my brain that a long, long time I had lain there in the presence of those gloomy orbs, my spirit seemed to groan and die within me.

In some minutes, however, I had scrambled to my feet, clutched at a dog's harness, and without one backward glance, was flying from that place.

Half-way to the halting-place, I waited Clark and Mew, being very sick and doddering, and unable to advance. But they did not come.

Later on, when I gathered force to go further, I found that they had perished in the upheaval of the ice. One only of the sledges, half buried, I

saw near the spot of our bivouac.

Alone that same day I began my way southward, and for five days made good progress. On the eighth day I noticed, stretched right across the southeastern horizon, a region of purple vapour which luridly obscured the face of the sun: and day after day I saw it steadily brooding there. But what it could be I did not understand.

Well, onward through the desert ice I continued my lonely way, with a baleful shrinking terror in my heart; for very stupendous, alas! is the burden of that Arctic solitude upon one poor human soul.

Sometimes on a halt I have lain and listened long to the hollow silence, recoiling, crushed by it, hoping that at least one of the dogs might whine. I have even crept shivering from the thawed sleeping-bag to flog a dog, so that I might hear a sound.

I had started from the Pole with a well-filled sledge, and the sixteen dogs left alive from the ice-packing which buried my comrades. This was on the evening of the 13th April. I had saved from the wreck of our things most of the whey-powder, pemmican, &c., as well as the theodolite, compass, chronometer, train-oil lamp for cooking, and other implements: I was therefore in no doubt as to my course, and I had provisions for ninety days. But ten days from the start my supply of dog-food failed, and I had to begin to slaughter my only companions, one by one.

Well, in the third week the ice became horribly rough, and with moil and toil enough to wear a bear to death, I did only five miles a day. After the day's work I would crawl with a dying sigh into the sleeping-bag, clad still in the load of skins which stuck to me a mere filth of grease, to sleep the sleep of a swine, indifferent if I never woke.

Always — day after day — on the south-eastern horizon, brooded sullenly that curious stretched-out region of purple vapour, like the smoke of the conflagration of the world. And I noticed that its length constantly reached out and out, and silently grew.

Once I had a very pleasant dream. I dreamed that I was in a garden — an Arabian paradise — so sweet was the perfume. All the time, however, I had a sub-consciousness of the gale which was actually blowing from the S.E. over the ice, and, at the moment when I awoke, was half-wittedly droning to myself; ‘It is a Garden of Peaches; but I am not really in the garden: I am really on the ice; only, the S.E. storm is wafting to me the aroma of this Garden of Peaches.’

I opened my eyes — I started — I sprang to my feet! For, of all the miracles! — I could not doubt — an actual aroma like peach-blossom was in the algid air about me!

Before I could collect my astonished senses, I began to vomit pretty violently, and at the same time saw some of the dogs, mere skeletons as they were, vomiting, too. For a long time I lay very sick in a kind of daze, and, on rising, found two of the dogs dead, and all very queer. The wind had now changed to the north.

Well, on I staggered, fighting every inch of my deplorably weary way. This odour of peach-blossom, my sickness, and the death of the two dogs, remained a wonder to me.

Two days later, to my extreme mystification (and joy), I came across a bear and its cub lying dead at the foot of a hummock. I could not believe my eyes. There she lay on her right side, a spot of dirty-white in a disordered patch of snow, with one little eye open, and her fierce-looking mouth also; and the cub lay across her haunch, biting into her rough fur. I

set to work upon her, and allowed the dogs a glorious feed on the blubber, while I myself had a great banquet on the fresh meat. I had to leave the greater part of the two carcasses, and I can feel again now the hankering reluctance — quite unnecessary, as it turned out — with which I trudged onwards. Again and again I found myself asking: ‘Now, what could have killed those two bears?’

With brutish stolidness I plodded ever on, almost like a walking machine, sometimes nodding in sleep while I helped the dogs, or manouvred the sledge over an ice-ridge, pushing or pulling. On the 3rd June, a month and a half from my start, I took an observation with the theodolite, and found that I was not yet 400 miles from the Pole, in latitude 84° 50’. It was just as though some Will, some Will, was obstructing and retarding me.

However, the intolerable cold was over, and soon my clothes no longer hung stark on me like armour. Pools began to appear in the ice, and presently, what was worse, my God, long lanes, across which, somehow, I had to get the sledge. But about the same time all fear of starvation passed away: for on the 6th June I came across another dead bear, on the 7th three, and thenceforth, in rapidly growing numbers, I met not bears only, but fulmars, guillemots, snipes, Ross’s gulls, little awks — all, all, lying dead on the ice. And never anywhere a living thing, save me, and the two remaining dogs.

If ever a poor man stood shocked before a mystery, it was I now. I had a big fear on my heart.

On the 2nd July the ice began packing dangerously, and soon another storm broke loose upon me from the S.W. I left off my trek, and put up the silk tent on a five-acre square of ice surrounded by lanes: and *again* — for the second time — as I lay down, I smelled that delightful strange odour of

peach-blossom, a mere whiff of it, and presently afterwards was taken sick. However, it passed off this time in a couple of hours.

Now it was all lanes, lanes, alas! yet no open water, and such was the difficulty and woe of my life, that sometimes I would drop flat on the ice, and sob: 'Oh, no more, no more, my God: here let me die.' The crossing of a lane might occupy ten or twelve entire hours, and then, on the other side I might find another one opening right before me. Moreover, on the 8th July, one of the dogs, after a feed on blubber, suddenly died; and there was left me only 'Reinhardt,' a white-haired Siberian dog, with little pert up-sticking ears, like a cat's. Him, too, I had to kill on coming to open water.

This did not happen till the 3rd August, nearly four months from the Pole.

I can't think, my God, that any heart of man ever tholed the appalling nightmare and black abysm of sensations in which, during those four long desert months, I weltered: for though I was as a brute, I had a man's heart to feel. What I had seen, or dreamed, at the Pole followed and followed me; and if I shut my poor weary eyes to sleep, those others yonder seemed to watch me still with their distraught and gloomy gaze, and in my spinning dark dreams spun that eternal ecstasy of the lake.

However, by the 28th July I knew from the look of the sky, and the absence of fresh-water ice, that the sea could not be far; so I set to work, and spent two days in putting to rights the now battered kayak. This done, I had no sooner resumed my way than I sighted far off a streaky haze, which I knew to be the basalt cliffs of Franz Josef Land; and in a craziness of joy I stood there, waving my ski-staff about my head, with the senile cheers of a very old man.

In four days this land was visibly nearer, sheer basaltic cliffs mixed with glacier, forming apparently a great bay, with two small islands in the mid-

distance; and at fore-day of the 3rd August I arrived at the definite edge of the pack-ice in moderate weather at about the freezing-point.

I at once, but with great reluctance, shot Reinhardt, and set to work to get the last of the provisions, and the most necessary of the implements, into the kayak, making haste to put out to the toilless luxury of being borne on the water, after all the weary trudge. Within fourteen hours I was coasting, with my little lug-sail spread, along the shore-ice of that land. It was midnight of a calm Sabbath, and low on the horizon smoked the drowsing red sun-ball, as my canvas skiff lightly chopped her little way through this silent sea. Silent, silent: for neither snort of walrus, nor yelp of fox, nor cry of startled kittiwake, did I hear: but all was still as the jet-black shadow of the cliffs and glacier on the tranquil sea: and many bodies of dead things strewn the surface of the water.

When I found a little fjord, I went up it to the end where stood a stretch of basalt columns, looking like a shattered temple of Antediluvians; and when my foot at last touched land, I sat down there a long, long time in the rubbly snow, and silently wept. My eyes that night were like a fountain of tears. For the firm land is health and sanity, and dear to the life of man; but I say that the great ungenial ice is a nightmare, and a blasphemy, and a madness, and the realm of the Power of Darkness.

I knew that I was at Franz Josef Land, somewhere or other in the neighbourhood of C. Fligely (about 82° N.), and though it was so late, and getting cold, I still had the hope of reaching Spitzbergen that year, by alternately sailing all open water, and dragging the kayak over the slack drift-ice. All the ice which I saw was good flat fjord-ice, and the plan seemed feasible enough; so after coasting about a little, and then three days'

good rest in the tent at the bottom of a ravine of columnar basalt opening upon the shore, I packed some bear and walrus flesh, with what artificial food was left, into the kayak, and I set out early in the morning, coasting the shore-ice with sail and paddle. In the afternoon I managed to climb a little way up an iceberg, and made out that I was in a bay whose terminating headlands were invisible. I accordingly decided to make S.W. by W. to cross it, but, in doing so, I was hardly out of sight of land, when a northern storm overtook me toward midnight; before I could think, the little sail was all but whiffed away, and the kayak upset. I only saved it by the happy chance of being near a floe with an ice-foot, which, projecting under the water, gave me foot-hold; and I lay on the floe in a mooning state the whole night under the storm, for I was half drowned.

And at once, on recovering myself, I abandoned all thought of whalers and of Europe for that year. Happily, my instruments, &c., had been saved by the kayak-deck when she capsized.

A hundred yards inland from the shore-rim, in a circular place where there was some moss and soil, I built myself a semi-subterranean Eskimo den for the long Polar night. The spot was quite surrounded by high sloping walls of basalt, except to the west, where they opened in a three-foot cleft to the shore, and the ground was strewn with slabs and boulders of granite and basalt. I found there a dead she-bear, two well-grown cubs, and a fox, the latter having evidently fallen from the cliffs; in three places the snow was quite red, overgrown with a red lichen, which at first I took for blood. I did not even yet feel secure from possible bears, and took care to make my den fairly tight, a work which occupied me nearly four weeks, for I had no tools, save a hatchet, knife, and metal-shod ski-staff. I dug a passage in the ground two feet wide, two deep, and ten long, with perpendicular sides, and

at its north end a circular space, twelve feet across, also with perpendicular sides, which I lined with stones; the whole excavation I covered with inch-thick walrus-hide, skinned during a whole bitter week from four of a number that lay about the shore-ice; for ridge-pole I used a thin pointed rock which I found near, though, even so, the roof remained nearly flat. This, when it was finished, I stocked well, putting in everything, except the kayak, blubber to serve both for fuel and occasional light, and foods of several sorts, which I procured by merely stretching out the hand. The roof of both circular part and passage was soon buried under snow and ice, and hardly distinguishable from the general level of the white-clad ground. Through the passage, if I passed in or out, I crawled flat, on hands and knees: but that was rare: and in the little round interior, mostly sitting in a cowering attitude, I wintered, harkening to the large and windy ravings of darkling December storms above me.

All those months the burden of a thought bowed me; and an unanswered question, like the slow turning of a mechanism, revolved in my gloomy spirit: for everywhere around me lay bears, walruses, foxes, thousands upon thousands of little awks, kittiwakes, snow-owls, eider-ducks, gulls-dead, dead. Almost the only living things which I saw were some walruses on the drift-floes: but very few compared with the number which I expected. It was clear to me that some inconceivable catastrophe had overtaken the island during the summer, destroying all life about it, except some few of the amphibia, cetacea, and crustacea.

On the 5th December, having crept out from the den during a southern storm, I had, for the third time, a distant whiff of that self-same odour of peach-blossom: but now without any after-effects.

Well, again came Christmas, the New Year — Spring: and on the 22nd May I set out with a well-stocked kayak. The water was fairly open, and the ice so good, that at one place I could sail the kayak over it, the wind sending me sliding at a fine pace. Being on the west coast of Franz Josef Land, I was in as favourable a situation as possible, and I turned my bow southward with much hope, keeping a good many days just in sight of land. Toward the evening of my third day out I noticed a large flat floe, presenting far-off a singular and lovely sight, for it seemed freighted thick with a profusion of pink and white roses, showing in its clear crystal the empurpled reflection. On getting near I saw that it was covered with millions of Ross's gulls, all dead, whose pretty rosy bosoms had given it that appearance.

Up to the 29th June I made good progress southward and westward (the weather being mostly excellent), sometimes meeting dead bears, floating away on floes, sometimes dead or living walrus-herds, with troop after troop of dead kittiwakes, glaucous and ivory gulls, skuas, and every kind of Arctic fowl. On that last day — the 29th June — I was about to encamp on a floe soon after midnight, when, happening to look toward the sun, my eye fell, far away south across the ocean of floes, upon something — *the masts of a ship*.

A phantom ship, or a real ship: it was all one; real, I must have instantly felt, it could not be: but at a sight so incredible my heart set to beating in my bosom as though I must surely die, and feebly waving the cane oar about my head, I staggered to my knees, and thence with wry mouth toppled flat.

So overpoweringly sweet was the thought of springing once more, like the beasts of Circe, from a walrus into a man. At this time I was tearing my bear's-meat just like a bear; I was washing my hands in walrus-blood to produce a glairy sort of pink cleanliness, in place of the black grease which chronically coated them.

Worn as I was, I made little delay to set out for that ship; and I had not travelled over water and ice four hours when, to my in-describable joy, I made out from the top of a steep floe that she was the *Boreal*. It seemed most strange that she should be anywhere hereabouts: I could only conclude that she must have forced and drifted her way thus far westward out of the ice-block in which our party had left her, and perhaps now was loitering here in the hope of picking us up on our way to Spitzbergen.

In any case, wild was the haste with which I fought my way to be at her, my gasping mouth all the time drawn back in a *rictus* of laughter at the anticipation of their gladness to see me, their excitement to hear the grand tidings of the Pole attained. Anon I waved the paddle, though I knew that they could not yet see me, and then I dug deep at the whitish water. What astonished me was her main-sail and fore-mast square-sail — set that calm morning; and her screws were still, for she moved not at all. The sun was abroad like a cold spirit of light, touching the great ocean-room of floes with dazzling spots, and a tint almost of rose was on the world, as it were of a just-dead bride in her spangles and white array. The *Boreal* was the one little distant jet-black spot in all this purity: and upon her, as though she were Heaven, I paddled, I panted. But she was in a queerish state: by 9 A.M. I could see that. Two of the windmill arms were not there, and half lowered down her starboard beam a boat hung askew; moreover, soon after 10 I could clearly see that her main-sail had a long rent down the middle.

I could not at all make her out. She was not anchored, though a sheet-anchor hung over at the starboard cathead; she was not moored; and two small ice-floes, one on each side, were sluggishly bombarding her bows.

I began now to wave the paddle, battling for my breath, ecstatic, crazy with excitement, each second like a year to me. Very soon I could make out someone at the bows, leaning well over, looking my way. Something put it

into my head that it was Sallitt, and I began an impassioned shouting. ‘Hi! Sallitt! Hallo! Hi!’ I called.

I did not see him move: I was still a good way off: but there he stood, leaning steadily over, looking my way. Between me and the ship now was all navigable water among the floes, and the sight of him so visibly near put into me such a shivering eagerness, that I was nothing else but a madman for the time, sending the kayak flying with venomous digs in quick-repeated spurts, and mixing with the diggings my crazy wavings, and with both the daft shoutings of ‘Hallo! Hi! Bravo! I have *been to the Pole!*’

Well, vanity, vanity. Nearer still I drew: it was broad morning, going on toward noon: I was half a mile away, I was fifty yards. But on board the *Boreal*, though now they *must* have heard me, seen me, I observed no movement of welcome, but all, all was still as death that still Arctic morning, my God. Only, the ragged sail flapped a little, and — one on each side — two ice-floes sluggishly bombarded the bows, with hollow sounds.

I was certain now that Sallitt it was who looked across the ice: but when the ship swung a little round, I noticed that the direction of his gaze was carried with her movement, he no longer looking my way.

‘Why, Sallitt!’ I shouted reproachfully: ‘why, Sallitt, man...!’ I whined.

But even as I shouted and whined, a perfect wild certainty was in my heart: for an aroma like peach, my God, had been suddenly wafted from the ship upon me, and I must have very well known then that that watchful outlook of Sallitt saw nothing, and on the *Boreal* were dead men all; indeed, very soon I saw one of his eyes looking like a glass eye which has slid askew, and glares distraught. And now again my wretched body failed, and my head dropped forward, where I sat, upon the kayak-deck.

Well, after a long time, I lifted myself to look again at that forlorn and wandering craft. There she lay, quiet, tragic, as it were culpable of the dark secret she bore; and Sallitt, who had been such good friends with me, would not cease his stare. I knew quite well why he was there: he had leant over to vomit, and had leant ever since, his forearms pressed on the bulwark-beam, his left knee against the boards, and his left shoulder propped on the cathead. When I came quite near, I saw that with every bump of the two floes against the bows, his face shook in response, and nodded a little; strange to say, he had no covering on his head, and I noted the play of the faint breezes in his uncut hair. After a time I would approach no more, for I was afraid; I did not dare, the silence of the ship seemed so sacred and awful; and till late afternoon I sat there, watching the black and massive hull. Above her water-line emerged all round a half-floating fringe of fresh-green sea-weed, proving old neglect; an abortive attempt had apparently been made to lower, or take in, the larch-wood pram, for there she hung by a jammed davit-rope, stern up, bow in the water; the only two arms of the windmill moved this way and that, through some three degrees, with an *andante* creaking sing-song; some washed clothes, tied on the bow-sprit rigging to dry, were still there; the iron casing all round the bluff bows was red and rough with rust; at several points the rigging was in considerable tangle; occasionally the boom moved a little with a tortured skirling cadence; and the sail, rotten, I presume, from exposure — for she had certainly encountered no bad weather — gave out anon a heavy languid flap at a rent down the middle. Besides Sallitt, looking out there where he had jammed himself, I saw no one.

By a paddle-stroke now, and another presently, I had closely approached her about four in the afternoon, though my awe of the ship was complicated by that perfume of hers, whose fearful effects I knew. My tentative

approach, however, proved to me, when I remained unaffected, that, here and now, whatever danger there had been was past; and finally, by a hanging rope, with a thumping desperation of heart, I clambered up her beam.

They had died, it seemed, very suddenly, for nearly all the twelve were in poses of activity. Egan was in the very act of ascending the companion-way; Lamburn was sitting against the chart-room door, apparently cleaning two carbines; Odling at the bottom of the engine-room stair seemed to be drawing on a pair of reindeer komagar; and Cartwright, who was often in liquor, had his arms frozen tight round the neck of Martin, whom he seemed to be kissing, they two lying stark at the foot of the mizzen-mast.

Over all — over men, decks, rope-coils — in the cabin, in the engine-room — between skylight leaves — on every shelf, in every cranny — lay a purplish ash or dust, very impalpably fine. And steadily reigning throughout the ship, like the very spirit of death, was that aroma of peach-blossom.

Here it had reigned, as I could see from the log-dates, from the rust on the machinery, from the look of the bodies, from a hundred indications, during something over a year. It was, therefore, mainly by the random workings of winds and currents that this fragrant ship of death had been brought hither to me.

And this was the first direct intimation which I had that the Unseen Powers (whoever and whatever they may be), who through the history of the world had been so very, very careful to conceal their Hand from the eyes of men, hardly any longer intended to be at the pains to conceal their Hand from me. It was just as though the Boreal had been openly presented

to me by a spiritual agency, which, though I could not see it, I could readily apprehend.

The dust, though very thin and flighty above-decks, lay thickly deposited below, and after having made a tour of investigation throughout the ship, the first thing which I did was to examine that — though I had tasted nothing all day, and was exhausted to death. I found my own microscope where I had left it in the box in my berth to starboard, though I had to lift up Egan to get at it, and to step over Lamburn to enter the chart-room; but there, toward evening, I sat at the table and bent to see if I could make anything of the dust, while it seemed to me as if all the myriad spirits of men that have sojourned on the earth, and angel and devil, and all Time and all Eternity, hung silent round for my decision; and such an ague had me, that for a long time my wandering finger-tips, all ataxic with agitation, eluded every delicate effort which I made, and I could nothing do. Of course, I know that an odour of peach-blossom in the air, resulting in death, could only be associated with some vaporous effluvium of cyanogen, or of hydrocyanic ('prussic') acid, or of both; and when I at last managed to examine some of the dust under the microscope, I was not therefore surprised to find, among the general mass of purplish ash, a number of bright-yellow particles, which could only be minute crystals of potassic ferrocyanide. What potassic ferrocyanide was doing on board the *Boreal* I did not know, and I had neither the means, nor the force of mind, alas! to dive then further into the mystery; I understood only that by some extraordinary means the air of the region just south of the Polar environ had been impregnated with a vapour which was either cyanogen, or some product of cyanogen; also, that this deadly vapour, which is very soluble, had by now either been dissolved by the sea, or else dispersed into space

(probably the latter), leaving only its faint after-perfume; and seeing this, I let my poor abandoned head drop again on the table, and long hours I sat there staring mad, for I had a suspicion, my God, and a fear, in my breast.

The *Boreal*, I found, contained sufficient provisions, untouched by the dust, in cases, casks, &c., to last me, probably, fifty years. After two days, when I had partially scrubbed and boiled the filth of fifteen months from my skin, and solaced myself with better food, I overhauled her thoroughly, and spent three more days in oiling and cleaning the engine. Then, all being ready, I dragged my twelve dead and laid them together in two rows on the chart-room floor; and I hoisted for love the poor little kayak which had served me through so many tribulations. At nine in the morning of the 6th July, a week from my first sighting of the *Boreal*, I descended to the engine-room to set out.

The screws, like those of most quite modern ships, were driven by the simple contrivance of a constant stream of liquid air, contained in very powerful tanks, exploding through capillary tubes into non-expansion slide-valve chests, much as in the ordinary way with steam: a motor which gave her, in spite of her bluff hulk, a speed of sixteen knots. It is, therefore, the simplest thing for one man to take these ships round the world, since their movement, or stopping, depend upon nothing but the depressing or raising of a steel handle, provided that one does not get blown to the sky meantime, as liquid air, in spite of its thousand advantages, occasionally blows people. At any rate, I had tanks of air sufficient to last me through twelve years' voyaging; and there was the ordinary machine on board for making it, with forty tons of coal, in case of need, in the bunkers, and two excellent Belleville boilers: so I was well supplied with motors at least.

The ice here was quite slack, and I do not think I ever saw Arctic weather so bright and gay, the temperature at 41°. I found that I was midway between Franz Josef and Spitzbergen, in latitude 79° 23' N. and longitude 39° E.; my way was perfectly clear; and something almost like a mournful hopefulness was in me as the engines slid into their clanking turmoil, and those long-silent screws began to churn the Arctic sea. I ran up with alacrity and took my stand at the wheel; and the bows of my eventful Argo turned southward and westward.

When I needed food or sleep, the ship slept, too: when I awoke, she continued her way.

Sixteen hours a day sometimes I stood sentinel at that wheel, overlooking the varied monotony of the ice-sea, till my knees would give, and I wondered why a wheel at which one might sit was not contrived, rather delicate steering being often required among the floes and bergs. By now, however, I was less weighted with my ball of Polar clothes, and stood almost slim in a Lap great-coat, a round Siberian fur cap on my head.

At midnight when I threw myself into my old berth, it was just as though the engines, subsided now into silence, were a dead thing, and had a ghost which haunted me; for I heard them still, and yet not them, but the silence of their ghost.

Sometimes I would startle from sleep, horrified to the heart at some sound of exploding iceberg, or bumping floe, noising far through that white mystery of quietude, where the floes and bergs were as floating tombs, and the world a liquid cemetery. Never could I describe the strange Doom's-day shock with which such a sound would recall me from far depths of chaos to recollection of myself: for often-times, both waking and in nightmare, I did not know on which planet I was, nor in which Age, but felt myself adrift in

the great gulf of time and space and circumstance, without bottom for my consciousness to stand upon; and the world was all mirage and a new show to me; and the boundaries of dream and waking lost.

Well, the weather was most fair all the time, and the sea like a pond. During the morning of the fifth day, the 11th July, I entered, and went moving down, an extraordinary long avenue of snow-bergs and floes, most regularly placed, half a mile across and miles long, like a Titanic double-procession of statues, or the Ming Tombs, but rising and sinking on the cadenced swell; many towering high, throwing placid shadows on the aisle between; some being of a lucid emerald tint; and three or four pouring down cascades that gave a far and chaunting sound. The sea between was of a strange thick bluishness, almost like raw egg-white; while, as always here, some snow-clouds, white and woolly, floated in the pale sky. Down this avenue, which produced a mysterious impression of Cyclopean cathedrals and odd sequesteredness, I had not passed a mile, when I sighted a black object at the end.

I rushed to the shrouds, and very soon made out a whaler.

Again the same panting agitations, mad rage to be at her, at once possessed me; I flew to the indicator, turned the lever to full, then back to give the wheel a spin, then up the main-mast ratlins, waving a long foot-bandage of vadmél tweed picked up at random, and by the time I was within five hundred yards of her, had worked myself to such a pitch, that I was again shouting that futile madness: ‘Hullo! Hi! Bravo! *I have been to the Pole!*’

And those twelve dead that I had in the chart-room there must have heard me, and the men on the whaler must have heard me, and smiled their smile.

For, as to that whaler, I should have known better at once, if I had not been crazy, since she *looked* like a ship of death, her boom slamming to port and starboard on the gentle heave of the sea, and her fore-sail reefed that serene morning. Only when I was quite near her, and hurrying down to stop the engines, did the real truth, with perfect suddenness, drench my heated brain; and I almost ran into her, I was so stunned.

However, I stopped the *Boreal* in time, and later on lowered the kayak, and boarded the other.

This ship had evidently been stricken silent in the midst of a perfect drama of activity, for I saw not one of her crew of sixty-two who was not busy, except one boy. I found her a good-sized thing of 500 odd tons, ship-rigged, with auxiliary engine of seventy horse-power, and pretty heavily armour-plated round the bows. There was no part of her which I did not over-haul, and I could see that they had had a great time with whales, for a mighty carcass, attached to the outside of the ship by the powerful cant-purchase tackle, had been in process of flensing and cutting-in, and on the deck two great blankets of blubber, looking each a ton-weight, surrounded by twenty-seven men in many attitudes, some terrifying to see, some disgusting, several grotesque, all so unhuman, the whale dead, and the men dead, too, and death was there, and the rank-flourishing germs of Inanity, and a mesmerism, and a silence, whose dominion was established, and its reign was growing old. Four of them, who had been removing the gums from a mass of stratified whalebone at the mizzen-mast foot, were quite imbedded in whale-flesh; also, in a barrel lashed to the top of the main top-gallant masthead was visible the head of a man with a long pointed beard, looking steadily out over the sea to the S.W., which made me notice that five only of the probable eight or nine boats were on board; and after visiting the 'tween-decks, where I saw considerable quantities of stowed

whalebone plates, and about fifty or sixty iron oil-tanks, and cut-up blubber; and after visiting cabin, engine-room, fo'cas'le, where I saw a lonely boy of fourteen with his hand grasping a bottle of rum under all the turned-up clothes in a chest, he, at the moment of death, being evidently intent upon hiding it; and after two hours' search of the ship, I got back to my own, and half an hour later came upon all the three missing whale-boats about a mile apart, and steered zig-zag near to each. They contained five men each and a steerer, and one had the harpoon-gun fired, with the loose line coiled round and round the head and upper part of the stroke line-manager; and in the others hundreds of fathoms of coiled rope, with toggle-irons, whale-lances, hand-harpoons, and dropped heads, and grins, and lazy *abandon*, and eyes that stared, and eyes that dozed, and eyes that winked.

After this I began to sight ships not infrequently, and used regularly to have the three lights burning all night. On the 12th July I met one, on the 15th two, on the 16th one, on the 17th three, on the 18th two — all Greenlanders, I think: but, of the nine, I boarded only three, the glass quite clearly showing me, when yet far off, that on the others was no life; and on the three which I boarded were dead men; so that that suspicion which I had, and that fear, grew very heavy upon me.

I went on southward, day after day southward, sentinel there at my wheel; clear sunshine by day, when the calm pale sea sometimes seemed mixed with regions of milk, and at night the immense desolation of a world lit by a sun that was long dead, and by a light that was gloom. It was like Night blanched in death then; and wan as the very kingdom of death and Hades I have seen it, most terrifying, that neuter state and limbo of nothingness, when unreal sea and spectral sky, all boundaries lost, mingled in a vast shadowy void of ghastly phantasmagoria, pale to utter huelessness, at whose centre I, as if annihilated, seemed to swoon in immensity of space.

Into this disembodied world would come anon waftures of that peachy scent which I knew: and their frequency rapidly grew. But still the *Boreal* moved, traversing, as it were, bottomless Eternity: and I reached latitude 72°, not far now from Northern Europe.

And now, as to that blossomy peach-scent — even while some floes were yet around me — I was just like some fantastic mariner, who, having set out to search for Eden and the Blessed Islands, finds them, and balmy gales from their gardens come out, while he is yet afar, to meet him with their perfumes of almond and champac, cornel and jasmin and lotus. For I had now reached a zone where the peach-aroma was constant; all the world seemed embalmed in its spicy fragrance; and I could easily imagine myself voyaging beyond the world toward some clime of perpetual and enchanting Spring.

Well, I saw at last what whalers used to call ‘the blink of the ice’; that is to say, its bright apparition or reflection in the sky when it is left behind, or not yet come-to. By this time I was in a region where a good many craft of various sorts were to be seen; I was continually meeting them; and not one did I omit to investigate, while many I boarded in the kayak or the larch-wood pram. Just below latitude 70° I came upon a good large fleet of what I supposed to be Lafoden cod and herring fishers, which must have drifted somewhat on a northward current. They had had a great season, for the boats were well laden with curing fish. I went from one to the other on a zig-zag course, they being widely scattered, some mere dots to the glass on the horizon. The evening was still and clear with that astral Arctic clearness, the sun just beginning his low-couched nightly drowse. These sturdy-looking brown boats stood rocking gently there with slow-creaking noises, as of things whining in slumber, without the least damage, awaiting the

appalling storms of the winter months on that tenebrous sea, when a dark doom, and a deep grave, would not fail them. The fishers were braw carles, wearing, many of them, fringes of beard well back from the chin-point, with hanging woollen caps. In every case I found below-decks a number of cruses of corn-brandy, marked *aquavit*, two of which I took into the pram. In one of the smacks an elderly fisher was kneeling in a forward sprawling pose, clasping the lug-mast with his arms, the two knees wide apart, head thrown back, and the yellow eye-balls with their islands of grey iris staring straight up the mast-pole. At another of them, instead of boarding in the pram, I shut off the *Boreal's* liquid air at such a point that, by delicate steering, she slackened down to a stoppage just a-beam of the smack, upon whose deck I was thus able to jump down. After looking around I descended the three steps aft into the dark and garrety below-decks, and with stooping back went calling in an awful whisper: '*Anyone? Anyone?*' Nothing answered me: and when I went up again, the *Boreal* had drifted three yards beyond my reach. There being a dead calm, I had to plunge into the water, and in that half-minute there a sudden cold throng of unaccountable terrors beset me, and I can feel again now that abysmal desolation of loneliness, and sense of a hostile and malign universe bent upon eating me up: for the ocean seemed to me nothing but a great ghost.

Two mornings later I came upon another school, rather larger boats these, which I found to be Brittany cod-fishers. Most of these, too, I boarded. In every below-decks was a wooden or earthenware image of the Virgin, painted in gaudy faded colours; and in one case I found a boy who had been kneeling before the statue, but was toppled sideways now, his knees still bent, and the cross of Christ in his hand. These stalwart blue woollen blouses and tarpaulin sou'-westers lay in every pose of death, every detail of feature and expression still perfectly preserved. The sloops were all

the same, all, all: with sing-song creaks they rocked a little, nonchalantly: each, as it were, with a certain sub-consciousness of its own personality, and callous unconsciousness of all the others round it: yet each a copy of the others: the same hooks and lines, disembowelling-knives, barrels of salt and pickle, piles and casks of opened cod, kegs of biscuit, and low-creaking rockings, and a bilgy smell, and dead men. The next day, about eighty miles south of the latitude of Mount Hekla, I sighted a big ship, which turned out to be the French cruiser *Lazare Tréport*. I boarded and overhauled her during three hours, her upper, main, and armoured deck, deck by deck, to her lowest black depths, even childishly spying up the tubes of her two big, rusted turret-guns. Three men in the engine-room had been much mangled, after death, I presume, by a burst boiler; floating about 800 yards to the north-east lay a long-boat of hers, low in the water, crammed with marines, one oar still there, jammed between the row-lock and the rower's forced-back chin; on the ship's starboard deck, in the long stretch of space between the two masts, the blue-jackets had evidently been piped up, for they lay there in a sort of serried disorder, to the number of two hundred and seventy-five. Nothing could be of suggestion more tragic than the wasted and helpless power of this poor wandering vessel, around whose stolid mass myriads of wavelets, busy as aspen-leaves, bickered with a continual weltering splash that was quite loud to hear. I sat a good time that afternoon in one of her steely port main-deck casemates on a gun-carriage, my head sunken on my breast, furtively eyeing the bluish turned-up feet, all shrunk, exsanguined, of a sailor who lay on his back before me; his soles were all that I could see, the rest of him lying head-downwards beyond the steel door-sill.

Drenched in seas of lugubrious reverie I sat, till, with a shuddering start, I awoke, paddled back to the *Boreal*, and, till sleep conquered me, went on

my way. At ten the next morning, coming on deck, I spied to the west a group of craft, and turned my course upon them. They turned out to be eight Shetland sixerns, which must have drifted north-eastward hither. I examined them well, but they were as the long list of the others: for all the men, and all the boys, and all the dogs on them were dead.

I could have come to land a long time before I did: but I would not: I was so afraid. For I was used to the silence of the ice: and I was used to the silence of the sea: but, God knows it, I was afraid of the silence of the land.

Once, on the 15th July, I had seen a whale, or thought I did, spouting very remotely afar on the S.E. horizon; and on the 19th I distinctly saw a shoal of porpoises vaulting the sea-surface, in their swift-successive manner, northward: and seeing them, I had said pitifully to myself: ‘Well, I am not quite alone in the world, then, my good God — not quite alone.’

Moreover, some days later, the *Boreal* had found herself in a bank of cod making away northward, millions of fish, for I saw them, and one afternoon caught three, hand-running, with the hook.

So the sea, at least, had its tribes to be my mates.

But if I should find the land as still as the sea, without even the spouting whale, or school of tumbling sea-hogs — *if Paris were dumber than the eternal ice* — what then, I asked myself, should I do?

I could have made short work, and landed at Shetland, for I found myself as far westward as longitude 11° 23’ W.: but I would not: I was so afraid. The shrinking within me to face that vague suspicion which I had, turned me first to a foreign land.

I made for Norway, and on the first night of this definite intention, at about nine o'clock, the weather being gusty, the sky lowering, the air sombrous, and the sea hard-looking, dark, and ridged, I was steaming along at a good rate, holding the wheel, my poor port and starboard lights still burning there, when, without the least notice, I received the roughest physical shock of my life, being shot bodily right over the wheel, thence, as from a cannon, twenty feet to the cabin-door, through it head-foremost down the companion-way, and still beyond some six yards along the passage. I had crashed into some dark and dead ship, probably of large size, though I never saw her, nor any sign of her; and all that night, and the next day till four in the afternoon, the *Boreal* went driving alone over the sea, whither she would: for I lay unconscious. When I woke, I found that I had received really very small injuries, considering: but I sat there on the floor a long time in a sulky, morose, disgusted, and bitter mood; and when I rose, pettishly stopped the ship's engines, seeing my twelve dead all huddled and disfigured. Now I was afraid to steam by night, and even in the daytime I would not go on for three days: for I was childishly angry with I know not what, and inclined to quarrel with Those whom I could not see.

However, on the fourth day, a rough swell which knocked the ship about, and made me very uncomfortable, coaxed me into moving; and I did so with bows turned eastward and southward.

I sighted the Norway coast four days later, in latitude 63° 19', at noon of the 11th August, and pricked off my course to follow it; but it was with a slow and dawdling reluctance that I went, at much less than half-speed. In some eight hours, as I knew from the chart, I ought to sight the lighthouse light on Smølen Island; and when quiet night came, the black water being branded with trails of still moonlight, I passed quite close to it, between ten and twelve, almost under the shadow of the mighty hills: but, oh my God,

no light was there. And all the way down I marked the rugged sea-board slumber darkling, afar or near, with never, alas! one friendly light.

Well, on the 15th August I had another of those maniac raptures, whose passing away would have left an elephant racked and prostrate. During four days I had seen not one sign of present life on the Norway coast, only hills, hills, dead and dark, and floating craft, all dead and dark; and my eyes now, I found, had acquired a crazy fixity of stare into the very bottom of the vacant abyss of nothingness, while I remained unconscious of being, save of one point, rainbow-blue, far down in the infinite, which passed slowly from left to right before my consciousness a little way, then vanished, came back, and passed slowly again, from left to right continually; till some prick, or voice, in my brain would startle me into the consciousness that I was staring, whispering the profound confidential warning: *You must not stare so, or it is over with you!* Well, lost in a blank trance of this sort, I was leaning over the wheel during the afternoon of the 15th, when it was as if some instinct or premonition in my soul leapt up, and said aloud: ‘If you look just yonder, *you will see...!*’ I started, and in one instant had surged up from all that depth of reverie to reality: I glanced to the right: and there, at last, my God, I saw something human which moved, rapidly moved: at last! — and it came to me.

That sense of recovery, of waking, of new solidity, of the comfortable usual, a million-fold too intense for words — how sweetly consoling it was! Again now, as I write, I can fancy and feel it — the rocky solidity, the adamant ordinary, on which to base the feet, and live. From the day when I stood at the Pole, and saw there the dizzy thing that made me swoon, there had come into my way not one sign or trace that other beings like myself were alive on the earth with me: till now, suddenly, I had the sweet

indubitable proof: for on the south-western sea, not four knots away, I saw a large, swift ship: and her bows, which were sharp as a hatchet, were steadily chipping through the smooth sea at a pretty high pace, throwing out profuse ribbony foams that went wide-vawering, with outward undulations, far behind her length, as she ran the sea in haste, straight northward.

At the moment, I was steering about S.E. by S., fifteen miles out from a shadowy-blue series of Norway mountains; and just giving the wheel one frantic spin to starboard to bring me down upon her, I flew to the bridge, leant my back on the main-mast, which passed through it, put a foot on the white iron rail before me, and there at once felt all the mocking devils of distracted revelry possess me, as I caught the cap from my long hairs, and commenced to wave and wave and wave, red-faced maniac that I was: for at the second nearer glance, I saw that she was flying an ensign at the main, and a long pennant at the main-top, and I did not know what she was flying those flags there for: and I was embittered and driven mad.

With distinct minuteness did she print herself upon my consciousness in that five minutes' interval: she was painted a dull and cholera yellow, like many Russian ships, and there was a faded pink space at her bows under the line where the yellow ceased: the ensign at her main I made out to be the blue-and-white saltire, and she was clearly a Russian passenger-liner, two-masted, two-funnelled, though from her funnels came no trace of smoke, and the position of her steam-cones was anywhere. All about her course the sea was spotted with wobbling splendours of the low sun, large coarse blots of glory near the eye, but lessening to a smaller pattern in the distance, and at the horizon refined to a homogeneous band of livid silver.

The double speed of the *Boreal* and the other, hastening opposite ways, must have been thirty-eight or forty knots, and the meeting was accomplished in certainly less than five minutes: yet into that time I

crowded years of life. I was shouting passionately at her, my eyes starting from my head, my face all inflamed with rage the most prone, loud and urgent. For she did not stop, nor signal, nor make sign of seeing me, but came furrowing down upon me like Juggernaut, with steadfast run. I lost reason, thought, memory, purpose, sense of relation, in that access of delirium which transported me, and can only remember now that in the midst of my shouting, a word, uttered by the fiends who used my throat to express their frenzy, set me laughing high and madly: for I was crying: 'Hi! Bravo! Why don't you stop? *Madmen! I have been to the Pole!*'

That instant an odour arose, and came, and struck upon my brain, most detestable, most execrable; and while one might count ten, I was aware of her near-sounding engines, and that cursed charnel went tearing past me on her maenad way, not fifteen yards from my eyes and nostrils. She was a thing, my God, from which the vulture and the jackal, prowling for offal, would fly with shrieks of loathing. I had a glimpse of decks piled thick with her festered dead.

In big black letters on the round retreating yellow stern my eye-corner caught the word *Yaroslav*, as I bent over the rail to retch and cough and vomit at her. She was a horrid thing.

This ship had certainly been pretty far south in tropical or sub-tropical latitudes with her great crowd of dead: for all the bodies which I had seen till then, so far from smelling ill, seemed to give out a certain perfume of the peach. She was evidently one of those many ships of late years which have substituted liquid air for steam, yet retained their old steam-funnels, &c., in case of emergency: for air, I believe, was still looked at askance by several builders, on account of the terrible accidents which it sometimes caused. The *Boreal* herself is a similar instance of both motors. This vessel, the *Yaroslav*, must have been left with working engines when her crew were

overtaken by death, and, her air-tanks being still unexhausted, must have been ranging the ocean with impunity ever since, during I knew not how many months, or, it might be, years.

Well, I coasted Norway for nearly a hundred and sixty miles without once going nearer land than two or three miles: for something held me back. But passing the fjord-mouth where I knew that Aadheim was, I suddenly turned the helm to port, almost before I knew that I was doing it, and made for land.

In half an hour I was moving up an opening in the land with mountains on either hand, streaky crags at their summit, umbrageous bosage below; and the whole softened, as it were, by veils woven of the rainbow.

This arm of water lies curved about like a thread which one drops, only the curves are much more pointed, so that every few minutes the scene was changed, though the vessel just crawled her way up, and I could see behind me nothing of what was passed, or only a land-locked gleam like a lake.

I never saw water so polished and glassy, like clarid polished marble, reflecting everything quite clean-cut in its lucid abysm, over which hardly the faintest zephyr breathed that still sun-down; it wimpled about the bluff *Boreal*, which seemed to move as if careful not to bruise it, in rich wrinkles and creases, like glycerine, or dewy-trickling lotus-oil; yet it was only the sea: and the spectacle yonder was only crags, and autumn-foliage and mountain-slope: yet all seemed caught-up and chaste, rapt in a trance of rose and purple, and made of the stuff of dreams and bubbles, of pollen-of-flowers, and rinds of the peach.

I saw it not only with delight, but with complete astonishment: having forgotten, as was too natural in all that long barrenness of ice and sea, that anything could be so ethereally fair: yet homely, too, human, familiar, and consoling. The air here was richly spiced with that peachy scent, and there

was a Sabbath and a nepenthe and a charm in that place at that hour, as it were of those gardens of Hesperus, and fields of asphodel, reserved for the spirits of the just.

Alas! but I had the glass at my side, and for me nepenthe was mixed with a despair immense as the vault of heaven, my good God: for anon I would take it up to spy some perched hut of the peasant, or burg of the ‘bonder,’ on the peaks: and I saw no one there; and to the left, at the third marked bend of the fjord, where there is one of those watch-towers that these people used for watching in-coming fish, I spied, lying on a craggy slope just before the tower, a body which looked as if it must surely tumble head-long, but did not. And when I saw that, I felt definitely, for the first time, that shoreless despair which I alone of men have felt, high beyond the stars, and deep as hell; and I fell to staring again that blank stare of Nirvana and the lunacy of Nothingness, wherein Time merges in Eternity, and all being, like one drop of water, flies scattered to fill the bottomless void of space, and is lost.

The *Boreal's* bow walking over a little empty fishing-boat roused me, and a minute later, just before I came to a new promontory and bend, I saw two people. The shore there is some three feet above the water, and edged with boulders of rock, about which grows a fringe of shrubs and small trees: behind this fringe is a path, curving upward through a sombre wooded little gorge; and on the path, near the water, I saw a driver of one of those Norwegian sulkies that were called karjolers: he, on the high front seat, was dead, lying sideways and backwards, with low head resting on the wheel; and on a trunk strapped to a frame on the axle behind was a boy, his head, too, resting sideways on the wheel, near the other's; and the little pony was dead, pitched forward on its head and fore-knees, tilting the shafts downward; and some distance from them on the water floated an empty skiff.

When I turned the next fore-land, I all at once began to see a number of craft, which increased as I advanced, most of them small boats, with some schooners, sloops, and larger craft, the majority a-ground: and suddenly now I was conscious that, mingling with that delicious odour of spring-blossoms — profoundly modifying, yet not destroying it — was another odour, wafted to me on the wings of the very faint land-breeze: and ‘Man,’ I said, ‘is decomposing’: for I knew it well: it was the odour of human corruption.

The fjord opened finally in a somewhat wider basin, shut-in by quite steep, high-towering mountains, which reflected themselves in the water to their last cloudy crag: and, at the end of this I saw ships, a quay, and a modest, homely old town.

Not a sound, not one: only the languidly-working engines of the *Boreal*. Here, it was clear, the Angel of Silence had passed, and his scythe mown.

I ran and stopped the engines, and, without anchoring, got down into an empty boat that lay at the ship’s side when she stopped; and I paddled twenty yards toward the little quay. There was a brigantine with all her courses set, three jibs, stay-sails, square-sails, main and fore-sails, and gaff-top-sail, looking hanging and listless in that calm place, and wedded to a still copy of herself, mast-downward, in the water; there were three lumber-schooners, a forty-ton steam-boat, a tiny barque, five Norway herring-fishers, and ten or twelve shallops: and the sailing-craft had all fore-and-aft sails set, and about each, as I passed among them, brooded an odour that was both sweet and abhorrent, an odour more suggestive of the very genius of mortality — the inner mind and meaning of Azrael — than aught that I could have conceived: for all, as I soon saw, were crowded with dead.

Well, I went up the old mossed steps, in that strange dazed state in which one notices frivolous things: I remember, for instance, feeling the lightness of my new clothes: for the weather was quite mild, and the day before I had changed to Summer things, having on now only a common undyed woollen shirt, the sleeves rolled up, and cord trousers, with a belt, and a cloth cap over my long hair, and an old pair of yellow shoes, without laces, and without socks. And I stood on the unhewn stones of the edge of the quay, and looked abroad over a largish piece of unpaved ground, which lay between the first house-row and the quay.

What I saw was not only most woeful, but wildly startling: woeful, because a great crowd of people had assembled, and lay dead, there; and wildly startling, because something in their *tout ensemble* told me in one minute why they were there in such number.

They were there in the hope, and with the thought, to fly westward by boat.

And the something which told me this was a certain *foreign* air about that field of the dead as the eye rested on it, something un-northern, southern, and Oriental.

Two yards from my feet, as I stepped to the top, lay a group of three: one a Norway peasant-girl in skirt of olive-green, scarlet stomacher, embroidered bodice, Scotch bonnet trimmed with silver lace, and big silver shoe-buckles; the second was an old Norway man in knee-breeches, and eighteenth-century small-clothes, and red worsted cap; and the third was, I decided, an old Jew of the Polish Pale, in gaberdine and skull-cap, with ear-locks.

I went nearer to where they lay thick as reaped stubble between the quay and a little stone fountain in the middle of the space, and I saw among those northern dead two dark-skinned women in costly dress, either Spanish or

Italian, and the yellower mortality of a Mongolian, probably a Magyar, and a big negro in zouave dress, and some twenty-five obvious French, and two Morocco fezes, and the green turban of a shereef, and the white of an Ulema.

And I asked myself this question: 'How came these foreign stragglers here in this obscure northern town?'

And my wild heart answered: 'There has been an impassioned stampede, northward and westward, of all the tribes of Man. And this that I, Adam Jeffson, here see is but the far-tossed spray of that monstrous, infuriate flood.'

Well, I passed up a street before me, careful, careful where I trod. It was not utterly silent, nor was the quay-square, but haunted by a pretty dense cloud of mosquitoes, and dreamy twinges of music, like the drawing of the violin-bow in elf-land. The street was narrow, paved, steep, and dark; and the sensations with which I, poor bent man, passed through that dead town, only Atlas, fabled to bear the burden of this Earth, could divine.

I thought to myself: If now a wave from the Deep has washed over this planetary ship of earth, and I, who alone happened to be in the extreme bows, am the sole survivor of that crew?... What then, my God, shall I do?

I felt, I felt, that in this townlet, save the water-gnats of Norway, was no living thing; that the hum and the savour of Eternity filled, and wrapped, and embalmed it.

The houses are mostly of wood, some of them fairly large, with a *porte-cochère* leading into a semi-circular yard, around which the building stands, very steep-roofed, and shingled, in view of the heavy snow-masses of

winter. Glancing into one open casement near the ground, I saw an aged woman, stout and capped, lie on her face before a very large porcelain stove; but I paced on without stoppage, traversed several streets, and came out, as it became dark, upon a piece of grass-land leading downward to a mountain-gorge. It was some distance along this gorge that I found myself sitting the next morning: and how, and in what trance, I passed that whole blank night is obliterated from my consciousness. When I looked about with the return of light I saw majestic fir-grown mountains on either hand, almost meeting overhead at some points, deeply shading the mossy gorge. I rose, and careless of direction, went still onward, and walked and walked for hours, unconscious of hunger; there was a profusion of wild mountain-strawberries, very tiny, which must grow almost into winter, a few of which I ate; there were blue gentianellas, and lilies-of-the-valley, and luxuriance of verdure, and a noise of waters. Occasionally, I saw little cataracts on high, fluttering like white wild rags, for they broke in the mid-fall, and were caught away, and scattered; patches also of reaped hay and barley, hung up, in a singular way, on stakes six feet high, I suppose to dry; there were perched huts, and a seemingly inaccessible small castle or burg, but none of these did I enter: and five bodies only I saw in the gorge, a woman with a babe, and a man with two small oxen.

About three in the afternoon I was startled to find myself there, and turned back. It was dark when I again passed through those gloomy streets of Aadheim, making for the quay, and now I felt both my hunger and a dropping weariness. I had no thought of entering any house, but as I passed by one open *porte-cochère*, something, I know not what, made me turn sharply in, for my mind had become as fluff on the winds, not working of its own action, but the sport of impulses that seemed external. I went across the yard, and ascended a wooden spiral stair by a twilight which just

enabled me to pick my way among five or six vague forms fallen there. In that confined place fantastic qualms beset me; I mounted to the first landing, and tried the door, but it was locked; I mounted to the second: the door was open, and with a chill reluctance I took a step inward where all was pitch darkness, the window-stores being drawn. I hesitated: it was very dark. I tried to utter that word of mine, but it came in a whisper inaudible to my ears: I tried again, and this time heard myself say: ‘*anyone?*’ At the same time I had made another step forward, and trodden upon a soft abdomen; and at that contact terrors the most cold and ghastly thrilled me through and through, for it was as though I saw in that darkness the sudden eyeballs of Hell and frenzy glare upon me, and with a low gurgle of affright I was gone, helter-skelter down the stairs, treading upon flesh, across the yard, and down the street, with pelting feet, and open arms, and sobbing bosom, for I thought that all Aadheim was after me; nor was my horrid haste appeased till I was on board the *Boreal*, and moving down the fjord.

Out to sea, then, I went again; and within the next few days I visited Bergen, and put in at Stavanger. And I saw that Bergen and Stavanger were dead.

It was then, on the 19th August, that I turned my bow toward my native land.

From Stavanger I steered a straight course for the Humber.

I had no sooner left behind me the Norway coast than I began to meet the ships, the ships — ship after ship; and by the time I entered the zone of the ordinary alternation of sunny day and sunless night, I was moving through the midst of an incredible number of craft, a mighty and wide-spread fleet.

Over all that great expanse of the North Sea, where, in its most populous days of trade, the sailor might perhaps sight a sail or two, I had now at

every moment at least ten or twelve within scope of the glass, oftentimes as many as forty, forty-five.

And very still they lay on a still sea, itself a dead thing, livid as the lips of death; and there was an intensity in the calm that was appalling: for the ocean seemed weighted, and the air drugged.

Extremely slow was my advance, for at first I would not leave any ship, however remotely small, without approaching sufficiently to investigate her, at least with the spy-glass: and a strange multitudinous mixture of species they were, trawlers in hosts, war-ships of every nation, used, it seemed, as passenger-boats, smacks, feluccas, liners, steam-barges, great four-masters with sails, Channel boats, luggers, a Venetian *burchiello*, colliers, yachts, *remorqueurs*, training ships, dredgers, two *dahabeeahs* with curving gaffs, Marseilles fishers, a Maltese *speronare*, American off-shore sail, Mississippi steam-boats, Sorrento lug-schooners, Rhine punts, yawls, old frigates and three-deckers, called to novel use, Stromboli caiques, Yarmouth tubs, xebecs, Rotterdam flat-bottoms, floats, mere gunwaled rafts — anything from anywhere that could bear a human freight on water had come, and was here: and all, I knew, had been making westward, or northward, or both; and all, I knew, were crowded; and all were tombs, listlessly wandering, my God, on the wandering sea with their dead.

And so fair was the world about them, too: the brightest suavest autumn weather; all the still air aromatic with that vernal perfume of peach: yet not so utterly still, but if I passed close to the lee of any floating thing, the spicy stirrings of morning or evening wafted me faint puffs of the odour of mortality over-ripe for the grave.

So abominable and accursed did this become to me, such a plague and a hissing, vague as was the offence, that I began to shun rather than seek the ships, and also I now dropped my twelve, whom I had kept to be my

companions all the way from the Far North, one by one, into the sea: for now I had definitely passed into a zone of settled warmth.

I was convinced, however, that the poison, whatever it might be, had some embalming, or antiseptic, effect upon the bodies: at Aadheim, Bergen and Stavanger, for instance, where the temperature permitted me to go without a jacket, only the merest hints and whiffs of the processes of dissolution had troubled me.

Very benign, I say, and pleasant to see, was sky and sea during all that voyage: but it was at sun-set that my sense of the wondrously beautiful was roused and excited, in spite of that great burden which I carried. Certainly, I never saw sun-sets resembling those, nor could have conceived of aught so flamboyant, extravagant, and bewitched: for the whole heaven seemed turned into an arena for warring Hierarchies, warring for the universe, or it was like the wild countenance of God defeated, and flying marred and bloody from His enemies. But many evenings I watched with unintelligent awe, believing it but a portent of the un-sheathed sword of the Almighty; till, one morning, a thought pricked me like a sword, for I suddenly remembered the great sun-sets of the later nineteenth century, witnessed in Europe, America, and, I believe, over the world, after the eruption of the volcano of Krakatoa.

And whereas I had before said to myself: 'If now a wave from the Deep has washed over this planetary ship of earth...', I said now: 'A wave — but not from the Deep: a wave rather which she had reserved, and has spouted, from her own un-motherly entrails...'

I had some knowledge of Morse telegraphy, and of the manipulation of tape-machines, telegraphic typing-machines, and the ordinary wireless

transmitter and coherer, as of most little things of that sort which came within the outskirts of the interest of a man of science; I had collaborated with Professor Stanistreet in the production of a text-book called 'Applications of Science to the Arts,' which had brought us some notoriety; and, on the whole, the *minutiae* of modern things were still pretty fresh in my memory. I could therefore have wired from Bergen or Stavanger, supposing the batteries not run down, to somewhere: but I would not: I was so afraid; afraid lest for ever from nowhere should come one answering click, or flash, or stirring....

I could have made short work, and landed at Hull: but I would not: I was so afraid. For I was used to the silence of the ice: and I was used to the silence of the sea: but I was afraid of the silence of England.

I came in sight of the coast on the morning of the 26th August, somewhere about Hornsea, but did not see any town, for I put the helm to port, and went on further south, no longer bothering with the instruments, but coasting at hap-hazard, now in sight of land, and now in the centre of a circle of sea; not admitting to myself the motive of this loitering slowness, nor thinking at all, but ignoring the deep-buried fear of the to-morrow which I shirked, and instinctively hiding myself in to-day. I passed the Wash, I passed Yarmouth, Felixstowe. By now the things that floated motionless on the sea were beyond numbering, for I could hardly lower my eyes ten minutes and lift them, without seeing yet another there: so that soon after dusk I, too, had to lie still among them all, till morning: for they lay dark, and to move at any pace would have been to drown the already dead.

Well, I came to the Thames-mouth, and lay pretty well in among the Flats and Pan Sands towards eight one evening, not seven miles from Sheppey and the North Kent coast: and I did not see any Nore Light, nor Girdler Light: and all along the coast I had seen no light: but as to that I said not one word to myself, not admitting it, nor letting my heart know what my brain thought, nor my brain know what my heart surmised; but with a daft and mock-mistrustful under-look I would regard the darkling land, holding it a sentient thing that would be playing a prank upon a poor man like me.

And the next morning, when I moved again, my furtive eye-corners were very well aware of the Prince's Channel light-ship, and also the Tongue ship, for there they were: but I would not look at them at all, nor go near them: for I did not wish to have anything to do with whatever might have happened beyond my own ken, and it was better to look straight before, seeing nothing, and concerning one's-self with one's-self.

The next evening, after having gone out to sea again, I was in a little to the E. by S. of the North Foreland: and I saw no light there, nor any Sandhead light; but over the sea vast signs of wreckage, and the coasts were strewn with old wrecked fleets. I turned about S.E., very slowly moving — for anywhere hereabouts hundreds upon hundreds of craft lay dead within a ten-mile circle of sea — and by two in the fore-day had wandered up well in sight of the French cliffs: for I had said: 'I will go and see the light-beam of the great revolving-drum on Calais pier that nightly beams half-way over-sea to England.' And the moon shone clear in the southern heaven that morning, like a great old dying queen whose Court swarms distantly from around her, diffident, pale, and tremulous, the paler the nearer; and I could see the mountain-shadows on her spotty full-face, and her misty aureole, and her lights on the sea, as it were kisses stolen in the kingdom of sleep; and all among the quiet ships mysterious white trails and powderings of

light, like palace-corridors in some fairy-land forlorn, full of breathless wan whispers, scandals, and runnings-to-and-fro, with leers, and agitated last embraces, and flight of the princess, and death-bed of the king; and on the N.E. horizon a bank of brown cloud that seemed to have no relation with the world; and yonder, not far, the white coast-cliffs, not so low as at Calais near, but arranged in masses separated by vales of sward, each with its wreck: but no light of any revolving-drum I saw.

I could not sleep that night: for all the operations of my mind and body seemed in abeyance. Mechanically I turned the ship westward again; and when the sun came up, there, hardly two miles from me, were the cliffs of Dover; and on the crenulated summit of the Castle I spied the Union Jack hang motionless.

I heard eight, nine o'clock strike in the cabin, and I was still at sea. But some mad, audacious whisper was at my brain: and at 10.30, the 2nd September, immediately opposite the Cross Wall Custom House, the *Boreal's* anchor-chain, after a voyage of three years, two months, and fourteen days, ran thundering, thundering, through the starboard hawse-hole.

Ah heaven! but I must have been stark mad to let the anchor go! for the effect upon me of that shocking obstreperous hubbub, breaking in upon all that cemetery repose that blessed morning, and lasting it seemed a year, was most appalling; and at the sudden racket I stood excruciated, with shivering knees and flinching heart, God knows: for not less terrifically uproarious than the clatter of the last Trump it raged and raged, and I thought that all the billion dead could not fail to start, and rise, at alarum so excessive, and question me with their eyes....

On the top of the Cross Wall near I saw a grey crab fearlessly crawl; at the end where the street begins, I saw a single gas-light palely burn that broad day, and at its foot a black man lay on his face, clad only in a shirt and one boot; the harbour was almost packed with every sort of craft, and on a Calais-Dover boat, eight yards from my stern, which must have left Calais crowded to suffocation, I saw the rotted dead lie heaped, she being unmoored, and continually grinding against an anchored green brig.

And when I saw that, I dropped down upon my knees at the capstan, and my poor heart sobbed out the frail cry: 'Well, Lord God, Thou hast destroyed the work of Thy hand...'

After a time I got up, went below in a state of somnambulism, took a packet of pemmican cakes, leapt to land, and went following the railway that runs from the Admiralty Pier. In an enclosed passage ten yards long, with railway masonry on one side, I saw five dead lie, and could not believe that I was in England, for all were dark-skinned people, three gaudily dressed, and two in flowing white robes. It was the same when I turned into a long street, leading northward, for here were a hundred, or more, and never saw I, except in Constantinople, where I once lived eighteen months, so variegated a mixture of races, black, brunette, brown, yellow, white, in all the shades, some emaciated like people dead from hunger, and, overlooking them all, one English boy with a clean Eton collar sitting on a bicycle, supported by a lamp-post which his arms clasped, he proving clearly the extraordinary suddenness of the death which had overtaken them all.

I did not know whither, nor why, I went, nor had I the least idea whether all this was visually seen by me in the world which I had known, or in some other, or was all phantasy of my disembodied spirit — for I had the thought

that I, too, might be dead since old ages, and my spirit wandering now through the universe of space, in which there is neither north nor south, nor up nor down, nor measure nor relation, nor aught whatever, save an uneasy consciousness of a dream about bottomlessness. Of grief or pain, I think, I felt nothing; though I have a sort of memory now that some sound, resembling a sob or groan, though it was neither, came at regular clockwork intervals from my bosom during three or four days. Meantime, my brain registered like a tape-machine details the most frivolous, the most ludicrous — the name of a street, Strond Street, Snargate Street; the round fur cap — black fur for the side, white ermine for the top — of a portly Karaite priest on his back, whose robes had been blown to his spread knees, as if lifted and neatly folded there; a violin-bow gripped between the thick, irregular teeth of a little Spaniard with brushed-back hair and mad-looking eyes; odd shoes on the foot of a French girl, one black, one brown. They lay in the street about as numerous as gunners who fall round their carriage, at intervals of five to ten feet, the majority — as was the case also in Norway, and on the ships — in poses of distraction, with spread arms, or wildly distorted limbs, like men who, the instant before death, called upon the rocks and hills to cover them.

On the left I came to an opening in the land, called, I believe, ‘The Shaft,’ and into this I turned, climbing a very great number of steps, almost covered at one point with dead: the steps I began to count, but left off, then the dead, and left off. Finally, at the top, which must be even higher than the Castle, I came to a great open space laid out with gravel-walks, and saw fortifications, barracks, a citadel. I did not know the town, except by passings-through, and was surprised at the breadth of view. Between me and the Castle to the east lay the district of crowding houses, brick and

ragstone, mixed in the distance with vague azure haze; and to the right the harbour, the sea, with their ships; and visible around me on the heights seven or eight dead, biting the dust; the sun now high and warm, with hardly a cloud in the sky; and yonder a mist, which was the coast of France.

It seemed too big for one poor man.

My head nodded. I sat on a bench, black-painted and hard, the seat and back of horizontal boards, with intervals; and as I looked, I nodded, heavy-headed and weary: for it was too big for me. And as I nodded, with forehead propped on my left hand, and the packet of pemmican cakes in my right, there was in my head, somehow, an old street-song of my childhood: and I groaned it sleepily, like coronachs and drear funereal nenias, dirging; and the packet beat time in my right hand, falling and raising, falling heavily and rising, in time.

I'll buy the ring,

You'll rear the kids:

Servants to wait on our ting, ting, ting.

.

.

Ting, ting,

Won't we be happy?

Ting, ting,

That shall be it:

I'll buy the ring,

You'll rear the kids:

Servants to wait on our ting, ting, ting.

.

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So maundering, I fell forward upon my face, and for twenty-three hours, the living undistinguished from the dead, I slept there.

I was awakened by drizzle, leapt up, looked at a silver chronometer which, attached by a leather to my belt, I carried in my breeches-pocket, and saw that it was 10 A.M. The sky was dark, and a moaning wind — almost a new thing now to me — had arisen.

I ate some pemmican, for I had a reluctance — needless as it turned out — to touch any of the thousand luxuries here, sufficient no doubt, in a town like Dover alone, to last me five or six hundred years, if I could live so long; and, having eaten, I descended The Shaft, and spent the whole day, though it rained and blustered continually, in wandering about. Reasoning, in my numb way, from the number of ships on the sea, I expected to find the town over-crowded with dead: but this was not so; and I should say, at a venture, that not a thousand English, nor fifteen thousand foreigners, were in it: for that westward rage and stampede must have operated here also, leaving the town empty but for the ever new-coming hosts.

The first thing which I did was to go into an open grocer's shop, which was also a post and telegraph office, with the notion, I suppose, to get a message through to London. In the shop a single gas-light was burning its last, and this, with that near the pier, were the only two that I saw: and ghastly enough they looked, transparently wannish, and as it were ashamed, like blinking night-things overtaken by the glare of day. I conjectured that they had so burned and watched during months, or years: for they were now blazing diminished, with streaks and rays in the flame, as if by effort, and if these were the only two, they must have needed time to all-but exhaust the works. Before the counter lay a fashionably-dressed negro with a number of tied parcels scattered about him, and on the counter an empty till, and

behind it a tall thin woman with her face resting sideways in the till, fingers clutching the outer counter-rim, and such an expression of frantic terror as I never saw. I got over the counter to a table behind a wire-gauze, and, like a numb fool, went over the Morse alphabet in my mind before touching the transmitting key, though I knew no code-words, and there, big enough to be seen, was the ABC dial, and who was to answer my message I did not ask myself: for habit was still strong upon me, and my mind refused to reason from what I saw to what I did not see; but the moment I touched the key, and peered greedily at the galvanometer-needle at my right, I saw that it did not move, for no current was passing; and with a kind of fright, I was up, leapt, and got away from the place, though there was a great number of telegrams about the receiver which, if I had been in my senses, I would have stopped and read.

Turning the corner of the next street, I saw wide-open the door of a substantial large house, and went in. From bottom to top there was no one there, except one English girl, sitting back in an easy-chair in the drawing-room, which was richly furnished with Valenciennes curtains and azure-satin things. She was a girl of the lowest class, hardly clad in black rags, and there she lay with hanging jaw, in a very crooked and awkward pose, a jemmy at her feet, in her left hand a roll of bank-notes, and in her lap three watches. In fact, the bodies which I saw here were, in general, either those of new-come foreigners, or else of the very poor, the very old, or the very young.

But what made me remember this house was that I found here on one of the sofas a newspaper: *The Kent Express*; and sitting unconscious of my dead neighbour, I pored a long while over what was written there.

It said in a passage which I tore out and kept:

‘Telegraphic communication with Tilsit, Insterburg, Warsaw, Cracow, Przemysl, Gross Wardein, Karlsburg, and many smaller towns lying immediately eastward of the 21st parallel of longitude has ceased during the night. In some at least of them there must have been operators still at their duty, undrawn into the great westward-rushing torrent: but as all messages from Western Europe have been answered only by that dread mysterious silence which, just three months and two days since, astounded the world in the case of Eastern New Zealand, we can only assume that these towns, too, have been added to the long and mournful list; indeed, after last evening’s Paris telegrams we might have prophesied with some certainty, not merely their overthrow, but even the hour of it: for the rate-uniformity of the slow-riding vapour which is touring our globe is no longer doubtful, and has even been definitely fixed by Professor Craven at 100-1/2 miles per day, or 4 miles 330 yards per hour. Its nature, its origin, remains, of course, nothing but matter of conjecture: for it leaves no living thing behind it: nor, God knows, is that of any moment now to us who remain. The rumour that it is associated with an odour of almonds is declared, on high authority, to be improbable; but the morose purple of its impending gloom has been attested by tardy fugitives from the face of its rolling and smoky march.

‘Is this the end? We do not, and cannot, believe it. Will the pure sky which we to-day see above us be invaded in nine days, or less, by this smoke of the Pit of Darkness? In spite of the assurances of the scientists, we still doubt. For, if so, to what purpose that long drama of History, in which we seem to see the Hand of the Dramaturgist? Surely, the end of a Fifth Act should be obvious, satisfying to one’s sense of the complete: but History, so far, long as it has been, resembles rather a Prologue than a Fifth Act. Can it be that the Manager, utterly dissatisfied, would sweep all off, and ‘hang up’ the piece for ever? Certainly, the sins of mankind have been as scarlet: and

if the fair earth which he has turned into Hell, send forth now upon him the smoke of Hell, little the wonder. But we cannot yet believe. There is a sparing strain in nature, and through the world, as a thread, is spun a silence which smiles, and on the end of events we find placarded large the words: "Why were ye afraid?" A dignified Hope, therefore — even now, when we cower beneath this worldwide shadow of the wings of the Condor of Death — becomes us: and, indeed, we see such an attitude among some of the humblest of our people, from whose heart ascends the cry: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Here, therefore, O Lord! O Lord, look down, and save!

‘But even as we thus write of hope, Reason, if we would hear her, whispers us “fool”: and inclement is the sky of earth. No more ships can New York Harbour contain, and whereas among us men die weekly of privations by the hundred thousand, yonder across the sea they perish by the million: for where the rich are pinched, how can the poor live? Already 700 out of the 1000 millions of our race have perished, and the empires of civilisation have crumbled like sand-castles in a horror of anarchy. Thousands upon thousands of unburied dead, anticipating the more deliberate doom that comes and smokes, and rides and comes and comes, and does not fail, encumber the streets of London, Manchester, Liverpool. The guides of the nation have fled; the father stabs his child, and the wife her husband, for a morsel of food; the fields lie waste; wanton crowds carouse in our churches, universities, palaces, banks and hospitals; we understand that late last night three territorial regiments, the Munster Fusiliers, and the Lotian and East Lancashire Regiments, riotously disbanded themselves, shooting two officers; infectious diseases, as we all know, have spread beyond limit; in several towns the police seem to have disappeared, and, in nearly all, every vestige of decency; the results

following upon the sudden release of the convicts appear to be monstrous in the respective districts; and within three short months Hell seems to have acquired this entire planet, sending forth Horror, like a rabid wolf, and Despair, like a disastrous sky, to devour and confound her. Hear, therefore, O Lord, and forgive our iniquities! O Lord, we beseech Thee! Look down, O Lord, and spare!’

When I had read this, and the rest of the paper, which had one whole sheet-side blank, I sat a long hour there, eyeing a little patch of the purple ash on a waxed board near the corner where the girl sat with her time-pieces, so useless in her Eternity; and there was not a feeling in me, except a pricking of curiosity, which afterwards became morbid and ravenous, to know something more of that cloud, or smoke, of which this man spoke, of its dates, its origin, its nature, its minute details. Afterwards, I went down, and entered several houses, searching for more papers, but did not find any; then I found a paper-shop which was open, with boards outside, but either it had been deserted, or printing must have stopped about the date of the paper which I had read, for the only three news-papers there were dated long prior, and I did not read them.

Now it was raining, and a blustering autumn day it was, distributing the odours of the world, and bringing me continual mixed whiffs of flowers and the hateful stench of decay. But I would not mind it much.

I wandered and wandered, till I was tired of spahi and bashi-bazouk, of Greek and Catalan, of Russian ‘pope’ and Coptic abuna, of dragoman and Calmuck, of Egyptian maulawi and Afghan mullah, Neapolitan and sheik, and the nightmare of wild poses, colours, stuffs and garbs, the yellow-green keffie of the Bedouin, shawl-turbans of Baghdad, the voluminous rose-silk tob of women, and face-veils, and stark distorted nakedness, and sashes of

figured muslin, and the workman's cords, and the red tarboosh. About four, for very weariness, I was sitting on a door-steep, bent beneath the rain; but soon was up again, fascinated no doubt by this changing bazaar of sameness, its chance combinations and permutations, and novelty in monotony. About five I was at a station, marked Harbour Station, in and about which lay a considerable crowd, but not one train. I sat again, and rested, rose and roamed again; soon after six I found myself at another station, called 'Priory'; and here I saw two long trains, both crowded, one on a siding, and one at the up-platform.

I examined both engines, and found them of the old boiler steam-type with manholes, heaters, autoclaves, feed-pump, &c., now rare in western countries, except England. In one there was no water, but in that at the platform, the float-lever, barely tilted toward the float, showed that there was some in the boiler. Of this one I overhauled all the machinery, and found it good, though rusted. There was plenty of fuel, and oil, which I supplemented from a near shop: and during ninety minutes my brain and hands worked with an intelligence as it were automatic, of their own motion. After three journeys across the station and street, I saw the fire blaze well, and the manometer move; when the lever of the safety-valve, whose load I lightened by half an atmosphere, lifted, I jumped down, and tried to disconnect the long string of carriages from the engine: but failed, the coupling being an automatic arrangement new to me; nor did I care. It was now very dark; but there was still oil for bull's-eye and lantern, and I lit them. I forgot nothing. I rolled driver and stoker — the guard was absent — one to the platform, one upon the rails: and I took their place there. At about 8.30 I ran out from Dover, my throttle-valve pealing high a long falsetto through the bleak and desolate night.

My aim was London. But even as I set out, my heart smote me: I knew nothing of the metals, their junctions, facing-points, sidings, shuntings, and complexities. Even as to whether I was going toward, or away from, London, I was not sure. But just in proportion as my first timorousness of the engine hardened into familiarity and self-sureness, I quickened speed, wilfully, with an obstinacy deaf and blind.

Finally, from a mere crawl at first, I was flying at a shocking velocity, while something, tongue in cheek, seemed to whisper me: 'There must be other trains blocking the lines, at stations, in yards, and everywhere — it is a maniac's ride, a ride of death, and Flying Dutchman's frenzy: remember your dark five-deep brigade of passengers, who rock and bump together, and will suffer in a collision.' But with mulish stubbornness I thought: 'They wished to go to London'; and on I raged, not wildly exhilarated, so far as I can remember, nor lunatic, but feeling the dull glow of a wicked and morose Unreason urge in my bosom, while I stoked all blackened at the fire, or saw the vague mass of dead horse or cow, running trees and fields, and dark homestead and deep-slumbering farm, flit ghostly athwart the murky air, as the half-blind saw 'men like trees walking.'

Long, however, it did not last: I could not have been twenty miles from Dover when, on a long reach of straight lines, I made out before me a tarpaulined mass opposite a signal-point: and at once callousness changed to terror within me. But even as I plied the brake, I felt that it was too late: I rushed to the gangway to make a wild leap down an embankment to the right, but was thrown backward by a quick series of rough bumps, caused by eight or ten cattle which lay there across the lines: and when I picked myself up, and leapt, some seconds before the impact, the speed must have considerably slackened, for I received no fracture, but lay in semi-coma in a patch of yellow-flowered whin on level ground, and was even conscious of

a fire on the lines forty yards away, and, all the night, of vague thunder sounding from somewhere.

About five, or half-past, in the morning I was sitting up, rubbing my eyes, in a dim light mixed with drizzle. I could see that the train of my last night's debauch was a huddled-up chaos of fallen carriages and disfigured bodies. A five-barred gate on my left opened into a hedge, and swung with creaks: two yards from my feet lay a little shaggy pony with swollen wan abdomen, the very picture of death, and also about me a number of dead wet birds.

I picked myself up, passed through the gate, and walked up a row of trees to a house at their end. I found it to be a little country-tavern with a barn, forming one house, the barn part much larger than the tavern part. I went into the tavern by a small side-door — behind the bar — into a parlour — up a little stair — into two rooms: but no one was there. I then went round into the barn, which was paved with cobble-stones, and there lay a dead mare and foal, some fowls, with two cows. A ladder-stair led to a closed trap-door in the floor above. I went up, and in the middle of a wilderness of hay saw nine people — labourers, no doubt — five men and four women, huddled together, and with them a tin-pail containing the last of some spirit; so that these had died merry.

I slept three hours among them, and afterwards went back to the tavern, and had some biscuits of which I opened a new tin, with some ham, jam and apples, of which I made a good meal, for my pemmican was gone.

Afterwards I went following the rail-track on foot, for the engines of both the collided trains were smashed. I knew northward from southward by the position of the sun: and after a good many stoppages at houses, and by

railway-banks, I came, at about eleven in the night, to a great and populous town.

By the Dane John and the Cathedral, I immediately recognised it as Canterbury, which I knew quite well. And I walked up Castle Street to the High Street, conscious for the first time of that regularly-repeated sound, like a sob or groan, which was proceeding from my throat. As there was no visible moon, and these old streets very dim, I had to pick my way, lest I should desecrate the dead with my foot, and they all should rise with hue and cry to hunt me. However, the bodies here were not numerous, most, as before, being foreigners: and these, scattered about this strict old English burg that mourning dark night, presented such a scene of the baneful wrath of God, and all abomination of desolation, as broke me quite down at one place, where I stood in travail with jeremiads and sore sobbings and lamentations, crying out upon it all, God knows.

Only when I stood at the west entrance of the Cathedral I could discern, spreading up the dark nave, to the lantern, to the choir, a phantasmagorical mass of forms: I went a little inward, and striking three matches, peered nearer: the two transepts, too, seemed crowded — the cloister-doorway was blocked — the southwest porch thronged, so that a great congregation must have flocked hither shortly before their fate overtook them.

Here it was that I became definitely certain that the after-odour of the poison was not simply lingering in the air, but was being more or less given off by the bodies: for the blossomy odour of this church actually overcame that other odour, the whole rather giving the scent of old mouldy linens long embalmed in cedars.

Well, away with stealthy trot I ran from the abysmal silence of that place, and in Palace Street near made one of those sudden immoderate rackets that seemed to outrage the universe, and left me so woefully faint, decrepit, and

gasping for life (the noise of the train was different, for there I was flying, but here a captive, and which way I ran was capture). Passing in Palace Street, I saw a little lampshop, and wanting a lantern, tried to get in, but the door was locked; so, after going a few steps, and kicking against a policeman's truncheon, I returned to break the window-glass. I knew that it would make a fearful noise, and for some fifteen or twenty minutes stood hesitating: but never could I have dreamed, my good God, of *such* a noise, so passionate, so dominant, so divulgent, and, O Heaven, so long-lasting: for I seemed to have struck upon the weak spot of some planet, which came suddenly tumbling, with protracted bellowing and *débâcle*, about my ears. It was a good hour before I would climb in; but then quickly found what I wanted, and some big oil-cans; and till one or two in the morning, the innovating flicker of my lantern went peering at random into the gloomy nooks of the town.

Under a deep old Gothic arch that spanned a paved alley, I saw the little window of a little house of rubble, and between the two diamond-paned sashes rags tightly beaten in, the idea evidently being to make the place air-tight against the poison. When I went in I found the door of that room open, though it, too, apparently, had been stuffed at the edges; and on the threshold an old man and woman lay low. I conjectured that, thus protected, they had remained shut in, till either hunger, or the lack of oxygen in the used-up air, drove them forth, whereupon the poison, still active, must have instantly ended them. I found afterwards that this expedient of making air-tight had been widely resorted to; and it might well have proved successful, if both the supply of inclosed air, and of food, had been anywhere commensurate with the durability of the poisonous state.

Weary, weary as I grew, some morbid persistence sustained me, and I would not rest. About four in the morning I was at a station again,

industriously bending, poor wretch, at the sooty task of getting another engine ready for travel. This time, when steam was up, I succeeded in uncoupling the carriages from the engine, and by the time morning broke, I was lightly gliding away over the country, whither I did not know, but making for London.

Now I went with more intelligence and caution, and got on very well, travelling seven days, never at night, except it was very clear, never at more than twenty or twenty-five miles, and crawling through tunnels. I do not know the maze into which the train took me, for very soon after leaving Canterbury it must have gone down some branch-line, and though the names were marked at stations, that hardly helped me, for of their situation relatively to London I was seldom sure. Moreover, again and again was my progress impeded by trains on the metals, when I would have to run back to a shunting-point or a siding, and, in two instances, these being far behind, changed from my own to the impeding engine. On the first day I travelled unhindered till noon, when I stopped in open country that seemed uninhabited for ages, only that half a mile to the left, on a shaded sward, was a large stone house of artistic design, coated with tinted harling, the roof of red Ruabon tiles, and timbered gables. I walked to it after another row with putting out the fire and arranging for a new one, the day being bright and mild, with great masses of white cloud in the sky. The house had an outer and an inner hall, three reception rooms, fine oil-paintings, a kind of museum, and a large kitchen. In a bed-room above-stairs I found three women with servants' caps, and a footman, arranged in a strange symmetrical way, head to head, like rays of a star. As I stood looking at them, I could have sworn, my good God, that I heard someone coming up the stairs. But it was some slight creaking of the breeze in the house,

augmented a hundredfold to my inflamed and fevered hearing: for, used for years now to this silence of Eternity, it is as though I hear all sounds through an ear-trumpet. I went down, and after eating, and drinking some clary-water, made of brandy, sugar, cinnamon, and rose water, which I found in plenty, I lay down on a sofa in the inner hall, and slept a quiet sleep until near midnight.

I went out then, still possessed with the foolish greed to reach London, and after getting the engine to rights, went off under a clear black sky thronged with worlds and far-sown spawn, some of them, I thought, perhaps like this of mine, whelmed and drowned in oceans of silence, with one only inhabitant to see it, and hear its silence. And all the long night I travelled, stopping twice only, once to get the coal from an engine which had impeded me, and once to drink some water, which I took care, as always, should be running water. When I felt my head nod, and my eyes close about 5 A.M., I threw myself, just outside the arch of a tunnel upon a grassy bank, pretty thick with stalks and flowers, the workings of early dawn being then in the east: and there, till near eleven, slept.

On waking, I noticed that the country now seemed more like Surrey than Kent: there was that regular swell and sinking of the land; but, in fact, though it must have been either, it looked like neither, for already all had an aspect of return to a state of wild nature, and I could see that for a year at the least no hand had tended the soil. Near before me was a stretch of lucerne of such extraordinary growth, that I was led during that day and the succeeding one to examine the condition of vegetation with some minuteness, and nearly everywhere I detected a certain hypertrophie tendency in stamens, calycles, pericarps, and pistils, in every sort of bulbiferous growth that I looked at, in the rushes, above all, the fronds, mosses, lichens, and all cryptogamia, and in the trefoils, clover especially,

and some creepers. Many crop-fields, it was clear, had been prepared, but not sown; some had not been reaped: and in both cases I was struck with their appearance of rankness, as I was also when in Norway, and was all the more surprised that this should be the case at a time when a poison, whose action is the arrest of oxidation, had traversed the earth; I could only conclude that its presence in large volumes in the lower strata of the atmosphere had been more or less temporary, and that the tendency to exuberance which I observed was due to some principle by which Nature acts with freer energy and larger scope in the absence of man.

Two yards from the rails I saw, when I got up, a little rill beside a rotten piece of fence, barely oozing itself onward under masses of foul and stagnant fungoids: and here there was a sudden splash, and life: and I caught sight of the hind legs of a diving young frog. I went and lay on my belly, poring over the clear dulcet little water, and presently saw two tiny bleaks, or ablets, go gliding low among the swaying moss-hair of the bottom-rocks, and thought how gladly would I be one of them, with my home so thatched and shady, and my life drowned in their wide-eyed reverie. At any rate, these little creatures are alive, the batrachians also, and, as I found the next day, pupae and chrysales of one sort or another, for, to my deep emotion, I saw a little white butterfly staggering in the air over the flower-garden of a rustic station named Butley.

It was while I was lying there, poring upon that streamlet, that a thought came into my head: for I said to myself: 'If now I be here alone, alone, alone... alone, alone... one on the earth... and my girth have a spread of 25,000 miles... what will happen to my mind? Into what kind of creature shall I writhe and change? I may live two years so! What will have

happened then? I may live five years — ten! What will have happened after the five? the ten? I may live twenty, thirty, forty...’

Already, already, there are things that peep and sprout within me...!

I wanted food and fresh running water, and walked from the engine half a mile through fields of lucerne whose luxuriance quite hid the foot-paths, and reached my shoulder. After turning the brow of a hill, I came to a park, passing through which I saw some dead deer and three persons, and emerged upon a terraced lawn, at the end of which stood an Early English house of pale brick with copings, plinths, stringcourses of limestone, and spandrels of carved marble; and some distance from the porch a long table, or series of tables, in the open air, still spread with cloths that were like shrouds after a month of burial; and the table had old foods on it, and some lamps; and all around it, and all on the lawn, were dead peasants. I seemed to know the house, probably from some print which I may have seen, but I could not make out the escutcheon, though I saw from its simplicity that it must be very ancient. Right across the façade spread still some of the letters in evergreens of the motto: ‘Many happy returns of the day,’ so that someone must have come of age, or something, for inside all was gala, and it was clear that these people had defied a fate which they, of course, foreknew. I went nearly throughout the whole spacious place of thick-carpeted halls, marbles, and famous oils, antlers and arras, and gilt saloons, and placid large bed-chambers: and it took me an hour. There were here not less than a hundred and eighty people. In the first of a vista of three large reception-rooms lay what could only have been a number of quadrille parties, for to the *coup d’oeil* they presented a two-and-two appearance, made very repulsive by their jewels and evening-dress. I had to steel my heart to go through this house, for I did not know if these people were

looking at me as soon as my back was turned. Once I was on the very point of flying, for I was going up the great central stairway, and there came a pelt of dead leaves against a window-pane in a corridor just above on the first floor, which thrilled me to the inmost soul. But I thought that if I once fled, they would all be at me from behind, and I should be gibbering mad long, long before I reached the outer hall, and so stood my ground, even defiantly advancing. In a small dark bedroom in the north wing on the second floor — that is to say, at the top of the house — I saw a tall young lady and a groom, or wood-man, to judge by his clothes, horribly riveted in an embrace on a settee, she with a light coronet on her head in low-necked dress, and their lipless teeth still fiercely pressed together. I collected in a bag a few delicacies from the under-regions of this house, Lyons sausages, salami, mortadel, apples, roes, raisins, artichokes, biscuits, a few wines, a ham, bottled fruit, pickles, coffee, and so on, with a gold plate, tin-opener, cork-screw, fork, &c., and dragged them all the long way back to the engine before I could eat.

My brain was in such a way, that it was several days before the perfectly obvious means of finding my way to London, since I wished to go there, at all occurred to me; and the engine went wandering the intricate railway-system of the south country, I having twice to water her with a coal-bucket from a pool, for the injector was giving no water from the tank under the coals, and I did not know where to find any near tank-sheds. On the fifth evening, instead of into London, I ran into Guildford.

That night, from eleven till the next day, there was a great storm over England: let me note it down. And ten days later, on the 17th of the month came another; and on the 23rd another; and I should be put to it to count the

great number since. And they do not resemble English storms, but rather Arctic ones, in a certain very suggestive something of personalness, and a carousing malice, and a Tartarus gloom, which I cannot quite describe. That night at Guildford, after wandering about, and becoming very weary, I threw myself upon a cushioned pew in an old Norman church with two east apses, called St. Mary's, using a Bible-cushion for pillow, and placing some distance away a little tin lamp turned low, whose ray served me for *veilleuse* through the night. Happily I had taken care to close up everything, or, I feel sure, the roof must have gone. Only one dead, an old lady in a chapel on the north side of the chancel, whom I rather mistrusted, was there with me: and there I lay listening: for, after all, I could not sleep a wink, while outside vogued the immense tempest. And I communed with myself, thinking: 'I, poor man, lost in this conflux of infinitudes and vortex of the world, what can become of me, my God? For dark, ah dark, is the waste void into which from solid ground I am now plunged a million fathoms deep, the sport of all the whirlwinds: and it were better for me to have died with the dead, and never to have seen the wrath and turbulence of the Ineffable, nor to have heard the thrilling bleakness of the winds of Eternity, when they pine, and long, and whimper, and when they vociferate and blaspheme, and when they expostulate and intrigue and implore, and when they despair and die, which ear of man should never hear. For they mean to eat me up, I know, these Titanic darknesses: and soon like a whiff I shall pass away, and leave the world to them.' So till next morning I lay mumping, with shivers and cowerings: for the shocks of the storm pervaded the locked church to my very heart; and there were thunders that night, my God, like callings and laughs and banterings, exchanged between distant hill-tops in Hell.

‘Well, the next morning I went down the steep High Street, and found a young nun at the bottom whom I had left the previous evening with a number of girls in uniform opposite the Guildhall — half-way up the street. She must have been spun down, arm over arm, for the wind was westerly, and whereas I had left her completely dressed to her wimple and beads, she was now nearly stripped, and her little flock scattered. And branches of trees, and wrecked houses, and reeling clouds of dead leaves were everywhere that wild morning.

This town of Guildford appeared to be the junction of an extraordinary number of railway-lines, and before again setting out in the afternoon, when the wind had lulled, having got an A B C guide, and a railway-map, I decided upon my line, and upon a new engine, feeling pretty sure now of making London, only thirty miles away. I then set out, and about five o’clock was at Surbiton, near my aim; I kept on, expecting every few minutes to see the great city, till darkness fell, and still, at considerable risk, I went, as I thought, forward: but no London was there. I had, in fact, been on a loop-line, and at Surbiton gone wrong again; for the next evening I found myself at Wokingham, farther away than ever.

I slept on a rug in the passage of an inn called The Rose, for there was a wild, Russian-looking man, with projecting top-teeth, on a bed in the house, whose appearance I did not like, and it was late, and I too tired to walk further; and the next morning pretty early I set out again, and at 10 A.M. was at Reading.

The notion of navigating the land by precisely the same means as the sea, simple and natural as it was, had not at all occurred to me: but at the first accidental sight of a compass in a little shop-window near the river at Reading, my difficulties as to getting to any desired place in the world vanished once and for all: for a good chart or map, the compass, a pair of

compasses, and, in the case of longer distances, a quadrant, sextant or theodolite, with a piece of paper and pencil, were all that were necessary to turn an engine into a land-ship, one choosing the lines that ran nearest the direction of one's course, whenever they did not run precisely.

Thus provided, I ran out from Reading about seven in the evening, while there was still some light, having spent there some nine hours. This was the town where I first observed that shocking crush of humanity, which I afterwards met in every large town west of London. Here, I should say, the English were quite equal in number to the foreigners: and there were enough of both, God knows: for London must have poured many here. There were houses, in every room of which, and on the stairs, the dead actually overlay each other, and in the streets before them were points where only on flesh, or under carriages, was it possible to walk. I went into the great County Gaol, from which, as I had read, the prisoners had been released two weeks before-hand, and there I found the same pressed condition, cells occupied by ten or twelve, the galleries continuously rough-paved with faces, heads, and old-clothes-shops of robes; and in the parade-ground, against one wall, a mass of human stuff, like tough grey clay mixed with rags and trickling black gore, where a crush as of hydraulic power must have acted. At a corner between a gate and a wall near the biscuit-factory of this town I saw a boy, whom I believe to have been blind, standing jammed, at his wrist a chain-ring, and, at the end of the chain, a dog; from his hap-hazard posture I conjectured that he, and chain, and dog had been lifted from the street, and placed so, by the storm of the 7th of the month; and what made it very curious was that his right arm pointed a little outward just over the dog, so that, at the moment when I first sighted him, he seemed a drunken fellow setting his dog at me. In fact, all the dead I

found much mauled and stripped and huddled: and the earth seemed to be making an abortive effort to sweep her streets.

Well, some little distance from Reading I saw a big flower-seed farm, looking dead in some plots, and in others quite rank: and here again, fluttering quite near the engine, two little winged aurelians in the quiet evening air. I went on, passing a great number of crowded trains on the down-line, two of them in collision, and very broken up, and one exploded engine; even the fields and cuttings on either hand of the line had a rather populous look, as if people, when trains and vehicles failed, had set to trudging westward in caravans and streams. When I came to a long tunnel near Slough, I saw round the foot of the arch an extraordinary quantity of wooden *débris*, and as I went very slowly through, was alarmed by the continuous bumping of the train, which, I knew, was passing over bodies; at the other end were more *débris*; and I easily guessed that a company of desperate people had made the tunnel air-tight at the two arches, and provisioned themselves, with the hope to live there till the day of destiny was passed; whereupon their barricades must have been crashed through by some up-train and themselves crushed, or else, other crowds, mad to share their cave of refuge, had stormed the boardings. This latter, as I afterwards found, was a very usual event.

I should very soon have got to London now, but, as my bad luck would have it, I met a long up-train on the metals, with not one creature in any part of it. There was nothing to do but to tranship, with all my things, to its engine, which I found in good condition with plenty of coal and water, and to set it going, a hateful labour: I being already jet-black from hair to toes. However, by half-past ten I found myself stopped by another train only a quarter of a mile from Paddington, and walked the rest of the way among trains in which the standing dead still stood, propped by their neighbours,

and over metals where bodies were as ordinary and cheap as waves on the sea, or twigs in a forest. I believe that wild crowds had given chase on foot to moving trains, or fore-run them in the frenzied hope of inducing them to stop.

I came to the great shed of glass and girders which is the station, the night being perfectly soundless, moonless, starless, and the hour about eleven.

I found later that all the electric generating-stations, or all that I visited, were intact; that is to say, must have been shut down before the arrival of the doom; also that the gas-works had almost certainly been abandoned some time previously: so that this city of dreadful night, in which, at the moment when Silence choked it, not less than forty to sixty millions swarmed and droned, must have more resembled Tartarus and the foul shades of Hell than aught to which my fancy can liken it.

For, coming nearer the platforms, I saw that trains, in order to move at all, must have moved through a slough of bodies pushed from behind, and forming a packed homogeneous mass on the metals: and I knew that they *had* moved. Nor could *I* now move, unless I decided to wade: for flesh was everywhere, on the roofs of trains, cramming the interval between them, on the platforms, splashing the pillars like spray, piled on trucks and lorries, a carnal quagmire; and outside, it filled the space between a great host of vehicles, carpeting all that region of London. And all here that odour of blossoms, which nowhere yet, save on one vile ship, had failed, was now wholly overcome by another: and the thought was in my head, my God, that if the soul of man had sent up to Heaven the odour which his body gave to me, then it was not so strange that things were as they were.

I got out from the station, with ears, God knows, that still awaited the accustomed noising of this accursed town, habituated as I now was to all the

dumb and absent void of Soundlessness; and I was overwhelmed in a new awe, and lost in a wilder woesomeness, when, instead of lights and business, I saw the long street which I knew brood darker than Babylons long desolate, and in place of its ancient noising, heard, my God, a shocking silence, rising higher than I had ever heard it, and blending with the silence of the inane, eternal stars in heaven.

I could not get into any vehicle for some time, for all thereabouts was practically a mere block; but near the Park, which I attained by stooping among wheels, and selecting my foul steps, I overhauled a Daimler car, found in it two cylinders of petrol, lit the ignition-lamp, removed with averted abhorrence three bodies, mounted, and broke that populous stillness. And through streets nowhere empty of bodies I went urging eastward my jolting, and spattered, and humming way.

That I should have persisted, with so much pains, to come to this unbounded catacomb, seems now singular to me: for by that time I could not have been sufficiently daft to expect to find another being like myself on the earth, though I cherished, I remember, the irrational hope of yet somewhere finding dog, or cat, or horse, to be with me, and would anon think bitterly of Reinhardt, my Arctic dog, which my own hand had shot. But, in reality, a morbid curiosity must have been within me all the time to read the real truth of what had happened, so far as it was known, or guessed, and to gloat upon all that drama, and cup of trembling, and pouring out of the vials of the wrath of God, which must have preceded the actual advent of the end of Time. This inquisitiveness had, at every town which I reached, made the search for newspapers uppermost in my mind; but, by bad luck, I had found only four, all of them ante-dated to the one which I had read at Dover, though their dates gave me some idea of the period when printing

must have ceased, viz. soon after the 17th July — about three months subsequent to my arrival at the Pole — for none I found later than this date; and these contained nothing scientific, but only orisons and despairings. On arriving, therefore, at London, I made straight for the office of the *Times*, only stopping at a chemist's in Oxford Street for a bottle of antiseptic to hold near my nose, though, having once left the neighbourhood of Paddington, I had hardly much need of this.

I made my way to the square where the paper was printed, to find that, even there, the ground was closely strewn with calpac and pugaree, black abayah and fringed praying-shawl, hob-nail and sandal, figured lungi and striped silk, all very muddled and mauled. Through the dark square to the twice-dark building I passed, and found open the door of an advertisement-office; but on striking a match, saw that it had been lighted by electricity, and had therefore to retrace my stumbling steps, till I came to a shop of lamps in a near alley, walking meantime with timid cares that I might hurt no one — for in this enclosed neighbourhood I began to feel strange tremors, and kept striking matches, which, so still was the black air, hardly flickered.

When I returned to the building with a little lighted lamp, I at once saw a file on a table, and since there were a number of dead there, and I wished to be alone, I took the heavy mass of paper between my left arm and side, and the lamp in my right hand; passed then behind a counter; and then, to the right, up a stair which led me into a very great building and complexity of wooden steps and corridors, where I went peering, the lamp visibly trembling in my hand, for here also were the dead. Finally, I entered a good-sized carpeted room with a baize-covered table in the middle, and large smooth chairs, and on the table many manuscripts impregnated with purple dust, and around were books in shelves. This room had been locked upon a

single man, a tall man in a frock-coat, with a pointed grey beard, who at the last moment had decided to fly from it, for he lay at the threshold, apparently fallen dead the moment he opened the door. Him, by drawing his feet aside, I removed, locked the door upon myself, sat at the table before the dusty file, and, with the little lamp near, began to search.

I searched and read till far into the morning. But God knows, He alone....

I had not properly filled the little reservoir with oil, and at about three in the fore-day, it began to burn sullenly lower, letting sparks, and turning the glass grey: and in my deepest chilly heart was the question: 'Suppose the lamp goes out before the daylight....'

I knew the Pole, and cold, I knew them well: but to be frozen by panic, my God! I read, I say, I searched, I would not stop: but I read that night racked by terrors such as have never yet entered into the heart of man to conceive. My flesh moved and crawled like a lake which, here and there, the breeze ruffles. Sometimes for two, three, four minutes, the profound interest of what I read would fix my mind, and then I would peruse an entire column, or two, without consciousness of the meaning of one single word, my brain all drawn away to the innumerable host of the wan dead that camped about me, pierced with horror lest they should start, and stand, and accuse me: for the grave and the worm was the world; and in the air a sickening stirring of cerements and shrouds; and the taste of the pale and insubstantial grey of ghosts seemed to infect my throat, and faint odours of the loathsome tomb my nostrils, and the toll of deep-toned passing-bells my ears; finally the lamp smouldered very low, and my charnel fancy teemed with the screwing-down of coffins, lych-gates and sextons, and the grating of ropes that lower down the dead, and the first sound of the earth upon the lid of that strait and gloomy home of the mortal; that lethal look of cold dead fingers I seemed to see before me, the insipidness of dead tongues, the

pout of the drowned, and the vapid froths that ridge their lips, till my flesh was moist as with the stale washing-waters of morgues and mortuaries, and with such sweats as corpses sweat, and the mawkish tear that lies on dead men's cheeks; for what is one poor insignificant man in his flesh against a whole world of the disembodied, he alone with them, and nowhere, nowhere another of his kind, to whom to appeal against them? I read, and I searched: but God, God knows ... If a leaf of the paper, which I slowly, warily, stealingly turned, made but one faintest rustle, how did that *reveille* boom in echoes through the vacant and haunted chambers of my poor aching heart, my God! and there was a cough in my throat which for a cruelly long time I would not cough, till it burst in horrid clamour from my lips, sending crinkles of cold through my inmost blood. For with the words which I read were all mixed up visions of crawling hearses, wails, and lugubrious crape, and piercing shrieks of madness in strange earthy vaults, and all the mournfulness of the black Vale of Death, and the tragedy of corruption. Twice during the ghostly hours of that night the absolute and undeniable certainty that some presence — some most gashly silent being — stood at my right elbow, so thrilled me, that I leapt to my feet to confront it with clenched fists, and hairs that bristled stiff in horror and frenzy. After that second time I must have fainted; for when it was broad day, I found my dropped head over the file of papers, supported on my arms. And I resolved then never again after sunset to remain in any house: for that night was enough to kill a horse, my good God; and that this is a haunted planet I know.

What I read in the *Times* was not very definite, for how could it be? but in the main it confirmed inferences which I had myself drawn, and fairly satisfied my mind.

There had been a battle royal in the paper between my old collaborator Professor Stanistreet and Dr. Martin Rogers, and never could I have conceived such an indecorous piece of business, men like them calling one another ‘tyro,’ ‘dreamer,’ and in one place ‘block-head.’ Stanistreet denied that the perfumed odour of almonds attributed to the advancing cloud could be due to anything but the excited fancy of the reporting fugitives, because, said he, it was unknown that either Cn, HCn, or K_4FeCn_6 had been given out by volcanoes, and the destructiveness to life of the travelling cloud could only be owing to CO and CO₂. To this Rogers, in an article characterised by extraordinary heat, replied that he could not understand how even a ‘tyro’(!) in chemical and geological phenomena would venture to rush into print with the statement that HCn had not commonly been given out by volcanoes: that it *had* been, he said, was perfectly certain; though whether it had been or not could not affect the decision of a reasoning mind as to whether it was being: for that cyanogen, as a matter of fact, was not rare in nature, though not directly occurring, being one of the products of the common distillation of pit-coal, and found in roots, peaches, almonds, and many tropical flora; also that it had been actually pointed out as probable by more than one thinker that some salt or salts of Cn, the potassic, or the potassic ferrocyanide, or both, must exist in considerable stores in the earth at volcanic depths. In reply to this, Stanistreet in a two-column article used the word ‘dreamer,’ and Rogers, when Berlin had been already silenced, finally replied with his amazing ‘block-head.’ But, in my opinion, by far the most learned and lucid of the scientific dicta was from the rather unexpected source of Sloggett, of the Dublin Science and Art Department: he, without fuss, accepted the statements of the fugitive eye-witnesses, down to the assertion that the cloud, as it rolled travelling, seemed mixed from its base to the clouds with languid tongues of purple

flame, rose-coloured at their edges. This, Sloggett explained, was the characteristic flame of both cyanogen and hydrocyanic acid vapour, which, being inflammable, may have become locally ignited in the passage over cities, and only burned in that limited and languid way on account of the ponderous volumes of carbonic anhydride with which they must, of course, be mixed: the dark empurpled colour was due to the presence of large quantities of the scoriae of the trappean rocks: basalts, green-stone, trachytes, and the various porphyries. This article was most remarkable for its clear divination, because written so early — not long, in fact, after the cessation of telegraphic communication with Australia and China; and at a date so early Sloggett stated that the character of the devastation not only proved an eruption — another, but far greater Krakatoa — probably in some South Sea region, but indicated that its most active product must be, not CO, but potassic ferrocyanide (K_4FeCn_6), which, undergoing distillation with the products of sulphur in the heat of eruption, produced hydrocyanic acid (HCn); and this volatile acid, he said, remaining in a vaporous state in all climates above a temperature of $26.5^{\circ} C.$, might involve the entire earth, if the eruption proved sufficiently powerful, travelling chiefly in a direction contrary to the earth's west-to-east motion, the only regions which would certainly be exempt being the colder regions of the Arctic circles, where the vapour of the acid would assume the liquid state, and fall as rain. He did not anticipate that vegetation would be permanently affected, unless the eruption were of inconceivable duration and activity, for though the poisonous quality of hydrocyanic acid consisted in its sudden and complete arrest of oxidation, vegetation had two sources of life — the soil as well as the air; with this exception, all life, down to the lowest evolutionary forms, would disappear (here was the one point in which he was somewhat at fault), until the earth reproduced them. For the rest, he fixed the rate of the

on-coming cloud at from 100 to 105 miles a day; and the date of eruption, either the 14th, 15th, or 16th of April — which was either one, two, or three days after the arrival of the *Boreal* party at the Pole; and he concluded by saying that, if the facts were as he had stated them, then he could suggest no hiding-place for the race of man, unless such places as mines and tunnels could be made air-tight; nor could even they be of use to any considerable number, except in the event of the poisonous state of the air being of very short duration.

I had thought of mines before: but in a very languid way, till this article, and other things that I read, as it were struck my brain a slap with the notion. For ‘there,’ I said, ‘if anywhere, shall I find a man....’

I went out from that building that morning feeling like a man bowed down with age, for the depths of unutterable horror into which I had had glimpses during that one night made me very feeble, and my steps tottered, and my brain reeled.

I got out into Farringdon Street, and at the near Circus, where four streets meet, had under my furthest range of vision nothing but four fields of bodies, bodies, clad in a rag-shop of every faded colour, or half-clad, or not clad at all, actually, in many cases, over-lying one another, as I had seen at Reading, but here with a markedly more skeleton appearance: for I saw the swollen-looking shoulders, sharp hips, hollow abdomens, and stiff bony limbs of people dead from famine, the whole having the grotesque air of some *macabre* battle-field of fallen marionettes. Mixed with these was an extraordinary number of vehicles of all sorts, so that I saw that driving among them would be impracticable, whereas the street which I had taken during the night was fairly clear. I thought a minute what I should do: then

went by a parallel back-street, and came out to a shop in the Strand, where I hoped to find all the information which I needed about the excavations of the country. The shutters were up, and I did not wish to make any noise among these people, though the morning was bright, it being about ten o'clock, and it was easy to effect entrance, for I saw a crow-bar in a big covered furniture-van near. I, therefore, went northward, till I came to the British Museum, the cataloguing-system of which I knew well, and passed in. There was no one at the library-door to bid me stop, and in the great round reading-room not a soul, except one old man with a bag of goître hung at his neck, and spectacles, he lying up a book-ladder near the shelves, a 'reader' to the last. I got to the printed catalogues, and for an hour was upstairs among the dim sacred galleries of this still place, and at the sight of certain Greek and Coptic papyri, charters, seals, had such a dream of this ancient earth, my good God, as even an angel's pen could not half express on paper. Afterwards, I went away loaded with a good hundred-weight of Ordnance-maps, which I had stuffed into a bag found in the cloak-room, with three topographical books; I then, at an instrument-maker's in Holborn, got a sextant and theodolite, and at a grocer's near the river put into a sack-bag provisions to last me a week or two; at Blackfriars Bridge wharf-station I found a little sharp white steamer of a few tons, which happily was driven by liquid air, so that I had no troublesome fire to light: and by noon I was cutting my solitary way up the Thames, which flowed as before the ancient Britons were born, and saw it, and built mud-huts there amid the primæval forest; and afterwards the Romans came, and saw it, and called it Tamesis, or Thamesis.

That night, as I lay asleep on the cabin-cushions of my little boat under the lee of an island at Richmond, I had a clear dream, in which something,

or someone, came to me, and asked me a question: for it said: 'Why do you go seeking another man? — that you may fall upon him, and kiss him? or that you may fall upon him, and murder him?' And I answered sullenly in my dream: 'I would not murder him. I do not wish to murder anyone.'

What was essential to me was to know, with certainty, whether I was really alone: for some instinct began to whisper me: 'Find that out: be sure, be sure: for without the assurance you can never be — yourself.'

I passed into the great Midland Canal, and went northward, leisurely advancing, for I was in no hurry. The weather remained very warm, and great part of the country was still dressed in autumn leaves. I have written, I think, of the terrific character of the tempests witnessed in England since my return: well, the calms were just as intense and novel. This observation was forced upon me: and I could not but be surprised. There seemed no middle course now: if there was a wind, it was a storm: if there was not a storm, no leaf stirred, not a roughening zephyr ran the water. I was reminded of maniacs that laugh now, and rave now — but never smile, and never sigh.

On the fourth afternoon I passed by Leicester, and the next morning left my pleasant boat, carrying maps and compass, and at a small station took engine, bound for Yorkshire, where I loitered and idled away two foolish months, sometimes travelling by steam-engine, sometimes by automobile, sometimes by bicycle, and sometimes on foot, till the autumn was quite over.

There were two houses in London to which especially I had thought to go: one in Harley Street, and one in Hanover Square: but when it came to the point, I would not; and there was a little embowered home in Yorkshire,

where I was born, to which I thought to go: but I would not, confining myself for many days to the eastern half of the county.

One morning, while passing on foot along the coast-wall from Bridlington to Flambro', on turning my eyes from the sea, I was confronted by a thing which for a moment or two struck me with the most profound astonishment. I had come to a mansion, surrounded by trees, three hundred yards from the cliffs: and there, on a path at the bottom of the domain, right before me, was a board marked: 'Trespassers will be Prosecuted.' At once a mad desire — the first which I had had — to laugh, to roar with laughter, to send wild echoes of merriment clapping among the chalk gullies, and abroad on the morning air, seized upon me: but I kept it under, though I could not help smiling at this poor man, with his little delusion that a part of the earth was his.

Here the cliffs are, I should say, seventy feet high, broken by frequent slips in the upper stratum of clay, and, as I proceeded, climbing always, I encountered some rather formidable gullies in the chalk, down and then up which I had to scramble, till I came to a great mound or barrier, stretching right across the great promontory, and backed by a natural ravine, this, no doubt, having been raised as a rampart by some of those old invading pirate-peoples, who had their hot life-scuffle, and are done now, like the rest. Going on, I came to a bay in the cliff, with a great number of boats lodged on the slopes, some quite high, though the declivities are steep; toward the inner slopes is a lime-kiln which I explored, but found no one there. When I came out on the other side, I saw the village, with an old tower at one end, on a bare stretch of land; and thence, after an hour's rest in the kitchen of a little inn, went out to the coast-guard station, and the lighthouse.

Looking across the sea eastward, the light-keepers here must have seen that thick cloud of convolving browns and purples, perhaps mixed with small tongues of fire, slowly walking the water, its roof in the clouds, upon them: for this headland is in precisely the same longitude as London; and, reckoning from the hour when, as recorded in the *Times*, the cloud was seen from Dover over Calais, London and Flambro' must have been overtaken soon after three o'clock on the Sunday afternoon, the 25th July. At sight in open daylight of a doom so gloomy — prophesied, but perhaps hoped against to the last, and now come — the light-keepers must have fled howling, supposing them to have so long remained faithful to duty: for here was no one, and in the village very few. In this lighthouse, which is a circular white tower, eighty feet high, on the edge of the cliff, is a book for visitors to sign their names: and I will write something down here in black and white: for the secret is between God only, and me: After reading a few of the names, I took my pencil, and I wrote my name there.

The reef before the Head stretches out a quarter of a mile, looking bold in the dead low-water that then was, and showing to what extent the sea has pushed back this coast, three wrecks impaled on them, and a big steamer quite near, waiting for the first movements of the already strewn sea to perish. All along the cliff-wall to the bluff crowned by Scarborough Castle northward, and to the low vanishing coast of Holderness southward, appeared those cracks and caves which had brought me here, though there seemed no attempts at barricades; however, I got down a rough slope on the south side to a rude wild beach, strewn with wave-worn masses of chalk: and never did I feel so paltry and short a thing as there, with far-outstretched bays of crags about me, their bluffs encrusted at the base with stale old leprosies of shells and barnacles, and crass algae-beards, and,

higher up, the white cliff all stained and weather-spoiled, the rock in some parts looking quite chalky, and elsewhere gleaming hard and dull like dirty marbles, while in the huge withdrawals of the coast yawn darksome gullies and caverns. Here, in that morning's walk, I saw three little hermit-crabs, a limpet, and two ninnycocks in a pool of weeds under a bearded rock. What astonished me here, and, indeed, above, and everywhere, in London even, and other towns, was the incredible number of birds that strewed the ground, at some points resembling a real rain, birds of nearly every sort, including tropic specimens: so that I had to conclude that they, too, had fled before the cloud from country to country, till conquered by weariness and grief, and then by death.

By climbing over rocks thick with periwinkles, and splashing through great sloppy stretches of crinkled sea-weed, which give a raw stench of brine, I entered the first of the gullies: a narrow, long, winding one, with sides polished by the sea-wash, and the floor rising inwards. In the dark interior I struck matches, able still to hear from outside the ponderous spasmodic rush and jostle of the sea between the crags of the reef, but now quite faintly. Here, I knew, I could meet only dead men, but urged by some curiosity, I searched to the end, wading in the middle through a three-foot depth of sea-weed twine: but there was no one; and only belemnites and fossils in the chalk. I searched several to the south of the headland, and then went northward past it toward another opening and place of perched boats, called in the map North Landing: where, even now, a distinct smell of fish, left by the old crabbers and herring-fishers, was perceptible. A number of coves and bays opened as I proceeded; a faded green turf comes down in curves at some parts on the cliff-brows, like wings of a young soldier's hair, parted in the middle, and plastered on his brow; isolated chalk-masses are numerous, obelisks, top-heavy columns, bastions; at one point no less than

eight headlands stretched to the end of the world before me, each pierced by its arch, Norman or Gothic, in whole or in half; and here again caves, in one of which I found a carpet-bag stuffed with a wet pulp like bread, and, stuck to the rock, a Turkish tarboosh; also, under a limestone quarry, five dead asses: but no man. The east coast had evidently been shunned. Finally, in the afternoon I reached Filey, very tired, and there slept.

I went onward by train-engine all along the coast to a region of iron-ore, alum, and jet-excavations round Whitby and Middlesborough. By by-ways near the small place of Goldsborough I got down to the shore at Kettleness, and reached the middle of a bay in which is a cave called the Hob-Hole, with excavations all around, none of great depth, made by jet-diggers and quarrymen. In the cave lay a small herd of cattle, though for what purpose put there I cannot guess; and in the jet-excavations I found nothing. A little further south is the chief alum-region, as at Sandsend, but as soon as I saw a works, and the great gap in the ground like a crater, where the lias is quarried, containing only heaps of alum-shale, brushwood-stacks, and piles of cement-nodules extracted from the lias, I concluded that here could have been found no hiding; nor did I purposely visit the others, though I saw two later. From round Whitby, and those rough moors, I went on to Darlington, not far now from my home: but I would not continue that way, and after two days' indecisive lounging, started for Richmond and the lead mines about Arkengarth Dale, near Reeth. Here begins a region of mountain, various with glens, fells, screes, scars, swards, becks, passes, villages, river-heads, and dales. Some of the faces which I saw in it almost seemed to speak to me in a broad dialect which I knew. But they were not numerous in proportion: for all this country-side must have had its population multiplied by at least some hundreds; and the villages had rather the air of Danube, Levant, or

Spanish villages. In one, named Marrick, I saw that the street had become the scene either of a great battle or a great massacre; and soon I was everywhere coming upon men and women, English and foreign, dead from violence: cracked heads, wounds, unhung jaws, broken limbs, and so on. Instead of going direct to the mines from Reeth, that waywardness which now rules my mind, as squalls an abandoned boat, took me somewhat further south-west to the village of Thwaite, which I actually could not enter, so occupied with dead was every spot on which the eye rested a hundred yards about it. Not far from here I turned up, on foot now, a very steep, stony road to the right, which leads over the Buttertubs Pass into Wensleydale, the day being very warm and bright, with large clouds that looked like lakes of molten silver giving off grey fumes in their centre, casting moody shadows over the swardy dale, which below Thwaite expands, showing Muker two miles off, the largest village of Upper Swaledale. Soon, climbing, I could look down upon miles of Swaledale and the hills beyond, a rustic panorama of glens and grass, river and cloudshadow, and there was something of lightness in my step that fair day, for I had left all my maps and things, except one, at Reeth, to which I meant to return, and the earth, which is very good, was — mine. The ascent was rough, and also long: but if I paused and looked behind — I saw, I saw. Man's notion of a Heaven, a Paradise, reserved for the spirits of the good, clearly arose from impressions which the earth made upon his mind: for no Paradise can be fairer than this; just as his notion of a Hell arose from the squalid mess into which his own foolish habits of thought and action turned this Paradise. At least, so it struck me then: and, thinking it, there was a hiss in my breath, as I went up into what more and more acquired the character of a mountain pass, with points of almost Alpine savagery: for after I had skirted the edge of a deep glen on the left, the slopes changed in character,

heather was on the mountain-sides, a fretting beck sent up its noise, then screes, and scars, and a considerable waterfall, and a landscape of crags; and lastly a broad and rather desolate summit, palpably nearer the clouds.

Two days later I was at the mines: and here I first saw that wide-spread scene of horror with which I have since become familiar. The story of six out of ten of them all is the same, and short: selfish 'owners,' an ousted world, an easy bombardment, and the destruction of all concerned, before the arrival of the cloud in many cases. About some of the Durham pit-mouths I have been given the impression that the human race lay collected there; and that the notion of hiding himself in a mine must have occurred to every man alive, and sent him thither.

In these lead mines, as in most vein-mining, there are more shafts than in collieries, and hardly any attempt at artificial ventilation, except at rises, winzes and cul-de-sacs. I found accordingly that, though their depth does not exceed three hundred feet, suffocation must often have anticipated the other dreaded death. In nearly every shaft, both up-take and down-take, was a ladder, either of the mine, or of the fugitives, and I was able to descend without difficulty, having dressed myself in a house at the village in a check flannel shirt, a pair of two-buttoned trousers with circles of leather at the knees, thick boots, and a miner's hat, having a leather socket attached to it, into which fitted a straight handle from a cylindrical candlestick; with this light, and also a Davy-lamp, which I carried about with me for a good many months, I lived for the most part in the deeps of the earth, searching for the treasure of a life, to find everywhere, in English duckies and guggs, Pomeranian women in gaudy stiff cloaks, the Walachian, the Mameluk, the Khirgiz, the Bonze, the Imaum, and almost every type of man.

One most brilliant Autumn day I walked by the village market-cross at Barnard, come at last, but with a tenderness in my heart, and a reluctance, to where I was born; for I said I would go and see my sister Ada, and — the other old one. I leaned and loitered a long time on the bridge, gazing up to the craggy height, which is heavy with waving wood, and crowned by the Castle-tower, the Tees sweeping round the mountain-base, smooth here and sunlit, but a mile down, where I wished to go, but would not, brawling bedraggled and lacerated, like a sweet strumpet, all shallow among rocks under reaches of shadow — the shadow of Rokeby Woods. I climbed very leisurely up the hill-side, having in my hand a bag with a meal, and up the stair in the wall to the top I went, where there is no parapet, but a massiveness of wall that precludes danger; and here in my miner's attire I sat three hours, brooding sleepily upon the scene of lush umbrageous old wood that marks the long way the river takes, from Marwood Chase up above, and where the rapid Balder bickers in, down to bowery Rokeby, touched now with autumn; the thickness of trees lessening away toward the uplands, where there are far etherealized stretches of fields within hedgerows, and in the sunny mirage of the farthest azure remoteness hints of lonesome moorland. It was not till near three that I went down along the river, then, near Rokeby, traversing the old meadow, and ascending the old hill: and there, as of old, was the little black square with yellow letters on the gate-wall:

HUNT HILL HOUSE.

No part, no house, I believe, of this country-side was empty of strange corpses: and they were in Hunt Hill, too. I saw three in the weedy plot to the right of the garden-path, where once the hawthorn and lilac tree had grown from well-rollered grass, and in the little bush-wilderness to the left, which was always a wilderness, one more: and in the breakfast-room, to the right

of the hall, three; and in the new wooden clinker-built attachment opening upon the breakfast-room, two, half under the billiard-table; and in her room overlooking the porch on the first floor, the long thin form of my mother on her bed, with crushed-in left temple, and at the foot of the bed, face-downward on the floor, black-haired Ada in a night-dress.

Of all the men and women who died, they two alone had burying. For I dugged a hole with the stable-spade under the front lilac; and I wound them in the sheets, foot and form and head; and, not without throes and qualms, I bore and buried them there.

Some time passed after this before the long, multitudinous, and perplexing task of visiting the mine-regions again claimed me. I found myself at a place called Ingleborough, which is a big table-mountain, with a top of fifteen to twenty acres, from which the sea is visible across Lancashire to the west; and in the sides of this strange hill are a number of caves which I searched during three days, sleeping in a garden-shed at a very rural and flower-embowered village, for every room in it was thronged, a place marked Clapham in the chart, in Clapdale, which latter is a dale penetrating the slopes of the mountain: and there I found by far the greatest of the caves which I saw, having ascended a path from the village to a hollow between two grass slopes, where there is a beck, and so entering an arch to the left, screened by trees, into the limestone cliff. The passage narrows pretty rapidly inwards, and I had not proceeded two yards before I saw the clear traces of a great battle here. All this region had, in fact, been invaded, for the cave must have been famous, though I did not remember it myself, and for some miles round the dead were pretty frequent, making the immediate approach to the cave a matter for care, if the foot was to be saved from pollution. It is clear that there had been an iron gate across the

entrance, that within this a wall had been built across, shutting in I do not know how many, perhaps one or two, perhaps hundreds: and both gate and wall had been stormed and broken down, for there still were the sledges and rocks which, without doubt, had done it. I had a lamp, and at my forehead the lighted candle, and I went on quickly, seeing it useless now to choose my steps where there was no choice, through a passage incrustated, roof and sides, with a scabrous petrified lichen, the roof low for some ninety yards, covered with down-looking cones, like an inverted forest of children's toy-trees. I then came to a round hole, apparently artificial, opening through a curtain of stalagmitic formation into a great cavern beyond, which was quite animated and festal with flashes, sparkles, and diamond-lustres, hung in their myriads upon a movement of the eye, these being produced by large numbers of snowy wet stalagmites, very large and high, down the centre of which ran a continuous long lane of clothes and hats and faces; with hasty reluctant feet I somehow passed over them, the cave all the time widening, thousands of stalactites appearing on the roof of every size, from virgin's breast to giant's club, and now everywhere the wet drip, drip, as it were a populous busy bazaar of perspiring brows and hurrying feet, in which the only business is to drip. Where stalactite meets stalagmite there are pillars: where stalactite meets stalactite in fissures long or short there are elegances, flimsy draperies, delicate fantasies; there were also pools of water in which hung heads and feet, and there were vacant spots at outlying spaces, where the arched roof, which continually heightened itself, was reflected in the chill gleam of the floor. Suddenly, the roof came down, the floor went up, and they seemed to meet before me; but looking, I found a low opening, through which, drawing myself on the belly over slime for some yards in repulsive proximity to dead personalities, I came out upon a floor of sand and pebbles under a long dry tunnel, arched and narrow, grim and dull,

without stalactites, suggestive of monks, and catacomb-vaults, and the route to the grave; and here the dead were much fewer, proving either that the general mob had not had time to penetrate so far inward, or else that those within, if they were numerous, had gone out to defend, or to harken to, the storm of their citadel. This passage led me into an open space, the grandest of all, loftily vaulted, full of genie riches and buried treasures of light, the million-fold *ensemble* of lustres dancing schottische with the eye, as it moved or was still: this place, I should guess, being quite half a mile from the entrance. My prying lantern showed me here only nineteen dead, men of various nations, and at the far end two holes in the floor, large enough to admit the body, through which from below came up a sound of falling water. Both of these holes, I could see, had been filled with cement concrete — wisely, I fancy, for a current of air from somewhere seemed to be now passing through them: and this would have resulted in the death of the hidiers. Both, however, of the fillings had been broken through, one partially, the other wholly, by the ignorant, I presume, who thought to hide in a secret place yet beyond, where they may have believed, on seeing the artificial work, that others were. I had my ear a long time at one of these openings, listening to that mysterious chant down below in a darkness most murky and dismal; and afterwards, spurred by the stubborn will which I had to be thorough, I went back, took a number of outer robes from the bodies, tied them well together, then one end round the nearest pillar, and having put my mouth to the hole, calling: ‘*Anyone? Anyone?*’ let myself down by the rope of garments, the candle at my head: I had not, however, descended far into those mournful shades, when my right foot plunged into water: and instantly the feeling of terror pierced me that all the evil things in the universe were at my leg to drag me down to Hell: and I was up quicker than

I went down: nor did my flight cease till, with a sigh of deliverance, I found myself in open air.

After this, seeing that the autumn warmth was passing away, I set myself with more system to my task, and within the next six months worked with steadfast will, and strenuous assiduity, seeking, not indeed for a man in a mine, but for some evidence of the possibility that a man might be alive, visiting in that time Northumberland and Durham, Fife and Kinross, South Wales and Monmouthshire, Cornwall and the Midlands, the lead mines of Derbyshire, of Allandale and other parts of Northumberland, of Alston Moor and other parts of Cumberland, of Arkendale and other parts of Yorkshire, of the western part of Durham, of Salop, of Cornwall, of the Mendip Hills of Somersetshire, of Flint, Cardigan, and Montgomery, of Lanark and Argyll, of the Isle of Man, of Waterford and Down; I have gone down the 360-ft. Grand Pipe iron ladder of the abandoned graphite-mine at Barrowdale in Cumberland, half-way up a mountain 2,000 feet high; and visited where cobalt and manganese ore is mined in pockets at the Foel Hiraeddog mine near Rhyl in Flintshire, and the lead and copper Newton Stewart workings in Galloway; the Bristol coal-fields, and mines of South Staffordshire, where, as in Somerset, Gloucester, and Shropshire, the veins are thin, and the mining-system is the 'long-wall,' whereas in the North, and Wales, the system is the 'pillar-and stall'; I have visited the open workings for iron ores of Northamptonshire, and the underground stone-quarries, and the underground slate-quarries, with their alternate pillars and chambers, in the Festiniog district of North Wales; also the rock-salt workings; the tin, copper and cobalt workings of Cornwall; and where the minerals were brought to the surface on the backs of men, and where they were brought by adit-levels provided with rail-roads, and where, as in old Cornish mines,

there are two ladders in the shaft, moved up and down alternately, see-saw, and by skipping from one to the other at right moments you ascended or descended, and where the drawing-up is by a gin or horse-whinn, with vertical drum; the Tisbury and Chilmark quarries in Wiltshire, the Spinkwell and Cliffwood quarries in Yorkshire; and every tunnel, and every recorded hole: for something urged within me, saying: ‘You must be sure first, or you can never be — yourself.’

At the Farnbrook Coal-field, in the Red Colt Pit, my inexperience nearly ended my life: for though I had a minute theoretical knowledge of all British workings, I was, in my practical relation to them, like a man who has learnt seamanship on shore. At this place the dead were accumulated, I think beyond precedent, the dark plain around for at least three miles being as strewn as a reaped field with stacks, and, near the bank, much more strewn than stack-fields, filling the only house within sight of the pit-mouth — the small place provided for the company's officials — and even lying over the great mountain-heap of wark, composed of the shale and *débris* of the working. Here I arrived on the morning of the 15th December, to find that, unlike the others, there was here no rope-ladder or other contrivance fixed by the fugitives in the ventilating-shaft, which, usually, is not very deep, being also the pumping-shaft, containing a plug-rod at one end of the beam-engine which works the pumps; but looking down the shaft, I discerned a vague mass of clothes, and afterwards a thing that could only be a rope-ladder, which a batch of the fugitives, by hanging to it their united weight, must have dragged down upon themselves, to prevent the descent of yet others. My only way of going down, therefore, was by the pit-mouth, and as this was an important place, after some hesitation I decided, very rashly. First I provided for my coming up again by getting a great coil of half-inch rope, which I found in the bailiff's office, probably 130 fathoms long, rope at most mines being so plentiful, that it almost seemed as if each fugitive had provided himself in that way. This length of rope I threw over the beam of the beam-engine in the bite where it sustains the rod, and paid one end down the shaft, till both were at the bottom: in this way I could come up, by tying one rope-end to the rope-ladder, hoisting it, fastening the other end below, and climbing the ladder; and I then set to work to light the pit-mouth engine-fire to effect my descent. This done, I started the engine,

and brought up the cage from the bottom, the 300 yards of wire-rope winding with a quaint deliberateness round the drum, reminding me of a camel's nonchalant leisurely obedience. When I saw the four meeting chains of the cage-roof emerge, the pointed roof, and two-sided frame, I stopped the ascent, and next attached to the knock-off gear a long piece of twine which I had provided; carried the other end to the cage, in which I had five companions; lit my hat-candle, which was my test for choke-damp, and the Davy; and without the least reflection, pulled the string. That hole was 900 feet deep. First the cage gave a little up-leap, and then began to descend — quite normally, I thought, though the candle at once went out — nor had I the least fear; a strong current of air, indeed, blew up the shaft: but that happens in shafts. *This* current, however, soon became too vehemently boisterous for anything: I saw the lamp-light struggle, the dead cheeks quiver, I heard the cage-shoes go singing down the wire-rope guides, and quicker we went, and quicker, that facile descent of Avernus, slipping lightly, then raging, with sparks at the shoes and guides, and a hurricane in my ears and eyes and mouth. When we bumped upon the 'dogs' at the bottom, I was tossed a foot upwards with the stern-faced others, and then lay among them in the eight-foot space without consciousness.

It was only when I sat, an hour later, disgustedly reflecting on this incident, that I remembered that there was always some 'hand-working' of the engine during the cage-descents, an engineman reversing the action by a handle at every stroke of the piston, to prevent bumping. However, the only permanent injury was to the lamp: and I found many others inside.

I got out into the coal-hole, a large black hall 70 feet square by 15 high, the floor paved with iron sheets; there were some little holes round the wall, dug for some purpose which I never could discover, some waggons full of coal and shale standing about, and all among the waggons, and on them,

and under them, bodies, clothes. I got a new lamp, pouring in my own oil, and went down a long steep ducky-road, very rough, with numerous rollers, over which ran a rope to the pit-mouth for drawing up the waggons; and in the sides here, at regular intervals, man-holes, within which to rescue one's self from down-tearing waggons; and within these man-holes, here and there, a dead, and in others every sort of food, and at one place on the right a high dead heap, and the air here hot at 64 or 65 degrees, and getting hotter with the descent.

The ducky led me down into a standing — a space with a turn-table — of unusual size, which I made my base of operations for exploring. Here was a very considerable number of punt-shaped putts on carriages, and also waggons, such as took the new-mined coal from putt to pit-mouth; and raying out from this open standing, several avenues, some ascending as guggs, some descending as dipples, and the dead here all arranged in groups, the heads of this group pointing up this gugg, of that group toward that twin-way, of that other down that dipple, and the central space, where weighing was done, almost empty: and the darksome silence of this deep place, with all these multitudes, I found extremely gravitating and hypnotic, drawing me, too, into their great Passion of Silence in which they lay, all, all, so fixed and veteran; and at one time I fell a-staring, nearer perhaps to death and the empty Gulf than I knew; but I said I would be strong, and not sink into their habit of stillness, but let them keep to their own way, and follow their own fashion, and I would keep to my own way, and follow my own fashion, nor yield to them, though I was but one against many; and I roused myself with a shudder; and setting to work, caught hold of the drum-chain of a long gugg, and planting my feet in the chogg-holes in which rested the wheels of the putt-carriages that used to come roaring down the gugg, I got up, stooping under a roof only three feet high, till I came, near

the end of the ascent, upon the scene of another battle: for in this gugg about fifteen of the mine-hands had clubbed to wall themselves in, and had done it, and I saw them lie there all by themselves through the broken cement, with their bare feet, trousers, naked bodies all black, visage all fierce and wild, the grime still streaked with sweat-furrows, the candle in their rimless hats, and, outside, their own 'getting' mattocks and boring-irons to besiege them. From the bottom of this gugg I went along a very undulating twin-way, into which, every thirty yards or so, opened one of those steep putt-ways which they called topples, the twin-ways having plates of about 2-1/2 ft. gauge for the putts from the headings, or workings, above to come down upon, full of coal and shale: and all about here, in twin-way and topples, were ends and corners, and not one had been left without its walling-in, and only one was then intact, some, I fancied, having been broken open by their own builders at the spur of suffocation, or hunger; and the one intact I broke into with a mattock — it was only a thin cake of plaster, but air-tight — and in a space not seven feet long behind it I found the very ill-smelling corpse of a carting-boy, with guss and tugger at his feet, and the pad which protected his head in pushing the putts, and a great heap of loaves, sardines, and bottled beer against the walls, and five or six mice that suddenly pitched screaming through the opening which I made, greatly startling me, there being of dead mice an extraordinary number in all this mine-region. I went back to the standing, and at one point in the ground, where there was a windlass and chain, lowered myself down a 'cut' — a small pit sunk perpendicularly to a lower coal-stratum, and here, almost thinking I could hear the perpetual rat-tat of notice once exchanged between the putt-boys below and the windlass-boys above, I proceeded down a dipple to another place like a standing, for in this mine there were six, or perhaps seven, veins: and there immediately I came upon the acme

of the horrible drama of this Tartarus, for all here was not merely crowded, but, at some points, a packed congestion of flesh, giving out a strong smell of the peach, curiously mixed with the stale coal-odour of the pit, for here ventilation must have been very limited; and a large number of these masses had been shot down by only three hands, as I found: for through three hermetical holes in a plaster-wall, built across a large gugg, projected a little the muzzles of three rifles, which must have glutted themselves with slaughter; and when, after a horror of disgust, having swum as it were through a dead sea, I got to the wall, I peeped from a small clear space before it through a hole, and made out a man, two youths in their teens, two women, three girls, and piles of cartridges and provisions; the hole had no doubt been broken from within at the spur of suffocation, when the poison must have entered; and I conjectured that here must be the mine-owner, director, manager, or something of that sort, with his family. In another dipple-region, when I had re-ascended to a higher level, I nearly fainted before I could retire from the commencement of a region of after-damp, where there had been an explosion, the bodies lying all hairless, devastated, and grotesque. But I did not desist from searching every other quarter, no momentary work, for not till near six did I go up by the pumping-shaft rope-ladder.

One day, standing in that wild region of bare rock and sea, called Cornwall Point, whence one can see the crags and postillion wild rocks where Land's End dashes out into the sea, and all the wild blue sea between, and not a house in sight, save the chimney of some little mill-like place peeping between the rocks inland — on that day I finished what I may call my official search.

In going away from that place, walking northward, I came upon a lonely house by the sea, a very beautiful house, made, it was clear, by an artist, of the bungalow type, with an exquisitely sea-side expression. I went to it, and found its special feature a spacious loggia or verandah, sheltered by the overhanging upper story. Up to the first floor, the exterior is of stone in rough-hewn blocks with a distinct batter, while extra protection from weather is afforded by green slating above. The roofs, of low pitch, are also covered with green slates, and a feeling of strength and repose is heightened by the very long horizontal lines. At one end of the loggia is a hexagonal turret, opening upon the loggia, containing a study or nook. In front, the garden slopes down to the sea, surrounded by an architectural sea-wall; and in this place I lived three weeks. It was the house of the poet Machen, whose name, when I saw it, I remembered very well, and he had married a very beautiful young girl of eighteen, obviously Spanish, who lay on the bed in the large bright bedroom to the right of the loggia, on her left exposed breast being a baby with an india-rubber comforter in its mouth, both mother and child wonderfully preserved, she still quite lovely, white brow under low curves of black hair. The poet, strange to say, had not died with them, but sat in the sitting-room behind the bedroom in a long loose silky-grey jacket, at his desk — actually writing a poem! writing, I could see, furiously fast, the place all littered with the written leaves — at three o'clock in the morning, when, as I knew, the cloud overtook this end of Cornwall, and stopped him, and put his head to rest on the desk; and the poor little wife must have got sleepy, waiting for it to come, perhaps sleepless for many long nights before, and gone to bed, he perhaps promising to follow in a minute to die with her, but bent upon finishing that poem, and writing feverishly on, running a race with the cloud, thinking, no doubt, 'just two couplets more,' till the thing came, and put his head to rest

on the desk, poor carle: and I do not know that I ever encountered aught so complimentary to my race as this dead poet Machen, and his race with the cloud: for it is clear now that the better kind of those poet men did not write to please the vague inferior tribes who might read them, but to deliver themselves of the divine warmth that thronged in their bosom; and if all the readers were dead, still they would have written; and for God to read they wrote. At any rate, I was so pleased with these poor people, that I stayed with them three weeks, sleeping under blankets on a couch in the drawing-room, a place full of lovely pictures and faded flowers, like all the house: for I would not touch the young mother to remove her. And finding on Machen's desk a big note-book with soft covers, dappled red and yellow, not yet written in, I took it, and a pencil, and in the little turret-nook wrote day after day for hours this account of what has happened, nearly as far as it has now gone. And I think that I may continue to write it, for I find in it a strange consolation, and companionship.

In the Severn Valley, somewhere in the plain between Gloucester and Cheltenham, in a rather lonely spot, I at that time travelling on a tricycle-motor, I spied a curious erection, and went to it. I found it of considerable size, perhaps fifty feet square, and thirty high, made of pressed bricks, the perfectly flat roof, too, of brick, and not one window, and only one door: this door, which I found open, was rimmed all round its slanting rims with india-rubber, and when closed must have been perfectly air-tight. Just inside I came upon fifteen English people of the dressed class, except two, who were evidently bricklayers: six ladies, and nine men: and at the further end, two more, men, who had their throats cut; along one wall, from end to end were provisions; and I saw a chest full of mixed potassic chlorate and black oxide of manganese, with an apparatus for heating it, and producing oxygen

— a foolish thing, for additional oxygen could not alter the quantity of breathed carbonic anhydride, which is a direct narcotic poison. Whether the two with cut throats had sacrificed themselves for the others when breathing difficulties commenced, or been killed by the others, was not clear. When they could bear it no longer, they must have finally opened the door, hoping that by then, after the passage of many days perhaps, the outer air would be harmless, and so met their death. I believe that this erection must have been run up by their own hands under the direction of the two bricklayers, for they could not, I suppose, have got workmen, except on the condition of the workmen's admission: on which condition they would naturally employ as few as possible.

In general, I remarked that the rich must have been more urgent and earnest in seeking escape than the others: for the poor realised only the near and visible, lived in to-day, and cherished the always-false notion that to-morrow would be just like to-day. In an out-patients' waiting-room, for instance, in the Gloucester infirmary, I chanced to see an astonishing thing: five bodies of poor old women in shawls, come to have their ailments seen-to on the day of doom; and these, I concluded, had been unable to realise that anything would really happen to the daily old earth which they knew, and had walked with assurance on: for if everybody was to die, they must have thought, who would preach in the Cathedral on Sunday evenings? — so they could not have believed. In an adjoining room sat an old doctor at a table, the stethoscope-tips still clinging in his ears: a woman with bared chest before him; and I thought to myself: 'Well, this old man, too, died doing his work....'

In this same infirmary there was one surgical ward — for in a listless mood I went over it — where the patients had died, not of the poison, nor of suffocation, but of hunger: for the doctors, or someone, had made the long

room air-tight, double-boarding the windows, felting the doors, and then locking them outside; they themselves may have perished before their precautions for the imprisoned patients were complete: for I found a heap of maimed shapes, mere skeletons, crowded round the door within. I knew very well that they had not died of the cloud-poison, for the pestilence of the ward was unmixed with that odour of peach which did not fail to have more or less embalming effects upon the bodies which it saturated. I rushed stifling from that place; and thinking it a pity, and a danger, that such a horror should be, I at once set to work to gather combustibles to burn the building to the ground.

It was while I sat in an arm-chair in the street the next afternoon, smoking, and watching the flames of this structure, that something was suddenly born in me, something from the lowest Hell: and I smiled a smile that never yet man smiled. And I said: ‘I will burn, I will burn: I will return to London....’

While I was on this Eastward journey, stopping for the night at the town of Swindon, I had a dream: for I dreamed that a little brown bald old man, with a bent back, whose beard ran in one thin streamlet of silver from his chin to trail along the ground, said to me: ‘You think that you are alone on the earth, its sole Despot: well, have your fling: but as sure as God lives, as God lives, as God lives’ — he repeated it six times— ‘sooner or later, later or sooner, you will meet another....’

And I started from that frightful sleep with the brow of a corpse, wet with sweat....

I returned to London on the 29th of March, arriving within a hundred yards of the Northern Station one windy dark evening about eight, where I

alighted, and walked to Euston Road, then eastward along it, till I came to a shop which I knew to be a jeweller's, though it was too dark to see any painted words. The door, to my annoyance, was locked, like nearly all the shop-doors in London: I therefore went looking near the ground, and into a cart, for something heavy, very soon saw a labourer's ponderous boots, cut one from the shrivelled foot, and set to beat at the glass till it came raining; then knocked away the bottom splinters, and entered.

No horrors now at that clatter of broken glass; no sick qualms; my pulse steady; my head high; my step royal; my eye cold and calm.

Eight months previously, I had left London a poor burdened, cowering wight. I could scream with laughter now at that folly! But it did not last long. I returned to it — the Sultan.

No private palace being near, I was going to that great hotel in Bloomsbury: but though I knew that numbers of candle-sticks would be there, I was not sure that I should find sufficient: for I had acquired the habit within the past few months of sleeping with at least sixty lighted about me, and their form, pattern, style, age, and material was of no small importance I selected ten from the broken shop, eight gold and silver, and two of old ecclesiastical brass, and having made a bundle, went out, found a bicycle at the Metropolitan Station, pumped it, tied my bundle to the handle-bar, and set off riding. But since I was too lazy to walk, I should certainly have procured some other means of travelling, for I had not gone ten jolted and creaking yards, when something went snap — it was a front fork — and I found myself half on the ground, and half across the bare knees of a Highland soldier. I flew with a shower of kicks upon the foolish

thing: but that bootied nothing; and this was my last attempt in that way in London, the streets being in an unsuitable condition.

All that dismal night it blew great guns: and during nearly three weeks, till London was no more, there was a storm, with hardly a lull, that seemed to behowl her destruction.

I slept in a room on the second-floor of a Bloomsbury hotel that night; and waking the next day at ten, ate with accursed shiverings in the cold banqueting-room; went out then, and under drear low skies walked a long way to the West district, accompanied all the time by a sound of flapping flags — fluttering robes and rags — and grotesquely grim glimpses of decay. It was pretty cold, and though I was warmly clad, the base *bizarrierie* of the European clothes which I wore had become a perpetual offence and mockery in my eyes: at the first moment, therefore, I set out whither I knew that I should find such clothes as a man might wear: to the Turkish Embassy in Bryanston Square.

I found it open, and all the house, like most other houses, almost carpeted with dead forms. I had been acquainted with Redouza Pasha, and cast an eye about for him amid that invasion of veiled hanums, fierce-looking Caucasians in skins of beasts, a Sheik-ul-Islam in green cloak, a khalifa, three emirs in cashmere turbans, two tziganes, their gaudy brown mortality more glaringly abominable than even the Western's. I could recognise no Redouza here: but the stair was fairly clear, and I soon came to one of those boudoirs which sweetly recall the deep-buried inner seclusion and dim sanctity of the Eastern home: a door encrusted with mother-of-pearl, sculptured ceiling, candles clustered in tulips and roses of opal, a brazen brasero, and, all in disarray, the silken chemise, the long winter-cafetan doubled with furs, costly cabinets, sachets of aromas, babooshes,

stuffs of silk. When, after two hours, I went from the house, I was bathed, anointed, combed, scented, and robed.

I have said to myself: 'I will ravage and riot in my Kingdoms. I will rage like the Caesars, and be a withering blight where I pass like Sennacherib, and wallow in soft delights like Sardanapalus. I will build me a palace, vast as a city, in which to strut and parade my Monarchy before the Heavens, with stones of pure molten gold, and rough frontispiece of diamond, and cupola of amethyst, and pillars of pearl. For there were many men to the eye: but there was One only, really: and I was he. And always I knew it: — some faintest secret whisper which whispered me: "*You* are the Arch-one, the *motif* of the world, Adam, and the rest of men not much." And they are gone — all! all! — as no doubt they deserved: and I, as was meet, remain. And there are wines, and opiums, and haschish; and there are oils, and spices, fruits and bivalves, and soft-breathing Cyclades, and scarlet luxurious Orients. I will be restless and turbulent in my territories: and again, I will be languishing and fond. I will say to my soul: "Be Full."'

I watch my mind, as in the old days I would watch a new precipitate in a test-tube, to see into what sediment it would settle.

I am very averse to trouble of any sort, so that the necessity for the simplest manual operations will rouse me to indignation: but if a thing will contribute largely to my ever-growing voluptuousness, I will undergo a considerable amount of labour to accomplish it, though without steady effort, being liable to side-winds and whims, and purposeless relaxations.

In the country I became very irritable at the need which confronted me of occasionally cooking some green vegetable — the only item of food which it was necessary to take some trouble over: for all meats, and many fish,

some quite delicious, I find already prepared in forms which will remain good probably a century after my death, should I ever die. In Gloucester, however, I found peas, asparagus, olives, and other greens, already prepared to be eaten without base cares: and these, I now see, exist everywhere in stores so vast comparatively to the needs of a single man, that they may be called infinite. Everything, in fact, is infinite compared with my needs. I take my meals, therefore, without more trouble than a man who had to carve his joint, or chicken: though even that little I sometimes find most irksome. There remains the detestable degradation of lighting fires for warmth, which I have occasionally to do: for the fire at the hotel invariably goes out while I sleep. But that is an inconvenience of this vile northern island only, to which I shall soon bid eternal glad farewells.

During the afternoon of my second day in London, I sought out a strong petrol motor in Holborn, overhauled and oiled it a little, and set off over Blackfriars Bridge, making for Woolwich through that other more putrid London on the south river-side. One after the other, I connected, as I came upon them, two drays, a cab, and a private carriage, to my motor in line behind, having cut away the withered horses, and using the reins, chain-harness, &c., as impromptu couplings. And with this novel train, I rumbled eastward.

Half-way I happened to look at my old silver chronometer of *Boreal*-days, which I have kept carefully wound — and how I can be still thrown into these sudden frantic agitations by a nothing, a nothing, my good God! I do not know. This time it was only the simple fact that the hands chanced to point to 3.10 P.M., the precise moment at which all the clocks of London had stopped — for each town has its thousand weird fore-fingers, pointing, pointing still, to the moment of doom. In London it was 3.10 on a Sunday afternoon. I first noticed it going up the river on the face of the ‘Big Ben’ of

the Parliament-house, and I now find that they all, all, have this 3.10 mania, time-keepers still, but keepers of the end of Time, fixedly noting for ever and ever that one moment. The cloud-mass of fine penetrating *scoriae* must have instantly stopped their works, and they had fallen silent with man. But in their insistence upon this particular minute I had found something so hideously solemn, yet mock-solemn, personal, and as it were addressed to *me*, that when my own watch dared to point to the same moment, I was thrown into one of those sudden, paroxysmal, panting turmoils of mind, half rage, half horror, which have hardly once visited me since I left the *Boreal*. On the morrow, alas, another awaited me; and again on the second morrow after.

My train was execrably slow, and not until after five did I arrive at the entrance-gates of the Woolwich Royal Arsenal; and seeing that it was too late to work, I uncoupled the motor, and leaving the others there, turned back; but overtaken by lassitude, I procured candles, stopped at the Greenwich Observatory, and in that old dark pile, remained for the night, listening to a furious storm. But, a-stir by eight the next morning, I got back by ten to the Arsenal, and proceeded to analyse that vast and multiple entity. Many parts of it seemed to have been abandoned in undisciplined haste, and in the Cap Factory, which I first entered, I found tools by which to effect entry into any desired part. My first search was for time-fuses of good type, of which I needed two or three thousand, and after a wearily long time found a great number symmetrically arranged in rows in a range of buildings called the Ordnance Store Department. I then descended, walked back to the wharf, brought up my train, and began to lower the fuses in bag-fulls by ropes through a shoot, letting go each rope as the fuses reached the cart. However, on winding one fuse, I found that the mechanism would not

go, choked with scoriae; and I had to resign myself to the task of opening and dusting every one: a wretched labour in which I spent that day, like a workman. But about four I threw them to the devil, having done two hundred odd, and then hummed back in the motor to London.

That same evening at six I paid, for the first time, a visit to my old self in Harley Street. It was getting dark, and a bleak storm that hooted like whooping-cough swept the world. At once I saw that even *I* had been invaded: for my door swung open, banging, a lowered catch preventing it from slamming; in the passage the car-lamp shewed me a young man who seemed a Jew, sitting as if in sleep with dropped head, a back-tilted silk-hat pressed down upon his head to the ears; and lying on face, or back, or side, six more, one a girl with Arlesienne head-dress, one a negress, one a Deal lifeboat's-man, and three of uncertain race; the first room — the waiting-room — is much more numerously occupied, though there still, on the table, lies the volume of *Punch*, the *Gentlewoman*, and the book of London views in heliograph. Behind this, descending two steps, is the study and consulting-room, and there, as ever, the revolving-cover oak writing-desk: but on my little shabby-red sofa, a large lady much too big for it, in shimmering brown silk, round her left wrist a *trousseau* of massive gold trinkets, her head dropped right back, almost severed by an infernal gash from the throat. Here were two old silver candle-sticks, which I lit, and went upstairs: in the drawing-room sat my old house-keeper, placidly dead in a rocking-chair, her left hand pressing down a batch of the open piano-keys, among many strangers. But she was very good: she had locked my bedroom against intrusion; and as the door stands across a corner behind a green-baize curtain, it had not been seen, or, at least, not forced. I did not know where the key might be, but a few thumps with my back drove it

open: and there lay my bed intact, and everything tidy. This was a strange coming-back to it, Adam.

But what intensely interested me in that room was a big thing standing at the maroon-and-gold wall between wardrobe and dressing-table — that gilt frame — and that man painted within it there. It was myself in oils, done by — I forget his name now: a towering celebrity he was, and rather a close friend of mine at one time. In a studio in St. John's Wood, I remember, he did it; and many people said that it was quite a great work of art. I suppose I was standing before it quite thirty minutes that night, holding up the bits of candle, lost in wonder, in amused contempt at that thing there. It is I, certainly: that I must admit. There is the high-curving brow — really a King's brow, after all, it strikes me now — and that vacillating look about the eyes and mouth which used to make my sister Ada say: 'Adam is weak and luxurious.' Yes, that is wonderfully done, the eyes, that dear, vacillating look of mine; for although it is rather a staring look, yet one can almost see the dark pupils stir from side to side: very well done. And there is the longish face; and the rather thin, stuck-out moustache, shewing both lips which pout a bit; and there is the nearly black hair; and there is the rather visible paunch; and there is, oh good Heaven, the neat pink cravat — ah, it must have been *that* — *the cravat* — that made me burst out into laughter so loud, mocking, and uncontrollable the moment my eye rested there! 'Adam Jeffson,' I muttered reproachfully when it was over, 'could that poor thing in the frame have been you?'

I cannot quite state why the tendency toward Orientalism — Oriental dress — all the manner of an Oriental monarch — has taken full possession of me: but so it is: for surely I am hardly any longer a Western, 'modern' mind, but a primitive and Eastern one. Certainly, that cravat in the frame has receded a million, million leagues, ten thousand forgotten aeons, from

me! Whether this is a result due to my own personality, of old acquainted with Eastern notions, or whether, perhaps, it is the natural accident to any mind wholly freed from trammels, I do not know. But I seem to have gone right back to the very beginnings, and resemblance with man in his first, simple, gaudy conditions. My hair, as I sit here writing, already hangs a black, oiled string down my back; my scented beard sweeps in two opening whisks to my ribs; I have on the *izar*, a pair of drawers of yomani cloth like cotton, but with yellow stripes; over this a soft shirt, or quamis, of white silk, reaching to my calves; over this a short vest of gold-embroidered crimson, the *sudeyree*; over this a khaftan of green-striped silk, reaching to the ankles, with wide, long sleeves divided at the wrist, and bound at the waist with a voluminous gaudy shawl of Cashmere for girdle; over this a warm wide-flowing torrent of white drapery, lined with ermine. On my head is the skull-cap, covered by a high crimson cap with deep-blue tassel; and on my feet is a pair of thin yellow-morocco shoes, covered over with thick red-morocco babooshes. My ankles — my ten fingers — my wrists — are heavy with gold and silver ornaments; and in my ears, which, with considerable pain, I bored three days since, are two needle-splinters, to prepare the holes for rings.

O Liberty! I am free....

While I was going to visit my old home in Harley Street that night, at the very moment when I turned from Oxford Street into Cavendish Square, this thought, fiercely hissed into my ears, was all of a sudden seething in me: ‘If now I should lift my eyes, and see a man walking yonder — just yonder — *at the corner there* — turning from Harewood Place into Oxford Street —

what, my good God, should I do? — I without even a knife to run and plunge into his heart?’

And I turned my eyes — ogling, suspicious eyes of furtive horror — reluctantly, lingeringly turned — and I peered deeply with lowered brows across the murky winds at that same spot: but no man was there.

Hideously frequent is this nonsense now become with me — in streets of towns — in deep nooks of the country: the invincible assurance that, if I but turn the head, and glance *there* — at a certain fixed spot — I shall surely see — I *must* see — a man. And glance I must, glance I must, though I perish: and when I glance, though my hairs creep and stiffen like stirring amobse, yet in my eyes, I know, is monarch indignation against the intruder, and my neck stands stiff as sovereignty itself, and on my brow sits more than all the lordship of Persepolis and Iraz.

To what point of wantonness this arrogance of royalty may lead me, I do not know: I will watch, and see. It is written: ‘It is not good for man to be alone!’ But good or no, the arrangement of One planet, One inhabitant, already seems to me, not merely a natural and proper, but the *only* natural and proper, condition; so much so, that any other arrangement has now, to my mind, a certain improbable, wild, and far-fetched unreality, like the Utopian schemes of dreamers and faddists. That the whole world should have been made for *me* alone — that London should have been built only in order that *I* might enjoy the vast heroic spectacle of its burning — that all history, and all civilisation should have existed only in order to accumulate for *my* pleasures its inventions and facilities, its stores of purple and wine, of spices and gold — no more extraordinary does it all seem to me than to some little unreflecting Duke of my former days seemed the possessing of lands which his remote forefathers seized, and slew the occupiers: nor, in reality, is it even so extraordinary, I being alone. But what sometimes strikes

me with some surprise is, not that the present condition of the world, with one sole master, should seem the common-place and natural condition, but that it should have come to seem *so* common-place and natural — in nine months. The mind of Adam Jeffson is adaptable.

I sat a long time thinking such things by my bed that night, till finally I was disposed to sleep there. But I had no considerable number of candle-sticks, nor was even sure of candles. I remembered, however, that Peter Peters, three doors away on the other side of the street, had had four handsome silver candelabra in his drawing-room, each containing six stems; and I said to myself: ‘I will search for candles in the kitchen, and if I find any, I will go and get Peter Peters’ candelabra, and sleep here.’

I took then the two lights which I had, my good God; went down to the passage; then down to the basement; and there had no difficulty in finding three packets of large candles, the fact being, I suppose, that the cessation of gas-lighting had compelled everyone to provide themselves in this way, for there were a great many wherever I looked. With these I re-ascended, went into a little alcove on the second-floor where I had kept some drugs, got a bottle of carbolic oil, and for ten minutes went dashing all the corpses in the house. I then left the two lighted bits of candle on the waiting-room table, and, with the car-lamp, passed along the passage to the front-door, which was very violently banging. I stepped out to find that the storm had increased to a mighty turbulence (though it was dry), which at once caught my clothes, and whirled them into a flapping cloud about and above me; also, I had not crossed the street when my lamp was out. I persisted, however, half blinded, to Peters door. It was locked: but immediately near the pavement was a window, the lower sash up, into which, with little trouble, I lifted myself and passed. My foot, as I lowered it, stood on a

body: and this made me angry and restless. I hissed a curse, and passed on, scraping the carpet with my soles, that I might hurt no one: for I did not wish to hurt any one. Even in the almost darkness of the room I recognised Peters' furniture, as I expected: for the house was his on a long lease, and I knew that his mother had had the intention to occupy it after his death. But as I passed into the passage, all was mere blank darkness, and I, depending upon the lamp, had left the matches in the other house. I groped my way to the stairs, and had my foot on the first step, when I was stopped by a vicious shaking of the front-door, which someone seemed to be at with hustlings and the most urgent poundings: I stood with peering stern brows two or three minutes, for I knew that if I once yielded to the flinching at my heart, no mercy would be shown me in this house of tragedy, and thrilling shrieks would of themselves arise and ring through its haunted chambers. The rattling continued an inordinate time, and so instant and imperative, that it seemed as if it could not fail to force the door. But, though horrified, I whispered to my heart that it could only be the storm which was struggling at it like the grasp of a man, and after a time went on, feeling my way by the broad rail, in my brain somehow the thought of a dream which I had had in the *Boreal* of the woman Clodagh, how she let drop a fluid like pomegranate-seeds into water, and tendered it to Peter Peters: and it was a mortal purging draught; but I would not stop, but step by step went up, though I suffered very much, my brows peering at the utter darkness, and my heart shocked at its own rashness. I got to the first landing, and as I turned to ascend the second part of the stair, my left hand touched something icily cold: I made some quick instinctive movement of terror, and, doing so, my foot struck against something, and I stumbled, half falling over what seemed a small table there. Immediately a horrible row followed, for something fell to the ground: and at that instant, ah, I heard something

— a voice — a human voice, which uttered words close to my ear — the voice of Clodagh, for I knew it: yet not the voice of Clodagh in the flesh, but her voice clogged with clay and worms, and full of effort, and thick-tongued: and in that ghastly speech of the grave I distinctly heard the words:

‘Things being as they are in the matter of the death of Peter ...’

And there it stopped dead, leaving me so sick, my God, so sick, that I could hardly snatch my robes about me to fly, fly, fly, soft-footed, murmuring in pain, down the steps, down like a sneaking thief, but quick, snatching myself away, then wrestling with the cruel catch of the door which she would not let me open, feeling her all the time behind me, watching me. And when I did get out, I was away up the length of the street, trailing my long *jubbah*, glancing backward, panting, for I thought that she might dare to follow, with her daring evil will. And all that night I lay on a common bench in the wind-tossed and dismal Park.

The first thing which I did when the sun was up was to return to that place: and I returned with hard and masterful brow.

Approaching Peters’ house I saw now, what the darkness had hidden from me, that on his balcony was someone — quite alone there. The balcony is a slight open-work wrought-iron structure, connected to a small roof by three slender voluted pillars, two at the ends, one in the middle: and at the middle one I saw someone, a woman — kneeling — her arms clasped tight about the pillar, and her face rather upward-looking. Never did I see aught more horrid: there were the gracious curves of the woman’s bust and hips still well preserved in a clinging dress of red cloth, very faded now; and her reddish hair floated loose in a large flimsy cloud about her; but her face, in that exposed position, had been quite eaten away by the winds to a

noseless skeleton, which grinned from ear to ear, with slightly-dropped under-jaw — most horrid in contrast with the body, and frame of hair. I meditated upon her a long time that morning from the opposite pavement. An oval locket at her throat contained, I knew, my likeness: for eight years previously I had given it her. It was Clodagh, the poisoner.

I thought that I would go into that house, and walk through it from top to bottom, and sit in it, and spit in it, and stamp in it, in spite of any one: for the sun was now high. I accordingly went in again, and up the stairs to the spot where I had been frightened, and had heard the words. And here a great rage took me, for I at once saw that I had been made the dupe of the malign wills that beset me, and the laughing-stock of Those for whom I care not a fig. From a little mahogany table there I had knocked sideways to the ground, in my stumble, a small phonograph with a great 25-inch japanned-tin horn, which, the moment that I now noticed it, I took and flung with a great racket down the stairs: for that this it was which had addressed me I did not doubt; it being indeed evident that its clock-work mechanism had been stopped by the volcanic scoriae in the midst of the delivery of a record, but had been started into a few fresh oscillations by the shock of the fall, making it utter those thirteen words, and stop. I was sufficiently indignant at the moment, but have since been glad, for I was thereby put upon the notion of collecting a number of cylinders with records, and have been touched with indescribable sensations, sometimes thrilled, at hearing the silence of this Eternity broken by those singing and speaking voices, so life-like, yet most ghostly, of the old dead.

Well, the most of that same day I spent in a high chamber at Woolwich, dusting out, and sometimes oiling, time-fuses: a work in which I acquired such facility in some hours, that each finally occupied me no more than

ninety to a hundred seconds, so that by evening I had, with the previous day's work, close on 600. The construction of these little things is very simple, and, I believe, effective, so that I should have no difficulty in making them myself in large numbers, if it were necessary. Most contain a tiny dry battery, which sends a current along a bell or copper wire at the running-down moment, the clocks being contrived to be set for so many days, hours, and minutes, while others ignite by striking. I arranged in rows in the covered van those which I had prepared, and passed the night in an inn near the Barracks. I had brought candle-sticks from London in the morning, and arranged the furniture — a settee, chest-of-drawers, basin-stand, table, and a number of chairs — in three-quarter-circle round the bed, so getting a triple-row altar of lights, mixed with vases of the house containing small palms and evergreens; with this I mingled a smell of ambergris from the scattered contents of some Turkish sachets which I had; in the bed a bottle of sweet Chypre-wine, with *bonbons*, nuts, and Havannas. As I lay me down, I could not but reflect, with a smile which I knew to be evil, upon that steady, strong, smouldering lust within me which was urging me through all those pains at the Arsenal, I who shirked every labour as unkingly. So, however, it was: and the next morning I was at it again after an early breakfast, my fingers at first quite stiff with cold, for it blew a keen and January gale. By nine I had 820 fuses; and judging those sufficient to commence with, got into the motor, and took it round to a place called the East Laboratory, a series of detached buildings, where I knew that I should find whatever I wanted: and I prepared my mind for a day's labour. In this place I found incredible stores: mountains of percussion-caps, more chambers of fuses, small-arm cartridges, shells, and all those murderous explosive mixtures, a-making and made, with which modern savagery occupied its leisure in exterminating itself: or, at least, savagery civilised in

its top-story only: for civilisation was apparently from the head downwards, and never once grew below the neck in all those centuries, those people being certainly much more mental than cordial, though I doubt if they were genuinely mental either — reminding one rather of that composite image of Nebuchadnezzar, head of gold, breast brazen, feet of clay — head man-like, heart cannibal, feet bestial — like aegipeds, and mermaids, and puzzling undeveloped births. However, it is of no importance: and perhaps I am not much better than the rest, for I, too, after all, am of them. At any rate, their lyddites, melanites, cordites, dynamites, powders, jellies, oils, marls, and civilised barbarisms and obiahs, came in very well for their own destruction: for by two o'clock I had so worked, that I had on the first cart the phalanx of fuses; on the second a goodly number of kegs, cartridge-cases and cartridge-boxes, full of powder, explosive cottons and gelatines, and liquid nitro-glycerine, and earthy dynamite, with some bombs, two reels of cordite, two pieces of tarred cloth, a small iron ladle, a shovel, and a crow-bar; the cab came next, containing a considerable quantity of loose coal; and lastly, in the private carriage lay four big cans of common oil. And first, in the Laboratory, I connected a fuse-conductor with a huge tun of blasting-gelatine, and I set the fuse on the ground, timed for the midnight of the twelfth day thence; and after that I visited the Main Factory, the Carriage Department, the Ordnance Store Department, the Royal Artillery Barracks, and the Powder Magazines in the Marshes, traversing, as it seemed to me, miles of building; and in some I laid heaps of oil-saturated coal with an explosive in suitable spots on the ground-floor near wood-work, and in some an explosive alone: and all I timed for ignition at midnight of the twelfth day. Hot now, and black as ink, I proceeded through the town, stopping with perfect system at every hundredth door: and I laid

the faggots of a great burning: and timed them all for ignition at midnight of the twelfth day.

Whatever door I found closed against me I drove at it with a maniac malice.

Shall I commit the whole dark fact to paper? — that deep, deep secret of the human organism?

As I wrought, I waxed wicked as a demon! And with lowered neck, and forward curve of the lower spine, and the blasphemous strut of tragic play-actors, I went. For here was no harmless burning which I did — but the crime of arson; and a most fiendish, though vague, malevolence, and the rage to burn and raven and riot, was upon me like a dog-madness, and all the mood of Nero, and Nebuchadnezzar: and from my mouth proceeded all the obscenities of the slum and of the gutter, and I sent up such hisses and giggles of challenge to Heaven that day as never yet has man let out. But this way lies a spinning frenzy....

I have taken a dead girl with wild huggings to my bosom; and I have touched the corrupted lip, and spat upon her face, and tossed her down, and crushed her teeth with my heel, and jumped and jumped upon her breast, like the snake-stamping zebra, mad, mad...!

I was desolated, however, that first day of the faggot-laying, even in the midst of my sense of omnipotence, by one thing, which made me give some kicks to the motor: for it was only crawling, so that a good part of the way I was stalking by its side; and when I came to that hill near the Old Dover Road, the whole thing stopped, and refused to move, the weight of the train

being too great for my horse-power traction. I did not know what to do, and stood there in angry impotence a full half-hour, for the notion of setting up an electric station, with or without automatic stoking-gear, presented so hideous a picture of labour to me, that I would not entertain it. After a time, however, I thought that I remembered that there was a comparatively new power station in St. Paneras driven by turbines: and at once, I uncoupled the motor, covered the drays with the tarpaulins, and went driving at singing speed, choosing the emptier by-streets, and not caring whom I crushed. After some trouble I found, in fact, the station in an obscure by-street made of two long walls, and went in by a window, a rage upon me to have my will quickly accomplished. I ran up some stairs, across two rooms, into a gallery containing a switch-board, and in the room below saw the works, all very neat-looking, but, as I soon found, very dusty. I went down, and fixed upon a generating set — there were three — that would give a decent load, and then saw that the switch-gear belonging to this particular generator was in order. I then got some cloths and thoroughly cleaned the dust off the commutators; ran next — for I was in a strange fierce haste — and turned the water into the turbines, and away went the engine; I hurried to set the lubricators running on the bearings, and in a couple of minutes had adjusted the speed, and the brushes of the generators, and switched the current on to the line. By this time, however, I saw that it was getting dark, and feared that little could be done that day; still, I hurried out, the station still running, got into the car, and was off to look for a good electric one, of which there are hosts in the streets, in order at least to clean up and adjust the motor that night. I drove down three by-streets, till I turned into Euston Road: but I had no sooner reached it than I pulled up — with sudden jerk — with a shout of astonishment.

That cursed street was all lighted up and gay! and three shimmering electric globes, not far apart, illuminated every feature of a ghastly battle-field of dead.

And there was a thing there, the grinning impression of which I shall carry to my grave: a thing which spelled and spelled at me, and ceased, and began again, and ceased, and spelled at me. For, above a shop which faced me was a flag, a red flag with white letters, fluttering on the gale the words: 'Metcalfe's Stores'; and beneath the flag, stretched right across the house, was the thing which spelled, letter by letter, in letters of light: and it spelled two words, deliberately, coming to the end, and going back to recommence:

Drink

ROBORAL.

And that was the last word of civilised Man to me, Adam Jeffson — its final counsel — its ultimate gospel and message — to *me*, my good God!
Drink Roboral!

I was put into such a passion of rage by this blatant ribaldry, which affected me like the laughter of a skeleton, that I rushed from the car, with the intention, I believe, of seeking stones to stone it: but no stones were there: and I had to stand impotently enduring that rape of my eyes, its victoriously-dogged iteration, its taunting leer, its Drink Roboral — D, R, I, N, K R, O, B, O, R, A, L.

It was one of those electrical spelling-advertisements, worked by a small motor commutator driven by a works-motor, and I had now set it going: for on some night before that Sabbath of doom the chemist must have set it to work, but finding the works abandoned, had not troubled to shut it down again. At any rate, this thing stopped my work for that day, for when I went to shut down the works it was night; and I drove to the place which I had

made my home in sullen and weary mood: for I knew that Roboral would not cure the least of all my sores.

The next morning I awoke in quite another frame of mind, disposed to idle, and let things go. After rising, dressing, washing in cold diluted rose-water, and descending to the *salle-à-manger*, where I had laid my morning-meal the previous evening, I promenaded an hour the only one of these long sombrous tufted corridors in which there were not more than two dead, though behind the doors on either hand, all of which I had locked, I knew that they lay in plenty. When I was warmed, I again went down, looked into my motor, got three cylinders from one of a number of motors standing near, lit up, and drove away — to Woolwich, as I thought at first: but instead of crossing the river by Blackfriars, I went more eastward; and having passed from Holborn into Cheapside, which was impassable, unless I crawled, was about to turn, when I noticed a phonograph-shop: into this I got by a side-door, suddenly seized by quite a curiosity to hear what I might hear. I took a good one with microphone diaphragm, and a number of record-cylinders in a brass-handled box, and I put them into the car, for there was still a very strong peach-odour in this closed shop, which displeased me. I then proceeded southward and westward through by-streets, seeking some probable house into which to go from the rough cold winds, when I saw the Parliament-house, and thither, turning river-ward by Westminster Hall to Palace Yard, I went, and with my two parcels, one weighting each arm, walked into this old place along a line of purple-dusted busts; I deposited my boxes on a table beside a massive brass thing lying there, which, I suppose, must be what they called the Mace; and I sat to hear.

Unfortunately, the phonograph was a clock-work one, and when I wound it, it would not go: so that I got very angry at my absurdity in not bringing an electric mechanism, as I could with much less trouble have put in a chemical than cleaned the clock-work; and this thing put me into such a rage, that I nearly tore it to pieces, and was half for kicking it: but there was a man sitting in an old straight-backed chair quite near me, which they called the Speaker's Chair, who was in such a pose, that he had, every time I glanced suddenly at him, precisely the air of bending forward with interest to watch what I was doing, a Mohrgrabim kind of man, almost black, with Jewish nose, crinkled hair, keffie, and flowing robe, probably, I should say, an Abyssinian Galla; with him were only five or six people about the benches, mostly leaning forward with rested head, so that this place had quite a void sequestered mood. At all events, this Galla, or Bedouin, with his grotesque interest in my doings, restrained my hands: and, finally, by dint of peering, poking, dusting, and adjusting, in an hour's time I got the phonograph to go very well.

And all that morning, and far into late afternoon, forgetful of food, and of the cold which gradually possessed me, I sat there listening, musing — cylinder after cylinder: frivolous songs, orchestras, voices of famous men whom I had spoken with, and shaken their solid hands, speaking again to me, but thick-tongued, with hoarse effort and gurgles, from out the vague void beyond the grave: most strange, most strange. And the third cylinder that I put on, ah, I knew, with a fearful start, that voice of thunder, I knew it well: it was the preacher, Mackay's; and many, many times over I heard those words of his that day, originally spoken, it seems, when the cloud had just passed the longitude of Vienna; and in all that torrent of speech not one single word of 'I told you so': but he cries:

‘...praise Him, O Earth, for He is He: and if He slay me, I will laugh raillery at His Sword, and banter Him to His face: for His Sword is sharp Mercy, and His poisons kill my death. Fear not, therefore, little flock of Man! but take my comfort to your heart to-night, and my sweets to your tongue: for though ye have sinned, and hardened yourselves as brass, and gone far, far astray in these latter wildernesses, yet He is infinitely greater than your sin, and will lead you back. Break not, break not, poor broken heart of Earth: for from Him I run herald to thee this night with the sweet and secret message, that of old He chose thee, and once mixed conjugally with thee in an ancient sleep, O Afflicted: and He is thou, and thou art He, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone; and if thou perish utterly, it is that He has perished utterly, too: for thou art He. Hope, therefore, most, and cheeriest smile, at the very apsis and black nadir of Despair: for He is nimble as a weasel, and He twists like Proteus, and His solstices and equinoxes, His tropics and turning-points and recurrences are innate in Being, and when He falls He falls like harlequin and shuttlecocks, shivering plumb to His feet, and each third day, lo, He is risen again, and His defeats are but the stepping-stones and rough scaffolding from which He builds His Parthenons, and from the densest basalt gush His rills, and the last end of this Earth shall be no poison-cloud, I say to you, but Carnival and Harvest-home ... though ye have sinned, poor hearts ...’

So Mackay, with thick-tongued metallic effort. I found this brown room of the Commons-house, with its green benches, and grilled galleries, so agreeable to my mood, that I went again the next morning, and listened to more records, till they tired me: for what I had was a prurient itch to hear secret scandals, and revelations of the festering heart, but these cylinders, gathered from a shop, divulged nothing. I then went out to make for

Woolwich, but in the car saw the poet's note-book in which I had written: and I took it, went back, and was writing an hour, till I was tired of that, too; and judging it too late for Woolwich that day, wandered about the dusty committee-rooms and recesses of this considerable place. In one room another foolishness suddenly seized upon me, shewing how my slightest whim has become more imperious within me than all the Jaws of the Medes and Persians: for in that room, Committee Room No. 15, I found an apparently young policeman lying flat on his back, who pleased me: his helmet tilted under his head, and near one white-gloved hand a blue official envelope; the air of that stagnant quiet room was still perceptibly peach-scented, and he gave not the slightest odour that I could detect, though he had been corporal and stalwart, his face now the colour of dark ashes, in each hollow cheek a ragged hole about the size of a sixpence, the flimsy vaulted eye-lids well embedded in their caverns, from under whose fringe of eye-lash seemed whispered the word: '*Eternity.*' His hair seemed very long for a policeman, or perhaps it had grown since death; but what interested me about him, was the envelope at his hand: for 'what,' I asked myself, 'was this fellow doing here with an envelope at three o'clock on a Sunday afternoon?' This made me look closer, and then I saw by a mark at the left temple that he had been shot, or felled; whereupon I was thrown into quite a great rage, for I thought that this poor man was killed in the execution of his duty, when many of his kind perhaps, and many higher than he, had fled their post to pray or riot. So, after looking at him a long time, I said to him: 'Well, D. 47, you sleep very well: and you did well, dying so: I am pleased with you, and to mark my favour, I decree that you shall neither rot in the common air, nor burn in the common flames: for by my own hand shall you be distinguished with burial.' And this wind so possessed me, that I at once went out: with the crow-bar from the car I

broke the window of a near iron-monger's in Parliament Street, got a spade, and went into Westminster Abbey. I soon prised up a grave-slab of some famous man in the north transept, and commenced to shovel: but, I do not know how, by the time I had digged a foot the whole impulse passed from me: I left off the work, promising to resume it: but nothing was ever done, for the next day I was at Woolwich, and busy enough about other matters.

During the next nine days I worked with a fever on me, and a map of London before me.

There were places in that city! — secrets, vastnesses, horrors! In the wine-vaults at London Docks was a vat which must certainly have contained between twenty and thirty thousand gallons: and with dancing heart I laid a train there; the tobacco-warehouse must have covered eighty acres: and there I laid a fuse. In a house near Regent's Park, standing in a garden, and shut from the street by a high wall, I saw a thing...! and what shapes a great city hid I now first know.

I left no quarter unremembered, taking a train, no longer of four, but of eight, vehicles, drawn by an electric motor which I re-charged every morning, mostly from the turbine station in St. Pancras, once from a steam-station with very small engine and dynamo, found in the Palace Theatre, which gave little trouble, and once from a similar little station in a Strand hotel. With these I visited West Ham and Kew, Finchley and Clapham, Dalston and Marylebone; I exhausted London; I deposited piles in the Guildhall, in Holloway Gaol, in the new pillared Justice-hall of Newgate, in the Tower, in the Parliament-house, in St. Giles' Workhouse, in the Crypt and under the organ of St. Paul's, in the South Kensington Museum, in the Royal Agricultural Society, in Whiteley's place, in the Trinity House, in

Liverpool Street, in the Office of Works, in the secret recesses of the British Museum; in a hundred inflammable warehouses, in five hundred shops, in a thousand private dwellings. And I timed them all for ignition at midnight of the 23rd April.

By five in the afternoon of the 22nd, when I left my train in Maida Vale, and drove alone to the solitary house on high ground near Hampstead Heath which I had chosen, the work was well finished.

The great morning dawned, and I was early a-stir: for I had much to do that day.

I intended to make for the sea-shore the next morning, and had therefore to choose a good petrol motor, store it, and have it in a place of safety; I had also to drag another vehicle after me, stored with trunks of time-fuses, books, clothes, and other little things.

My first journey was to Woolwich, whence I took all that I might ever require in the way of mechanism; thence to the National Gallery, where I cut from their frames the 'Vision of St. Helena,' Murillo's 'Boy Drinking,' and 'Christ at the Column'; and thence to the Embassy to bathe, anoint myself, and dress.

As I had anticipated, and hoped, a blustering spring gale was blowing from the north.

Even as I set out from Hampstead, about 9 A.M., I had been able to guess that some of my fuses had somehow anticipated the appointed hour: for I saw three red hazes at various points in the air, and heard the far vague booming of an occasional explosion; and by 11 A.M. I felt sure that a large region of north-eastern London must be in flames. With the solemn feelings of bridegrooms and marriage-mornings — with a flinching, a flinching

heart, God knows, yet a heart up-buoyed on thrilling joys — I went about making preparations for the Gargantuan orgy of the night.

The house at Hampstead, which no doubt still stands, is of rather pleasing design in quite a stone and rural style, with good breadths of wall-surface, two plain coped gables, mullioned windows, and oversailing slate verge roofs, but, rather spoiling it, a high square three-storied tower at the south-east angle, on the topmost floor of which I had slept the previous night. There I had provided myself with a jar of pale tobacco mixed with rose-leaves and opium, found in a foreign house in Seymour Street, also a genuine Saloniki hookah, together with the best wines, nuts, and so on, and a gold harp of the musician Krasinski, stamped with his name, taken from his house in Portland Street.

But so much did I find to do that day, and so many odd things turned up which I thought that I would take with me, that it was not till near six that I drove finally northward through Camden Town. And now an ineffable awe possessed my soul at the solemn noise which everywhere encompassed me, an ineffable awe, a blissful terror. Never, never could I have dreamed of aught so great and potent. All above my head there rushed southward with wide-spread wing of haste a sparkling smoke; and mixed with the immense roaring I heard mysterious hubbubs of tumblings and rumblings, which I could not at all comprehend, like the moving-about of furniture in the houses of Titans; while pervading all the air was a most weird and tearful sound, as it were threnody, and a wild wail of pain, and dying swan-songs, and all lamentations and tribulations of the world. Yet I was aware that, at an hour so early, the flames must be far from general; in fact, they had not well commenced.

As I had left a good semicircular region of houses, with a radius of four hundred yards, without combustibles to the south of the isolated house which I was to occupy, and as the wind was so strongly from the north, I simply left my two vehicles at the door of the house, without fear of any injury: nor did any occur. I then went up to the top of the tower, lit the candles, and ate voraciously of the dinner which I had left ready, for since the morning I had taken nothing; and then, with hands and heart that quivered, I arranged the clothes of the low spring-bed upon which to throw my frame in the morning hours. Opposite the wall, where lay the bed, was a Gothic window, pretty large, with low sill, hung with poppy-figured muslin, and looking directly south, so that I could recline at ease in the red-velvet easy-chair, and see. It had evidently been a young lady's room: for on the toilette were cut-glass bottles, a plait of brown hair, powders, *rouge-aux-lèvres*, one little bronze slipper, and knick-knacks, and I loved her and hated her, though I did not see her anywhere. About half-past eight I sat at the window to watch, all being arranged and ready at my right hand, the candles extinguished in the red room: for the theatre was opened, was opened: and the atmosphere of this earth seemed turned into Hell, and Hell was in my soul.

Soon after midnight there was a sudden and very visible increase in the conflagration. On all hands I began to see blazing structures soar, with grand hurrahs, on high. In fives and tens, in twenties and thirties, all between me and the remote limit of my vision, they leapt, they lingered long, they fell. My spirit more and more felt, and danced — deeper mysteries of sensation, sweeter thrills. I sipped exquisitely, I drew out enjoyment leisurely. Anon, when some more expansive angel of flame would arise from the Pit with steady aspiration, and linger with outspread

arms, and burst, I would lift a little from the chair, leaning forward to clap, as at some famous acting; or I would call to them in shouts of cheer, giving them the names of Woman. For now I seemed to see nothing but some bellowing pandemonic universe through crimson glasses, and the air was wildly hot, and my eye-balls like theirs that walk staring in the inner midst of burning fiery furnaces, and my skin itched with a fierce and prickly itch. Anon I touched the chords of the harp to the air of Wagner's 'Walküren-ritt.'

Near three in the morning, I reached the climax of my guilty sweets. My drunken eye-lids closed in a luxury of pleasure, and my lips lay stretched in a smile that dribbled; a sensation of dear peace, of almighty power, consoled me: for now the whole area which through streaming tears I surveyed, mustering its ten thousand thunders, and brawling beyond the stars the voice of its southward-rushing torment, billowed to the horizon one grand Atlantic of smokeless and flushing flame; and in it sported and washed themselves all the fiends of Hell, with laughter, shouts, wild flights, and holiday; and I — first of my race — had flashed a signal to the nearer planets....

Those words: 'signal to the nearer planets' I wrote nearly fourteen months ago, some days after the destruction of London, I being then on board the old *Boreal*, making for the coast of France: for the night was dark, though calm, and I was afraid of running into some ship, yet not sleepy, so I wrote to occupy my fingers, the ship lying still. The book in which I wrote has been near me: but no impulse to write anything has visited me, till now I continue; not, however, that I have very much to put down.

I had no intention of wearing out my life in lighting fires every morning to warm myself in the inhospitable island of Britain, and set out to France with the view of seeking some palace in the Riviera, Spain, or perhaps Algiers, there, for the present at least, to make my home.

I started from Calais toward the end of April, taking my things along, the first two days by train, and then determining that I was in no hurry, and a petrol motor easier, took one, and maintained a generally southern and somewhat eastern direction, ever-anew astonished at the wildness of the forest vegetation which, within so short a space since the disappearance of man, chokes this pleasant land, even before the definite advent of summer.

After three weeks of very slow travelling — for though I know several countries very well, France with her pavered villages, hilly character, vines, forests, and primeval country-manner, is always new and charming to me — after three weeks I came unexpectedly to a valley which had never entered my head; and the moment that I saw it, I said: ‘Here I will live,’ though I had no idea what it was, for the monastery which I saw did not look at all like a monastery, according to my ideas: but when I searched the map, I discovered that it must be La Chartreuse de Vauclaire in Périgord.

It is my belief that this word ‘Vauclaire’ is nothing else than a corruption of the Latin *Vallis Clara*, or Bright Valley, for *l*’s and *u*’s did interchange about in this way, I remember: *cheval* becoming *chevau(x)* in the plural, like ‘fool’ and ‘fou,’ and the rest: which proves the dear laziness of French people, for the ‘l’ was too much trouble for them to sing, and when they came to *two* ‘l’s’ they quite succumbed, shying that vault, or voute, and calling it some *y*. But at any rate, this Vauclaire, or Valclear, was well named: for here, if anywhere, is Paradise, and if anyone knew how and where to build and brew liqueurs, it was those good old monks, who followed their Master with *entrain* in that Cana miracle, and in many other

things, I fancy, but aesthetically shirked to say to any mountain: 'Be thou removed.'

The general hue of the vale is a deep cerulean, resembling that blue of the robes of Albertinelli's Madonnas; so, at least, it strikes the eye on a clear forenoon of spring or summer. The monastery consists of an oblong space, or garth, around three sides of which stand sixteen small houses, with regular intervals between, all identical, the cells of the fathers; between the oblong space and the cells come the cloisters, with only one opening to the exterior; in the western part of the oblong is a little square of earth under a large cypress-shade, within which, as in a home of peace, it sleeps: and there, straight and slanting, stand little plain black crosses over graves....

To the west of the quadrangle is the church, with the hostelry, and an asphalted court with some trees and a fountain; and beyond, the entrance-gate.

All this stands on a hill of gentle slope, green as grass; and it is backed close against a steep mountain-side, of which the tree-trunks are conjectural, for I never saw any, the trees resembling rather one continuous leafy tree-top, run out high and far over the extent of the mountain.

I was there four months, till something drove me away. I do not know what had become of the fathers and brothers, for I only found five, four of whom I took in two journeys in the motor beyond the church of Saint Martial d'Artenset, and left them there; and the fifth remained three weeks with me, for I would not disturb him in his prayer. He was a bearded brother of forty years or thereabouts, who knelt in his cell robed and hooded in all his phantom white: for in no way different from whatever is most phantom, visionary and eerie must a procession of these people have seemed by

gloaming, or dark night This particular brother knelt, I say, in his small chaste room, glaring upward at his Christ, who hung long-armed in a little recess between the side of three narrow bookshelves and a projection of the wall; and under the Christ a gilt and blue Madonna; the books on the three shelves few, leaning different ways. His right elbow rested on a square plain table, at which was a wooden chair; behind him, in a corner, the bed: a bed all enclosed in dark boards, a broad perpendicular board along the foot, reaching the ceiling, a horizontal board at the side over which he got into bed, another narrower one like it at the ceiling for fringe and curtain, and another perpendicular one hiding the pillow, making the clean bed within a very shady and cosy little den, on the wall of this den being another smaller Christ and a little picture. On the perpendicular board at the foot hung two white garments, and over a second chair at the bed-side another: all very neat and holy. He was a large stern man, blond as corn, but with some red, too, in his hairy beard; and appalling was the significance of those eyes that prayed, and the long-drawn cavity of those saffron cheeks. I cannot explain to myself my deep reverence for this man; but I had it, certainly. Many of the others, it is clear, had fled: but not he: and to the near-marching cloud he opposed the Cross, holding one real as the other — he alone among many. For Christianity was an *élite* religion, in which all were called, but few chosen, differing from Mohammedanism and Buddhism, which grasped and conquered all within their reach: the effect of Christ rather resembling Plato's and Dante's, it would seem: but Mahomet's more like Homer's and Shakespeare's.

It was my way to plant at the portal the big, carved chair from the chancel on the hot days, and rest my soul, refusing to think of anything, drowsing and smoking for hours. All down there in the plain waved gardens of delicious fruit about the prolonged silver thread of the river Isle, whose

course winds loitering quite near the foot of the monastery-slope. This slope dominates a tract of distance that is not only vast, but looks immense, although the horizon is bounded by a semicircle of low hills, rather too stiff and uniform for perfect beauty; the interval of plain being occupied by yellow ploughed lands which were never sown, weedy now, and crossed and recrossed by vividly-green ribbons of vine, with stretches of pale-green lucerne, orchards, and the white village of Monpont near the railway, all embowered, the Isle drawing its mercurial streams through the village-meadow, which is dark with shades of oaks: and to have played there a boy, and used it familiarly from birth as one's own hand or foot, must have been very sweet and homely; after this, the river divides, and takes the shape of a heart; and very far away are visible the grey banks of the Gironde. On the semicircle of hills, when there was little distance-mist, I saw the ruins of some seigneurial château, for the seigneurs, too, knew where to build; and to my left, between a clump of oaks and an avenue of poplars, the bell-tower of the village — church of Saint Martial d'Artenset — a very ancient type of tower, I believe, and common in France, rather ponderous, consisting of a square mass with a smaller square mass stuck on, the latter having large Gothic windows; and behind me the west face of the monastery-church, over the door being the statue of Saint Bruno.

Well, one morning after four months, I opened my eyes in my cell to the piercing consciousness that I had burned Monpont over-night: and so overcome was I with regret for this poor inoffensive little place, that for two days, hardly eating, I paced between the oak and walnut pews of the nave, massive stalls they are, separated by grooved Corinthian pilasters, wondering what was to become of me, and if I was not already mad; and there are some little angels with extraordinarily human Greuze-like faces, supporting the nerves of the apse, which, after a time, every time I passed

them, seemed conscious of me and my existence there; and the wood-work which ornaments the length of the nave, and of the choir also, elaborate with carved marguerites and roses, here and there took in my eyes significant forms from certain points of view; and there is a partition — for the nave is divided into two chapels, one for the brothers and one for the fathers, I conclude — and in this partition a massive door, which yet looks quite light and graceful, carved with oak and acanthus leaves, and every time I passed through I had the impression that the door was a sentient thing, subconscious of me; and the delicate Italian-Renaissance brick vault which springs from the vast nave seemed to look upon me with a gloomy knowledge of me, and of the heart within me; and at about four in the afternoon of the second day, after pacing the church for hours, I fell down at one of the two altars near that carved door of the screen, praying God to have mercy upon my soul; and in the very midst of my praying, I was up and away, the devil in me, and I got into the motor, and did not come back to Vauclaire for another month, and came leaving great tracts of burned desolation behind me, towns and forests, Bordeaux burned, Lebourne burned, Bergerac burned.

I returned to Vauclaire, for it seemed now my home; and there I experienced a true, a deep repentance; and I humbled myself before my Maker. And while in this state, sitting one bright day in front of the monastery-gate, something said to me: ‘You will never be a good man, nor permanently escape Hell and Frenzy, unless you have an aim in life, devoting yourself heart and soul to some great work, which will exact all your science, your thought, your ingenuity, your knowledge of modern things, your strength of body and will, your skill of head and hand: otherwise you are bound to succumb. Do this, therefore, beginning, not to-

morrow nor this afternoon, but now: for though no man will see your work, there is still the Almighty God, who is also something, in His way: and He will see how you strive, and try, and groan: and perhaps, seeing, He may have mercy upon you.'

In this way arose the idea of the Palace — an idea, indeed, which had entered my brain before, but merely as a bombastic and visionary outcome of my raving moods: now, however, in a very different way, soberly, and soon concerning itself with details, difficulties, means, limitations, and every kind of practical matter-of-fact; and every obstruction which, one by one, I foresaw was, one by one, as the days passed, over-borne by the vigour with which that thought, rapidly becoming a mania, possessed me. After a week of incessant meditation, I decided Yes: and I said: I will build a palace, which shall be both a palace and a temple: the first human temple worthy the King of Heaven, and the only human palace worthy the King of Earth.

After this decision I remained at Vauclaire another week, a very different man to the loungeur it had seen, strenuous, converted, humble, making plans of this and of that, of the detail, and of the whole, drawing, multiplying, dividing, adding, conic sections and the rule-of-three, totting up the period of building, which came out at a little over twelve years, estimating the quantities of material, weight and bulk, my nights full of nightmare as to the *sort*, deciding as to the size and structure of the crane, forge, and workshop, and the necessarily-limited weights of their component parts, making a list of over 2,400 objects, and finally, up to the third week after my departure from Vauclaire, skimming through the topography of nearly the whole earth, before fixing upon the island of Imbros for my site.

I returned to England, and, once more, to the hollow windows and strewn streets of black, burned-out and desolate London: for its bank-vaults, etc., contained the necessary complement of the gold brought from Paris, and then lying in the *Speranza* at Dover; nor had I sufficient familiarity with French industries and methods to find, even with the aid of *Bottins*, one half of the 4,000 odd objects which I had now catalogued. My ship was the *Speranza*, which brought me from Havre, for at Calais, to which I first went, I could find nothing suitable for all purposes, the *Speranza* being an American yacht, very palatially fitted, three-masted, air-driven, with a carrying capacity of 2,000 tons, Tobin-bronzed, in good condition, containing sixteen interacting tanks, with a five-block pulley-arrangement amid-ships that enables me to lift very considerable weights without the aid of the hoisting air-engine, high in the water, sharp, handsome, containing a few tons only of sand-ballast, and needing when I found her only three days' work at the water-line and engines to make her decent and fit. I threw out her dead, backed her from the Outer to the Inner Basin to my train on the quai, took in the twenty-three hundred-weight bags of gold, and the half-ton of amber, and with this alone went to Dover, thence to Canterbury by motor, and thence in a long train, with a store of dynamite from the Castle for blasting possible obstructions, to London: meaning to make Dover my *dépôt*, and the London rails my thoroughfare from all parts of the country.

Instead of three months, as I had calculated, it took me nine: a harrowing slavery. I had to blast no less than forty-three trains from the path of my loaded wagons, several times blasting away the metals as well, and then having to travel hundreds of yards without metals: for the labour of kindling the obstructing engines, to shunt them down sidings perhaps distant, was a

thing which I would not undertake. However, all's well that ends well, though if I had it to go through again, certainly I should not. The *Speranza* is now lying seven miles off Cape Roca, a heavy mist on the still water, this being the 19th of June at 10 in the night: no wind, no moon: cabin full of mist: and I pretty listless and disappointed, wondering in my heart why I was such a fool as to take all that trouble, nine long servile months, my good God, and now seriously thinking of throwing the whole vile thing to the devil; she pretty deep in the water, pregnant with the palace. When the thirty-three ...

Those words: 'when the thirty-three' were written by me over seventeen years since — long years — seventeen in number, nor have I now any idea to what they refer. The book in which I wrote I had lost in the cabin of the *Speranza*, and yesterday, returning to Imbros from an hour's aimless cruise, discovered it there behind a chest.

I find now considerable difficulty in guiding the pencil, and these few lines now written have quite an odd look, like the handwriting of a man not very proficient in the art: it is seventeen years, seventeen, seventeen ... ah! And the expression of my ideas is not fluent either: I have to think for the word a minute, and I should not be surprised if the spelling of some of them is queer. My brain has been thinking inarticulately perhaps, all these years: and the English words and letters, as they now stand written, have rather an improbable and foreign air to me, as a Greek or Russian book might look to a man who has not so long been learning those languages as to forget the

impossibly foreign impression received from them on the first day of tackling them. Or perhaps it is only my fancy: for that I have fancies I know.

But what to write? The history of those seventeen years could not be put down, my good God: at least, it would take me seventeen more to do it. If I were to detail the building of the palace alone, and how it killed me nearly, and how I twice fled from it, and had to return, and became its bounden slave, and dreamed of it, and grovelled before it, and prayed, and raved, and rolled; and how I forgot to make provision on the west side for the contraction and expansion of the gold in the colder weather and the heats of summer, and had to break down nine months' work, and how I cursed Thee, how I cursed Thee; and how the lake of wine evaporated faster than the conduits replenished it, and the three journeys which I had to take to Constantinople for shiploads of wine, and my frothing despairs, till I had the thought of placing the reservoir in the platform; and how I had then to break down the south side of the platform to the very bottom, and of the month-long nightmare of terror that I had lest the south side of the palace would undergo subsidence; and how the petrol failed, and of the three-weeks' search for petrol along the coast; and how, after list-rubbing all the jet, I found that I had forgotten the necessary rouge for polishing; and how, in the third year, I found the fluate, which I had for water-proofing the pores of the platform-stone, nearly all leaked away in the *Speranza's* hold, and I had to get silicate of soda at Gallipoli; and how, after two years' observation, I had to come to the conclusion that the lake was leaking, and discovered that this Imbros sand was not suitable for mixing with the skin of Portland cement which covered the cement concrete, and had to substitute sheet-bitumen in three places; and how I did all, all for the sake of God, thinking: 'I will work, and be a good man, and cast Hell from me:

and when I see it stand finished, it will be an Altar and a Testimony to me, and I shall find peace, and be well': and how I have been cheated — seventeen years, long years of my life — for there is no God; and how my plasterers'-hair failed me, and I had to use flock, hessian, scrym, wadding, wood-street paving-blocks, and whatever I could find, for filling the interspaces between the platform cross-walls; and of the espagnolette bolts, how a number of them mysteriously disappeared, as if snatched to Hell by harpies, and I had to make them; and how the crane-chain would not reach two of the silver-panel castings when they were finished, and they were too heavy for me to lift, and the wringing of the hands of my despair, and my biting of the earth, and the transport of my fury; and how, for a whole wild week, I searched in vain for the text-book which describes the ambering process; and how, when all was nearly over, in the blasting away of the forge and crane with dynamite, a long crack appeared down the gold of the east platform-steps, and how I would not be consoled, but mourned and mourned; and how, in spite of all my tribulations, it was sweetly interesting to watch my power slowly grow from the first feeble beginnings of the landing of materials and unloading them from the motor, a hundred-weight at a time, till I could swing four tons — see the solid metals flow — enjoy the gliding sounds of the handle, crank-shaft, and system of levers, forcing inwards the mould-end, and the upper and lower plungers, for pressing the material — build at ease in a travelling-cage — and watch from my hut-door through sleepless hours, under the electric moonlight of this land, the three piles of gold stones, the silver panels, the two-foot squares of jet, and be comforted; and how the putty-wash — but it is past, it is past: and not to live over again that vulgar nightmare of means and ends have I taken to this writing again — but to put down something else, if I dare.

Seventeen years, my good God, of that delusion! I could write down no sort of explanation for all those groans and griefs, at which a reasoning being would not shriek with laughter. I should have lived at ease in some palace of the Middle-Orient, and burned my cities: but no, I must be ‘a good man’ — vain thought. The words of a wild madman, that preaching man in England who prophesied what happened, were with me, where he says: ‘the defeat of Man is *His* defeat’; and I said to myself: ‘Well, the last man shall not be quite a fiend, just to spite That Other.’ And I worked and groaned, saying: ‘I will be a good man, and burn nothing, nor utter aught unseemly, nor debauch myself, but choke back the blasphemies that Those Others shriek through my throat, and build and build, with moils and groans.’ And it was Vanity: though I do love the house, too, I love it well, for it is my home on the waste earth.

I had calculated to finish it in twelve years, and I should undoubtedly have finished it in fourteen, instead of in sixteen and seven months, but one day, when the south, north, and east platform-steps were already finished — it was in the July of the third year, and near sunset — as I left off work, instead of going to the tent where my dinner lay ready, I walked down to the ship — most strangely — in a daft, mechanical sort of way, without saying a word to myself, an evil-meaning smile of malice on my lips; and at midnight I was lying off Mitylene, thirty miles to the south, having bid, as I thought, a last farewell to all those toils. I was going to burn Athens.

I did not, however: but kept on my way westward round Cape Matapan, intending to destroy the forests and towns of Sicily, if I found there a suitable motor for travelling, for I had not been at the pains to take the motor on board at Imbros; otherwise I would ravage parts of southern Italy. But when I came thereabouts, I was confronted with an awful horror: for no southern Italy was there, and no Sicily was there, unless a small new island,

probably not five miles long, was Sicily; and nothing else I saw, save the still-smoking crater of Stromboli. I cruised northward, searching for land, and for a long time would not believe the evidence of the instruments, thinking that they wilfully misled me, or I stark mad. But no: no Italy was there, till I came to the latitude of Naples, it, too, having disappeared, engulfed, engulfed, all that stretch. From this monstrous thing I received so solemn a shock and mood of awe, that the evil mind in me was quite chilled and quelled: for it was, and is, my belief that a wide-spread re-arrangement of the earth's surface is being purposed, and in all that drama, O my God, how shall *I* be found?

However, I went on my way, but more leisurely, not daring for a long time to do anything, lest I might offend anyone; and, in this foolish cowering mind, coasted all the western coast of Spain and France during five weeks, in that prolonged intensity of calm weather which now alternates with storms that transcend all thought, till I came again to Calais: and there, for the first time, landed.

Here I would no longer contain myself, but burned; and that magnificent stretch of forest that lay between Agincourt and Abbéville, covering five square miles, I burned; and Abbéville I burned; and Amiens I burned; and three forests between Amiens and Paris I burned; and Paris I burned; burning and burning during four months, leaving behind me smoking districts, a long tract of ravage, like some being of the Pit that blights where pass his flaming wings.

This of city-burning has now become a habit with me more enchaining — and infinitely more debased — than ever was opium to the smoker, or alcohol to the drunkard. I count it among the prime necessities of my life: it is my brandy, my bacchanal, my secret sin. I have burned Calcutta, Pekin,

and San Francisco. In spite of the restraining influence of this palace, I have burned and burned. I have burned two hundred cities and countrysides. Like Leviathan disporting himself in the sea, so I have rioted in this earth.

After an absence of six months, I returned to Imbros: for I was for looking again upon the work which I had done, that I might mock myself for all that unkingly grovelling: and when I saw it, standing there as I had left it, frustrate and forlorn, and waiting its maker's hand, some pity and instinct to build took me — for something of God was in Man — and I fell upon my knees, and spread my arms to God, and was converted, promising to finish the palace, with prayers that as I built so He would build my soul, and save the last man from the enemy. And I set to work that day to list-rub the last few dalles of the jet.

I did not leave Imbros after that during four years, except for occasional brief trips to the coast — to Kilid-Bahr, Gallipoli, Lapsaki, Gamos, Rodosto, Erdek, Erekli, or even once to Constantinople and Scutari — if I happened to want anything, or if I was tired of work: but without once doing the least harm to anything, but containing my humours, and fearing my Maker. And full of peaceful charm were those little cruises through this Levantic world, which, truly, is rather like a light sketch in water-colours done by an angel than like the dun real earth; and full of self-satisfaction and pious contentment would I return to Imbros, approved of my conscience, for that I had surmounted temptation, and lived tame and stainless.

I had set up the southern of the two closed-lotus pillars, and the platform-top was already looking as lovely as heaven, with its alternate two-foot squares of pellucid gold and pellucid jet, when I noticed one

morning that the *Speranza*'s bottom was really now too foul, and the whim took me then and there to leave all, and clean her as far as I could. I at once went on board, descended to the hold, took off my sudeyrie, and began to shift the ballast over to starboard, so as to tilt up her port bottom to the scraper. This was wearying labour, and about noon I was sitting on a bag, resting in the almost darkness, when something seemed to whisper to me these words: '*You dreamed last night that there is an old Chinaman alive in Peking.*' Horridly I started: I *had* dreamed something of the sort, but, from the moment of waking, till then, had forgotten it: and I leapt livid to my feet.

I cleaned no *Speranza* that day, nor for four days did I anything, but sat on the cabin-house and mused, my supporting palm among the hairy draperies of my chin: for the thought of such a thing, if it could by any possibility be true, was detestable as death to me, changing the colour of the sun, and the whole aspect of the world: and anon, at the outrage of that thing, my brow would flush with wrath, and my eyes blaze: till, on the fourth afternoon, I said to myself: 'That old Chinaman in Peking is likely to get burned to death, I think, or blown to the clouds!'

So, a second time, on the 4th March, the poor palace was left to build itself. For, after a short trip to Gallipoli, where I got some young lime-twigs in boxes of earth, and some preserved limes and ginger, I set out for a long voyage to the East, passing through the Suez Canal, and visiting Bombay, where I was three weeks, and then destroyed it.

I had the thought of going across Hindustan by engine, but did not like to leave my ship, to which I was very attached, not sure of finding anything so suitable and good at Calcutta; and, moreover, I was afraid to abandon my

petrol motor, which I had taken on board with the air-windlass, since I was going to uncivilised land. I therefore coasted down western Hindustan.

All that northern shore of the Arabian Sea has at the present time an odour which it wafts far over the water, resembling odours of happy vague dream-lands, sweet to smell in the early mornings as if the earth were nothing but a perfume, and life an inhalation.

On that voyage, however, I had, from beginning to end, twenty-seven fearful storms, or, if I count that one near the Carolines, then twenty-eight. But I do not wish to write of these rages: they were too inhuman: and how I came alive through them against all my wildest hope, Someone, or Something, only knows.

I will write down here a thing: it is this, my God — something which I have observed: a definite obstreperousness in the mood of the elements now, when once roused, which grows, which grows continually. Tempests have become very very far more wrathful, the sea more truculent and unbounded in its insolence; when it thunders, it thunders with a venom new to me, cracking as though it would split the firmament, and bawling through the heaven of heavens, as if roaring to devour all things; in Bombay once, and in China thrice, I was shaken by earthquakes, the second and third marked by a certain extravagance of agitation, that might turn a man grey. Why should this be, my God? I remember reading very long ago that on the American prairies, which from time immemorial had been swept by great storms, the storms gradually subsided when man went to reside permanently there. If this be true, it would seem that the mere presence of man had a certain subduing or mesmerising effect upon the native turbulence of Nature, and his absence now may have removed the curb. It is my belief that within fifty years from now the huge forces of the earth will be let fully loose to tumble as they will; and this planet will become one of

the undisputed playgrounds of Hell, and the theatre of commotions stupendous as those witnessed on the face of Saturn.

The Earth is all on my brain, on my brain, O dark-minded Mother, with thy passionate cravings after the Infinite, thy regrets, and mighty griefs, and comatose sleeps, and sinister coming doom, O Earth: and I, poor man, though a king, sole witness of thy bleak tremendous woes. Upon her I brood, and do not cease, but brood and brood — the habit, if I remember right, first becoming fixed and fated during that long voyage eastward: for what is in store for her God only knows, and I have seen in my broodings long visions of her future, which, if a man should see with the eye of flesh, he would spread the arms, and wheel and wheel through the mazes of a hiccuping giggling frenzy, for the vision only is the very verge of madness. If I might cease but for one hour that perpetual brooding upon her! But I am her child, and my mind grows and grows to her like the off-shoots of the banyan-tree, that take root downward, and she sucks and draws it, as she draws my feet by gravitation, and I cannot take wing from her: for she is greater than I, and there is no escaping her; and at the last, I know, my soul will dash itself to ruin, like erring sea-fowl upon pharos-lights, against her wild and mighty bosom. Often a whole night through I lie open-eyed in the dark, with bursting brain, thinking of that hollow Gulf of Mexico, how identical in shape and size with the protuberance of Africa just opposite, and how the protuberance of the Venezuelan and Brazilian coast fits in with the in-curve of Africa: so that it is obvious to me — it is quite *obvious* — that they once were one; and one night rushed so far apart; and the wild Atlantic knew that thing, and ran gladly, hasting in between: and how if eye of flesh had been there to see, and ear to hear that cruel thundering, my God, my God — what horror! And if now they meet again, so long apart

...but that way fury lies. Yet one cannot help but think: I lie awake and think, for she fills my soul, and absorbs it, with all her moods and ways. She has meanings, secrets, plans. Strange, strange, for instance, that similarity between the scheme of Europe and the scheme of Asia: each with three southern peninsulas pointing south: Spain corresponding with Arabia, Italy with India, the Morea and Greece, divided by the Gulf of Corinth, corresponding with the Malay Peninsula and Annam, divided by the Gulf of Siam; each with two northern peninsulas pointing south, Sweden and Norway, and Korea and Kamschatka; each with two great islands similarly placed, Britain and Ireland, and the Japanese Hondo and Yezo; the Old World and the New has each a peninsula pointing north — Denmark and Yucatan: a forefinger with long nail — and a thumb — pointing to the Pole. What does she mean? What can she mean, O Ye that made her? Is she herself a living being, with a will and a fate, as sailors said that ships were living entities? And that thing that wheeled at the Pole, wheels it still yonder, yonder, in its dark ecstasy? Strange that volcanoes are all near the sea: I don't know why; I don't think that anyone ever knew. This fact, in connection with submarine explosions, used to be cited in support of the chemical theory of volcanoes, which supposed the infiltration of the sea into ravines containing the materials which form the fuel of eruptions: but God knows if that is true. The lofty ones are intermittent — a century, two, ten, of silent waiting, and then their talk silenced for ever some poor district; the low ones are constant in action. Who could know the dark way of the world? Sometimes they form a linear system, consisting of several vents which extend in one direction, near together, like chimneys of some long foundry beneath. In mountains, a series of serrated peaks denotes the presence of dolomites; rounded heads mean calcareous rocks; and needles, crystalline schists. The preponderance of land in the northern hemisphere

denotes the greater intensity there of the causes of elevation at a remote geologic epoch: that is all that one can say about it: but whence that greater intensity? I have some knowledge of the earth for only ten miles down: but she has eight thousand miles: and whether through all that depth she is flame or fluid, hard or soft, I do not know, I do not know. Her method of forming coal, geysers and hot sulphur-springs, and the jewels, and the atolls and coral reefs; the metamorphic rocks of sedimentary origin, like gneiss, the plutonic and volcanic rocks, rocks of fusion, and the unstratified masses which constitute the basis of the crust; and harvests, the burning flame of flowers, and the passage from the vegetable to the animal: I do not know them, but they are of her, and they are like me, molten in the same furnace of her fiery heart. She is dark and moody, sudden and ill-fated, and rends her young like a cannibal lioness; and she is old and wise, and remembers Hur of the Chaldees which Uruk built, and that Temple of Bel which rose in seven pyramids to symbolise the planets, and Birs-i-Nimrud, and Haran, and she bears still, as a thing of yesterday, old Persepolis and the tomb of Cyrus, and those cloister-like vihârah-temples of the ancient Buddhists, cut from the Himalayan rock; and returning from the Far East, I stopped at Ismailia, and so to Cairo, and saw where Memphis was, and stood one bright midnight before that great pyramid of Shafra, and that dumb Sphynx, and, seated at the well of one of the rock-tombs, looked till tears of pity streamed down my cheeks: for great is the earth, and her Ages, but man 'passeth away.' These tombs have pillars extremely like the two palace-pillars, only that these are round, and mine are square: for I chose it so: but the same band near the top, then over this the closed lotus-flower, then the small square plinth, which separates them from the architrave, only mine have no architrave; the tombs consist of a little outer temple or court, then comes a well, and inside another chamber, where, I suppose, the dead were,

a ribbon-like astragal surrounding the walls, which are crowned with boldly-projecting cornices, surmounted by an abacus. And here, till the pressing want of food drove me back, I remained: for more and more the earth over-grows me, woos me, assimilates me; so that I ask myself this question: ‘Must I not, in time, cease to be a man, and become a small earth, precisely her copy, extravagantly weird and fierce, half-demoniac, half-ferine, wholly mystic — morose and turbulent — fitful, and deranged, and sad — like her?’

A whole month of that voyage, from May the 15th to June the 13th, I wasted at the Andaman Islands near Malay: for that any old Chinaman could be alive in Pekin began, after some time, to seem the most quixotic notion that ever entered a human brain; and these jungled islands, to which I came after a shocking vast orgy one night at Calcutta, when I fired not only the city but the river, pleased my fancy to such an extent, that at one time I intended to abide there. I was at the one called in the chart ‘Saddle Hill,’ the smallest of them, I think: and seldom have I had such sensations of peace as I lay a whole burning day in a rising vale, deeply-shaded in palm and tropical ranknesses, watching thence the *Speranza* at anchor: for there was a little offing here at the shore whence the valley arose, and I could see one of its long peaks lined with cocoanut-trees, and all cloud burned out of the sky except the flimsiest lawn-figments, and the sea as absolutely calm as a lake roughened with breezes, yet making a considerable noise in its breaking on the shore, as I have noticed in these sorts of places: I do not know why. These poor Andaman people seem to have been quite savage, for I met a number of them in roaming the island, nearly skeletons, yet with limbs and vertebrae still, in general, cohering, and in some cases dry-skinned and mummified relics of flesh, and never anywhere a sign of clothes: a very

singular thing, considering their nearness to high old civilisations all about them. They looked small and black, or almost; and I never found a man without finding on or near him a spear and other weapons: so that they were eager folk, and the wayward dark earth was in them, too, as she should be in her children. They had in many cases some reddish discoloration, which may have been the traces of betel-nut stains: for betel-nuts abound there. And I was so pleased with these people, that I took on board with the gig one of their little tree-canoes: which was my foolishness: for gig and canoe were only three nights later washed from the decks into the middle of the sea.

I passed down the Straits of Malacca, and in that short distance between the Andaman Islands, and the S.W. corner of Borneo I was thrice so mauled, that at times it seemed quite out of the question that anything built by man could escape such unfettered cataclysms, and I resigned myself, but with bitter reproaches, to perish darkly. The effect of the third upon me, when it was over, was the unloosening afresh of all my evil passion: for I said: ‘Since they mean to slay me, death shall find me rebellious’; and for weeks I could not sight some specially happy village, or umbrageous spread of woodland, that I did not stop the ship, and land the materials for their destruction; so that nearly all those spicy lands about the north of Australia will bear the traces of my hand for many a year: for more and more my voyage became dawdling and zigzagged, as the merest whim directed it, or the movement of the pointer on the chart; and I thought of eating the lotus of surcease and nepenthe in some enchanted nook of this bowering summer, where from my hut-door I could see through the pearl-hues of opium the sea-lagoon slaver lazily upon the old coral atol, and the cocoanut-tree would droop like slumber, and the bread-fruit tree would moan in sweet and weary

dream, and I should watch the *Speranza* lie anchored in the pale atol-lake, year after year, and wonder what she was, and whence, and why she dozed so deep for ever, and after an age of melancholy peace and burdened bliss, I should note that sun and moon had ceased revolving, and hung inert, opening anon a heavy lid to doze and drowse again, and God would sigh 'Enough,' and nod, and Being would swoon to sleep: for that any old Chinaman should be alive in Pekin was a thing so fantastically maniac, as to draw from me at times sudden fits of wild red laughter that left me faint.

During a space of four months, from the 18th June to the 23rd October, I visited the Fijis, where I saw skulls still surrounded with remnants of extraordinary haloes of stiff hair, women clad in girdles made of thongs fixed in a belt, and, in Samoa near, bodies crowned with coronets of nautilus-shell, and traces of turmeric-paint and tattooing, and in one townlet a great assemblage of carcasses, suggesting by their look some festival, or dance: so that I believe that these people were overthrown without the least fore-knowledge of anything. The women of the Maoris wore an abundance of green-jade ornaments, and I found a peculiar kind of shell-trumpet, one of which I have now, also a tattooing chisel, and a nicely-carved wooden bowl. The people of New Caledonia, on the other hand, went, I should think, naked, confining their attention to the hair, and in this resembling the Fijians, for they seemed to wear an artificial hair made of the fur of some creature like a bat, and also they wore wooden masks, and great rings — for the ear, no doubt — which must have fallen to the shoulders: for the earth was in them all, and made them wild, perverse and various like herself. I went from one to the other without any system whatever, searching for the ideal resting-place, and often thinking that I had found it: but only wearying of it at the thought that there was a yet deeper and dreamier in the world.

But in this search I received a check, my God, which chilled me to the marrow, and set me flying from these places.

One evening, the 29th November, I dined rather late — at eight — sitting, as was my custom in calm weather, cross-legged on the cabin-rug at the port aft corner, a small semicircle of *Speranza* gold-plate before me, and near above me the red-shaded lamp with green conical reservoir, whose creakings never cease in the stillest mid-sea, and beyond the plates the array of preserved soups, meat-extracts, meats, fruit, sweets, wines, nuts, liqueurs, coffee on the silver spirit-tripod, glasses, cruet, and so on, which it was always my first care to select from the store-room, open, and lay out once for all in the morning on rising. I was late, seven being my hour: for on that day I had been engaged in the occasionally necessary, but always deferred, task of overhauling the ship, brushing here a rope with tar, there a board with paint, there a crank with oil, rubbing a door-handle, a brass-fitting, filling the three cabin-lamps, dusting mirrors and furniture, dashing the great neat-joined plains of deck with bucketfulls, or, high in air, chopping loose with its rigging the mizzen top-mast, which since a month was sprained at the clamps, all this in cotton drawers under loose *quamis*, bare-footed, my beard knotted up, the sun a-blaze, the sea smooth and pale with the smooth pallor of strong currents, the ship still enough, no land in sight, yet great tracts of sea-weed making eastward — I working from 11 A.M. till near 7, when sudden darkness interrupted: for I wished to have it all over in one obnoxious day. I was therefore very tired when I went down, lit the central chain-lever lamp and my own two, washed and dressed in my bedroom, and sat to dinner in the dining-hall corner. I ate voraciously, with sweat, as usual, pouring down my eager brow, using knife or spoon in the right hand, but never the Western fork, licking the plates clean in the

Mohammedan manner, and drinking pretty freely. Still I was tired, and went upon deck, where I had the threadbare blue-velvet easy-chair with the broken left arm before the wheel, and in it sat smoking cigar after cigar from the Indian D box, half-asleep, yet conscious. The moon came up into a pretty cloudless sky, and she was bright, but not bright enough to out-shine the enlightened flight of the ocean, which that night was one continuous swamp of Jack-o'-lantern phosphorescence, a wild but faint luminosity mingled with stars and flashes of brilliance, the whole trooping unanimously eastward, as if in haste with elfin momentous purpose, a boundless congregation, in the sweep of a strong oceanic current. I could hear it, in my slumbrous lassitude, struggling and gurgling at the tied rudder, and making wet sloppy noises under the sheer of the poop; and I was aware that the *Speranza* was gliding along pretty fast, drawn into that procession, probably at the rate of four to six knots: but I did not care, knowing very well that no land was within two hundred miles of my bows, for I was in longitude 173°, in the latitude of Fiji and the Society Islands, between those two: and after a time the cigar drooped and dropped from my mouth, and sleep overcame me, and I slept there, in the lap of the Infinite.

So that something preserves me, Something, Someone: *and for what?* ... If I had slept in the cabin, I must most certainly have perished: for lying there on the poop, I dreamed a dream which once I had dreamed on the ice, far, far yonder in the forgotten hyperborean North: that I was in an Arabian paradise, a Garden of Peaches; and I had a very long vision of it, for I walked among the trees, and picked the fruit, and pressed the blossoms to my nostrils with breathless inhalations of love: till a horrible sickness woke me: and when I opened my eyes, the night was black, the moon gone down, everything wet with dew, the sky arrayed with most glorious stars like a

thronged bazaar of tiaraed rajahs and begums with spangled trains, and all the air fragrant with that mortal scent; and high and wide uplifted before me — stretching from the northern to the southern limit — a row of eight or nine inflamed smokes, as from the chimneys of some Cyclopean foundry at work all night, most solemn, most great and dreadful in the solemn night: eight or nine, I should say, or it might be seven, or it might be ten, for I did not count them; and from those craters puffed up gusts of encrimsoned material, here a gust and there a gust, with tinselled fumes that convolved upon themselves, and sparks and flashes, all veiled in a garish haze of light: for the foundry worked, though languidly; and upon a rocky land four miles ahead, which no chart had ever marked, the *Speranza* drove straight with the current of the phosphorus sea.

As I rose, I fell flat: and what I did thereafter I did in a state of existence whose acts, to the waking mind, appear unreal as dream. I must at once, I think, have been conscious that here was the cause of the destruction of mankind; that it still surrounded its own neighbourhood with poisonous fumes; and that I was approaching it. I must have somehow crawled, or dragged myself forward. There is an impression on my mind that it was a purple land of pure porphyry; there is some faint memory, or dream, of hearing a long-drawn booming of waves upon its crags: I do not know whence I have them. I think that I remember retching with desperate jerks of the travailing intestines; also that I was on my face as I moved the regulator in the engine-room: but any recollection of going down the stairs, or of coming up again, I have not. Happily, the wheel was tied, the rudder hard to port, and as the ship moved, she must, therefore, have turned; and I must have been back to untie the wheel in good time, for when my senses came, I was lying there, my head against the under gimbal, one foot on a spoke of the wheel, no land in sight, and morning breaking.

This made me so sick, that for either two or three days I lay without eating in the chair near the wheel, only rarely waking to sufficient sense to see to it that she was making westward from that place; and on the morning when I finally roused myself I did not know whether it was the second or the third morning: so that my calendar, so scrupulously kept, may be a day out, for to this day I have never been at the pains to ascertain whether I am here writing now on the 5th or the 6th of June.

Well, on the fourth, or the fifth, evening after this, just as the sun was sinking beyond the rim of the sea, I happened to look where he hung motionless on the starboard bow: and there I saw a clean-cut black-green spot against his red — a most unusual sight here and now — a ship: a poor thing, as it turned out when I got near her, without any sign of mast, heavily water-logged, some relics of old rigging hanging over, even her bowsprit apparently broken in the middle (though I could not see it), and she nothing more than a hirsute green mass of old weeds and sea-things from bowsprit-tip to poop, and from bulwarks to water-line, stout as a hedgehog, only awaiting there the next high sea to founder.

It being near my dinner-hour and night's rest, I stopped the *Speranza* some fifteen yards from her, and commenced to pace my spacious poop, as usual, before eating; and as I paced, I would glance at her, wondering at her destiny, and who were the human men that had lived on her, their Christian names, and family names, their age, and thought, and way of life, and beards; till the desire arose within me to go to her, and see; and I threw off my outer garments, uncovered and unroped the cedar cutter — the only boat, except the air-pinnace, left to me intact — and got her down by the mizzen five-block pulley-system. But it was a ridiculous nonsense, for having paddled to her, I was thrown into paroxysms of rage by repeated

failures to scale her bulwarks, low as they were; my hands, indeed, could reach, but I found no hold upon the slimy mass, and three rope-ends which I caught were also untenably slippery: so that I jerked always back into the boat, my clothes a mass of filth, and the only thought in my blazing brain a twenty-pound charge of guncotton, of which I had plenty, to blow her to uttermost Hell. I had to return to the *Speranza*, get a half-inch rope, then back to the other, for I would not be balked in such a way, though now the dark was come, only slightly tempered by a half-moon, and I getting hungry, and from minute to minute more fiendishly ferocious. Finally, by dint of throwing, I got the rope-loop round a mast-stump, drew myself up, and made fast the boat, my left hand cut by some cursed shell: and all for what? the imperiousness of a whim. The faint moonlight shewed an ample tract of deck, invisible in most parts under rolled beds of putrid seaweed, and no bodies, and nothing but a concave, large esplanade of seaweed. She was a ship of probably 1,500 tons, three-masted, and a sailer. I got aft (for I had on thick outer babooshes), and saw that only four of the companion-steps remained; by a small leap, however, I could descend into that desolation, where the stale sea-stench seemed concentrated into a very essence of rankness. Here I experienced a singular ghostly awe and timorousness, lest she should sink with me, or something: but striking matches, I saw an ordinary cabin, with some fungoids, skulls, bones and rags, but not one cohering skeleton. In the second starboard berth was a small table, and on the floor a thick round ink-pot, whose continual rolling on its side made me look down; and there I saw a flat square book with black covers, which curved half-open of itself, for it had been wet and stained. This I took, and went back to the *Speranza*: for that ship was nothing but an emptiness, and a stench of the crude elements of life, nearly assimilated now to the rank deep to which she was wedded, and soon to be

absorbed into its nature and being, to become a sea in little, as I, in time, my God, shall be nothing but an earth in little.

During dinner, and after, I read the book, with some difficulty, for it was pen-written in French, and discoloured, and it turned out to be the journal of someone, a passenger and voyager, I imagine, who called himself Albert Tissu, and the ship the *Marie Meyer*. There was nothing remarkable in the narrative that I could see — common-place descriptions of South Sea scenes, records of weather, cargoes, and the like — till I came to the last written page: and that was remarkable enough. It was dated the 13th of April — strange thing, my good God, incredibly strange — that same day, twenty long years ago, when I reached the Pole; and the writing on that page was quite different from the neat look of the rest, proving immoderate excitement, wildest haste; and he heads it ‘*Cinq Heures*,’ — I suppose in the evening, for he does not say: and he writes: ‘Monstrous event! phenomenon without likeness! the witnesses of which must for ever live immortalised in the annals of the universe, an event which will make even Mama, Henri and Juliette admit that I was justified in undertaking this most eventful voyage. Talking with Captain Tombarel on the poop, when a sudden exclamation from him— “*Mon Dieu!*” His visage whitens! I follow the direction of his gaze to eastward! I behold! eight kilomètres perhaps away — , *ten monstrous waterspouts*, reaching up, up, high enough — all apparently in one straight line, with intervals of nine hundred *mètres*, very regularly placed. They do not wander, dance, nor waver, as waterspouts do; nor are they at all lily-shaped, like waterspouts: but ten hewn pillars of water, with uniform diameter from top to bottom, only a little twisted here and there, and, as I divine, fifty *mètres* in girth. Five, ten, stupendous minutes we look, Captain Tombarel mechanically repeating and repeating under his breath “*Mon Dieu!*” “*Mon Dieu!*” the whole crew now on the poop, I agitated, but

collected, watch in hand. And suddenly, all is blotted out: the pillars of water, doubtless still there, can no more be seen: for the ocean all about them is steaming, hissing higher than the pillars a dense white vapour, vast in extent, whose venomous sibilation we at this distance can quite distinctly hear. It is affrighting, it is intolerable! the eyes can hardly bear to watch, the ears to hear! it seems unholy travail, monstrous birth! But it lasts not long: all at once the *Marie Meyer* commences to pitch and roll violently, and the sea, a moment since calm, is now rough! and at the same time, through the white vapour, we see a dark shadow slowly rising — the shadow of a mighty back, a new-born land, bearing upwards ten flames of fire, slowly, steadily, out of the sea, into the clouds. At the moment when that sublime emergence ceases, or seems to cease, the grand thought that smites me is this: “I, Albert Tissu, am immortalised: my name shall never perish from among men!” I rush down, I write it. The latitude is 16° 21’ 13” South; the longitude 176° 58’ 19” West. There is a great deal of running about on the decks — they are descending. There is surely a strange odour of almonds — I only hope — it is so dark, *mon D* — —’

So the Frenchman, Tissu.

[This must be French reckoning, from meridian of Paris.]

With all that region I would have no more to do: for all here, it used to be said, lies a great sunken continent; and I thought it would be rising and shewing itself to my eyes, and driving me stark mad: for the earth is full of these contortions, sudden monstrous grimaces and apparitions, which are like the face of Medusa, affrighting a man into spinning stone; and nothing could be more appallingly insecure than living on a planet.

I did not stop till I had got so far northward as the Philippine Islands, where I was two weeks — exuberant, odorous places, but so hilly and rude,

that at one place I abandoned all attempt at travelling in the motor, and left it in a valley by a broad, shallow, noisy river, full of mossy stones: for I said: 'Here I will live, and be at peace'; and then I had a fright, for during three days I could not re-discover the river and the motor, and I was in the greatest despair, thinking: 'When shall I find my way out of these jungles and vastnesses?' For I was where no paths were, and had lost myself in deeps where the lure of the earth is too strong and rank for a single man, since in such places, I suppose, a man would rapidly be transformed into a tree, or a snake, or a tiger. At last, however, I found the place, to my great joy, but I would not shew that I was glad, and to hide it, fell upon a front wheel of the car with some kicks. I could not make out who the people were that lived here: for the relics of some seemed quite black, like New Zealand races, and I could still detect the traces of tattooing, while others suggested Mongolian types, and some looked like pigmies, and some like whites. But I cannot detail the two-years' incidents of that voyage: for it is past, and like a dream: and not to write of that — of all that — have I taken this pencil in hand after seventeen long, long years.

Singular my reluctance to put it on paper. I will write rather of the voyage to China, and how I landed the motor on the wharf at Tientsin, and went up the river through a maize and rice-land most charming in spite of intense cold, I thick with clothes as an Arctic traveller; and of the three dreadful earthquakes within two weeks; and how the only map which I had of the city gave no indication of the whereabouts of its military depositories, and I had to seek for them; and of the three days' effort to enter them, for every gate was solid and closed; and how I burned it, but had to observe its flames, without deep pleasure, from beyond the walls to the south, the whole place being one cursed plain; yet how, at one moment,

I cried aloud with wild banterings and glad laughter of Tophet to that old Chinaman still alive within it; and how I coasted, and saw the hairy Ainus, man and woman hairy alike; and how, lying one midnight awake in my cabin, the *Speranza* being in a still glassy water under a cliff overhung by drooping trees — it was the harbour of Chemulpo — to me lying awake came the thought: ‘Suppose now you should hear a step walking to and fro, leisurely, on the poop above you — *just suppose*’; and the night of horrors which I had, for I could not help supposing, and at one time really thought that I heard it: and how the sweat rolled and poured from my brow; and how I went to Nagasaki, and burned it; and how I crossed over the great Pacific deep to San Francisco, for I knew that Chinamen had been there, too, and one of them might be alive; and how, one calm day, the 15th or the 16th April, I, sitting by the wheel in the mid-Pacific, suddenly saw a great white hole that ran and wheeled, and wheeled and ran, in the sea, coming toward me, and I was aware of the hot breath of a reeling wind, and then of the hot wind itself, which deep-groaned the sound of the letter *V*, humming like a billion spinning-tops, and the *Speranza* was on her side, sea pouring over her port-bulwarks, and myself in the corner between deck and taffrail, drowning fast, but unable to stir; but all was soon past and the white hole in the sea, and the hot spinning-top of wind, ran wheeling beyond, to the southern horizon, and the *Speranza* righted herself: so that it was clear that someone wished to destroy me, for that a typhoon of such vehemence ever blew before I cannot think; and how I came to San Francisco, and how I burned it, and had my sweets: for it was mine; and how I thought to pass over the great trans-continental railway to New York, but would not, fearing to leave the *Speranza*, lest all the ships in the harbour there should be wrecked, or rusted, and buried under sea-weed, and turned unto the sea; and how I went back, my mind all given up now to musings upon the earth and

her ways, and a thought in my soul that I would return to those deep places of the Filipinas, and become an autochthone — a tree, or a snake, or a man with snake-limbs, like the old autochthones: but I would not: for Heaven was in man, too: Earth and Heaven; and how as I steamed round west again, another winter come, and I now in a mood of dismal despondencies, on the very brink of the inane abyss and smiling idiotcy, I saw in the island of Java the great temple of Boro Budor: and like a tornado, or volcanic event, my soul was changed: for my recent studies in the architecture of the human race recurred to me with interest, and three nights I slept in the temple, examining it by day. It is vast, with that look of solid massiveness which above all characterises the Japanese and Chinese building, my measurement of its width being 529 feet, and it rises terrace-like in six stories to a height of about 120 or 130 feet: here Buddhist and Brahmin forms are combined into a most richly-developed whole, with a voluptuousness of tracery that is simply intoxicating, each of the five off-sets being divided up into an innumerable series of external niches, containing each a statue of the sitting Boodh, all surmounted by a number of cupolas, and the whole crowned by a magnificent dagop: and when I saw this, I had the impulse to return to my home after so long wandering, and to finish the temple of temples, and the palace of palaces; and I said: ‘I will return, and build it as a testimony to God.’

Save for a time, near Cairo, I did not once stop on that homeward voyage, but turned into the little harbour at Imbros at a tranquil sunset on the 7th of March (as I reckon), and I moored the *Speranza* to the ring in the little quay, and I raised the battered motor from the hold with the middle air-engine (battered by the typhoon in the mid-Pacific, which had broken it from the rope-fastenings and tumbled it head-over-heels to port), and I went

through the windowless village-street, and up through the plantains and cypresses which I knew, and the Nile mimosas, and mulberries, and Trebizond palms, and pines, and acacias, and fig-trees, till the thicket stopped me, and I had to alight: for in those two years the path had finally disappeared; and on, on foot, I made my way, till I came to the board-bridge, and leant there, and looked at the rill; and thence climbed the steep path in the sward toward that rolling table-land where I had built with many a groan; and half-way up, I saw the tip of the crane-arm, then the blazing top of the south pillar, then the shed-roof, then the platform, a blinking blotch of glory to the watery eyes under the setting sun. But the tent, and nearly all that it contained, was gone.

For four days I would do nothing, simply lying and watching, shirking a load so huge: but on the fifth morning I languidly began something: and I had not worked an hour, when a fever took me — to finish it, to finish it — and it lasted upon me, with only three brief intervals, nearly seven years; nor would the end have been so long in coming, but for the unexpected difficulty of getting the four flat roofs water-tight, for I had to take down half the east one. Finally, I made them of gold slabs one-and-a-quarter inch thick, smooth on both sides, on each beam double gutters being fixed along each side of the top flange to catch any leakage at the joints, which are filled with slaters'-cement. The slabs are clamped to the top flanges by steel clips, having bolts set with plaster-of-Paris in holes drilled in the slabs. These clips are 1-1/2 in. by 3/17 in., and are 17 in. apart. The roofs are slightly pitched to the front edges, where they drain into gold-plated copper-gutters on plated wrought-iron brackets, with one side flashed up over the blocks, which raise the slabs from the beam-tops, to clear the joint gutters.... But now I babble again of that base servitude, which I would forget, but

cannot: for every measurement, bolt, ring, is in my brain, like a burden: but it is past, it is past — and it was vanity.

Six months ago to-day it was finished: six months more protracted, desolate, burdened, than all those sixteen years in which I built.

I wonder what a man — another man — some Shah, or Tsar, of that far-off past, would say now of me, if eye could rest upon me! With what awe would he certainly shrink before the wild majesty of these eyes; and though I am not lunatic — for I am not, I am not — how would he fly me with the exclamation: ‘There is the very lunacy of Pride!’

For there would seem to him — it must be so — in myself, in all about me, something extravagantly royal, touched with terror. My body has fattened, and my girth now fills out to a portly roundness its broad Babylonish girdle of crimson cloth, minutely gold-embroidered, and hung with silver, copper and gold coins of the Orient; my beard, still black, sweeps in two divergent sheaves to my hips, flustered by every wind; as I walk through this palace, the amber-and-silver floor reflects in its depths my low-necked, short-armed robe of purple, blue, and scarlet, a-glow with luminous stones. I am ten times crowned Lord and Emperor; I sit a hundred times enthroned in confirmed, obese old Majesty. Challenge me who will — challenge me who dare! Among those myriad worlds upon which I nightly pore, I may have my Peers and Compeers and Fellow-denizens ... but *here* I am Sole; Earth acknowledges my ancient sway and hereditary sceptre: for though she draws me, not yet, not yet, am I hers, but she is mine. It seems to me not less than a million million aeons since other beings, more or less resembling me, walked impudently in the open sunlight on this planet, which is rightly mine — I can indeed no longer picture to myself, nor even credit, that such a state of things — so fantastic, so far-

etched, so infinitely droll — could have existed: though, at bottom, I suppose, I know that it must have been really so. Up to ten years ago, in fact, I used frequently to dream that there were others. I would see them walk in the streets like ghosts, and be troubled, and start awake: but never now could such a thing, I think, occur to me in sleep: for the wildness of the circumstance would certainly strike my consciousness, and immediately I should know that the dream was a dream. For now, at least, I am sole, I am lord. The golden walls of this palace which I have built look down, enamoured of their reflection, into a lake of the choicest, purplest wine.

Not that I made it of wine because wine is rare; nor the walls of gold because gold is rare: that would have been too childish: but because I would match for beauty a human work with the works of those Others: and because it happens, by some persistent freak of the earth, that precisely things most rare and costly are generally the most beautiful.

The vision of glorious loveliness which is this palace now risen before my eyes cannot be described by pen and paper, though there *may* be words in the lexicons of language which, if I sought for them with inspired wit for sixteen years, as I have built for sixteen years, might as vividly express my thought on paper, as the stones-of-gold, so grouped and built, express it to the eye: but, failing such labours and skill, I suppose I could not give, if there were another man, and I tried to give, the faintest conception of its celestial charm.

It is a structure positively as clear as the sun, and as fair as the moon — the sole great human work in the making of which no restraining thought of cost has played a part: one of its steps alone being of more cost than all the temples, mosques and besestins, the palaces, pagodas and cathedrals, built between the ages of the Nimrods and the Napoleons.

The house itself is very small — only 40 ft. long, by 35 broad, by 27 high: yet the structure as a whole is sufficiently enormous, high uplifted: the rest of the bulk being occupied by the platform, on which the house stands, each side of this measuring at its base 480 ft., its height from top to bottom 130 ft, and its top 48 ft. square, the elevation of the steps being just nearly 30 degrees, and the top reached from each of the four points of the compass by 183 low long steps, very massively overlaid with smooth molten gold — not forming a continuous flight, but broken into threes and fives, sixes and nines, with landings between the series, these from the top looking like a great terraced parterre of gold. It is thus an Assyrian palace in scheme: only that the platform has steps on all sides, instead of on one. The platform-top, from its edge to the golden walls of the house, is a mosaic consisting of squares of the glassiest clarified gold, and squares of the glassiest jet, corner to corner, each square 2 ft. wide. Around the edge of the platform on top run 48 square plain gold pilasters, 12 on each side, 2 ft. high, tapering upwards, and topped by a knob of solid gold, pierced with a hole through which passes a lax inch-and-a-half silver chain, hung with little silver balls which strike together in the breeze. The mansion consists of an outer court, facing east toward the sea, and the house proper, which encloses an inner court. The outer court is a hollow oblong 32 ft. wide by 8 ft. long, the summit of its three walls being battlemented; they are 18-1/2 ft. in height, or 8-1/2 ft. lower than the house; around their gold sides, on inside and outside, 3 ft. from the top, runs a plain flat band of silver, 1 ft. wide, projecting 2/3 in., and at the gate, which is a plain Egyptian entrance, facing eastwards, 2-1/2 ft. narrower at top than at bottom, stand the two great square pillars of massive plain gold, tapering upwards, 45 ft. high, with their capital of band, closed lotus, and thin plinth; in the outer court, immediately opposite the gate, is an oblong well, 12 ft. by 3 ft, reproducing in little the shape of the

court, its sides, which are gold-lined, tapering downward to near the bottom of the platform, where a conduit of 1/8 in. diameter automatically replenishes the ascertained mean evaporation of the lake during the year, the well containing 105,360 litres when nearly full, and the lake occupying a circle round the platform of 980 ft. diameter, with a depth of 3-1/2 ft. Round the well run pilasters connected by silver chains with little balls, and it communicates by a 1/8 in. conduit with a pool of wine let into the inner court, this being fed from eight tall and narrow golden tanks, tapering upwards, which surround it, each containing a different red wine, sufficient on the whole to last for all purposes during my lifetime. The ground of the outer court is also a mosaic of jet and gold: but thenceforth the jet-squares give place throughout to squares of silver, and the gold-squares to squares of clear amber, clear as solidified oil. The entrance is by an Egyptian doorway 7 ft. high, with folding-doors of gold-plated cedar, opening inwards, surrounded by a very large projecting coping of plain silver, 3-1/2 ft. wide, severe simplicity of line throughout enormously multiplying the effect of richness of material. The interior resembles, I believe, rather a Homeric, than an Assyrian or Egyptian house — except for the ‘galleries,’ which are purely Babylonish and Old Hebrew. The inner court, with its wine-pool and tanks, is a small oblong of 8 ft. by 9 ft., upon which open four silver-latticed window-oblongs in the same proportion, and two doors, before and behind, oblongs in the same proportion. Round this run the eight walls of the house proper, the inner 10 ft. from the outer, each parallel two forming a single long corridor-like chamber, except the front (east) two, which are divided into three apartments; in each side of the house are six panels of massive plain silver, half-an-inch thinner in their central space, where are affixed paintings, 22 or else 21 taken at the burning of Paris from a place called ‘The Louvre,’ and 2 or else 3 from a place in England: so that

the panels have the look of frames, and are surrounded by oval garlands of the palest amethyst, topaz, sapphire, and turquoise which I could find, each garland being of only one kind of stone, a mere oval ring two feet wide at the sides and narrowing to an inch at the top and bottom, without designs. The galleries are five separate recesses in the outer walls under the roofs, two in the east façade, and one in the north, south, and west, hung with pavilions of purple, blue, rose and white silk on rings and rods of gold, with gold pilasters and banisters, each entered by four steps from the roof, to which lead, north and south, two spiral stairs of cedar. On the east roof stands the kiosk, under which is the little lunar telescope; and from that height, and from the galleries, I can watch under the bright moonlight of this climate, which is very like lime-light, the for-ever silent blue hills of Macedonia, and where the islands of Samothraki, Lemnos, Tenedos slumber like purplish fairies on the Aegean Sea: for, usually, I sleep during the day, and keep a night-long vigil, often at midnight descending to bathe my coloured baths in the lake, and to disport myself in that strange intoxication of nostrils, eyes, and pores, dreaming long wide-eyed dreams at the bottom, to return dazed, and weak, and drunken. Or again — *twice* within these last void and idle six months — I have suddenly run, bawling out, from this temple of luxury, tearing off my gaudy rags, to hide in a hut by the shore, smitten for one intense moment with realisation of the past of this earth, and moaning: ‘alone, alone ... all alone, alone, alone ... alone, alone....’ For events precisely resembling eruptions take place in my brain; and one spangled midnight — ah, how spangled! — I may kneel on the roof with streaming, uplifted face, with outspread arms, and awe-struck heart, adoring the Eternal: the next, I may strut like a cock, wanton as sin, lusting to burn a city, to wallow in filth, and, like the Babylonian maniac, calling myself the equal of Heaven.

But it was not to write of this — of all this — !

Of the furnishing of the palace I have written nothing.... But why I hesitate to admit to myself what I *know*, is not clear. If They speak to me, I may surely write of Them: for I do not fear Them, but am Their peer.

Of the island I have written nothing: its size, climate, form, vegetation.... There are two winds: a north and a south wind; the north is cool, and the south is warm; and the south blows during the winter months, so that sometimes on Christmas-day it is quite hot; and the north, which is cool, blows from May to September, so that the summer is hardly ever oppressive, and the climate was made for a king. The mangal-stove in the south hall I have never once lit.

The length, I should say, is 19 miles; the breadth 10, or thereabouts; and the highest mountains should reach a height of some 2,000 ft., though I have not been all over it. It is very densely wooded in most parts, and I have seen large growths of wheat and barley, obviously degenerate now, with currants, figs, valonia, tobacco, vines in rank abundance, and two marble quarries. From the palace, which lies on a sunny plateau of beautifully-sloping swards, dotted with the circular shadows thrown by fifteen huge cedars, and seven planes, I can see on all sides an edge of forest, with the gleam of a lake to the north, and in the hollow to the east the rivulet with its little bridge, and a few clumps and beds of flowers. I can also spy right through ——

It shall be written now:

I have this day heard within me the contention of the Voices.

I thought that they were done with me! That all, all, all, was ended! I have not heard them for twenty years!

But to-day — distinctly — breaking in with brawling impassioned suddenness upon my consciousness.... I heard.

This late *far niente* and vacuous inaction here have been undermining my spirit; this inert brooding upon the earth; this empty life, and bursting brain! Immediately after eating at noon to-day, I said to myself:

‘I have been duped by the palace: for I have wasted myself in building, hoping for peace, and there is no peace. Therefore now I shall fly from it, to another, sweeter work — not of building, but of destroying — not of Heaven, but of Hell — not of self-denial, but of reddest orgy. Constantinople — beware!’ I tossed the chair aside, and with a stamp was on my feet: and as I stood — again, again — I heard: the startlingly sudden wrangle, the fierce, vulgar outbreak and voluble controversy, till my consciousness could not hear its ears: and one urged: ‘Go! go!’ and the other: ‘Not there...! where you like, ... but not there...! for your life!’

I did not — for I could not — go: I was so overcome. I fell upon the couch shivering.

These Voices, or impulses, plainly as I felt them of old, quarrel within me now with an openness new to them. Lately, influenced by my long scientific habit of thought, I have occasionally wondered whether what I used to call ‘the two Voices’ were not in reality two strong instinctive movements, such as most men may have felt, though with less force. But to-day doubt is past, doubt is past: nor, unless I be very mad, can I ever doubt again.

I have been thinking, thinking of my life: there is a something which I cannot understand.

There was a man whom I met once in that dark backward and abysm of time, when I must have been very young — I fancy at some college or school in England, and his name now is far enough beyond scope of my memory, lost in the vast limbo of past things. But he used to talk continually about certain ‘Black’ and ‘White’ Powers, and of their strife for this world. He was a short man with a Roman nose, and lived in fear of growing a paunch. His forehead a-top, in profile, was more prominent than the nose-end, he parted his hair in the middle, and had the theory that the male form was more beautiful than the female. I forget what his name was — the dim clear-obscure being. Very profound was the effect of his words upon me, though, I think, I used to make a point of slighting them. This man always declared that ‘the Black’ would carry off the victory in the end: and so he has, so he has.

But assuming the existence of this ‘Black’ and this ‘White’ being — and supposing it to be a fact that my reaching the Pole had any connection with the destruction of my race, according to the notions of that extraordinary Scotch parson — then it must have been the power of ‘*the Black*’ which carried me, in spite of all obstacles, to the Pole. So far I can understand.

But *after* I had reached the Pole, what further use had either White or Black for me? Which was it — White or Black — that preserved my life through my long return on the ice — and *why*? It *could* not have been ‘the Black’! For I readily divine that from the moment when I touched the Pole, the only desire of the Black, which had previously preserved, must have been to destroy me, with the rest. It must have been ‘the White,’ then, that led me back, retarding me long, so that I should not enter the poison-cloud, and then openly presenting me the *Boreal* to bring me home to Europe. But his motive? And the significance of these recommencing wrangles, after such a silence? This I do not understand!

Curse Them, curse Them, with their mad tangles! I care nothing for Them! Are there any White Idiots and Black Idiots — *at all*? Or are these Voices that I hear nothing but the cries of my own strained nerves, and I all mad and morbid, morbid and mad, mad, my good God?

This inertia here is *not good* for me! This stalking about the palace! and long thinkings about Earth and Heaven, Black and White, White and Black, and things beyond the stars! My brain is like bursting through the walls of my poor head.

To-morrow, then, to Constantinople.

Descending to go to the ship, I had almost reached the middle of the east platform-steps, when my foot slipped on the smooth gold: and the fall, though I was not walking carelessly, had, I swear, all the violence of a fall caused by a push. I struck my head, and, as I rolled downward, swooned. When I came to myself, I was lying on the very bottom step, which is thinly washed by the wine-waves: another roll and I suppose I must have drowned. I sat there an hour, lost in amazement, then crossed the causeway, came down to the *Speransa* with the motor, went through her, spent the day in work, slept on her, worked again to-day, till four, at both ship and time-fuses (I with only 700 fuses left, and in Stamboul alone must be 8,000 houses, without counting Galata, Tophana, Kassim-pacha, Scutari, and the rest), started out at 5.30, and am now at 11 P.M. lying motionless two miles off the north coast of the island of Marmora, with moonlight gloating on the water, a faint north breeze, and the little pale land looking immensely stretched-out, solemn and great, as if that were the world, and there were nothing else; and the tiny island at its end immense, and the *Speranza* vast, and I only little. To-morrow at 11 A.M. I will moor the *Speranza* in the Golden Horn at the spot where there is that low damp nook of the bagnio

behind the naval magazines and that hill where the palace of the Capitan Pacha is.

I found that great tangle of ships in the Golden Horn wonderfully preserved, many with hardly any moss-growths. This must be due, I suppose, to the little Ali-Bey and Kezat-Hanah, which flow into the Horn at the top, and made no doubt a constant current.

Ah, I remember the place: long ago I lived here some months, or, it may be, years. It is the fairest of cities — and the greatest. I believe that London in England was larger: but no city, surely, ever *seemed* so large. But it is flimsy, and will burn like tinder. The houses are made of light timber, with interstices filled by earth and bricks, and some of them look ruinous already, with their lovely faded tints of green and gold and red and blue and yellow, like the hues of withered flowers: for it is a city of paints and trees, and all in the little winding streets, as I write, are volatile almond-blossoms, mixed with maple-blossoms, white with purple. Even the most splendid of the Sultan's palaces are built in this combustible way: for I believe that they had a notion that stone-building was presumptuous, though I have seen some very thick stone-houses in Galata. This place, I remember, lived in a constant state of sensation on account of nightly flares-up; and I have come across several tracts already devastated by fires. The ministers-of-state used to attend them, and if the fire would not go out, the Sultan himself was obliged to be there, in order to encourage the firemen. Now it will burn still better.

But I have been here six weeks, and still no burning: for the place seems to plead with me, it is so ravishing, so that I do not know why I did not live here, and spare my toils during those sixteen nightmare years; for two whole weeks the impulse to burn was quieted; and since then there has been

an irritating whisper at my ear which said: 'It is not really like the great King that you are, this burning, but like a foolish child, or a savage, who liked to see fireworks: or at least, if you must burn, do not burn poor Constantinople, which is so charming, and so very old, with its balsamic perfumes, and the blossomy trees of white and light-purple peeping over the walls of the cloistered painted houses, and all those lichened tombs — those granite menhirs and regions of ancient marble tombs between the quarters, Greek tombs, Byzantine, Jew, Mussulman tombs, with their strange and sacred inscriptions — overwaved by their cypresses and vast plane-trees.' And for weeks I would do nothing: but roamed about, with two minds in me, under the tropic brilliance of the sky by day, and the vast dreamy nights of this place that are like nights seen through azure-tinted glasses, and in each of them is not one night, but the thousand-and-one long crowded nights of glamour and fancy: for I would sit on the immense esplanade of the Seraskierat, or the mighty grey stones of the porch of the mosque of Sultan Mehmed-fatih, dominating from its great steps all old Stamboul, and watch the moon for hours and hours, so passionately bright she soared through clear and cloud, till I would be smitten with doubt of my own identity, for whether I were she, or the earth, or myself, or some other thing or man, I did not know, all being so silent alike, and all, except myself, so vast, the Seraskierat, and the Suleimanieh, and Stamboul, and the Marmora Sea, and the earth, and those argent fields of the moon, all large alike compared with me, and measure and space were lost, and I with them.

These proud Turks died stolidly, many of them. In streets of Kassimpacha, in crowded Taxim on the heights of Pera, and under the long Moorish arcades of Sultan-Selim, I have seen the open-air barber's razor with his bones, and with him the half-shaved skull of the faithful, and the

long two-hours' narghile with traces of burnt tembaki and haschish still in the bowl. Ashes now are they all, and dry yellow bone; but in the houses of Phanar and noisy old Galata, and in the Jew quarter of Pri-pacha, the black shoe and head-dress of the Greek is still distinguishable from the Hebrew blue. It was a mixed ritual of colours here in boot and hat: yellow for Mussulman, red boots, black calpac for Armenian, for the Effendi a white turban, for the Greek a black. The Tartar skull shines from under a high taper calpac, the Nizain-djid's from a melon-shaped head-piece; the Imam's and Dervish's from a grey conical felt; and there is here and there a Frank in European rags. I have seen the towering turban of the Bashi-bazouk, and his long sword, and some softas in the domes on the great wall of Stamboul, and the beggar, and the street-merchant with large tray of water-melons, sweetmeats, raisins, sherbet, and the bear-shewer, and the Barbary organ, and the night-watchman who evermore cried 'Fire!' with his long lantern, two pistols, dirk, and wooden javelin. Strange how all that old life has come back to my fancy now, pretty vividly, and for the first time, though I have been here several times lately. I have gone out to those plains beyond the walls with their view of rather barren mountain-peaks, the city looking nothing but minarets shooting through black cypress-tops, and I seemed to see the wild muezzin at some summit, crying the midday prayer: '*Mohammed Resoul Allah!*' — the wild man; and from that great avenue of cypresses which traverses the cemetery of Scutari, the walled city of Stamboul lay spread entire up to Phanar and Eyoub in their cypress-woods before me, the whole embowered now in trees, all that complexity of ways and dark alleys with overhanging balconies of old Byzantine houses, beneath which a rider had to stoop the head, where old Turks would lose their way in mazes of the picturesque; and on the shaded Bosphorus coast, to Foundoucli and beyond, some peeping yali, snow-white palace, or old

Armenian cot; and the Seraglio by the sea, a town within a town; and southward the Sea of Marmora, blue-and-white, and vast, and fresh as a sea just born, rejoicing at its birth and at the jovial sun, all brisk, alert, to the shadowy islands afar: and as I looked, I suddenly said aloud a wild, mad thing, my God, a wild and maniac thing, a shrieking maniac thing for Hell to laugh at: for something said with my tongue: '*This city is not quite dead.*'

Three nights I slept in Stamboul itself at the palace of some sanjak-bey or emir, or rather dozed, with one slumbrous eye that would open to watch my visitors Sinbad, and Ali Baba, and old Haroun, to see how they slumbered and dozed: for it was in the small luxurious chamber where the bey received those speechless all-night visits of the Turks, long rosy hours of perfumed romance, and drunkenness of the fancy, and visionary languor, sinking toward morning into the yet deeper peace of dreamless sleep; and there, still, were the white *yatags* for the guests to sit cross-legged on for the waking dream, and to fall upon for the final swoon, and the copper brazier still scenting of essence-of-rose, and the cushions, rugs, hangings, the monsters on the wall, the haschish-chibouques, narghiles, hookahs, and drugged pale cigarettes, and a secret-looking lattice beyond the door, painted with trees and birds; and the air narcotic and grey with the pastilles which I had burned, and the scented smokes which I had smoked; and I all drugged and mumbling, my left eye suspicious of Ali there, and Sinbad, and old Haroun, who dozed. And when I had slept, and rose to wash in a room near the overhanging latticed balcony of the façade, before me to the north lay old Galata in sunshine, and that steep large street mounting to Pera, once full at every night-fall of divans on which grave dervishes smoked narghiles, and there was no space for passage, for all was divans, lounges,

almond-trees, heaven-high hum, chibouques in forests, the dervish, and the innumerable porter, the horse-hirer with his horse from Tophana, and arsenal-men from Kassim, and traders from Galata, and artillery-workmen from Tophana; and on the other side of the house, the south end, a covered bridge led across a street, which consisted mostly of two immense blind walls, into a great tangled wilderness of flowers, which was the harem-garden, where I passed some hours; and here I might have remained many days, many weeks perhaps, but that, dozing one fore-day with those fancied others, it was as if there occurred a laugh somewhere, and a thing said: 'But this city is not quite dead!' waking me from deeps of peace to startled wakefulness. And I thought to myself: 'If it be not quite dead, it *will* be soon — and with some suddenness!' And the next morning I was at the Arsenal.

It is long since I have so deeply enjoyed, even to the marrow. It may be 'the White' who has the guardianship of my life: but assuredly it is 'the Black' who reigns in my soul.

Grandly did old Stamboul, Galata, Tophana, Kassim, right out beyond the walls to Phanar and Eyoub, blaze and burn. The whole place, except one little region of Galata, was like so much tinder, and in the five hours between 8 P.M. and 1 A.M. all was over. I saw the tops of those vast masses of cemetery-cypresses round the tombs of the Osmanlis outside the walls, and those in the cemetery of Kassim, and those round the sacred mosque of Eyoub, shrivel away instantaneously, like flimsy hair caught by a flame; I saw the Genoese tower of Galata go heading obliquely on an upward curve, like Sir Roger de Coverley and wild rockets, and burst high, high, with a report; in pairs, and threes, and fours, I saw the blue cupolas of the twelve or fourteen great mosques give in and subside, or soar and rain, and the

great minarets nod the head, and topple; and I saw the flames reach out and out across the empty breadth of the Etmeidan — three hundred yards — to the six minarets of the Mosque of Achmet, wrapping the red Egyptian-granite obelisk in the centre; and across the breadth of the Serai-Meidani it reached to the buildings of the Seraglio and the Sublime Porte; and across those vague barren stretches that lie between the houses and the great wall; and across the seventy or eighty great arcaded bazaars, all-enwrapping, it reached; and the spirit of fire grew upon me: for the Golden Horn itself was a tongue of fire, crowded, west of the galley-harbour, with exploding battleships, Turkish frigates, corvettes, brigs — and east, with tens of thousands of feluccas, caiques, gondolas and merchantmen aflame. On my left burned all Scutari; and between six and eight in the evening I had sent out thirty-seven vessels under low horse-powers of air, with trains and fuses laid for 11 P.M., to light with their wandering fires the Sea of Marmora. By midnight I was encompassed in one great furnace and fiery gulf, all the sea and sky inflamed, and earth a-flare. Not far from me to the left I saw the vast Tophana barracks of the Cannoniers, and the Artillery-works, after long reluctance and delay, take wing together; and three minutes later, down by the water, the barrack of the Bombardiers and the Military School together, grandly, grandly; and then, to the right, in the valley of Kassim, the Arsenal: these occupying the sky like smoky suns, and shedding a glaring day over many a mile of sea and land; I saw the two lines of ruddier flaring where the barge-bridge and the raft-bridge over the Golden Horn made haste to burn; and all that vastness burned with haste, quicker and quicker — to fervour — to fury — to unanimous rabies: and when its red roaring stormed the infinite, and the might of its glowing heart was Gravitation, Being, Sensation, and I its compliant wife — then my head nodded, and with

crooked lips I sighed as it were my last sigh, and tumbled, weak and drunken, upon my face.

O wild Providence! Unfathomable madness of Heaven! that ever I should write what now I write! I will not write it....

The hissing of it! It is only a crazy dream! a tearing-out of the hair by the roots to scatter upon the raving storms of Saturn! My hand will not write it!

In God's name —— ! During four nights after the burning I slept in a house — French as I saw by the books, &c., probably the Ambassador's, for it has very large gardens and a beautiful view over the sea, situated on the rapid east declivity of Pera; it is one of the few large houses which, for my safety, I had left standing round the minaret whence I had watched, this minaret being at the top of the old Mussulman quarter on the heights of Taxim, between Pera proper and Foundoucli. At the bottom, both at the quay of Foundoucli, and at that of Tophana, I had left under shelter two caiques for double safety, one a Sultan's gilt craft, with gold spur at the prow, and one a boat of those zaptias that used to patrol the Golden Horn as water-police: by one or other of these I meant to reach the *Speranza*, she being then safely anchored some distance up the Bosphorus coast. So, on the fifth morning I set out for the Tophana quay; but a light rain had fallen over-night, and this had re-excited the thin grey smoke resembling quenched steam, which, as from some reeking province of Abaddon, still trickled upward over many a square mile of blackened tract, though of flame I could see no sign. I had not accordingly advanced far over every sort of *débris*, when I found my eyes watering, my throat choked, and my

way almost blocked by roughness: whereupon I said: 'I will turn back, cross the region of tombs and barren waste behind Pera, descend the hill, get the zaptia boat at the Foundoucli quay, and so reach the *Speranza*.'

Accordingly, I made my way out of the region of smoke, passed beyond the limits of smouldering ruin and tomb, and soon entered a rich woodland, somewhat scorched at first, but soon green and flourishing as the jungle. This cooled and soothed me, and being in no hurry to reach the ship, I was led on and on, in a somewhat north-western direction, I fancy. Somewhere hereabouts, I thought, was the place they called 'The Sweet Waters,' and I went on with the vague notion of coming upon them, thinking to pass the day, till afternoon, in the forest. Here nature, in only twenty years has returned to an exuberant savagery, and all was now the wildest vegetation, dark dells, rills wimpling through deep-brown shade of sensitive mimosa, large pendulous fuchsia, palm, cypress, mulberry, jonquil, narcissus, daffodil, rhododendron, acacia, fig. Once I stumbled upon a cemetery of old gilt tombs, absolutely overgrown and lost, and thrice caught glimpses of little trellised yalis choked in boscage. With slow and listless foot I went, munching an almond or an olive, though I could swear that olives were not formerly indigenous to any soil so northern: yet here they are now, pretty plentiful, though elementary, so that modifications whose end I cannot see are certainly proceeding in everything, some of the cypresses which I met that day being immense beyond anything I ever heard of: and the thought, I remember, was in my head, that if a twig or leaf should change into a bird, or a fish with wings, and fly before my eyes, what then should I do? and I would eye a branch suspiciously anon. After a long time I penetrated into a very sombre grove. The day outside the wood was brilliant and hot, and very still, the leaves and flowers here all motionless. I seemed, as it were, to hear the vacant silence of the world, and my foot treading on a twig,

produced the report of pistols. I presently reached a glade in a thicket, about eight yards across, that had a scent of lime and orange, where the just-sufficient twilight enabled me to see some old bones, three skulls, and the edge of a tam-tam peeping from a tuft of wild corn with corn-flowers, and here and there some golden champac, and all about a profusion of musk-roses. I had stopped — *why* I do not recollect — perhaps thinking that if I was not getting to the Sweet Waters, I should seriously set about finding my way out. And as I stood looking about me, I remember that some cruising insect trawled near my ear its lonely drone.

Suddenly, God knows, I started, I started.

I imagined — I dreamed — that I saw a pressure in a bed of moss and violets, *recently made!* And while I stood gloating upon that impossible thing, I imagined — I dreamed — the lunacy of it! — that I heard a laugh...! the laugh, my good God, of a human soul.

Or it seemed half a laugh, and half a sob: and it passed from me in one fleeting instant.

Laughs, and sobs, and idiot hallucinations, I had often heard before, feet walking, sounds behind me: and even as I had heard them, I had known that they were nothing. But brief as was this impression, it was yet so thrillingly *real*, that my poor heart received, as it were, the very shock of death, and I fell backward into a mass of moss, supported on the right palm, while the left pressed my working bosom; and there, toiling to catch my breath, I lay still, all my soul focussed into my ears. But now I could hear no sound, save only the vast and audible hum of the silence of the universe.

There was, however, the foot-print. If my eye and ear should so conspire against me, that, I thought, was hard.

Still I lay, still, in that same pose, without a stir, sick and dry-mouthed, infirm and languishing, with dying breaths: but keen, keen — and malign.

I would wait, I said to myself, I would be artful as snakes, though so woefully sick and invalid: I would make no sound....

After some minutes I became conscious that my eyes were leering — leering in one fixed direction: and instantly, the mere fact that I had a sense of direction proved to me that I must, *in truth*, have heard something! I strove — I managed — to raise myself: and as I stood upright, feebly swaying there, not the terrors of death alone were in my breast, but the authority of the monarch was on my brow.

I moved: I found the strength.

Slow step by slow step, with daintiest noiselessness, I moved to a thread of moss that from the glade passed into the thicket, and along its winding way I stepped, in the direction of the sound. Now my ears caught the purling noise of a brooklet, and following the moss-path, I was led into a mass of bush only two or three feet higher than my head. Through this, prowling like a stealthy cat, I wheedled my painful way, emerged upon a strip of open long-grass, and now was faced, three yards before me, by a wall of acacia-trees, prickly-pear and pichulas, between which and a forest beyond I spied a gleam of running water.

On hands and knees I crept toward the acacia-thicket, entered it a little, and leaning far forward, peered. And there — at once — ten yards to my right — I saw.

Singular to say, my agitation, instead of intensifying to the point of apoplexy and death, now, at the actual sight, subsided to something very like calmness. With malign and sullen eye askance I stood, and steadily I watched her there.

She was on her knees, her palms lightly touching the ground, supporting her. At the edge of the streamlet she knelt, and she was looking with a

species of startled shy astonishment at the reflexion of her face in the limpid brown water. And I, with sullen eye askance regarded her a good ten minutes' space.

I believe that her momentary laugh and sob, which I had heard, was the result of surprise at seeing her own image; and I firmly believe, from the expression of her face, that this was the first time that she had seen it.

Never, I thought, as I stood moodily gazing, had I seen on the earth a creature so fair (though, analysing now at leisure, I can quite conclude that there was nothing at all remarkable about her good looks). Her hair, somewhat lighter than auburn, and frizzy, was a real garment to her nakedness, covering her below the hips, some strings of it falling, too, into the water: her eyes, a dark blue, were wide in a most silly expression of bewilderment. Even as I eyed and eyed her, she slowly rose: and at once I saw in all her manner an air of unfamiliarity with the world, as of one wholly at a loss what to do. Her pupils did not seem accustomed to light; and I could swear that that was the first day in which she had seen a tree or a stream.

Her age appeared eighteen or twenty. I guessed that she was of Circassian blood, or, at least, origin. Her skin was whitey-brown, or old ivory-white.

She stood up motionless, at a loss. She took a lock of her hair, and drew it through her lips. There was some look in her eyes, which I could plainly see now, somehow indicating wild hunger, though the wood was full of food. After letting go her hair, she stood again feckless and imbecile, with sideward-hung head, very pitiable to see I think now, though no faintest pity

touched me then. It was clear that she did not at all know what to make of the look of things. Finally, she sat on a moss-bank, reached and took a musk-rose on her palm, and looked hopelessly at it.

One minute after my first actual sight of her my extravagance of agitation, I say, died down to something like calm. The earth was mine by old right: I felt that: and this creature a mere slave upon whom, without heat or haste, I might perform my will: and for some time I stood, coolly enough considering what that will should be.

I had at my girdle the little cangiar, with silver handle encrusted with coral, and curved blade six inches long, damascened in gold, and sharp as a razor; the blackest and the basest of all the devils of the Pit was whispering in my breast with calm persistence: ‘Kill, kill — and eat.’

Why I should have killed her I do not know. That question I now ask myself. It must be true, true that it is ‘*not good*’ for man to be alone. There was a religious sect in the Past which called itself ‘Socialist’: and with these must have been the truth, man being at his best and highest when most social, and at his worst and lowest when isolated: for the Earth gets hold of all isolation, and draws it, and makes it fierce, base, and materialistic, like sultans, aristocracies, and the like: but Heaven is where two or three are gathered together. It may be so: I do not know, nor care. But I know that after twenty years of solitude on a planet the human soul is more enamoured of solitude than of life, shrinking like a tender nerve from the rough intrusion of Another into the secret realm of Self: and hence, perhaps, the bitterness with which solitary castes, Brahmins, patricians, aristocracies, always resisted any attempt to invade their slowly-acquired domain of privileges. Also, it may be true, it may, it may, that after twenty years of solitary selfishness, a man becomes, without suspecting it — not at all

noticing the slow stages — a real and true beast, a horrible, hideous beast, mad, prowling, like that King of Babylon, his nails like birds' claws, and his hair like eagles' feathers, with instincts all inflamed and fierce, delighting in darkness and crime for their own sake. I do not know, nor care: but I know that, as I drew the cangiar, the basest and the slyest of all the devils was whispering me, tongue in cheek: 'Kill, kill — and be merry.'

With excruciating slowness, like a crawling glacier, tender as a nerve of the touching leaves, I moved, I stole, obliquely toward her through the wall of bush, the knife behind my back. Once only there was a restraint, a check: I felt myself held back: I had to stop: for one of the ends of my divided beard had caught in a limb of prickly-pear.

I set to disentangling it: and it was, I believe, at the moment of succeeding that I first noticed the state of the sky, a strip of which I could see across the rivulet: a minute or so before it had been pretty clear, but now was busy with hurrying clouds. It was a sinister muttering of thunder which had made me glance upward.

When my eyes returned to the sitting figure, she was looking foolishly about the sky with an expression which almost proved that she had never before heard that sound of thunder, or at least had no idea what it could bode. My fixed regard lost not one of her movements, while inch by inch, not breathing, careful as the poise of a balance, I crawled. And suddenly, with a rush, I was out in the open, running her down....

She leapt: perhaps two, perhaps three, paces she fled: then stock still she stood — within some four yards of me — with panting nostrils, with enquiring face.

I saw it all in one instant, and in one instant all was over. I had not checked the impetus of my run at her stoppage, and I was on the point of reaching her with uplifted knife, when I was suddenly checked and smitten

by a stupendous violence: a flash of blinding light, attracted by the steel which I held, struck tingling through my frame, and at the same time the most passionate crash of thunder that ever shocked a poor human ear felled me to the ground. The cangiar, snatched from my hand, fell near the girl's foot.

I did not entirely lose consciousness, though, surely, the Powers no longer hide themselves from me, and their close contact is too intolerably rough and vigorous for a poor mortal man. During, I should think, three or four minutes, I lay so astounded under that bullying cry of wrath, that I could not move a finger. When at last I did sit up, the girl was standing near me, with a sort of smile, holding out to me the cangiar in a pouring rain.

I took it from her, and my doddering fingers dropped it into the stream.

Pour, pour came the rain, raining as it can in this place, not long, but a deluge while it lasts, dripping in thick-liquidity, like a profuse sweat, through the forest, I seeking to get back by the way I had come, flying, but with difficulty and slowness, and a feeling in me that I was being tracked. And so it proved: for when I struck into more open space, nearly opposite the west walls, but now on the north side of the Golden Horn, where there is a flat grassy ground somewhere between the valley of Kassim and Charkoi, with horror I saw that *protégée* of Heaven, or of someone, not ten yards behind, following me like a mechanical figure, it being now near three in the afternoon, and the rain drenching me through, and I tired and hungry, and from all the ruins of Constantinople not one whiff of smoke ascending.

I trudged on wearily till I came to the quay of Foundoucli, and the zaptia boat; and there she was with me still, her hair nothing but a thin drowned string down her back.

Not only can she not speak to me in any language that I know: but she can speak in *no* language: it is my firm belief that she has *never* spoken.

She never saw a boat, or water, or the world, till now — I could swear it. She came into the boat with me, and sat astern, clinging for dear life to the gunwale by her finger-nails, and I paddled the eight hundred yards to the *Speranza*, and she came up to the deck after me. When she saw the open water, the boat, the yalis on the coast, and then the ship, astonishment was imprinted on her face. But she appears to know little fear. She smiled like a child, and on the ship touched this and that, as if each were a living thing.

It was only here and there that one could see the ivory-brown colour of her skin: the rest was covered with dirt, like old bottles long lying in cellars.

By the time we reached the *Speranza*, the rain suddenly stopped: I went down to my cabin to change my clothes, and had to shut the door in her face to keep her out. When I opened it, she was there, and she followed me to the windlass, when I went to set the anchor-engine going. I intended, I suppose, to take her to Imbros, where she might live in one of the broken-down houses of the village. But when the anchor was not yet half up, I stopped the engine, and let the chain run again. For I said, ‘No, I will be alone, I am not a child.’

I knew that she was hungry by the look in her eyes: but I cared nothing for that. I was hungry, too: and that was all I cared about.

I would not let her be there with me another instant. I got down into the boat, and when she followed, I rowed her back all the way past Foundoucli and the Tophana quay to where one turns into the Golden Horn by St. Sophia, around the mouth of the Horn being a vast semicircle of charred wreckage, carried out by the river-currents. I went up the steps on the Galata side before one comes to where the barge-bridge was. When she had followed me on to the embankment, I walked up one of those rising streets,

very encumbered now with stone-*débris* and ashes, but still marked by some standing black wall-fragments, it being now not far from night, but the air as clear and washed as the translucency of a great purple diamond with the rain and the afterglow of the sun, and all the west aflame.

When I was about a hundred yards up in this old mixed quarter of Greeks, Turks, Jews, Italians, Albanians, and noise and cafedjis and wine-bibbing, having turned two corners, I suddenly gathered my skirts, spun round, and, as fast as I could, was off at a heavy trot back to the quay. She was after me, but being taken by surprise, I suppose, was distanced a little at first. However, by the time I could scurry myself down into the boat, she was so near, that she only saved herself from the water by a balancing stoppage at the brink, as I pushed off. I then set out to get back to the ship, muttering: ‘You can have Turkey, if you like, and I will keep the rest of the world.’

I rowed sea-ward, my face toward her, but steadily averted, for I would not look her way to see what she was doing. However, as I turned the point of the quay, where the open sea washes quite rough and loud, to go northward and disappear from her, I heard a babbling cry — the first sound which she had uttered. I did look then: and she was still quite near me, for the silly maniac had been running along the embankment, following me.

‘Little fool!’ I cried out across the water, ‘what are you after now?’ And, oh my good God, shall I ever forget that strangeness, that wild strangeness, of my own voice, addressing on this earth another human soul?

There she stood, whimpering like an abandoned dog after me. I turned the boat, rowed, came to the first steps, landed, and struck her two stinging slaps, one on each cheek. While she cowered, surprised no doubt, I took her by the hand, led her back to the boat, landed on the Stamboul side, and set off, still leading her, my object being to find some sort of possible edifice

near by, not hopelessly burned, in which to leave her: for in all Galata there was plainly none, and Pera, I thought, was too far to walk to. But it would have been better if I had gone to Pera, for we had to walk quite three miles from Seraglio Point all along the city battlements to the Seven-towers, she picking her bare-footed way after me through the great Sahara of charred stuff, and night now well arrived, and the moon a-drift in the heaven, making the desolate lonesomeness of the ruins tenfold desolate, so that my heart smote me then with bitterness and remorse, and I had a vision of myself that night which I will not put down on paper. At last, however, pretty late in the evening, I spied a large mansion with green lattice-work façade, and shaknisier, and terrace-roof, which had been hidden from me by the arcades of a bazaar, a vast open space at about the centre of Stamboul, one of the largest of the bazaars, I should think, in the middle of which stood the mansion, probably the home of pasha or vizier: for it had a very distinguished look in that place. It seemed very little hurt, though the vegetation that had apparently choked the great open space was singed to a black fluff, among which lay thousands of calcined bones of man, horse, ass, and camel, for all was distinct in the bright, yet so pensive and forlorn, moonlight, which was that Eastern moonlight of pure astral mystery which illumines Persepolis, and Babylon, and ruined cities of the old Anakim.

The house, I knew, would contain divans, *yatags*, cushions, foods, wines, sherbets, henna, saffron, mastic, raki, haschish, costumes, and a hundred luxuries still good. There was an outer wall, but the foliage over it had been singed away, and the gate all charred. It gave way at a push from my palm. The girl was close behind me. I next threw open a little green lattice-door in the façade under the shaknisier, and entered. Here it was dark, and the moment that she, too, was within, I slipped out quickly, slammed the door in her face, and hooked it upon her by a little hook over the latch.

I now walked some yards beyond the court, then stopped, listening for her expected cry: but all was still: five minutes — ten — I waited: but no sound. I then continued my morose and melancholy way, hollow with hunger, intending to start that night for Imbros.

But this time I had hardly advanced twenty steps, when I heard a frail and strangled cry, apparently in mid-air behind me, and glancing, saw the creature lying at the gateway, a white thing in black stubble-ashes. She had evidently jumped, well outward, from a small casement of lattice on a level with the little shaknisier grating, through which once peeped bright eyes, thirty feet aloft.

I hardly believe that she was conscious of any danger in jumping, for all the laws of life are new to her, and, having sought and found the opening, she may have merely come with blind instinctiveness after me, taking the first way open to her. I walked back, pulled at her arm, and found that she could not stand. Her face was screwed with silent pain — she did not moan. Her left foot, I could see, was bleeding: and by the wounded ankle I took her, and dragged her so through the ashes across the narrow court, and tossed her like a little dog with all my force within the door, cursing her.

Now I would not go back the long way to the ship, but struck a match, and went lighting up girandoles, cressets, candelabra, into a confusion of lights among great numbers of pale-tinted pillars, rose and azure, with verd-antique, olive, and Portoro marble, and serpentine. The mansion was large, I having to traverse quite a desert of embroidered brocade-hangings, slender columns, and Broussa silks, till I saw a stair-case doorway behind a Smyrna *portière*, went up, and wandered some time in a house of gilt-barred windows, with very little furniture, but palatial spaces, solitary huge pieces of *faïence* of inestimable age, and arms, my footfalls quite stifled in the Persian carpeting. I passed through a covered-in hanging-gallery, with one

window-grating overlooking an inner court, and by this entered the harem, which declared itself by a greater luxury, bric-à-bracerie, and profusion of manner. Here, descending a short curved stair behind a *portière*, I came into a marble-paved sort of larder, in which was an old negress in blue dress, her hair still adhering, and an infinite supply of sweetmeats, French preserved foods, sherbets, wines, and so on. I put a number of things into a pannier, went up again, found some of those exquisite pale cigarettes which drunken in the hollow of an emerald, also a jewelled two-yard-long chibouque, and tembaki: and with all descended by another stair, and laid them on the steps of a little raised kiosk of green marble in a corner of the court; went up again, and brought down a still-snowy *yatag* to sleep on; and there, by the kiosk-step, ate and passed the night, smoking for several hours in a state of languor. In the centre of the court is a square marble well, looking white through a rankness of wild vine, acacias in flower, weeds, jasmines, and roses, which overgrew it, as well as the kiosk and the whole court, climbing even the four-square arcade of Moorish arches round the open space, under one of which I had deposited a long lantern of crimson silk: for here no breath of the fire had come. About two in morning I fell to sleep, a deeper peace of shadow now reigning where so long the melancholy silver of the moon had lingered.

About eight in the morning I rose and made my way to the front, intending that that should be my last night in this ruined place: for all the night, sleeping and waking, the thing which had happened filled my brain, growing from one depth of incredibility to a deeper, so that at last I arrived at a sort of certainty that it could be nothing but a drunken dream: but as I opened my eyes afresh, the deep-cutting realisation of that impossibility smote like a pang of lightning-stroke through my being: and I said: 'I will

go again to the far Orient, and forget': and I started out from the court, not knowing what had become of her during the night, till, having reached the outer chamber, with a wild start I saw her lying there at the door in the very spot where I had flung her, asleep sideways, head on arm ... Softly, softly, I stept over her, got out, and went running at a cautious clandestine trot. The morning was in high *fête*, most fresh and pure, and to breathe was to be young, and to see such a sunlight lighten even upon ruin so vast was to be blithe. After running two hundred yards to one of the great broken bazaar-portals, I looked back to see if I was followed: but all that space was desolately empty. I then walked on past the arch, on which a green oblong, once inscribed, as usual, with some text in gilt hieroglyphs, is still discernible; and, emerging, saw the great panorama of destruction, a few vast standing walls, with hollow Oriental windows framing deep sky beyond, and here and there a pillar, or half-minaret, and down within the walls of the old Seraglio still some leafless, branchless trunks, and in Eyoub and Phanar leafless forests, and on the northern horizon Pera with the steep upper-half of the Iani-Chircha street still there, and on the height the European houses, and all between blackness, stones, a rolling landscape of ravine, like the hilly pack-ice of the North if its snow were ink, and to the right Scutari, black, laid low, with its vast region of tombs, and rare stumps of its forests, and the blithe blue sea, with the widening semicircle of floating *débris*, looking like brown foul scum at some points, congested before the bridgeless Golden Horn: for I stood pretty high in the centre of Stamboul somewhere in the region of the Suleimanieh, or of Sultan-Selim, as I judged, with immense purviews into abstract distances and mirage. And to me it seemed too vast, too lonesome, and after advancing a few hundred yards beyond the bazaar, I turned again.

I found the girl still asleep at the house-door, and stirring her with my foot, woke her. She leapt up with a start of surprise, and a remarkable sinuous agility, and gazed an astounded moment at me, till, separating reality from dream and habit, she realised me: but immediately subsided to the floor again, being in evident pain. I pulled her up, and made her limp after me through several halls to the inner court, and the well, where I set her upon the weedy margin, took her foot in my lap, examined it, drew water, washed it, and bandaged it with a strip torn from my caftan-hem, now and again speaking gruffly to her, so that she might no more follow me.

After this, I had breakfast by the kiosk-steps, and when I was finished, put a mass of truffled *foie gras* on a plate, brushed through the thicket to the well, and gave it her. She took it, but looked foolish, not eating. I then, with my forefinger, put a little into her mouth, whereupon she set hungrily to eat it all. I also gave her some ginger-bread, a handful of bonbons, some Krishnu wine, and some anisette.

I then started out afresh, gruffly bidding her stay there, and left her sitting on the well, her hair falling down the opening, she peering after me through the bushes. But I had not half reached the ogival bazaar-portal, when looking anxiously back, I saw that she was limping after me. So that this creature tracks me in the manner of a nutshell following about in the wake of a ship.

I turned back with her to the house, for it was necessary that I should plan some further method of eluding her. That was five days ago, and here I have stayed: for the house and court are sufficiently agreeable, and form a museum of real *objets d'art*. It is settled, however, that to-morrow I return to Imbros.

It seems certain that she never wore, saw, nor knew of, clothes.

I have dressed her, first sousing her thoroughly with sponge and soap in luke-warm rose-water in the silver cistern of the harem-bath, which is a circular marbled apartment with a fountain and the complicated ceilings of these houses, and frescoes, and gilt texts of the Koran on the walls, and pale rose-silk hangings. On the divan I had heaped a number of selected garments, and having shewed her how to towel herself, I made her step into a pair of the trousers called *shintiyan* made of yellow-striped white-silk; this, by a running string, I tied loosely round the upper part of her hips; then, drawing up the bottoms to her knees, tied them there, so that their voluminous baggy folds, overhanging still to the ankles, have rather the look of a skirt; over this I put upon her a blue-striped chiffon chemise, or quamis, reaching a little below the hips; I then put on a short jacket or vest of scarlet satin, thickly embroidered in gold and precious stones, reaching somewhat below the waist, and pretty tight-fitting; and, making her lie on the couch, I put upon her little feet little yellow baboosh-slippers, then anklets, on her fingers rings, round her neck a necklace of sequins, finally dyeing her nails, which I cut, with henna. There remained her head, but with this I would have nothing to do, only pointing to the tarboosh which I had brought, to a square kerchief, to some corals, and to the fresco of a woman on the wall, which, if she chose, she might copy. Lastly, I pierced her ears with the silver needles which they used here: and after two hours of it left her.

About an hour afterwards I saw her in the arcade round the court, and, to my great surprise, she had a perfect plait down her back, and over her head and brows a green-silk feredjeh, or hood, precisely as in the picture.

Here is a question, the answer to which would be interesting to me: Whether or not for twenty years — or say rather twenty centuries, twenty eternal aeons — I have been stark mad, a raving maniac; and whether or not I am now suddenly sane, sitting here writing in my right mind, my whole mood and tone changed, or rapidly changing? And whether such change can be due to the presence of only one other being in the world with me?

This singular being! Where she has lived — and how — is a problem to which not the faintest solution is conceivable. She had, I say, never seen clothes: for when I began to dress her, her perplexity was unbounded; also, during her twenty years, she has never seen almonds, figs, nuts, liqueurs, chocolate, conserves, vegetables, sugar, oil, honey, sweetmeats, orange-sherbet, mastic, salt, raki, tobacco, and many such things: for she showed perplexity at all these, hesitation to eat them: but she has known and tasted *white wine*: I could see that. Here, then, is a mystery.

I have not gone to Imbros, but remained here some days longer observing her.

I have allowed her to sit in a corner at meal-time, not far from where I eat, and I have given her food.

She is wonderfully clever! I continually find that, after an incredibly short time, she has most completely adapted herself to this or that. Already she wears her outfit as coquettishly as though born to clothes. Without at all seeming observant — for, on the contrary, she gives an impression of great flightiness — she watches me, I am convinced, with pretty exact observation. She knows precisely when I am speaking roughly, bidding her go, bidding her come, tired of her, tolerant of her, scorning her, cursing her. If I wish her to the devil, she quickly divines it by my face, and will

disappear. Yesterday I noticed something queer about her, and soon discovered that she had been staining her lids with black kohol, like the *hanums*, so that, having found a box, she must have guessed its use from the pictures. Wonderfully clever! — imitative as a mirror. Two mornings ago I found an old mother-of-pearl kittur, and sitting under the arcade, touched the strings, playing a simple air; I could just see her behind one of the arch-pillars on the opposite side, and she was listening with apparent eagerness, and, I fancied, panting. Well, returning from a walk beyond the Phanar walls in the afternoon, I heard the same air coming out from the house, for she was repeating it pretty faultlessly by ear.

Also, during the forenoon of the previous day, I came upon her — for footsteps make no sound in this house — in the pacha's visitors'-hall: and what was she doing? — copying the poses of three dancing-girls frescoed there! So that she would seem to have a character as light as a butterfly's, and is afraid of nothing.

Now I know.

I had observed that at the beginning of every meal she seemed to have something on her mind, going toward the door, hesitating as if to see whether I would follow, and then returning. At length yesterday, after sitting to eat, she jumped up, and to my infinite surprise, said her first word: said it with a most quaint, experimental effort of the tongue, as a fledgling trying the air: the word '*Come*.'

That morning, meeting her in the court, I had told her to repeat some words after me: but she had made no attempt, as if shy to break the long silence of her life; and now I felt some sort of foolish pleasure in hearing her utter that word, often no doubt heard from me: and after hurriedly

eating, I went with her, saying to myself: 'She must be about to shew me the food to which she is accustomed: and perhaps that will solve her origin.'

And so it has proved. I have now discovered that to the moment when she saw me, she had tasted only her mother's milk, dates, and that white wine of Ismidt which the Koran permits.

As it was getting dark, I lit and took with me the big red-silk lantern, and we set out, she leading, and walking confoundedly fast, slackening when I swore at her, and getting fast again: and she walks with a certain levity, flightiness, and liberated *furore*, very hard to describe, as though space were a luxury to be revelled in. By what instinctive cleverness, or native vigour of memory, she found her way I cannot tell, but she led me such a walk that night, miles, miles, till I became furious, darkness having soon fallen with only a faint moon obscured by cloud, and a drizzle which haunted the air, she without light climbing and picking her thinly-slippered steps over mounds of *débris* and loosely-strewn masonry with unfailing agility, I occasionally splashing a foot with horror into one of those little ponds which always marked the Stamboul streets. When I was nearer her, I would see her peer across and upward toward Pera, as if that were a remembered land-mark, and would note the perpetual aspen oscillations of the long coral drops in her ears, and the nimble ply of her limbs, wondering with a groan if Pera was our goal.

Our goal was even beyond Pera. When we came to the Golden Horn, she pointed to my caique which lay at the Old Seraglio steps, and over the water we went, she lying quite at ease now, with her face at the level of the water in the centre of the crescent-shape, as familiarly as a *hanum* of old engaged in some escapade through the crowded Babel of Galata and that north side of the Horn.

Through Galata we passed, I already cursing the journey: and, following the line of the coast and the great steep thoroughfare of Pera, we came at last, almost in the country, to a great wall, and the entrance to an immense terraced garden, whose limits were invisible, many of the trees and avenues being still intact.

I knew it at once: I had lain a special fuse-train in the great palace at the top of the terraces: it was the royal palace, Yildiz.

Up and up we went through the grounds, a few unburned old bodies in rags of uniform still discernible here and there as the lantern swung past them, a musician in sky-blue, a fantassin and officer-of-the-guard in scarlet, forming a cross, with domestics of the palace in red-and-orange.

The palace itself was quite in ruins, together with all its surrounding barracks, mosque, and seraglio, and, as we reached the top of the grounds, presented a picture very like those which I have seen of the ruins of Persepolis, only that here the columns, both standing and fallen, were innumerable, and all more or less blackened; and through doorless doors we passed, down immensely-wide short flights of steps, and up them, and over strewn courtyards, by tottering fragments of arcades, all roofless, and tracts of charcoal between interrupted avenues of pillars, I following, expectant, and she very eager now. Finally, down a flight of twelve or fourteen rather steep and narrow steps, very dislocated, we went to a level which, I thought, must be the floor of the palace vaults: for at the bottom of the steps we stood on a large plain floor of plaster, which bore the marks of the flames; and over this the girl ran a few steps, pointed with excited recognition to a hole in it, ran further, and disappeared down the hole.

When I followed, and lowered the lantern a little, I saw that the drop down was about eight feet, made less than six feet by a heap of stone-rubbish below, the falling of which had caused the hole: and it was by

standing on this rubbish-heap, I knew at once, that she must have been enabled to climb out into the world.

I dropped down, and found myself in a low flat-roofed cellar, with a floor of black earth, very fusty and damp, but so very vast in extent that even in the day-time, I suppose, I could not have discerned its boundaries; I fancy, indeed, that it extends beneath the whole palace and its environs — an enormous stretch of space: with the lantern I could only see a very limited portion of its area. She still led me eagerly on, and I presently came upon a whole region of flat boxes, each about two feet square, and nine inches high, made of very thin laths, packed to the roof; and about a-hundred-and-fifty feet from these I saw, where she pointed, another region of bottles, fat-bellied bottles in chemises of wicker-work, stretching away into gloom and total darkness. The boxes, of which a great number lay broken open, as they can be by merely pulling with the fingers at a pliant crack, contain dates; and the bottles, of which many thousands lay empty, contain, I saw, old Ismidtwine. Some fifty or sixty casks, covered with mildew, some old pieces of furniture, and a great cube of rotting, curling parchments, showed that this cellar had been more or less loosely used for the occasional storage of superfluous stores and knick-knacks.

It was also more or less loosely used as a domestic prison. For in the lane between the region of boxes and the region of bottles, near the former, there lay on the ground the skeleton of a woman, the details of whose costume were still appreciable, with thin brass gyves on her wrists: and when I had examined her well, I knew the whole history of the creature standing silent by my side.

She is the daughter of the Sultan, as I assumed when I had once determined that the skeleton is both the skeleton of her mother, and the skeleton of the Sultana.

That the skeleton was her mother is clear: for the cloud occurred just twenty-one years since, and the dead woman was, of course, at that moment in the prison, which must have been air-tight, and with her the girl: but since the girl is quite certainly not much more than twenty — she looks younger — she must at that time have been either unborn or a young babe: but a babe would hardly be imprisoned with another than its own mother. I am rather inclined to think that the girl was unborn at the moment of the cloud, and was born in the cellar.

That the mother was the Sultana is clear from her fragments of dress, and the symbolic character of her every ornament, crescent earrings, heron-feather, and the blue campaca enamelled in a bracelet. This poor woman, I have thought, may have been the victim of some unbounded fit of imperial passion, incurred by some domestic crime, real or imagined, which may have been pardoned in a day had not death overtaken her master and the world.

There are four steep stone steps at about the centre of the cellar, leading up to a locked iron trap-door, apparently the only opening into this great hole: and this trap-door must have been so nearly air-tight as to bar the intrusion of the poison in anything like deadly quantity.

But how rare — how strange — the coincidence of chances here. For, if the trap-door was absolutely air-tight, I cannot think that the supply of oxygen in the cellar, large as it was, would have been sufficient to last the girl twenty years, to say nothing of what her mother used up before death: for I imagine that the woman must have continued to live some time in her dungeon, sufficiently long, at least, to teach her child to procure its food of dates and wine; so that the door must have been only just sufficiently hermetic to bar the poison, yet admit some oxygen; or else, the place may have been absolutely air-tight at the time of the cloud, and some crack,

which I have not seen, opened to admit oxygen after the poison was dispersed: in any case — the all-but-infinite rarity of the chance!

Thinking these things I climbed out, and we walked to Pera, where I slept in a great white-stone house in five or six acres of garden overlooking the cemetery of Kassim, having pointed out to the girl another house in which to sleep.

This girl! what a history! After existing twenty years in a sunless world hardly three acres wide, she one day suddenly saw the only sky which she knew collapse at one point! a hole appeared into yet a world beyond! It was I who had come, and kindled Constantinople, and set her free.

Ah, I see something now! I see! it was for this that I was preserved: I to be a sort of new-fangled Adam — and this little creature to be my Eve! That is it! *The White* does not admit defeat: he would recommence the Race again! At the last, the eleventh hour — in spite of all — he would turn defeat into victory, and outwit that Other.

However, if this be so — and I seem to see it quite clearly — then in that White scheme is a singular flaw: at *one point*, it is obvious, that elaborate Forethought fails: for I have a free will — and I refuse, I refuse.

Certainly, in this matter I am on the side of the Black: and since it depends absolutely upon me, this time Black wins.

No more men on the earth after me, ye Powers! To *you* the question may be nothing more than a gambling excitement as to the final outcome of your aërial squabble: but to the poor men who had to bear the wrongs, Inquisitions, rack-rents, Waterloos, unspeakable horrors, it was hard earnest, you know! Oh the wretchedness — the deep, deep pain — of that bungling ant-hill, happily wiped out, my God! My sweetheart Clodagh ... she was not an ideal being! There was a man called Judas who betrayed the gentle

Founder of the Christian Faith, and there was some Roman king named Galba, a horrid dog, and there was a French devil, Gilles de Raiz: and the rest were all much the same, much the same. Oh no, it was not a good race, that small infantry which called itself Man: and here, falling on my knees before God and Satan as I write, I swear, I swear: Never through me shall it spring and fester again.

I cannot realise her! Not at all, at all, at all! If she is out of my sight and hearing ten minutes, I fall to doubting her reality. If I lose her for half a day, all the old feelings, resembling certainties, come back, that I have only been dreaming — that this appearance cannot be an actual objective fact of life, since the impossible is impossible.

Seventeen long years, seventeen long years, of madness....

To-morrow I start for Imbros: and whether this girl chooses to follow me, or whether she stays behind, I will see her from the moment I land no more.

She must rise very early. I who am now regularly on the palace-roof at dawn, sometimes from between the pavilion-curtains of the galleries, or from the steps of the telescope-kiosk, may spy her far down below, a dainty microscopic figure, generally running about the sward, or gazing up in wonder at the palace from the lake-edge.

It is now three months since she came with me to Imbros.

I left her the first night in that pale-yellow house with the two green jalousies facing the beach, where there was everything that she would need; but I knew that, like all the houses there now, it leaked profusely, and the next day I went down to the curving stair, cut through the rock at the back

and south of the village, climbed, and half a mile beyond found that park and villa with gables, which I had noted from the sea. The villa is almost intact, very strongly built of purplish marble, though small, and very like a Western house, with shingles, and three gables, so that I think it must have been the yali of some Englishman, for it contains a number of English books, though the only body I saw there was what looked like an Aararat Kurd, with spiral string wound down his turban, yellow ankle-pantaloons, and flung red shoulder-cloak; and all in the heavily-wooded park, and all about the low rock-steps up the hill, profusions of man-dragora; and from the rock-steps to the house a narrow long avenue of acacias, mossy underfoot, that mingle overhead, the house standing about four yards from the edge of the perpendicular sea-cliff, whence one can see the *Speranzas* main top-mast, and broken mizzen-mast-head, in her quiet haven. After examining the place I went down again to the village, and her house: but she was not there: and two hours long I paced about among the weeds of these amateur little alleys and flat-roofed windowless houses (though some have terrace-roofs, and a rare aperture), whose once-raw yellows, greens, and blues look now like sunset tints when the last flush is gone, and they fade dun. When at last she came running with open mouth, I took her up the rock-steps, and into the house, and there she has lived, one of the gable-tips, I now find (that overlooking the sea), being just visible from the north-east corner of the palace-roof, two miles from it.

That night again, when I was leaving her, she made an attempt to follow me. But I was resolved to end it, then: and cutting a sassafras-whip I cut her deep, three times, till she ran, crying.

So, then, what is my fate henceforth? — to think always, from sun to moon, and from moon to sun, of one only thing — and that thing an object

for the microscope? — to become a sneaking Paul Pry to spy upon the silly movements of one little sparrow, like some fatuous motiveless gossip of old, his occupation to peep, his one faculty to scent, his honey and his achievement to unearth the infinitely unimportant? I would kill her first!

I am convinced that she is no stay-at-home, but roams continually over the island: for thrice, wandering myself, I have come upon her.

The first time she was running with flushed face, intent upon striking down a butterfly with a twig held in the left hand (for both hands she uses with dexterity). It was at about nine in the morning, in her park, near the bottom where there are high grass-growths and ferny luxuriance between the close tree-trunks, and shadow, and the broken wall of an old funeral-kiosk sunk aslant under moss, creepers, and wild flowers, behind which I peeped hidden and wet with dew. She has had the assurance to modify the dress I put upon her, and was herself a butterfly, for instead of the shintiyān, she had on a zouave, hardly reaching to the waist, of saffron satin, no feredjé, but a scarlet fez with violet tassel, and baggy pantaloons of azure silk; down her back the long auburn plait, quite neat, but all her front hair loose and wanton, the fez cocked backward, while I caught glimpses of her fugitive heels lifting out of the dropping slipper-sole. She is pretty clever, but not clever enough, for that butterfly escaped, and in one instant I saw her change into weary and sad, for on this earth is nothing more fickle than that Proteus face, which resembles a landscape swept with cloud-shadows on a bright day. Fast beat my heart that morning, owing to the consciousness that, while I saw, I was unseen, yet might be seen.

Another noontide, three weeks afterwards, I came upon her a good way up yonder to the west of the palace, sleeping on her arm in an alley between overgrown old trellises, where rioting wild vine buried her in gloom: but I

had not been peeping through the bushes a minute, when she started up and looked wildly about, her quick consciousness, I imagine, detecting a presence: though I think that I managed to get away unseen. She keeps her face very dirty: all about her mouth was dry-stained with a polychrome of grape, *mûrs*, and other coloured juices, like slobbering *gamins* of old. I could also see that her nose and cheeks are now sprinkled with little freckles.

Four days since I saw her a third time, and then found that the primitive instinct to represent the world in pictures has been working in her: for she was drawing. It was down in the middle one of the three east-and-west village streets, for thither I had strolled toward evening, and coming out upon the street from between an old wall and a house, saw her quite near. I pulled up short — and peered. She was lying on her face all among grasses, a piece of yellow board before her, and in her fingers a chalk-splinter: and very intently she drew, her tongue-tip travelling along her short upper-lip from side to side, regularly as a pendulum, her fez tipped far back, and the left foot swinging upward from the knee. She had drawn her yali at the top, and now, as I could see by peering well forward, was drawing underneath the palace — from memory, for where she lay it is all hidden: yet the palace it was, for there were the waving lines meant for the steps, the two slanting pillars, the slanting battlements of the outer court, and before the portal, with turban reaching above the roof, and my two whisks of beard sweeping below the knees — myself.

Something spurred me, and I could not resist shouting a sudden “Hi!” whereupon she scrambled like a spring-bok to her feet, I pointing to the drawing, smiling.

This creature has a way of mincing her pressed lips, while she shakes the head, intensely cooing a fond laugh: and so she did then.

“You are a clever little wretch, you know,” said I, she cocking her eye, trying to divine my meaning with vague smile.

‘Oh, yes, a clever little wretch,’ I went on in a gruff voice, ‘clever as a serpent, no doubt: for in the first case it was the Black who used the serpent, but now it is the White. But it will not do, you know. Do you know what you are to me, you? You are my Eve! — a little fool, a little piebald frog like you. But it will not do at all, at all! A nice race it would be with you for mother, and me for father, wouldn’t it? — half-criminal like the father, half-idiot like the mother: just like the last, in short. They used to say, in fact, that the offspring of a brother and sister was always weak-headed: and from such a wedlock certainly came the human race, so no wonder it was what it was: and so it would have to be again now. Well no — unless we have the children, and cut their throats at birth: and *you* would not like that at all, I know, and, on the whole, it would not work, for the White would be striking a poor man dead with His lightning, if I attempted that. No, then: the modern Adam is some eight to twenty thousand years wiser than the first — you see? less instinctive, more rational. The first disobeyed by commission: I shall disobey by omission: only his disobedience was a sin, mine is a heroism. I have not been a particularly ideal sort of beast so far, you know: but in me, Adam Jeffson — I swear it — the human race shall at last attain a true nobility, the nobility of self-extinction. I shall turn out trumps: I shall prove myself stronger than Tendency, World-Genius, Providence, Currents of Fate, White Power, Black Power, or whatever is the name for it. No more Clodaghs, Lucrezia Borgias, Semiramises, Pompadours, Irish Landlords, Hundred-Years’ Wars — you see?’

She kept her left eye obliquely cocked like a little fool, wondering, no doubt, what I was saying.

‘And talking of Clodagh,’ I went on, ‘I shall call you that henceforth, to keep me reminded. So that is your name — not Eve — but Clodagh, who was a Poisoner, you see? She poisoned a poor man who trusted her: and that is your name now — not Eve, but Clodagh — to remind me, you most dangerous little speckled viper! And in order that I may no more see your foolish little pretty face, I decree that, for the future, you wear a *yashmak* to cover up your lips, which, I can see, were meant to be seductive, though dirty; and you can leave the blue eyes, and the little white-skinned freckled nose uncovered, if you like, they being commonplace enough. Meantime, if you care to see how to draw a palace — I will show you.’

Before I stretched my hand, she was presenting the board — so that she had guessed something of my meaning! But some hard tone in my talk had wounded her, for she presented it looking very glum, her under-lip pushing a little obliquely out, very pathetically, I must say, as always when she is just ready to cry.

In a few strokes I drew the palace, and herself standing at the portal between the pillars: and now great was her satisfaction, for she pointed to the sketched figure, and to herself, interrogatively: and when I nodded ‘yes,’ she went cooing her fond murmurous laugh, with pressed and mincing lips: and it is clear that, in spite of my beatings, she is in no way afraid of me.

Before I could move away, I felt some rain-drops, and down in some seconds rushed a shower. I looked, saw that the sky was rapidly darkening, and ran into the nearest of the little cubical houses, leaving her glancing sideways upward, with the quaintest artlessness of interest in the downpour: for she is not yet quite familiarised with the operations of nature, and seems to regard them with a certain amiable inquisitive seriousness, as though they

were living beings, comrades as good as herself. She presently joined me, but even then stretched her hand out to feel the drops.

Now there came a thunder-clap, the wind was rising, and rain spattering about me: for the panes of these houses, made, I believe, of paper saturated in almond-oil, have long disappeared, and rains, penetrating by roof and rare window, splash the bones of men. I gathered up my skirts to run toward other shelter, but she was before me, saying in her strange experimental voice that word of hers: "*Come.*"

She ran in advance, and I, with the outer robe over my head, followed, urging flinching way against the whipped rain-wash. She took the way by the stone horse-pond, through an alley to the left between two blind walls, then down a steep path through wood to the rock-steps, and up we ran, and along the hill, to her yali, which is a mile nearer the village than the palace, though by the time we pelted into its dry shelter we were wet to the skin.

Sudden darkness had come, but she quickly found some matches, lit one, looking at it with a certain meditative air, and applied it to a candle and to a bronze Western lamp on the table, which I had taught her to oil and light. Near a Western fire-place was a Turkish mangal, like one which she had seen me light to warm bath-waters in Constantinople, and when I pointed to it, she ran to the kitchen, returned with some chopped wood, and very cleverly lit it. And there for several hours I sat that night, reading (the first time for many years): it was a book by the poet Milton, found in a glazed book-case on the other side of the fire-place: and most strange, most novel, I found those august words about warring angels that night, while the storm raved: for this man had evidently taken no end of pains with his book, and done it gallantly well, too, making the thing hum: and I could not conceive why he should have been at that trouble — unless it were for the same

reason that I built the palace, because some spark bites a man, and he would be like — but that is all vanity, and delusion.

Well, there is a rage in the storms of late years which really transcends bounds; I do not remember if I have noted it in these sheets before: but I never could have conceived a turbulence so huge. Hour after hour I sat there that night, smoking a chibouque, reading, and listening to the batteries and lamentations of that haunted air, shrinking from it, fearing even for the *Speranza* by her quay in the sequestered harbour, and for the palace-pillars. But what astonished me was that girl: for, after sitting on the ottoman to my left some time, she fell sideways asleep, not the least fear about her, though I should have thought that nervousness at such a turmoil would be so natural to her: and whence she has this light confidence in the world into which she has so abruptly come I do not know, for it is as though someone inspired her with the mood of nonchalance, saying: ‘Be of good cheer, and care not a pin about anything: for God is God.’

I heard the ocean swing hoarse like heavy ordnance against the cliffs below, where they meet the outer surface of the southern of the two claws of land that form the harbour: and the thought came into my mind: ‘If now I taught her to speak, to read, I could sometimes make her read a book to me.’

The winds seemed wilfully struggling for the house to snatch and wing it away into the drear Eternities of the night: and I could not but heave the sigh: ‘Alas for us two poor waifs and castaways of our race, little bits of flotsam and seaweed-hair cast up here a moment, ah me, on this shore of the Ages, soon to be dragged back, O turgid Eternity, into thy abysmal gorge; and upon what strand — who shall say? — shall she next be flung, and I, divided then perhaps by all the stretch of the trillion-distanced astral gulf?’

And such a pity, and a wringing of the heart, seemed in things, that a tear fell from my eyes that ominous midnight.

She started up at a gust of more appalling volume, rubbing her eyes, with dishevelled hair (it must have been about midnight), listening a minute, with that demure, droll interest of hers, to the noise of the elements, and then smiled to me; rose then, left the room, and presently returned with a pomegranate and some almonds on a plate, also some delicious old sweet wine in a Samian cruche, and an old silver cup, gilt inside, standing in a zarf. These she placed on the table near me, I murmuring: ‘Hospitality.’

She looked at the book, which I read as I ate, with lowered left eye-lid, seeking to guess its use, I suppose. Most things she understands at once, but this must have baffled her: for to see one looking fixedly at a thing, and not know what one is looking at it for, must be very disconcerting.

I held it up before her, saying:

“Shall I teach you to read it? If I did, how would you repay me, you Clodagh?”

She cocked her eyes, seeking to comprehend. God knows, at that moment I pitied the poor dumb waif, alone in all the whole round earth with me. The candle-flame, moved by the wind like a slow-painting brush, flickered upon her face, though every cranny was closed.

“Perhaps, then,” I said, “I will teach you. You are a pitiable little derelict of your race, you know: and two hours every day I will let you come to the palace, and I will teach you. But be sure, be careful. If there be danger, I will kill you: assuredly — without fail. And let me begin with a lesson now: say after me: ‘White.’”

I took her hand, and got her to understand that I wanted her to repeat after me.

“White,” said I.

“Hwhite,” said she.

‘Power,’ said I.

‘Pow-wer,’ said she.

‘White Power,’ said I.

‘Hwhite Pow-wer,’ said she.

‘Shall not,’ said I.

‘Sall not,’ said she.

‘White Power shall not,’ said I.

‘Hwhite Pow-wer sall not,’ said she.

‘Prevail,’ said I.

‘Fffail,’ said she, pronouncing the ‘v’ with a long fluttering ‘f’-sound.

‘Pre-vail,’ said I.

‘Pe-vvvail,’ said she.

‘White Power shall not prevail,’ said I.

‘Hwhite Pow-wer sall not — fffail,’ said she.

A thunder which roared as she said it seemed to me to go laughing through the universe, and a minute I looked upon her face with positive shrinking fear; till, starting up, I thrust her with violence from my path, and dashed forth to re-seek the palace and my bed.

Such was the ingratitude and fatality which my first attempt, four nights since, to teach her met with. It remains to be seen whether my pity for her dumbness, or some servile tendency toward fellowship in myself, will result in any further lesson. Certainly, I think not: for though I have given my word, the most solemnly-pledged word may be broken.

Surely, surely, her presence in the world with me — for I suppose it is that — has wrought some profound changes in my mood: for gone now apparently are those turbulent hours when, stalking like a peacock, I flaunted my monarchy in the face of the Eternal Powers, with hissed

blasphemies; or else dribbled, shaking my body in a lewd dance; or was off to fire some vast city and revel in redness and the chucklings of Hell; or rolled in the drunkenness of drugs. It was mere frenzy! — I see it now — it was ‘not good,’ ‘not good.’ And it rather looks as if it were past — or almost. I have clipped my beard and hair, removed the earrings, and thought of modifying my attire. I will just watch to see whether she comes loitering down there about the gate of the lake.

Her progress is like....

It is nine months since I have written, on these sheets, those words, ‘Her progress is like....’ being the beginning of some narrative in which something interrupted me: and since then I have had no impulse to write.

But I was thinking just now of the curious tricks and uncertainties of my memory, and seeing the sheets, will record it here. I have lately been trying to recall the name of a sister of mine — some perfectly simple name, I know — and the name of my old home in England: and they have completely passed out of my cognizance, though she was my only sister, and we grew up closely together: some quite simple name, I forget it now. Yet I can’t say that my memory is bad: there are things — quite unexpected, unimportant things — which come up in my mind with considerable clearness. For instance, I remember to have met in Paris (I think), long before the poison-cloud, a little Brazilian boy of the colour of weak coffee-and-milk, of whom she now constantly reminds me. He wore his hair short like a convict’s, so that one could spy the fish-white flesh beneath, and delighted to play solitary about the stairs of the hotel, dressed up in the white balloon-dress of a Pierrot. I have the impression now that he must have had very large ears. Clever as a flea he was, knowing five or six

languages, as it were by nature, without having any suspicion that that was at all extraordinary. She has that same light, unconscious, and nonchalant cleverness, and easy way of life. It is little more than a year since I began to teach her, and already she can speak English with a quite considerable vocabulary, and perfect correctness (except that she does not pronounce the letter 'r'); she has also read, or rather devoured, a good many books; and can write, draw, and play the harp. And all she does without effort: rather with the flighty naturalness with which a bird takes to the wing.

What made me teach her to read was this: One afternoon, fourteen months or so ago, I from the roof-kiosk saw her down at the lake-rim, a book in hand; and as she had seen me looking steadily at books, so she was looking steadily at it, with pathetic sideward head: so that I burst into laughter, for I saw her clearly through the glass, and whether she is the simplest little fool, or the craftiest serpent that ever breathed, I am not yet sure. If I thought that she has the least design upon my honour, it would be ill for her.

I went to Gallipoli for two days in the month of May, and brought back a very pretty little caique, a perfect slender crescent of the colour of the moon, though I had two days' labour in cutting through bush-thicket for the passage of the motor in bringing it up to the lake. It has pleased me to see her lie among the silk cushions of the middle, while I, paddling, taught her her first words and sentences between the hours of eight and ten in the evening, though later they became 10 A.M. to noon, when the reading began, we sitting on the palace-steps before the portal, her mouth invariably well covered with the yashmak, the lesson-book being a large-lettered old Bible found at her yali. *Why* she must needs wear the yashmak she has never once asked; and how much she divines, knows, or intends, I have no

idea, continually questioning myself as to whether she is all simplicity, or all cunning.

That she is conscious of some profound difference in our organisation I cannot doubt: for that I have a long beard, and she none at all, is among the most patent of facts.

I have thought that a certain *Western-ness* — a growing modernity of tone — may be the result, as far as I am concerned, of her presence with me? I do not know....

There is the gleam of a lake-end just visible in the north forest from the palace-top, and in it a good number of fish like carp, tench, roach, etc., so in May I searched for a tackle-shop in the Gallipoli Fatmeh-bazaar, and got four 12-foot rods, with reels, silk-line, quill-floats, a few yards of silk-worm gut, with a packet of No. 7 and 8 hooks, and split-shot for sinkers; and since red-worms, maggots and gentles are common on the island, I felt sure of a great many more fish than the number I wanted, which was none at all. However, for the mere amusement, I fished several times, lying at my length in a patch of long-grass over-waved by an enormous cedar, where the bank is steep, and the water deep. And one mid-afternoon she was suddenly there with me, questioned me with her eyes, and when I consented, stayed: and presently I said I would teach her bottom-angling, and sent her flying up to the palace for another rod and tackle.

That day she did nothing, for after teaching her to thread the worm, and put the gentles on the smaller hooks, I sent her to hunt for worms to chop up for ground-baiting the pitch for the next afternoon; and when this was done it was dinner-time, and I sent her home, for by then I was giving the reading-lessons in the morning.

The next day I found her at the bank, taught her to take the sounding for adjusting the float, and she lay down not far from me, holding the rod. So I

said to her:

‘Well, this is better than living in a dark cellar twenty years, with nothing to do but walk up and down, sleep, and consume dates and Ismidt wine.’

‘Yes!’ says she.

‘Twenty years!’ said I: ‘How did you bear it?’

‘I was not closs,’ says she.

‘Did you never suspect that there was a world outside that cellar?’ said

I.

‘Never,’ says she, ‘or lather, yes: but I did not suppose that it was *this* world, but another where he lived.’

‘He who?’

‘He who spoke with me.’

‘Who was that?’

‘Oh! a bite!’ she screamed gladly.

I saw her float bob under, and started up, rushed to her, and taught her how to strike and play it, though it turned out when landed to be nothing but a tiny barbel: but she was in ecstasies, holding it on her palm, murmuring her fond coo.

She re-baited, and we lay again. I said:

‘But what a life: no exit, no light, no prospect, no hope—’

‘Plenty of *hope!*’ says she.

‘Good Heavens! hope of what?’

‘I knew vely well that something was lipening over the cellar, or under, or aloud it, and would come to pass at a certain fixed hour, and that I should see it, and feel it, and it would be vely nice.’

‘Ah, well, you had to wait for it, at any rate. Didn’t those twenty years seem *long?*’

‘No — at least sometimes — not often. I was always so occupied.’

‘Occupied in doing what?’

‘In eating, or dlinking, or lunning, or talking.’

‘Talking to *yourself*?’

‘Not myself.’

‘To whom, then?’

‘To the one who told me when I was hungry, and put the dates to satisfy my hunger.’

‘I see. Don’t wriggle about in that way, or you will never catch any fish. The maxim of angling is: “Study to be quiet”—’

‘O! another bite!’ she called, and this time, all alone, very agilely landed a good-sized bream.

‘But do you mean that you were never sad?’ said I when she was re-settled.

‘Sometimes I would sit and cly,’ says she— ‘I did not know why. But if that was “sadness,” I was never miserlable, never, never. And if I clied, it did not last long, and I would soon fall to sleep, for he would lock me in his lap, and kiss me, and wipe all my tears away.’

‘He who?’

‘Why, what a question! he who told me when I was hungry, and of the thing that was lipening outside the cellar, which would be so nice.’

‘I see, I see. But in all that dingy place, and thick gloom, were you never at all afraid?’

‘Aflaid! *I!* of what?’

‘Of the unknown.’

‘I do not understand you. How could I be *aflaid*? The known was the very opposite of tellible: it was merely hunger and dates, thirst and wine, the desire to lun and space to lun in, the desire to sleep and sleep: there was

nothing tellible in that: and the unknown was even less tellible than the known: for it was the nice thing that was lipening outside the cellar. I do not understand—’

‘Ah, yes,’ said I, ‘you are a clever little being: but your continual fluttering about is fatal to all angling. Isn’t it in your nature to keep still a minute? And with regard now to your habits in the cellar — ?’

‘*Another!*’ she cried with happy laugh, and landed a young chub. And that afternoon she caught seven, and I none.

Another day I took her from the pitch to one of the kitchens in the village with some of the fish, till then always thrown away, and taught her cooking: for the only cooking-implement in the palace is the silver alcohol-lamp for coffee and chocolate. We both scrubbed the utensils, and boil and fry I taught her, and the making of a sauce from vinegar, bottled olives, and the tinned American butter from the *Speranza*, and the boiling of rice mixed with flour for ground-baiting our pitch. And she, at first astonished, was soon all deft housewifeliness, breathless officiousness, and behind my back, of her own intuitiveness, grated some dry almonds found there, and with them sprinkled the fried tench. And we ate them, sitting on the floor together: the first new food, I suppose, tasted by me for twenty-one years: nor did I find it disagreeable.

The next day she came up to the palace reading a book, which turned out to be a cookery-book in English, found at her yali; and a week later, she appeared, out of hours, presenting me a yellow-earthenware dish containing a mess of gorgeous colours — a boiled fish under red peppers, bits of saffron, a greenish sauce, and almonds: but I turned her away, and would have none of her, or her dish.

About a mile up to the west of the palace is a very old ruin in the deepest forest, I think of a mosque, though only three truncated internal pillars under ivy, and the weedy floor, with the courtyard and portal-steps remain, before it being a long avenue of cedars, gently descending from the steps, the path between the trees choked with long-grass and wild rye reaching to my middle. Here I saw one day a large disc of old brass, bossed in the middle, which may have been either a shield or part of an ancient cymbal, with concentric rings graven round it, from centre to circumference. The next day I brought some nails, a hammer, a saw, and a box of paints from the *Speranza*; and I painted the rings in different colours, cut down a slim lime-trunk, nailed the thin disc along its top, and planted it well, before the steps: for I said I would make a bull's-eye, and do rifle and revolver practice before it, from the avenue. And this the next evening I was doing at four hundred feet, startling the island, it seemed, with that unusual noise, when up she came peering with enquiring face: at which I was very angry, because my arm, long unused, was firing wide: but I was too proud to say anything, and let her look, and soon she understood, laughing every time I made a considerable miss, till at last I turned upon her saying: 'If you think it so easy, you may try.'

She had been wanting to try, for she came eagerly to the offer, and after I had opened and showed her the mechanism, the cartridges, and how to shoot, I put into her hands one of the *Speranza* Colt's. She took her bottom-lip between her teeth, shut her left eye, vaulted out the revolver like an old shot to the level of her intense right eye, and sent a ball through the geometrical centre of the boss.

However, it was a fluke-shot, for I had the satisfaction of seeing her miss every one of the other five, except the last, which hit the black. That, however, was three weeks since, and now my hitting record is forty per

cent., and hers ninety-six — most extraordinary: so that it is clear that this creature is the *protégée* of someone, and favouritism is in the world.

Her book of books is the Old Testament. Sometimes, at noon or afternoon, I may look abroad from the roof or galleries, and see a remote figure sitting on the sward under the shade of plane or black cypress: and I always know that the book she cons there is the Bible — like an old Rabbi. She has a passion for stories: and there finds a store.

Three nights since when it was pretty late, and the moon very splendid, I saw her passing homewards close to the lake, and shouted down to her, meaning to say ‘Good-night’; but she thought that I had called her, and came: and sitting out on the top step we talked for hours, she without the yashmak.

We fell to talking about the Bible. And says she: ‘What did Cain to Abel?’

‘He knocked him over,’ I replied, liking sometimes to use such idioms, with the double object of teaching and perplexing her.

‘Over what?’ says she.

‘Over his heels,’ said I.

‘I do not complehend!’

‘He killed him, then.’

‘That I know. But how did Abel feel when he was killed? What is it to be *killed*?’

‘Well,’ said I, ‘you have seen bones all around you, and the bones of your mother, and you can feel the bones in your fingers. Your fingers will become mere bone after you are dead, as die you must. Those bones which you see around you, are, of course, the bones of the men of whom we often

‘speak: and the same thing happened to them which happens to a fish or a butterfly when you catch them, and they lie all still.’

‘And the men and the butterfly feel the same after they are dead?’

‘Precisely the same. They lie in a deep drowse, and dream a nonsense-dream.’

‘That is not dleadful. I thought that it was much more dleadful. I should not mind dying.’

‘Ah!... so much the better: for it is possible that you may have to die a great deal sooner than you think.’

‘I should not mind. Why were men so vely aflaid to die?’

‘Because they were all such shocking cowards.’

‘Oh, not all! not all!’

(This girl, I know not with what motive, has now definitely set herself up against me as the defender of the dead race. With every chance she is at it.)

‘Nearly all,’ said I: ‘tell me one who was not afraid—’

‘There was Isaac,’ says she: ‘when Ablaham laid him on the wood to kill him, he did not jump up and lun to hide.’

‘Isaac was a great exception,’ said I: ‘in the Bible and such books, you understand, you read of only the best sorts of people; but there were millions and millions of others — especially about the time of the poison-cloud — on a very much lower level — putrid wretches — covetous, false, murderous, mean, selfish, debased, hideous, diseased, making the earth a very charnel of festering vices and crimes.’

This, for several minutes, she did not answer, sitting with her back half toward me, cracking almonds, continually striking one step with the ball of her outstretched foot. In the clarid gold of the platform I saw her fez and corals reflected as an elongated blotch of florid red. She turned and drank some wine from the great gold Jarvan goblet which I had brought from the

temple of Boro Budor, her head quite covered in by it. Then, the little hairs at her lip-corners still wet, says she:

‘Vices and climes, climes and vices. Always the same. What were these climes and vices?’

‘Robberies of a hundred sorts, murders of ten hundred—’

‘But what made them *do* them?’

‘Their evil nature — their base souls.’

‘But *you* are one of them, *I* am another: yet you and I live here together, and we do no vices and climes.’

Her astounding shrewdness! Right into the inmost heart of a matter does her simple wit seem to pierce!

‘No,’ I said, ‘we do no vices and crimes, because we lack *motive*. There is no danger that we should hate each other, for we have plenty to eat and drink, dates, wines, and thousands of things. (Our danger is rather the other way.) But *they* hated and schemed, because they were very numerous, and there arose a question among them of dates and wine.’

‘Was there not, then, enough land to grow dates and wine for all?’

‘There was — yes: much more than enough, I fancy. But some got hold of a vast lot of it, and as the rest felt the pinch of scarcity, there arose, naturally, a pretty state of things — including the vices and crimes.’

‘Ah, but then,’ says she, ‘it was not to their bad souls that the vices and climes were due, but only to this question of land. It is certain that if there had been no such question, there would have been no vices and climes, because you and I, who are just like them, do no vices and climes here, where there is no such question.’

The clear limelight of her intelligence! She wriggled on her seat in her effort of argument.

‘I am not going to argue the matter,’ I said. ‘There *was* that question of dates and wine, you see. And there always must be on an earth where millions of men, with varying degrees of cunning, reside.’

‘Oh, not at all necessarily!’ she cries with conviction: ‘not at all, at all: since there are much more dates and wine than are enough for all. If there should spring up more men now, having the whole wisdom, science, and experience of the past at their hand, and they made an arrangement among themselves that the first man who tried to take more than he could work for should be killed, and sent to glean a nonsense-glean, the question could never again arise!’

‘It arose before — it would arise again.’

‘But no! I can guess clearly how it arose before: it arose through the sheer carelessness of the first men. The land was at first so very, very much more than enough for all, that the men did not take the trouble to make an arrangement among themselves; and afterwards the habit of carelessness was confirmed; till at last the very original carelessness must have got to have the look of an arrangement; and so the stream which began in a little long ended in a big long, the long growing more and more fixed and fatal as the stream lrolled further from the source. I see it clearly, can’t you? But now, if some more men would spring, they would be taught—’

‘Ah, but no more men will *spring*, you see — !’

‘There is no telling. I sometimes feel as if they must, and shall. The trees blossom, the thunder rolls, the air makes me run and leap, the ground is full of richness, and I hear the voice of the Lord God walking all among the trees of the forests.’

As she said this, I saw her under-lip push out and tremble, as when she is near to crying, and her eyes moisten: but a moment after she looked at me full, and smiled, so mobile is her face: and as she looked, it suddenly struck

me what a noble temple of a brow the creature has, almost pointed at the uplifted summit, and widening down like a bell-curved Gothic arch, draped in strings of frizzy hair which anon she shakes backward with her head.

‘Clodagh,’ I said after some minutes— ‘do you know why I called you Clodagh?’

‘No? Tell me?’

‘Because once, long ago before the poison-cloud, I had a lover called Clodagh: and she was a....’

‘But tell me first,’ cries she: ‘how did one know one’s lover, or one’s wife, from all the others?’

‘Well, by their faces....’

‘But there must have been many faces — all alike—’

‘Not all alike. Each was different from the rest.’

‘Still, it must have been very clever to tell. I can hardly conceive any face, except yours and mine.’

‘Ah, because you are a little goose, you see.’

‘What was a goose like?’

‘It was a thing like a butterfly, only larger, and it kept its toes always spread out, with a skin stretched between.’

‘Leally? How capricious! And am I like that? — but what were you saying that your lover, Clodagh, was?’

‘She was a Poisoner.’

‘Then why call me Clodagh, since *I* am not a poisoner?’

‘I call you so to remind me: lest you — lest you — should become my — lover, too.’

‘I am your lover already: for I love you.’

‘What, girl?’

‘Do I not love you, who are mine?’

‘Come, come, don’t be a little maniac!’ I went. ‘Clodagh was a *poisoner....*’

‘Why did she poison? Had she not enough dates and wine?’

‘She had, yes: but she wanted more, more, more, the silly idiot.’

‘So that the vices and climes were not confined to those that lacked things, but were done by the others, too?’

‘By the others chiefly.’

‘Then I see how it was!’

‘How was it?’

‘The others had got *spoiled*. The vices and climes must have begun with those who lacked things, and then the others, always seeing vices and climes alound them, began to do them, too — as when one rotten olive is in a bottle, the whole mass soon becomes collupted: but originally they were not rotten, but only became so. And all though a little carelessness at the first. I am sure that if more men could spling now—’

‘But I *told* you, didn’t I, that no more men will spring? You understand, Clodagh, that originally the earth produced men by a long process, beginning with a very low type of creature, and continually developing it, until at last a man stood up. But that can never happen again: for the earth is old, old, and has lost her producing vigour now. So talk no more of men *splinging*, and of things which you do not understand. Instead, go inside — stop, I will tell you a secret: to-day in the wood I picked some musk-roses and wound them into a wreath, meaning to give them you for your head when you came to-morrow: and it is inside on the pearl tripod in the second room to the left: go, therefore, and put it on, and bring the harp, and play to me, my dear.’

She ran quick with a little cry, and coming again, sat crowned, incarnadine in the blushing depths of the gold. Nor did I send her home to

her lonely yali, till the pale and languished moon, weary of all-night beatitudes, sank down soft-couched in quilts of curdling opals to the Hesperian realms of her rest.

So sometimes we speak together, she and I, she and I.

That ever I should write such a thing! I am driven out from Imbros!

I was walking up in a wood yesterday to the west — it was a calm clear evening about seven, the sun having just set. I had the book in which I have written so far in my hand, for I had thought of making a sketch of an old windmill to the north-west to show her. Twenty minutes before she had been with me, for I had chanced to meet her, and she had come, but kept darting on ahead after peeping fruit, gathering armfuls of amaranth, nenuphar, and red-berried asphodel, till, weary of my life, I had called to her: ‘Go away! out of my sight’ — and she, with suddenly pushed under-lip, had walked off.

Well, I was continuing my stroll, when I seemed to feel some quaking of the ground, and before one could count twenty, it was as if the island was bent upon wracking itself to pieces. My first thought was of her, and in great scare I went running, calling in the direction which she had gone, staggering as on the deck of some labouring ship, falling, picking myself up, running again. The air was quite full of uproar, and the land waving like the sea: and as I went plunging, not knowing whither, I saw to my right some three or four acres of forest droop and sink into a gulf which opened to receive them. Up I flung my arms, crying out: ‘Good God! save the girl!’ and a minute later rushed out, to my surprise, into open space on a hill-side. On the lower ground I could see the palace, and beyond it, a small space of white sea which had the awful appearance of being higher than the land. Down the hill-side I staggered, driven by the impulse to fly somewhither,

but about half way down was startled afresh by a shrill pattering like musical hail, and the next moment saw the entire palace rush with the jangling clatter of a thousand bells into the heaving lake.

Some seconds after this, the earthquake, having lasted fully ten minutes, began to lull, and soon ceased. I found her an hour later standing among the ruins of her little yali.

Well, what a thing! Probably every building on the island has been destroyed; the palace-platform, all cracked, leans half-sunken askew into the lake, like a huge stranded ark, while of the palace itself no trace remains, except a mound of gold stones emerging above the lake to the south. Gone, gone — sixteen years of vanity and vexation. But from a practical point of view, what is a worst calamity of all is that the *Speranza* now lies high-and-dry in the village: for she was bodily picked up from the quay by the tidal wave, and driven bow-foremost into a street not half her width, and there now lies, looking huge enough in the little village, wedged for ever, smashed in at the nip like a frail match-box, a most astonishing spectacle: her bows forty feet up the street, ten feet above the ground at the stem, rudder resting on the inner edge of the quay, foremast tilted forward, the other two masts all right, and that bottom, which has passed through seas so far, buried in every sort of green and brown seaweed, the old *Speranza*. Her steps were there, and by a slight leap I could catch them underneath and go up hand-over-hand, till I got foothold; this I did at ten the same night when the sea-water had mostly drained back from the land, leaving everything very swampy, however; she there with me, and soon following me upon the ship. I found most things cracked into tiny fragments, twisted, disfigured out of likeness, the house-walls themselves displaced a little at the nip, the bow of the cedar skiff smashed in to her

middle against the aft starboard corner of the galley; and were it not for the fact that the air-pinnace had not broken from her heavy ropings, and one of the compasses still whole, I do not know what I should have done: for the four old water-logged boats in the cove have utterly disappeared.

I made her sleep on the cabin-floor amid the *débris* of berth and everything, and I myself slept high up in the wood to the west. I am writing now lying in the long-grass the morning after, the sun rising, though I cannot see him. My plan for to-day is to cut three or four logs with the saw, lay them on the ground by the ship, lower the pinnace upon them, so get her gradually down into the water, and by evening bid a long farewell to Imbros, which drives me out in this way. Still, I look forward with pleasure to our hour's run to the Mainland, when I shall teach her to steer by the compass, and manipulate liquid-air, as I have taught her to dress, to talk, to cook, to write, to think, to live. For she is my creation, this creature: as it were, a 'rib from my side.'

But what is the design of this expulsion? And what was it that she called it last night?— 'this new going out from Halan'! 'Haran,' I believe, being the place from which Abraham went out, when 'called' by God.

We apparently felt only the tail of the earthquake at Imbros: for it has ravaged Turkey! And we two poor helpless creatures put down here in the theatre of all these infinite violences: it is too bad, too bad. For the rages of Nature at present are perfectly astonishing, and what it may come to I do not know. When we came to the Macedonian coast in good moonlight, we sailed along it, and up the Dardanelles, looking out for village, yali, or any habitation where we might put up: but everything has apparently been wrecked. We saw Kilid-Bahr, Chanak-Kaleh, Gallipoli, Lapsaki in ruins; at the last place I landed, leaving her in the boat, and walked a little way, but

soon went back with the news that there was not even a bazaar-arch left standing whole, in most parts even the line of the streets being obliterated, for the place had fallen like a house of dice, and had then been shaken up and jumbled. Finally we slept in a forest on the other side of the strait, beyond Gallipoli, taking our few provisions, and having to wade at some points through morass a foot deep before we reached dry woodland.

Here, the next morning, I sat alone — for we had slept separated by at least half a mile — thinking out the question of whither I should go: my choice would have been to remain either in the region where I was, or to go Eastward: but the region where I was offered no dwelling that I could see; and to go any distance Eastward, I needed a ship. Of ships I had seen during the night only wrecks, nor did I know where to find one in all these latitudes. I was thus, like her ‘Ablaham,’ urged Westward.

In order, then, to go Westward, I first went a little further Eastward, once more entered the Golden Horn, and once more mounted the scorched Seraglio steps. Here what the wickedness of man had spared, the wickedness of Nature had destroyed, and the few houses which I had left standing round the upper part of Pera I now saw low as the rest; also the house near the Suleimanieh, where we had lived our first days, to which I went as to a home, I found without a pillar standing; and that night she slept under the half-roof of a little funeral-kiosk in the scorched cypress-wood of Eyoub, and I a mile away, at the edge of the forest where first I saw her.

The next morning, having met, as agreed, at the site of the Prophet’s mosque, we traversed together the valley and cemetery of Kassim by the quagmires up to Pera, all the landscape having to me a rather twisted unfamiliar aspect. We had determined to spend the morning in searching for supplies among the earthquake-ruins of Pera; and as I had decided to collect sufficient in one day to save us further pains for some time, we passed a

good many hours in this task, I confining myself to the great white house in the park overlooking Kassim, where I had once slept, losing myself in the huge obliquities of its floors, roofs and wall-fragments, she going to the old Mussulman quarter of Djianghir near, on the heights of Taxim, where were many shops, and thence round the brow of the hill to the great French Embassy-house, overlooking Foundoucli and the sea, both of us having large Persian carpet-bags, and all in the air of that wilderness of ruin that morning a sweet, strong, permanent odour of maple-blossom.

We met toward evening, she quivering under such a load, that I would not let her carry it, but abandoned my day's labour, which was lighter, and took hers, which was quite enough: we went back Westward, seeking all the while some shelter from the saturating night-dews of this place: and nothing could we find, till we came again, quite late, to her broken funeral-kiosk at the entrance to the immense cemetery-avenue of Eyoub. There without a word I left her among the shattered catafalques, for I was weary; but having gone some distance, turned back, thinking that I might take some more raisins from the bag; and after getting them, said to her, shaking her little hand where she sat under the roof-shadow on a stone:

‘Good-night, Clodagh.’

She did not answer promptly: and her answer, to my surprise, was a protest against her name: for a rather sulky, yet gentle, voice came from the darkness, saying:

‘I am *not* a Poisoner!’

‘Well,’ said I, ‘all right: tell me whatever you like that I should call you, and henceforth I will call you that.’

‘Call me Eve,’ says she.

‘Well, no,’ said I, ‘not Eve, anything but that: for *my* name is Adam, and if I called you Eve, that would be simply absurd, and we do not want to be

ridiculous in each other's eyes. But I will call you anything else that you like.'

'Call me Leda,' says she.

'And why Leda?' said I.

'Because Leda sounds something like Clodagh,' says she, 'and you are al-ready in the habit of calling me Clodagh; and I saw the name Leda in a book, and liked it: but Clodagh is most horrible, most bitterly horrible!'

'Well, then,' said I, 'Leda it shall be, and I shan't forget, for I like it, too, and it suits you, and you ought to have a name beginning with an "L." Good-night, my dear, sleep well, and dream, dream.'

'And to you, too, my God give dreams of peace and pleasantness,' says she; and I went.

And it was only when I had lain myself upon leaves for my bed, my head on my caftan, a rill for my lullaby, and two stars, which alone I could see out of the heavenful, for my watch-lights; and only when my eyes were already closed toward slumber, that a sudden strong thought pierced and woke me: for I remembered that Leda was the name of a Greek woman who had borne twins. In fact, I should not be surprised if this Greek word Leda is the same word etymologically as the Hebrew Eve, for I have heard of *v's*, and *b's*, and *d's* interchanging about in this way, and if *Di*, meaning God, or Light, and *Bi*, meaning Life, and Iove, and Ihovah and *God*, meaning much the same, are all one, that would be nothing astonishing to me, as widow, and *veuve*, are one: and where it says, 'truly the Light is Good (*tob, bon*),' this is as if it said, 'truly the Di is Di.' Such, at any rate, is the fatality that attends me, even in the smallest things: for this Western Eve, or Greek Leda, had twins.

Well, the next morning we crossed by the ruins of old Greek Phanar across the triple Stamboul-wall, which still showed its deep-ivied portal, and made our way, not without climbing, along the Golden Horn to the foot of the Old Seraglio, where I soon found signs of the railway. And that minute commenced our journey across Turkey, Bulgaria, Servia, Bosnia, Croatia, to Trieste, occupying no day or two as in old times, but four months, a long-drawn nightmare, though a nightmare of rich happiness, if one may say so, leaving on the memory a vague vast impression of monstrous ravines, ever-succeeding profundities, heights and greatnesses, jungles strange as some moon-struck poet's fantasy, everlasting glooms, and a sound of mighty unseen rivers, cataracts, and slow cumbered rills whose bulrushes never see the sun, with largesse everywhere, secrecies, profusions, the unimaginable, the unspeakable, a savagery most lush and fierce and gaudy, and vales of Arcadie, and remote mountain-peaks, and tarns shy as old-buried treasure, and glaciers, and we two human folk pretty small and drowned and lost in all that amplitude, yet moving always through it.

We followed the lines that first day till we came to a steam train, and I found the engine fairly good, and everything necessary to move it at my hand: but the metals in such a condition of twisted, broken, vaulted, and buried confusion, due to the earthquake, that, having run some hundreds of yards to examine them, I saw that nothing could be done in that way. At first this threw me into a condition like despair, for what we were to do I did not know: but after persevering on foot for four days along the deep-rusted track, which is of that large-gauge type peculiar to Eastern Europe, I began to see that there were considerable sound stretches, and took heart.

I had with me land-charts and compass, but nothing for taking altitude-observations: for the *Speranza* instruments, except one compass, had all

been broken-up by her shock. However, on getting to the town of Silivri, about thirty miles from our start, I saw in the ruins of a half-standing bazaar-shop a number of brass objects, and there found several good sextants, quadrants, and theodolites. Two mornings later, we came upon an engine in mid-country, with coals in it, and a stream near; I had a goat-skin of almond-oil in the bag, and found the machinery serviceable after an hour's careful inspection, having examined the boiler with a candle through the manhole, and removed the autoclaves of the heaters. All was red with rust, and the shaft of the connecting-rod in particular seemed so frail, that at one moment I was very dubious: I decided, however, and, except for a slight leakage at the tubulure which led the steam to the valve-chest, all went very well; at a pressure never exceeding three-and-a-half atmospheres, we travelled nearly a hundred and twenty miles before being stopped by a head-to-head block on the line, when we had to abandon our engine; we then continued another seven miles a-foot, I all the time mourning my motor, which I had had to leave at Imbros, and hoping at every townlet to find a whole one, but in vain.

It was wonderful to see the villages and towns going back to the earth, already invaded by vegetation, and hardly any longer breaking the continuity of pure Nature, the town now as much the country as the country, and that which is not-Man becoming all in all with a certain *furore* of vigour. A whole day in the southern gorges of the Balkan Mountains the slow train went tearing its way through many a mile of bind-weed tendrils, a continuous curtain, flaming with large flowers, but sombre as the falling shades of night, rather resembling jungles of Ceylon and the Filipinas; and she, that day, lying in the single car behind, where I had made her a little yatag-bed from Tatar Bazardjik, continually played the kittur, barely

touching the strings, and crooning low, low, in her rich contralto, eternally the same air, over and over again, crooning, crooning, some melancholy tune of her own dreaming, just audible to me through the slow-travailing monotony of the engine; till I was drunken with so sweet a woe, my God, a woe that was sweet as life, and a dolour that lulled like nepenthe, and a grief that soothed like kisses, so sweet, so sweet, that all that world of wood and gloom lost locality and realness for me, and became nothing but a charmed and pensive Heaven for her to moan and lullaby in; and from between my fingers streamed plenteous tears that day, and all that I could keep on mourning was ‘O Leda, O Leda, O Leda,’ till my heart was near to break.

The feed-pump eccentric-shaft of this engine, which was very poor and flaky, suddenly gave out about five in the afternoon, and I had to stop in a hurry, and that sweet invisible mechanism which had crooned and crooned about my ears in the air, and followed me whithersoever I went, stopped too. Down she jumped, calling out:

‘Well, I had a plesentiment that something would happen, and I am so glad, for I was tired!’

Seeing that nothing could be done with the feed-water pump, I got down, took the bag, and parting before us the continuous screen, we went pioneering to the left between a rock-cleft, stepping over large stones that looked black with moss-growths, no sky, but hundreds of feet of impenetrable leafage overhead, and everywhere the dew-dabbled profusion of dim ferneries, dishevelled maidenheads mixed with a large-leaved mimosa, wild vine, white briony, and a smell of cedar, and a soft rushing of perpetual waters that charmed the gloaming. The way led slightly upwards three hundred feet, and presently, after some windings, and the climbing of five huge steps almost regular, yet obviously natural, the gorge opened in a

roundish space, fifty feet across, with far overhanging edges seven hundred feet high; and there, behind a curtain which fell from above, its tendrils defined and straight like a Japanese bead-hanging, we spread the store of foods, I opening the wines, fruits, vegetables and meats, she arranging them in order with the gold plate, and lighting both the spirit-lamp and the lantern: for here it was quite dark. Near us behind the curtain of tendrils was a small green cave in the rock, and at its mouth a pool two yards wide, a black and limpid water that leisurely wheeled, discharging a little rivulet from the cave: and in it I saw three owl-eyed fish, a finger long, loiter, and spur themselves, and gaze. Leda, who cannot be still in tongue or limb, chattered in her glib baby manner as we ate, and then, after smoking a cigarette, said that she would go and ‘lun,’ and went, and left me darkling, for she is the sun and the moon and the host of the stars, I occupying myself that night in making a calendar at the end of this book in which I have written, for my almanack and many things that I prized were lost with the palace — making a calendar, counting the days in my head — but counting them across my thoughts of her.

She came again to tell me good-night, and then went down to the train to sleep; and I put out the lantern, and stooped within the cave, and made my simple couch beside the little rivulet, and slept.

But a fitful sleep, and soon again I woke; and a long time I lay so, gradually becoming conscious of a slow dripping at one spot in the cave: for at a minute’s interval it darkly splashed, regularly, very deliberately; and it seemed to grow always louder and sadder, and the splash at first was ‘Leesha,’ but it became ‘Leda’ to my ears, and it sobbed her name, and I pitied myself, so sad was I. And when I could no longer bear the anguished melancholy of its spasm and its sobbing, I arose and went softly, softly, lest she should hear in that sounding silence of the hushed and darksome night,

going more slow, more soft, as I went nearer, a sob in my throat, my feet leading me to her, till I touched the carriage. And against it a long time I leant my clammy brow, a sob aching in my poor throat, and she all mixed up in my head with the suspended hushed night, and with the elfin things in the air that made the silence so musically a-sound to the vacant ear-drum, and with the dripping splash in the cave. And softly I turned the door-handle, and heard her breathe in Asleep, her head near me; and I touched her hair with my lips, and close to her ear I said — for I heard her breathe as if in sleep— ‘Little Leda, I have come to you, for I could not help it, Leda: and oh, my heart is full of the love of you, for you are mine, and I am yours: and to live with you, till we die, and after we are dead to be near you still, Leda, with my broken heart near your heart, little Leda—’

I must have sobbed, I think; for as I spoke close at her ears, with passionately dying eyes of love, I was startled by an irregularity in her breathing; and with cautious hurry I shut the door, and quite back to the cave I stole in haste.

And the next morning when we met I thought — but am not now sure — that she smiled singularly: I thought so. She may, she *may*, have heard — But I cannot tell.

Twice I was obliged to abandon engines on account of forest-tree obstructions right across the line, which, do what I might, I could not move, and these were the two bitterest incidents of the pilgrimage; and at least thirty times I changed from engine to engine, when other trains blocked. As for the extent of the earthquake, it is pretty certain that it was universal over the Peninsula, and at many points exhibited extreme violence, for up to the time that we entered upon Servian territory, we occasionally came upon stretches of the lines so dislocated, that it was impossible to proceed upon

them, and during the whole course I never saw one intact house or castle; four times, where the way was of a nature to permit of it, I left the imbedded metals and made the engine travel the ground till I came upon other metals, when I always succeeded in driving it upon them. It was all very leisurely, for not everywhere, nor every day, could I get a nautical observation, and having at all times to go at low pressures for fear of tube and boiler weakness, crawling through tunnels, and stopping when total darkness came on, we did not go fast, nor much cared to. Once, moreover, for three days, and once for four, we were overtaken by hurricanes of such vast inclemency, that no thought of travelling entered our heads, our only care being to hide our poor cowering bodies as deeply and darkly as possible. Once I passed through a city (Adrianople) doubly devastated, once by the hellish arson of my own hand, and once by the earthquake: and I made haste to leave that place behind me.

Finally, three months and twenty-seven days from the date of the earthquake, having traversed only 900 odd English miles, I let go in the Venice lagoon, in the early morning of the 10th September, the lateen sail and stone anchor of a Maltese *speronare*, which I had found, and partially cleaned, at Trieste; and thence I passed up the Canalazzo in a gondola. For I said to Leda: 'In Venice will I pitch my Patriarch tent.'

But to will and to do are not the same thing, and still further Westward was I driven. For the stagnant upper canals of this place are now mere miasmas of pestilence: and within two days I was rolling with fever in the Old Procurazie Palace, she standing in pale wonderment at my bed-side, sickness quite a novel thing to her: and, indeed, this was my first serious illness since my twentieth year or thereabouts, when I had over-worked my brain, and went a voyage to Constantinople. I could not move from bed for some weeks, but happily did not lose my senses, and she brought me the

whole pharmacopoeia from the shops, from which to choose my medicines. I guessed the cause of this illness, though not a sign of it came near her, and as soon as my trembling knees could bear me, I again set out — always Westward — enjoying now a certain luxury in travelling compared with that Turkish difficulty, for here were no twisted metals, more and better engines, in the cities as many good petrol motors as I chose, and Nature markedly less savage.

I do not know why I did not stop at Verona or Brescia, or some other neighbourhood of the Italian lakes, since I was fond of water: but I had, I think, the thought in my head to return to Vauclaire in France, where I had lived, and there live: for I thought that she might like those old monks. At all events, we did not remain long in any place till we came to Turin, where we spent nine days, she in the house opposite mine, and after that, at her own suggestion, went on still, passing by train into the valley of the Isère, and then into that of the Western Rhone, till we came to the old town of Geneva among some very great mountains peaked with snow, the town seated at the head of a long lake which the earth has made in the shape of the crescent moon, and like the moon it is a thing of much beauty and many moods, suggesting a creature under the spell of charms and magics. However, with this idea of Vauclaire still in my head, we left Geneva in the motor which had brought us at four in the afternoon of the 17th May, I intending to reach the town called Bourg that night about eight, and there sleep, so to go on to Lyons the next morning by train, and so, by the Bordeaux route, make Vauclaire. But by some chance for which I cannot to this hour account (unless the rain was the cause), I missed the chart-road, which should have been fairly level, and found myself on mountain tracks, unconscious of my whereabouts, while darkness fell, and a windless downpour that had a certain sullen venom in its superabundance drenched

us. I stopped several times, looking about for château, chalet, or village, but none did I see, though I twice came upon railway lines; and not till midnight did we run down a rather steep pass upon the shore of a lake, which, from its apparent vastness in the moonless obscurity, I could only suppose to be the Lake of Geneva once again. About two hundred yards to the left we saw through the rain a large pile, apparently risen straight out of the lake, looking ghostly livid, for it was of white stone, not high, but an old thing of complicated white little turrets roofed with dark red candle extinguishers, and oddities of Gothic nooks, window slits, and outline, very like a fanciful picture. Round to this we went, drowned as rats, Leda sighing and bedraggled, and found a narrow spit of low land projecting into the lake, where we left the car, walked forward with the bag, crossed a small wooden drawbridge, and came upon a rocky island with a number of thick-foliaged trees about the castle. We quickly found a small open portal, and went throughout the place, quite gay at the shelter, everywhere lighting candles which we found in iron sconces in the rather queer apartments: so that, as the castle is far seen from the shores of the lake, it would have appeared to one looking thence a place suddenly possessed and haunted. We found beds, and slept: and the next day it turned out to be the antique Castle of Chillon, where we remained five long and happy months, till again, again, Fate overtook us.

The morning after our coming, we had breakfast — our last meal together — on the first floor in a pentagonal room approached from a lower level by three little steps. In it is a ponderous oak table pierced with a multitude of worm eaten tunnels, also three mighty high backed chairs, an old oak desk covered still with papers, arras on the walls, and three dark religious oil paintings, and a grandfathers clock: it is at about the middle of

the château, and contains two small, but deep, three faced oriels, in each face four compartments with white stone shafts between, these looking south upon shrubs and the rocky edge of the island, then upon the deep blue lake, then upon another tiny island containing four trees in a jungle of flowers, then upon the shore of the lake interrupted by the mouths of a river which turned out to be the Rhone, then upon a white town on the slopes which turned out to be Villeneuve, then upon the great mountains back of Bouveret and St. Gingolph, all having the surprised air of a resurrection just completed, everything new washed in dyes of azure, ultramarine, indigo, snow, emerald, that fresh morning: so that one had to call it the best and holiest place in the world. These five old room walls, and oak floor, and two oriels, became specially mine, though it was really common ground to us both, and there I would do many little things. The papers on the desk told that it had been the *bureau* of one R.E. Gaud, '*Grand Bailli*,' whose residence the place no doubt had been.

She asked me while eating that morning to stay here, and I said that I would see, though with misgiving: so together we went all about the house, and finding it unexpectedly spacious, I consented to stop. At both ends are suites, mostly small rooms, infinitely quaint and cosy, furnished with heavy Henri Quatre furniture and bed draperies; and there are separate, and as it were secret, spiral stairs for exit to each: so we decided that she should have the suite overlooking the length of the lake, the mouths of the Rhone, Bouveret and Villeneuve; and I should have that overlooking the spit of land behind and the little drawbridge, shore cliffs, and elmwood which comes down to the shore, giving at one point a glimpse of the diminutive hamlet of Chillon; and, that decided, I took her hand in mine, and I said:

‘Well, then, here we stay, both under the same roof — for the first time. Leda, I will not explain why to you, but it is dangerous, so much so that it

may mean the death of one or other of us: deadly, deadly dangerous, my poor girl. You do not understand, but that is the fact, believe me, for I know it very well, and I would not tell you false. Well, then, you will easily comprehend, that this being so, you must never on any account come near my part of the house, nor will I come near yours. Lately we have been very much together, but then we have been active, full of purpose and occupation: here we shall be nothing of the kind, I can see. You do not understand at all — but things are so. We must live perfectly separate lives, then. You are nothing to me, really, nor I to you, only we live on the same earth, which is nothing at all — a mere chance. Your own food, clothes, and everything that you want, you will procure for yourself: it is perfectly easy: the shores are crowded with mansions, castles, towns and villages; and I will do the same for myself. The motor down there I set apart for your private use: if I want another, I will get one; and to-day I will set about looking you up a boat and fishing tackle, and cut a cross on the bow of yours, so that you may know yours, and never use mine. All this is very necessary: you cannot dream how much: but I know how much. Do not run any risks in climbing, now, or with the motor, or in the boat ... little Leda ...’

I saw her under-lip push, and I turned away in haste, for I did not care whether she cried or not. In that long voyage, and in my illness at Venice, she had become too near and dear to me, my tender love, my dear darling soul; and I said in my heart: ‘I will be a decent being: I will turn out trumps.’

Under this castle is a sort of dungeon, not narrow, nor very dark, in which are seven stout dark-grey pillars, and an eighth, half-built into the wall; and one of them which has an iron ring, as well as the ground around it, is all worn away by some prisoner or prisoners once chained there; and in

the pillar the word 'Byron' engraved. This made me remember that a poet of that name had written something about this place, and two days afterwards I actually came upon three volumes of the poet in a room containing a great number of books, many of them English, near the Grand Bailli's *bureau*: and in one I read the poem, which is called 'The Prisoner of Chillon.' I found it very affecting, and the description good, only I saw no seven rings, and where he speaks of the 'pale and livid light,' he should speak rather of the dun and brownish gloom, for the word 'light' disconcerts the fancy, and of either pallor or blue there is there no sign. However, I was so struck by the horror of man's cruelty to man, as depicted in this poem, that I determined that she should see it; went up straight to her rooms with the book, and, she being away, ferreted among her things to see what she was doing, finding all very neat, except in one room where were a number of prints called *La Mode*, and *débris* of snipped cloth, and medley. When, after two hours, she came in, and I suddenly presented myself, 'Oh!' she let slip, and then fell to cooing her laugh; and I took her down through a big room stacked with every kind of rifle, with revolvers, cartridges, powder, swords, bayonets — evidently some official or cantonal magazine — and then showed her the worn stone in the dungeon, the ring, the narrow deep slits in the wall, and I told the tale of cruelty, while the splashing of the lake upon the rock outside was heard with a strange and tragic sound, and her mobile face was all one sorrow.

'How cruel they must have been!' cries she with tremulous lip, her face at the same time reddened with indignation.

'They were mere beastly monsters,' said I: 'it is nothing surprising if monsters were cruel.'

And in the short time while I said that, she was looking up with a new-born smile.

‘Some others came and set the plisoner flee!’ cries she.

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘they did, but—’

‘That was good of them,’ says she.

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘that was all right, so far as it went.’

‘And it was a time when men had al-leady become cluel,’ says she: ‘if those who set him flee were so good when all the lest were cluel, what would they have been at a time when all the lest were kind? They would have been just like Angels....!’

At this place fishing, and long rambles, were the order of the day, both for her and for me, especially fishing, though a week rarely passed which did not find me at Bouveret, St. Gingolph, Yvoire, Messery, Nyon, Ouchy, Vevay, Montreux, Geneva, or one of the two dozen villages, townlets, or towns, that crowd the shores, all very pretty places, each with its charm, and mostly I went on foot, though the railway runs right round the forty odd miles of the lake’s length. One noon-day I was walking through the main-street of Vevay going on to the Cully-road when I had a fearful shock, for in a shop just in front of me to the right I heard a sound — an unmistakable indication of life — as of clattering metals shaken together. My heart leapt into my mouth, I was conscious of becoming bloodlessly pale, and on tip-toe of exquisite caution I stole up to the open door — peeped in — and it was she standing on the counter of a jeweller’s shop, her back turned to me, with head bent low over a tray of jewels in her hands, which she was rummaging for something. I went ‘*Hoh!*’ for I could not help it, and all that day, till sunset, we were very dear friends, for I could not part from her, we walking together by vor-alpen, wood, and shore all the way to Ouchy, she just like a creature crazy that day with the bliss of living, rolling in grasses and perilous flowery declines, stamping her foot defiantly at me, arrogant

queen that she is, and then running like mad for me to catch her, with laughter, *abandon*, carolling railleries, and the levity of the wild ass's colt on the hills, entangling her loose-flung hair with Bacchic tendril and blossom, and drinking, in the passage through Cully, more wine, I thought, than was good: and the flaming darts of lightning that shot and shocked me that day, and the inner secret gleams and revelations of Beauty which I had, and the pangs of white-hot honey that tortured my soul and body, and were too much for me, and made me sick, oh Heaven, what tongue could express all that deep world of things? And at Ouchy with a backward wave of my arm I silently motioned her from me, for I was dumb, and weak, and I left her there: and all that long night her power was upon me, for she is stronger than gravitation, which may be evaded, and than all the forces of life combined, and the sun and the moon and the earth are nothing compared with her; and when she was gone from me I was like a fish in the air, or like a bird in the deep, for she is my element of life, made for me to breathe in, and I drown without her: so that for many hours I lay on that grassy hill leading to the burial-ground outside Ouchy that night, like a man sore wounded, biting the grass.

What made things worse for me was her adoption of European clothes since coming to this place: I believe that, in her adroit way, she herself made some of her dresses, for one day I saw in her apartments a number of coloured fashion-plates, with a confusion like dress-making; or she may have been only modifying finished things from the shops, for her Western dressing is not quite like what I remember of the modern female style, but is really, I should say, quite her own, rather resembling the Greek, or the eighteenth century. At any rate, the airs and graces are as natural to her as feathers to parrots; and she has changes like the moon; never twice the same, and always transcending her last phase and revelation: for I could not

have conceived of anyone in whom *taste* was a faculty so separate as in her, so positive and salient, like smelling or sight — more like *smelling*: for it is the faculty, half Reason, half Imagination, by which she fore-scents precisely what will suit exquisitely with what; so that every time I saw her, I received the impression of a perfectly novel, completely bewitching, work of Art: the special quality of works of Art being to produce the momentary conviction that anything else whatever could not possibly be so good.

Occasionally, from my window I would see her in the wood beyond the drawbridge, cool and white in green shade, with her Bible probably, training her skirt like a court-lady, and looking much taller than before. I believe that this new dressing produced a separation between us more complete than it might have been; and especially after that day between Vevay and Ouchy I was very careful not to meet her. The more I saw that she bejewelled herself, powdered herself, embalmed herself like sachets of sweet scents, chapleted her Greek-dressed head with gold fillets, the more I shunned her. Myself, somehow, had now resumed European dress, and, ah me, I was greatly changed, greatly changed, God knows, from the portly inflated monarch-creature that strutted and groaned four years previously in the palace at Imbros: so that my manner of life and thought might once more now have been called modern and Western.

All the more was my sense of responsibility awful: and from day to day it seemed to intensify. An arguing Voice never ceased to remonstrate within me, nor left me peace, and the curse of unborn hosts appeared to menace me. To strengthen my fixity I would often overwhelm myself, and her, with muttered opprobriums, calling myself ‘convict,’ her ‘lady-bird’; asking what manner of man was I that I should dare so great a thing; and as for her, what was she to be the Mother of a world? — a versatile butterfly with a

woman's brow! And continually now in my fiercer moods I was meditating either my death — or hers.

Ah, but the butterfly did not let me forget her brow! To the south-west of Villeneuve, between the forest and the river is a well-grown gentian field, and returning from round St. Gingolph to the Château one day in the third month after an absence of three days, I saw, as I turned a corner in the descent of the mountain, some object floating in the air above the field. Never was I more startled, and, above all, perplexed: for, beside the object soaring there like a great butterfly, I could see nothing to account for it. It was not long, however, before I came to the conclusion that she has re-invented *the kite* — for she had almost certainly never seen one — and I presently sighted her holding the string in the midfield. Her invention resembles the kind called 'swallow-tail' of old.

But mostly it was on the lake that I saw her, for there we chiefly lived, and occasionally there were guilty approaches and *rencontres*, she in her boat, I in mine, both being slight clinker-built Montreux pleasure-boats, which I had spent some days in overhauling and varnishing, mine with jib, fore-and-aft mainsail, and spanker, hers rather smaller, one-masted, with an easy-running lug-sail. It was no uncommon thing for me to sail quite to Geneva, and come back from a seven-days' cruise with my soul filled and consoled with the lake and all its many moods of bright and darksome, serene and pensive, dolorous and despairing and tragic, at morning, at noon, at sunset, at midnight, a panorama that never for an instant ceased to unroll its transformations, I sometimes climbing the mountains as high as the goat-herd region of hoch-alpen, once sleeping there. And once I was made very ill by a two-weeks' horror which I had: for she disappeared in her skiff, I being at the Château, and she did not come back; and while she was away

there was a tempest that turned the lake into an angry ocean, and, ah my good God, she did not come. At last, half-crazy at the vacant days of misery which went by and by, and she did not come, I set out upon a wild-goose quest, of her — of all the hopeless things the most hopeless, for the world is great — and I sought and did not find her; and after three days I turned back, recognising that I was mad to search the infinite, and coming near the Château, I saw her wave her handkerchief from the island-edge, for she divined that I had gone to seek her, and she was watching for me: and when I took her hand, what did she say to me, the Biblical simpleton?— ‘Oh you of little Faith!’ says she. And she had adventures to lisp, with all the *r*’s liquefied into *l*’s, and I was with her all that day again.

Once a month perhaps she would knock at my outermost door, which I mostly kept locked when at home, bringing me a sumptuously-dressed, highly-spiced red trout or grayling, which I had not the heart to refuse, and exquisitely she does them, all hot and spiced, applying apparently to their preparation the taste which she applies to dress; and her extraordinary luck in angling did not fail to supply her with the finest specimens, though, for that matter, this lake, with its old fish-hatcheries and fish-ladders, is not miserly in that way, swarming now with the best lake trout, river trout, red trout, and with salmon, of which last I have brought in one with the landing-net of, I should say, thirty-five to forty pounds. As the bottom goes off very rapidly from the two islands to a depth of eight to nine hundred feet, we did not long confine ourselves to bottom-fishing, but gradually advanced to every variety of manoeuvre, doing middle-water spinning with three-triangle flights and sliding lip-hook for jack and trout, trailing with the sail for salmon, live-baiting with the float for pike, daping with blue-bottles, casting with artificial flies, and I could not say in which she became the

most carelessly adept, for all soon seemed as old and natural to her as an occupation learned from birth.

On the 21st October I attained my forty-sixth birthday in excellent health: a day destined to end for me in bloodshed and tragedy, alas. I forget now what circumstance had caused me to mention the date long beforehand in, I think, Venice, not dreaming that she would keep any count of it, nor was I even sure that my calendar was not faulty by a day. But at ten in the morning of what I called the 21st, descending by my private spiral in flannels with some trout and par bait, and tackle — I met her coming up, my God, though she had no earthly right to be there. With her cooing murmur of a laugh, yet pale, pale, and with a most guilty look, she presented me a large bouquet of wild flowers.

I was at once thrown into a state of great agitation. She was dressed in rather a frippery of *mousseline de soie*, all cream-laced, with wide-hanging short sleeves, a large diamond at the low open neck, the ivory-brown skin there contrasting with the powdered bluish-white of her face, where, however, the freckles were not quite whited out; on her feet little pink satin slippers, without any stockings — a divinely pale pink; and well back on her hair a plain thin circlet of gold; and she smelled like heaven, God knows.

I could not speak. She broke an awkward silence, saying, very faint and pallid:

‘It is the day!’

‘I — perhaps—’ I said, or some incoherency like that.

I saw the touch of enthusiasm which she had summoned up quenched by my manner.

‘I have not done long again?’ she asked, looking down, breaking another silence.

‘No, no, oh no,’ said I hurriedly: ‘not done wrong again. Only, I could not suppose that you would count up the days. You are ... considerate. Perhaps — but—’

‘Tell Leda?’

‘Perhaps.... I was going to say ... you might come fishing with me....’

‘O luck!’ she went softly.

I was pierced by a sense of my base cowardice, my incredible weakness: but I could not at all help it.

I took the flowers, and we went down to the south side, where my boat lay; I threw out some of the fish from the well; arranged the tackle, and then the stern cushions for her; got up the sails; and out we went, she steering, I in the bows, with every possible inch of space between us, receiving delicious intermittent whiffs from her of ambergris, frangipane, or some blending of perfumes, the morning being bright and hot, with very little breeze on the water, which looked mottled, like colourless water imperfectly mixed with indigo-wash, we making little headway; so it was some time before I moved nearer her to get the par for fixing on the three-triangle flight, for I was going to trail for salmon or large lake-trout; and during all that time we spoke not a word together.

Afterwards I said:

‘Who told you that flowers are proper to birthdays? or that birthdays are of any importance?’

‘I suppose that nothing can happen so important as birth,’ says she: ‘and perfumes must be proper to birth, because the wise men brought spices to the young Jesus.’

This *naïveté* was the cause of my immediate recovery: for to laugh is to be saved: and I laughed right out, saying:

‘But you read the Bible too much! all your notions are biblical. You should read the quite modern books.’

‘I have tried,’ says she: ‘but I cannot lead them long, nor often. The whole world seems to have got so collupted. It makes me shudder.’

‘Ah, well now, you see, you quite come round to my point of view,’ said I.

‘Yes, and no,’ says she: ‘they had got so *spoiled*, that is all. Everlybody seems to have become quite dull-witted — the plainest tluths they could not see. I can imagine that those faculties which aided them in their stlain to become lich themselves, and make the lest more poor, must have been gleatly sharpened, while all the other faculties withered: as I can imagine a person with one eye seeing double thlough it, and quite blind on the other side.’

‘Ah,’ said I, ‘I do not think they even *wanted* to see on the other side. There were some few tolerably good and clear-sighted ones among them, you know: and these all agreed in pointing out how, by changing one or two of their old man-in-the-moon Bedlam arrangements, they could greatly better themselves: but they heard with listless ears: I don’t know that they ever made any considerable effort. For they had become more or less unconscious of their misery, so miserable were they: like the man in Byron’s “Prisoner of Chillon,” who, when his deliverers came, was quite indifferent, for he says:

“It was at length the same to me
Fettered or fetterless to be:
I had learned to love Despair.””

‘Oh my God,’ she went, covering her face a moment, ‘how dleadful! And it is tluе, it seems tluе: — they had learned to love Despair, to be even ploud of Despair. Yet all the time, I feel *sure* flom what I have lead, flom what I scent, that the individual man was stlugging to see, to live light, but without power, like one’s leg when it is asleep: that is so pletty of them all! that they meant well — everly one. But they were too tloubled and sad, too awfully burdened: they had no chance at all. Such a queer, unnatual feeling it gives me to lead of all that world: I can’t desclibe it; all their motives seem so tainted, their life so lopsided. Tluely, the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint.’

‘Quite so,’ said I: ‘and observe that this was no new thing: in the very beginning of the Book we read how God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and every imagination of his heart evil....’

‘Yes,’ she interrupted, ‘that is tluе: but there must have been some *cause!* We can be quite *sure* that it was not natulal, because you and I are men, and our hearts are not evil.’

This was her great argument which she always trotted out, because she found that I had usually no answer to give to it. But this time I said:

‘Our hearts not evil? Say yours: but as to mine you know nothing, Leda.’

The semicircles under her eyes had that morning, as often, a certain moist, heavy, pensive and weary something, as of one fresh from a revel, very sweet and tender: and, looking softly at me with it, she answered:

‘I know my own heart, and it is not evil: not at all: not even in the very least: and I know yours, too.’

‘You know *mine!*’ cried I, with a half-laugh of surprise.

‘Quite well,’ says she.

I was so troubled by this cool assurance, that I said not a word, but going to her, handed her the baited flight, swivel-trace, and line, which she paid

out; then I got back again almost into the bows.

After a ten-minutes I spoke again:

‘So this is news to me: you know all about my heart. Well, come, tell me what is in it!’

Now she was silent, pretending to be busy with the trail, till she said, speaking with low-bent face, and a voice that I could only just hear:

‘I will tell you what is in it: in it is a rebellion which you think good, but is not good. If a stream will just flow, neither trying to climb upward, nor overflowing its banks, but running modestly in its fated channel just wherever it is led, then it will finally reach the sea — the mighty ocean — and lose itself in fulness.’

‘Ah,’ said I, ‘but that counsel is not new. It is what the philosophers used to call “yielding to Destiny,” and “following Nature.” And Destiny and Nature, I give you my word, often led mankind quite wrong—’

‘Or *seemed* to,’ says she— ‘for a time: as when a stream flows north a little, and the sea is to the south: but it is bound for the sea all the time, and will turn again. Destiny never could, and cannot yet, be judged, for it is not finished: and our race should follow blindly whither it points, sure that through many curves it leads the world to our God.’

‘Our God indeed!’ I cried, getting very excited: ‘girl! you talk speciously, but falsely! whence have you these thoughts in that head of yours? Girl! you talk of “our race”! But there are only two of us left? Are you talking *at* me, Leda? Do not *I* follow Destiny?’

‘You?’ she sighed, with down-bent face: ‘ah, poor me!’

‘What should I do if I followed it?’ said I, with a crazy curiosity.

Her face hung lower, paler, in trouble: and she said:

‘You would come now and sit near me here. You would not be there where you are. You would be always and for ever near me....’

My good God! I felt my face redden.

‘Oh, I could not *tell* you...!’ I cried: ‘you talk the most disastrous...! you lack all responsibility...! Never, never...!’

Her face now was covered with her left hand, her right on the tiller: and bitingly she said, with a touch of venom:

‘I could *make* you come — *now*, if I chose: but I will not: I will wait upon my God....’

‘*Make* me!’ I cried: ‘Leda! How make me?’

‘I could cly before you, as I cly often and often ... in seclet ... for my childlen....’

‘*You* cry in secret? This is news—’

‘Yes, yes, I cly. Is not the burden of the world heavy upon me, too? and the work I have to do *vely, vely* gleat? And often and often I cly in seclet, thinking of it: and I could cly now if I chose, for you love your little girl so much, that you could not lesist me one minute....’

Now I saw the push and tortion and trembling of her poor little under-lip, boding tears: and at once a flame was in me which was altogether beyond control; and crying out: ‘why, my poor dear,’ I found myself in the act of rushing through the staggering boat to take her to me.

Mid-way, however, I was saved: a whisper, intense as lightning, arrested me: ‘Forward is no escape, nor backward, but *sideward* there may be a way!’ And at a sudden impulse, before I knew what I was doing, I was in the water swimming.

The smaller of the islands was two hundred yards away, and thither I swam, rested some minutes, and thence to the Castle. I did not once look behind me.

Well, from 11 A.M. till five in the afternoon, I thought it all out, lying in the damp flannels on my face on the sofa in the recess beside my bed, where it was quite dark behind the tattered piece of arras: and what things I suffered that day, and what deeps I sounded, and what prayers I prayed, God knows. What infinitely complicated the awful problem was this thought in my head: that to kill her would be far more merciful to her than to leave her alone, having killed myself: and, Heaven knows, it was for her alone that I thought, not at all caring for myself. To kill her was better: but to kill her with my own hands — that was too hard to expect of a poor devil like me, a poor common son of Adam, after all, and never any sublime self-immolator, as two or three of them were. And hours I lay there with brows convulsed in an agony, groaning only those words: ‘To kill her! to kill her!’ thinking sometimes that I should be merciful to myself too, and die, and let her live, and not care, since, after my death, I would not see her suffer, for the dead know not anything: and to expect me to kill her with my own hand was a little too much. Yet that one or other of us must die was perfectly certain, for I knew that I was just on the brink of failing in my oath, and matters here had reached an obvious crisis: unless we could make up our minds to part...? putting the width of the earth between us? That conception occurred to me: and in the turmoil of my thoughts it seemed a possibility. Finally, about 5 P.M., I resolved upon something: and first I leapt up, went down and across the house into the arsenal, chose a small revolver, fitted it with cartridge, took it up-stairs, lubricated it with lamp-oil, went down and out across the drawbridge, walked two miles beyond the village, shot the revolver at a tree, found its action accurate, and started back. When I came to the Castle, I walked along the island to the outer end, and looked up: there were her pretty cream Valenciennes, put up by herself, waving inward before the light lake-breeze at one open oriel; and I knew that she was in the

Castle, for I felt it: and always, always, when she was within, I knew, for I felt her with me; and always when she was away, I knew, I felt, for the air had a dreadful drought, and a barrenness, in it. And I looked up for a time to see if she would come to the window, and then I called, and she appeared. And I said to her: ‘Come down here.’

Just here there is a little rock-path to the south, going down to the water between rocks mixed with shrub-like little trees, three yards long: a path, or a lane, one might call it, for at the lower end the rocks and trees reach well over a tall man’s head. There she had tied my boat to a slender linden-trunk: and sadder now than Gethsemane that familiar boat seemed to my eyes, for I knew very well that I should never enter it more. I walked up and down the path, awaiting her: and from the jacket-pocket in which lay the revolver I drew a box of Swedish matches, from it took two matches, and broke off a bit from the plain end of one; and the two I held between my left thumb and forefinger joint, the phosphorus ends level and visible, the other ends invisible: and I awaited her, pacing fast, and my brow was as stern as Azrael and Rhadamanthus.

She came, very pale, poor thing, and flurried, breathing fast. And ‘Leda,’ I said, meeting her in the middle of the lane, and going straight to the point, ‘we are to part, as you guess — for ever, as you guess — for I see very well by your face that you guess. I, too, am very sorry, my little child, and heavy is my heart. To leave you ... alone ... in the world ... is — death for me. But it must, ah it must, be done.’

Her face suddenly turned as sallow as the dead were, when the shroud was already on, and the coffin had become a stale added piece of room-furniture by the bed-side; but in recording that fact, I record also this other: that, accompanying this mortal sallowness, which painfully shewed up her

poor freckles, was a steady smile, a little turned-down: a smile of steady, of slightly disdainful — Confidence.

She did not say anything: so I went on.

‘I have thought long,’ said I, ‘and I have made a plan — a plan which cannot be effective without *your* consent and co-operation: and the plan is this: we go from this place together — this same night — to some unknown spot, some town, say a hundred miles hence — by train. There I get two motors, and I in one, and you in the other, we separate, going different ways. We shall thus never be able, however much we may want to, to rediscover each other in all this wide world. That is my plan.’

She looked me in the face, smiling her smile: and the answer was not long in coming.

‘I will go in the train with you,’ says she with slow decisiveness: ‘but where you leave me, there I will stay, till I die; and I will patiently wait till my God convert you, and send you back to me.’

‘That means that you refuse to do what I say?’

‘Yes,’ said she, bowing the head with great dignity.

‘Well, you speak, not like a girl, Leda,’ said I, ‘but like a full woman now. But still, reflect a minute.... O reflect! If you stayed where I left you, I *should* go back to you, and pretty soon, too: I know that I should. Tell me, then — reflect well, and tell me — do you definitely refuse to part with me?’

The answer was pretty prompt, cool, and firm:

‘Yes; I refuse.’

I left her then, took a turn down the path, and came back.

‘Then,’ said I, ‘here are two matches in my grasp: be good enough to draw one.’

Now she was hit to the heart: I saw her eyes widen to the width of horror, with a glassy stare: she had read of the drawing of lots in the Bible: she knew that it meant death for me, or for her.

But she obeyed without a word, after one backward start and then a brief hovering in decision of thumb and forefinger over my held-out hand. I had fixed it in my mind that if she drew the shorter of the matches, then she should die; if the longer, then I should die.

She drew the shorter....

This was only what I should have expected: for I knew that God loved her, and hated me.

But instantly upon the first shock of the enormity that I should be her executioner, I made my resolve: to drop shot, too, at the moment after she dropped shot, so disposing my body, that it would fall half upon her, and half by her, so that we might be close always: and that would not be so bad, after all.

With a sudden movement I snatched the revolver from my pocket: she did not move, except her white lips, which, I think, whispered:

‘Not yet....’

I stood with hanging arm, forefinger on trigger, looking at her. I saw her glance once at the weapon, and then she fixed her eyes upwards upon my face: and now that same smile, which had disappeared, was on her lips again, meaning confidence, meaning disdain.

I waited for her to open her mouth to say something — to stop that smile — that I might shoot her quick and sudden: and she would not, knowing that I could not kill her while she was smiling; and suddenly, all my pity and love for her changed into a strange resentment and rage against her, for she was purposely making hard for me what I was doing for her sake: and

the bitter thought was in my mind: 'You are nothing to me: if you want to die, you do your own killing; and I will do my own killing.' And without one word to her, I strode away, and left her there.

I see now that this whole drawing of lots was nothing more than a farce: I never could have killed her, smiling, or no smiling: for to each thing and man is given a certain strength: and a thing cannot be stronger than its strength, strive as it may: it is so strong, and no stronger, and there is an end of the matter.

I walked up to the Grand Bailli's *bureau*, a room about twenty-five feet from the ground. By this time it was getting pretty dark, but I could see, by peering, the face of a grandfather's-clock which I had long since set going, and kept wound. It is on the north side of the room, over the writing-desk opposite the oriels. It then pointed to half-past six, and in order to fix some definite moment for the bitter effort of the mortal act, I said: 'At Seven.' I then locked the door which opens upon three little steps near the desk, and also the stair-door; and I began to pace the chamber. There was not a breath of air here, and I was hot; I seemed to be stifling, tore open my shirt at the throat, and opened the lower half of the central mullion-space of one oriel. Some minutes later, at twenty-five to seven, I lit two candles on the desk, and sat to write to her, the pistol at my right hand; but I had hardly begun, when I thought that I heard a sound at the three-step door, which was only four feet to my left: a sound which resembled a scraping of her slipper; I stole to the door, and crouched, listening: but I could hear nothing further. I then returned to the desk, and set to writing, giving her some last directions for her life, telling her why I died, how I loved her, much better than my own soul, begging her to love me always, and to live on to please me, but if she *would* die, then to be sure to die near me. Tears were pouring down my face, when, turning, I saw her standing in a terrified pose hardly two feet

behind me. The absolute stealth which had brought and put her there, unknown to me, was like miracle: for the ladder, whose top I saw intruding into the open oriel, I knew well, having often seen it in a room below, and its length was quite thirty feet, nor could its weight be trifling: yet I had heard not one hint of its impact upon the window. But there, at all events, she was, wan as a ghost.

Immediately, as my consciousness realised her, my hand instinctively went out to secure the weapon: but she darted upon it, and was an instant before me. I flew after her to wrench it away, but she flew, too: and before I caught her, had thrown it cleanly through two rungs of the ladder and the window. I dashed to the window, and after a hurried peer thought that I saw it below at the foot of a rock; away I flew to the stair-door, wrung open the lock, and down the stairs, three at a time, I ran to recover it. I remember being rather surprised that she did not follow, forgetting all about the ladder.

But with a horrid shock I was reminded of it the moment I reached the bottom, before ever I had passed from the house: for I heard the report of the weapon — that crack, my God! and crying out: ‘Well, Lord, she has died for me, then!’ I tottered forward, and tumbled upon her, where she lay under the incline of the ladder in her blood.

That night! what a night it was! of fingers shivering with haste, of harum-scarum quests and searches, of groans, and piteous appeals to God. For there were no surgical instruments, lint, anaesthetics, nor antiseptics that I knew of in the Château; and though I knew of a house in Montreux where I could find them, the distance was quite infinite, and the time an eternity in which to leave her all alone, bleeding to death; and, to my horror, I remembered that there was barely enough petrol in the motor, and the store usually kept in the house exhausted. However, I did it, leaving her

there unconscious on her bed: but *how* I did it, and lived sane afterwards, that is another matter.

If I had not been a medical man, she must, I think, have died: for the bullet had broken the left fifth rib, had been deflected, and I found it buried in the upper part of the abdominal wall. I did not go from her bed-side: I did not sleep, though I nodded and staggered: for all things were nothing to me, but her: and for a frightfully long time she remained comatose. While she was still in this state I took her to a chalet beyond Villeneuve, three miles away on the mountain-side, a homely, but very salubrious place which I knew, imbedded in verdures, for I was desperate at her long collapse, and had hope in the higher air. And there after three more days, she opened her eyes, and smiled with me.

It was then that I said to myself: ‘This is the noblest, sagest, and also the most loveable, of the creatures whom God has made in heaven or earth. She has won my life, and I will live.... But at least, to save myself, I will put the broadest Ocean that there is between her and me: for I wish to be a decent being, for the honour of my race, being the last, and to turn out trumps ... though I do love my dear, God knows....’

And thus, after only fifty-five days at the chalet, were we forced still further Westward.

I wished her to remain at Chillon, intending, myself, to start for the Americas, whence any sudden impulse to return to her could not be easily accomplished: but she refused, saying that she would come with me to the coast of France: and I could not say her no.

And at the coast, after thirteen days we arrived, three days before the New Year, traversing France by steam, air, and petrol traction.

We came to Havre — infirm, infirm of will that I was: for in my deep heart was the secret, hidden away from my own upper self, that, she being at Havre, and I at Portsmouth, we could still speak together.

We came humming into the dark town of Havre in a four-seat motor-car about ten in the evening of the 29th December: a raw bleak night, she, it was clear, poor thing, bitterly cramped with cold. I had some recollection of the place, for I had been there, and drove to the quays, near which I stopped at the *Maire's* large house, a palatial place overlooking the sea, in which she slept, I occupying another near.

The next morning I was early astir, searched in the *mairie* for a map of the town, where I also found a *Bottin*: I could thus locate the Telephone Exchange. In the *Maire's* house, which I had fixed upon to be her home, the telephone was set up in an alcove adjoining a very stately *salon* Louis Quinze; and though I knew that these little dry batteries would not be run down in twenty odd years, yet, fearing any weakness, I broke open the box, and substituted a new one from the Company's stores two streets away, at the same time noting the exchange-number of the instrument. This done, I went down among the ships by the wharves, and fixed upon the first old green air-boat that seemed fairly sound, broke open a near shop, procured some buckets of oil, and by three o'clock had tested and prepared my ship. It was a dull and mournful day, drizzling, chilly. I returned then to the *mairie*, where for the first time I saw her, and she was heavy of heart that day: but when I broke the news that she would be able to speak to me, every day, all day, first she was all incredulous astonishment, then, for a moment, her eyes turned white to Heaven, then she was skipping like a kid. We were together three precious hours, examining the place, and returning with stores of whatever she might require, till I saw darkness coming on, and we went down to the ship.

And when those long-dead screws awoke and moved, bearing me toward the Outer Basin, I saw her stand darkling, lonely, on the Quai through heart-rending murk and drizzly inclemency: and oh my God, the gloomy underlook of those red eyes, and the piteous out-push of that little lip, and the hurried burying of that face! My heart broke, for I had not given her even one little, last kiss, and she had been so good, quietly acquiescing, like a good wife, not attempting to force her presence upon me in the ship; and I left her there, all widowed, alone on the Continent of Europe, watching after me: and I went out to the bleak and dreary fields of the sea.

Arriving at Portsmouth the next morning, I made my residence in the first house in which I found an instrument, a spacious dwelling facing the Harbour Pier. I then hurried round to the Exchange, which is on the Hard near the Docks, a large red building with facings of Cornish moor-stone, a bank on the ground-floor, and the Exchange on the first. Here I plugged her number on to mine, ran back, rang — and, to my great thanksgiving, heard her speak. (This instrument, however, did not prove satisfactory: I broke the box, and put in another battery, and still the voice was muffled: finally, I furnished the middle room at the Exchange with a truckle-bed, stores, and a few things, and here have taken up residence.)

I believe that she lives and sleeps under the instrument, as I here live and sleep, sleep and live, under it. My instrument is quite near one of the harbour-windows, so that, hearing her, I can gaze out toward her over the expanse of waters, yet see her not; and she, too, looking over the sea toward me, can hear a voice from the azure depths of nowhere, yet see me not.

I this morning early to her:

‘Good morning! Are you there?’

‘Good morning! No: I am there,’ says she.

‘Well, that was what I asked— “are you there”?’

‘But I not here, I am there,’ says she.

‘I know very well that you are not “here,”’ said I, ‘for I do not see you: but I asked if you were there, and you say “No,” and then “Yes.”’

‘It is the paladox of the heart,’ says she.

‘The what?’

‘The paladox,’ says she.

‘But still I do not understand: how can you be both there and not there?’

‘If my ear is here, and I elsewhere?’ says she.

‘An operation?’

‘Yes!’ says she.

‘What doctor?’

‘A specialist!’ says she.

‘An ear-specialist?’

‘A heart!’ says she.

‘And you let a heart-specialist operate on your ear?’

‘On myself he operlated, and left the ear behind!’ says she.

‘Well, and how are you after it?’

‘Fairly well. Are you?’ says she.

‘Quite well. Did you sleep well?’

‘Except when you lang me up at midnight. I have had such a dleam ...’

‘What?’

‘I dleamed that I saw two little boys of the same age — only I could not see their faces, I never can see anybody’s face, only yours and mine, mine and yours always — of the same age — playing in a wood....’

‘Ah, I hope that one of them was not called Cain, my poor girl.’

‘Not at all! neither of them! Suppose I tell a stoly, and say that one was called Caius and the other Tibelius, or one John and the other Jesus?’

‘Ah. Well, tell me the *dleam*....’

‘Now you do not deserve.’

‘Well, what will you do to-day?’

‘I? It is a lovely day ... have you nice weather in England?’

‘Very.’

‘Well, between eleven and twelve I will go out and gather Spling-flowers in the park, and cover the salon deep, deep. Wouldn’t you like to be here?’

‘Not I.’

‘You would!’

‘Why should I? I prefer England.’

‘But Flance is nice too: and Flance wants to be fliends with England, and is waiting, oh waiting, for England to come over, and be fliends. Couldn’t some *lapplochement* be negotiated?’

‘Good-bye. This talking spoils my morning smoke....’

So we speak together across the sea, my God.

On the morning of the 8th April, when I had been separated thirteen weeks from her, I boarded several ships in the Inner Port, a lunacy in my heart, and selected what looked like a very swift boat, one of the smaller Atlantic air-steamers called the *Stettin*, which seemed to require the least labour in oiling, &c., in order to fit her for the sea: for the boat in which I had come to England was a mere tub, though sound, and I pined for the wings of a dove, that I might fly away to her, and be at rest.

I toiled with fluttering hands that day, and I believe that I was of the colour of ashes to my very lips. By half-past two o’clock I was finished, and by three was coasting down Southampton Water by Netley Hospital and the

Hamble-mouth, having said not one word about anything at the telephone, or even to my own guilty heart not a word. But in the silent depths of my being I felt this fact: that this must be a 35-knot boat, and that, if driven hard, hard, in spite of the heavy garment of seaweed which she trailed, she would do 30; also that Havre was 120 miles away, and at 7 P.M. I should be on its quay.

And when I was away, and out on the bright and breezy sea, I called to her, crying out: '*I am coming!*' And I knew that she heard me, and that her heart leapt to meet me, for mine leapt, too, and felt her answering.

The sun went down: it set. I was tired of the day's work, and of standing at the high-set wheel; and I could not yet see the coast of France. And a thought smote me, and after another ten minutes I turned the ship's head back, my face screwed with pain, God knows, like a man whose thumbs are ground between the screws, and his body drawn out and out on the rack to tenuous length, and his flesh massacred with pincers: and I fell upon the floor of the bridge contorted with anguish: for I could not go to her. But after a time that paroxysm passed, and I rose up sullen and resentful, and resumed my place at the wheel, steering back for England: for a fixed resolve was in my breast, and I said: 'Oh no, no more. If I could bear it, I would, I would ... but if it is impossible, how can I? To-morrow night as the sun sets — without fail — so help me God — I will kill myself.'

So it is finished, my good God.

On the early morning of the next day, the 9th, I having come back to Portsmouth about eleven the previous night, when I bid her 'Good morning' through the telephone, she said 'Good morning,' and not another word. I said:

‘I got my hookah-bowl broken last night, and shall be trying to mend it to-day.’

No answer.

‘Are you there?’ said I.

‘Yes,’ says she.

‘Then why don’t you answer?’ said I.

‘Where were you all yesterday?’ says she.

‘I went for a little cruise in the basin,’ said I.

Silence for three minutes: then she says:

‘What is the matter?’

‘Matter?’ said I, ‘nothing!’

‘*Tell me!*’ she says — with such an intensity and rage, as to make me shudder.

‘There is nothing to tell, Leda!’

‘Oh, but how can you be so *chuel* to me?’ she cries, and ah, there was anguish in that voice! ‘There is something to tell — there *is!* Don’t I know it vely well by your voice?’

Ah, the thought took me then, how, on the morrow, she would ring, and have no answer; and she would ring again, and have no answer; and she would ring all day, and ring, and ring; and for ever she would ring, with white-flowing hair and the staring eye-balls of frenzy, battering reproaches at the doors of God, and the Universe would cry back to her howls and ravings only one eternal answer of Silence, of Silence. And as I thought of that — for very pity, for very pity, my God — I could not help sobbing aloud:

‘May God pity you, woman!’

I do not know if she heard it: she *must*, I think, have heard: but no reply came; and there I, shivering like the sheeted dead, stood waiting for her

next word, waiting long, dreading, hoping for, her voice, thinking that if she spoke and sobbed but once, I should drop dead, dead, where I stood, or bite my tongue through, or shriek the high laugh of distraction. But when at last, after quite thirty or forty minutes she spoke, her voice was perfectly firm and calm. She said:

‘Are you there?’

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘yes, Leda.’

‘What was the color,’ says she, ‘of the poison-cloud which destroyed the world?’

‘Purple, Leda,’ said I.

‘And it had a smell like almonds or peach blossoms, did it not?’ says she.

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘yes.’

‘Then,’ says she, ‘there is *another* eruption. Every now and again I seem to scent strange whiffs like that ... and there is a purple vapour in the East which glows and glows ... just see if you can see it....’

I flew across the room to an east window, threw up the grimy sash, and looked. But the view was barred by the plain brick back of a tall warehouse. I rushed back, gasped to her to wait, rushed down the two stairs, and out upon the Hard. For a minute I ran dodging wildly about, seeking a purview to the East, and finally ran up the dockyard, behind the storehouses to the Semaphore, and reached the top, panting for life. I looked abroad. The morning sky, but for a bank of cloud to the north-west, was cloudless, the sun blazing in a region of clear azure pallor. And back again I flew.

‘I cannot see it...!’ I cried.

‘Then it has not travelled far enough to the north-west yet,’ she said with decision.

‘My wife!’ I cried: ‘you are my wife now!’

‘Am I?’ says she: ‘at last? Are you glad?... But shall I not soon die?’

‘No! You can escape! My home! My heart! If only for an hour or two, then death — just think, together — on the same couch, for ever, heart to heart — how sweet!’

‘Yes! how sweet! But how escape?’

‘It travelled slowly before. Get quick — will you? — into one of the smaller boats by the quay — there is one just under the crane that is an air-boat — you have seen me turn on the air, haven’t you? — that handle on the right as you descend the steps under the dial-thing — get first a bucket of oil from the shop next to the clock-tower in the quay-street, and throw it over everything that you see rusted. Only, spend no time — for me, my heaven! You can steer by the tiller and compass: well, the wheel is quite the same, only just the opposite. First unmoor, then to the handle, then to the wheel. The course is directly North-East by North. I will meet you on the sea — go now—’

I was wild with bliss. I thought that I should take her between my arms, and have the little freckles against my face, and taste her short firm-fleshed upper-lip, and moan upon her, and whimper upon her, and mutter upon her, and say ‘My wife.’ And even when I knew that she was gone from the telephone, I still stood there, hoarsely calling after her: ‘My wife! My wife!’

I flew down to where the steamer lay moored that had borne me the previous day. Her joint speed with the speed of Leda’s boat would be forty knots: in three hours we must meet. I had not the least fear of her dying before I saw her: for, apart from the deliberate movement of the vapour that first time, I fore-tasted and trusted my love, that she would surely come, and not fail: as dying saints fore-tasted and trusted Eternal Life.

I was no sooner on board the *Stettin* than her engines were straining under what was equivalent to forced draught. On the previous day it would

have little surprised me at any moment, while I drove her, to be carried to the clouds in an explosion from her deep-rusted steel tanks: but this day such a fear never crossed my mind: for I knew very well that I was immortal till I saw her.

The sea was not only perfectly smooth, but placid, as on the previous day: only it seemed far placider, and the sun brighter, and there was a levity in the breezes that frilled the sea in fugitive dark patches, like *frissons* of tickling; and I thought that the morning was a true marriage-morning, and remembered that it was a Sabbath; and sweet odours our wedding would not lack of peach and almond, though, looking eastward, I could see no faintest sign of any purple cloud, but only rags of chiffon under the sun; and it would be an eternal wedding, for one day in our sight would be as a thousand years, and our thousand years of bliss would be but one day, and in the evening of all that eternity death would come and sweetly lay its finger upon our languid lids, and we should die of weary bliss; and all manner of dancings and singings — fandango and light galliard, corantoes and the solemn gavotte — were a-tune in my heart that happy day; and running by the chart-house to the wheel, I saw under the table a great roll of old flags, and presently they were flying in a long curve of gala from the main; and the sea rumped in a long tract of tumbling milk behind me; and I hasted homeward, to meet my heart.

No purple cloud could I see as, on and on, for two hours, I tore southward: but at hot noon, on the weather beam I spied through the glass across the water something else which moved, and it was you who came to me, Oh Leda, my spirit's breath!

I bore down upon her, waving: and soon I saw her stand like an ancient mariner, but in white muslins that fluttered, at her wheel on the bridge — it

was one of those little old Havre-Antwerp craft very high in the bows — and she waved a little white thing. And we came nearer, till I could spy her face, her smile, and I shouted her to stop, and in a minute stopped myself, and by happy steering came with slowing headway to a slight crash by her side, and ran down the trellised steps to her, and led her up; and on the deck, without saying a word, I fell to my knees before her, and I bowed my brow to the floor, with obeisance, and I worshipped her there as Heaven.

And we were wedded: for she, too, bowed the knee with me under the jovial blue sky; and under her eyes were the little moist semicircles of dreamy pensive fatigue, so dear and wifish: and God was there, and saw her kneel: for He loves the girl.

And I got the two ships apart, and they rested there some yards divided all the day, and we were in the main-deck cabin, where I had locked a door, so that no one might come in to be with my love and me.

I said to her:

‘We will fly west to one of the Somersetshire coal-mines, or to one of the Cornwall tin-mines, and we will barricade ourselves against the cloud, and provision ourselves for six months — for it is perfectly feasible, and we have plenty of time, and no crowds to break down our barricades — and there in the deep earth we will live sweetly together, till the danger is overpast.’

And she smiled, and drew her hand across my face, and said:

‘No, no: don’t you trust in my God? do you think He would really let me die?’

For she has appropriated the Almighty God to herself, naming Him ‘*my* God’ — the impudence: though she generally knows what she is saying, too. And she would not fly the cloud.

And I am now writing three weeks later at a little place called Châteaux-Roses, and no poison-cloud, and no sign of any poison-cloud, has come. And this I do not understand.

It may be that she divined that I was about to destroy myself ... she may be quite capable.... But no, I do not understand, and shall never ask her.

But *this* I understand: that it is *the White* who is Master here: that though he wins but by a hair, yet he wins, he wins: and since he wins, dance, dance, my heart.

I look for a race that shall resemble its Mother: nimble-witted, light-minded, pious — like her; all-human, ambidextrous, ambicephalous, two-eyed — like her; and if, like her, they talk the English language with all the r's turned into l's, I shall not care.

They will be vegetable-eaters, I suppose, when all the meat now extant is eaten up: but it is not certain that meat is good for men: and if it is really good, then they will *invent* a meat: for they will be *her* sons, and she, to the furthest cycle in which the female human mind is permitted to orbit, is, I swear, all-wise.

There was a preaching man — a Scotchman he was, named Macintosh, or something like that — who said that the last end of Man shall be well, and very well: and she says the same: and the agreement of these two makes a Truth. And to that I now say: Amen, Amen.

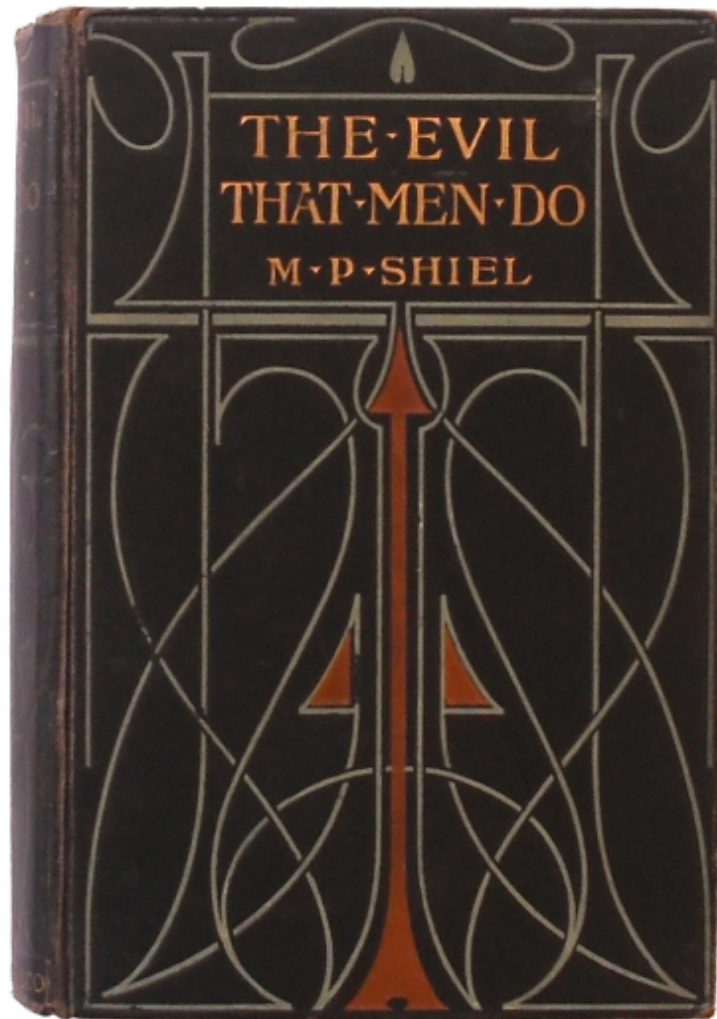
For I, Adam Jeffson, second Parent of the world, hereby lay down, ordain, and decree for all time, clearly perceiving it now: That the one Motto and Watch-word essentially proper to each human individual, and to the whole Race of Man, as distinct from other races in heaven or in earth, was always, and remains, even this: 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'

THE END

The Evil That Men Do (1904)



First published in London by Ward , Lock & Co in 1904, *The Evil That Men Do* is not one of the author's better known works and it has not received much attention from scholars or critics. It concerns a strange man called Robert Hartwell, as the author combines elements of mystery, romance and adventure to create an unnerving story. An interesting element of the novel and one which provided fertile material for late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers, is the question of whether morality is hereditary, or whether environmental factors are predominant in shaping one's character.



The first edition

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I. ON THE SEA



AN INTERESTING QUESTION raised by the incident we have to tell is this: How far is it true that children inherit the traits of their parents? The son, the father — a racehorse is usually a racehorse; but is the son, the father, a Napoleon, a Napoleon? On the contrary, history teaches that no great man ever had a great son.

A child's resemblance to its parents may sometimes arise after its birth; for constant intimacy is alone sufficient to produce resemblance. Thus, the late President McKinley came to look like his wife's brother; and so with many couples.

For years the child's existence is all mixed up with its parents'. How many kisses, forbidden hours of sleep in the drowsy mother's bed! Therefore, if either parent has a disease, the child can hardly escape. Later on he will be told that his consumption is "hereditary," but it may have originated since his birth.

No one would question the fact of heredity: we only remark that the extent to which we now believe in it is "not proven" in the case of that mysterious animal, man; and we are led to the reflection by a singular case which happened on board a ship some forty five years ago.

She was the *Africa*, and was one of those Union line mail boats that ply between the Cape and Southampton before the Castle line was formed to share with the Union line half the Government subvention, about 1870. They were small boats (compared with the present monsters) of 1,000 tons or so, of the kind which it was the fashion to call "tin-kettles;" half steamer,

half sailing-ship, brigantine-rigged, with one funnel; and the postage of a letter to the Cape was — one shilling.

The captain of the *Africa* — a certain Captain Denner — was a handsome man of forty, with a large freckled face, who might have done very well for a model of Charlemagne, or some old sea-king, only that his long beard was black. He had a red birth-mark, the size of a penny, across his left temple. His lips were rather thick, and his moustache, parting in the middle, showed their strong pressure there. Though rather taciturn at times he was a good captain, popular with the passengers: and the voyage went well, till they reached the latitude of Madeira. At that time, by the way, it lasted thirty days, not sixteen, as now.

One Sunday morning, then, near Madeira, the vessel moving through a calm sea, the passengers were assembled at prayers, which were conducted by a clergyman who happened to be aboard. Among them were two ladies, a Mrs Drayton and a Mrs Hartwell, both of whom were about to become mothers.

It was noted as an odd thing that the captain was not at the service; no one, in fact, had seen him at all that morning. The first officer had knocked at his door, but the captain, without opening, had called back, in a strange voice, the strange words: “Go away.”

However, the clergyman had not yet reached the Litany, when the captain appeared at the door of the dining-saloon, where the worshippers were. Their backs were turned to the door, but when the clergyman stopped, with gaping mouth, the others looked round and saw the captain.

He had on nothing but a shirt and drawers. Some open ports, with a wellhole communicating with the smoke-room above, gave plenty of light, and he was distinctly seen: his rich, black hair seemed to stand on end, his eyes were wild, and in his hand was a revolver.

As all stared at this apparition he lifted his right arm, uttered the sound “bang,” and shot the clergyman dead. He then turned the weapon a little, uttered the same sound, and sent another into eternity. The third shot pierced Mrs Drayton’s right forearm; the fourth wounded the purser in the breast; the fifth killed a passenger who was running to seize the madman. This scene somehow affected the witnesses of it, not merely with terror, but with some sort of ghostly awe, which left all the survivors, male and female, in a state of nervous ruin for days. Before the fifth shot, all the ladies had fainted.

A rush, however, was made by the men, the lunatic was mastered, put into irons, and died the same night of the brain disease which had suddenly seized him.

Four months afterwards, in the town of Bradford, Mrs Drayton gave birth to a son; six months afterwards, near Rugby, Mrs Hartwell too, gave birth to a son. And the point which we wanted to emphasize is this, that these two boys, as they grew to manhood, bore no resemblance to hereditary types; but each had a raspberry birthmark the size of a penny on his left temple; and each was the image of Captain Denner, the captain of the *Africa*.

In that instant of the captain’s apparition at the saloon door in that one vivid shock of panic, the nervous beings of the two mothers had leapt, caught, appropriated, and kodaked the captain’s image.

And for thirty-eight years after that Sunday on the sea those two portraits of the captain of the *Africa* lived in England unconscious of each other. But after that stretch of time, the winds that blew the lives of men like wandering waves of the sea, blew them together, and they met.

II. ON THE ROAD



IT WAS ON the road between Cromer and Norwich — a good road, as many cyclists know, but with some steep bits, especially toward Cromer end, and there between Horsham, St. Fay's and Aylsham.

It is late autumn, and all those woods of Stratton, Strawless, and Blickling, are whirls of dead leaves. The sun is setting — bleakly setting; and the storm winds sweeping south wrinkle the puddles in the road, along which one may walk miles and not meet a soul.

Certainly, the country has a desolate aspect this evening; the ground, turned since harvest for the first wheat sowing, looks black and dead with wet. Hardly a tuft of chrysanthemum in some sheltered nook still braves the bleakness of wintry winds. The ferns, and heather of Roughton Heath look scorched by the breath of a fire. The wind seems to have a grey colour.

Go still further north along the road, and you will find all that breadth of sand, where the village girls “paddle” through the summer and catch sea anemones, swallowed up now by the sea. It is blowing great guns inland, and the flat-bottomed crab boats are perched in nooks of the cliffs beyond the range of the breakers.

Beyond Roughton and Aylsham, a motor car comes scorching at a speed of not less than thirty miles an hour; for the wind blows keen and, moreover, the driver of this particular twin cylinder is famous for his illegal pace.

His car is a specially “chic” turn-out, an elongated mass of double phaeton type, brown-painted, upholstered in green leather, with French

Dunlops, and lightly pitches forward all that weight over the slushy road a purring Juggernaut — toward Norwich, toward London.

On the front seat are two men, thick as bears in a rug, gloves, and furred coats. Only their noses are cold, but even that little they resent: they do not know that within two hours they will be cold all over.

“Dimmed cold,” says one.

“Hang the silly storm,” says the other.

They are the financier, James Drayton, and his right-hand man, McCalmont. They have motored together from London to Sheffield to attend a conference on the pooling of some steel concern, but when the conference was over, instead of returning direct to London, Drayton has said to McCalmont’s surprise, that he wished to see someone at Cromer, and at Cromer they have accordingly arrived about four that afternoon. But whom it could have been that Drayton wished to see at Cromer, McCalmont, even now, cannot guess. Drayton apparently had “seen” no one at Cromer. He did separate a few minutes from McCalmont, but only to go into the *poste restante*, where he got a letter, which, after reading, he tore up. Why, therefore, they have made this detour to the east of England, McCalmont is still wondering. Drayton must have had some reason.

In silence they pitch and slip ahead. Steadily hums the car, the rough wind instruments make music of dead marches about them, the sun has set and darkness gathers fast.

James Drayton is a big man, with a handsome, large face, florid and freckled, a black beard, and rather thick lips, whose pressure is visible at the parting of the moustache. He, too, would do very well for Charlemagne or a sea-king, as we said of Captain Denner, of the *Africa*, whose image he is. His eyes have a hard, aggressive look, and his appearance somehow tells

you that he is a modern city man to the finger tips, who knows the world familiarly, uses it, and perhaps abuses it.

They are now at the elevated ground about Ingworth, whence they can see the darkling valley of the Bure on either hand, and black before them the woods of Blickling. It is a place where many a spill has taken place on account of two nasty turnings where the road crosses bridges, but Drayton proves that he knows the locality by altering his change-speed gear. The car hastens slower, and neatly negotiates the ticklish bits.

At the second turning it splashes a man on the road. He is a tramp — at least, he is tramping. A little bundle in a red handkerchief hangs from a stick over his Shoulder. He has no jacket this inclement night; his boots are ruined; misery is in his eyes, bitterness in his pressed lips. His name is Robert Hartwell.

And because of the slowing-down of the motor, and because some greyness still lingers in the dark, therefore Hartwell sees for a moment that face of Drayton, though Drayton and McCalmont do not observe Hartwell. And Hartwell thinks to himself, “Well, that man might be my brother! — ah, but you seem to be happier than I, my friend!”

The motor vanishes down the hill towards Blickling, the lessening voice of its flight still haunting Hartwell’s ear drum like a wasp — till that, too, is gone. And on he tramps, muttering bitter at heart, in the same direction as they — towards Norwich, towards London, and the tortoise shall yet beat the hare.

Past the mill, past the farm among the trees, the bridge, the old gabled manor-house, hedges loaded with the storm, heron, crop and grebe by the solitary pool, with bat and white owl in the air, the strange screams of madness in the winds that now fill a darkness unrelieved by moon or star —

Hartwell continually puts his feet into puddles without seeing them and sounds come from his chest!

Meanwhile, the motor has not gone far upon the main road, for soon after crossing the Bure, it has turned aside into rather obscure country tending to bracken and heath, Drayton having said to McCalmont: "There ought to be a place just in there somewhere, which I remember from long ago. Suppose we go and get a glass of ale, and light up."

McCalmont is surprised, for there is champagne on board, if Drayton is thirsty, and it is surely not necessary to go to a tavern to "light up!" but he says, "As you like," and soon Drayton takes a lane to the left.

A mile in this direction, and they come, to a house behind the shoulder of a hill — a rather high house, black with age, with a physiognomy both picturesque and sinister. The roofs are quaint, on different levels, some quite small; there are broken external steps; some of the windows are broader than long, latticed, small or irregularly placed, and two are dormer windows. Along the front runs a gut with some water trickling among rocks, and beyond this a hillside of rocks, pines, and a couple of old huts. Some special dismalness here causes McCalmont to shiver at the cold, as they draw up.

"What place is it?" he asks.

"I think it is called 'The Anchor,'" says Drayton.

Some rain begins to be mixed with the wind as they go into a bar parlour, with a floor of earth stamped hard, and sanded. The light is dim, but a turf fire burns brightly in the grate. Only one man is there, a laborer, with his tankard on the bench beside him; and from his happy posture one may conjecture him not sober. He is the driver of a manure cart whose horse is enduring all the storm yonder at the house side. He has still a long way to fare, past Aylsham, almost on to Marsham, and the entrance of the rich men

rouses him. He pulls himself together, braves the outer night, mounts and sets off, not uncomfited, for he has a can of beer with him. We shall overtake him, again be overtaken by him, and again overtake him.

Meanwhile, the landlord has drawn some cider for Drayton. Cider is not McCalmont's taste, but Drayton duly sips his cider.

"By the way, landlord," says he presently, "just take me to a room: I want to write a letter."

McCalmont is really surprised now. Why on earth — But Drayton knows what he is about: he knows that Letty, the landlord's daughter, is listening behind the inner door, hears what he says, and will act accordingly.

Barnes, the landlord, has never before seen Drayton, nor Drayton Barnes; but Letty and Drayton have met this summer on Cromer pier.

Drayton says to his friend: "Shan't be long," and Barnes says to Drayton: "This way, sir."

Barnes is a powerful man with a red beard, and a constant frown. He has a certain air of self-importance above his station, as of "one who has come down." He and Drayton mount some creaking stairs; some paper and two candles are placed on a table in a dingy old-timbered room, then Barnes retires.

Drayton, however, writes no letter, but waits, and in a minute Letty looks in. She is twenty or so, middle-sized, fair, plump, and pretty — not the prettiness of a doll — there is character in her face. She is neatly dressed in grey and has quite the air and speech of a lady, save for a countrified word here or there. Her hair is firmly built, she has some jewellery, watch and chain, and smells of lavender, as Drayton puts a kiss on her cheek.

"We mustn't talk here," she whispers, "come—"

She leads him by the hand through darkness down a back stair into the open. Nothing is said till they are beyond the kitchen garden, the stable, the

fowl house, the pigs. Then there is a hedge with a gate, then a plank bridging a rill, then a fir plantation. Among the firs they stand.

Rain smites their faces, winds catch away their words. Now, too, there is a vague sound of thunder somewhere, but they heed none of these things. Each is fully occupied by the other.

“We have only a few minutes,” says Letty Barnes.

“What’s it all about, my girl?” answers Drayton. “I got your letter at the Cromer *poste restante*, but you are cool to expect a man like me to be running after you.”

“Oh, you drop all pretence of love, then, I see?” says Letty.

Drayton puts his arm round her waist.

“Kiss your old man. I love you all right, girlie — honestly, I do, but you mustn’t be a bore, Letty. I am prepared to do a lot for you, if you only know how to manage me—”

“But I do know how to manage you, as you are going to see! I have found out! Not by begging, but by commanding! With all your experience, you seem to know very little about women, really; and as to me, you don’t know me one little bit! I look like a lamb, don’t I? Aren’t you really going to marry me, then, after all?”

“Don’t be a goose, Letty; don’t be a goose.”

“You did promise though, I think, didn’t you?”

“Let me see: I forget now.”

“Ah, a great scoundrel!”

“Little Letty, little Letty.”

“A bitter devil, James Drayton!”

“Let not your angry passions rise, my Letty! I’m a sixty-horse-power for angry passions myself, you know.”

“And I! and I! and my father! — when he finds out. Do you think, then, that you will be getting off scot free this time? How silly! We are not common people! Compared to a clown like you, we are respectable folk, though poor. You dare, James Drayton! Pity yourself, if you won’t — pity — me—”

She suddenly covered her face, and the winds bore away one sob.

“My good girl,” says Drayton, “don’t cry, because crying depresses me; and don’t threaten me, because I don’t like it, so don’t do it.”

“Selfish brute! I never knew what it was to hate—”

“Look here; be quick. What; is it you want with me?”

“Keep your promise!”

“That all you got to say for yourself?”

“What happens to you, if you fail to honor a signed promise to pay at three months’ sight for value received, James? You become a dead man commercially, don’t you? Well, your promise to me is more binding in my sight than a thousand pieces of paper, and your failure to keep it shall have the same penalty, my friend — death — social death—”

“Pooh! I am going—”

“No, don’t go. I didn’t make you come here to quarrel, and waste words, but to tell you that you are quite in my power. I have discovered about your engagement to Lady Methwold; you are to be married in three months, aren’t you? But listen to this other fact: I have taken a trip to your place, Corton Chantry—”

“You!” whispers Drayton; and now his face is suddenly pallid.

“Ah, that touches you near, James,” says Letty. “Yes, I have been to Corton. It is only nine miles from here, you know. You must be a scoundrel, really. I will marry you, but within seven months from now I shall be divorced from you. I shouldn’t live with you for all the crowns—”

“You been to Corton, girl! What ever for?”

“I don’t quite know why: some instinct took me. I had heard that you kept the place running wild, with only one daft man, named Steve Anderson, to look after it. That stirred my curiosity, for lately I have believed you capable of any villainy. So I went, and I heard screams—”

“By gad!”

“Yes, screams — a woman’s — in that north tower—”

“You little beggar!”

“Take care! you touch me! you dare! Look here — can you see? — this is a letter which I have ready to send to Lady Methwold—”

Drayton is a man of action, and the instant that white object appears through the murk, he makes a catch at it. His hand meets Letty Barnes’ wrist and seizes it. But he has not to do with a weakling. Letty is strong, and they proceed to fight like two men, though there is no reason why they should, really, for if this letter be got from Letty, she can surely write another, but they are speedily in that state of mind in which men no longer reason.

Passion possesses them, pants in their breath, stares in their eyes.

“Let it — go you — shall!” pants Drayton, stooped to her hand; but Letty’s fingers are a vice. Though if it were less dark, one would see her failing, as with bitten lip and many a jerk and stumble she endures that rough usage to which Drayton is subjecting her.

And every moment, as they fight, up and up climbs the temperature of their rage. The striving for that letter becomes a mania. Where will it end?

This way frenzy lies. But neither will yield and their breaths grow louder than the winds.

“Give it — up you — shall—”

“No, you — devil—”

But Letty is white; her hands are sore and burning; she feels herself going, going; and now she sends out one shriek upon the night.

McCalmont, who is pacing in the tavern-bar, awaiting Drayton, says:

“What’s that?”

“Where?” asks Barnes, the landlord.

“Didn’t I hear something like a cry somewhere?”

“Ey, it’s the wind,” says Barnes; “rough night, rough night. I’d not care to be out on the road, sir.”

But by that cry of Letty’s, Drayton has been startled, and in a moment she has wrenched her hand free, and is gone flying. He catches her, but misses her, and panting to himself, “No, you don’t,” is after her.

She has run back toward the rill and the board-bridge, but she never reaches it. He has caught her, his hand in the collar of her dress behind.

“Going to — drop it?” he pants at her ear.

But she cannot answer. He is choking her. She tries to say that she yields, then to say “pity,” but no whisper comes. Now a thousand words throng in her throat — only to speak would be Heaven — but no more comes than from dry suction-pumps that caw and gurgle. Her poor eyes stare in a horror of panic, seeing Eternity upon her, and the sudden grave yawn to receive her youth.

“Quick! going to drop it?” he repeats. But how can she answer? She cannot answer! and her silence adds fuel to his flame.

But the end is not yet; there is a rent of cloth. Something gives way at her neck. She dives and is running free.

Away from the rill this time — and he runs after her: but neither runs fast — they cannot — there is a certain impotence in their run, as when in dreams one would hasten, but cannot, the limbs are so hampered and heavy.

But of the two it is she who runs the more feebly, and his legs are long. He gets near again and makes a blow, but a feeble wild blow, made too soon, which only touches her. She dodges, and is gone in a changed direction.

And again he is after her, with that same feeble obstinacy, so deplorable to see. If she can only escape his sight one instant, how lucky, for she will be lost to him in the dark. But the wood is fatally sparse, and he never quite loses her. Anon they stumble for the ground is rough with game-holes, thistle, fern, and furze, and once Drayton is staggering backward with arms a-struggle in the air. But he saves himself, and is soon impending again while she, feeling him near again, with a panic now boundless and lunatic, throws her soul into the scream:

“Help! he is going — !”

They are a longish distance from the tavern, but such a scream as that, that Barnes, her father, behind the bar, cocks an ear and says to McCalmont, who is pacing with his hands in his coat-pockets:

“Well, I thought I heard — Heard anything, sir?”

“No,” says McCalmont, “no. Thought I did a while since, though.”

“Ey, it’s the blessed wind. It cries out behind the hill at times, like a woman in trouble.”

But Drayton has made another blow at the poor victim, again without effect. She is nimble, though failing, and during his momentary stoppage she evades and is off in yet a new direction. But her end is not far; she is tumbling too frequently — and all at once, with a mortal little last cry, she is down. Instantly he is on his knees over her.

His right forearm presses on her windpipe — he does not look at her at all, nor admit to himself that he is killing her. He looks away sideways, as if interested in something yonder among the trees —

Presently he picks himself up, leans his back against a fir-bole, peers this way and that and recovers wind a little.

At the bottom of the plantation runs a bend of that same gut which passes before the tavern — a square-cut opening in the ground about ten feet wide and fifteen feet deep. Their run has brought them so near it that Drayton, leaning against a tree, can see its edge. He thinks that it is a river, but a mere thread of water trickles through it.

He goes to the body again, takes the letter to Lady Methwold from her hand, tears it up, and is about to throw the pieces upon the wind when he considers himself and puts them into a pocket. He then draws her ten yards to the gut, over the edge. He listens for a splash, but hears neither splash nor thud. The winds are in his ears and it is as though he had thrown her into an abyss of darkness. She is gone from him.

Now he runs — thievish, but quick — back toward the rill, the bridge, the hedge-gate, past the pigs, the kitchen garden, up the dark back-stairs. He re-enters the room which he had left with her. There burn the two candles as before, quietly, as if nothing had happened meanwhile. He looks at his hands, at his clothes — no blood. He takes off his coat and shakes off the water. But his face! that looks a bit wild; he sees it in a spotted piece of mirror that hangs from a timber of this old room. He can't show such a face to McCalmont; there's a scratch, too, under his left eye. The little beggar must have scratched him somehow.

She is dead, then! He has killed her dead — unexpected thing. But it has happened, it is so. He cannot at all recognise himself, paces the room, misery in his face. Pity he ever met her that night on Cromer pier; pity he came to her this night; pity she was ever born — and he.

“Well, that's as it may—” He pulls himself together, glances again at the glass. He will wait a little longer.

Now he has the thought that the number of the sheets given him may be known to the landlord. He will therefore take one — will even write a letter, since he came for that and has time. His mind is in a state in which thought is fairly active, but not with perfect rationality. Standing, he covers half a sheet with writing; but the words are nonsense words, to fill up space. He blots them on a Life Assurance almanac, in which leaves of blotting paper alternate with memorandum leaves.

Now he descends and, as he enters the bar, McCalmont says:

“By Jove! you must have written ten letters, old man.”

“Only one, boy,” answers Drayton, “but that wanted some thinking, you see. All ready to be off?”

McCalmont has lighted up; all is ready. Drayton slips a couple of shillings into the landlord’s hand and, stepping outside, they hear Barnes call “Letty!”

Off goes the motor round the hill, down the lane, out upon the road; and now the darkness is lit by an occasional lightning flash.

Within four minutes, near Blickling, they come upon Robert Hartwell, who has tramped thus far with his bundle and stick. He is aware of the gathering hum of the two dragon-eyes staring nearer upon him and, stepping aside, he mutters as they dash past.

Five minutes later, they overtake the manure-cart of the laborer who had left “The Anchor” on their entrance. He sends a drowsy shout to warn them as they grow near, for he carries no light. And past him, too, they dash. But he shall overtake them, and again be overtaken by them.

III. ROBERT HARTWELL'S SIN



WE LEFT HARTWELL where the road crosses a bridge in the Bure Valley, and he has tramped on to the second encounter with the motor, wondering how much bitterer the weather will become, and if the world is a place designed to torture and oppress the poor. All the time he is on the look-out for some barn or hollow tree, in which to rest his frame.

He is a big man, about the size of Drayton, the same age — two months' younger — the same black beard, a longish oblong of hair; on his left temple the same raspberry mark; his moustache flows sideways in the same way, showing the pressure of rather thick lips, and a definite point in the middle of the upper. They have the same straight noses, freckle-splashed faces, glossy hair. Hartwell's photograph would do very well for a photograph of Denner, captain of the S.S. *Africa*, dead thirty-eight years since. So would Drayton's.

Only Hartwell's hands are different from Drayton's. He is not, however, a working-man of common type; his father was a nail manufacturer; he himself has spent three years at Rugby School, though Rugby has receded many a thousand miles from Hartwell now.

When he was seventeen, his father failed, and died. Then for three years he maintained his mother by hard work as an under-clerk in an electrical machine-makers. He was steady — at one time even religious — had abilities and rose higher in his firm. But his mother died and, alone in the world, he fell in love with a pretty work-girl, who induced him to marry. She was worthless, and drank. One day she appeared at the office and made

a scene. He was dismissed. Falling now into misery, he took work at the factory in whose office he had been a clerk. He has been a working-man ever since.

But, an excellent specimen of his class, his remarkable mind has not rusted. He has been a student, a keen watcher of the world's march in science, thought, invention, social changes. He knows a great lot about chemistry and biology, reads German, has filled a pile of note-books with notes at science classes, knows Darwin, Haeckel, by heart. He has been a sober, sagacious workman, bringing up his son, Bobbie, as respectably as he could, ever since his wife died ten years ago.

But he has had misfortunes — disaster after disaster just lately, and the iron has entered into his soul. He has seen Bobbie hungry and one memorable night Bobbie has seen him drunk.

Electricity makes such progress in these days! — it flies. The workman can hardly keep pace with the bewildering changes. What is new to-day will be ancient history to-morrow, and the older types of craftsmen, their pursuits and habits of mind, already fixed, see younger men step in and take their place.

Hartwell has made two inventions from each of which he hoped for wealth, but he lacked the few pounds to patent either. One was patented for him by a manufacturer, who has given him £20, making thousands himself by it. The other is still in the air.

He has seen door after door close in his face, and hope has pined. Too many people seem to be born! something is wrong with the scheme of things, and there's a "fault" in the Machine. His thick firm lips pressed together on that Norwich Road, hisses are on his breath, and now is the winter of his discontent.

Partly by train, partly tramping, he has come from Birmingham to Cromer, allured by the hope of getting employment in a gentleman's stable, for an acquaintance had written him of a vacancy there. But it was filled when he arrived. He is now tramping for London with the vaguest hopes though, certainly, his boots will never outlast that length of road. Already his feet are soaked and congealed. The foxes have holes, but he nowhere to lay his head. His vitals scream for food.

He does not blame himself — he knows that he is little to blame; he does not blame man, nor the devil; his rage is against the nature of the world. But it does not break out — he is not of that sort. Till, just as he comes to that lane leading to “The Anchor,” where Drayton has turned in, some rain, as we said before, begins to be mixed with the winds and this little thing, though his mind is of the strongest, irritates Hartwell to fury, and now he breaks out.

“Curse the rain,” he mutters, looking up.

And as on he plods, taunting words come to him, mockeries of Nature. “A metal-worker's apprentice would have conceived it better!” he laughs. But the rain only gets worse; there grows a sound of thunder somewhere in the dark; he breathes a wish that lightning may strike him dead — if it can. The lightning can, but is busy.

During the next two miles, his lips are never silent; and while he goes muttering James Drayton is doing what we know to Letty Barnes.

Then again Drayton passes Hartwell on the road and, this time, that motor-car has upon the usually cold mind of Hartwell an effect like madness. How brazen a power the thing is! domineering in its approach, obtrusive in its passage, triumphant in its swift translation from sight. It has the eyes, the smell, the wings, the mutter and meditation of an Ogre. It is like a daughter of Mammon.

Wealth! Hartwell knows what it is, he has stood in mansions. He knows poverty. As the proud chariot of iron flashes past him, he has in his consciousness at one and the same moment both houselessness and the palace, rags and furred robes, the crust and the fat of turtles. It is a double vision almost, which he has, and a lust for wealth, more crass and ugly than he has ever felt, arises and boils in his breast. To shoot in motor cars, anon crushing some wretch on the road — to roll in luxury, while multitude's starve — how good, he thinks!

“Give me that!” he says, and now he is down on his knees, frowning, his hands clutched in his hair, for though his fires are slow to kindle they burn hot and strong, like hard anthracite and he is praying, but not looking up, looking down, not praying to heaven.

“Whatever your name Mammon — Power of the world — give me that! Say ten years, five! I will serve you gladly — say five years — from tonight. Will you? Can you? Are you there? No, you are not there, but if you were — I offer myself: only cloy me—”

His head is bowed right down, frowning, but he rises hastily, ashamed of himself, muttering:

“No! let it not be said that I have entered my second childhood at the age of thirty-seven.”

But he goes on his way a worse man. Between Blickling and Aylsham a thought comes into his head of his son, Bobbie, whom he has left at Birmingham with an old friend. He has tenderly loved the lad: but he mutters now:

“Selfishness is the law, my friend, I must not care for you.”

Presently, near eight o'clock, he is passing through Aylsham, his fires burned out now, or only sullenly smouldering within him. And again in Aylsham he has overtaken James Drayton, and sees him. It is at the old

coaching-house, the “Black Boys;” the motor is before the door, and since the thunderstorm is over, and hardly any rain left for the wind to play with, half-a-dozen admiring boys and girls are gathered round the motor, and Hartwell, too, stops to admire. In the room behind that window, Drayton and McCalmont are dining, and there is a space under the blind by which Hartwell, stooping, spies Drayton, full face.

“Well, certainly,” he breathes, “this is odd! there is the same man again, my own twin brother, as I live. It is said that everyone has a double. Ah, lucky person, lucky person!”

Five minutes he stoops there, peering, absorbed in the contemplation of this marvel. Then, with a sigh he straightens himself, and goes his dreary way — through Aylsham — down the railed footway by the lych-gate and down the hill beyond.

IV. SO SOON?



DOWN THE LONG hill trudges Hartwell, his eyes bent upon the ground in gloomy reverie, and now this thought occurs to him whether, on the strength of the resemblance between him and Drayton, it might not be a good thing to turn back and beg a shilling of the rich man. He had never begged before — but hunger and weariness grow pressing —

He regrets the idea, but it recurs, and he is again considering it, his eyes on the ground, when he strikes upon something, and his walk is brought to a stoppage. What is it? a cart lying across the road, no horse, no driver. It lies tilted, like a stranded ship, one of the wheels is off.

It is the manure cart of the laborer who left “The Anchor,” fuddled, when Drayton and McCalmont entered it. We said that they should overtake them, and they did; we said that he should overtake them again, and he has, while they dine at Aylsham; but they shall overtake him again — or, at least, his cart.

“But the dolt!” thinks Hartwell, “to leave the cart in the middle of the road this dark night!”

At the breakdown the driver has unspanned, mounted the horse with all its hames and trailing harness, and gone on to his farm near Marsham to seek help, for he cannot move the cart: and he has gone at a walk, happy, singing, and full of hot spiced ale.

Hartwell walks round the cart, lingering, thinking what to do. He decides to return to Aylsham, and tell some one. But as he turns to climb, he hears, he sees — with an alarm which quickly grows into horror. There is a

humming song somewhere, then two dragon eyes quick coming, and above the dragon eyes two little adder eyes, clear cut, in the darkness — the glowing ends of two cigars. At 25 miles an hour they come. Hartwell forgets his vow to do no good.

“Stop!” he howls, waving, red-faced, running a little up. He implores as for his own life, “Danger! Stop!”

But in vain. If they hear, they do not understand, nor heed. There is no time. Drayton has fuddled himself at dinner that he may forget what lies in the gutter behind “The Anchor.” On hums the motor, and suddenly Hartwell is no more shouting to save others, but skedaddling to save his own skin — down again to the cart — beyond it — like one pelting from pestilence. Nor does he stop till he hears behind him the shock — a bumping hubbub, then a rattling and throbbing — and his eye-corner catches sight of a sheet of flame vanishing like lightning flash into the dark.

Then all is still — all but the wind. Drayton has gone to meet Letty Barnes.

It was the high side of the tilted cart that had been turned to the motor, but even so, McCalmont has been shot clean over it, a long way, like an arrow; and when Hartwell turns back toward the scene of the ruin, it is upon McCalmont that he first comes. He finds that the dead man’s head has made quite a hole in the ground, and his neck is obviously broken. Everything can be seen, for the car has ignited in one spot, and yonder on the road and in the roadside field are several flames dodging about from the rain, as petroleum does on contact with water.

Going on to the cart, Harwell finds it bottom upward, some fifteen feet from where it stood before. It has been turned over and over, and half of its substance is matchwood. The motor is still jammed into it, and looks shorter, tilted sideways, and twisted. The two lights are gone, the front tires

burst, and everything in front of the steering pillar and dash board is a chaos of dripping debris.

Drayton's body is still in the car, but no longer on the front seat. He is lying in an ungainly pose across the back seat, with one foot up on the back of the front seat. Little more remains of his face than the beard; unlike McCalmont, he has dived head foremost against the cart, and been tossed by it like a ball.

"Dead as two nails—" mutters Hartwell.

He himself is rather dazed — the calamity here is so pitiful. He walks a little to and fro, not knowing what to do. Thinking that the driver of the cart may come, he peers along the road, trotting a little this way and that — . No driver comes. All is solitude and aglow from the jumping fires. Some night bird flies across between the Lombardy poplars that line the road. On the east is a stretch of bracken, with a pond, on the west a hilly field, with a rick on the top, just discernible. Some minutes pass. Hartwell, waiting, shivers with cold.

The next definite thought borne on his head is this: that he, for his part, will not fail of bed and board this night, that there is money, watches, on these dead men and it is an ill wind that blows no one any good —

He does not delay. He, too, as we said of Drayton, is a man of action. He approaches Drayton to despoil him and now he thinks: "this is the one that is my twin—"

But at that thought he stops and turns as white as McCalmont yonder. His teeth chatter as at some blast of Arctic cold. For a time he is like one struck into stone, then he is pacing curiously this way and that, bent sideways, one hand pressed into his pocket, the other shouldering his stick. He has invented —

And all of a sudden he is in a passion of haste, a storm of action. He is in the car, not yet well ignited, on the back seat beside Drayton, undressing him; and quick and keen is the work. He has off collar and tie — coat — throws off the braces, shirt, vest, and now the boots — they are laced — pitifully slow. Now he whips off the trousers, drawers. The earnest labor of his bosom is hoarser than the storm, but the dead limbs are still limp, and lend themselves readily to that tugging and hustling. All is well, that wild glance discerns no one on the road. The dead man is naked, the clothes lie in a heap on the seat.

In some seconds now Hartwell himself is naked to the waist and in two minutes he has on the dead man's vest and shirt, collar and tie. Then, ceasing to dress himself, he dresses Drayton in his own rags. His hands, all that he touches, are smeared — so much the better.

He returns to his own dressing again, tosses off his nether garments, puts on Drayton's, then dresses Drayton in his own rags. In proportion, as he becomes Drayton, so Drayton becomes he. Finally he puts on Drayton's socks, boots, ring, gloves, and Drayton has on his. He does not use Drayton's hat: he will do without a hat. He casts his own cap, stick, and bundle away.

Now he leaves the car, drags out the dead man, and places him on the ground under the front wheels of the motor, between motor and cart. It will seem to the world that McCalmont and an unknown tramp have been killed in the accident, but that Drayton has escaped. Hartwell will be Drayton.

He stands a little, recovering wind. The work is done. No one comes along the road. After a time he starts to trudge back up the hill, bareheaded, but warm and rich, toward Aylsham, a new man, in a wildly new world, with a new name. But what name? That will be well: there are papers in the dead man's pocket. He feels first in the lower coat pockets — that warm

coat — but there he finds only some shreds of paper, the shreds of the letter which Letty Barnes wrote to Lady Methwold against Drayton. But in the trouser are a bunch of keys, in the breast pockets many papers that will be well about the name and other things. He feels his strength, he knows that he is sagacious, trusts in himself at bottom —

And as to the purse? That is well also. It contains two sovereigns, and five bank notes. He will feast to-night — he will say that the accident has made him hungry afresh. He vaguely wonders if one can get champagne in Aylsham, and by the time he is half way up the hill that has become a care to him, he is not for the moment in a condition of sanity. He wheels on all the whirlwinds —

He thinks that if he only had Bobby with him, that would intensify the pleasure...to see him eat and eat — But he stops short at another thought. “Starting from to-night,” he has said, “I will serve you — only cloy me—” His fingers touch his brow. But it soon passes! He laughs audibly: he is not a child.

Moving on again, it occurs to him that it might be well to have a bruise somewhere. With a stone he strikes his forehead, a good hard blow which he hardly feels. And now he laughs again — a laugh cynical, defiant, triumphant; then immediately his teeth beat together with ague. But he pulls himself together, proceeds up the hill, and is soon in Aylsham.

So began the drama of love and pain, which we have to tell.

V. HARTWELL FINDS HIMSELF A MARRIED MAN



WHEN HARTWELL RE-ENTERED Aylsham, he stopped under a street lamp, and looked at several of the envelopes in the breast pocket of Drayton's overcoat, which he had on. He saw the words "James Drayton, Esq.," on them all, and decided that that was the name which was to be his thenceforth.

He then walked up the empty street to the "Black Dogs," and entered the old coaching house chilled to the heart with that feeling of rashness gone crazy, which must have chilled the heart of the first man who ever stepped into the car of a balloon, trusting on theory alone, to make the first strange leap into the air. He was met in the passage by a girl, who started and turned pale at the sight of the gore on the clothes, at the self-inflicted bruise on his hatless head and at the streamlets of blood on his white face. He seemed to her the murdered ghost of the man who, not twenty minutes before, had dined in boisterous health at the tavern, and gone away, hearty and happy and half-tipsy in his motor car.

"There has been an accident," cried Hartwell to her: "just lend me your shoulder to lean on — that's a girl — I can hardly stand."

She gave him her shoulder and conducted him, step by step, to the commercial room on the left of the passage, while a number of people who had caught sight of him from the bar on the right crowded at the door of the parlour, staring after him till he disappeared. He sank into the first easy-chair, all sighs, with an abandoned head and a bent back, while the landlord, who had run in, and the girl stood over and gazed at him.

“An accident has happened to the car,” sighed Hartwell: “my friend is killed; also a tramp who was on the road. I cannot talk. Someone run and tell the police.”

“Run quick for, some brandy, Maggie,” said the landlord. “Dreadful thing, sir! How did it happen, sir?”

“I cannot talk,” sighed Hartwell.

The girl ran out and quickly ran in again with a glass of brandy and water, which the landlord held to Hartwell’s lips, and Hartwell drank, sighing with gusto at the end:

“That’s a man.”

“Feel better now, sir?” asked the landlord, contemplating him, with his arms akimbo.

“Yes, that’s better. Put me to bed, my friend, and let me be left alone. Ah, no, I feel not well—”

“Dreadful thing, sir! Who would have thought half an hour since — Maggie, send off John for Dr Richards at once.”

By this time two of the other servants of the establishment and several of the visitors were assembled at the door, craning in to see.

“No doctor, I think,” murmured Hartwell to the landlord. “I do not need any — at least I will not have any. Do not make me talk — just put me to bed.”

“Just draw off the gentleman’s gloves, Maggie,” said the landlord. “I’ll take off his coat.”

“Leave the gloves and coat for the present,” murmured Hartwell, “you have only to take me to a room, and then give notice to the authorities.”

He now raised himself with pretended difficulty, and, supported by the girl and the man, stumbled up the stairs with feebleness which was not all pretence, for he was very weary from his tramping, and weak with hunger.

One of the other servant girls followed them with a lamp to a room above stairs, where Hartwell at once drew himself upon an ottoman, whose chintz covering he soiled with mud and blood.

“Get off the gentleman’s boots, Maggie,” said the landlord. “May I take off your coat now, sir?”

“That is all right about my things,” replied Hartwell. “You may leave me and I will do all for myself presently. Perhaps something to eat may do me good, though I have just dined. The shaking has caused me to feel—”

“At once, sir: what will you have?”

“Anything — with some wine. Say, in half an hour’s time I will ring for it. But meanwhile I want some hot water. Bring me this at once.”

“Yes, sir. By the way, sir — what name to give to the police?”

With a renewed chill at the heart Hartwell now, for the first time, pronounced these words:

“Mr James Drayton.”

The landlord and the girl then went away and Hartwell sat on the ottoman in his coat with his wide brow on his gloved palm, till the girl returned with a jug of hot water and lit a fire in the room. When she was gone again, Hartwell locked the door upon himself, took off his outer clothes, his gloves and his boots, poured the hot water into a basin and put the basin on a small table which he pushed to the side of the bed.

He then took out all the objects which Drayton’s pockets contained, except the shreds of Letty’s letter in the coat pocket, and he placed these all together on the table by the bedside with the basin of hot water and the lamp, in order to examine them at his leisure. He then got into bed and lay for some minutes idle, luxuriating in the rest and peace of the soft bed after his weariness and thinking of what chance his strange to-morrow might bring forth.

He would have fallen asleep, but that he severely roused himself with a flash of the eye, warning himself that, however tired he might be, there must be little sleep for him that night. He had kept on his gloves in the presence of the landlord and the girl so that they might not see his working man's hands, and now he put his hands into the basin of hot water, hoping by dint of soaking and soaping to have them at least presentable before the morning came. After some soaking, he used Drayton's penknife to shape the nails and cut away the callous growths round the quicks and then continued to soak them. They had once been as soft and shapely as Drayton's, and only needed coaxing to become so again.

After half an hour he rose, wiped his hands, poured out the water from the basin, and rang for the supper before returning to bed. The girl appeared bringing the news that the two bodies had been taken to the mortuary and bringing also a fat Norfolk capon, an apple tart, and a bottle of port. Hartwell then ate a hearty meal, but without quite that sense of luxury which he had looked for from feast at first. There is always a certain disappointment in the actual enjoyment of the delights which one has longed for and, moreover, Hartwell's mind had already enlarged itself to the largeness of his new kingdom, a kingdom in which the stomach suddenly ceased to be of importance. For men stand, as it were, at different heights, each seeing from his own level, so what the beggar thinks is heaven, the millionaire regards as nothing and what the millionaire pursues, the saint or the thinker regards as a bauble. In one and the same night Hartwell was all the three — beggar, millionaire, and thinker. He had longed for a meal at seven; at nine he had forgotten food, and was thinking of palaces and social grandeur; before midnight, he had half forgotten palaces and was thinking with joy of the laboratory which he would make and of the research work which he would do in it.

When the girl, Maggie, brought the supper, he ordered her to fetch him up some ink, a pen, and some writing paper, with more hot water for his hands. Immediately after the meal, when he was alone again, he set to work to examine Drayton's papers, of which there lay quite a mass on the table near him and, leaning toward the lamp on his elbow, he weighed the meaning of each with a certain sideward sagacity of gaze, a sagacity that smiled in its self-sureness.

Each letter brought its own light to its intelligence, adding its share to its knowledge of Drayton's pursuits, passions, friends, business, environment, tastes, point of view, and ways of life. Only a few lines in one business letter, and the whole of another letter, he tried in vain to understand. Once he stopped short in the reading, and was lost in reflection, asking himself:

"Shall I succeed in carrying it through? Have I the steel, the wit?" And presently, as he read, he muttered, "He seems to have been a great character for horses;" and once again with a severe flash of the eye, he said, "He was a ruffian, this man!" and, lastly, as he read the letter, which he could not understand, he started with a whisper: "Oh, I have a wife—"

In that letter, which had been written by Drayton himself, Hartwell saw these words: "the wife." He had taken out the letter from an envelope which had no address on it, and yet had been fastened down, and it seemed the letter of a crazy man, being, in fact, none other than that nonsense-letter written by Drayton at the "Anchor Tavern" after the death of Letty, in order to be able to say to himself or to others that he had written a letter. For to the greatest liars truth is dear, and men engaged in building up a fabric of lies have been known to mix truth with it in a random way, even at the greatest personal risk to themselves: and so with Drayton and his nonsense-letter. And in this letter Hartwell read the words:

“Dear Sir, — Weather very bad to-night, blowing great guns. So it has come to this: if any one had told me that it would, I should have bet half a million to the contrary. The little wretch went to C.C.” — meaning Corton Chancery— “and heard the wife’s screams. Weather very bad to-night, wind, rain, thunder, and lightning. It isn’t all beer and skittles in this little world; there are things that make a man feel rather cold. Now is the time for all good men to come to the rescue of the party. If that little Kirk only does to Brighteye what I have put him up to do, my Queenie will win the next Oaks as sure as there’s a sun. Now is the time for all good men to come to the rescue of the party. Weather very bad to-night, very bad.

“Yours truly,

“James Drayton.”

“This man was certainly a ruffian in many ways,” thought Hartwell, on reading the letter for the third time and, after tearing off the signature, which he needed, he tore that letter in fine shreds, rose and threw the shreds on the fire with disgust.

When he returned to the bed, he lay for some time with his hands under his head, listening to the sound of the lessening storm outside, and thinking of “the wife.” “The little wretch has gone to C.C., and heard the wife’s screams.” “The” wife could only mean Drayton’s wife, and her occupation was, apparently — to scream. So that for her also, evidently, it was not all beer and skittles in this little world. As to the meaning of “C.C.” there was nothing in what he had so far read to show him. His mind at once took up the notion that “C.C.” was a person, nor did the thought that it might be a place occur to him for many a day. If it had occurred to him in time, it might have saved him a world of misery but, in fact, Drayton’s nonsense letter having been once destroyed, the letters “C.C.” passed out of

Hartwell's memory for that memory, though an extraordinary one, soon found as much to carry, as it could bear.

There remained on the table three more letters which he had not read, and the very first of these which he took up still further complicated his relations with women, for it was from a lady to whom Drayton had evidently been engaged at the moment of his death and the discovery of the engagement to be married, of this already married man, drew from Hartwell's lips the exclamation: "This ruffian!" The lady's letter was crested with the three pearled coronet of earldom, came from "The Villa Borgia-Costi, Cannes," was signed "Julia," and said, among other things:

"It is raining to-day, and my Aunt Margaret and I mope, which is nothing strange for her when the racing-season is over, but exceptional for me. So if I am disposed to be over frank with you, you will attribute it to external nature and the way the wind blows...I certainly do not wish to hurt you — I wonder if I could if I tried? — for apart from the wild relations between us, I am convinced that I have some sort of depraved liking for you, you are so breezy and boisterous, and careless of the usual shams. I believe you would beat me blue if I married you, and that is why I said 'yes,' for the same reason that one hunts in 'bullfish' country, because of the spice of madness and danger in it. And then I was really grateful to you for saving my life that day in Northamptonshire, for it was gallantly done at the risk of your own neck and, lastly I suppose, I wished to prove myself independent of the general point of view, to be a mad-cap. I believe, on reflection, that this last was the main *leit-motif* of my maidenly 'yes.' But I said that I would be quite frank, since it is rainy, and I say that you are heavy, my James, and begin to weigh upon one...

A woman may have a wayward admiration for the Centaur or the Cyclops, and throw kisses at them, but one does not marry them...I have been wondering why we should marry, really? I recommend you to lock yourself into a room and ask yourself that question. Are we fond of each other, then? That does not seem very probable. I repeat and insist upon it, that I do like and enjoy you, as one enjoys a breeze, but how, if I throw you over a week before the wedding? then you might bring an action for breach of promise, which would be fun, and make my brothers swear. It really seems that I am going to do it, unless you give me some reason...

Write soon, and tell me, but not with the thick end of the pen, etc., etc.”

Hartwell saw from the date that this letter was a week old.

“At any rate,” he thought, with a smiling eye, a slight lifting of the lower lids giving always to his eyes their smiling expression; “at any rate, it will not be difficult for me to shirk my engagement with the lively Julia and I shall not delay to release her by letter. I am already married! Let us choose to eschew bigamy and all breaches of the common law. This Drayton was undoubtedly a ruffian—”

In reading and weighing letters and documents, hours passed over Hartwell. It grew on towards midnight, the house was wrapped in silence, and only the wind and rain were heard. But he would not permit himself to sleep. His next care was to take Drayton’s signature which he had torn from the nonsense letter, and to set himself to copy it with the writing material which Maggie had brought him. Drayton’s handwriting was very different from his own, and he foresaw that the typewriter, for some time at least, would have to be his closest friend. But as to the mere signature, that would be easily enough acquired by a day or two of earnest work. He had no lack of trust in his own handiness, capacity, and equalness to every difficulty that might arise. For two hours and a half he was copying the signature, over

and over very slowly, like a boy doing his copy-book, with ever repeated “James, James,” “Drayton, Drayton.” Occasionally, if he paused, he soaked his hands in the water, then wiped them and re-commenced the copying. It was far into the foreday when he nodded over the paper, and could hardly go on. He then rose and threw the sheets, on which he had written, into the now dying embers of the fire.

He was in the act of throwing himself backward upon his pillow to enjoy the sweetest sleep when he started, for opposite him, in the half-darkness, he saw a face looking at him. He had blown out the lamp, but one of the blinds was not lowered, so that some sort of light from the outer night with its street lamps relieved the darkness of the room and he could darkly see the face. He knew at once that it was his own face reflected in the mirror of the chest of drawers, but it was also the face of the man whose place in the world he was taking, and the suspicion suggested to his nerves was that he might think the face his own, and yet it might be Drayton’s.

No mind could be colder, or more trained and fixed into scepticism, than Hartwell’s. The average sceptic, looking at the growth of so striking a being as man from the lowest forms of fish-life, cannot help thinking that there has been something intelligently working in the world to bring forth such a product: but to Hartwell’s hard head all was chance, chance. There was no compromise with him: he belonged to the school of Haeckel.

His universe consisted of atoms and ether alone, driven by more or less blind forces. As to ghosts and all other things, “whose existence we have no means of verifying,” these were to him the merest “dreams of man’s childhood.” Yet he did lift his hands to assure himself that the man in the glass lifted his hand also.

His eyes then closed in sleep, but when he was on the point of sleep they opened again to see, for his nerves were not themselves that night, and a

man with a black beard and coarse eyebrows was in the glass, dwelling there as in a home. The temptation occurred to Hartwell to rise, and throw a towel over the glass, but he would not do this. Finally his eyes flashed with a certain severe humor characteristic of him. He suddenly closed his lids, and was soon involved in as wild a vision as ever rioted in a man's head.

VI. HARTWELL HEARS FROM A LADY OF TITLE



IN THE GREY of the morning Hartwell opened his eyes and the first thing which he saw was a towel hanging over the mirror of the chest of drawers. He was astonished and could only conclude that he had put it there during sleep, for it happened to him to walk in his sleep before this, but his rising from bed to do this proved that his nervous fancy about Drayton's face during the night had made a deep enough impression on his nerves. He now smiled at himself for being subject to such disorders of digestion and dismissed the matter from his mind.

For two hours he then lay, full of plans and thought. During that time he made a review of all that the world contained to gratify him and of all these things he chose out what pleased him best. It has been shown that revels and poms were already below the level to which his staid mind had risen, but among the letters he had seen one from the captain of a yacht called the *Sempronia*. She was his now and he would travel; and there was a long-love science of biology; he would become a genuinely "learned man" — that old dream of his. He could picture himself moving about his own laboratory, adding a little to the sum of human knowledge.

First, however, he would give his mind to acquiring a sufficient working knowledge of Drayton's business in order to retire from it without serious loss. There would have to be at least one month's daily personal attendance at the office in Fenchurch Street, after which he would probably be able to retire with credit in order to lead a mild, studious, epicurean life, the life of much science, a little art, and the pagan virtues.

For the pagan virtues, or any virtue, Hartwell had no more respect theoretically, than for vice, since “a pure egotism” was his summing up of the duty of man. But since he had inherited a tendency to virtue from his father and forefathers, he knew that more or less virtue was as needful to his comfort as breathing; “the pagan virtues,” therefore, and a life of calm study, was the line along which he foresaw his maximum of happiness in that great new world into which he was that morning born. Drayton’s friends would, of course, be greatly surprised at such a change in Drayton’s manner of life — no more Epsom, unbridled motor cars, and rattling doings.

Hartwell foresaw their surprise, but he decided that he would live his life as he thought fit: for by old habit of mind he looked with no small disdain upon “the human animal in his present stage of development,” and was ever disposed to esteem lightly the opinions of that animal. From time to time he might pretend in his new world that the shock of the motor car accident had made a difference in him and, for the rest, he trusted in the bodily oneness between himself and Drayton to bear the strain of any novelty of conduct that might be marked in the new Drayton.

As to “the wife” who “screamed,” he he would provide for and somehow rid himself of her, if he was really married; and as to Julia, the sweetheart, he would be quickly rid of her, too. So he lay and dreamed and planned in the early morning, not counting upon the unexpected which, however, is always sure to happen: and within two hours his new state of existence seemed already as old and stale to him as if he had been a rich man and filled Drayton’s place for ten years. As for hunger and want they had become to him unrealities as remote and forgotten as the nightmare of the night.

Near eight he rose to go to Drayton's overcoat pocket where there were still some shreds of paper which he had not examined. He had felt them in the pocket and, on account of the trouble of fitting them together, had not taken them out on taking the mass of other papers. He now took them in one heap, unlocked his door, removed the towel from the mirror, returned to bed, and began to fit the shreds of paper together.

But he was almost at once interrupted in this by a rap and bundled the shreds with the other papers as the opened door, let in a flood of day light, and the girl, Maggie, came in asking how he was.

"Much better, thank you," said Hartwell.

"Hodder, the sergeant, is downstairs asking to speak with you, sir," she said.

"Send him up and bring me a breakfast of hard-boiled eggs and coffee," said Hartwell. "Then see what can be made of my clothes by dint of cleaning. The overcoat, I think, is beyond your cares, and I must get a new one in the town; or perhaps I shall take from the police that of my friend, Mr — McCalmont."

He had seen from the letters that McCalmont was the name of Drayton's right-hand man, and also that McCalmont had accompanied his chief on the motor car expedition to Sheffield. He therefore made the true guess that this was the name of the second dead man.

The girl took up his clothes and went out. Then came in the officer, hat in hand, saying, "sorry sir, I'm sure, for your terrible accident."

"Ah, yes," said Hartwell, "I have had a memorable shaking, sergeant and an escape only to be attributed to the interpositions of a merciful Providence."

"Bad bruise on the forehead sir, I see," said the officer in a sympathetic voice.

“Yes, I was pitched head foremost over the cart — happily into a mass of mud. Sit down on that side of the bed while I have some breakfast and I will tell you all.”

Hodder, the sergeant, sat and they spoke of the accident, of the condition of the two bodies and what had been done with the half-burned car, with the cart and with the guilty carter. As for the inquest, the coroner had issued his warrants and it would be at two p.m.

“It was a night o’ trouble, last night,” remarked the officer, as he rose to go, “what with the storm and there’s Mr Barnes, of the “Anchor Inn,” can’t find his daughter, Letty. Its odd too, sir, how that laboring man got himself between your motor car and the cart. There’s precious little left of his head, I see.”

Hartwell’s eyes, characterised by a certain humorous vivacity in their sideward look, smiled upon him as he said:

“The poor tramp perished in trying to save us. We heard him howling out to us but had no idea what he meant. The lamps may have dazzled and made him think us farther from him than we were and so he got himself between the car and the cart.”

“You must have been going a pace, sir!”

“No doubt. If you like to fine me, I suppose I must pay—”

“Oh, that’ll be all right sir, bless you,” said Hodder, the sergeant.

He then went away, but before Hartwell could finish his breakfast, in came the girl again, this time with a breezy telegram, which said:

“CONGRATULATION! HURRAH! — BENTLEY.”

And while he ate, three more arrived. This meant that the accident of the night had got into the London morning papers; and by 10.30 there was quite a crowd of telegrams.

One of them said:

“MY HEARTY CONGRATULATION; I AM COMING DOWN TO YOU. — OSWALD.”

Another said:

“THE OFFICE BEG TO UNITE IN EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY AND CONGRATULATIONS. — FOTHERGILL.”

A third said:

“YOUR USUAL LUCK; THREE CHEERS FOR THE OLD FIRM! — EDWARDS.”

Hartwell lay back smoking a cigar: but he was to find no rest now from the rain of congratulatory telegrams. There was only one which was the reverse of congratulatory, for it said:

“YOU HAVE ESCAPED THIS TIME, BUT NOT FOR LONG,”
and this one was anonymous. Near one o’clock there came one from “the sweetheart” at Cannes, saying:

“THE NEWS HAS BEEN TELEGRAPHED ME BY YOUR BROTHER: ACCEPT MY CONGRATULATIONS. — JULIA.”

He had just read this when Maggie, whose legs were growing weary of mounting and going down the stairs, re-appeared, saying:

“Mr Oswald Drayton to see you, sir.”

“Ah,” thought Hartwell, “this is that Oswald who was ‘coming down to me,’ and he is a ‘Drayton,’ the ‘brother’ probably whom ‘Julia’ speaks of.

Now, then, begins the test,” and his eyes hardened keenly under their coarse brows. “Show him up,” he said.

Presently there entered before Hartwell, in his room at the inn, a man rather under middle size, with a polished bald head (though he was only 35) and a friz of reddish hair running behind from ear to ear. He had a well-curved moustache, a hard chin, square jaws, a square head and a limp in his walk. His dress was the perfection of correctness, with some studied harmony between the tie, the gloves, the morning coat and, in all his air, a suggestion of club-land and Pall Mall.

“This does not look like my brother,” thought Hartwell, quickly. But he was bold, he spoke first, though with a quailing sense of rashness, saying quietly: “My good Oswald, you are kind to come—”

But the words were so unlike Drayton’s, who had usually addressed brother Oswald with a rough off-handiness, tossing him anon a careless hundred-pound-note, that Oswald stopped short one moment and his eyebrows slightly lifted. He shook hands, saying:

“My dear James, I am delighted at your escape, but — my dear fellow — you certainly look bad.”

“In what way?” asked Hartwell quickly.

“Done up somehow, thinner—”

“Haven’t I — cause?”

“Of course you have. I have myself lost a pound at least in weight since hearing of the accident. By a mere chance my man, Magee, saw it in the ‘Times’ about eight this morning, and I at once telegraphed to Lady Methwold. Er — heard from her, by the way?”

Hartwell at the first instant did not know who Lady Methwold was and, though in the second instant he guessed, his momentary conclusion caused

him to say, more to himself than to Oswald, “Lady Methwold — you mean Julia.”

Oswald slowly seated himself, and slowly turned his large gaze upon Hartwell, for all Oswald’s movements were slow and premeditated. He was stiffer even than his collar. Anon he slowly turned his gaze at his image in the glass with sublime eyebrows. There was about him some detachment or absence of mind, as of one musing inwardly on himself and not finding surrounding objects of sufficient interest to occupy his attention.

“My good fellow,” said he, “you are queer. Why on earth am I to call Lady Methwold ‘Julia’ before your marriage with her, if that ever arrives? Has she telegraphed to you?” He asked it with an interest which did not escape Hartwell’s notice.

“Yes. Why?” asked Hartwell.

“Curiosity. Don’t be odd. One has always a natural interest in people whose actions are always unexpected. Tell me about the spill” — with half a yawn.

Hartwell, looking at him penetratingly, said:

“Why tell you? You are not really anxious about the spill.”

Oswald again turned his large eyes upon the bed, subconscious, no doubt, of a change in Drayton’s noisy, slangy choice of words, and he said with surprise:

“My good James! do you mean because I merely yawned? It is that infernal journey — You are queer to-day. I see you have got a knock on the head. If I was not anxious, why come? No other brother would.”

“He is poor,” thought Hartwell, “and a sponger: his motive is money.”

But before he could sound Oswald further, the breathless Maggie again looked in, saying, “Mr Barnes to see you, sir.”

“Show him up,” said Hartwell, without having any idea who Mr Barnes was, and in a minute in came the red beard and constant frown of Barnes, the father of the murdered Letty.

“You will excuse me, sir,” began Barnes, “I am in a bit of trouble—”

“Yes, just take that chair, Mr Barnes,” said Hartwell.

“Thank you, sir. Sorry to hear of your accident, sir, and I congratulate you on your lucky escape. I am very much put about this morning, sir, or should not have troubled you. Fact is — God help us all! — my daughter, Letty, left the house during the night and can’t be found.”

At the mention of that name, “Letty,” Oswald Drayton slowly turned himself to look at Barnes, and listened closer.

“I thought she might have come to her cousin’s in Aylsham,” continued Barnes; “at least, it was just possible, but she hasn’t. There’s no telling where’s she got to, or when she left the house, or why, or — anything. Forgive a father’s feelings, gentlemen—”

The man buried his face, and a sob was heard in the room. Oswald’s gaze turned upon Hartwell’s face.

“I am sorry for your trouble, Barnes,” said Hartwell. “I only hope that —” he was about to say, “am in no way connected—” but checked himself.

“I have been thinking that it is just possible that you may have seen the lass last night, sir,” said Barnes, looking up.

“I may have, tell me more.”

“You recollect coming to *The Anchor* in your motor car, sir? It must have been about twenty past seven?”

“That is true, I had almost forgotten. My head is all in a topsy-turvey this morning, Barnes. You see where I got the blow—” Hartwell passed his palm across the breadth of his brow, and Oswald’s gaze travelled slowly from one to the other.

“Forgive me for troubling you sir, with my troubles, when you have your own,” said Barnes. “I had the notion that if you had seen the lass when you went upstairs to write your letter, then we’d be able to say that at that hour, anyway, she was in the house. But if you don’t recollect seeing her, I can only wish you a good day, and a speedy recovery — ah, good God!”

Barnes sighed, and stamped his stick and his foot together as he rose, the picture of loss and care.

“You are certain to find her, Barnes!” Hartwell called comfortingly after him, “have you made a thorough search?”

“The house, the whole neighborhood, five of us, since midnight, sir. She’s gone, God knows where to.”

The old man went out, and as he disappeared, Oswald’s eyebrows deliberately lifted and, turning upon Hartwell, he said:

“I am prepared to take an oath that you have run off with that girl, James.”

The fact was that, five days before this, Oswald had received a letter from a woman unknown to him named Letty Barnes, asking if he would tell her the proposed date of his brother’s marriage with Lady Methwold; he had received it with a number of others brought him by his man Magee, at his club, and had then somehow dropped or mislaid it, for when he looked for it afterwards he could not find it anywhere. But he happened to remember the name Letty, because Letty seemed to be someone who, like himself, had a dislike to his brother.

“What makes you think that I have run off with her?” asked Hartwell.

Oswald would say nothing about Letty’s letter to him, but said only:

“Why else should you stop at that inn when you were coming to dine at Aylsham? You have run off with her — dreadful scoundrel.”

This was meant as flattery for Oswald, having come down to beg for money, wished to please. The real Drayton would have undoubtedly chuckled at being thus prodded about his conquests, but Hartwell who was born with the soul of a professor in the body of a Viking, took it without the least humor, foreseeing already that Drayton's way of life would probably involve him in some distasteful episodes. He looked at Oswald with a smiling eye, saying:

"I see that your methods of deduction are not conclusive, Oswald. Because I stopped on my way to dine at Aylsham at the 'Anchor Inn,' therefore, you say, I have run off with the girl there. But the landlord has already given you my real reason for stopping — namely, to write a letter."

"You would have waited till you came to Aylsham to write it, if you hadn't had some other motive," said Oswald, "and what on earth are you doing in this part of the country at all? My man, Magee, told me that you had gone to Sheffield for something, or other."

"So I had. But I returned this way to do some business at Cromer."

"Do people do business at Cromer?" asked Oswald wearily, looking at his image in the wardrobe glass with the critical detachment of a drill sergeant. "I thought Cromer was all bathing machines and shrimps. It is of no importance, my dear James. I don't know why you take it gravely, a girl less or more can't matter to you. But I thought that you were going to reform when you became engaged to her ladyship of Garlot. Magee, who never can get over his surprise that she ever took you, thinks that if she had any conception of your rowdyism, she would send you to the devil."

(Magee was Oswald's Irish servant, and Oswald seldom opened his mouth, without somehow bringing in Magee.)

"Magee is right," said Hartwell, "I am, in fact, already practically thrown over. So, if it will comfort you to know that I shall not finally outrun you in

the good graces of that lady, then be comforted. We shall not marry.”

Hartwell’s thick lips smiled clinically as he said this, with that definite point in the middle of the upper pressed into the lower, not thinking how sad a prophecy he uttered. Oswald stared incredulously at him, as he uttered it, though even the mere prophecy pleased Oswald for one of the dreads of his life was that his brother should marry anyone, since that would mean the loss of two entails which would fall to him if his brother died without an heir.

Oswald had no suspicion that his brother had married nine years before this, in South Africa, a certain Martha Harper, and he had taken to his bed for a week, sick with disgust, when the extraordinary news of Drayton’s engagement with Lady Julia became public, for he himself had long worshipped Julia as a “bright particular star” afar off, and had vaguely hoped to wed it. That the “James” whom he despised should have rushed in and conquered where Oswald feared to tread was a marvel to which Oswald’s slow mind could never accustom itself. He had a constitutional and chronic dislike for the breezy Drayton, who threw him doles and checks with a careless hand, as one throws bones to a dog, and with this dislike was mixed a fine-gentleman disdain for the rough-and-ready city-man which Oswald could often hardly keep from peeping through his pretended chumship with James, to whom he was obliged to cringe, since his elegant existence among the tip-top circles was almost dependent on James’ doles.

The brothers had not grown up together. They moved for the most part in different sets. Till James’ surprising engagement with the wayward and independent Julia, James and Oswald could hardly have been called social equals, Oswald being so distinguished, though poor, and James so democratic a fellow, though a millionaire. Their parents had been pretty high in the social scale, but at an early age James had quarrelled with his

father, had run away from school, resolving to stand on his own footing and make his own way, and in South Africa, where he lived a good many years, had laid the foundations of his large fortune.

It was not surprising, therefore, that little love was lost between the brothers, since they had seen little of each other, nor did Oswald's dislike — as yet — amount to actual hatred of "James." Yet that morning when he had been shown by Magee the account in the newspaper of the good James' escape from the spill, the thought in Oswald's mind, though he did not express it, was this: "My vicious luck."

He and Hartwell conversed for half an hour in a desultory way, Hartwell pumping him on the details of Oswald's own and the dead Drayton's mode of existence, their friends, habits, and so on, till at one-thirty Hartwell started, saying:

"I must get up and dress for that inquest."

Then Oswald, too, rose, and paced a little, anon inspecting the image in the glass, saying:

"So McCalmont is gone? Well, one cannot pretend to be sorry. I hated McCalmont."

"Why so?" asked Hartwell, glad of any scrap of information.

"You know very well that he used to put you against me, James. I say, Jimmy" — Oswald's voice lowered rather meanly— "I lost £80 on that dreadful Riley-match, and there's an infernal bill from Prince's this week. Don't think I'm exigent, but I might have scraped something together to-day from somewhere, if I had not rushed down to see you. May I count upon a hundred before I start back to town."

"I will think about it," said Hartwell, not intending to give. "You might go down while I dress and ask the girl whether the sergeant has sent me McCalmont's overcoat, as I told him to. My own is all stained."

“Is it that splendid sable of yours that is all stained? I say, may I have it, Jimmy? I might use the fur.”

“If you like!” said Hartwell off-handedly.

Oswald went out, while Hartwell dressed in Drayton’s clothes, which the girl had well cleaned and brought up, some time before. He then descended to the commercial room, where lunch was waiting for him, and he and Oswald sat to lunch.

Oswald was all the time conscious in a dull way of some change, some heightening of mind and character in the good James before him, but without making any attempt to account for it. All problems, in fact, were regarded by Oswald as an ox regards a five-barred gate, seeing it certainly there, but unable to understand who made it, or how, or why, and not caring, but chewing its cud, and feeling bored. During the lunch, however, Oswald could not but be surprised at the little that “James” drank, and he asked:

“Why are you drinking less heroically, my good James? That spill has had a chastening effect upon you. You are less florid and boisterous, somehow. You look like a converted burglar, which is horrid. I believe her fair ladyship of Garlot would almost prefer the unconverted type. Better not change, James, from just what you were at the moment of her consent, or she will certainly fly off at a tangent, and leave you. Is that really true then, that she shows sighs of restiveness?”

“Yes,” said Hartwell.

“Tell me.”

“I have a letter saying that she has re-considered the matter, and is disposed to cast me into despair.”

“Despair!” repeated Oswald to himself, with a mocking breath of laughter. Just that little turn of expression was so unexpected for his slangy brother to use. “But do you think that she meant it, Jimmy?”

“I have no doubt about it — Ah that makes you glad, Oswald! Your sympathies with the pangs of your brother are not so profound as they should be, my friend.”

Oswald glanced at him in surprise, and then said with abashed lids in a lower voice:

“My dear James, you are queer to-day.”

Already the power of Hartwell’s personality was producing upon him an effect of greater respect.

“You remarked that before,” said Hartwell, “that I am queer to-day. But in what sense queer? Because I probe in you your unbrotherly mood? You are to get it well into your mind Oswald, that I am not queer to-day, even if I was queer before.”

“My dear fellow,” said Oswald, “I don’t care a curse whether you are queer or not. I don’t know what it is all about. If I am glad at all that Lady Methwold won’t have you, it is partly for your sake. You know very well that you have no earthly right to such a wife.”

“Why not?”

“Because, because. You know very well. In two weeks she would play the very deuce with you, or you with her, or both. She is the very finest flower of nineteenth-century Society, and you belong to the Roman Empire under Galba.”

“Not altogether to the Roman Empire, Oswald,” said Hartwell with a twinkling eye. “No! I have heard a mention of the geologic ages, my friend, at least a mention, though you may not think so well of me. And why, after all, am I not a suitable catch for a lady of title? I am rich —

“Not a suitable match for her, James. There are plenty of others who will be glad of you, if you are sufficiently absurd to desire rank in a wife. What, then have you done about her letter?”

“Nothing yet. I mean to answer it shortly. And I shall accept her inclination to withdraw from the engagement as being as serious as I consider it wise.”

“You won’t really, James?”

“Yes, never fear, you shall be well pleased!”

“Magee tells me that she is coming back from Cannes before Christmas, first to Garlot Croft, and then for hunting in Gloucestershire.”

“I may see her then, or write before — Ah, it must be time for the inquest,” Hartwell rose as he said this, and took out the dead man’s watch to look at it, and now occurred a painful incident to him, for he could not open the watch, which was double cased, and only opened on the touching of a tiny spring which he did not know where to find. He fumbled with the winding knob, but the watch would not open, and catching sight of Oswald looking at him, he grew rather confused, feeling that he should surely know the secret of opening his own watch. It was rather a bitter moment. The watch would not open, and Hartwell’s colour slightly changed when Oswald asked:

“Why ever can’t you open it?”

This question, innocent as it was, was never forgotten by Hartwell who, in his sensitive outlook for the first sign of a suspicion that he was not Drayton, was apt to flee when no man pursued. From that moment, he definitely disliked, as well as despised, Oswald, in whom however, not even the beginning of a suspicion of anything wrong had arisen. For men know each other, not by vague impressions of character or manner, but almost entirely by the broad evidence of the senses, so that if one knows one’s brother, or one’s husband, to be a saint, yet if someone exactly like him came home tipsy one day, the last thing which one would think is that it was not really he. One might say, “I cannot believe my eyes,” but one would

nevertheless believe them, in spite of a whole life's excellence of character, for our trust in our senses is perfect — far more perfect than they deserve.

If even the faintest suspicion should happen to arise in one's mind that the tipsy man might not really be one's brother or husband, then the march from that to certainty would in most cases be swift, but the birth of such a suspicion would be more hard and stubborn than the changing of coal into diamond, if the bodily resemblance was very strong. In the case of Hartwell and Drayton, not only was the manner, speech and tone of mind as different as possible in the two men, but even the bodily resemblance was not perfect. For Hartwell's beard was worn quite an inch shorter than Drayton's and the raspberry birth-mark on his temple was rather smaller, and of a different shape to that of Drayton. Yet that "first suspicion" which was necessary to open the eyes to see all this did not occur to Oswald nor, for a long time, to anyone.

Such an incident as that of the watch, and a hundred others like it which did not fail to occur to Hartwell during the first two weeks of the imposture, might have opened any eyes but those fast closed by the undoubting certainty that he was Drayton, since he was like Drayton, and stood in Drayton's shoes. He was quite a minute fumbling with Drayton's watch, yet could not open it. His first impulse was to say that the shock of the spill had made him forget everything, finally, however, he rose better than that to the emergency, his perfect calm returning as he quietly said:

"I see the cover got strained in my fall. Never mind, it must be time to go."

They then set out for the court, Hartwell in a hat of the landlord's and in McCalmont's overcoat which Hodder, the sergeant, had sent him. He walked down the street, still keeping up the pretence of feebleness, leaning on Oswald's arm, with his palm on the bruise on his brow. The wealth and

importance of Drayton had been learned by Aylsham from the morning papers, so Hartwell was received by the coroner and his twelve men like a sovereign who had been the victim of someone's wrong-doing, was condoled with, was not permitted to stand in giving his evidence, and finally went out with everyone bowing to him. As to the furious driving not a word was said.

The jury did not give their verdict that day, and on this account, as well as to meet Mrs McCalmont and her father who had telegraphed him their coming down, Hartwell had to remain at Aylsham that night. Oswald, meanwhile, was clearly beginning to fidget — hating to stay — for outside of Mayfair he was like a fish out of water, yet afraid to speak of hurrying off, lest he should go without the £100, for 'James' was touchy and a creature of whims. But as they re-entered the old coaching house, he ventured to say at last:

"I think I must go, Jimmy; I could hardly stand a night in this hole."

"Then go, my friend," answered Hartwell, who had now sufficiently used Oswald to pump from him all the knowledge he could furnish, and wished to be alone to study McCalmont's papers, which he had just obtained at the court.

"Then may I have the cheque, Jimmy, before I go?" asked Oswald in a certain sycophant voice.

"I think not," answered Hartwell. He had Drayton's cheque-book, but did not yet consider himself sufficiently expert in signing Drayton's name to do so, even if he had wished to be obliging. But Hartwell was no scatterer of £100 cheques, and did not wish to be obliging and, at that moment, the enmity already begun between him and Oswald deepened.

"But I thought you promised?" said Oswald.

"I said that I would think about it."

“Don’t be a miser, Jimmy! Didn’t I rush down at once to see you?”

“No doubt, but I have been over-liberal of late. You know that.”

“The clown!” muttered Oswald to himself, “but what has happened to the brute? His choice of words seems different — Won’t you then, Jimmy?”

“No.”

That “No” was very final. Hartwell went up to his room, and Oswald lingered in the commercial room for two hours, pacing there with his slow limp, as the afternoon shadows lengthened, nosing the old window panes, his mind bitter with the miseries of scarcity, and with the thought which haunted it that, if the car had only pitched James when it had pitched McCalmont, then he, Oswald, would have changed his rooms in a week’s time to the Albany and would have wintered in Algiers.

As for Hartwell, wearied with the anxieties of the day and night, he had gone again to bed. He already knew Oswald through and through and acted with respect to him without hesitation. For already a certain heightening of wit and insight, which his ticklish situation called forth, was begun in him — a certain “adaptation to his environment,” almost like the growth of a new sense which, in a few weeks, would find him sharpened at the call of a thousand exigencies into a very genius of swift discernment and decision.

When Oswald went up to say good-bye, he found Hartwell asleep. He did not wake him but, coming down again to go, got the “splendid sable” overcoat which Hartwell had made him a present of, from the maid, who had cleaned it as well as she could. He was about to leave the tavern, when, feeling in the pockets of the overcoat, in the vague hope of finding a forgotten five pound note, he found instead a shred of paper. A shred of Letty Barnes’ letter to Lady Methwold, which Hartwell had chanced to leave behind in the pocket in taking out the rest in a heap.

The hand-writing interested Oswald, he seemed to know it. Letty Barnes had written to him in that hand, asking the date of his brother's marriage.

"James" had said that morning that he did not know Letty, yet here was a shred of her writing in James' pocket and on it Oswald read the word and the half-word: "cruel bru."

That seemed very odd to Oswald that James should have denied knowing her, for James usually took such things more lightly. What, then, had he done with this Letty?

Oswald called Maggie again, and asked her:

"Has anything more been heard of Mr Barnes' daughter?"

"I don't think so, sir," she answered. "There's a great excitement about it in the town. Everybody was that fond of Letty."

"Where is the 'Anchor Inn?'"

"About two miles from here, between Ingworth and Coleby, sir."

"I want you to get me a horse and trap."

Oswald waited till this was procured him, and instead of walking to the station, drove to "The Anchor," and actually slept there that night.

Hartwell, on his part, spent the night much as he had spent the last, studiously examining McCalmont's papers, making his plans for the future and forming his handwriting on the model of Drayton's. About nine in the evening there occurred to him an event in the shape of a letter from Lady Julia. It had been written two days after the one of hers which he had found in Drayton's pocket, threatening him with dismissal, and four days before Julia had heard of his accident. The letter had gone from Cannes to Drayton's house in Addison Road, and was now sent down to Aylsham with some others by a Miss Scatchett, who was Drayton's town housekeeper.

In this letter Lady Methwold did what in the previous letter she had only threatened to do, for with a light and almost flippant touch, but still firmly

enough, she threw Drayton over, giving no reason that any British jury would take seriously. Though it was evident “between the lines” that she had thought seriously of the matter, for she accounted in one place for her change of whim by the fact that she was “six months older.” Hartwell had already so identified himself with Drayton, that, if he had been dissected, some slight pique or feeling of offence would have been found within him at this light treatment. He read the letter with a cold and smiling eye, and murmured when he was finished:

“Your ladyship will be spared the action, and since I no longer possess your ladyship’s affections, I shall now set about and dispose myself to exist without them.”

He was almost merry that night — as near it as his earnest nature ever got — full of a sense of success, safety, and old-established ease. But as he was dropping off to sleep, about two in the morning, the same thing as on the previous night troubled his repose, for he caught sight of a face in the mirror which was his, and yet might possibly be Drayton’s. The face meditated upon him, and since Hartwell looked at it through half-closed lids, the face seemed a dead man’s face. This disturbed Hartwell, as such things do to one who is about to sleep and though he had smiled at himself that morning, his unrest was even greater this second night. It was a morbidness, the beginning of a madness — which might grow. Fearing lest he should again cover the mirror in his sleep, he rose and threw the towel over it. Till he did that he could not sleep.

VII. HARTWELL COMES HOME



THE NEXT EVENING, near eight, James Drayton's brougham awaited its master at Liverpool Street Station, for Hartwell, after making arrangements for the burial of the "tramp," and the bringing of McCalmont's body to London, had telegraphed his coming to Miss Scatchett, his housekeeper, and she had sent a brougham to meet him.

It was a dark, rainy night, and the scene about the station was a blur of umbrellas, wheels, mist, lights, mud, and hurrying feet.

Standing in it all, apparently awaiting someone, was a tall young man, with a wide hat tilted aside on his head, blonde hair, and the most alert eyes — evidently a Frenchman — with a certain dancing levity in all his air. His clothes were of a fashionable cut, but shabby, he had no overcoat, no umbrella and his jacket collar was turned up. But though cold and poor, he did not seem depressed, being a young man used to the ups and downs of life, certain to be rich to-morrow, if he was poor to-day, and quite certain to be poor again the day after to-morrow. His name was Emile Dulaunay, Count d'Artenset-Villiers, for though penniless for the moment, he was the representative of one of the oldest seigneurial families.

"Mon dieu!" thought the count, "I wish that she would come."

But he was getting wet, his expected friend did not appear and finally, seeing a brougham standing just near him among a number of carriages, and seeing also that its door had by chance fallen open he, in his nimble way, slipped in out of the rain, with a grimace of self-conscious monkeyism, and there in the brougham, he sat, leaning out of the door with a bright outlook

both for his expected friend and for the owner of the brougham, ready to slip out at the first sign of the latter's appearing.

He had not been three minutes in the brougham, when quite near him a big man in a furred coat seemed to rise out of the ground, calling out: "Drayton's carriage!" This was Hartwell, just arrived from Aylsham. Hartwell, of course, did not know his own carriage and coachman, and his hesitating indirect approach in the crowd had given the Frenchman no hint that he was the owner of the carriage. At the call of "Drayton's carriage!" the coachman sang out in reply: "Here, sir!" and before the Frenchman could stir, Hartwell was at the carriage door.

The excellent count was about to laugh an excuse and take to flight when, to his extreme mystification, Hartwell said, "How do you do?" put out his hand, and shook the count's. For Hartwell naturally assumed that here must be some household friend or dependant of Drayton's who had come in the carriage to meet him.

Hartwell got hurriedly into the carriage, saying to Dulaunay:

"Tell him to drive us home fast, I am hungry."

And Dulaunay at once said to himself "Here then, evidently, is a dinner arranged beforehand for me by the good God himself."

A born adventurer and hanger-on on Providence, living by instants like a bird, Dulaunay followed always giddily whither chance led, little recking whither that might be, and leaning out of the door he called to the astonished driver, who had not seen him get in: "It is necessary that you hasten yourself!" whereupon the carriage moved, and off they went westward.

There was a silence for a time in the dim brougham, each of its two occupants waiting in vain for the other to speak. Dulaunay would not say a word, and finally Hartwell asked:

“Is everything going well at home?”

“But, sir, I hope it,” answered Dulaunay.

Hartwell considered that answer in silence.

“Tell me about things,” he said, presently.

“What things, sir?”

“Everything.”

“Well — but— ‘everything’ is a sufficiently ample subject, you will admit, sir! It is, in effect, an abstract science that, sir, demands — .” The count said this with reproach.

“Ha! yes, that is so. I see that you are as full of your jokes as usual.”

“But yes, as usual, sir. It is better to take the life lightly, is it not, sir?”

“You are a philosopher as well as a humorist,” said Hartwell, “and a philosopher of my own school. I am in agreement with you.”

He did not know what to make of the Frenchman by his side, who was evidently a man of culture and no chef, nor was it within the bounds of Dulaunay’s fancy to conceive why this excellent sir was taking him in his carriage to dinner. They were now passing down Holborn. Hartwell longed and was sorely tempted, to ask the name and relation to himself of the man who was so near to him, yet was so strange, dark, and spectral to his consciousness. But, as he was supposed to know, to ask was precisely the thing which he was resolved in no case to do. Dulaunay for his part could only dream that he was the subject of some mistake which might bring him a dinner and other good chances, and refrained from uttering rashness with his lips, so that the two men, wholly unrelated till that hour, but now linked fast together by a chain of circumstances, remained perfect riddles one to the other.

“As to my housekeeper?” said, Hartwell, brusquely, after a long time.

“What, as to her?” asked the excellent count.

“Is she well?”

“I venture to cherish the hope that she is well, sir,” said Dulaunay, in a tone of some surprise.

“You have not seen her lately, then?”

“Not perhaps lately, sir.”

“Where, then, have you been?”

“I? Why at home.”

“I see, at home, but not come in contact with her, so to say?”

“Not into personal contact, perhaps, sir.”

“You say ‘perhaps’ always,” said Hartwell, reproachfully.

“Yes, sir,” answered Dulaunay.

There was silence between them again, till Hartwell said:

“I am late, by the way. I hope our dinner will not spoil.”

“The heaven defend that, sir,” answered the count, in a quiet and confident tone of protest.

Hartwell, meantime, was thinking: “Strange that he asks me not a word about the accident;” and presently he said:

“What did you think of my accident?”

“Your accident? *Mon Dieu!* but the news of your accident sensibly touches me, sir,” cried the count.

“I cannot, however, flatter myself that you exhibit the keenest interest in the details.”

“I! but even the keenest!” cried the count, “permit me instantly, sir, to ask of you a full history of that vexing circumstance!”

Hartwell, with that humorous shrewd look of his narrow eye, answered:

“I will not burden you on the eve of your dinner. A motor car may be heavy for digestion.”

Whereupon Dulaunay at once spun round toward Hartwell in an ardour of narrative, exclaiming:

“A motor car! but I have not yet told you, I think, of that what you call it?— ‘upset’ that arrived to me in the Upper Auvergne? You are going to hear—”

And the glib count plunged into a story of hair-breadth escape, full of cries and gesticulation, which lasted till they were sweeping through the gates of Addison Road to the house.

Arrived at James Drayton’s home in Addison’s Road, the two occupants of the carriage got out. The coachman, who had seen only one man get in, saw two get out, but almost before he could ask himself anew how that was, his attention was all drawn off from this question by the strange conduct of a mastiff — a large, buff watch-dog, named “Bull” — which had bounded from the outer hall as the carriage entered the drive. Bull had been a great friend of Drayton’s, and the moment Hartwell appeared at the carriage door the hound ran to fondle him and be fondled by him. But half-way to the carriage the dog stopped short, uttered a yelp, then a growl, and now was apparently about to spring with a bristling neck and no good meaning upon the new-comer. But again he stopped short, whined and shrunk backwards, with vague eyes of awe, his back bristling with superstitious horror. And suddenly the dog was in flight, whimpering, his tail between his legs, round the house to the back.

The coachman, seeing all this, muttered to himself:

“Well, I never!”

And Hartwell thought:

“Our dog will have to be reasoned with severely!”

Miss Scatchett, the housekeeper, had thought fit, in view of so great an event as the accident, to have her staff assembled in the inner-hall, where

Hartwell shook hands all round, receiving their congratulations with an affable dignity while the Frenchman stuck to his elbow with many bows and an opening of the arms.

“Well, Mr Drayton, you have had a miraculous escape, heaven be praised!” said Miss Scatchett, a very meagre old gentlewoman, with a bird-like and active air, who wore old brown silks and black silk mits on her hands. Hartwell already knew her name and decided at his first glance at her that she was a spinster.

“Such is life, Miss Scatchett,” he said; “I am safe, you see, I am here, in spite of all. Let all be attributed to that merciful Providence which occupies itself in watching over our mute existences. I received your letter of sympathy, and thank you. I thank you all — I wish this overcoat taken to my room. It is my poor McCalmont’s” — and he threw off the overcoat to the arm of a footman, his object being to discover the whereabouts of his own room, and when the footman moved Hartwell followed, and when Hartwell moved Dulaunay followed.

“Ah, I fear you have had a truly terrible shock sir,” said Miss Scatchett, who also went up with them for, missing the breezy entrance of her old Drayton and finding instead a self-respecting and genial dignity, she could only put this down to the shock of the accident.

“Yes, a terrible shock enough,” answered Hartwell, “it may be months before I am myself again. I believe that you will henceforth miss in me a certain, let me say, boisterousness, Miss Scatchett. I feel myself somewhat changed. The memory in particular seems rather clouded. I struck just here, where you see the bruise.”

“Dear, dear me!”

“Well, never mind, I say! Let us take all things cheerily and bravely as they come, Miss Scatchett. Our earth is not a paradise, but the Chance

which governs it is not uniformly bitter. Ah, here we are.”

The footman with the coat now entered a room on the first floor, into which Hartwell followed him, and seeing Dulaunay about to follow also said rather testily, “You may, perhaps, prefer to go to your own room, sir, before dinner.”

“Certainly, sir,” answered the count, and turned with enquiring brows towards Miss Scatchett, who was wondering that he had not been presented to her while Hartwell, on his side, assumed that the Count was well known to her.

“This way, sir,” said Miss Scatchett to Dulaunay, as Hartwell closed the door upon himself, and she led the way up another soft stair to a bed-room overlooking the lawn. And here Dulaunay, after surveying its spaciousness, the bright fire, the draperies, and comfortable bed, muttered to himself:

“*Mon dieu*, it is not but the English, after all, who know to be imposing!”

“May I ask, sir,” said Miss Scatchett, “if you will be staying any considerable time with Mr Drayton?”

“But, madame, I hope it,” said the pleased Frenchman. “Have the goodness to make to know Mr Drayton that I descend to dinner in five minutes.”

“Very good sir, and your name?”

“Emile Dulaunay, the Count d’Artenset-Villiers, madam, at your service,” answered the Count.

VIII. HARTWELL MEETS A LADY



IF WE PASS over twelve days from that night of Hartwell's coming home to Addison Road — twelve days which Hartwell spent in a state of the hardest mental strain in learning a thousand facts, in conversing with fifty people whom he had never before seen, in fighting his way to a more entrenched position in the kingdom which he had seized upon and generally, in getting to himself that almost "new sense" of sharp insight which the many calls upon his wits made needful to him — if we pass over these active twelve days, we find him on the thirteenth afternoon sitting in his private room in his Fenchurch Street office, looking through a number of documents relating to landed estate, as title deeds, conveyances, mortgages, liens, and so on, which he had not had the time to look into before.

From these he now found himself the owner of an important estate in Bucks, of another in Hampshire, and of a smaller one in Norfolk. This last was that Corton Estate where, as we know, "the wife" was. But Hartwell did not know that she was there and in vain, so far, had he tried to find out her whereabouts, though he was now fairly certain that he was really married, for he had found, under lock and key, a diary of Drayton's in which were more obscure references to "the wife." But who? where? this question greatly troubled Hartwell, when he found time, as during his unquiet nights, to think of it.

This Corton was a dilapidated old place, not yielding any rent, apparently given over to poachers, and unless Hartwell should some day

think of turning it to some account, it was quite likely that he might not go down there for years.

Besides these three estates, there was a “Hobham House” in Surrey, not far from London, and on that twelfth evening, after examining the deeds, he determined to take a trip to this Hobham House at once, intending to decide that night as to whether it or Addison Road house would prove the more suitable for the laboratory which he was about to make. He therefore got the keys from the outer office, and took train for the small Surrey station of Lydney, where he asked his way, and thence walked to Hobham House. He found it to be a square brick building in a lonely situation at the end of an avenue of pines, and went through all the rooms, which were empty but for a few pieces of old furniture here and there.

He then set out to return to the station, but being absorbed in thought, he happened to take a wrong path where two paths met, and walking on and on without noticing his mistake, he was soon in the park of another estate, which adjoined the woods round Hobham House. Its name was Garlot Croft; it was the country-seat of Julia, Lady Methwold, which fact it was that had caused Drayton to acquire Hobham House lying near it, though he had hardly ever occupied Hobham House.

Hartwell was descending an avenue rather rough with ruts of hardened mud, when he saw before him a lady walking in the same direction as he, rolling a bicycle — saw, as it were, without seeing her, for he was looking on the ground. He had soon overtaken and passed her a little, absorbed in thought, when he heard a deep voice of mockery behind him say:

“A justly-offended James!”

He turned, and his eyes rested on a spirited image, a lady of twenty-two or twenty-three years, with a small head and face and a divinely tall length of body between her toes and her chin, and Hartwell said to himself:

“This can only be ‘Julia,’ whom I imagined to be still at Cannes.”

Since she had formally given him up, he had not even been at the pains to answer her letter of dismissal. He had not, indeed, had the time to remember her existence. He put out his hand with a genial smile in his eyes, pleased with her frank beauty, the freedom of her carriage, and her profusion of soft-brown hair, which had become rather loose and dropped a little behind the neck, and he said:

“No, I was absorbed in thought, and looking on the ground. I am not offended, still less justly offended. For I am sure you never did a wiser thing, for yourself at least.”

At once she looked at him with puzzled eyebrows — a little cynical surprise — and her first thought was:

“Well, but someone has been teaching my James to talk modestly, and to lift his hat with distinction.”

They walked side by side under the over-arching branches of two rows of beech trees, she rolling her bicycle, and even as they talked, Hartwell’s mind was inwardly busy with her, summing her up in a way that had become almost mechanical to him since he had entered the great world under false colours, and he thought to himself:

“She is a widow, young as she is, and she is as fated to second marriage as streams to flowing downward. The portrait in the locket is doubtless that of the already-forgotten Methwold—”

“You have been a long while considering your reply to my letter, James,” she said, bridling, “or are you more correctly ‘Mr Drayton’ now?”

“Still ‘James, let me hope,” he answered with a patronising humor in his eyes, “though you, perhaps, should no longer be ‘Julia,’” and he thought to himself, “she is an athlete, a horsewoman, no doubt — the back and neck. But I fancy that only fencing could give that liberation of her curves, that

buoyant air. These are her grounds, that yonder is her house, she would not otherwise have troubled to alight from her bicycle on account of this little roughness of the ground.”

While he was thinking this, Julia was saying:

“I have not the least objection to being still ‘Julia,’ if you like. I recognise, of course, that you have the right to be aggrieved, and I am quite disposed to be chums ever after.”

“Then I call you the most charming of ladies,” replied Hartwell, while he was thinking inwardly:

“She is certainly a fine specimen of the human mammal. Her most soft and womanly air is due, I fancy, to her hair, which is very fine, loose and light, and partly perhaps to the peachy coloring of her face, or something in the eyes, which are purple, like the violet or pansy, and are very soft in expression, though bright and spirited.”

And while these thoughts of her were fluttering through his mind, Julia on her part was thinking with surprise of him: “But what is the matter? He is talking very much better than I always thought!”

And she said aloud:

“I was very sorry about the accident, James.”

“‘Very’ is one of the strong words,” he answered in a coldly playful way, smiling upon her with a patronising eye as a man of many cares and deep thought may watch something pretty play in his mood of relaxation, and still his thoughts kept running on her, dissecting her without any conscious effort, thinking: “She has a child, probably only one, a girl, under three years, for the doll on the handle-bar seems to be of cloth, it was bought *en route*—”

“But I was sincerely sorry,” she said, in answer to his criticism of her ‘very,’ “you are not, please, to consider me a monster of heartlessness, for I

do not think I am, then.”

“You are not a monster at all,” he answered, “but an excellent little human person, producing your allotted influence upon the history of life,” and, as he said this, he was thinking inwardly.

She, meanwhile, was looking up at him with the most puzzled of eyebrows, for she could not believe her ears. He had called her “a little human person, producing her allotted influence — !” Was this then her rejected James? Drayton had called her “a clipper!” and she thought again with a pout, “His vulgarity must have been a pose! he is really quite nice when he chooses! I don’t understand—”

“At any rate,” she said aloud, “it seems pretty evident that I need not reproach myself with having broken anyone’s heart.”

“The wound on my head,” he answered, “acted as a counter-irritant to that in my heart. The two thus tended to cure each other.”

“Did, actually, cure each other, say.”

“Pardon, only tended to!” he said with a sort of paternal gallantry. “The wound in the heart — remains.”

“Dear me! It has lasted three eternal weeks, then.”

“It can — never — be effaced.”

“Is it my doing, really, that you are subdued and graver?” she asked seriously after a minute, with a side glance up at his face.

“I fear so,” he answered, languidly toying with her, “the wound, you know, in the heart.”

“Is it that accident?” she laughed, pleased, somehow at his pretence that her thunderbolt of dismissal had not fallen without hurting anyone, yet with a question, a doubt in her, whether her James could by any possibility be making fun of her.

“Yet, you see, I haunt your grounds,” he said.

“You are only passing through to somewhere from Hobham House.”

“No, I am here to be near you.”

“Improbable fib. One would almost say that you were ‘trying again,’ James; but though the words are honeyed, the tone is bored, and the ears of widows are quick and accurate!”

“Then I must resign myself to being misunderstood.”

They had come to a mansion with a Jacobean-Italian front and there they continued to talk a while on the steps of a terrace. It was suddenly so dark that he was to her only a cloaked pillar under a silk hat, and she to him something slim and dainty in a short skirt, with a ghost of white where some phlox lay on her bosom. Near Christmas, as it was, scents of Marechal Niel roses were to be detected in the air, some far-separated lights appeared in the mansion, accentuating its dreamy gloom, and the park lay silent, but for the noises made by three spaniels, which had come to meet her and were gambolling about them.

“Did you really know, then, that I had come back?” she asked.

“Let me be candid — no. I had been to Hobham House, where I am thinking of setting up a laboratory, and making the house my home.”

“Did you say a laboratory?”

“Yes.”

“What sort of a laboratory?”

“The laboratory of a biologist.”

“For your own use, do you mean?”

“Yes.”

“Then, I suppose I am dreaming, or are you Joking?”

“Is this so surprising, then?” he said: “I have always cherished an inclination for science, and finding myself at the age of thirty-eight no longer a stripling, and superfluously wealthy, I am now working hard to free

myself from all business, in order to devote the remainder of my days to my inclination. I know of no heart in the world that loves me, unless it be one poor boy, to whom I have been a father, I have no ties, the rather coarse life which you have seen me live never really pleased me: so you will readily conceive why I decide to shut myself in with a mistress who will not write me a letter casting me into despair on the first rainy morning.”

He could no longer see Julia’s face, but there was now something more depicted there than mere astonishment. Some finger of pain and pity touched Julia’s heart at this strange mixture of truth and falsehood pronounced by Hartwell, and her delicate bosom swelled a little at the birth of an instinct within her that if this man fell sick, she would like to nurse him, and if he were sad, then that would be sweet to a woman to lay her hand on his head.

“James,” she said, with her eyes cast down a moment, “I am sorry, then, if I have seemed flippant.”

“But I cannot permit you to be sorry,” he answered. “I repeat seriously that never were your instincts so wise as when you cast me into despair, just as they were never so frivolous as when you engaged yourself to marry me. I was not half worthy of you.”

“But by saying that, you make me doubt the truth of it, James. I did not, perhaps, quite know you. I’m afraid that, since I desired to disengage myself, I should have done it with rather more responsibility and — respect. I am cross with us both then. You should have made me like you better” — her dry little mouth pouted, as she said this.

“As for me, however you liked me, I like you well,” said he. “You are charming, you are most beautiful, and you are also good.”

And, bending to say this in a lower tone, there took place within Hartwell an event, an affection, an act of the soul, which he himself would

have called “physiological,” but really was no more so than a chord of music is. He somehow found her hand in his, and kissed it.

She laughed lightly, uneasily, murmuring in a soft low voice:

“No, James.”

“What, have I transgressed?”

“Everybody knows that we are parted. It would be extremely absurd, really, if we are not. And we must not steal things, must we?”

“Then, I shall steal no more. Honesty is the best policy, as you say, but the hardest.”

“Is it hard, really?”

“Yes.”

“Frankly, it never once entered my head to take you seriously, James, to dream that you really cared, or that I did. It is very, very, very amusing! Did you really care, then?”

“No, no,” he said in a new tone; “I must be serious, I see, with you and with myself. Forget my light words. I find you all too important a matter to trifle with — your dove’s voice, your soft face, and all the pleasant fruit of your womanly being. Human creatures are among the paltriest of insects really, dear Lady Julia, if we consider it, but there are those of them, it seems, that have the biological property of giving out a music by merely living, as the dragon-fly’s flight is accompanied by a musical sound. And such you seem to me at this moment, more admirable and important than all the crowd of suns visible to the eye on a moonless night, which delusion of mine proves to you, does it not, that my consciousness is not at this moment at its brightest. And now, moreover, I am only flirting with you, no doubt. Let not half that you hear me say be believed! This impression that I have of you is the merest passing delusion of my senses, you are no fairer and better than any other.”

“Am I to be pleased, then, or vexed? Shall I laugh, or cry?” asked Julia, laughing. “I seem at last to have met a complex man! Or shall I simply remain silently astonished, with neither laughter nor tears? I assure you, that since the darkness has hidden your face I have quite the impression that you are not yourself, but another man. But come, Aunt Margaret is waiting: dinner.”

“Thank you, I will, not,” Hartwell said shortly. “Good-night.”

He shook hands abruptly, turned, and had walked away some steps when she, after a few seconds of hesitation, called after him:

“James! I am going to fox-hunt and spend Christmas with the house party at Castle Moran—”

She said no more. He for his part, stood still, silent, tempted to be there with her, but undecided. He finally broke the silence by saying:

“I do not remember that I have an invitation.”

“I will see to that. That is, if you like.”

“I certainly like, but I do not think — Well, but you are very good. I must be there, then. Good-night.”

Hartwell then walked on through the dark wood, making for the railway station, but going the wrong way, so that later on he had to traverse the park again. He fell at once, as he went, into the dark mood which regularly overcame him at every nightfall, and he thought within himself: “She is like a little flower on a tall stem — certainly very pleasant, very precious, very rare. The deluded arms open of themselves to embrace her — We, however, are ‘married,’ we have a ‘wife’ — Let us choose, if we can, to keep within the four corners of our British Law.”

Julia, for her part, looked after him till he disappeared, amazed at herself and at him. She had liked Drayton, his rough way, his beard, his nonchalance, his frankly City-man point of view. He had once saved her life

in the hunting-field, he had, moreover, appealed to her toleration, had amused and outraged her, and she had engaged herself to him mainly because that was outrageous and perverse. But there was some quality of weight, of eminence in him — he was admirable. She dropped her bicycle upon the lawn with rather a crash, and went into the house with a sigh.

IX. HARTWELL IS IN GREAT PERIL



MEANTIME, AS WAS said before, Oswald had slept a night at the “Anchor Inn” in exile from Pall Mall and from those two rooms behind Piccadilly where his man, Magee, made Irish bulls, and told to Oswald whatever Oswald did not already know of the doings and movements of people in the great world.

Precisely why he had slept a night in such a “hole,” as Oswald called the “Anchor,” he could not have told, but he had wished to be on the spot. Something very odd in “James’s” denial to him that he knew Letty Barnes, when he certainly did, and in her strange disappearance, without taking any hat with her, stirred up some interest in Oswald’s rather dull mind. It was not like him to be there in a bed of that “Anchor” tavern, but no one is always a fossil and there Oswald was.

By the next morning the countryside was eagerly talking about the girl. Letty’s appearance, dress, habits, were described in the Norfolk papers, with comments on her good name, her “walk and conversation,” her place and use in the little local world where she had lived and run her course. She had been a good chapel-goer, and, till lately, had taught in the Sunday school, and kept a missionary-box, had gone to spend three weeks with an aunt in Cromer during the summer, but had spent only two, though Barnes, her father, still maintained that she had spent three. The newspapers, however, had definitely found out from the aunt that she had spent only two, and Oswald thought that that third week of her absence from the tavern of

which Barnes was so sure, may have been spent with his brother, for he remembered that Drayton had been to Cromer that summer.

On the whole, it was pitiful, the girl seemed to have been snatched away by the Harpies, somehow. Her poor feet had strayed, the Maelstrom had caught her, clouds and darkness were round about her.

Oswald breakfasted on an excellent lobster in that room of the tavern where writing-materials had been placed that night of the murder, for his brother James. Oswald was alone in the room: Barnes had not risen that morning, or, at least, had refused to unlock his door to the old grandmother of the place. The tavern was closed to the public, and a presence like death was all about it.

By Oswald's plate was a note-book made of very thin ivory-leaves, and on these, as he ate, he re-read a few notes which he had made.

His mind, like all his personality, was slow in movement and too standoffish to get very near to truth; but still he was knowing, versed in men and things, and had minutely questioned Barnes and spurred his memory the previous evening.

He had now, therefore, on his note book the facts about how McCalmont first, and then Barnes, had seemed to hear a cry somewhere outside the tavern, though Barnes still seemed to be certain that it was the wind that rough night. How Drayton, meantime, was upstairs writing— "For how long?" Oswald had asked. Barnes could not be too sure, but quite half-an-hour; for when Drayton came down, McCalmont had said: "Why, you must have written ten letters," and Drayton had replied: "Only one, boy, but that one required some thinking." James, then, had had plenty of time to talk to Letty. That he had talked to her (supposing her then in the tavern), was almost proved by the fact that Oswald had found a shred of her writing in

James's coat-pocket. James knew her, as to that no further proof was wanting.

"My good James," thought Oswald, "what, then, have you done with this Letty? He had no house hereabouts — yes, he has, though! Corton Chantry can't be very far, and that is where Letty is! He made her go down by the back stairs to get to the motor car, and then whipped her off to Corton some time before the accident. But why on earth without a hat? With her watch and chain — but without a hat."

Then again Oswald considered the words "cruel bru" on the shred of paper. If cruel brute meant James, then Letty was angry, which was against the Corton Chantry theory, unless, indeed, he took her to conciliate her. Oswald had, of course, shown the shred to no one: the one motive of his interest in the matter was, by means of this handle, to wheedle and force £500, which he needed, from his brother, if he could once get at the certainty that Drayton had abducted the girl. So far the notion that she might be dead had hardly taken root in any mind.

Oswald rose from breakfast with his wits all in confusion, he could see no light, and thinking was as burdensome to him as running is to a fat man. He lit a cigar, and slowly limped about the room. He decided at one moment that he would go to Corton Chantry, and see. But then again, the uncertainty of discovering anything made that a bore. No, he would return to London, but first would telegraph to Walker to come down, and put Walker on to see if he could find out anything. Walker was not altogether a fool. (Walker was a young man in London who did shorthand writing and Oswald had him from time to time to write his letters and to write statements for the lawyers about an endlessly long and vague lawsuit which Oswald had in the courts.)

Oswald had written some letters the previous evening at a worm-eaten oak cabinet in which there was some paper, and going now and again to it he wrote to Walker the words:

“I want you to come here at once. Get a pound from Magee.” He then opened an assurance-almanac which lay at his elbow to blot the words, and, in doing this, he saw some inverted writing which looked like his brother’s.

This astonished him. James, then, did actually write a letter in that room, as he had pretended to want to do. Had he two motives in coming here, then? — one motive to write and one to see Letty? For he certainly did see Letty. Oswald neatly tore out the leaf of the blotting-paper, and held it before a spotted piece of mirror hung from the white-washed timber and now, though the leaf was rather thick with blots, he could read in the mirror the words: “Now is the time for all good men,” and again lower down, “now is, the time for all good men to come to the rescue of the.”

Odd words, but certainly in James writing. This, then, was that letter that “wanted some thinking.” Oswald searched through the assurance-almanac, but could find nothing more in Drayton’s hand. He sat at a window and considered it, and in his effort of thought little sweat-grains stood out on his square bald head. “Now is the time for all good men to come” — it was all a blind! a thousand to one. It would be interesting to see the whole of that “letter.”

But, if a blind, James must have been terribly in earnest to hide his relation with Letty at the moment when he was at the pains to sit down and write those words. He was not a cautious man, took consequences breezily, pooh-poohed most things. Why, then, this special anxiousness in the case of Letty, shown, too, in his denial at Aylsham that he knew her.

Now first arose in Oswald’s mind the thought: “Suppose we are seeking a living girl, when we should be seeking a dead? ‘Cruel bru’ seemed to

indicate passion!”

At this thought, sitting at a window overlooking the kitchen garden, Oswald went off into a day-dream about a steam yacht of Drayton's called the *Sempronia*, about banquets at Claridge's and the Carlton, and mingled with it all in his dream was a ceremony at St. Peter's, Eaton Square, in which the soft face of Julia, Lady Methwold, with its peachy painting would be present, and he, Oswald, by her side — If James had, by chance, killed Letty, and if he, Oswald, could clearly prove it to himself and to James, then James' banking-account would become Oswald's to the last penny; or in the last resort the clown might hang — why not? Oswald had cringed to his brother too many years, despising him the while, not to dislike him now.

That was indeed a dream about the *Sempronia* and St. Peter's — if one had only the wit, energy, and patience to realise it! if one could hit upon the right clues, hide them from the police, and hold them as a Damocles sword over the head of James, till James had formally made over everything — But wit, energy, and patience were an infernal bore. One could not if one could not, one was no longer so young as one had been. It made one pant to think and achieve things. And was the primary assumption correct? It seemed improbable. Mr Jimmy was certainly a shadier beggar than most people supposed, but murder was a tallish order.

Yet that alone explained about the hat. She had gone without a hat. James, therefore, while supposed to be writing, might all the time have been with Letty, and done her some harm. Who could tell? But in that case the body would not be far —

It grew toward noon. Oswald went up three little steps to his bedroom, took his hat, coat, and stick, descended, sent the telegram by a stable-lad to Walker, his shorthand man, and went out at the back of the inn. Barnes, so far, had not shown himself that day.

The day was not cold, but wintry looking, with that dead mist which belongs to winter. Oswald had already examined the grounds without result, and though a new thought was now in him, he went languidly limping, not at all believing in his own conclusion. He sauntered into a fir plantation, smoking a cigar. Yonder, in a hollow sheltered by sweeps of meadow-land, appeared dimly through a veil of mist a little Norfolk church of flint, with a thatched roof and a round tower, and beyond stood a farmstead of neat red brick, with crow-stepped gables. On the ground no trace was now to be seen of Drayton's and Betty's terrible struggle. It had rained in torrents since then and many feet, moreover, had passed over the spot in the search for her. Oswald came to the fateful place — a kind of gut.

“It she were really killed,” he thought, “she would be somewhere about here.”

All along the lower part of the two walls of the gut there was bush, growing high and rank at some points, such as furze, nettle, grasses, tufts of scabious thistle. Midway between the two walls, where the gut is slightly deeper, there ran a rivulet among rocks, some of which were of considerable size. Half a mile to the south of the tavern the gut is crossed by a one-arch bridge —

Oswald went that way, toward the bridge: but he had not gone far when he stood still, for at a shelving spot at the edge of the gut a stone happened to roll before his foot down into the gut. He heard it fall through the bushes at the bottom, and at once he heard another sound, a rushing sound through the bushes, which caused him to peep over, and with a shudder of disgust he saw a black cat scamper guiltily out from a mass of bush which was infested with a swarm of water gnats. The stone had fallen near the cat and frightened it in what it was doing. Oswald guessed, he even knew, then.

Always with his deliberate slight limp, but now with a wild heart, he returned to the house. He asked the old grandmother in the parlour where Barnes was, made his way to Barnes' room, and persisted in knocking at the door, till Barnes looked out.

"You had better come with me, Barnes," said Oswald, "get some things on. But you will have to keep your courage up, my good sir."

Barnes drew on a pair of boots and, without lacing them, came out in his shirt and trousers, with the braces hanging down. He did not say anything, but silently followed Oswald, with that angry-looking frown which always made his heavy eyes look like blue slits. When they reached the gate in the hedge, Barnes must have been struck by some misapprehension, for he turned pale and hesitated, but he said nothing, and after a moment continued to follow Oswald. And soon he was standing by the gut, and Oswald's stick was pointing.

Barnes looked at Oswald steadily, stupidly, for some time, with a piercing frown and with the tip of his tongue out on his lower lip, as if trying to read Oswald's soul, and failing; he was stunned. Then the poor man's lips went crooked, and he smiled, looking down where she lay, and he crooned: "Well, Letty—"

Oswald turned away, murmuring something. There was that in the face of Barnes which could not be looked at. The poor Barnes suddenly gave way beneath his weight, and fell, bawling out in distress.

Oswald could not get him to lift himself, and had to leave him while he himself went back to the inn to send a message to the police. Barnes remained there till near five, when two country constables and a detective hot from London arrived with a stretcher. They were a party of nine and Barnes was with them, grimly calm now, when she was drawn out of the bush. He saw her face in a minute in the failing light, before the macintosh

covered it. It was engorged, violence was evident, and Barnes uttered a threat against her destroyer.

He trudged steadily by the body in his undress all the way into Aylsham, following her desperately, taking no notice of anyone or of any question, only trudging behind her like a machine, following her to the very last. He did not droop nor weep. It was only near eight o'clock in the evening, when he was forcibly removed from near her at the mortuary, that he dropped his arms and head upon an officer's shoulders like a man shot, and there gave way to sobbing.

Barnes was returning to "The Anchor" in a trap from "The Black Dogs" in Aylsham, when he met Oswald and Oswald's shorthand man, Walker, who were being driven from "The Anchor" to Aylsham in Barnes's own trap. For Walker, summoned by Oswald's telegram, had arrived at "The Anchor" from London at seven. Barnes called out to Oswald as they met:

"A word with you, sir," and, sitting next each other in the two traps, Oswald and Barnes conversed in subdued voices.

"I've wondered," said Barnes, "why you have been so particular about knowing Mr Drayton's doings that night. I ask you, fair and square, if you suspect him of knowing my girl."

"He may have. I do not know, Barnes."

"He's a friend or relation of yours, I take it, for I saw you in his room at 'The Black Dogs' yesterday."

"Yes, an acquaintance; but my interest in the case has no reference to him, but is simply due to my chance nearness to the scene."

"Do you think — fair and square that Drayton had anything — ?"

"I have really come to no conclusion," said Oswald, and in mere motiveless enmity to his brother he added, "I only see that it would be

stupid to take it for granted that he was in that room all the time he was supposed to be writing there. He may have gone down the back stair—”

“Then, God help him, if it’s so!” cried Barnes, furiously. “I want no Law — a life for a life! Drive on, my lad!”

Oswald and Walker then went on to Aylsham, and thence to North Walsham together, where they separated, Oswald for London, Walker for Cromer, the latter full of Oswald’s instructions as to the search which lay before him. Walker’s task was to discover someone about Cromer who had seen Drayton and Letty together, and to this end Walker had with him a photograph of Letty, stolen by Oswald from the album in the little drawing-room of “The Anchor.” The shred which Oswald had found in Drayton’s coat was, of course, a proof to himself only that Drayton knew Letty: for he had no proof to show that he had really taken the shred from the coat. Drayton could deny that it was ever there, and his word would be as good as Oswald’s. Further evidence, therefore, that Drayton knew Letty was essential in order that Oswald might become “James”’ master, and bitterly Oswald now cursed his luck in losing the letter which Letty had written him, asking for the date of Drayton’s marriage with Lady Methwold.

Walker, therefore, had instructions to search well for some witness of Drayton’s and Letty’s friendship, to keep a mum tongue in his head, giving no reason to anyone why he asked his questions, and, if he discovered anything, he was to give hints of a bribe to the person from whom he discovered it, on condition that that person would tell what he had seen to no one but Walker. Above all Walker was to be very quick, for Oswald feared that the police might get some scent from somewhere of the acquaintance of Drayton and Letty, and might be beforehand with him in bringing home the guilt of the murder to Drayton, in which case Oswald would be baulked of his power over his brother’s cheque book.

But, as a matter of fact, no quickness on the part of Walker was necessary, for the police were without the clues which had led Oswald to suspect Drayton, namely, the shred of Letty's letter and the blotting-leaf with the nonsense-words. These were in Oswald's safe-keeping. Even after a long time Letty and Drayton were not in the slightest degree connected in any mind, except in Oswald's, and vaguely, through Oswald, in Barnes'. The police did not even trouble to go to ask Hartwell if "he" had seen her in "The Anchor" on the night of the murder, when "he" had written a letter there, for Barnes told them that Drayton had told him the next morning at "The Black Dogs" in Aylsham that he had not seen her. That Letty had had a lover was certain, and the police ransacked Norfolk, including Cromer, where Letty had been that summer, to find him.

But they unearthed nothing, and after two futile arrests remained agape at the mystery of the girl's death. By the merest chance, however, Walker, without the least merit on his part, discovered something where the police failed, for of the two people in question, Walker had the photograph of the girl and knew the man, but the police only knew the girl, the man being anybody to them. But Oswald should have conducted his researches in person, for Walker, a young "cockney" clerk, was hardly born for research, and bungled matters. After five useless days in Cromer itself, he wandered out in the direction of Overstrand and that group of villages, much frequented by visitors where, as the local saying goes:

"Gimmingham, Trimmingham, Knanton, and Trunch,
Northrepps and Southrepps lie all of a bunch."

About each of these villages Walker loitered in turn, liking this vague life of research, till he grew to know the lighting-up minute of the lighthouse,

the tombstones round the ruined church-tower on the cliffs, the flocks of Christmas turkeys, the coast-guardman's telescope, and the postman's tread in the distance at evensong. He made languid research in a straw-hat at inns, and questioned every chance acquaintance in a tone of mystery, but Oswald was thinking of recalling him when, wandering one afternoon in a lane near Overstrand, Walker saw in a window across the breadth of a courtyard, an old piece of cardboard with the word "Lodgings" written on it.

It was an abandoned farmhouse embowered in old trees, most of it a rambling ruin of gables and lattices, but one small part of it was modern, and before this part there was a garden plot full of cottage flowers, and there was some poultry in the court-yard. It was occupied by one Gissing, a hale old fellow, one of those amphibious men who live near the coast, a thatcher and reaper, but also a waterman. To say that he had a beard grown back from the chin, like a fringe tied round the jaws, is to describe him. His wife, a hearty, large countrywoman of forty, kept a shop of little oddments in one window, and they had one daughter, named Sarah, seventeen years of age.

Walker went in, really to drink a glass of milk, but, being there, he began to chat; and soon this question arose whether a gentleman with a long black beard, and a fair girl (photograph produced) had been seen by any of them that summer, to which the wife answered:

"Why, they, were here with us a week. They would be Mr Drayton and his lady."

Here, then, was the treasure struck. Walker was so proud of himself, that he decided at once to become a detective. The same day he sent the news to Oswald. But he was a talkative, loose, swaggering fellow, and talked too much to the Gissings during his repeated visit of the next two days. His unnecessary insistence upon silence, his large promises, his hints of

Drayton's importance in the world, all this turned the Gissings' head with fabulous hopes. Gissing himself was no brilliant wit, but "mother" was canny. What the matter was they did not quite know, did not even know that the girl whose face they saw in the photograph was dead, but it was clear that the great Drayton was in danger — of something, that Walker was his enemy and that, if they received £50 from Walker's side, they might well receive a thousand pounds if they took the other side.

So on the third morning — four days before Christmas — just when Oswald was turning in his tiresomely slow mind the project of going down to Gissing, Gissing went up to Drayton. He and the wife had plotted it darkly in their heads upon their beds. Walker had mentioned Fenchurch Street as being the place where Drayton's office was. Gissing would be easily able to find it by making inquiries, said the wife, and with almost the last of his £7 harvest money Gissing, saying not one word to anyone, but cannily taking the tide of fortune at the flood, took ticket for London, and so, not knowing to what manner of man he was going, bid a long farewell to his native Poppyland.

X. HARTWELL BEGINS TO “UPROOT”



IT WAS NEAR five p.m., Hartwell's day's work was over, and he was standing with his back to the fire and his elbows stuck up on the mantelpiece of his private room in his Fenchurch Street offices. It was now the third week since he had come in to that wonderful kingdom of his, which he owed to the mere chance of passing at a certain hour along a certain place of the Norwich Road. All, so far, had gone well, but his two "nasal wrinkles" were somewhat more deeply marked than before. There was a wrinkle or two more at the eye-corners, adding meaning and history to that smile of his eyes, and a look of care was among the furrows of that brow, from which the hair stood up a little and fell back in tufts, without any parting.

The fact was, that Hartwell's nights were not peaceful. He had impressions, dreams, that were as real to him as anything which he saw or handled during his waking hours. There was a face which might either be his or another's, according to the state of his mind and body. Something had gone wrong with his nerves in respect to the dead man, Drayton: every morning he chided, or smiled at, himself, but every evening he grew morose again.

The conduct, too, of the mastiff, Bull, had made an altogether exaggerated impression upon Hartwell's nerves. At one time he had Bull on the brain, he dreamt of Bull. How much secret kindness had he lavished on the hound, but it persisted in regarding him as a ghost. But for the charming talkativeness of the French count, Hartwell would have found a quiet

evening at home unbearable, but the Frenchman's tongue flowed with a constant stream of anecdotes, epigrams, adventures, and drolleries and Hartwell would have found it hard now to part with him.

But if the nights went badly, the days went well. The industry of Hartwell's thorough mind had been brought to bear upon, and had mastered, Drayton's large business, and he was already almost in a position to be able to withdraw from the City life without making large losses. Moreover, he had met at a Merchant Taylors' banquet a certain Professor M ——, with whom he had become friendly, and M —— was at this time turning two rooms of the first floor at Addison Road into a first-class laboratory for him. To the day when he would be able to call himself a really accomplished biologist, Hartwell was now looking forward with pleasure.

And this was all the positive joy that Drayton's million had brought to Hartwell, except the rather dangerous joy of his meeting in the park of Garlot Croft, with a lady whom he had likened to a flower on a tall stem. "Cloy me — for five years!" he had prayed to the Under-world that wild night on the Norwich Road, at a crazy moment in which he was very unlike himself, but he now found that there was really nothing amusing in the world to buy with the riches which he had, except a laboratory. Dinners at £7 a head and the wine of Chateau Yehym no longer entertained his staid mind.

As to the numbers of men and women whom he had to pretend to know familiarly, Hartwell had passed through well, sometimes with a moment of awkward misery, but never with a breakdown. In fact, lightning had now become the habit of Hartwell's mind to such an extent that, as was said before, it was almost like the phenomenon of a new sense grown up in him at the many pressing calls made by his situation upon his brain. Though, of course, it must have been in him in the germ beforehand, or it could not

have grown up. In the same way, as we know, the tadpole is a fish while it lives in water, but when it takes to the land the new conditions so change his body that the fish becomes a frog. And this hard-won knack of sharpness was exercised by Hartwell, not only to the extent needful for his self-protection, but over and above, with the pleasure of a creature sporting in its element, or with the pleasure of one who by long toils has impressed a new and better rhythm upon one's breathing and at last one finds oneself breathing morally, even in one's sleep, without any effort — like that "Master of Breath" (Sahib Nafas), who once breathed in Palestine — and one is all well and perfect, and can hardly bear oneself for abounding joy, because one has really learned at last how to breathe the air. So to some extent it was with Hartwell and his new nimbleness of wit, which he used as a skirmisher uses his short-sword.

At the mere approach of a new man Hartwell now drew conclusions, quite in the manner of the excellent (but, of course, fictitious) Sherlock Holmes, though in a different intellectual mood, perhaps. A neck-tie, a handshake, told him their tale, after some talk he was at home in the situation.

But many things harassed Hartwell, apart from his terrible uncertainties with regard to "the wife." Mysterious letters came to him, threats, freakish rendezvous, sinister vague telegrams.

"MEET ME TO-NIGHT AT THE SAME PLACE AT EIGHT. THE PINK PARROT IS TALKING. MOST IMPORTANT."

Such was one of them. It had no signature, where "the same place" was he did not know, and the most earnest torturing of his wits could bring him no hint of light as to the possible meaning of that so important talking of the pink parrot. Or, again, there was this letter from a Norwich bank:

“We beg to remind you that the sum of £400 deposited with us for the use of Mr Steve Anderson is now reduced to 15s.”

Who Steve Anderson was, where he lived, why Drayton had supplied him with money, Hartwell had no means of knowing. He could hardly write to the bank to ask who or what or where was this Anderson whom he himself was paying. Such a letter from him might some day furnish written evidence that he was not Drayton, and he was far too wary and sensitive of suspicion to write it. Moreover, he was pretty sure beforehand that, if he did, the bank would not know anything about Anderson except his appearance, since it was his habit to go in person to draw the money. Hartwell thought of letting the fund in the bank run out, whereupon if Anderson had known how to write, Anderson would have written to him, but he saw that Anderson could not write, for the bank had sent him a number of Anderson’s cheques, with only a cross for signature. Hartwell feared, therefore, that if by ceasing to pay, he forced Anderson to communicate with, him, Anderson might get a third person to write the letter, thereby revealing perhaps some dangerous secret of Drayton’s life. And in the end he had to deposit a further £400 in the bank, without knowing for what object, though it may at once be said here that this Steve Anderson was a man who looked after “the wife” at Corton.

Then, again, there came another letter in an illiterate scrawl, without any address on it, the writer evidently assuming that Drayton was familiar with her address, and this one said:

“The child tried to run away last week to go to her mother, she says, and I only caught her after a lot of trouble, seeing as she hid herself in the beech wood. I have moved from there and took a house near-by called ‘Hayes,’ seeing as it has a high wall and a gate, and all that expense must come out

of the money in the bank at Cheltenham, so please sir, write to them and tell them to let me have £20 extra for the month.

Yours faithfully,

Elizabeth Seward.”

Hartwell saw from the postmark that the letter was written at, or near, a village in Gloucestershire called Birdlip and he thought that some day, perhaps, when he had time he might go there and see what this woman and this “child” who “ran away” could be to him. Drayton, he saw, had deposited £3,000 in the Cheltenham bank, of which this Elizabeth Seward drew the interest, but the same difficulties as to finding out anything about her through the bank faced him as in the case of Steve Anderson, and he had, as the woman asked, to write to the bank bidding them give her an extra £20, without at all knowing for what object. Though it may be stated at once that this “child” was a daughter, named Rosie, of that Martha Drayton, “the wife,” who was in the care of the unknown Steve Anderson at Corton.

Or, again, Hartwell received this mysterious and ugly-looking cable in cypher from Buenos Ayres:

“Think it can be done at last, but still ticklish. Two German Government spies to be nicked first.”

He did not know what “it” was which could be done at last.

Or, again, this from a Cornish village:

“You will have read in the paper that my daughter Margaret drowned herself in Harrold’s pond two nights since. You know this only comes of what you did to her husband, sending men to sea in a rotten old tub of a ship, though you was warned repeatedly how it would be, and then refusing to help the families of the men you’ve murdered. I think that anyone who

took the life of a man like you would only be doing a good deed, but I won't say anything more about that now. Still I should look out for myself, rich and great as you are, if I was you.

Mary Liskeard.”

Such things troubled Hartwell. A bitter sense of injury had grown up in him against Drayton. For, in proportion as he became more and more established in his kingdom, as he more and more felt that the wealth which he had wrongfully seized was his own by natural right, like his own hand or foot — which he naturally did feel with the passage of time — so he more and more felt Drayton's sins as an outrageous insolence to himself, because he had to reap them. He grew almost to look not upon himself as the interloper, but upon Drayton as the interloper, the intruder, the outsider, the impostor, who had usurped Robert Hartwell's place for a time, and committed sins in it. And he was in pretty constant talk with (as it were) Drayton's ghost, kicking it, calling it “ruffian,” “clown.” Drayton was always with him. They were more intimate, soul with soul, than ever perhaps were two human beings in the world.

Such, then, were some of Hartwell's troubles. He was surrounded with doubts, dangers, some of them dangers to his life. And now the question arose: On what principle should Hartwell meet and grapple with these difficulties? He was not quite decided yet, for though his reason was quite decided, a still, small voice in some part of him was at war with his reason. He saw that there were two broad principles, on one or other of which he might meet those troubles and dangers. He might complete the wrongdoings of Drayton by added wrongs, and so rid himself of them with ruthless directness. This, indeed, would only be what he had promised to do in a crazy moment, that forgotten night on the Norwich-road. Or, secondly, instead of cutting the knot thus roughly, he might try to unravel it, looking

upon Drayton's acts as acts to be patiently redressed or endured, at whatever cost to him self. This would be righteousness. But as to this latter, let it be clearly said again that righteousness had no sanction at all for Hartwell, or the school of thought to which he belonged. The only rational morality in his view was a care of one's tiny self during one's tiny life on this tiny earth — a pure unselfishness or egotism, or, as he called it "egoism." And since this was the only rational morality, therefore he was determined to be moral in that way, as far as ever his inherited love of righteousness would let him — for what he loved above all things was to be rational.

Having thus clearly explained his point of view, or rather the very hue of his mind at this period of his life, one may now introduce to him the poor country man Gissing, who has just come to London from the Manor Farm, near Overstrand, full of the hints about "Drayton's danger," dropped by Walker, Oswald's shorthand man, and eager to see what luck his knowledge of Drayton's and Letty's intimacy would bring him. Hartwell, as was said, was standing with his elbows stuck up on the mantelpiece behind him, and his legs crossed, thinking of his troubles, and a clerk from the outer office looked in, saying: "One Gissing to see you, sir."

"Show Mr Gissing in," said Hartwell.

In then came Gissing presently, in old Sunday best clothes. Hartwell touched an electric button and filled the room with light, for the evening was now getting dark. Gissing touched his forehead with a low bow. Hartwell returned it with a slight bending of the head, and while his steadfast eye rested a little sideways on the countryman, with a smiling twinkle in it, he was saying to himself:

"He has apparently seen me somewhere before; he is agricultural, a grubber of root crops, I should say from the right forefinger. Helps in a mill

also, from the whitened outer convolution of the ear, but he must be seaside, too. Yes, his tint, the sea gaze, the fringe of beard, the stain of sail ochre on the hand. Norfolk probably, the wide hat, the black Norman eyes — from about Cromer — He makes crab-pots.

“Have a seat, Gissing.”

“No doubt you remember me, master!” asked Gissing, sitting down on the edge of the chair to which Hartwell pointed.

“Distinctly,” answered Hartwell. “Tell your business quickly.”

And he went on thinking: “He has two women, one modern, the other more old-fashioned, a wife and daughter, say. The younger has learned feather-stitching, the elder apparently not. He is come about money, from his abashment, mixed with a certain look of sharpness. A case of blackmail, but you should be careful, my friend.”

The countryman told what he had come to say, turning his hat round and round in his hands. Someone who was plainly an enemy to Drayton had got scent of Drayton’s and the young lady’s stay at the Manor Farm, and sent down a youngster from London to ferret it out, and the youngster had ferreted it out. Drayton, therefore, was in danger.

“I see,” said Hartwell; “but what is the nature of that danger?”

“Ah, I ain’t seen through that much as yet,” replied the honest countryman, “you would be more better able to guess that nor me, no doubt. I only know that it’s a matter o’ life and death with you, judgin’ by the manner o’ talk of the youngster from London.”

“Very good, we will accept that as a truth, that it is a matter of life and death with me. But tell me this, during the week that I was in your house, by what name did you hear me call my agreeable companion?”

“Let me, see — I don’t recollect hearin’ you call her any name — no, I can’t call it to mind. I’ve heard you say ‘my dear.’”

“Then, here is another stupid mystery,” thought Hartwell to himself with a face of fretful disgust. Is there to be no end to the miseries and muddles of that clown?

“So you can’t tell her name, Gissing?”

“No, I don’t seem to recollect hearing you call her name.”

“But you could describe her accurately, no doubt?”

“Oh, I could describe her like my own good woman. She wor just like the photograph that the youngster has.”

“You have a wife and, if I remember rightly, a — daughter — or two?”

“A wife and one daughter.”

“And are you and they two the only three persons in that part who remember seeing me with my agreeable companion?”

“So says the youngster from London,” replied the countryman, little dreaming how dangerous this statement was to him and to those other two.

“And Mr Walker’s principals — meaning the person, or persons, for whom he is working — who are they?” asked Hartwell.

“Ah, there now you’re asking me mor ‘n I know,” replied Gissing.

“I see. And as to yourself: tell me, Gissing, what sum you expect from me for denying henceforth that you saw what you did see.”

Gissing smiled sheepishly, with a hung head, and a lip just shaking a little with agitation. He was silent a while.

“We’ll, make it £500 and be done,” he said suddenly in a manner which showed that this sum was immense to him, and quite unusual and awkward on his lips.

“But suppose, Gissing, that my enemies offer you a thousand pounds?” said Hartwell.

“Ey, then, I should make it my business to come straight to you, and say, ‘You must give me £1,000,’” replied the dazzled countryman.

“But, Gissing, suppose that they offer you £2000 on the conditions that you do not make it your business to come to me?” said Hartwell, in a tone in which there lurked a certain sinister reproachfulness.

The simple countryman smiled, silently meditating on these great sums, hung his head, shrugged his shoulders, and said nothing.

Hartwell’s eyes flashed with an evil meaning. Within three weeks a Sultan severity of mood had grown in him, especially in his morose hours as night drew on. In a silence marked by the ticks of the clock he had decided to uproot and scatter the Gissings. He left the spot where he had been standing at the fireplace, and began to pace the room, outwardly silent, but within him there was going on a debate on the highest moral plane between the two voices. One of the voices, and the one inclined to follow said: “Banish such qualms, follow reason, and begin this night to up root the Gissings.”

Hartwell turned sharply upon the countryman, saying:

“Well, we shall see, Gissing. I am now going home, and you had better come with me.”

He put on his overcoat, took a bunch of keys from a safe, and they went out. There was a brougham waiting at the outer door to take Hartwell home to Addison Road, and they got in. But instead of “home,” Hartwell called out to the coachman “Cannon Street,” and thither they set off. It was a warm evening, the street lamps, just lit, mingled with some remaining daylight. At Cannon Street Hartwell took two tickets for Lydney, the small Surrey station nearest to Hobham House, and they set off, travelling in different carriages of the train.

Alighting at Lydney, Hartwell passing close by Gissing on the platform, whispered:

“Perhaps we had better not be seen together — follow me.”

In his passage through the village he stopped at a little grocer's shop, bought four tins of potted ham, and two bottles of claret, caused them to be opened, and took them with him. They then entered upon the open country, Gissing following about twenty yards behind Hartwell. It was almost night. They went down the avenue of pines to Hobham House.

Hartwell, with his bunch of keys, unlocked the door under the porch, saying at the same time:

"Follow, follow me closely, Gissing, for it is all dark inside: I am living a bachelor life." And his breath and his pulse were as tranquil as they ever were, as they entered and walked inward.

As for the countryman, he thought no ill, though rather surprised at the look of things, but followed up the uncarpeted stairs through a darkness which was nearly complete. On the second floor Hartwell struck a match, and other matches on the third, till he found a certain door which he had in his mind. He knew that the room behind that door had no window opening upon the grounds, and only two doors, one opening into a small blind closet, and the one which he now found and unlocked. As he unlocked it, he said to Gissing, still keeping his hand on the key:

"In here, Gissing." The countryman passed in, and at once Hartwell deposited inside the door the two bottles and the tins of ham, slammed the door, and locked it on the outside. He then called in through the key hole:

"Gissing, you will see me again in four days time."

Only silence answered Hartwell for a longish while, but as he made his way down the stairs, a cry from the old man went after him.

XI. HARTWELL TAKES TO FLIGHT



ON THE MORNING of Christmas Eve, Hartwell was in the hunting field galloping by the side of Julia, upon whom his eyes were fastened and by whose chatter his ears were occupied, for she was as blithe as a lark or a healthy girl in her teens, that morning, which was one of those fine, cold, “scenting” mornings, when the hounds need no holoo nor lifting, and the blood runs briskly in one’s veins. There was no conversation between the two riders, for everything which Hartwell attempted to say was broken in upon by the merry Julia, who was breathless with prattle and high spirits, asking questions without any intention of waiting for an answer, and flitting airily from subject to subject.

With a field of some eighty hunters, the hounds had been brought to the gorse and thrown in, whereupon at once one of the whips to the lee of covert, had seen a fox steal away,. and from that moment the riding was hard. Hartwell did his best to keep by Julia, though he had hardly ridden for fifteen years and she was a very dashing horse-woman, and for some time he succeeded.

“Do you know the word which you suggest to me now?” he managed to say between two of her breaths.

“What?”

“Lady-bird,” he replied.

Such talk was not very like Hartwell, who was made of heavier metal than the ladies’ men, and it proved that his manhood was on the verge of a great conflagration, these being only the petty first prattlings of the fire. It

seemed to him now that Julia's place of places was surely in the saddle. She rode with such spirit and lightness as though her horse was a skiff on a flood, and she taking a wild voyage in it. But he had the same impression of her on the previous evening, when he had seen her dance the cake-walk in the drawing-room at Castle Moran, for he had felt sure then that neither she nor anyone could ever possibly do anything else quite so wildly well. And he had had exactly the same impression of her on seeing her the day before in the orchid house, moving among the flowers with a bent head and a long train to her dress, for he had thought then that it was at such moments, when she was serious and in repose, that she seemed the rightest and the rarest. From which, it will be seen, that Hartwell thenceforth was to find her ladyship his beautiful thing under the sun, above all things to be desired and run after.

At present he was still flirting with her with a certain gawkiness, and a feeling of stooping down to her level, as when a learned man is light-minded with young ladies. But all such feeling was getting as rapidly burnt up as chaff in a furnace, even as they galloped along together.

"I hear that you have been selling your stable, James," she said to him. "Can that really be so?"

"Yes," he began, "I have abandoned all thought—"

"But I thought that 'Queenie' was for me," she laughed, interrupting him always. "Was that not so? But the broken engagement cancels the presents, which reminds me that I have all the things from you done up in a packet, and shall send them. No protest, we must be quite responsible and correct, like ordinary responsible people. It is the proper thing also to do something to the letters, burn them, or send them back — Are you liking it? Such a morning for a real barefaced scamper! A white sky — it is snowing, did you know? but such a mere spray — Look at that thread of red coats drawing

away out yonder on the horizon. They are really racing full-speed, yet they hardly seem to be moving, like remote cavalry heading under orders for something in some complex Waterloo—”

“Let me look at nothing remote,” said Hartwell, with a finical smile on his thick lips, “my eyes are fully occupied with—”

“With what is near!” she screamed. “That is not an uncommon remark to make to a lady; it has even been made to me before, but hunting and flirting are enemies, for by neglecting the fox you are apt to catch a vixen! If you be earnest and get in at the death with me, I will consider your proposal to join your yachting party — Where are you going to, then? Egypt? If I go with you, people will only say, are saying already perhaps — I have no intention to be thought crazy on your account — Oh, look at poor old Bostie, with that hound running riot! Let us ride! I don’t know your horse, he seems a puller, and your stirrup looks rather long — this dear old thing of mine has hunted four days a week every season for six years, and has just that little over-ripeness which makes a hunter jolly. Is it not really jolly? like Simla air, with a bluish tint — Oh, to be free — I don’t like fetters!

“If you really want me on the yacht, then, I will, perhaps, but you must ask me a lot, and be humble. But what about my little Looloo in that case? She has been asking after you! She said: ‘Drayton gone?’ and I said: ‘Yes, Drayton has become addicted to science and physiology, poor Drayton!’ Oh, look! those hounds have checked! and there’s that Charley absolutely at a loss what to do! I don’t think a master should be his own huntsman — no, they’re off again! let us ride — !”

These were her last words which Hartwell heard for seven hours, except when she called back at him: “Better not take it!” as she soared over a hedge with a ditch on the taking-off side — an unnecessary warning, for a cold disinclination to break his neck kept Hartwell from feats. He saw her

caught away from him into hazy distances down a ploughed dale in the midst of a flying patch of pink.

He returned to the “Crown” in M —— where the meet had been, and thence went back with her and the house-party to Castle Moran in the dusk of the evening. She was then all in furs, with a lingering rich bloom, like the bloom of a peach, on her face. And again it seemed to Hartwell that it was when she was so, all in furs, with such a color, that he loved her the best.

He felt, however, that the task now before him was to behave himself decently with respect to her, if his affection was worth anything. Hartwell flattered himself that he was hardly of the same flesh and blood as that crowd of majors, squires, and lordlings around him, whose main distinction from the higher ape seemed to consist in purposely saying “hunt’n” for “hunting.” He, for his part, was a man trained in rational thought, and had henceforth no longer one, but two, to think for — himself and his other-self.

Supposing that she would brave ridicule and renew the engagement with him — that was highly improbable — but if she did, he could never say to her, “I, Drayton, love you,” when his name really began with an Aitch. Now for the first time, in the presence of love, he felt the misery of telling stories — the moral stickiness and discomfort. He was hardly able to lie to her in casual talk, how much less at a moment when his soul on its knees, confessed its love to her. And apart from the fact that he was not the man he seemed to be, he was “married.” The “wife” who “screamed”, mysteriously hidden now, might any day spring up somewhere and claim him. And Julia’s eyes, though wild sometimes, had a certain reproach in their dark depths when she was still. Hartwell would not be able to bear that look, if he wronged her, so a world of obstacles parted them.

She was talking to him about hunting on the return from M —— , and as they entered the castle-hall, was saying:

“I think our small fields and cramped fences in Surrey are just as much fun as these Northampton covers. Let us have house-parties for February — .”

“Us, who?”

“You and me. I at Garlot, and you at Hobham—”

Late that night he heard her play a “Berceuse,” and sat all the time with sullen and half-closed lids, hardly venturing to glance at her clinging to her fiddle, as if she were struggling to hide and defend the child from someone, and rocking it like a branch in a storm.

“You play charmingly,” he said afterwards, sitting with her in the old drawing-room, famous for its frieze and stucco ceiling, “but that is due to the law of your nature, that you do best whatever you do last.”

Her eyes rested very gravely for some seconds on his face before she replied with her usual frankness of manner:

“Far better not say over-nice things to me, James, lest I remember them.”

Discussing the subject of love, later, Hartwell said:

“Thought is very much higher than most love. But if the love springs from rational perception, if it is love up in the head, then, it is itself thought in a state of passion — though in its highest activity — and nothing is higher. If I ever loved I fancy that, for the most part, I should love in that way.”

“But it would show in your eyes just the same,” she murmured absently, at which words Hartwell’s brow flushed and his eyes dropped from her face.

“I should love simply with the heart,” said Julia, with a short nervous laugh, “the whole of it in one lump, and leave the head and all the rest of me to take care of themselves. But people should pray to be kept out of that. It is no fun, I can see.”

Someone at the piano was playing a *valse brillante* and three haphazard couples were dancing among the furniture. Hartwell was silent, leaning on his knee, till he suddenly said:

“When an emotion arises, reason has only one maxim— ‘take the train.’ Hence I mean to be a traveller on Christmas night.”

“No, James,” she said earnestly. “People will only say that you are still afraid of being with me.”

“I fear that I am not very sensitive to the opinion of the organism known as ‘people.’”

“But not so soon. I have to plan with you our February hunting-party.”

“Then I must only wait and hear.”

The castle was full of people disposed to be freely merry and the next (Christmas) day was jolly with holly, sport, wine and dancing.

After that whole day spent in Julia’s company, Hartwell strolled out from the castle at about eleven in the night and sat down in a six-sided summerhouse, in order to think out his problem and come to some sort of understanding with himself, once for all, if he could.

Almost suddenly this improbable thing had come upon him like a bolt from the blue — this great care. In stepping into Drayton’s shoes, he had foreseen everything, but he had not foreseen this possibility — the human nature of his own bosom. Here was the unexpected for Hartwell! to find himself, not a thinking machine, but a man in love with a woman. He sat on the seat of the summer-house and his cold eye looked out sideward at it, warily, considering and weighing it.

Truly, Julia was very dear to his heart, to his eyes! To be with her on moonlit midnights on the poop of the *Sempronia* in the middle of the sea, when it was calm, and look into her eyes, as he drew her shawl close around her shoulders, they two alone in the world, seemed to Hartwell a fair

prospect. But that was not the point: the point was that, if he loved her, he should not tell her that he was Drayton, And if he told her that he was Drayton, then he should not marry her, Drayton being already married.

“Egoism” was Hartwell’s settled creed, but in the presence of Julia “egoism” apparently broke down. He found himself thinking more of her than of himself.

Behind the summer-house was a wood all stark with the frost, before its door were four steps with stone balustrades to them, leading down to a lawn on a lower level. On the lawn was a lake and in the middle of the lake a stone satyr, standing on a rock. On the lawn also, between the lake and the summer-house, was a sundial, raised on steps and on and over everything shone a cold Christmas moonlight.

Hartwell had once before spoken with Julia here, and while he now sat there, bent down and thinking, she came again. His heart pulsed slowly and strongly, like fierce cuts of a whip in his breast, when he heard her laugh and knew that she was coming, before he saw her. She was with a school-boy son of their hostess, and Hartwell presently saw them strolling across the lawn in the direction of the lake. She looked wondrously tall to him in the moonlight in her wraps and a furred cloak, like Diana towering above her maidens. She and the boy halted by the lake, which was a stone’s throw from the summerhouse. He thought that they would not know that he was there. He made no sound, but when after some minutes the boy left her at a run, Julia moved toward the summerhouse and Hartwell went and met her on the steps of the terrace.

“You are here, then,” she said. “I thought you might be, and I am glad, for I want to ask you something. But here, sitting still, and it is so cold! Happy men at least put on overcoats, James, therefore you are unhappy. Is it about me?”

He flung away his cigar, saying irrelevantly, as they went into the summer-house together:

“I am not a man for riotous company. I like quietude and hence am here.”

“You not a man for riotous company? Well, then, this is the second time lately that I have had the selfsame impression! and each time when your face has been hidden: it is a little uncanny!”

“What impression?”

“A dream impression, the impression that you are quite a new, another, man!”

Hartwell did not like this.

“Sit here,” he said. “What is it that you want to ask me?”

“Just that: what has made you different?”

“In what sense different?”

“In yourself, in your very fibre, it sometimes seems to me, almost. Why did I not like you well before? Tell me that.”

“You do now?” he asked tenderly, turning a little toward her, his left arm over the back of the bench behind her shoulders, his right hand on the knob of his stick.

“Well, yes, I seem to like you now, James,” she answered; “especially sometimes.”

“When? I am interested, you see.”

“When I am with you, then. When I am not, you are sometimes all mixed — a mixture perhaps of two impressions — one recent, one old. If the old predominates then I am cross, and if the new, then I am pleased, and when I am with you, especially where it is dark, like here, then there is the new alone, and I am quite pleased.” Julia smiled fondly, saying this.

Hartwell's hand made a movement to touch hers, but he drew it back quickly, before there was any contact.

"The change which you say you note in me," he said, "may be perfectly real, but only — a change — let us say, of mood, which I hope will be life-long, since it pleases you. I would do, and be, much to please you."

"Then I feel so honoured, James—"

"And to please me," he said quickly, cutting her short before she could give expression to any more, "to please me, pray do not let your mind recur to any of the rude impressions which I have given you in the past, unless it be to prevent yourself from being sorry for having thrown me over."

"But if I am genuinely sorry now."

"Don't be, don't!" he said fiercely. "I tell you that nothing short of a dog-like shamelessness could ever have permitted me to aspire to your hand, your rare hand, Julia. We were divided as the Poles, and as much divides us still. But, being what I am, if I may be permitted to call you friend and dear to the hour of my death."

Julia now let her hand rest lightly upon his hand that was over the knob of his stick, a touch in the dark which sent a current of magnetism thrilling through Hartwell's frame, rather flustering his self-control and the depth of his breathing. At the same time the excellent Julia said frankly, in a low and intimate tone:

"What 'divides us still?' Nothing divides us. I am fond of you, James."

"Yes," said Hartwell, with greedy ears, forgetting everything in his keenness to hear more of this good news; "in actual fact? to what extent?"

Now gazing closely at her, he could see the delicate length of her chin in profile, lit by a moonbeam which touched it, with the firm contour of her lips, and the lower half of her nose, and his eyes could just guess the violet

glow of her eyes in the deeper darkness higher up under the overarching wrap which covered her head.

“To what extent?” she answered with a fond smile, while her eyes rested pensively upon him. “Should I be the first to tell, because it was I who wantonly threw you away? Forgive me for that. I was merely senseless, I suppose. Shall I say to what extent, if I could? To the extent, at least, I think, James, to which you are fond of me.”

“But that is to the very dust!” cried Hartwell aloud, with great suddenness, in a sort of passionate protest; “with a burden under which I must surely break—” He stopped short and his head bowed down with a sound that resembled a sob.

Julia did not understand the full depth of Hartwell’s emotion, nor, of course, its cause. She had her own burden of emotion, which fully occupied her. Her head was leant in a pensive attitude on her hand, her bosom gently heaved, and her eyes were closed. The admirable Julia took her passion seriously. With her eyes closed, she murmured, just loudly enough for Hartwell to hear:

“I have found you. I love.”

But something in that definite word “love” caused Hartwell to rise suddenly from her side and take a backward step, seeing that things had been allowed to go too far. His fingers lightly touched his forehead. His lips were about to pronounce the word “No,” but he stopped to listen to what she was saying, for looking pensively down on the floor of the summer-house, without apparently noticing his getting up from her, she was speaking, rather to herself than to him, saying:

“It is wonderfully tender, really; wonderfully deep and real and lifelong. I never even dreamed what it was like before, James. I don’t suppose that

most people even know. It comes mysteriously from Heaven. Yes, I love you. I can only tell you that.”

She now rose and laid her two hands on his shoulders, smiling sweetly and looking into his eyes, as she continued to speak in a soft voice, making her lover the confidant of her tender pains.

Several times Hartwell attempted to utter some word to cut the scene short, but without uttering anything, but when she said, “Yes, that is the accomplished fact; I love you — like a serf,” his lips pronounce a sharp “No!”

“But I say yes.” she answered smiling, thinking that his protest had only reference to the meekness of the word serf— “like a serf and like a mother, and like a woman, and like a daughter, and like your oldest schoolboy friend. I couldn’t say — But what is the matter? Kiss me.”

Hartwell’s lips were pressed together with a certain vindictive severity, his eyes were engorged with blood. He now bitterly blamed himself for his self-indulgence in letting her speak in this way to him, and bitterly he hated destiny for the harsh trick it had paid him. His nose and his wrinkled underlids were pallid, his lips and beard trembled with agitation. His arms opened slightly of themselves for one embrace, but his hard will conquered this impulse, and he turned quite roughly from her.

“I was in the wrong to let you give expression to all that,” he said hoarsely, rapidly: “there are innumerable reasons. I never said that I love you.”

“But what is the matter?” she cried, startled at last. “You never said, but nothing else is so true.”

Hartwell spun sharply round to her, pressed her with a groan to his bosom, and for a minute their souls met and held converse the one with the other where their lips were joined together. But even as she hung upon his

heart he placed her with perfunctory haste upon the cushioned seat, and instantly was gone — running — from her. And there where he had placed her she sat for a long time, staring at the ground with her palm under her chin. When she returned to the castle, she heard that Hartwell had hurriedly departed for the station.

XII. HARTWELL RISES IN THE NIGHT



HARTWELL REACHED HIS home in Addison Road on the evening of the day after Boxing Day, a very morose man. As he opened the gate he heard the bayings of Bull the mastiff, but the dog no sooner got to know who it was that was coming in, than with his usual signs of horror he took himself off to the back. And Hartwell's eye flashed with severity as he murmured —

“Let this be the dog's last flight from me.”

When he went in he said to the footman in the outer hall:

“I want Bull chained in his cot for the night.” Then, with a rather lower voice, with a certain stealthiness in it, he added, “If anyone calls to see me before dinner, let me know at once, in my bedroom.”

In the inner hall he was met by Miss Scatchett and the Frenchman, who had hurried from different directions to greet his entrance.

“Sir,” murmured the excellent Count, who had on a large black tie and a limp shirt-front with small frills, “my compliments.”

“Ah, Dulaunay, how do you do?” cried Hartwell with a fling of the hand. “Well, you look hearty, my friend.”

Without stopping for any talk, he went upstairs to his bedroom, where he washed and was dressing, when the footman rapped at his door with the announcement:

“One Robert Hartwell to see you, sir.”

“Send — do not bring — him up,” said Hartwell.

Hartwell threw on a dressing-gown, hastily seated himself in an easy chair, and propped his brow on his thumb and forefinger, looking the

picture of meditative calm; but this look was assumed, for the beat of his heart had quickened.

There came a knock at the door.

Hartwell, called “Come in” and a boy of fifteen entered.

He was cleanly dressed, but his trousers were too short by an inch. His boots were heavy and rather worn out, his clothes were all darned, he had on a plaid scarf and held a deerstalker cap in his hand. He looked first agitated, then all at once, wild with amazement.

“Father,” he breathed.

It was this father that Hartwell had not wished the footman to hear, and so had told him to send — not to bring — the boy up.

“Kindly shut the door my young friend,” said he.

The lad obeyed.

This lad was a perfect beauty, resembling his dead mother, and not at all like Hartwell. He was rather small-built, with an oval Madonna face, which was delicately flushed with a rosy colour, and he had soft brown eyes and pretty lips. But he looked for the moment simply silly in his boundless lack of comprehension at finding his poor hard-working father in this mansion, served by a footman and wrapped in the dressing gown of a king.

The father’s eye rested upon him with a caressing smile in it, and with this thought in his head— “Julia would love him.”

“Father! you here?” breathed the lad again in a husky voice.

“Sit down on that chair, my friend,” said Hartwell, “and permit me at once to rid your mind of an error — an excusable one, certainly, but still an error. I am not your father. Your father, I regret to say — is dead.”

The boy touched his brow with his hand. He looked as if he were stunned by these words.

“You not my father, sir?” said he. “Oh, but father—”

“I am not your father. I know well that it must seem incredible to you, but I am about to explain it to you. Your father is dead.”

“Father dead?” breathed the lad. “Is that the truth, sir?”

“The simple truth. Your father had a strong, a very strong resemblance to me and hence your error. I was driving a motor-car along the Norwich Road one dark night some three weeks since, when your father, in the attempt to save me from running into a cart, was himself killed. I am sure that you must have read of the accident in the Sunday paper, though you would not know that the news concerned you, since your father’s name, which could not at the time be discovered, did not appear. However, from a piece of paper found in his pocket I have been able, with much difficulty, to find out your address and so sent for you to come to me.”

“And he’s dead?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, my sir!” The lad fell into a chair, bowed down with sobbing.

Hartwell got up out of his chair, went to him, and put his lips on the boy’s hair with a murmur of love.

“Don’t cry,” he murmured. “You have now a father far mightier than you ever had, and just as fond.”

“You are very kind, sir,” sobbed the boy inconsolably, “but that can’t give back anybody’s own father. There ain’t ne’er another like him — the cleverest workman — that poor, hungry sometimes — and yet always that blooming decent to me — oh my.”

Hartwell, with a soft look in his eyes, said —

“No doubt, no doubt; but men — and boys, too — should know how to check their emotions, and rise above their griefs. The skull is higher than the chest, my friend. Let us therefore live in our top-storey, and be men. Pull yourself together, and listen to what I have now to say to you.”

“But you talk just like father!” said the boy, lifting his wet eyes with a look of bland astonishment— “the same notions, too, about the skull and the chest—”

“Is that really so?” asked Hartwell in a tone of surprise. “Then your father must have been a man who had reflected, and I hope taught you to reflect also. Dry your tears, and let us talk. I have, first of all, a promise to exact from you and it is this — that, since there are reasons why the resemblance between your father and me should not even be suspected, you will never, as long as you live, breathe a word of it to any creature.”

“Yes sir, I promise you, sir — Please sir, where’s my father buried?”

“Never mind your father now, I say. The dead are dead, boy, and only the living are alive. He was buried at Aylsham, then — I will tell you the fuller details another time, but think now of yourself and of me. Promise again to keep the great secret of your life.”

“All right, sir, I promise.”

“You will be like an eagle while you keep it and like an Icarus, whose wings of wax the sun melts, when you fail.”

“I shan’t fail, sir.”

“Well, I believe that, boy. You are to be trusted.” The dinner-gong began to sound. “I must dress, and you must go. Take this £5-note — ah, ah, you aren’t too used to them, I fear, poor boy. I see that you have been getting some work on a generating set at a machine-maker’s within the last two weeks—”

“That’s true, sir. How can you see that, sir? My word, sir, you and father are just like brothers!”

“Forget your father and love me, whose delight you are. Listen to what you have to do now. When you go out from here, take a cab to this little Holborn hotel” — Hartwell handed the boy a slip of paper which he had

ready in his pocket— “and live there for the next week. Take also this letter which I have written for you, and carry it to-morrow morning to its address in Saville Row, near Regent Street, where the firm of tailors to whom it is addressed will take care to provide you with a suitable wardrobe. In a week’s time, when you are dressed like a gentleman, you will come and live with me here for a fortnight, after which you will start for Rugby, where I have arranged for your residence with a house-master and in two years you will begin your career as an engineer—”

“Yes, sir,” said the boy, all agaze in a fairy dream, “but — I — want to be a poet, sir.”

“Aha! I have heard that you are given to scribbling rhymes. But you must abandon that mood, to please me. Now you must go. Come first to my fatherly arms, and kiss me.”

Hartwell embraced him and the lad went away in tears, with the bank note, the slip, and the letter to the tailors. Hartwell then descended to dinner, where he found Oswald talking to Dulaunay, for Oswald, a confirmed diner-out, often looked in about dinner-time. At table the talk was with the glib Count, who, liking Hartwell and the haphazard prosperity of his situation here, stuck to it, letting his tongue run loose on every subject under the sun, from the Quartier Latin to Italian literature, and from Anarchism to *le boxe*, *le sport*, and *le fun*.

At this time Hartwell was actually paying Dulaunay a salary of £500 a year, for one morning the excellent count, having complained of a shortness of funds, if not exactly to Hartwell, at least in Hartwell’s hearing.

Hartwell had said in words of a vague and, doubtful meaning: “Mention to me afresh, Dulaunay, the sum which I pay you as salary, these things easily slip the memory.” For Hartwell had now a suspicion that Dulaunay’s relation to him was in some way bogus. Many little things and words had

tended to show it to his active perceptions, but he had rather shut his eyes to them, refraining from probing the mystery, for the simple reason that he found the versatile count agreeable, and chose to remain in a half-darkness as to the reason of his presence in the household, to accept him as an accomplished fact, and to leave matters as they were.

One morning he had seen Dulaunay busied in the book-room, another morning he had seen him before an easel painting landscapes and each time he had made the count's occupation an excuse for not prying too closely into his right to be there, thinking in the one case that he may have been a sort of do-nothing librarian to Drayton, and in the other, that he may have been Drayton's protege, on account of his promising talents as an artist — both of which were highly improbable.

Hartwell went out regularly to the city before noon, and as to how the Frenchman passed his days he had no idea, and cared nothing. In the evenings they met and neither referred to anything farther back in the past than the night of their meeting at Liverpool Street-Station. Once only Hartwell had found it necessary to remonstrate pleasantly with Dulaunay on receiving a hint from Miss Scatchett of a certain absence of mind in some of the servants, due to the gallant and excellent count, but otherwise their relation flowed quietly along like a gentle stream. If Miss Scatchett, or Oswald, or anyone had once happened to say to Hartwell: "Who or what is this French count? we did not know him till lately," Hartwell, no doubt, would have been stirred, to find out the truth of things. But though Miss Scatchett or Oswald may have asked themselves why the count was there, their vague interest never chanced to lead them to ask Hartwell anything about him, while Hartwell was willing to believe that the count was an institution in the house, and the count, for his part, within some days after

his first drive to Addison Road, in Hartwell's brougham, looked upon Hartwell and all he had as his by an ancient right.

After dinner that evening of young Bobbie Hartwell's visit to the house, the count departed in the brougham for the theatre, while Hartwell and Oswald smoked together in the billiard-room and each interview between the supposed brothers tended to increase the antipathy between them. When Oswald left it was getting late, and Hartwell went up to bed. But he lay without being able to sleep, watching the little ray of a night-light on the dressing-table. He heard the shutting up of the house, and also the wheels of the carriage on the drive, returning with Dulaunay. Hartwell's nights were wretched: firstly, because sleep was hard to get, and secondly, because it was so gruesome when it came. Things now happened to him in dreams — woods, scenes, terrors, with that face which might be either his own or another's, such as he could not have fancied. It even happened to him anon to be shocked by the doubt of the average credulous man: "How, if in heaven and earth there be, after all, more things than atoms, ether and energy? or how if the atoms be very different, far more ghostly things, than one dreams."

This was a strange doubt to trouble such a mind as Hartwell's. When his clock struck two, his eyes flashed severely, and he rose, lit a candle, threw on a splendid gold-wrought dressing-gown and put on a pair of slippers. He then took a revolver from a case, descended to the back, quietly undid a door, and went out into the grounds, which were fairly extensive and rich in vegetation. He walked in the direction of the stable and, in doing this, passed near the dog's cot in an alley, where, by his order Bull was chained up that night. The dog whined on seeing him, but Hartwell did not even glance at it. His face was stern. He had determined that the dog should no more fly from him. He went to an outhouse which stood near the stable, his

feet now soaked with the wet in the grasses, and there he found a spade and crowbar, which he took and with them he went on to the far end of the grounds. There, choosing a spot under a holly tree, he set to work to dig a grave two feet deep by the dim light of a moon struggling to shine in a grey and cloudy sky.

This done, he straightened himself, put his arms akimbo, and looked up a little while to where the blotch of moonlight was. He then returned to the kennel, undid the chain, and led the dog towards the grave. Bull followed him with uplifted eyes, showing more of the whites than of the brown part, an expression of weak abashment. Hartwell tied the dog to the holly-tree, stepped back a little, the revolver in his hand and, stooping far forward, held the weapon to the dog's ear. The dog sidled a little round the tree, whining pitifully, but as the dog moved so Hartwell, stooping, followed step by step. "Now, Bull," he said again, and the report sounded. The dog yelped and dropped dead. This was a sort of murder, for in Hartwell's scientific creed the dog is a very near first cousin to man and Hartwell's consciousness of truth was so keen that this was not a mere sterile bit of knowledge to him, but one of the big, living facts of life, ever present in his mind.

He buried the poor Bull with grim lips, and returned to bed and as he lay abed again, thinking of Julia and of his son, into these thoughts there intruded a thought of Gissing, his lonely cold prisoner in Hobham House, whom he had to see on the morrow.

XIII. MORE ABOUT LETTY



THE SUDDEN DEPARTURE of Gissing from the old Manor farm came as a disappointment to Oswald. He actually had on his overcoat and gloves, one afternoon at his chambers, about to go to Norfolk to see Gissing, when he received from Walker his shorthand man, the telegram:

“FIND THAT GISSING TEMPORARILY GONE AWAY. WILL WIRE AGAIN WHEN HE RETURNS;”

so that Magee had to take off Oswald's coat again.

Oswald received this telegram two days before Christmas. He ought to have gone down to Norfolk at least forty-eight hours before and now blamed himself for his slow habit of turning round, but there had been social engagements. One could not throw everything to the devil at a moment's notice. He sighed and waited till Gissing should return home and would have lifted his eyebrows in lingering surprise, if he had been told that Gissing was in a locked room in Hobham House.

When Oswald received that telegram from Walker, Hartwell was already at Castle Moran, fox-hunting with the admirable Julia. It has been seen how he fled from her, when she told him that she loved him and how, after lingering a day at an inn in the country, he returned to Addison Road on the second evening after Christmas and saw his son, Bobby, and killed the dog, Bull, the same night.

The next day Hartwell was at the office in Fenchurch Street, from noon till the closing of the house. During that time he took a second saloon ticket

on a P. and O. boat, which was to sail for the East in three days' time, on the Thursday, the 31st of December, "old-year's-day." After the closing of the house he put on his overcoat and put into a pocket of it some sheets of paper and envelopes, a pen and a bottle of ink, together with some other sheets of paper which were covered with his own writing. He went out, and outside bought an ounce of tobacco and a pipe, which he also put into his pocket. He then went to Gannon Street, and took a train for Lydney, the station nearest to Hobham House. At Lydney he bought a loaf, a bottle of claret, and a candle and with these things he walked to Hobham House, unlocked the front door and went in. When he had gone up, unlocked the door of the room in which Gissing was, and entered it, he lit the candle and stuck it in its own grease on the mantelpiece, and now he saw Gissing crouching in a corner near the mantelpiece with a certain glower-underlook at him.

"Well, Gissing," said Hartwell, "I suppose that you have not had four very enjoyable days and I suppose, too, that like a foolish man, you blame me for your discomfort. But it is not my fault, nor is it yours, but the fault of an evil chance which caused you to know more about my affairs than is good for your comfort. I wish you no ill, and only locked you up with little food and no fire in order that you may fully realise my power over you and the more readily follow my instructions."

The countryman's mouth worked in the effort to find expression for what he felt, but in the end all that came out was:

"Ah, you're a wicked one, you!"

Hartwell made no reply, but proceeded to lay on the mantelpiece three half-sheets of paper covered with something written by himself, while Gissing cried out:

"Good Lord on High, mister, why have you done the likes o' this here to a poor man?"

“Gissing,” answered Hartwell, “I have already apologised for the discomfort to which an evil chance has forced me to subject you. Unfortunately, still worse things await you, but let no one be blamed. The cat eats the mouse, the mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow is speared by the shrike, the man kills the microbe, the lamb the lion, the German kills the Frenchman, the Englishman the Hindoo. Nor can we alter this necessary condition of life on our planet by regretting it. The weaker suffer for the stronger—”

Again Gissing looked at Hartwell with his mouth working to find expression, but the power of expressing his thoughts and feelings was not the strong point of Gissing, or of any of his class and kind, and in the end all that came was:

“Ey, he’s a hard man to deal with!”

“But let us not waste words, Gissing,” Hartwell went on. “I have first of all to tell you that on Thursday coming, only three days from now, you will be placed in complete liberty by me on board a ship, on which your passage is already taken. You will start without funds, though with a trunk of clothes, but on your arrival at Hong Kong a correspondent of my firm will offer you permanent employment in his warehouse. You will never return to England, even if you can ever find the means to do so, nor will you ever write to anyone in England, for in this case, if I discover it I shall simply place in the hands of the police a confession which you are now about to write of having attempted to extort blackmail from me on a false charge, whereupon you will be arrested in your new abode. No, say nothing, my friend, but submit yourself to me, or your discomforts will be stretched perhaps to the point of death. See here, I have brought you some bread, some wine, and some tobacco, pleasures which can only be enjoyed by you on condition of submission—”

“Ey he’s a hard man!” groaned the ill-fated countryman, with a hoarse chest, “he don’t call to mind that I’ve got a wife and daughter.”

“I have not forgotten them,” replied Hartwell: “I am a hard man, yes, but by no means a wicked one. Your wife and daughter shall be my care, Gissing, and your wisest course will be to cast their existence out of your memory as soon as ever Nature will permit you—”

“My own wife and daughter! Cast them out o’ my — ! Ah, you, you, you, you!”

“You think me a monster, I see, Gissing, but that is not because I am a monster, but because I am somewhat more rational than you. I know the feelings of a father, and I know well the feelings of a husband, and I experience a human sympathy with your case. But all things must yield to the iron laws of Necessity and on the whole your dependents will do very well. But now to business, my friend. Here are two letters to your wife which I have written and require you to copy out now. I will first of all read them aloud to you. The first one says:

““My dear wife, here am I in Birmingham where I had to come from London on the business that I came up to London about. But not much can be done without the evidence of our Sarah and perhaps yours too. So I want you to send Sarah at once to me at 117, Duke Street, Moseley, Birmingham, and I send you enclosed 17/- in postal orders to give her for the journey — but do not give her any more than 17/-. Perhaps in a day or two I may have to write you again to come to me and her in London, where I am going back to from here. Your affectionate husband—”

“That is the first, Gissing; and the second says:

““My dear wife, I and Sarah met all right here at Birmingham, and now we are just starting back for London. Everything is going first rate, but I want you now to shut up the house and come to meet us at once at 112,

Chapel Street, S. Kensington, London, for which I enclose £1. Then we shall all go home together. Unless you come, we shan't get the £2,000, so be sure to come. Your affectionate husband—'

"Such is the second letter, Gissing; and this third paper is the confession of blackmail and false accusation, which you will also copy out."

"Then, my home will be broken up?" cried the suffering countryman.

"I, in God knows where, my wife in London, my daughter in Birmingham without a penny-piece to bless themselves—"

"Neither they nor you shall starve, Gissing, that I undertake. It is true that there is no such house as 117, Duke Street, Moseley, Birmingham, nor any such house as 112, Chapel Street, S. Kensington, but there is a Duke Street, and a Chapel Street, and in them the two women shall be met by my agents and suitable employment shall be found for them. You will all, indeed, be lost to one another, and to those also who wish to use you for my hurt."

At this point the old man sprang upright from his cowering position, crying out:

"Look here, I — I wouldn't do that thing, not to save my life!"

Hartwell's eyes flashed at this. He said not another word, but with pressed lips, caught up the "pleasures" — the bread, wine, and tobacco — and went out, leaving the pen and ink, the blank sheets of paper, the letters to be copied, and the candle and matches. As to the last two, he had little fear that Gissing's sufferings would tempt him to burn down the house, for in that case the room where Gissing was was in such a position would burn and he would certainly be burned to death.

Those sufferings of Gissing, however, must have been great and might have tempted him to do almost anything. For four days he had eaten nothing but two tins of potted ham, with two bottles of claret. It continued,

moreover, to be cold and now he would have to wait at least one other day. With a fine English stoicism, the old man had said not a word about what he suffered, but his frame knew its own pains. As Hartwell walked out bearing off the “pleasures,” Gissing, shivering with his two hands in his pockets, gazed after him with a glowering underlook, and uttered the groan, “Ey, he’s a cold-hearted man.”

Hartwell locked the door on the outside, put the pleasures on the floor, and went away.

When he reached home that night he again found Oswald there. They dined together, and after dinner found themselves alone in the billiard room, for Dulaunay was in the drawing-room, playing pieces from Chopin. For a long time little was said between the supposed brothers. Oswald listlessly threw the billiard balls about the table, Hartwell lay on a couch meditating on the wreaths of smoke from his cigar. Then suddenly, after half an hour, it came out that Oswald had pressing need of £200 and Hartwell, tossing the cigar end into the fire, said:

“My good fellow, I won’t give it you.”

Oswald’s square jaws stiffened themselves at his bitter feelings, he left the table and, standing before the fire, turned an evil look upon Hartwell, who was now, he felt, in his hands. Gissing, indeed, had gone from home — so Walker had telegraphed. But Oswald was only waiting for Gissing’s return to run down to Norfolk and get Gissing’s written evidence that his brother and Letty Barnes had known each other (the desired £200 was partly to tip Gissing with), after which, there would be no more refusals of £200. And, exulting in his power, never dreaming that Gissing lay a prisoner in Hobham House, he said sourly to Hartwell:

“My good James, I fear that you are growing mean, but let me explain to you why I really need this two hundred. A girl in whom I am interested has

been murdered, James. Her father is impecunious the police at a loss, and I have taken up the case, employing a private agent to get at the bottom of it.”

“Who was she?” asked Hartwell.

“A girl named Letty Barton,” answered Oswald, his habit of sycophancy even now restraining his lips from venturing upon the open defiance of saying “Letty Barnes.” For though they had opened to say Barnes they ended by saying Barton: a very inconsistent, but natural thing, for he wished to let “James” know that he knew all, but in the midst of obeying his impulses, he was checked by a qualm, by a feeling of his rashness, and modified it by saying the illogical “Barton.” However, if he had said “Letty Barnes,” this name would have had no effect whatever upon Hartwell, from whose memory it had passed ever since that day when he saw her father a moment in the “Black Dogs” at Aylsham. The shreds of Letty’s letter to Julia lay forgotten in McCalmont’s overcoat pocket, which was now hung up in Hartwell’s wardrobe. Hartwell had never fitted them together, had never read in the newspapers of the finding of Letty’s body, did not know that she was dead, or remember that she had lived, or have any reason to think that Drayton had known such a girl. When, therefore, Oswald, saying “Letty Barton,” looked to see Hartwell flinch, he saw only indifference, and thought to himself: “James can command his face.”

“Who was this Letty Barton?” asked Hartwell.

“I need only say that I had an interest in her and mean to avenge her. It was a disgusting atrocity, this murder.”

“By whom committed?”

“A lover. You have seen it in the papers.”

“I don’t remember. It is known then, that she had a lover? Well, the post mortem, of course. Tell me the circumstances and let us see what light a detached reason may throw up on them.”

“I suppose I never knew him well,” thought Oswald, “he is a deeper man —”

“My dear fellow,” he said aloud, “I need not go into it, you have read it all.”

“But if I say not? Tell me.”

“Oh well then, she was found in a gut behind an old tavern, two days after her death. She had been strangled, her hand was bruised, most of her finger-nails were broken, her collar was rumpled behind, while one of its button holes was torn through in front, her face was swollen, round one wrist was a red mark, in her pocket were a thimble, a hymn-book, and a little powder-puff—”

Hartwell, with his thumb and forefinger pressing down his closed eyelids, and frowning deeply, said:

“Well, now, let me see: there was a struggle for a letter.”

“By Jove!” Oswald started, thinking within himself: “That, then, was the letter of which I have a shred! but this motive for telling? His bluff!” He added aloud: “That is quite probably true, my good James, but your certainty is curious.”

“Why so? It seems pretty clear to me. Did you see the body yourself, by the way?”

“Er — yes.”

“You said in describing her appearance that ‘her hand’ was bruised: does that mean one hand only?”

“I really can’t say now.”

“Then it was probably both hands, for one only would very likely have resulted in a more definite observation on your part. But how do you account for these bruises on her hands?”

“She was thrown over a cliff through a lot of prickles and bush: that, I suppose, might account for her scratches and things.”

“Ah, but now you use another word, not ‘bruises,’ but ‘scratches and things.’ Was her face, then, bruised like her hands?”

“No, I think not. It was scratched—”

“Then the hand-bruises had a different origin from the face-scratches; were true bruises, caused by a struggle for some object, a ring, a letter, a coin, or something; and the mauling of both hands seems to prove that the struggle was spirited and prolonged, the object having been slipped to the left hand, when the right became sore.”

“James, you are amazing,” said Oswald, with a breath of laughter: “but admit, my good fellow, that your certainty that the object of the struggle was a letter is curious.”

“Why so? How else can you explain the bruises, the broken nails, and the hymn book?”

“I confess that I do not see your point.”

“The bruises rather seem to prove, don’t they? that the object was not a large object, like a stick, for instance. It was containable in the hand; and since most of her nails were broken, that certainly proves that the object was not a small one like a ring, for instance; for her fingers could not quite close upon the object. That seems to give us the size of the object, the size of a letter crumpled into a ball. It may therefore have been a letter, and the hymn book strongly suggests that it was a letter, for why the hymn book except to hold a letter uncrumpled between the leaves in her pocket? She had placed the letter in the hymn book on writing it, meaning to show it to him, and when the time came she took the hymn book and all. But observe that this gives you the motive of the crime, if you do not already know it. For if I am right we have the fact of a letter written by her for which there

was a struggle, and the natural inference is that it was a letter, say, to some new flame of his, containing damaging statements—”

“He has now told me enough to hang him!” thought Oswald, “given Gissing’s evidence that he knew Letty—”

“As to the powder puff—” began Hartwell, but before he could get farther he was interrupted by a footman who looked in to announce some visitors; and Hartwell stood up, saying to Oswald: “Well, jot down all the facts of the matter, Oswald, and we will confer on them some other night. Such things furnish interesting exercises for the reason. As for the £200, you shall have them for this specific purpose of punishing an ugly crime, and I will send you the cheque to-morrow. But I warn you, my good fellow, that my brotherly affection has its limits and that you will have to rely upon your own resources to a far greater extent than heretofore. I have had losses.”

Oswald looked at him with eyes of mere wonder, having given up all hope of the £200 when he had once dared to mention that name — Letty Barton.

XIV. HARTWELL UPROOTS



THE NEXT EVENING, as Hartwell went out from his office to return to Gissing, he saw in the street, near the outer door of the building in which his office was, a man with very heavy eyes, a deep frown, and a red fan-beard. It was Barnes, the father of Letty.

Hartwell peered searchingly at him, at the same time making haste to shut himself in his brougham, which was there awaiting him, and he thought to himself, "I have seen him before — but where? He was waiting there to see me come out. The there-he-is of his expression — . And the man means me no good, his mind in a state of unworldly distraction or despair. The feather in his beard, the old mud on his boots, his wrinkled waistcoat, the rent in his coat pocket, perhaps drinking, yet hardly a drunkard, and the bulge in his pocket angular, perhaps a revolver. But let us not permit ourselves to be shot. Such a weakness would be too immoral."

He drove from Cannon Street to the little Surrey Station of Lydney alone in his compartment and still he kept on musing on Barnes, thinking: "He is a countryman, not of the lowest class, his rings, his chain, but not a farmer. Apparently rather a tradesman. No trace of the use of leggings on the trousers, and trousers gone at the knees, not at the bottoms. Yet a great shot, high aim, too — pheasants, 'rocketers,' — say therefore from Suffolk, Norfolk, the nap on right shoulder, cock of left leg, turpentine stains, muscles of neck. But a tradesman and a sportsman, too? Hardly — then, perhaps, a town tradesman; rather one in open country, near coverts, yet not a farmer. A lonely publican, tavern-keeper — lurking in Fenchurch Street!

What, then, has that ruffian done to this poor man? He's probably in London only to see and hurt me — You should be careful, however, of yourself, mine host."

From Lydney he walked to Hobham House, and up to Gissing's prison. This time, on seeing Gissing, Hartwell's heart was moved to pity. The countryman, roused by the entrance of Hartwell from morbid sleep, still sat without a word or motion in his corner, hugging his tremors, with a glint like lunacy in the downward stare of his eyes. He had copied the confession of blackmail — there it lay on the mantelpiece — but he had not copied either of the letters to his wife. And again Hartwell, seeing this, was adamant, saying:

"See, I have brought you some ham, Gissing. But do as I bid you or I cannot permit myself to alleviate your discomforts."

"Merciful Lord, man!" cried the countryman suddenly, "won't you give a man a morsel o' food, then?"

"No."

"Don't ye believe in a just God above, then, man, man, in God's name?"

"Above, eh?" said Hartwell, sitting on a cloud, no doubt, as on a cushion, in the Turkish manner. "No, Gissing! She in whom I believe exists and is mighty, but He in whom you believe is thin and dying."

"Ey, he's a strange man!" wailed the countryman in muffled words with a covered face.

Hartwell now paced the room with his hands behind his back, and during the time while he twice passed from end to end of the floor Gissing leapt up furiously, took the pen in his hand, and began to copy one of the letters by the light of the candle. Hartwell went and looked over his shoulder, but after the old man had written five or six words Hartwell said:

“You are too cold; you cannot write now, Gissing. Promise me that if I alleviate your discomforts you will do all that I require.”

“Merciful Lord on High, can I help promising?” exclaimed Gissing, “Ain’t I but mortal.”

“That’s a man,” said Hartwell.

He at once took the candle, went out, and descending to the basement found there a chopper and some sticks of firewood. A few of the rooms here and there in the house remained scantily furnished, and on his way back to the top Hartwell took with him two chairs which, on re-entering the prison room he set to work to hew to pieces. Gissing looked silently at him under lowering brows while he did this. When the work grew hot, Hartwell threw off his overcoat, and continued to hew at the two chairs, till both were in fragments.

“Now, then, Gissing, for a fire,” he said with merry eyes, a little short of breath, with his arms akimbo, “and let it never more be said that I am an egoist.”

The enfeebled countryman dropped his head upon his arms over the mantelpiece and two tears flowed down his rude face, while Hartwell stooped at the grate.

“Now, Gissing, for a feast,” said Hartwell rising, when this was done. “Take also this coat of mine, which I will leave with you simply and solely because I do not myself feel cold, and let it serve you for blanket or pillow. When you have regaled yourself, then write the two letters, not forgetting the addresses on the envelopes. To-morrow at noon I come to take you to your ship, on which a trunk of clothes is already shipped for you. Good night.”

The countryman gazed after him as he walked out, not as after a man, but as after a force that could speak and look like a man.

However, the legacy of troubles which Drayton had left to Hartwell were rather like the hundred-headed hydra, and for every head that he cut down another sprang up. That very evening, for instance, when Gissing was at last forced to consent to write the letters to his wife, Hartwell had a startling adventure. He had come from Lydney to Shepherd's Bush, and was walking the short distance from the station to his house, when, as he came to the north corner of Addison Road he saw a woman standing on the east pavement. It was rather dark there, but at once he noticed that she was interested in him, was looking hard at him. She was quite a giantess in size. Her age was perhaps 40, she had the look of a countrywoman, was poorly but decently dressed, her face very round and fat, and covered all over with large freckles.

He wished to examine her more closely, and was about to pass near her when all of a sudden he shied sharply, and took to his heels as fast as he could run to the other (west) side of the road. Nor when he had reached that pavement did he stop, but pelted down on the road with some anxious, backward glances over his shoulder, till he slipped through someone's garden gate, and crouching there behind the wall in the deep shadow thrown by a mass of leafage, he peeped through the railings to see if she was coming. But she had not apparently followed. Not a soul was to be seen in the deep and lonely road and presently with a murmur of "Ah," and a smile he crept out and went hurriedly across to his own gate, which was on the east side of the road.

When, on his entrance into the house, Dulaunay said to him: "Sir, my compliments," Hartwell made the reply: "They are well-timed, my friend," for he knew that a knife lay in the woman's bosom, and that her eyes were very strange and deranged. "I shall assuredly see her again," he thought.

“The sins of that man spring up and multiply about me, and their harvest is great, and the labourer but one.”

The next day was Gissing's day of departure. Near noon Hartwell drove to the beginning of the Avenue before Hobham House, stopped the brougham there, alighted, walked to the house and returned to the brougham with Gissing dressed in the fur overcoat of Hartwell's which Hartwell had left for the countryman's blanket the previous evening. Gissing looked the picture of despair, and was non-resistant as a lamb. Hartwell now had the confession of blackmail and the two letters duly written by Gissing to his wife. They drove to a wharf in Chelsea, where a small steam-boat awaited them and they steamed down the river to Tilbury, where the great ship had just received her passengers from the company's special train. Hartwell gave the countryman a letter to one Bathright, who lived at Hong Kong, impressed upon him anew the line of his future conduct, and the ship moved down the river as Gissing was taken on board.

The next morning Gissing's wife received the first letter, in which her husband instructed her to send her daughter to meet him in Birmingham. And this she did. Two days afterwards she received the second letter, instructing her to start at once to meet her husband and daughter in London. And this also she did. Both mother and daughter were received by agents of Hartwell, the one in Birmingham, the other in London.

Later on, when the mother wrote to 117 Duke Street, Moseley, Birmingham, her letter came back to her, for there was no such address. When the daughter wrote to Overstrand, her letter, too, came back to her, for Hartwell had bought the Old Manor Farm from its owner and had shut it up. He gave their little furniture to the mother.

In the course of months both mother and girl found with some difficulty an opportunity to leave their work for a day and return to Overstrand, in

some vague hope of retracing a clue of their past. But they returned at different times, and found that past all scattered to the winds. Mystery and desolation confronted them. The yard was encumbered with leaves, weeds, and grasses, stranger-ducks swam in the green slime of the pond, stranger-fowls scratched the marrow-plot, house martens built all round the eaves, the white owl haunted the lattices, poppy and yellow wild tulip choked the garden. They saw the old home lie like the face of the dead and shed tears at the ways of God.

XV. HARTWELL IS EGOISTIC



“MY VERY DEAR,” Julia wrote to Hartwell on the very day of Gissing’s departure to the East, *“is an explanation due to me, or not? You should come to me. I am here in Brook Street. Come, for I have waited, and am waiting. — Julia.”*

That morning Hartwell did not go to the city, though he was now in the thick of tearing himself out of the coils of Drayton’s business, but spent the forenoon in his study at Addison Road with the little packet of letters which Julia had written to Drayton, which he had found in the drawer of a wardrobe. There was hardly a word of fondness in any of them, but his eyes loved to smile upon her large writing, whose dash and decision, like cavalry assaulting a position, seemed to say: “There, that’s Julia.” Finally, a visit on business from the captain of the *Sempronia* caused him to lock the jacket away, and then he had to drive to Hobham House to get Gissing on his ship.

But a week passed after this and still Hartwell did not answer Julia’s note. He was at a loss what to answer. The question whether he should go to her or not go, and if he went what he should say to her, was so distracting that there were moments when he almost wished that those of his enemies who wanted to take his life might succeed in doing what they wanted.

His existence all round was infested with doubts and dangers. If Julia was by far the biggest of them, there were others very grave and pressing. There was the big woman with the clasped knife and the deranged eye. Who was she? Hartwell only knew that his death was her mania — that, like some “Charlotte Corday” she had come up from the country on a mission of

death, and that he was her Marat. There, lurking under the shadow of trees, he caught a glimpse of her regularly every night as the brougham swept from Holland Park into Addison Road. She did not apparently know his house, for twice she had started after the carriage, presumably to discover the gate into which it went, but must have lost sight of it before it entered the gate, those being the darkest nightfalls of the year. This woman's name was Mary Liskeard. Her daughter, Margaret, had drowned herself in a lake called Harrod's, owing to melancholia caused by her husband's drowning, which drowning again was owing to some infamy of Drayton's in connection with an unseaworthy ship.

And there was the man with the frown and the red beard, and the heavy eyes. Barnes, too, had brooded and had his mania, and meant to do a deed. The evil seed sown in the mind of Barnes by Oswald, that day of the finding of Letty's body, was now grown to a mustard tree and the careless disdain with which the police had received his conviction that Drayton killed Letty had only the more embittered and fixed Barnes' mania.

Hartwell always now left his office, not by the front door of the building, but by way of a court behind, for regularly each evening from about the hour of the closing of the house till six o'clock he could see Barnes from a window of the office, standing sentry below.

And again there was the little stableman, Kirk. Kirk had apparently been bribed by Drayton to cut the tendon of a rival's horse called Brighteye, and Kirk now pretended that the plot was known to another turf-man named Teddy, to silence whom a further £2000 was necessary. Hartwell saw that if he did not give, his good name would be ruined, but it was not Hartwell's way to give. Apart from the fact that he knew that Teddy was a myth — for the jockey's mind was clear as crystal to him — he considered that to give was immoral. But he did not refuse outright, he temporised, dallied, and

discussed, thinking how to uproot this Kirk and meanwhile Kirk had grown pressing.

To permit himself to be shot or hurt Hartwell considered immoral. He looked after No. 1, not because he particularly loved No. 1, but because that was the only sensible thing to do, the world being what he thought it was. Therefore, he meant to put “egoism,” which was his morality, into practice, and so it happened that Barnes, Mary Liskeard, Kirk, the turf-man, and others were in even more danger from him than he was from them.

A week after Julia’s unanswered note, in which she prayed Hartwell to go to her, it happened that Hartwell, in going to lunch over a conference with three financiers at the Holborn Restaurant, was taken down a by-street near the restaurant by his head clerk, who was going to lunch with him, to be shown a house of his which was falling to pieces. The house was No. 7 Twyford Buildings, a queer old house in a slum just to the south of Holborn. The upper part of it was clinker-built, the lower half was all patched with rough boardings; the windows were low and long, like the house itself; the window-panes all broken, and thicker than themselves with grime. The one door, which stood at one end of the house, was secured with a padlock.

When Hartwell was taken into it by his head clerk that day, he looked into every room with a particular interest, though it was empty but for a few corn-bags. (It had been used as a warehouse). He and his head clerk then went on to lunch. After the lunch, when they drove back to Fenchurch Street, there was Kirk awaiting Hartwell in the office, looking a mere spider in a stiff sack-overcoat, with a little mouse-face peeping out from under a Homburg hat and, without any invitation, he followed Hartwell into Hartwell’s private room.

“Well, now,” said Hartwell, when they were seated, “but I thought I hinted to you that it would be better not to show yourself here so often.”

“Look here, that’s as it may be,” answered Kirk.

“Take your hat off.”

“Shan’t. That be blowed!” went Kirk vehemently. “I’m as good a man as you, Drayton, any day.”

“But you try my patience, Kirk,” said Hartwell, with reproach.

“Don’t matter about patience,” muttered the estimable Kirk. “Try his little patience, poor little boy! Look here, where’s the use beating about the bush between men of the world? Going to brass up to-day yes or no? Else Teddy’ll only act, and where’ll you be then? Lord! I think I see your face at the Club of Tats. — great Scott!”

“I’ll pay,” said Hartwell, “I’ll pay. But I mustn’t give myself away — not by cheque, not here. Meet me. Do you happen to know Twyford Buildings? It is an alley off Great Queen Street. Meet me at No. 7 — an old wooden house — at 7.30 to-morrow evening. But be punctual. I shan’t wait for you one second if you are not there when I go. The house will be open, but do not enter the house till you see me coming down the alley. Then very quickly enter and wait. There is a caretaker about the place, who must by no means see us meeting. I can’t have myself compromised. We will then go upstairs to a lighted room, that you may count the money, and write me a receipt. But so that there may be but one footfall as we go up, be prepared as I enter to mount upon my back.”

“Now you’re talking,” answered Kirk. “I’ll be there. Look here, there’s not an atom of bad blood, Drayton, on my side—”

“That’s a man. Good-bye. No. 7 Twyford Buildings, at 7.30 p.m., tomorrow.”

Kirk then went away. The moment he was gone Hartwell peeped cautiously into the street to see if Barnes was there. Barnes was not there yet, but after having three interviews with a broker, an actuary, and the

steward of his Buck's estate, Hartwell again peeped out, and there was Barnes standing sentry below.

"Ah," thought Hartwell within himself, "I hardly think that my enemies will save me from that hard interview with her after all." And, sitting now to his desk, he wrote, no longer with the typewriter, but in a hand that was already, after much practice, very like the dead Drayton's: —

"My Dear Julia,

"I have received your note. I hope to call upon you in Brook Street to-morrow evening at 9. If I do not hear from you, I shall assume that I shall then be able to speak with you alone.

"Your sincere friend,

"James Drayton."

The letter written and enclosed, he thrice pressed an electric button, and the clerk who had to answer to three rings entered.

"Post this letter for me, Ife," said Hartwell. "I want you, Ife, to do something for me with some little tact. There is a man with a red beard standing near the street door, whom you might ask the way to somewhere. Then ask if he is not Norfolk or Suffolk, and whether he can tell you anything of the pheasant-shooting, as you think of taking a holiday down there. Try to get him to have a drink with you. Be unconcerned and affable. Then mention casually that you belong to Drayton's, and that the boss means to be off to-morrow night, to the Continent for six months. Then some more talk, and leave him."

Ife undertook this, and went out.

After Ife's departure to interview Barnes, the man with the red beard, Hartwell paced his room. Then half an hour later came Ife, saying to

Hartwell:

“He wouldn’t have a drink, but I told him what you said about going on the Continent. He seems a bit moody, sir; a screw loose somewhere—”

“No doubt. He will probably present himself here to-day, but must on no account be allowed to get to me. Take him to the alcove in which is the speaking-tube, if he comes, and put him into communication with me. And, as I do not know his name, you will use the word ‘eager’ as you mention his name, so that I may know that it is he.”

After this an hour passed before Barnes went up to Hartwell’s office. Barnes had, of course, been spurred to prompt and desperate action by the clerk’s news that Hartwell was going away for six months, for he saw that he must avenge his daughter that very day, or put off his vengeance for a long time. But he had lingered an hour trembling on the brink of action, eager enough, but held back by many doubts and fears. At last, however, he came to a decision, and went up. The clerk, Ife, conducted him to the alcove and the telephone-whistle whiffed into Hartwell’s room.

“Well?” answered Hartwell, with the drum at his ear.

“Mr Barrow, sir— ‘eager’ — to speak with you,” said Ife. For Barnes believed that if he sent in his true name to “Drayton,” he would not be permitted to get near “Drayton,” which was what he wanted, and he called himself Barrow. Though, as a matter of fact, if he had called himself Barnes, Hartwell would probably not have remembered the name, or known what was his grievance.

“Leave him in the alcove, Ife,” said Hartwell, “and close the door upon him,” and half a minute afterwards he said, “You there, Mr Barrow?”

“Yes,” answered Barnes: “you Drayton?”

“The same.”

“Can’t a man converse a bit with you, face to face, like men? Can’t very well through this thing.”

“But this thing was made for conversing through, Barrow,” replied Hartwell in a tone of sinister reproachfulness. “What is it you want?”

“Two minutes’ face to face talk with you.”

“But, Barrow, you speak like an angry man. How is that, Barrow?”

“Me? like an angry man? no, no, no, no—”

“But I know you, Barrow. You mean me no good, but you shall do me no harm. You cannot see me now, and to-morrow night I leave England. But that I may know the cause of your pernicious rancour against me — your baleful malice, Barrow — I will meet you to-morrow evening, if you like, at 7.15, in a house where we shall be alone. The house is No. 7, Twyford Buildings — an old wooden house in an alley lying between Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Great Queen Street. Does that satisfy you?”

“That’ll do for me.”

“Be punctual, then — at 7.15. I shall not wait one minute if you are late. It is No. 7, Twyford Buildings, Lincoln’s Inn, an old empty house. You will find the door open. Enter, if I am not there at 7.15, and go up to a room on the first floor in which you will see a fire. I shall enter the house by a way known only to myself, and we shall fail to meet, unless you are in that lighted room. There await me. But, Barrow, I warn you — attempt no violence. I know what you keep in your pocket, and I shall enter that room and meet you with my finger on the trigger of a weapon, ready for reprisals. Do you understand?”

“I see your meaning,” replied Barnes.

“That’s a man! Good-bye.”

And Barnes went away muttering: “He’s taking me to that empty old house to do for me, if I don’t do for him first. Well, then, it’ll be the quicker

man of the two! and, by the lord above us, that shall be me!”

Soon after this Hartwell left the office to go home, walking down his secret back court to where the brougham always now waited for him. That night when he drove round the corner into Addison Road, Mary Liskeard was not at the corner, but Hartwell peering out all the time along the road descried her further down under a mass of shadow cast by some trees. For the third time she started after the carriage, as it passed her, and this time undoubtedly saw the gate into which it swept.

Hartwell found in the house that night, not only Oswald who was almost a professional diner-out, but also seven foreign people, guests of the count, in a condition of gaiety, for that his *jour de fête*, or baptism day. Accordingly, a quite bird-like vivacity characterised the full dinner table, which rather burdened Mr Dray-”tong,” in whose grave heart was an ache, a sadness and a longing. There was a thin Arlesienne girl in a costume which seemed in peril of dropping down her shoulders who, while she talked, vibrated up and down in sheer animation of being, and her fingers twinkled abroad in the air. Always she said of something or other: “*T-res, t-res, jolie — magnifique!*”

Young Bobbie Hartwell, looking in his fashionable new clothes like a blushing page-o’-honor, gazed contemplatively at her with open mouth, and threw out anon a silent breath of laughter. Hartwell committed the indiscretion of talking some rather Birmingham French, and at once saw Oswald’s eyebrows slowly lift and Oswald’s gaze turn upon him, like a wooden head moved round by slow clock-work. For Oswald had not known that his “James” could speak Birmingham French. Now he knew; but Hartwell’s eyes rested lingeringly, with no good meaning, on that gaze of surprise, and he remembered it.

Later in the night Oswald and Hartwell were getting together among some palms in a nook of the drawing-room, whose silken walls gave a shimmer of azure in the dreamy light, when Oswald produced a piece of paper covered with notes. Dulaunay, with his foreign guests and Bobbie, were playing whist and chattering some distance away.

“You asked me,” said Oswald to Hartwell, “to jot down these details about the murder of Letty Barton. You said, I think, that you would ‘reason’ about, them—”

“Ah, yes, how is the matter going?” asked Hartwell.

“I don’t know that anything has been discovered.”

If will be understood that Oswald, while waiting to hear from his man, Walker, the news of the return of Gissing to Overstrand, had heard instead — with bitterness and amazement — that all the Gissings had mysteriously disappeared, and that their house was shut up. Now the Gissings were the only valid proof connecting Drayton with Letty Barnes, for the shred of her letter found by Oswald was a proof to himself alone, since he could produce no evidence to show that he had found it where he had, in Drayton’s pocket. So that the Gissings disappearance had quite dashed the cup of triumph from Oswald’s hands.

But a fresh hope had arisen for Oswald. “James” had one night voluntarily revealed to him much of the details of the tragedy— “the struggle for a letter,” the “motive” — evidently finding some foolhardy pleasure, as Oswald thought, in living the tragedy over again, on the pretence of “reasoning;” and how if “James” could be led on to tell — too much? It was a possibility. Oswald, at least, would not fail to tempt him. And so it happened that if Hartwell’s “reason” should chance to let itself over-much run on the subject of Letty Barnes, it was quite likely to put the hangman’s noose around ins own neck.

Reclining on a couch, Hartwell let his eyes run over Oswald's notes; then after some minutes of thought, which he spent frowning deeply and with closed eyes, he said:

"She seems to have been expecting the lover that night, and certainly met him first in the tavern before they went into the grounds."

Oswald was amazed at this candour: "This is delicious candour!" he thought to himself.

"Yes, that may be so, James," he said aloud, "very curious. But how does your 'reason' arrive at all that?"

"That much, I think, is perfectly established," said Hartwell. "You have only to consider the powder-puff in the girl's pocket, her whole dress, the watch and chain. She was to be seen by her lover in the light."

Oswald laughed with bitter gladness. As "James'" only relative, he was specially bitter just now at the preposterous "adoption" of young Bobbie Hartwell.

"James, you are admirable," he said. "Oh, I am quite sincere. However you come to know all this, your mere manner of telling it is even more extraordinary than your notion of building laboratories. That blow on the head has knocked all the good stuff from the interior to the surface of your brain. You are no longer James Drayton—"

Hartwell looked at him with a chill "beware!" in that smile of his eye with the wrinkles at its corner; for any remark about change in Drayton, unless it was sweet flattery in the mouth of Julia, instantly stirred up in Hartwell a threatful watchfulness, for his nerves were always on the *qui vive* to detect the first dawn of a suspicion that he was not Drayton. Oswald's question about the watch at Aylsham—"Why can't you open it?"—was stored in Hartwell's memory, and now to it was added these other words: "You are no longer James Drayton," two little remarks that might

well have made Oswald take a hurried trip to Australia or Peru, if he had understood the still menace of that humour in Hartwell's sideward look. But Hartwell, as was said before, "fled when no human man pursued." If anyone had told Oswald that Hartwell was not Drayton, for some minutes such a person would have seemed crazy to Oswald. For though the mental difference between Hartwell and Drayton was very great, the bodily resemblance was just as great, or greater, and it is by the body that men know one another.

Before anything farther could be said on the subject of Letty Barnes, a footman entered the drawing-room, and walked up to Hartwell, saying:

"One Mary Liskeard to see you, sir."

"I know the name," thought Hartwell at once, "she has threatened me in a letter. Her daughter's husband was lost with the 'Berenice,' and her daughter then drowned herself." Then he had a quick thought that this might be the very woman who lay in wait for him every night in Addison Road and rising, he walked a little way across the room with the footman, saying in a low voice near the man's ear: "A very big woman, with a very freckled face, John?"

"Yes, sir." answered the footman.

"Tell her this fib, John, that I leave England for six months to-morrow night, nor can she see me to-night. But tell her that she may see me to-morrow evening between six and eight, as I leave my office in the City, then give her the Fenchurch Street address."

While the man went down to deliver this message, Hartwell, in his keen interest in this woman, ran into his bedroom and peeped from behind the curtains as she passed down the drive. On returning to the drawing-room, he took his stand by the Arlesienne, who was rattling off a piece on the piano.

He afterwards made Bobbie recite "The Lotus-eaters," spent the evening socially, and reasoned no more about Letty Barnes that night.

The next morning he went to the City as usual, spent the day in work as usual, and no one looking at the face of Hartwell all that day could have imagined the terrible work that lay before him that evening — the terrible, doubtful meeting with his enemies at Twyford Buildings first of all and then, if he should happen to survive that meeting, the equally terrible meeting with the admirable and beloved Julia afterwards. About five in the afternoon he called the clerk, Ife, and said to him:

"I am requesting Durrant and Co. to make me a tender and specification for the repair of No. 7, Twyford Buildings. I want to beg you, therefore, to take a scuttle of coals in a cab and to get me a roaring fire lighted there in that large first floor just at the top of the stair. Go now and, in going away from the place after lighting the fire, be careful to leave the front door a little open for Durrant's man when he goes."

Before six o'clock, then, a fire was burning in that room of No. 7, Twyford Buildings. At Fenchurch Street Hartwell signed letters, and wound up the day's work. One by one the clerks went away. But he still remained alone in the office, doing nothing, pacing his room, glancing frequently at the clock, till it was 7.15 p.m. That was the hour at which Barnes was to be at Twyford Buildings in the lighted room. At 7.30 Kirk was to be standing in the alley before the door, waiting for Hartwell to come to him. Hartwell intended to be punctual in keeping his appointment with Kirk, but he wished Barnes to spend the quarter of an hour between 7.15 and 7.30 on a stretch of nervous expectancy. At 7.15 it was time for him to start. He went down, knowing that Mary Liskeard was there in the street near the outer door. He had seen her arrival from a window of the office, but he passed her with a rush and a run, and got himself safely into a cab.

He had caused her, as he had caused Barnes, to believe that this night was her last chance, and the deranged woman, all possessed with her mania and her mission, was eager to seize it. She followed Hartwell in another cab, as he expected that she would. At this hour Barnes was standing lonely and lurking, with an intense ear and an alert pistol, in the room with the fire in the Twyford Buildings house.

The night was thick with a London fog, very cold and very dark; the lights in the streets and in the shops seemed to smoulder; all was uproar, gloom, and dull fires; and London resembled an extinct, but still howling, Tartarus. Nearly all the interior of No. 7, Twyford Buildings was about as black as it could be. Only that one room with the fire in it jiggled in an ecstatic indecision between light and shadow.

While Hartwell and Mary Liskeard were on their way in two cabs, the jockey, Kirk, arrived punctually at Twyford Buildings at 7.29, and stood at the door of No. 7, waiting to see Hartwell come. Twyford Buildings is a narrow alley of some ten houses on each side. It is not passable to vehicles, for at its east end are two barrier-posts, and at its west one of the houses projects, this house being joined to the opposite house by an arch. Two lanterns hanging outside two of the houses light its cosy wretchedness. A rare woman or a child may be seen lounging in a doorway, always looking terribly poor.

Hartwell alighted in Holborn at the Royal Music Hall, and ran southward down a passage toward Lincoln's Inn Fields with his eyes in his back, for he knew that the woman was trotting after him in heavy, stealthy haste. He came to the two barrier-posts and turned westward into Twyford Buildings, and instantly Kirk slipped within the door of No. 7, as Hartwell had bidden him do.

Hartwell, too, slipping some moments after Kirk within the door, whispered quickly into Kirk's ear: "Perhaps we had better change hats," and he whipped off Kirk's Homburg hat, and put his own silk hat on Kirk's head. He then caught up the light weight of the jockey on his back, as had been arranged, and now with sounding steps he walked down the passage toward the stair, half-expecting meanwhile Mary Liskeard's knife in someone's back, though not in his own, which Kirk protected. But, in fact, he was nearly up the stairs before the woman entered the darkness of the passage, and there stood uncertain what to do next, for she could not see the stair, and though she heard Hartwell's footsteps, she did not know where they were.

But, in any case, the poor Kirk was doomed: for if he escaped the woman, there remained for him Barnes. Barnes heard the loud coming step, the step of a heavy man like Hartwell. He had quite closed the door in order to have the first short chance at the opening, but still the coming footsteps were distinct, and Barnes stood near behind the door, alert to shoot the first shot, for he believed that Hartwell was about to shoot him.

When Hartwell came to the door, he deposited Kirk without making a sound, whispering at the same time very softly into Kirk's ear the two words, "In here." Kirk turned the handle of the door, opened it, and looked in, as he moved to enter. And the moment Barnes' eyes were aware in the dancing firelight of a human being and a silk hat, prompt as lightning he fired, and Kirk dropped, shot through the head. At the same time Hartwell made off stealthily on tip-toe up the passage in which the door of that room stood.

As for Mary Liskeard, the effect upon her nerves of that shot may be imagined. She was in a strange house surrounded with darkness, and she sickened at the unknown on hearing the report of Barnes' pistol. She hid in

one of the rooms below, opening upon the passage, her body shaken in an agitation almost like that of epilepsy. But she would not run. She waited for Hartwell to come down to go out. During his passage from the stair to the door her mission would be fulfilled.

Barnes, meantime, understood by the fire light that he had not shot the murderer of his daughter. He stood over the body. Certainly, Kirk was not Drayton. And now panic took hold of Barnes, for awful is the thing done, far awfuller than the thing projected. It appears in a different light, it cannot, moreover, be undone. Barnes smote his brow, this was not Drayton. All thought of avenging his daughter that night vanished instantly from his mind, for one corpse, like one dinner, is enough for one night. Barnes' only instinct for the moment was flight from what he had done, and he fled.

But Mary Liskeard in her room below, hearing the hurried, light step coming down the stairs, thought that it was "Drayton," as she could not help thinking, for the pistol shot fired by Barnes at Kirk was to Mary Liskeard a shot fired by "Drayton" at her; she had therefore the idea that Drayton had decoyed her into this house to do her to death, for she knew that he knew of her continual spying on him. She had the natural instinct, therefore, that since "Drayton" had decoyed her there for such a purpose the house would be empty. Any step, therefore, which she might hear would certainly be "Drayton's" and the stealthy haste with which Barnes came down confirmed her in her certainty that Barnes was "Drayton," for she felt without thinking, that "Drayton," after firing his shot at her, must have lost her, and now was escaping, lest she should come upon and kill him in the dark. She could see nothing, but when Barnes was very near to her in the passage, into which she had slipped out from her hiding-place, she could discern a form. And he dropped so heavily as to make the old house tremble, for she had stabbed him in the left temple.

At that moment, before the woman could run out, Hartwell himself appeared at the top of the stairs, hatless, holding a lighted candle. The woman looked alternately from him to the wounded man at her feet; and severely, with bright eyes, Hartwell looked down at her. This silent gazing and looking lasted, perhaps, as long as a minute. Then the woman moved, big as she was, with the movement of a panther — swift, stealthy, and cruel, she moved toward Hartwell.

Hartwell sent a howl at her.

“Do not pursue me, Mary Liskeard!” he passionately shouted, “these rooms are full of pitfalls! Let it not be said that I was the cause of your death, Mary!”

Out he puffed the candle, and ran. But she was close upon him, deaf to his counsel, the knife in her hand. He could actually hear behind him the short breaths of her heavy haste. They ran the length of the first floor down a passage which lay between rooms on either hand, then into a room on the left, then through room after room, doors banging after their flight, mostly through perfect darkness, with only his footfalls to guide her course, she all blown and panting, with feeble little womanly cries of “Oh!” and “Stop him!” and “My daughter!” Hartwell knew that several of these rooms had traps for the passage of merchandise from one floor to the other, and he knew in which of them the traps were, but as for her, she ran quite blindly, though she chanced always to escape, till the race brought them to a doorway without a floor, opening sheer upon the yard at the back of the house. Hartwell knew it, and since she was close behind him, leapt through the door, alighting safe on his toes and palms twenty feet below; but Mary Liskeard expected no drop, ran on through the door after him, and with all that weight came down with a child’s outcry. The yard was paved with

small cobble stones. When Hartwell bent over her, he found that she was dead.

He entered the house by a window, went upon the stair, took his hat from Kirk's head, passed by Barnes lying on his face in the passage on the ground floor, and went away, leaving the door wide open. Hartwell thought that Barnes was dead, or he would not have left him lying there without assistance, but Barnes was not dead. Later in the night Barnes was found hanging half out of the front door. The knife had penetrated the left temple, wounding that part of the brain which doctors call "Broca's area." A wound just there on the left side means dumbness, and also paralysis of the right side of the body, and this was thenceforth Barnes' wrecked condition.

Barnes could neither tell nor write what had happened. When the police subsequently inquired in Fenchurch Street why the door of No. 7, Twyford Buildings had been left open that night, they were told that it was in order that a building contractor might go over it, and Barnes' wound and the two deaths remained one of the unsolved mysteries. It was supposed that the woman had stabbed Barnes, shot Kirk, and then committed suicide.

As for Hartwell, on leaving Twyford Buildings, his enemies having thus destroyed one another, he dined at a restaurant, and took a cab to Brook Street, in order to keep his appointment, with the fair Julia.

XVI. HARTWELL PAINS A LADY



THE FRANK AND admirable Julia met Hartwell on the stairs as he came up, and led him by the hand to a narrow, long drawing-room, with a full-length crayon of herself at one of the narrow ends, and an alabaster hearthplace at the opposite end. In the room sat "Aunt Margaret" (Lady Wisden), a very faded and bejewelled type, fifty years of age if she was a day. Her much-painted face had the crude glaring look of amateurish water-colour sketches, not pleasing to the male eye; her cheek-bones were high, twin thrones on which sat Rouge; her lips thin; She sat on a couch near the hearthplace, and with her demurely sat the young Bobbie Hartwell.

Julia had only recently come in, her hat was still on her head, and at once on Hartwell's entrance she began flurriedly to talk, saying anything that came to her lips, as if afraid of a moment's silence.

"Here, you see," she said, "is your new Bobbie: he has made me play him a Traumbild, and has been reciting 'The Lotus-eaters' for Aunt Margaret, who flatters me with the assurance that he resembles me! He is charming with his accent and his freshness, but will spoil within two years, for all the debutantes will fall in love—"

"Why is he here?" asked Hartwell. "As for the debutantes, they shall not see him much, the young man shall be in his workshop."

Hartwell's lips were pressed together with a firm expression. He was rather pale. The scene at No. 7, Twyford Buildings, from which he had lately come, had not been a happy one, and he foresaw that the scene to which he was now come might be even more trying to his strength of will.

He was therefore in no drawing-room mood and, even as he shook hands with Lady Wisden, he said:

“My visit must be short, if you will pardon my abruptness. You, my young friend, will at once take yourself off whithersoever your whim may lead you. Pardon me, I am not quite well to-night.”

Silence fell at this. Julia shot a glance at Hartwell, and changed colour at the severe and iron look of his face. The boy at once rose blushing, shook hands with Julia and Hartwell, and was about to shake hands with Aunt Margaret, when she said to him, “I am coming, too,” and followed the boy out.

Hartwell and Julia were left alone. Hartwell sat on the small Sheraton couch near the fire, on which Lady Wisden and Bobbie had been sitting. Julia stood a little way off, somewhat behind him, looking at him. Hartwell looked into the fire, leaning over his umbrella-handle, looking prim as usual, the umbrella being neatly folded, his gloves on, with all the buttons buttoned, and his beard having a vague parting down the middle from which the hair was brushed away on each side, giving the effect, of a certain provincial-French primness and neatness, especially in connection with the rather finical pressure of the thick lips, with the definite point in the middle of the upper. This parting of the beard, and brushing it aside, was a very un-Drayton-like thing, for the dead Drayton would never have done it, but it was a very Hartwell-like one; and it had attracted some notice.

While Hartwell looked at the fire in this way, Julia stood silent, scared, drawn up to her tall length, a little behind him. She had now thrown her hat from her, and stood handsomely dressed in an over-skirt of black silk muslin, her chest well bared, with heliotrope orchids at her waist, and on her neck and chest a necklace of pearls which had been given her by

Drayton, and was purposely worn by her for this meeting, because she thought that it was the beloved Hartwell who had given it to her.

Hartwell, too, looking at the fire was silent, inwardly strengthening himself, thinking to himself “a man should at all costs be a man,” till Julia, making a sudden decision on the rising within her of a feeling of trust and confidence in him, went and sat on a yellow-satin stool at his feet, all her length gracefully coiled down almost to the level of his knee. And he, with a tender and relenting smile of the eye, looked down upon the soft, wave-fabric of her hair.

Nothing was said on either side for some time, till she, scared afresh by this silence, broke into a rather nervous mock-gaiety, saying gallopingly the first thing that entered her head, with apprehensive eyebrows and little upward glances at him all the time.

Hartwell hardly heard what was being said, till she went on to tell some tale about Oswald, when he more or less understood what she was relating.

“I must tell you,” she was saying: “I have had a definite ‘offer,’ if you please — your brother Oswald. I have captivated a family! Or not quite definite, perhaps, but tending that way. He stood just there — two nights ago — bowing a little, smiling a little, his hands held stubbornly behind him, even as he offered me one of them. He drawled, and he droned, and he accumulated hints, till his meaning emerged, while I tingled at the distinction. He had heard that his good James was no longer in the running. Everyone had heard, and expected it, and he hoped that he might prove the acceptable Abel to your Cain. I really thought of ‘c,a,n,e.’ Fatuity of him! I replied that everybody had heard wrongly, and I always liked elder brothers —”

But now she broke off in the midst of the unreal prattle, glancing up with a pretty dismay at him, for there he still sat, saying nothing, bent over the

handle of his umbrella, and gazing at the fire. And again scared, she ran off anew into talk about his approaching cruise in the *Sempronia*, saying that she had asked so-and-so, as he had bid her, and intended to be charming in the smartest yachting costume that had ever been devised and built. But again she broke down in this pretence to herself and to him that nothing was the matter, and now, looking up appealingly, she said to Hartwell:

“What is all the mystery?”

To Julia’s query, Hartwell had perforce to reply. He spoke thus:

“You are dear to my heart, Julia. I cannot refuse to myself the triumph of repeating to you that profound verity. But what you expect from me now is not such avowals, but rather some explanation of my abrupt departure from Castle Moran, and of my absence from your side since then, after weakly permitting you to give expression to your gentle inclinations towards me. This explanation it is not easy to give, Julia — no, not easy. But I say now, definitely, that many things peremptorily prohibit our nearer union. Ah! I astonish, I give you pain, my dear one. I am much to be pitied that I needs must.”

“But what things prohibit?” she cried, with a terrified expression on her face, “there were no things before!”

“There always were, there are still. I say that I was never half worthy of you, nor am now.”

“Really! but surely you might permit me to decide that for myself, James, as I have the right, and the power, to do. I know you now quite thoroughly, though I didn’t before, and there isn’t any woman on any throne who wouldn’t be glad — I laugh, if that is the reason.”

“It is, nevertheless, a real, an abundant reason, Julia,” said Hartwell with great earnestness. “Your words are sweet, but let me not allow myself to be enticed by them. You have formed a mirage of me in the cells of your mind

which has no objective reality. Not even in the least am I what I seem to you. I know myself, I know you, and I compare the two.” — now Hartwell proceeded to give her a lecture on her merits, with a certain professorial zest in his own choice of words— “In that glory of your eyes, now purple, now black as pools of ink, dwells all sincerity. Words which on other lips are the most trivial, have when uttered by you a memorable distinction and sweetness. What an emblem of purity to me is your soft cheek, just brushed with pollen-dusts of purplish and rose, like the colored rind of the peach! Your soft and wavy hair — dove brown — If the Madonna had been you, surely I should have been a Christian, Julia! The two delicate curves of your face running from the thick of each cheek to the tip of the chin, between which as in a sunshiny dale your smile resides. Your small-facedness, like the racehorse; the undiminished breadth of the upper part of your forehead; the marble nobility there presiding; your long-drawn shapeliness; your princess presence; your athlete freedom; the perfection of your whole skeleton; your lips compounded of the flesh of water-lily and withering petals of the rose — All these are the signs of an aristocracy of organisation, Julia, with which my gross clay must not aspire to mate itself. No! such pleasures are not for me and, with pain, I have to renounce them.”

“But what a list of me!” cried Julia fondly. “Was over woman so exalted with flattery so weighty and judicial, like blue-books and statistics? My hair, my skeleton — I am enamored of myself! — and the lips last of all for dessert, and liqueurs. But that is not how ‘I’ like ‘you,’ James, in little sips; I like you at one gallant draught, like the Three Mousquetaires.”

Hartwell had the impulse to touch her hand so strongly, that the restraint of it caused him to groan inwardly, while he made the half-absent remark:

“But we are made of little sips, we are colonies of cells.”

“No, nothing about cells, now, James,” answered Julia firmly. “How can you, when our hearts are heavy? And why should they be heavy? You have not given me any reason! You give me pain, then.”

“Let me be pitied! because I must. There are real reasons. We are not to be mated, we are different as the Poles. If you knew me, you might hate, you would despise, me. I say that I am an utterly selfish thing; selfish in principle, hard, pitiless on occasion; a — liar; what you would call an atheist—”

“You don’t believe in God, really? and the next world?” asked the excellent Julia.

“The next world is the moon,” replied Hartwell, “and is therefore moonshine. Of course, Julia, I believe in the moon. As to believing in God, I believe in nothing else, since nothing else exists; but my God, who, I assure you, is the one and true God, is so essentially different from yours, that you would, I say, assuredly call me atheist, or at least atheous—”

“What do I care?” said Julia suddenly, quietly, with a pout, “your God is sure to be the real one. I have got mine from hearsay, and you have thought about yours. Isn’t thought all mixed up with that little superior smile in the eye? and like an old monarch throned among the cares of empire on your forehead. Whatever you are in that way, it is certain that I am, too, James. What do I care? But confess, James, is not our discussion just now about atheism a trifle unreal?”

Hartwell keenly felt its unrealness, for Julia was a modern woman-of-the-world, taking the world and its good things as she found them — its balls and its villas, its hunting, fencing, and music, without giving herself any headaches about whence it all came, or why it was all here, or whither it all went. Such questions only haunt naturally inquisitive minds, or else minds wracked with pain and sorrow, and Julia had had no sorrow so far,

and no time to be inquisitive about such matters. Hartwell's suggestion, therefore, that she should give him up because he was "atheous" was felt to be unreal by both of them, for the admirable Julia was herself rather "atheous." Such talk was, in fact, merely a beating about the bush, and a putting off of the hard thing which had to be said. Hartwell's eyes closed in a silent agony, his palm laid lightly on his hair, for she was driving him step by step toward the statement which he had come to make, but shrank more from than he had shrunk from Mary Liskeard's knife or Barnes' revolver.

"Not real!" he answered gruffly, with an unreal emphasis. "I am as hard of heart as Nature herself. I tell you now that every day I tell a thousand lies. I am at this moment, in a way undreamable by you, lieing to you — even, Julia, to you. I am fresh, as I sit here, from callously watching the execution of three persons who dared to wish me ill. These things, approved by my reason, must be hateful to yours. I am utterly selfish—"

"But what do I care?" asked Julia, deaf to all this. "You are not selfish. You are unselfish to *me*, that is all I care about. Are you not at this moment breaking your heart — I can see, you know — for my sake, because you have got it into your head that it would somehow be bad for me to marry you? Is that unselfish, or not?"

"Darling of my heart — Yes, even that is selfish for, by a mystery, I love you better than I love myself, and your hurt would be greater pain to me than this hewing off of my right arm which I now do. Julia, Julia, you must give me up. Julia, you must. I beseech, I bid you—"

"But it all sounds so unreal!" she said pleadingly. "Oh, think of my maimed life! At least, let one know some reason! I seem to be in a nightmare, I understand nothing.

"Dear! you should not, you should not! Give — me up? and part with everything? up the ghost — !"

“It may — possibly — kill me,” said Hartwell. “You are too young, too pliant, to die; and time will assuredly solace your discomfort. A day may even come when you will feel yourself disposed, Julia, to further the evolution of our human race by casting into its life-whirlpool the products of your excellent motherhood. The cells, the brain, whose purely physiological interaction causes love—”

“No cells — I won’t hear,” cried Julia! “Cells is only a subterfuge to conceal from yourself that you are bitterly suffering, and you won’t tell me why, that I may comfort you. Oh, what has happened? Why, you were always my constant lackey before the accident, running to do my whims, but now you are different — you part your beard under the chin, and brush it neatly aside, and insist on cells and apes — and now when I like like you, like you, like you, to leave me!

“Frankly I could not bear it. You don’t know what a thing is in me for you, dear. And no real reason, none — none is conceivable — it is only a love-whim. Cell me no cells! Let’s talk of prison-cells — arms that more lock themselves by pulling — Will you? See, I woo you!”

Now, in her panic of losing him, she collected and lavished upon him all her passion and power of beautiful serpent, morbid dove, and love-sick woman, pleading, fondling, tempting, laughing, crying, working hard to seduce his senses and enchain his will, with a yearning, upward gaze in her eyes— “I woo you. Be good to me now. You shall, you shall. Look into my eyes, gaze, you like them half-closed? languishing in love-liquor?

“Am I divine when I am impassioned? You never saw me — my eyes turn black. (Oh, if I were to fail — !) And the lips, you may be rough, and yet kind, Jimmy — what did you say of them? ‘composed of lily and rose-leaf,’ with a dash of woman’s blood, just to kiss with, and a snake in the flowers to infect you with the malignant sweet o’ me. No, don’t try, you

can't cope with the resources of the woman you love. You may slight me till the moment I choose, and then I'll drown you in surprises. I'm wily — you remember Uncle Toby and the widow. Don't try — James, my own, how strongly you love me! With what wings I love you! Let's be chums, near and dear, shall we? Then I will cast the products of my excellent motherhood wildly into a whirlpool, if only their father be — biological. Is it agreed now, then? He likes my face on his knee, kiss — then? Now? I'll taste sweeter than honeydew and milk of Paradise! — Now? Eh? No, really, really, you should not push my head away, James, really, no. Oh! how very fatal! What, are you still stern then? But — great Heavens! — what a disastrous thing!”

Hartwell had sprung up roughly, white to the lips, she still sitting on the foot-stool, staring up in a wide-eyed scare at him, apprehensive of his next moods, understanding now that this was no dallying or “love-whim, but the wounding of her life in earnest. And, in fact, Hartwell's next words were monstrous, brutally direct and unequivocal. Turned toward the fire, with his back to her, and looking downward, he pronounced the words:

“I happen to be already — married. I had been married some years when — I — engaged myself to you. I was, indeed, merely a low ruffian. And my wife probably lives.”

It was all that was left to Hartwell to say! He might, indeed, have told her that he was not Drayton, but a poor working-man, that Drayton was married, but not Hartwell. But at that time he was certain that in either case he must lose her. Neither Drayton nor Hartwell, it seemed to him, could marry her, for Drayton was already married and Hartwell was a Birmingham working-man. In telling her that he was Drayton and married, he lost her, but kept Drayton's wealth and estate. If he had revealed to her that he was not the married Drayton, but the widower Hartwell, who was a

working-man and an impostor, it seemed to him that he would have lost both her and Drayton's wealth and estate also.

Hartwell, looking down at the fire with his back half-turned to Julia, did not glance at her for a minute or so after making his declaration that he was already married. He waited for her to speak, but she said nothing. When at last the corners of his eyes did take her in, he saw that her face was laid sideways on the couch, there where she sat on the foot-stool. Her eyes were closed, and it was a face as screwed in silent pain as that of a woman pierced with neuralgia, or torture of the thumb-screw. This Hartwell could not stand, and with a severe flash of the eyes and a seizure of his umbrella, as though he were snatching it from someone, he made off, trembling, grumbling something, without having once looked directly at her.

She, for her part, must have become quickly conscious of her loneliness, for half-way down the stairs he heard her scream after him. She had leapt up with the cry: "But it couldn't be true—"

This sound only the more hurried his headlong steps. He got his hat in an agitated dream, and rushed from the house into the foggy night, shaken to the depths, horrified at his own ruthlessness, and frightened at his desolate future.

XVII. HARTWELL SAILS THE SEAS



HARTWELL'S PROJECTED YACHTING-PARTY in the *Sempronia* never became a fact for, five days after his break with Julia, the invited guests learned with astonishment that Hartwell had gone alone. He took no one with him save Dulaunay and a young Creole doctor, named Kinsey, whom he had got by advertising for a doctor, and for nearly three years the yacht was Hartwell's home.

Those years must be rapidly passed over, in order that we may follow what afterwards happened, and that the narrative may not become too long.

Hartwell had furnished one of the *Sempronia's* stately rooms with the fittings and apparatus of a laboratory, promising himself some forgetfulness of Julia, in scientific research on the sea. But this hope did not come to very much, on account of the state of his health. He was a troubled wanderer, a dyspeptic guest in the world, with a confirmed acidity of the stomach, and whatever he ate, or saw or experienced, had bitterness in it for him.

Unknown to anyone, he returned to London toward the end of the season that first year, leaving Dulaunay on the yacht, and he spent two weeks in a secluded incognito at a West-End hotel. There he made the acquaintance of a certain old major who knew everyone's movements, and by the gossip of this old major, as well as by what appeared in the newspapers, Hartwell could follow the goings and comings of Julia, who was being ground in the usual Society mill. One night he lay in wait among a mass of carriages outside the Empress Rooms where she was a hostess at a poudre-ball that night, and he caught a glimpse of her. Then, once again he saw her through

a glass darkly at Newmarket, he being a long distance from her, for he did not wish her to see him. And again one Sunday on the lawn opposite Stanhope Gate he saw her, this time with a long look, for he was directly behind her. She was talking with two men, and seemed gay enough. On none of these three occasions did she suspect that he was anywhere near her.

He had put himself into the hands of a stomach-specialist when he first arrived in London from his ship, but he returned to the sea grievously ill. There seemed to be no cure in the world for his splenetic sickness.

One midnight Dulaunay and the “chief” were leaning over the taffrail of the *Sempronia*, smoking. Earlier in the night a troupe of dancing-girls and jugglers had been on board for a dinner given by the ship to the podesta and grandi of the white town under the hills inland, and this merriment had kept the count from his bed. The sea lay with hardly a wave on it, the ship was as dim and lonely as a cloister, the moon was in the sky, and the universe looked an Italian universe all stained in that bluest blue in which clothes are washed. Suddenly, as the two men smoked and chatted, looking over the sea, a quiet step passed behind them. Dulaunay turned and saw Hartwell, who was in pyjamas, with bare feet, and the count put up his hand to the “chief” with a gesture which meant. “You wait;” and he himself followed Hartwell.

Hartwell was asleep. He walked three quarters of the *Sempronia*’s length — a considerable distance, for she was a long, low craft of 3,000 tons, with three masts and one funnel. Then, as though he could see, he turned into a lane between the smoking room and a skylight, strange sounds coming from him all the time, groans, little whimpers of trouble. And back they went toward the poop, Dulaunay dogging Hartwell’s steps, step for step, to the stair, down to the main deck, and so into Hartwell’s bedroom. The electric

light was shining in the room, and Dulaunay could see the blank and solemn-looking white of the sleeper's eyes as, standing before a mirror, Hartwell uttered sound upon sound of suffering. His right hand slowly and falteringly lifted, and pointing with a limp finger at his own image in the glass, he mumbled:

"I know that you are not Drayton, but myself. Let it not be said that I have ever feared you."

When Dulaunay touched his hand, Hartwell started awake, uttered a sob, and was presently induced to lie on his bed.

These nocturnal pilgrimages had become not uncommon with Hartwell of late.

Dulaunay went up puzzling his brains as to the meaning of those words: "You are not Drayton, but myself," for if Drayton was himself, yet not Drayton, who, then, was Drayton? That was a fine question in the metaphysic.

The excellent count had become Hartwell's very faithful nurse and friend. Together they went to Puyde-Dome to visit an old chateau among the mountain ranges of Upper Auvergne, where Dulaunay's mother and sister lived. They were the last representatives of the Counts d'Artenset, very poor, but very proud in a French way, and still highly honored by the peasantry who lived in those hills. The home-coming of Dulaunay, who was the reigning count, was made the occasion of a fete in three villages, and here, in the half-ruined chateau, Hartwell spent a pleasant fortnight. Three days of it, indeed, he spent in bed, but the other days were passed in the enjoyment of an old-world atmosphere of quietness and culture, and of the charms of the two ladies' society. There were other chateaux and a copper mine in the neighborhood, and to these he took drives with the ladies through natural beauties, for which he had always the keenest eye.

In going south from there to join the *Sempronia* at Genoa, during a week in Milan he one night caught sight of Julia and Lady Wisden at an opera at the Scala. Then a long time passed before he saw her again. The interval was filled by random cruisings; all the coasts of the Eastern and Western Mediterranean, Norway and the Baltic, from St. Petersburg to Odessa, were leisurely visited, and now Hartwell and the count were in an atmosphere of brigandage and coloured clothes in a Sicilian mountain world. Now in casinos, and now among Byzantine palaces, and tombs of the Osmanlis. For two months Hartwell was trying the bromo-iodine treatment of Salsomaggiore, but whether or no this might have done him good, if he had continued there, he had to go away to attend a series of Imperial functions at Moscow, without feeling any the better for the treatment. Hartwell was now known in Europe not merely as a rich man, but as a thinker, and had become familiar with the life of Courts, for in the second year he had published an essay on the "Causes of Evolution," and the small work had been widely translated and "crowned." This pamphlet, which was supposed to be marked by great "scientific imagination," traced in a detailed and remarkable way the probable history of the change from ape into man, the main reason, according to Hartwell, being the so-called Glacial Period, an event which forced the apes to light fires, or else be frozen. And this thesis, which was apparently new to the scientific world, caused him to be decorated at Berlin, and to be made a Fellow of the Societies.

From time to time he paid a flying visit to England. Twice he saw his son, Bobbie, once at the estate in Bucks, and once at Rugby, where Hartwell himself had been "educated." One dark midnight he stood for a long time looking at the factory in Birmingham in which he had for many years been a workman, and he dropped a ten-pound note into the letter-box of an old workman friend.

He was now free of “business,” save of such as arose from the estates and from a continued stream of correspondence. He had pensioned all the older members of Drayton’s staff, and he could be liberal, as not only the widow McCalmont found, but as the hosts of begging letter-writers — the hospitals, societies, missions, etc. — sometimes found: but, on the whole, the saying went that Drayton had become “more close-fisted” with his money.

As to Corton Chantry, in Norfolk, Hartwell knew nothing of it, save that one of his agents paid taxes for a comparatively unimportant property in ruins somewhere down there. No woodman, no servant there had even called upon Hartwell to recognise his or her existence. He assumed that the old place was given over to the bats, and practically forgot that there was such a place. But one day when he was in harbour at Ajaccio, for the second time within three years there reached him a letter from a Norwich Bank reminding him that “the second £400 deposited for the use of Steve Anderson was nearly exhausted,” and again he wondered, as he had wondered before, who this Steve Anderson could be, and sent a cheque for a further £400 to the bank for Steve Anderson’s use.

Sometimes a hope would strike like lightning through Hartwell’s breast; “Perhaps ‘the wife’ is dead! She gives no signs, no sign, that ‘wife’ who ‘screams.’” If “the wife” was only dead, Julia was still unmarried, and might still be his. At the end of each year he had searched the newspapers for every day of it, to see if Julia was engaged. Her movements were recorded, he followed her in fancy wherever she went, from country house to casa, from city to kurhaus, but she remained unengaged.

Sometimes he had another hope, vague enough, that “the wife” might not really be a wife. But one idle day — it was in Bucks — while rummaging in an old trunk full of papers in a bed-room once used by Drayton, he came

upon a marriage certificate, the certificate of Drayton's marriage. Drayton had married his wife in the town of Colesburg, South Africa, fifteen years before, she at the time of her marriage with him being a widow of twenty, named Martha Harper.

If Hartwell happened to stay a few days at Addison Road, he saw the bald head of Oswald, who was every month a more fossilised dawdler toward old fogeyism and an empty old age. Oswald, is the "villain" of our history, and we may wish that we had a more terrible and orthodox villain, but we must represent him as he really was. Always still embarrassed for money, Oswald lived in a weary limbo of clubs, bets, debts, and other people's dinner. The Gissings seemed gone forever, Oswald's dreary brain could get no nearer the implication of his brother in the murder of Letty Barnes. "James'" indigestion of body and mind would permit of no further "reasonings" for the present on that fascinating subject, "James'" visits to town were too flying for reasonings, and "James'" cheque-book remained a dream to Oswald.

Oswald had only this one spiteful joy, that "James" and Julia were, evidently, permanently parted. Oswald did not yet despair of Julia, he saw her often. She even seemed of late to like his society in a special way. Someone had suggested to him that this might be only because he was "James'" brother, but Oswald knew better. He had a queer, fixed figment of a thought in his head that, since she had accepted Cain, she must needs accept Abel. He meant to try Julia again some day, and this mania, which was destined to bear him disastrous fruit, grew in Oswald.

Once when Hartwell was spending a night at the house in Addison Road, Oswald said to him:

"There is Corton Chantry, why not let me renovate the old shooting-box, Jimmy, as my man, Magee, suggests — it would cost precious little, I

suppose — and call it my country house for the present? It will be mine some day by the entail, of course, supposing I outlive you, and you leave no heir. Those unpreserved old coverts must be running wild with pheasants and poachers. I might take some men down there for a month's fun. May I?"

And to this Hartwell answered:

"I suppose you may, if you like."

Hartwell went away that time very sick, weary of Europe and of life, and determined to start for the Far East from Marseilles, where the *Sempronia* lay. In order to get to Marseilles he went to Paris, where he met Dulaunay and the mulatto, Dr Kinsey. He had thought that Julia also was in Paris, but when he got there he learned that she had left Paris two days before, for her Cannes villa. Upon this Hartwell, Dulaunay, and Kinsey set off for Cannes, neither Hartwell himself nor either of the two at all knowing why they were going to Cannes but, in fact, a whisper was growing urgent and more urgent in Hartwell's mind, which said to him:

"Suppose you tell her that 'the wife' is dead or suppose you tell her that it was not really true that you are married, and so save your own life, even if you ruin hers." This temptation, which was as strong as a rope that drew him, more and more, drew Hartwell toward Julia.

The three men arrived at Cannes, and on the second night after their arrival, Hartwell was on the grounds of the Villa Borgia-Costi, where Julia was. It was already a late hour when he entered the grounds, but after prowling for another hour about the olive grove and elaborate "water works" of the villa, he got a sight of her, as she sat alone in a boudoir, writing letters. By leaning aside on a water-butt, with his weight supported by his left palm, he could peep in at a window and watch her, but even as he looked, her face was hidden from him, for she laid it on the table at which

she was writing, and kept it so a long time. About her bent form fell the draperies of a white tea-gown. He saw the bare back of her neck, and her bare forearms which were crossed over the table, on which also he saw his pamphlet on Evolution, and Hartwell's heart beat wildly against his side, as all the trees of the grove seemed to whisper him: "Tell her, since she will like the lie," and the cicada chirped to him, "Tell her, Hartwell, and get some sleep for yourself," but when she raised her self with a despondently-shaken head, suddenly his eye flashed severely, he muttered: "No! let this be the last of such fooling," and he went away.

That this unfed hankering near about her must sooner or later bring him to the hospital or the grave the worthy Hartwell saw, and now he made haste to put the breadth of the earth between her and him. He went, as he had intended, to the Far East, peeped at the Mongolian Courts, saw the reproachful eyes of old Gissing at Hong Kong, visited the islands of spice, and after nine months of the East returned with a dark pale face, thinner cheeks, and health so broken, that only a mulish power of will any longer kept him on his feet. Weary of the barren world of the sea, he now settled awhile in a feudal rocca, or fortress, small but impreguably perched among mountain crags not far from Siena, and here again he heard of Julia. She had come to Siena from Venice for the July festival which they call "Palio delle Contrade," and was occupying with her aunt one of those grim palaces of the fourteenth century — a vast, dark block of building, near the centre of the town.

XVIII. HARTWELL GETS A NURSE



INTO WHATEVER TOWN Dulaunay went, if there was no gaiety there, his mere presence evoked it. Hartwell's bankers and letter-of-credit connections presented the count among the best people; he went out and was gay, while Hartwell secluded himself at home, throeing with his indigestion of the world; and everywhere the count left behind him at least one love-lorn lady, one sighing heart.

Dulaunay met Julia for the first time at a function at the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, and returning to the castle among the hills at three in the morning, found Hartwell in a dressing gown pacing the flag-stones of his bedroom, which was on the ground floor of the little moschio (or donjon) of the fortress. A large book lay open on the stone table in the room, which was lighted with four tallow candles stuck on an iron bar.

"*Mon Dieu*, sir!" murmured Dulaunay, stopping short with bated breath and a rueful face, "but this is not that which you promised me as to going to bed."

"Let it not be said, Dulaunay," answered Hartwell, still pacing, "that the servant is above his Lord. I act as I please, sir."

"Good! very good." The count threw himself upon a wooden settee, tired out and there was silence for a time, till, deliberately collecting his five finger-tips into a bunch, the worthy and excellent count put them to his lips, kissed them away, and sighed.

Hartwell's eyes softened into their genial smile, and he said:

“Dulaunay, I see that you have been losing your heart for the thousandth time.”

“Ah, “Draytong”, there are not but the English women, after all,” answered the count.

“Are there, then, some English in Siena?” asked Hartwell.

“Imagine, sir, the head of Aphrodite on the body of Artemis! Figure yourself, “Draytong”, a human woman whose father was a dove, and whose mother was a peach—”

“Ah! she is cross-bred.”

“But, sir, I do not say it to make laugh! It is really so in a certain sense! whose father was a mourning dove, and whose mother was a peach: whose grandfather was a swan, and whose grandmother was a violet: it is too strong, you know.”

“Do not add that the great-grandfather was a pork-man, Dulaunay,” said Hartwell.

“And she waltzes! ah, she waltzes! like a trailing long wisp of hay in the arms of the whirlwind! and her hair cannot be kept from growing loose, as she dances.”

“Well, then, may the fervor be reciprocal.”

“But I think it: I have reason to think it!” cried the count: “I know the signs — . She is not one of them who will be too difficult to the favorite, provided he be not a novice, while all the rest of the men would only lose their Latin with her. I have already my plan of siege laid to the last detail. Three things, “Draytong”, make the women ours — the gratitude, the pity, and the vanity — in exciting the gratitude in a young girl of family, the pity in a married woman, and the vanity in a widow. The first I make gay, the second I make sad, the third I make to blush — when that is possible: if I make her to blush, the hour has struck, she is mine. Now this divinity is a

widow: but a wise general knows how to change his tactics in the different cases——”

“What, by the way, is her name?” asked Hartwell suddenly:

“Lady Methwold.”

“Ah?”

“But, sir, you find yourself bad — ?” Hartwell had not known that Julia was near to him: he stood a minute with closed eyes and his palm laid lightly on his hair; then, sitting on the settee, he rested his forehead on Dulaunay’s shoulder, for he was not strong at that time.

Dulaunay had no suspicion that Hartwell even knew Julia, and during the two weeks which followed that night, the count brought home daily news of his progressive love-story. At first Hartwell heard it absent-mindedly: but when it became evident that Julia must really be quite unusually intimate with the Count d’Artenset, Hartwell’s interest quickened: and from that hour the situation became charged with danger. In Hartwell’s nature ordinarily jealousy had little place, but from day to day he now more than ever sickened; he could hardly eat anything; his nights were more than ever dark and wretched; life seemed to his atrabiliar eyes a thing all crape and gloom; and he lost all taste and interest in everything, save in Dulaunay’s intrigue, to whose details he would hearken with a flashing eye and a lip white with agitation.

Wherever Julia was or went, there, it was evident to Hartwell, the count also was to be found: Julia herself seemed to desire, and devise this. Dulaunay was almost daily at the old palazzo, grim With its barred window-slits, where Julia lived: he would stroll up with her to the cathedral, or to the church of St. Dominic, among those steep and winding alleys of Siena, whose succession of arches make them mere arcades of mediaeval dimness, haunted, as it were, by the ghost of Dante; they met at hill-picnics and

dances, or strolled together at sunset among the meadows, orchards, and mulberry groves of the valley; there was also the July race, and there were card-parties, and functions in August at the Palazzo Pubblico, which constantly threw the count and Julia together. It was clear that this time Dulaunay was in earnest; all the ladies in Siena could not turn his mind from the siege of Julia. One night he whispered to Hartwell the great tidings:

“To-day, for the first time, I kissed her hand.”

“There, I think, you made some progress, count,” said Hartwell: “did she — you know what — did she blush, and mince, and cast down the eyes?”

“Ah, not yet. It is that which is going to arrive. She only smiled in a certain little way. But the intrigue is now in that stage which does not let itself accelerate.

“Well, you may succeed, my good fellow, you may, you may: but, seriously, I doubt it. She seems slow, she is dallying with you, Dulaunay. Have a care, my friend! she’ll eat out your vitals like a wolf!”

Dulaunay was so taken up with his intrigue with Lady Julia that he did not notice the tragic strangeness of Hartwell’s tone and look; he replied:

“Oh, I have no fear of anything: I am on the road, and the end is in sight. I attack both her vanity, her gratitude, and, little by little, her pity also. She becomes conscious of my misery, and is going to learn that she alone can cure it. These two consciousnesses will give to her, firstly, a highly pleasant sense of her own importance (for which pleasure she will be unconsciously grateful to me), and, secondly, a sentiment of sublime pity for my pains: then she will stretch her hand to save me from the abyss—”

“Excellent!” cried Hartwell with a laugh: “you’ll win her yet, by Heaven! An Apollo like you, born for conquest. It is well to be young, and French, and handsome, sir.”

“He is queer to-night,” thought Dulaunay to himself, adding aloud: “By the way, she has heard of you, sir, and demonstrates the keenest interest in your personality—”

“In mine?”

“But yes: often she invites me to discuss you and our life here: our plans, our voyages, your health — Wonders for what you are a hermit—”

“Oh, she does?” said Hartwell, stopping in his restless pacing. “Wonders why I am a hermit! Well, then, all I can say is that you seem to me to be in a bad way, Dulaunay; it is evident that she is hankering after the — unknown: look, therefore, to yourself, my friend, and let it not be said that a sick hermit beat a gallant in love!”

“But “Draytong”, you are queer tonight. No sleep at all, then, no sleep, no sleep? What to do there, *mon Dieu*! You should make greater efforts, however, sir: you should compose yourself to sleep. Kinsey does not like to give you the drugs two nights in succession. But if you sleep, you immediately somnambulate — What vexing circumstance! This morning at three o’clock you were out in the courtyards without slippers—”

“But when you kissed the hand — tell your tale right through. She made no remonstrance? did not pout up her lips and look vexed?” queried Hartwell.

On the contrary, replied the count, “she smiled, I repeat, in a certain little way.”

“Then, let doubt be dismissed! you have carried half the fort, Dulaunay. Why, kissing is kissing, man! if you have only touched her hand, the — the lips come next; there’s hardly a step. And such lips! The child of a dove and of a peach, you said — excellently said! You are a genius, you know, for expression, and they love a glib, expressive, French tongue.”

“No, “Draytong”, come, come,” said Dulaunay, springing up with decision: “never again will I converse with you at this late hour” — and after a long argument and almost a struggle the count got Hartwell to go to bed.

It was two nights after this that the count told to Hartwell the story of how that day at the Isituto, while he and Julia were standing before a famous picture, looking at it, Julia called him no longer “monsieur le comte,” but “Emile,” and he had called her “Julia.” This must have deeply affected Hartwell in his then morbid condition of mind and body; at all events, he disappeared from the rocca that same foreday; Dulaunay, Kinsey, and a sort of abbe who was a hereditary fixture in the rocca, together with the steward of the *Sempronia* and a little porter called Pini, searched the district with lanterns in a heavy rain for two hours: but it was not till daybreak that Hartwell was found lying on his face in a thicket of sarsaparilla near the outer ditch of the rocca; he was shivering with cold, though burning with fever; by noon he had delirium; and Dr Kinsey believed that he would die.

For the next two days Julia did not see Dulaunay; for now that Hartwell was actually stricken down, Dulaunay was like his shadow, and would not leave his side. He sent Julia a note, folded in a special way at right angles, excusing himself from being with her on account of the illness of Hartwell; but on the third day Julia wrote pressingly to him, to see her at the portal of the city called the Wolf; and that afternoon Dulaunay went to meet her.

The sun had set, and they strolled for an hour or so in a scented evening air among orchards, summer villas, and hedges which were now heavy with brown grapes, for about there the vines run in the hedges. Dulaunay considered that the intrigue was now ripe, and had decided to declare himself more definitely at that interview.

“I have no necessity,” he said, “to tell you that my heart is in flames — Ah! you blush divinely. I dare to hope that I, on my side, am not altogether indifferent to you.”

They were sitting at that time in an arbor of vines behind a little inn on the Empoli Road; he took her hand, and she did not withdraw it from him; her face hung pensively in the twilight.

“What is it all about, Emile?” she said: “if you jest, you choose a singular moment when you see me so sad.”

“Sad? are you sad? But have I, then, the air of someone who jests? I am at your feet—”

“And on my nerves, too,” said Julia quickly. “I never expected to see you *mal a propos*. Whatever has got into your head to-day, you who are always so charming?”

The excellent and worthy count sat one moment aghast, then, sudden and quick to take offence, he sprang up and bowed stiffly.

“Madame, if I have dared to flatter myself with the hope—”

“Of what?” asked Julia with a perplexed brow. “Don’t be fantastic. Haven’t I always gone out of my way to show how much I like your society? Wasn’t it I first called you by your Christian name? That ought to have shown you that I wished to be friends. I thought everyone could read my secret, Emile: I have been a hopelessly infatuated woman for years—”

“*Mon Dieu!*”

“Oh, look at him! he can’t conceive it lasting for years — dreadful man. It can, Emile, it does, let me tell you, it is the worm that dieth not. Some day when we are still closer chums, I will tell you about it, and you will know.”

“Madame, my felicitations. But, as for me, am I, then, annihilated?”

“I thought you would guess! Why else should I have liked to have you always about me at the first, except to hear you talk about someone? I saw

that you liked him awfully, and that was at once a sympathy — . You do love and honor him an awful lot, Emile, don't you? Tell me."

"It is "Draytong" that she wishes to say!" exclaimed Dulaunay: "I am, then, annihilated!" But he added in a lower tone a moment after, "all the same, if I had to be supplanted by another, it is he whom I should have chosen."

"Of course, it is. I can't imagine anyone troubling to be fond of anyone but him, Emile: and he has been dying, three days, and you didn't tell me. Suppose he were, in truth, to die?"

"Ah, but tears! Pardon me, adorable Julia, I knew nothing — do not cry, do not cry, I implore. He will not die! it, is no one but Kinsey who talks of the death, the doctor of Siena laughs—"

"And as to the nurse, who is she?"

"She is of the Ospedale of the University: but I, for the most part, nurse him myself."

"Yes, you look rather worn. You are awfully enamored of him, really, I can see, Emile. You and I shall be the nurses, Emile! We can't trust anyone's care but our own, and you will procure me a room from to-night in some house not too far away from the rocca. I foresee that we are going, to be the very best chums, you and I, if you have thoroughly dropped the fantastic part. Shall it be so? then, shake hands: that is a compact for always on my side — Do you know that La Forli is miserably in love with you? I shall procure you meetings with her at my palazzo when he is better, and any other of them that you care for; you must tell me, and I will help you, and be always your friend. Have you any rooms to spare in the rocca itself? or is there a tavern near by? I am afraid my Aunt Margaret won't like going out to the hills, but I daresay I shall manage her."

In the end it was arranged that Julia and Lady Wisden should stay at a lonely tavern half-a-mile down in the valley behind the rocca. There they took up their abode, and thence Julia climbed up to the rocca during the first two days; but on the third day a different arrangement was come to, and Julia took up her residence in the abbe's room on the first floor of the fortress, Lady Wisden remaining at the tavern in the valley. Meanwhile, in that little room under Julia's, Hartwell's deliriums went on.

XIX. HARTWELL MAKES A PLUNGE



“IT IS A good thing that it is not but during the day that you are with him,” said Dulaunay to Julia: “from one to four o’clock in the morning he is even violent.”

They were seated in a square well under a sycamore tree, which stood in the space between the two barracks, and the sun was at noon, burning the stones in the court-yard hot. Julia was dressed in plain grey and white; purposely, perhaps, looking like a nurse, with the softest light moss of hair protruding from under the edges of her cap. Her attendance at the bedside had made her lips look still dryer than usual, and had paled to a mere vision of color the fruity dry carmine with which her cheeks were brushed a little.

“Is it ever going to stop?” she asked; “and are Kinney and Calvo really good men? This is the sixth day, and the temperature still at 105.”

“He will not die, have no fear,” said the count: “but it will be a struggle. Last night he was alarming and amusing at the same time, oh, la, la! It is some years ago he had a vexing accident in a motor-car, and of this, not for the first time, he raved. At one moment it was the perplexity the most acute depicted on his visage: ‘Am I Hartwell?’ said he, ‘Or am I “Draytong”?’ His perplexity! that made me smile. ‘The faces are one,’ said he, ‘how if the natures be one also? and which of the two am I, am I?’ At another moment it was the agitation the most breathless, the staring eyes, the sighs, the hoarse whispers, *mon Dieu!* ‘I will change the clothes, I will change the clothes,’ he whispers, dreadfully: ‘Hartwell shall be “Draytong”, and “Draytong” shall be Hartwell; the millionaire shall be the beggar, and the

beggar the millionaire; no one on the road, McCalmont dead the coat — the waistcoat — now the collar: the dead know not anything, the dead know not anything' — And so on for two hours."

"And what does all that mean? Do you know any Hartwell? That is the name of his ward, Bobbie."

"No, I know no Hartwell except Bobbie. But thrice when he has somnambulated I have heard him employ that name of Hartwell. There is here that which is droller than you think."

"How do you mean?"

"I know not how I mean: but I will apply my mind there. There are things which have perplexed me. Is it not droll, for example, the infinite difference in physique, in mentality, in all, between "Drayton" and his brother, Oswald?"

"Yes, that is a rather queer story. Their mother was frightened with a gun on board a ship by some splendid madman, named — I forget what — some time before James' birth; and when James grew up he turned out to be like this splendid man, while Oswald is like his father."

The subject then dropped between them, these ravings of Hartwell falling for the present from the surface of their minds like water from a duck's back, without finding any root there, seeming to be mere ravings and nothing else; but in the case of Dulaunay, the still unexplained mystery of his relation with Hartwell was too astonishing, and he had heard those ravings too near and often to forget them entirely; when, at a later day, circumstances recalled them to his mind, and forced him to reflect on them, he not only remembered them clearly, but understood them thoroughly, as we shall see.

"Well, that explains it," he said now to Julia.

“Oh, there comes the abbe,” said Julia. “I’m afraid he, too, is a little in love with me.”

Already, within the last twenty minutes the chef had peeped round the corner of the barrack-house after Julia to see where she was; and now also came the abbe, peeping after her, saying that the one o’clock dinner was served.

Nothing could be quainter than that life up there in the rude little rocca, and when Hartwell’s crisis was once past, Julia was constantly amused by it. There were seven males and she, beside a very young nurse from Siena, and the consciousness of the seven was turned at all moments toward the one, as sunflowers follow the sun; the fact of Julia’s presence fully occupied every mind; the chef cooked for her, the abbe talked at her, Dr Kinsey giggled toward her; and in this mental mood their existence up in the rocca went on as remote from the present age as the voyagers to the moon of M. Jules Verne, living in their steel box in the midst of space.

The moschio was a squat low tower which stood sheer over a precipice a thousand feet deep, upon which it looked by the one small window of Hartwell’s room, and by no other. From some little distance off it looked almost as much like a piece of the mountain as like the work of man. The moat, or ditch, round the moschio was crossed by a drawbridge, then came some outhouses, barracks, and paved courts, with the well under its sycamore tree, all shut in by a fortified wall, which was provided with covered ways and parapets, to protect the defenders in a siege: outside this fortified wall was a larger drawbridge, called the “outer drawbridge,” which crossed the outer ditch.

Julia and the count followed the abbe into the moschio to dinner. At table the talk was mostly with the abbe, a man of stale and wandering eye, with nothing to do but bask in the sun, and once a day fuddle himself with

muscat wine. "I could have been anything, madame," he would say to Julia in very Italian French: "preacher (predicateur)! architect! statesman! cardinal! in short — any thing. Yes, my talents were made to declare themselves. But in the rocca, what scope? In the barrack yonder I was born, and here I am destined to close my eyes."

This was the abbe's grievance, that he could have been anything, if only he and all things else had been different.

Of a moonlit evening sometimes all was interest, laughter, and "bravos" in the courtyards, when everyone came to watch Dulaunay and the graceful Julia fencing with two maple sticks; or when the sun set behind Siena and the hills, they two talked together on the parapets, or on the well, or strolled down by the chestnut lane and the vines running in the hedges over a carpet of yellow and purple maple-flowers to the tavern where Lady Wisden wearily dreamt of Ascot.

"It looks as if to-morrow will be my last day," said Julia one evening, when Hartwell had passed from delirium into a state of coma.

"How!" exclaimed the count: "you go?"

"The moment he becomes conscious, of course," she replied.

"But why? I understand nothing there. Does not "Draytong" adore you? He pronounces your name always—"

"But surely you know that Mr Drayton is married?"

"But not married? "Draytong" is not married!"

"He is, Emile."

"Not possible. Where, then, is that Mrs "Draytong"?"

"Ah, the 'where' is the least of her. She is somewhere, and may she live long. I myself have never quite believed it, but three mornings ago I heard, him say: 'the wife — is she mine, or his? I have no wife but one' — whatever that may mean."

“There is something very droll somewhere,” mused Dulaunay: “I understand nothing there. I know “Draytong” very well, he would not, he could not, have affianced himself to you, if he was married.”

“He did though, Emile,” — Julia said in a low voice with a hung head, “yes, he did that to me.”

“*Mon Dieu!* but this is an infamy!” exclaimed the worthy count. “I am afraid that this good gentleman will have to cross swords with me when he re-establishes himself.”

“And yet you pretend to be my friend. Don’t be extravagant,” said Julia.

“But how! I understand nothing there, then! Did you not find it difficult to pardon such a conduct?”

“Oh, I! no, quite easy. Don’t you understand? — till seventy times seven. And remember that he did not let me marry him: he was tempted, he yielded, but he pulled up in time, like a brick. Better not go crossing swords with him, for, if you were to hurt him, you know that you can’t parry my flanconnade attack.”

“Ah! to be the man beloved like that, and by you, adorable Julia!” sighed the count. “But then since it is so, why not rest at the rocca?”

“As if I dared! I owe that much to myself, and I have solemnly promised Aunt Margaret, not to stay. And you are never to let him know, Emile, that I was ever near the rocca. Promise me that. I had better go to-morrow before dinner.”

But the next morning after chocolate, she being then with Hartwell for about the last time, he knew her. The room was small and very dim to her after the boundless light outside, for she had been outside in the courtyards after her chocolate before coming to relieve Dulaunay at the bedside, and Hartwell’s room had only one small, deep window in the wall over the precipice, through which not much light came in. Dulaunay was out in the

courts in his shirt-sleeves to take a breath of air after his watch before going to bed. The little nurse and Dr Kinsey were in their respective rooms, and Julia was alone with Hartwell. Hartwell lay quiet, the picture of muscular waste, on a square, squat bed, with a wooden tester, and no curtains; he had so far seemed to recognise no one. Julia poured out some digitalis into a glass at a stone table, and was going to present it to his lips when she started violently; he had turned over to his left side had been looking at her. She saw humor, intelligence, in his eyes, spilled some of the medicine, stood in stone, and suddenly fled from the room.

She hurried out in great agitation to Dulaunay in the yard, saying: "It has happened! I am sure he has noticed me, and I should have given anything — ! Go to him, will you? And Pini must be told — about the cart. I shan't stay another minute, not even in the valley, nor in Siena, nor in Italy — I turned towards him to give him the digitalis, and, good gracious! there was he looking side ways, with his left, eye all wrinkled up and smiling! What shall I do now, Emile? It is so agonisingly delicate!"

"Come," said Dulaunay, calmly, "go make your trunk, and I will tell Pini, rouse Kinsey to stay with him, and go down with you to the valley."

"No, you are too tired. But isn't it vexing? I never felt so mean" — and off she ran into the moschio faster than he could follow, and hurried up the hopelessly-worn stone steps to her room, where she at once cast her odds and ends pell-mell into a portmanteau, and locked it. She then sat down on a cypress coffer, that had lovely little glances of gilt among its rough carving, waiting with alert ears for Pini or for Dulaunay to come. Hearing a rumbling of wheels, she ran to the one window of her room, which looked down upon the yard of the moschio, and saw the mule cart coming over the inner drawbridge. The little Pini, who was called "the facchino," then ran up to her, lifted the portmanteau on his back, and she saw him place it on the

cart in the yard. She then caught up her hat and hurried to an alcove to pin it on, for in the alcove there was a mirror on an altar, half hiding two blue and gilt frescoes of angels in old canopied frames; but when she had pinned on the hat, she stood uncertain, hesitating, partly waiting for Dulaunay, and partly for she knew not what.

Presently the count came in a flurry, saying in an earnest and secret voice: "He has spoken—"

"Not of me, Emile," said Julia.

"Yes, of you; 'Tell her,' he has said, 'that she should not go, without saying me adieu.'"

"Oh, you told him that I was going!" said Julia with reproach.

"He asked it! and I replied: 'Her portmanteau is even now on the cart.' Then, after a long time, he said: 'She should not go without saying me adieu.'"

Julia shrunk from him, and stood waiting in silence for her mind to speak to her and suggest something, then, subsiding into a chair at her table, she supported her cheek on two fingers of her right hand, gazing fixedly at Dulaunay ten minutes, lost in a pre-occupation which did not hear one word of his running chatter of advice.

"Tell him no!" she said suddenly, with determined lips: "tell him no."

"Well, if that is your will—"

"Yes, tell him no."

He started off, she started stealthily after him, and caught him at the head of the stairs with the whisper: "Let me know quickly what he says," then back to her room with like stealthiness she ran, and stood at the window, waiting and looking out, without seeing the cart under her eyes, nor hearing the blithe little Pini whistling like a thrush.

A long and trying interval now passed for her, full of emptiness and mystery, for Dulaunay did not return in a hurry, and she could not guess what could possibly keep him. The hour grew from nine to ten, then to ten thirty. Julia paced about the room, peeped and listened at the door, bent down her ear towards the flooring, which separated her from Hartwell's room below: but there was no sound.

At last, however, the count came, yawning even as he dashed up the little stairs, for he was very sleepy.

“Why, what could possibly have kept you?” she asked.

“He would not let me depart!” protested Dulaunay. “After a long reflection he gave me a message, but immediately changing of advice, he said: ‘No, let me not again be rash: you must wait, Dulaunay.’ Then, after another long reflection, he said again: ‘Tell her that, if she leave me thus suddenly, I shall surely die.’”

“Surely die?” breathed Julia, shrinking palely, with suspended breath: “why should he surely die? Tell him — I owe it to myself — No, he won't surely die, no he won't. Tell him no, he won't Emile!”

“Good! but I think—”

“No, you tell him that. Tell him no, he won't no, he won't. He has no right to send such messages! Say just as I bid you, word for word: say, no, he won't: and then — let me hear.”

Away, therefore, ran Dulaunay like Mercury, destined to little sleep that day; and again Julia waited a wearily long time at the window, opening and shutting many times an old ivory casket with evanescent glints of gilt among its carvings.

The fact was that Hartwell had fainted, or sunk into an exhausted sleep, when Dulaunay returned to him from Julia. The little nurse, roused prematurely from sleep, had not yet come down, and Dulaunay, every

moment expecting Hartwell to come to, could not leave him. After half an hour of impatient waiting on the part of the drowsy count, the nurse came down, and he then sent her up to tell Julia that Hartwell had fainted. Julia pouted and waited.

When Hartwell at last opened his eyes, he said in a feeble voice:

“Well, what does the lady say?”

“That good lady says that you will not die, sir,” replied Dulaunay, “and she attends your response.”

Hartwell pondered that answer and the whole situation with a piercing and crafty eye; anon he drew his brows together with his fingers in a painfulness of thought.

He had her there; he had opened his eyes and found her there; and now he felt her slipping from him. In his feebleness of body and mind he felt an absolute lack of grit to face the cheerlessness which she would leave behind her when she went away. All his craft and sagacity, therefore, were at work.

“What response must I bear her, sir?” asked Dulaunay: “she waits to go, and I who have not slept must accompany her to the valley.”

“You must wait; let me think,” answered Hartwell.

There came in an odor of the one o’clock dinner from the hall, for the table was served. The abbe ran up to tell Julia that there were truffled pates which she liked, but she would not stir to come down, for the dinner table was too near to Hartwell’s door. The others ate their dinner, sending up meantime plates of food to her, but she did not eat anything. The count dined sitting in her chair, and had not quite finished when Hartwell called him.

Then the lingering interchange of messages went on.

Hartwell prayed her to stay three days.

She sent to ask: Why so?

It was in order that his recovery might become more definite.

But that was no reason, Julia answered: he must know that that was hardly generous to tempt and trifle with her, yet he did it; he was taking advantage of her foibles and of her position; his recovery would become definite in any case.

The afternoon shadows lengthened; the portmanteau lay on the cart; the mule's head hung; Hartwell groaned on his bed; the worthy and excellent Dulaunay plied up and down the stairs like the messenger of the gods; Julia from time to time proudly absorbed the moisture that stung her eyes; her throat was dry and aching, but she was unconscious of that fact; she stood near the window, rather haggard at the long strain of the duel.

Would she not see him to say goodbye? then she might go: so Hartwell sent to say.

No: that was hardly a frank and fair request, Julia replied.

Would she not wait three days, in order that he might weigh a communication which he had to make to her?

No: let him make the communication now.

He could not now.

Then she would go; she owed it to herself.

Well, then, if she would go, she might go.

So at last, near five in the afternoon, the protracted campaign was over. Julia dashed a passionate tear from her eyes, and descended with a veiled face on Dulaunay's arm. Hartwell's door lay wide open, and he saw her hurry through the sala. She did not glance his way at all. The cart rolled away at last with the portmanteau, Julia and Dulaunay walked across the inner court over the inner drawbridge, and yonder by the barrack-house saw the chef and abbe lying in wait to say their adios.

But before Julia had quite come to where the chef and abbe waited for her, Dr Kinsey came running after out of the moschio, bearing yet a message from Hartwell: if she would go to him, he would make now the communication which, as he had said, he had to make.

She looked appealingly to Dulaunay, saying: "What can one do?"

The count pressed her hand. And all at once she was hurrying back to the moschio.

She went into Hartwell's room, without quite closing the door behind her.

She stood a yard from the bed with the Veil over her face; and she said: "I am here, James."

They were alone; he was lying on his side; his back was turned toward her; and for some time he did not answer. At last he said, without turning toward her:

"It was not true what I told you, Julia. I am not married."

Julia stood blanched, breathing heavily; his words were so immense, had in them such a world of life and salvation and happiness for her, that they did not at once find room for themselves in her mind. At last she cried out imperatively:

"Oh, tell the God's-truth, if you love me!"

"No, I am not married," said Hartwell. "I married when I was a youth of nineteen, but my wife died seventeen years ago. That is the God's truth."

It was really, as we know, the truth; the good Julia was too willing to believe to doubt; and now she broke down, taking his wasted big hand, kissing it alternately on the palm and on the back, trying to say between her sobs: "Thank you, thank you, James, thank you," as to one who had saved her life. Dulaunay and the abbe, who were just outside the door, could clearly hear that meek outpouring of her gratitude, her sobs and gasps, and

her continued "Thank you, dear James," uttered in the tone of a penitent child, as she kissed and re-kissed his hand, and the strain of all that day and the pent-up grief of years broke through all restraint, and had rent. Then she half-lay on the bed with him, and for some time her sobbings, more smothered, but more regular and confirmed, came out from her buried head, and were heard by the two men outside.

Two tears rolled down Dulaunay's face; but he dried his eyes, shrugged his shoulders with "So much the better," went up, threw himself upon his bed, and at once went to sleep.

XX. HARTWELL GOES TO CORTON



HYDE PARK WAS in young leafage, a blush of colour was in Piccadilly and Dover Street, the clubs were fast filling, and the first bazaar and floral fete had come off, before the date fixed for the marriage of Julia and Hartwell — the second of June — arrived.

Julia's side had claimed some delay in view of the comedy of engagement, breach, semi-reconciliation, then breach again, and now again engagement, with the two men who passed as one. Society needed time to digest such a menu. Hence, Hartwell having definitely risen from his illness in December, no date earlier than the following June would be permitted.

No one any more recognised Julia, she was so victoriously established in happiness. To doubt Hartwell's oath that he was not married never, of course, entered her thoughts. His statement to her four years before that he was married was put down to any reason that first presented itself to the mind, or was not thought of at all.

Julia attributed it in her own mind to an unselfish whim of Hartwell, who, she thought, wanted her to make a higher match, more suitable to her rank; when she asked him if this were not so, he seemed to assent. The oath made in the little room of the rocca at Siena was too rose-coloured to be untrue; not only herself, but her aunts, her brothers, and all her friends, took it for granted that it was true beyond question. Therefore, in that "sunshiny dale," where, according to Hartwell, Julia's "smile resided," the sun never now set — it was a land "where it seemed always afternoon." Hartwell, for his part, took his joy physiologically, but his eye danced. He had yielded to

the great temptation, the thing was done, there could be no drawing back now. Hartwell, therefore, shut his eyes to everything, compelled his memory to forget “the wife,” and also to forget that he was not James Drayton; and though a pang of doubt, of panic, anon stopped for a moment the beating of his heart, still, on the whole, he was deeply happy.

Julia and Lady Wisden had returned to England in the *Sempronia* a month before Hartwell; and only two days after their arrival at Brook Street, Oswald Drayton presented himself before Julia with the face of a man who has screwed himself to a sublime and solemn effort.

He did not know that Julia had even seen his good James abroad: and Oswald renewed to her his offer of marriage.

This seemed to her, and indeed was, mere mania. She looked at him with a certain insolent happiness — with a puckered brow and smiling lips — as a something zoological, his quixotism was played with such solemnity; then she could not resist, for his continued gravity tickled some nerve in her — she laughed. When she could speak, she asked him to excuse her levity, but said she had thought that it was written legibly all over her that she was going to be the wife of someone else whom he knew.

Oswald went away from her that day with something new and living in his stale mind; a new and vital hatred. It seemed to him that he now for the first time knew what spite was, a spite in which he included Julia, as well as his supposed brother. What he now thought of was the Gissings, with a new longing, a new zeal of discovery. Where, then, in the world were those three people? Beyond doubt the ruffian James had committed a brutal murder, and Oswald in his impotence could not prove it.

When Hartwell returned, Oswald stuck to him. There was still the hope, frail as a straw to a drowning man, almost frailer, that James might be led on to “reason” about Letty’s death with that same bravado which he had

before displayed; he might, though it was impossible, just possibly tell too much; so hope, hoping against common sense, whispered to Oswald. Oswald broached the subject several times. But Hartwell had lost interest in the matter, and rather brushed it aside.

One day, however, Hartwell discussed it.

Oswald that forenoon had been riding his old trotting-park cob in the Row, and there met Julia and Bobbie Hartwell and her brother, Lord Archie Linaker: he had afterwards ridden home with Julia to Brook Street, to lunch with her; but just as they arrived at the house in Brook Street, in came the little Looloo from a promenade with her nurse, looking so lovely, that Julia at once conceived a family-descent upon Hartwell for lunch, that she might parade Looloo before her lover; and in half-an-hour they set out in the carriage, Julia looking like a charming dream in heliotrope voile, with a large picture-hat which could not be described, and with her went Oswald, Lady Wisden, and the pretty Looloo.

They found Hartwell in a silk jacket and a skull-cap in the laboratory at the back of the first-floor, with his bared right arm red to the elbow in blood, he being now almost well again, though somewhat yellow under his coarse freckles. Lunch was already served, and in that jacket he first lunched with the party, and afterwards took Julia back to the laboratory, where he was alone with her for some time, showing her different objects of interest, such as the still-beating heart of a dead frog, a protozoon under the microscope, a headless Lancelot "whose goul was a spine," and Hartwell explained to her how and why the "immortality of the soul" is a "groundless thesis of the childhood of man," so that the admirable Julia, who had come to the lunch an immortelle, went away rather a sun-flower. With all this talk, there was no word of love between them, no contact of the hands. Their "engaged manner" was not demonstrative. If by chance some evening their

lips touched, it was in one of those sudden tempests in which, as in the typhoon, the elements seem to groan; but that hardly ever happened. Usually they lowered their eyes, suppressed the mutiny of their bosom, and waited. But that day when he put her into the carriage, Hartwell kissed her gloved hand; and just this little act made the corners of Oswald's square jaws, who was looking on from the outer hall, stiffen and rib themselves with bitterness.

When Hartwell returned into the house, Oswald followed him into the morning-room. They were alone in the house, for Dulaunay was temporarily in Paris, and Bobbie Hartwell was living in chambers in St. James'. Hartwell, as they talked, was half sitting on the edge of the table, with his two hands in his trouser-pockets, watching two sparrows among the hyacinths in the window garden: it was suddenly summer; a branch of lilac in bloom brushed the window pane; but there was still a fire in the grate, which seemed to blink at all this unusual new light; and near the fire stood Oswald a little behind Hartwell.

"I was wondering, Jimmy, by the way," said Oswald presently, "whether you had thought any more about the case of that poor murdered girl?"

"Which murdered girl?" asked Hartwell— "Ah, I remember; Letty Barton. But why ply me with such a matter, as though I were a specialist in that sort of research?" — the last three words perished in an exhaustive great yawn, which dragged the poor Oswald into its abyssmal mood, making him too, half-yawn— "I have almost forgotten the details."

"Forgotten? Really? So soon?" said Oswald. "But in a few minutes you once threw more light on the matter than all the police and people in a year. That's why I ask you. There's one point, too, which I think, I didn't mention; a shred of the letter which she wrote to her lover's other lover has

been found. Don't you think that might be a clue to hang the ruffian, James?"

"Surely. But why didn't you mention that before? Where was the shred found?"

"In — on — well, on the ground where the tragedy happened."

Oswald lacked the audacity to say "in the lover's coat-pocket," and Hartwell wondered vaguely, "Why did he stammer?"

"And where is that shred?" asked Hartwell.

"I myself have, it."

"It was not, then, found by the police?"

"No, by my private, agent, who gave it me."

"Singular. Let me see it."

Oswald produced it, and Hartwell, reaching aside for a magnifying-glass on a side-table, looked through it at "cruel bru" lying on his palm, thinking, as he looked: "This fragment of paper was never found on the ground: either he to me, or his agent to him, has therefore lied for some reason; probably he to me — from the stammer; I suppose of no importance—" He said aloud after an examination of the shred, which lasted several minutes:

"Well, what, does this fragment reveal to you, Oswald?"

"I don't know. Does it reveal things?"

"A more proper question," said Hartwell, "would be, is there anything which it does not reveal? — to a consciousness sufficiently large. It seems to reveal at least, firstly, that the letter was torn into shreds by the murderer himself: secondly, that the other shreds are still probably in some pocket of that murderer: and thirdly, that it should not be difficult to discover that pocket, and so end your researches."

"Yes?" said Oswald, with bated breath, and again, "yes?"

Hartwell, suddenly looking at his watch, said:

“I have to go out, I must go and dress. Come up to my bedroom with me, and we will discuss it there.”

He then returned the shred to Oswald, and they went up, Oswald following him greedily, hastening, alas, to his own ruin, and not dreaming it, but full of a vague expectancy, of a hope against hope, that this mad murderer would reveal all his own crime.

In the bedroom Hartwell threw off his working jacket, and began to dress; and even as he put on his boots, or buttoned his collar, or washed his hands, he went on speaking of Letty Barnes.

“She seems to have been a girl of specially strong physique.” he said, “this shred rather proves it. You knew her — am I not right?”

“I daresay you are. Er — would it entertain you to look on her photograph, my good James?”

“Show me.”

Oswald slowly picked the photograph from a neatly-bound packet of papers, gave it to Hartwell, and looked to see at least one twitch of Hartwell’s face: but of course, he saw nothing of the kind.

“This, then, is she, poor unfortunate,” said Hartwell, studying the photograph; “I seem to have seen a face somewhere which she recalls to me” — he meant Barnes, Letty’s father— “but can’t remember where. Well, her eyes look out bravely and cheerily enough, poor girl. The shred which you have shown me shows that it was not pulled off from the letter in the course of the struggle, but one torn when the letter was being torn up by the murderer.”

“Where and why did he tear it up, James?”

“He tore it up, apparently, on the very spot where the tragedy took place and as to why, there could have been only one reason — an exhaustion of body and therefore of mind, approaching sheer imbecility; the idiot seems

to have been about to commit the folly of throwing the shreds upon the winds, but recollected himself in the nick of time, and put them into his pocket: put all of them, by the way, not all but one, as you said, my friend.”

“Your certainty is very curious—” began Oswald, who was slowly pacing about in one part of the room.

“But why so very curious?” protested Hartwell; “this impression of yours is merely an illusion of a more or less hibernating consciousness, if I may say so; you had only to open your eyes, and examine the shred in order to be quite as certain as I am. If it had been a shred pulled off in the struggle we should most probably have had a shred pulled from an edge, but this is a triangular shred, with pretty straight edges, but no smooth edge, a part of the middle of the letter, torn when the letter was being deliberately torn up. But torn up by whom? By her, perhaps? No! for the night was rainy — observe the running of the ink on the shred, probably dark then, perhaps windy; even supposing that it was not windy, the shreds would have been more or less scattered, if she had torn up the letter and thrown them abroad, and a man fresh from her murder would have fled rather than submit himself to the discomfort of searching for them, each and all, in the dark! five, three at least one, would have been found afterwards; but none, I say, were found.”

“But I said, my good fellow, that one of the shreds was found on the ground.”

“Your agent has misinformed you as to that; I don’t know with what motive, but with a motive which, you should warn him, Oswald, it may not be difficult to find out. That shred has never lain on the ground through a rainy night, I will swear; it was put into the murderer’s pocket with the others when he tore up the letter, and then recollected himself; and that brings me to my second point, that those others are still probably in some

pocket of the murderer — not in the same pocket, I think, into which he put them on the scene of the murder, but in another pocket, to which he transferred them in a day or two after the murder — during which transference the shred which you hold was either dropped on the ground, or more probably left behind in the original pocket. In that second pocket, and nowhere else, I believe, that the other shreds still are; and I will now give you the evidence offered by the shred, which leads me to think so.”

Hartwell at the moment when he said this was washing his hands, his back turned towards Oswald, who was pacing the other end of the room before a large wardrobe Henri Quatre; in a narrow compartment of this wardrobe hung McCalmont’s coat, prominently among other clothes, where it had hung forgotten for over four years — that coat of McCalmont which Hartwell had put on the day after the murder and the motor-car accident, since Drayton’s coat had been too soiled with blood to be worn.

Now Hartwell had just virtually told Oswald that the shreds of Letty’s letter were in this coat — told him, for what to Hartwell was reasoning, to Oswald was mere information given, most strangely given, but still heard with Oswald’s ears; and Oswald suddenly became quite gaunt with agitation, for by reaching out his hand he could take the shreds, if they were in that lower pocket of the coat which lay outermost and near his hand. And “James” was washing his hands, not looking, his back turned; in a thousand years such a chance might not recur to Oswald; and as Hartwell began to tell why he concluded that the shreds had been transferred from one pocket to another on the day following the crime, Oswald rose to the occasion, and, looking away at Hartwell’s back, put out a stealing hand sideways, felt the shreds in a lidless envelope in the pocket, and was about to take them, when Hartwell spun round. Oswald snatched away his hand quickly from the pocket, without having the shreds.

But Hartwell had seen — seen in a mirror which stood in a curtained alcove behind the washstand, and his eye had flashed.

Oswald continued to pace slowly about with his little limp near the wardrobe, unconscious that he had been seen, while Hartwell now sat on a settee, saying, “Excuse, me, my good fellow, from continuing my argument for the moment: these boots pinch” — and he proceeded to take off his boots which he had just put on, a perfectly false train of thought, meantime, going forward in Hartwell’s mind; for what he was thinking was this, whether Oswald did not suspect that he was not Drayton, whether Oswald was not hunting for some proof that Hartwell was not Drayton in that coat worn on the day after the metamorphosis of Hartwell into Drayton; Oswald’s remark at Aylsham about the watch: “Why can you not open it?” with another remark once made by Oswald: “You are no longer James Drayton,” had never been forgotten by Hartwell; as soon as the boots were taken off, he walked to the wardrobe in his socks, opened the other leaf of the wardrobe-door, and standing there with his back turned to Oswald, opened a little drawer in which he often kept some bank-notes. Even if Oswald had looked to see, he would not have seen what was being done, but, all occupied as he was with his own agitation, he did not look. Hartwell found an envelope containing bank-notes, drew one of the notes from the envelope, noticed the “number” of the note, then making a sideward step to the compartment of the wardrobe containing McCalmont’s coat, he felt in the pocket in which he had seen Oswald’s hand, felt the envelope with the shreds, transferred it quickly from that pocket to the pocket of another coat hanging there, slipped the envelope with the notes into the pocket — where the envelope with the shreds had been, then, turning round, said to Oswald, “Excuse me, I must go out; I shall be back in two minutes.”

The room had two doors opening upon a corridor. Hartwell walked to the one more remote from the wardrobe, near which Oswald was pacing, and with the deftness of a thief quickly drew out the key from the key-hole without seeming to pause a moment in going out; then, slamming the door after him, he went out, and now at once he flew noiselessly in his socks over thick carpet along the corridor to the stair, saw a servant girl coming up the stair, beckoned to her eagerly with his finger placed on his lips, so that she should not make a sound, caught her by the arm, and hurried her to the bedroom door; he first stooped and peeped himself through the keyhole from which he had removed the key, saw Oswald at the wardrobe, then pushed the girl's head downwards to the keyhole, whispering: "Peep to wards the wardrobe," then peeped himself again, and saw Oswald smuggle the envelope into his pocket. Hartwell then whispered to the girl "Go away," and he re-entered the room.

Now, when Oswald had first put his hand into the pocket of McCalmont's coat, he had felt that there was only one envelope in it, an envelope which contained some shreds; and he now undoubtedly believed that was the same envelope which he had put into his pocket.

Hartwell put on again those same boots that "pinched," all unnoticed by Oswald, who was far too wildly preoccupied to notice anything, and too eager to be gone with the precious shreds; and presently, as Hartwell continued to dress, Oswald said, looking at his watch, "I must go, James."

"I shan't detain you three minutes, if you will wait for me," said Hartwell. "You will thus save your cab fare."

He now rapidly finished off his dressing. The supposed brothers went out together. In Addison-road Oswald put up his hand to a passing hansom to stop it, but Hartwell would not take it, saying that he wanted a four-wheeler. "But why so?" asked Oswald. Hartwell replied that he had a reason. They

walked a little way, till a four-wheeler came along, when they got in, and drove towards Holland Park. The afternoon was like a summer holiday, full just there of leafage in maturity, and with the cries of little birds.

Oswald's nose, which had been as white as death, was now somewhat less white, and he smiled, saying by way of conversation:

"I am having that shooting-box at Corton Chantry looked after, Jimmy, as you said I might."

"Ah, I sometimes have weaknesses, I fear, Oswald," replied Hartwell.

"But surely that was months ago that I gave you permission to do that — to me it seems years. Isn't it done yet? You are a slow coach, Oswald."

"Well, I suppose I am a slowcoach," said Oswald; "I like things to develop themselves, and come off when they are ripe. People in a hurry are really hurrying to the grave, and I find life moderately livable. I shall have Corton finished for September, though. Perhaps if you tipped me five or six hundreds, Jimmy, that might help with the repairs."

"Decidedly that would help," said Hartwell; "let doubt be dismissed as to that. But being on the eve of marriage, I am thinking of curbing my prodigalities."

The corners of Oswald's jaw stiffened bitterly, and he said:

"I will ask you again at this hour to-morrow, my good fellow; and I wager you that you will do it then."

"But, Oswald, that is a hard, unbrotherly saying, surely?" cried Hartwell, loudly. "How is that, then. Oswald? And how much will you wager, my friend?"

"I'll wager you £500 that you will."

"And I'll wager you £500,000 that I will not, on this favourable condition to you that, if you lose, sir, you pay nothing, whereas, if I lose, I pay all. Stop, cabman! Here — officer — !"

The cab stopped; a policeman who was standing near by came to the door.

“I have to charge this gentleman with a felony,” said Hartwell to the officer. “He has just stolen the sum of £700 in notes from the pocket of a coat in my house; he has them now on his person. I can swear to the number of at least one of them, and he was seen in the act both by myself and one of my servants.”

Oswald could not answer. He put his hand into his pocket and felt the notes in the envelope; he was like a dead man, if death could utter sighs of disgust and woe.

The officer got into the four-wheeler — it was in order for him to have room for him that Hartwell had refused to take a two-wheeler-and they drove to the High Street police station. The charge was taken. Hartwell gave the “number” of the note; it was found on Oswald. Oswald could not be bailed, the case being a felony; and when he was being taken to a cell the poor Oswald uttered a deplorable little giggle of delirium.

That night Hartwell had to deliver a lecture on the “Ions of Electrolysis” at the Royal Institution, and after the lecture to go to visit Julia. He delivered the lecture, but sent an excuse to Julia, shrinking from seeing her during the first flush of the disgrace; but late in the night he received from her this telegram:

“IS IT TRUE? FOR HEAVEN’S SAKE, AND MINE, SPARE POOR OSWALD, IF AWFUL NEWS BE TRUE. TO ME INCREDIBLE. PRAY COME EARLY TO LUNCH TO-MORROW. MY LOVE. JULIA.”

The news, then, had already got about. Hartwell’s eyes flashed severely; he had warned Julia years ago that he was hard, that he was not one of the

“sparing” sort. He meant to damp Oswald Drayton’s zeal for research.

The next forenoon he drove with the servant who was his witness to the court. Oswald sat in the dock, the picture of sighing, sick disgust, one side of his upper lip lifted a little, a sight to pity. The court was rather crowded with ladies and men-about-town, for the incident caused a three-days’ flutter, and may, perhaps, be still remembered by some readers, since it was not very long ago. Oswald’s advocate earnestly pleaded that the whole thing was a storm in a tea-cup; the accused was a well-known member of Society, a man of high honour, as he would call several gentlemen to prove; he had meant to take from his brother’s pocket a letter having no direct pecuniary value, and had taken another envelope instead. The magistrate, too, tried hard to smooth down the scandal; but Hartwell was not to be moved to forgive; he did not find it “compatible with his duty.” The prisoner was sentenced to four months in Holloway gaol.

When, on the pronouncement of the sentence, a policeman touched his arm, the unfortunate Oswald went temporarily crazy.

Hartwell still shrank from seeing Julia that day and night of the trial, and did not go to her: and again the day after the trial he did not see her, for that morning he received a letter which caused him to take a journey. The letter was from one Walker, that same Walker who was Oswald’s occasional shorthand man, and doer of odd jobs; he was down at Corton Chantry, disbursing moneys, and watching the progress of some work for Oswald; and Walker wrote to Hartwell:

“Dear Sir,

“I have just read of the committal of my employer, Mr Oswald, and as I do not know what to do now about the repairs on the Pavilion, or even about money for me to get back to London, I write to ask you what I am to

do. You may know that there are a foreman and five men on the job, which is in a half-finished state, and I have only a few shillings left out of the current fund. This savage, Steve Anderson, refuses even to let me sleep in either of the chalk cottages, if I do not pay down cash every night. Awaiting your favoured advice. I am, dear sir, yours faithfully,

“R. Hamilton Walker.”

Hartwell's eye flashed with anger at his own weakness in granting a privilege to Oswald, and he had an immediate impulse to hurry on to Corton and bundle those workmen off the place — an impulse which would no doubt have passed away had it not been strengthened by the occurrence of that name “Steve Anderson” in Walker's letter, a man whom Hartwell had been paying for years through a bank, without knowing who, what, or where Anderson might be; and the impulse was further strengthened by his reluctance to face Julia's reproach for a day or two. He decided to go down to Corton that same day after lunch.

But he had a strange feeling of depression all that forenoon, while looking down at a table glittering with wedding presents, he had one of those brief pangs of doubt and panic which sometimes turned his heart cold. The wedding was not far off. The bride, who was a god-daughter of Royalty, had already received two presents from the Throne.

However, after lunch he started for Corton. In this way things come strangely about: Hartwell's re-engagement to Julia had roused Oswald's malice to renewed activity about the tragedy of Letty; this renewed activity of Oswald had brought about Oswald's ruin: and Oswald's ruin was the cause of Walker's letter, which in turn caused Hartwell to go down to Corton where “the Drayton wife” lay hidden.

Hartwell had told Julia that he was not married; that this was the God's truth; so that in what awaited him now the worthy and honest Hartwell was not to be envied.

XXI. HARTWELL FINDS A WIFE



IT WAS NOT without difficulty that Hartwell was able to penetrate to Corton Chantry; from Felmingham, the nearest station, it was a long and lonely drive, during which he thought that this must surely be one of the most thickly-wooded spots in England, and the journey was made still slower and more gloomy by the fact that it was raining. However, at about eight in the evening the basket-chaise, in which he was, arrived at a cottage from a chimney of which smoke was coming out, and Hartwell alighted amid the loud excitement of a fox-hound or harrier, and of a spaniel, at the door.

The cottage was of hard chalk with a red-brown old roof, and was built in two telescope-pieces, one slightly larger than the other; it stood almost under a ruin whose proportions could just be made out in the dark air; some distance away another white cottage with a red-brown roof could also be made out; and up to the very walls of the ruin, which stood on a low mound, and to the walls of the two cottages, thick wood and thicker coppice grew rank.

At the cottage door stood a creature peering out under a lamp at the chaise, and holding a fowling-piece in one hand; another man was peeping over his shoulder; and Hartwell, as he alighted, said to himself: "The man is 'Walker,' and the monster is 'Anderson.'"

"It's him," said Steve Anderson aloud to himself in a voice whose rumble resembled that of a running anchor chain. "A' knowed he'd be looking in some fine day."

“Well, Anderson; well, Walker,” said Hartwell, going in, and immediately on his entrance he turned to Walker, saying: “Here, Walker, is a sovereign; you will go away by the chaise that brought me.”

The room in which he stood was cosy and pleasing, but over-hot with an applewood fire; it had two windows with crimson moreen curtains, three wolf-skins on the floor, which was made of hard earth, and a singing kettle hung up in the fireplace.

“But, sir, am I turned off like this with a sovereign?” asked Walker, turning pale. “Mr Oswald owes me—”

“Then, let Mr Oswald pay you, my friend. Go away.”

Hartwell stood on a stool at a rude table made of logs, on which were two unplucked teals and a water-hen, with five or six large loaves, a black bottle which contained rum, and a small lamp.

“But aren’t you going to give me any more, sir, for a fact?” asked Walker.

“No. Well, now, Anderson, how is everything at Corton?” Walker, stared at Hartwell, then walked out of the room into an inner one. Anderson, a mound of misshapen flesh with an expression of face unmistakably daft, sat over the fire, his back turned to Hartwell, treating the master with scant ceremony. His arms hung at his sides as massive as two ordinary legs; his head resembled a mat of rough hair: he had, moreover, quite the air of a Crusoe; he wore Wellington boots, and a red shirt open at the breast; and something shy and untamed in his glance and address told of a wild man who had long inhabited a world apart, in which any other presence was an intrusion.

“Aye, a’ thought he’d be looking in some fine day,” he said when Walker had gone from the room; “but look ‘ee here, ma man, never ye send the likes o’ them meddlers and muddlers here again, flushing the coverts, and

starting the water-fowl — . Is it me or them, a'd like to know? It can't be both. One o' them working-men shot his gun at a young rocketer yesterday, and if a'd er caughted him, a'd er split his head as clean as a log, a' would. And how was I to be sartin" — his eyes swam cautiously round— "that that there youngster would be getting on the scent o' her?"

It needed an accustomed ear to catch much meaning in that chain which rumbled in Anderson's voice, but Hartwell heard that word her. There was a she in the matter, and a secret she.

"Ah," said he, "and how is she?"

Anderson stretched his face closer to Hartwell's, with the grim whisper:

"She don't scream out any more; but a' had to scorch her hands at the fire afore she dropped that game."

Who "she" was Hartwell now knew; the word "scream" informed him; and to his inwards he felt the dart of fate strike coldly, inflicting a pain at which he could have cried aloud; but he made no sound; only his lips whitened.

At this moment Walker returned from the inner room with his bag, and a mackintosh on, saying:

"Well, I shall consider myself very badly used, that's all, Mr Drayton, between you and your brother—"

Hartwell flurriedly handed him a ten-pound note, bribing him to go and leave him alone, for he felt weak and ill. Walker took it, thanked Hartwell, and went out to the chaise, while Anderson drained a tumbler of rum, and set his big body before the fire again.

Hartwell and Anderson heard the chaise roll away amid the pelting upon the window panes of handfuls of rain, also a noise of swollen running waters.

"Is 'she' well?" asked Hartwell.

“Same as when you seed her last; only she don’t scream out any more: A’ put a stoppage to that game.”

The questions were asked in a low voice, but the answers were given in a tone of indifference.

“You alone know, Anderson?”

“Know what?”

“That she is here.”

“H’m! Who else was to know, master?”

“Is she — weak?”

“She wouldn’t be what you might call an ox for strength, ye know. Ye should give her some clothes, ma man. A’ made a camlet gown for her with my own hands three weeks ago: yes, cut out and stitched it together myself, A’ did, seeing as her hands are shaky to stitch for herself; the money won’t run to more ‘n that, A’ doubt: but, come winter, she’ll be freezing. A’ looked to see you turn up some fine day afore this.”

“Take me there.”

“What, now? in the pouring rain?”

“Yes.”

Anderson got up, took a horn lantern from a number of mattocks, adzes, and rifles in a corner, lit it, and said: “A’m ready.”

But Hartwell, on rising, found that his knees could hardly bear him; he said: “I will be with you—” and stood with his palms on the table leaning on it, with a hanging head.

Anderson waited, and presently Hartwell was able to rouse himself, and move toward the front door. They then went out. The ruins were not more than four or five yards from the side of the cottage. They went up to it by a steep little path covered over with dripping leafage, and now were within an enclosure of old walls. Even here there were trees and bush; they felt the

rain still spraying upon them. Anderson went, a little in advance, swinging the lantern in his hand, with the harrier and the spaniel at his heels; a few startled birds took to flight or stirred among the bush, as the two men went forward. Twice Anderson stopped short, peering earnestly about, but without any sign of fear, and stamped as if to frighten something away.

They went on darkly in this way — for the horn lantern gave little light — till they came to the north-western part of the ruins, where there were four old worn steps, with a stone balustrade to them, leading up to a deep-set door under a Norman portal, the door itself being modern, and made of rough logs, like Anderson's table in the chalk cottage. Anderson drew a bunch of keys from the bagging part of his red shirt, went up the four steps, and opened the door. Hartwell who was as pale as a dead man, and trembling all over, followed him. They entered a spacious hall with a groined roof and a floor made of stone flags, an empty and hollow place, which re-echoed even the patter of the dogs feet; at its further end there was another stone stair, steep and narrow this one, without any balustrade. They walked across the hall to it, went up, and at the top of the stair Anderson opened a small Gothic door, which they had to stoop in order to pass through; they then found themselves on a stone landing, semicircular in shape, where the lantern showed the foot of a spiral stair which went up from it to the top of a high tower; and up this stair they now plodded, going round and up between spiral walls, where the damp struck cold, and the feet seemed shod with echoes, to another landing, and then to another, and finally to an old Norman door at the top, which Anderson opened.

They now went into a good-sized square chamber with a vaulted roof, and, as they entered it, a rat dropped massively from a table which stood in the middle of it, and ran away.

“She’s yonder, abed,” whispered Anderson, pointing to a Gothic door which stood opposite to the door by which they had come in.

Hartwell, seeing a key sticking outward in the door to which Anderson had pointed, walked quickly and quietly to it, and locked “her” ‘in. He then looked round the room by the light of the lantern. There was a small deal table, without any covering, and on it was a cup-and-saucer, a crust of bread, and a little lamp, not burning; under one of the window slits was a small sofa covered with very faded old pink damask, also a cane lounge, an old oak chair, an old coffer, and a lot of old torn books on the floor, nearly filling the hearth; the floor was of uncarpeted wood, very dislocated so that pieces of it creaked and shook under the feet.

In the wall which contained “her” chamber door there was another door through which Hartwell looked, and beckoned to Anderson to show him what lay beyond it. Anderson went through it with the lantern into another room and Hartwell followed.

This second room was similar to the first, but had nothing in it, was windowless, and must therefore have been dark even at noon. And here the floor was even more shaky and creaky.

“Does she come here?” whispered Hartwell in a hoarse voice.

“Only to pass through to yonder,” answered Anderson, pointing to the further doorway of a cabinet that had once been a bartizan, with oylets.

There was silence for some minutes, till Hartwell gave utterance to the terrible words:

“But she owes her life to you, Anderson.”

“To me?” said Anderson, showing the brown fangs in his mouth in a daft sort of laugh.

“Let us not think what might have happened, if you had taken up two or three of these old boards one night.” Hartwell said this in a base low tone of

voice shivering at the same time as if with intense cold.

“Now, hark at that,” said the great hunchback, with his rumbling voice: “did not you tell me with your own mouth that I worn’t never to go as far as that?”

“I have said so,” replied Hartwell, but without expecting to be obeyed. “I saw that your interest lay in drawing the salary, without having the work, Anderson.”

The daft Anderson scratched his rough head a little under his deerstalker cap, thinking of it, and the conclusion at which he arrived was uttered in these words: “A’ could use this place for a apple store, and to put up the marjoram, southernwood, and artichokes — . No one would never be the wiser, as for that.”

Hartwell laid his hand on Anderson’s shoulder to uphold his weak knees, and he said, apparently speaking to Anderson, but really to himself:

“Let each act according to the dictates of a pure reason, Anderson, in every case. It is the only morality. And do it with decision, without a tear, I implore you, without one qualm.”

He patted the hunchback’s arm admonishingly as he said this, and at the same time the sob of a whole manhood in convulsion broke from the ill-fated Hartwell.

“A’ll do it,” said Anderson, “nothing couldn’t be easier done. Not but what A’ll be lonesome, for lack o’ her, and her poor harmless ghost ‘ll be haunting me for a morsel o’ bread. But A’ tak’ no more notice o’ ghosts than o’ sparrows: they come and they go, in broad day sometimes, just to keep ma company; and I tak’ no notice. A’ll do it this self-same night.”

At these words Hartwell suddenly fled from the hunchback, and was gone into the outer room, and thence down the dark spiral stair. Something or other in Hartwell could not quite stand this: “perhaps it was that non-

rational love of righteousness” which he had “got from his forefathers;” whatever it was, he fled down the stair like an escaping thief, with a bent back, with white lips pressed together, and with a wild eye.

To this point fate and pure reason had brought the worthy Hartwell to murder most foul.

He had sworn to Julia that he was not married: he could not outrage and massacre that beloved life by marrying her now, while this woman, lived; and the day after the marriage the existence of this woman, who was his wife, so long as he was Drayton, might become known; he had hoped, had permitted himself to believe blindly, that the woman had somehow thinned into air; let her be thin, then! — rather her than Julia.

But she had never hurt him, not wilfully, this already wronged woman. Hartwell understood that if she suddenly thinned to nothing, then he would not be happy afterwards; there was even a grumble somewhere within or without him, which said to him:

“Dare but to lift your little finger against her, Hartwell, and there is that in Nature which will not fail to bring down your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.”

Even the robustious Drayton had had pity on her — had said “Don’t kill;” even the daft Anderson would miss her, and see with compunction her harmless ghost; was Hartwell, alone, then, to go ruthlessly, following “reason,” calling himself “the best and choicest kind of man,” calling Drayton “ruffian” and “clown,” though, in fact, he and Drayton were as twin in conduct as they were in face, when it came to the push?

After wandering at random in unknown paths for some time, Hartwell butted upon an old wall buried in a spinny, and turned in a new direction, with the vague purpose of returning to the cottage; but both the cottage and the ruin were now lost to him. He did not know where he was, and did not

care. The forest here was primitively savage and profound. There were caverns of bush, little homes of darkness, full of the stirring of birds, where the pouring rain penetrated only as a slow dripping. Hartwell did not cease to wander for hours, wet to the skin through his overcoat, with water pouring over the rim of his silk hat. About midnight he came to a Moorish looking lodge or shooting-box, which was called "the Pavilion," with a portico running all round it, and facing the forest in all the four directions, with a series of light arches supported on slender pillars. On one of the pillars, which was covered with honeysuckle, Hartwell leant his forehead, thinking now of the old Birmingham works, the purring of the dynamos, and how well it was with him then; and how he had pitied a man named Ediss who, happening to touch the switchboard one day, started a little, and dropped dead — pitied him then, but envied him now, that light surprise of death. He could not go to Julia and say: "I am married after all, though I swore to you, and it would have been better for you if you had not been born." Nor could he say: "I am not Drayton; Drayton is married, But I am not Drayton; I am Hartwell, a working man." Quite so much courage no man had; either way it seemed to him that she and he, too, would die of shame. It was better that "the wife" should die. Reason sentenced her.

But she, already so wronged, had not done him any harm.

Hartwell's brain ached miserably; seeing a bench in the portico where he stood, he lay on it, and soon, being wearied out in body and mind, fell asleep.

He was not long lying there, however, before he was away sleep-walking in the forest; and, walking in his sleep, Hartwell had a dreadful vision that night. It seemed to him that Drayton was walking with him in a wonderland of the dead; the stirrings of the trees of Corton became a shivering of many grave-clothes in his dream; the rain drops turned to a sweat of that place;

and with blank eye whites Hartwell groped through a mystery of shadow, solemnner than over entered into any living, happy heart to conceive. He thought that Drayton said to him: "Act well, Hartwell, that you may shorten my hell," and that he answered: "Which hell, Drayton? There is no hell: I am only dreaming," and Drayton seemed to say again: "Hell is the evil that men do: and the continuance of that evil in the world is the measure of their hell;" and Hartwell thought that he asked: "What is it to act well?" and Drayton seemed to him to make the answer: "To act well is to crush one's self in the effort to do to others as one would have them do to one." On this Hartwell dreamed that he said "That is an ancient precept impossible to fulfil;" to which Drayton seemed to answer: "Impossible to fulfil, but not impossible to try to fulfil."

Hartwell dreamed that they debated for a long while on that high plane in such a mood of awe as tongue cannot tell; Drayton's every word was like a god's to the dreamer's consciousness, never to be forgotten, and his voice like winds when they surge bleakly and die away in November. Dreams, however, cannot be told: in the morning we tell the details of our dreams, and think that we have told the dream, but any other details would have been equally true, equally false; the real dream was a mood among the gnomes, a trouble in a sea shell, or starlight in limbo, and words cannot express all that. So in a special degree it was with this long dream of Hartwell's: augustly beyond words he walked and mused in that strange country, and anyone looking at him would have seen him at one moment shaken by the fluttering of his breath at his lips, and at another moment would have heard him whine thinly. He thought that he said to Drayton:

"Nature takes the line of least resistance; man is part of Nature; selfishness is his law. Streams flow downward."

To this Drayton seemed to answer in a very solemn voice:

“Hartwell, they flow upward, all streams, all things, full of labor they climb, they strain. Could they even incidentally flow downward, if they had not first climbed high? — by the toil of the sun, and the aspiration of the sea, and the achievement of the clouds.”

Hartwell now dreamed that he said to Drayton’s ghost: “Are you really Drayton, or are you only one part of myself talking to another part of myself? I do not believe in ghosts, with cavernous, oracular voices. Yet my heart aches at the incubus of your presence, Drayton; you oppress me, Drayton, to death and the grave,” to which he thought that Drayton answered:

“This is the last time that I shall visit you in your sleep; and this last time I only pray you to shorten the buccaneer hell which I have made on the earth, not prolong it by an added scientific hell of your own.”

Hartwell’s sleep-walking had now led him into a glade in a pine-wood, ten or twelve minutes’ walk from the Pavilion; in the middle of the glade was an old well surrounded by ferns; and to this he happened to walk. When the brickwork stopped him, this seemed to break the thread of the dream for a time; he groped with his palms on the well, and then sat on it with his face turned upward, staring blankly, perhaps more or less conscious of the full moon which was making her way among dark clouds just over the opening in the pinewood. The smell of the pines may have come to his nostrils and soothed him, for what he next dreamed was that he had rather laid down his arms before the authority of the ghost, and was saying to Drayton, “But if I crush myself, Drayton, in the effort to do good to others, what is my reward?” to which the answer suggested to his mind was, “The reward is happiness, a kingdom; and unchallengeable authority, though your hair turn grey with troubles. On that road you shall run and not be weary, Hartwell: in it all the systems troop, and that flying moon, see-yonder! seeming to

soar on her orbit beyond the flying clouds; with songs and everlasting joy on her head.”

The dream alter this gradually lost definiteness, though it lasted through other scenes to the time when Hartwell awoke. He was then lying without a hat, and very bedraggled, under the portico of the pavilion, to which he had returned from the well. The sun was well up; before him was a small lawn enclosed by forest, and in the middle of the lawn was a statue of Pan on a pedestal. He lay for some time, stiff in the limbs, thinking of his dream, living through it again, seeing the scenes which he had seen, and hearing again the words which he had heard. The effect of it upon him was extraordinary, not only upon his nerves, but upon his memory; for he found that he could remember the very order in which what he had said, and what Drayton had said, had been uttered; two or three of Drayton’s phrases seemed to be burned into his brain as only words heard in dreams can be; anon a subdued groan came from the prostrate form, as lying there in the portico on his face, Hartwell reconsidered the universe. What thoughts then passed through Hartwell’s mind? It is useless to follow them, if we could: but his “pure reason” had brought him to the verge of a terrible deed, and the conclusion at which he seems to have arrived was that the Drayton of the vision was his own purer and purest reason, roused by the disastrous fix in which he now stood, to a debate with his pure reason; that his cut-and-dry theory of the world was hardly complete; that there must be some thing inside or outside of the atoms more than he had accounted for; and that, consequently, his life must begin afresh. At all events, when he suddenly saw a workman with a hod and a trowel standing by the statue of Pan on the lawn, and staring at him, Hartwell sprang to his feet as if this sight terrified him, and ran past the workman, wildly seeking the ruin.

XXII. HARTWELL LIES LOW



AFTER RUNNING UP a steep path in the forest, Hartwell saw Anderson standing with his harrier, spaniel, and fowling-piece under a tree on the rising ground where the ruin stood; he joined the hunchback nearly breathless.

“Did you remove the boards from the flooring?” he asked in a secret and agitated voice.

“A’ did,” said Anderson, with a nod of the head.

“Give me the keys quickly!”

“Wherever did ye sleep — ?

“The keys!”

Anderson slowly drew them from his shirt: Hartwell caught them from the hunchback’s hand with a severe flash of the eye, and instantly was running again. He entered the ruin, ran to the door made of logs, opened it, ran across the empty hall to the flight of stone steps with the low Gothic door above it, opened that also, then ran up the spiral stair, never pausing to take breath, till he reached the top; he then opened the door at the top, and entered the vaulted room of untooled blocks.

There at the little deal table sat a woman eating porridge out of a pewter plate — her breakfast, which Anderson had just brought her.

The moment her eyes rested upon Hartwell, she uttered a short cry, and fled with a fluttering sort of motion first toward her own room, then, with a sudden change of direction, toward the room where the boards had been removed. Hartwell started after her, hissing under his breath the word

“Stop!” He almost caught her during the delay while she opened the door, but she was gone again before he could touch her.

Immediately afterwards he was aware of a scream, of an effort to stop himself, of a life passing beyond his power; and almost without knowing what he did, he was on his face, half hanging over an opening in the flooring four feet square, and in his left hand the woman’s left arm and her hanging weight.

For a moment the strain was severe, and the issue doubtful: but as soon as he had her held by both hands and began to draw her cautiously up, he found that she was wonderfully light; he got her to the flooring, picked himself up, and bore her in his arms to the outer vaulted room; there he laid her on the old pink sofa, and threw himself upon the lounge to take breath.

She, for her part, had fainted, and with his thoughtful smiling side-look Hartwell looked at her during some ten minutes. At once something struck him — a certain resemblance of her face to his own: she might have been his sister; and at once, too, there was at work in him a sympathy with her, a compassion for her, instinctive and sudden, such as he had never yet felt for anyone.

She was of middle height, very slender, with very thin cheeks, and dressed in a manner grotesque to the point of comicalness, for she had on only a robe that was really a nightdress, but with a waist to it, this waist being loose and low down at the hips, and one of the sleeves was much larger than the other (this robe was the handiwork of Anderson); and through a large rent in her right slipper (the left had fallen through the hole in the flooring) her dirty toes were seen.

Presently she opened her eyes, started, and stared at Hartwell. She had a commonplace, but rather pathetic face, once, perhaps, more or less pretty; there was something pathetic in the sideward way in which she held it

always. Her hair was gathered up in a knot, a quite little knot no bigger than a ping-pong ball or large marble; it had “dropped,” and from jet black was now well-sown with grey, though she was hardly thirty-six; her face was very blanched, with the palest washed-out freckles on it. Only the upper part of it resembled Hartwell’s, for her lips were not thick, and the upper was short, with a tendency to stand a little open.

Her surprise and fear of him rapidly vanished. Looking downward with her head held sideward in her habitual manner, she said:

“So you’ve come at last, James.”

“At last,” replied Hartwell: “never more, I think, to leave your side.”

“I hope you’ve not come here to murder me.”

“No! but to save, to liberate, and to avenge you.”

“Ah, nice tale.”

Her talk was slightly nasal, with a countrified drawl, and, like all about her, was the very embodiment of the commonplace.

“Let it not be doubted,” said Hartwell, with a vivacious eye. “I come back to you, though late, a changed man, a different man — Martha, sorry for my grievous offences against you, and sick to the heart that I have been, and may still be, the ruffian you have known me; but I come — no longer, indeed, your husband, nor disposed ever more to aspire to that title, but as a suppliant friend, beseeching you to forgive, and to permit me to prove my penitence by a lifelong devotion.”

Sideward she held her wearied, uninterested face. She made no answer to this, but said musingly:

“How came that hole in the flooring in there, I wonder? Nearly broke my poor neck—”

At this Hartwell’s lips pressed vindictively together.

“What’s brought you here?” asked Martha suddenly: “it’s only to do me some harm or other, I know. You might as well leave me in peace after all this time, James. I shouldn’t be surprised if you only want to murder me to marry some other woman; or p’raps, if the truth were known, you’ve done it already, and that’s why you locked me up, so as I should not show you up to everybody.”

“No! I have married no one, nor ever shall — take my word for it! — while you live. Nor have I come now to murder you, but, I repeat, to crave your forgiveness at your feet, and to comfort you, Martha, with my respect and love.”

“Fine tale,” she went on wearily; “you’ve got some new move on the board, I suppose. It’s all very well to come now with your pretences, James, when I don’t care whether I go out or stop in. You could kill me, if you like, and I shouldn’t care now. I want none of your false-hearted respect and love, all I want is my little Rosie.” Now the poor Martha began to cry into her hands.

“Your little-Rosie?” said Hartwell with a stammer. He was appalled, for he knew nothing of any little Rosie.

“Oh, of course, you don’t know where she is, do you? Oh no! you wouldn’t, of course,” said Martha. “How could you be so cruel, after all, so cruel, cruel, cruel, oh, my good God, as to take away my little girl from me?”

Hartwell now knelt on a sudden, with a bowed head and back, at her feet.

“She shall be recovered—”

“How do you mean ‘recovered.’ Where’s she, James?”

Hartwell had no idea! He could not answer.

“You may as well let me have the child,” she said. “What have you done with her? You may as well let me know at once. You should never have

taken her from me. I always said: ‘He’s a right to do what he likes with me, because I’m his wife, and I came from Africa against his orders, but he shouldn’t separate mother and child; oh, no, he shouldn’t do that: that isn’t hardly right.’ You may as well let me know what you’ve done with the child. Have you locked her up in a tower, too, with never a sight of God’s sky, and not a rag to her back five long years? She won’t know her own mother when she sees her. You may as well let me know if the child is well.”

“She is well — forgive me — she is well.”

“Is that the real downright truth, James?”

“Yes — forgive me, forgive me.”

“All right, I forgive you, if you give her back to me. You know you never liked the child: anybody could see that much. You may as well tell me whether I shall ever see the child again, or whether this is only some new move on the board—”

He kissed the back of her hand several times with quick-repeated pressures.

“Trust me, trust me this once,” he said: “I really make no new move on the board, having, perhaps, made enough. On the contrary, my heart so yearns with fatherly pity for all your forlorn and unprotected helplessness, that I present you my life as a sin-offering for my sins against you, Martha. You shall see her — let doubt be dismissed! — you shall certainly see her, if you will but bear with me.”

“It’s too good to be true. You were always such a one for telling lies, James. Shall I see her to-day?”

“Not to-day, I fear.”

“Oh, then, go away” — she pushed his head— “it’s only some new move you’re at: some other woman in the case, I’ll lay.”

Hartwell kissed her hand again, and rose, saying:

“You shall see her, believe me. But now, come; and let these prison-walls hear your lifelong farewell. Allow me to bear you in my arms—”

He lifted and bore her down, step by step, through the darkness of the spiral stair. She showed little interest, little joy, at crossing that threshold; but when they emerged from the ruin, and the full morning splendour struck the eyes of Martha, she gave a little cry, wriggled from his hold, ran a little way with her bare left foot through the dripping underwood, plucked a cowslip, and then ran back from the excursion with a sort of Chinese woman flurry in her shivering dress to his arms: thus Martha had her momentary happiness.

Hartwell took her to Anderson’s cottage; at the door of the cottage he met four of the working men who were engaged in making repairs on Oswald’s behalf at the pavilion, and he ordered them to finish the repairs, meaning to live there some time; then, depositing Martha at the table, which was already laid, they sat to Anderson’s excellent breakfast of teal, with several sorts of eggs, bread, butter, lettuce, and coffee.

After the breakfast Hartwell changed his wet clothes for some of Anderson’s, and after a search in the cottage for writing materials, which ended in the finding of a pencil and some old foolscap paper, he sat to write a number of letters, while Martha sat on the outer step in her grotesque garment, wondering at the sky, herself a wonder to the hunchback, who saw her at liberty from that day forward with a stare of surprise.

Hartwell first wrote to Miss Scatchett, his housekeeper, telling her to send him a trunk of clothes, also a certain packet of papers in a certain drawer in his study, and instructing her also to buy and send down a complete outfit for a lady of middle size. Miss Scatchett, he said, was not to reveal his whereabouts to anyone.

He next wrote to Bobbie Hartwell in St. James Street, saying: "I want you to come down here immediately. You are not to reveal my whereabouts to anyone."

He also wrote that day a letter to one Bathright, of Hong Kong, enclosing a draft to pay for the return of the old countryman, Gissing, to England.

He also wrote to the Chief Superintendent at Scotland Yard asking for information as to the whereabouts of a man who one night over four years before had received a mysterious wound in the temple at No. 7, Twyford Buildings, W.C., which wound had made the man dumb. He meant Barnes, the father of the murdered Letty.

Kirk, the stableman, who had tried to blackmail him, and Mary Liskeard, who had wished to stab him, were dead: Bull, the mastiff, which had taken him for a ghost, was dead; and because he could not recall them, Hartwell's eye, as he thought of them, flashed severely.

He also wrote next day to the Home Office, and to two London morning papers, stating in equivocal language that Oswald Drayton, condemned to four months' imprisonment, had not meant to steal the bank notes found on him. The notes had been purposely placed in the hanging coat by him, James Drayton, in order that Oswald might mistake them for a letter which he meant to steal.

And now it occurred to Hartwell that he had not examined that letter which Oswald had meant to steal. He had intended to do this on the day after Oswald's trial, but the hurried trip to Gorton had caused him to remit it. He now resolved to see, when he was next in London, what that letter could be which Oswald had so wanted.

These letters, at any rate, Hartwell wrote, crushing himself with grim lips; and Anderson took them on his cover-hack to Felmingham.

The day after the liberation of Martha, in the afternoon, the outfit for her and the trunk of clothes, for Hartwell, together with the packet of papers which he had asked Miss Scatchett for, arrived from London. He wanted that packet of letters because it contained an old letter from one Elizabeth Seward, which said that “the girl” had run away, “to go to her mother,” but had been recaptured. It had no address, no date, but the postmark on the envelope indicated a village (Birdlip) in Gloucestershire: and Hartwell knew that one Elizabeth Seward drew the half-yearly interest of a fund placed by Drayton in a Cheltenham bank for her use. He had never been able to find out who, or precisely where this woman was; had once determined to go down there and seek her out when he got a chance, but had never gone; and for over four years he had had no word from her. At any rate, he concluded that “the girl” with her must be Martha’s daughter.

Two hours after the arrival of the packages at Corton, arrived Mr Bobbie Hartwell, who was now grown into a slim, rosy-faced Adonis of nineteen years, but an Adonis unrural to his glove-tips, tintured by Rugby, retintured by Mayfair, and tintured all through again by St. John’s Wood and the Quartier Latin — a rather complex Adonis of nineteen. The young man was supposed to be studying electrical engineering, but his hair was worn in longish waves, and his father, who had seen his name in an art journal, darkly suspected that Bobbie was more given to verses than to volts.

Bobbie and Hartwell walked for an hour that evening in the forest, where the father impressed upon the son the task that lay before him: he was to start at once, and, making Cheltenham his centre, search the country, especially about Birdlip, till he found the girl, Rosie; the name “Elizabeth Seward” was to be Bobbie’s clue and pole-star; and he would take with him a trained investigator from London.

“You will use your wits, and not fail me,” said Hartwell; “it is essential to my tranquillity that you find her within the week. I may mention that she is black-haired, and her age under sixteen.”

But these details were quite wrong. Hartwell assumed that Rosie was Drayton’s daughter, and, since he knew the date of Drayton’s marriage, he could thus fix Rosie’s maximum age; also, since both Drayton and Martha were black-haired, he assumed that Rosie would be, too; but, in fact, she was a daughter of Martha’s first husband, one Harper, was over seventeen, and fair-haired.

“And what do you say her name is, sir?” asked Bobbie.

“Rose Drayton.”

Here again was a fatal direction, her name being Rose Harper.

“Some relative of yours, perhaps, sir?”

“Perhaps.”

“Quite so, sir. But I suppose you see, sir, that it will be deucedly odd if I don’t turn up at your wedding in three days’ time. I had to take Miss Aimee Drummond—”

“Yes, deucedly odd, my friend if you don’t turn up at my wedding,” answered Hartwell, “nothing so odd. Let it not, however, be said, Bobbie, that you have a larger consciousness than your protector. Do as I bid you — do as I Did you.”

Hartwell’s head dropped to his breast with a deep frown of pain, his palm laid lightly on his brushed-back hair, which was growing rather thin now.

“Do you feel bad, sir?” asked Bobbie.

“No! I feel well. Let us return to the cottage. I have only this further hint to give you, Bobbie, which you may have already gathered from my manner, that, in seeking this Rose Drayton, you seek your wife; and, in

finding her, you find what is a good thing for youths of your age and hers — a mate.”

“By Jove, sir — you — you, really, sir,” went Bobbie, with a lovely blush, “you — you overwhelm me with distinction — Ah, Heaven! this is why I am sent to Birdlip! I shall say Roselip — !”

“You displease me, Bobbie,” said the lad’s father: “I require you to take my serious communications with a more becoming gravity. It is my wish that you marry this girl, and at once, if she be healthy — if she be alive! (She is, she must be, alive). Will you marry her whom I wish, or whom you wish?”

“Whom you wish, sir, with pleasure,” said Bobbie.

“That’s a man. Let us return.”

XXIII. HARTWELL IS TEMPTED



THE “DISAPPEARANCE OF Drayton,” of course, caused a flutter, especially in the west end of London. When the day of his marriage with Julia arrived, and no one could guess what had become of him, it was generally supposed that he had met with an accident, and, perhaps, was dead. But the morning after that sad wedding day, it was seen that he could not be dead, for there appeared in two of the morning papers his extraordinary letter, exculpating his “brother,” Oswald, from intending to steal the bank notes. Still, it could not be guessed what had happened to upset the marriage, or where “Drayton” was.

Hartwell, meanwhile, remained at Corton, where he took up his residence with Martha in the Pavilion. During the first three days after finding Martha in her prison in the tower, he wrote several letters to Julia, letters which were like groans expressed in words, but he tore them all up. Only four brief lines on the day before the wedding reached her from him: “It is better to say briefly what has to be said. I cannot, after all, become to you what I have hoped. And this is the last ill-usage that you will receive at my hands.”

Julia spent the forenoon of her wedding day in a long and solitary ride over the downs, after which she returned to Garlot Croft unwell, and was put to bed by her relatives in a sort of sleep.

It was not till about a week after that disastrous wedding day, that it got into the stream of general knowledge that “Drayton” was at an out-of-the-way place called Corton, the information having by then got abroad through

Hartwell's several letters to the Home Office, etc. By that time Julia, her aunt, and some other relatives had gone away to the South of France. June, the month of the marriage, passed into July. Hartwell, meanwhile, at Corton, was looking out anxiously to see his son and Rosie, expecting their arrival every day. But, strange to say, neither Bobbie and Rosie came, nor Bobbie by himself.

Hartwell had received only one letter from Bobbie, dated at Birdlip, saying that the search for Rosie was going forward: then had followed a most mysterious silence.

At this delay Martha could not be consoled, could not be won, by the excellent Hartwell; "You may as well tell me what you have done with the child," said Martha wearily ten times a day in her little nasal drawl; "you'd better tell that to the marines that you don't know where the child is, James."

But Hartwell's patience with her little vulgarities of thought and speech never failed her deadness to him, her continued lack of any spark of gratitude or amity, had no influence on his dogged devotion; like an automaton of chivalry he still hung about and fostered her; and the more he served her, the more the reward of having a genuine pity and affection for her was given to him.

From the first he had observed a certain facial resemblance between her and himself, and had felt toward her some sort of special affinity and friendship; and one day, a couple of weeks after coming to live in the pavilion, a possible explanation, of this was offered him: for she had an album brought from her empty trunk in the tower, full of the faded photographs of some rather obsolete people, the leaves of which she was fond of turning; and, looking over her shoulder in the portico one morning while she was going through the album, Hartwell, seeing an old

daguerreotype photograph which, being very much like himself, he took to be a photograph of Drayton, said to her: "Ah, there I am, then," but she replied: "You know very well that's not you; it's my grandfather. Denner, that shot at your mother on the ship."

Hartwell now for the first time saw into the mystery of his bodily twinning with Drayton, having never before been struck by the possibility that another mother might have been affected in the same way as his own had been by that old tragedy of the sea. He now saw that this must have been so; and since that Captain Denner, the quasi-father of his and Drayton's body, was also Martha's grandfather, from that hour Hartwell looked upon the good Martha as kith and kin, and added to his fatherly affection for her a brotherly friendship.

He believed that Drayton, too, may have felt, something of this affinity for Martha, and under its influence may have married her. But, in Drayton's case, time and "the world" may have turned the positive liking into a negative sentiment of actual dislike.

During all those weeks of June and July, while he waited for Bobbie to come with Rosie, Hartwell did not weary of trying to call up in Martha some little interest, trust, or affection toward him: but it was always in vain; and her carping unfriendliness became an added care to his great sorrow. Always she said to him. "You may as well tell me where she is, James, and not be such a brute;" but he could not tell: Bobbie Hartwell seemed to be dead; a letter addressed to Bobbie at Birdlip was returned by the post office to Hartwell and Hartwell would even kneel to Martha and say: "Bear with me."

He spent nearly all his days with her, though he had now his books in the pavilion, as well as the necessary apparatus for research-work arranged in a back room on the first floor. The house was a square, yellow-white building,

moderately large, in a Moorish tone, surrounded by a portico of arches on slender pillars; it lay somewhat in a valley, all shut in by old forest, about a quarter of a mile from the ruin. Some of its lonely, large rooms contained furniture, faded tapestries and carpets, an old organ, cracked spinets and pianos, historical Chippendales and Davids, coffers, cabinets, bronzes, and a library of books which were just visible through dust. Hartwell made five or six of the rooms habitable, and had down three of the servants from Addison Road, with a young groom named Gloucester, who brought down two of the horses, the landau, and the trap. Sarah Gissing was made Martha's maid, and Steve Anderson became the commissionaire of the establishment, doing whatever odd jobs were to be done, but never losing his look of wonder at the change in the aspect of his world. When Mrs Gissing and her daughter Sarah arrived to await the coming of Gissing, and occupied the second of the two chalk cottages, Steve appeared before Hartwell to complain that things had now reached a climax, that the water-fowl would be flushed, that the sky would fall — But Hartwell was a new kind of Drayton, made to be submitted to. "Let it not be said, Anderson," he said with a smiling eye, "that the hare hunts the harrier;" and this was an allusion which Steve could appreciate; but even so long as a month after her liberation, if the sullen and daft Steve by chance saw Martha alone in the forest, he would make a startled step, as if to seeing a runaway; and a rumble was always in his chest at the way things were looking.

Martha was, however, seldom to be seen alone, for her legs would not bear her far; her vitality was almost gone.

Sometimes she would turn white, with flustered breath, as if from heart-failure; she was quite light to lift. Suddenly she would fall asleep, physically and mentally enfeebled and washed out. Always it was Hartwell's arm which supported her, and his bosom was her pillow.

Sometimes she had childish moods, picnic-fancies, and he would take her all the summer's day to where the natural profusion of the estate was wildest with flowers and fruit of blackberry and honeysuckle, or into the depths of the pinewood where in some parts the underwood was very thick and the scenery very romantic, or to the north-east reaches of the estate where there was a frog pond in the gloom of the forest, and all thereabouts festoons of dog rose rioted over hedges that were three yards thick — rambles from which Hartwell might return with Martha asleep in his arms, and in her arms a load of flowers, roses and tall sunflowers which nodded above their heads, and clematis and red-berried briony which trailed on the ground, destined to fill her vases and her dark-blue china bowl in the drawing room of the pavilion.

“Is it true,” she asked one sunset, “that you got so rich, as I heard before I left South Africa?”

They were sitting on the banks of the mere under the west wall of the ruin, fishing, for Hartwell had tried to teach her angling, though she always sailed the float of her rod about on the surface of the water in an uninterested and very grotesque fashion; but they often came and sat just there in the long twilights under a gigantic old willow by a ground-baited patch of the mere.

“Yes,” answered Hartwell, “I got rich; hence my revolt against my humble past when you were my lawful companion; and hence also that lawless sense of power which you have bitterly felt, poor woman;” with closed eyes he passed his hand back ward over his hair, which had grown markedly more grey within the last four weeks.

“At any rate,” she said, ludicrously sailing the float about, and fingering a new pearl necklet which lay over her muslin bodice, “I haven't got much of the riches. That's been for other women, I daresay, if the truth were only

known. I think a husband should act better by his wife than that, James: not lock her up in an old tower five long years, and take the child away. If you'd only tell me what you've done with my little Rosie, I'd let bygones be bygones. Whatever has that poor child done to you? You may as well give her back to me, James. Oh, my good Lord, I'd just like to lay eyes on that little girl once again! I wonder if she'd know me?"

"She is coming, she is assuredly coming, she is being earnestly sought," said Hartwell.

"Ah, fine talk, no doubt: always coming but never come. You may as well tell me what you've done with the child. Sought for what? You know very well where the child is all the time: but you always took the cake for telling lies, James."

The last rose and primrose blushes of the sunset faded in the west, but still lingered like fragrant memories in the spirit of the twilight; a faint evening breeze stirred the reeds and bulrushes, where a few grebes and herons loitered, and the wild duck suddenly shot up a bluff stern, like ships that dive when they are about to sink, while yonder a little red woodcock "roaded," giving out in a strange language a sound which meant that that day was done, though the air was still all alive with twitterings. Martha pinned her sailor hat over the paltry little knot of her hair, while Hartwell, putting together the rods and tackle, the can of red worms, and two breams which he had caught, said to her: "Take my word for it, Martha, that the greater number of the lies which I was to tell you have been already told. As for the riches of which you speak, they are yours, all yours, and have in store for you a greater sum of pleasures than you at present dream of. I am only waiting for you to grow a little stronger in this bracing air of Corton, before presenting you to the world as my wife, and settling you in that sphere which is yours by right; nor ever again are you destined to find

yourself without a protecting husband at your side — take my word for it! — nor ever again will he willingly cause to those eyes that have wept, one tear — If only you will give me your pardon in return for my strong and tender affection, Martha. Yes! you are rich enough: you possess an excellent seat in the county of Bucks, one in Salop, houses, a million at least in cash —”

Martha was not much interested; her confirmed insensibility to him could not be moved. “You can keep all your grand things,” she said, leaning on him, as they walked down the steep forest path from the ruin to the pavilion: “I want none of your palaver and soft-soaping, you know; you’ve got the gift of the gab, since I knew you, haven’t you? and have learned to talk like grand people; but that isn’t going to get over me, James. I’d be quite happy where I am, if you’d only give me the child to run about with me, and pick the flowers. My goodness! that would be a treat.”

“You shall have her — never fear! (Such an added calamity could not befall me —)” Hartwell’s eyes closed in pain. What had become of Bobbie, he could not begin to conceive. The thought that Bobbie had met foul play, that he might be dead, had occurred to him, and at one time he had thought of giving notice of the lad’s disappearance to the police, and having him officially searched for. But he had first written to Bobbie’s man at Bobbie’s chambers in London to see if the man knew anything of Bobbie, and it turned out that the man had quite recently received some instructions from Bobbie, who was therefore apparently alive and well. Why, then, even if his quest had failed, did Bobbie not write to his father? It could not be guessed; but with that faith which believes what it hopes for, pushed to make some promise, Hartwell now said jauntily to Martha: “Yes! you shall have her. I have even to tell you news the most auspicious! I have lately arranged for

Rosie to marry one of the healthiest, handsomest, richest, and smartest young men in the Kingdom—”

“You have? Is that the downright truth?” she asked, agaze.

“The gospel truth — let fears be dismissed! All is arranged, and the wedding bells as it were already ring out! It is only a matter of days when you will see her with her ideal bridegroom, a young man as like a fairy prince as you can imagine — a poet! rich! handsome.”

“My goodness!” cried Martha, animated and laughing: “why couldn’t you tell me that before?”

“I had reasons—”

But now at once the worthy Martha fell into melancholy again, saying “Seeing is believing; I’m not going to pluck any more chickens before they’re hatched: we’ll wait and see.”

After this they went in silence down the path to the pavilion, till presently Martha said sleepily, with her head on Hartwell’s shoulder:

“Yes, you took away my few little jewels, didn’t you, when I came from Africa? and what have you given me since? this paltry necklet and four paltry rings—”

“Stop!” cried Hartwell: “you shall be well pleased.”

He had discovered that she had a fondness for jewels, and one day had gone to Cromer to buy her a few; he now determined to choose her himself a load of the brightest and best the next day in London, where he had also an appointment at the Home Office concerning the case of Oswald.

After dinner Martha played, usually, a few old-fashioned airs on the old piano, or they played cards, or he read to her, till she fell asleep. The surrounding forest, which was grand with many huge old trees, lay only a few steps away round the portico, and its sombre presence, never unfelt, at all hours pervaded the faded old house with some impression of mystery

and enchantment; but this was deepest at night, and often Hartwell and Martha sat silently watching it in the portico all the evening till ten o'clock, hearing two nightingales which lived near to the house, and sang every night to the moonlight.

The morning following Martha's reproach to him for his meanness in the matter of jewels, Hartwell, after recommending her to the care of Sarah Gissing, started off for Felmingham and thence for London. But in the train he read a newspaper, and that day forgot Martha and the jewels, forgot where he was, awoke as from a dream when the train stopped; he had read in the newspaper a rumor, a gossip, that Julia was engaged to the heir-apparent of the hereditary Arch Duke P — of B — a "brilliant" young soldier in the Austrian army, three years younger than Julia.

Hartwell had seen the young prince at Vienna, and considered him a mere clockwork made of moustaches and spurs, who danced at state balls. Julia's marriage with him would be like the marriage of a peach with an artificial peach of cloth and stuffing; and Hartwell felt that he would hardly be able to live and see it.

He could not suspect Julia of ambition. Her motive for entering into such an engagement could only be resentment against him, unless it was brought about by the pressure of her relatives. In either case his pity for her and for himself now ached afresh in his breast, as if no days had passed since the breakdown of their hope.

Her resentment, her disdain: Hartwell had the thought that it might not be so deep, if she only knew, if with the secretest of whispers he went and whispered to her, "I have failed you because of a living wife: yet she is not my wife — Drayton is married — but I am not." Then she might think less ill of him — at present her mind was wholly without explanation of his conduct; she might even dare to give him a boundless forgiveness, and say:

“I will have you so;” and that would avert the Austrian tragedy.

But if he thus saved Julia and himself, he abandoned Martha: Martha was wronged again. At the stubborn fact of Martha, Hartwell groaned. He had vowed to himself that, while he was Drayton, Drayton’s wife should not be a wholly desolate widow. With the name and estate henceforth Hartwell took the burdens.

But how if he threw off the name and estate of Drayton entirely? — stood forth to the world as the penniless Hartwell, exposed to scorn and punishment? It could be done — given a courage such as did not at all belong to average man. Yet it could be done. To lose all, yet thereby lessen the disdain for him of one woman became Hartwell’s temptation. Martha would then be a widow like other widows, knowing that her husband was dead, and rich with his wealth, not a widow thinking that her husband was alive; and thinking herself abandoned by him; and Julia might even dare to say, with a boundless bosom, “I will have you so.”

But Hartwell could not face it absolutely naked. He had once been very poor, and to men who have once felt the stark nakedness of penury, it never quite ceases to be a motif of shame: he could not present himself as a wholly upstart beggar of the working-class. He thought that if he could slip off Drayton, and yet be a passably rich and respectable Hartwell, then he might dare. And now he remembered an electrical invention of his working-days which he had lacked the money to patent. He reconsidered and still found it a good thing, which is rare when one reconsiders old ideas, unless they are genuinely good. The sale of that invention might bring him in sixty, a hundred thousand pounds, honestly his own.

The first night in London he sat up till near morning drawing two plans of it in a warmth of new nope. Dulaunay, who had lately gone from his chateau in Upper Auvergne to spend a week with Julia at Cannes, was now

again loitering in Addison Road; and he and Hartwell the next morning went together to the city, where Hartwell left one of the drawings at a model-maker's, the other one with a patent agent, and afterwards had two interviews with business men on the commercial aspects and floating of the invention.

Hartwell and the count then drove in a cab to the Home Office, Dulaunay not knowing why, for, having been abroad, he had heard nothing of Oswald's disgrace. At the office Hartwell learned that the revoking of Oswald's sentence was under the consideration of the secretary, but that, since Oswald had meant to steal some thing, his term would almost be up before the necessary machinery for his release could be got in motion. Hartwell, on rejoining Dulaunay in the cab to drive home, was again thinking of that letter which Oswald had meant to steal, and determined to see that day what the letter could contain; but again that day something prevented him, for as they turned westward into Cockspur Street *en route* for Addison Road, Dulaunay nudged Hartwell with the whisper "look," and Hartwell had a glimpse of Julia driving fast eastward in a landau with her eldest brother? Colonel Lord Forlong.

Hartwell had not known that she was in England (she had arrived in London the previous night); and on a pretence of work, he shut himself in the laboratory at Addison Road, sitting like a frowning statue with a bowed head in one position till near nine in the evening, when he suddenly went out in great haste, brushing aside Dulaunay who tried to speak to him at the foot of the stairs. Hartwell took a cab for Brook Street, driven by the uncontrollable impulse to see Julia, to tell her something, he had not decided what. But when he reached Kensington Gardens, he turned back, saying to himself: "Let this be the last;" and he determined to fly from any

further temptation of the sort by returning to the country early on the morrow.

But he would not have found Julia in Brook Street if he had gone there; for when he had seen her that forenoon in the landau with her brother, she was driving to Liverpool Street in order to go down to Norfolk, and at about that hour of the evening when he was in the cab going to her, she and her brother were moving down an avenue in the Corton forest in a Felmingham basket-chaise. Julia had now come from the Continent, a month after the breakdown of her marriage, humbly enough to discover an explanation of Draytonism, for none so far was conceivable to her. He had said to her that evening in the rocca near Siena: "I am not married, that is the God's truth;" and Julia still had no doubt that the God's truth must be true.

Her brother's hand lay on hers in the chaise. They did not speak a word to each other.

There was not a breath of wind, the birds were asleep in the trees, the avenue was dark, save where, in bands and patches, moonlight lay on the mossy underfoot.

Lord Forlong drove. They assumed that they would come to somewhere, if they kept on, but they were not sure of the way: presently, however, they came to an alley on the left, at the end of which they could spy a glade in the wood; in the glade was a well, a woman sitting on it, a girl, and a dog — a scene of quiet moonlight and underwood; the dog was barking, and this attracted the attention of the two in the chaise; whereupon Julia, led by some instinct, as well as by the desire to learn the way, said to her brother: "Stop, I will go and ask."

She got out and walked to meet the woman, who had now risen from the well, and was coming to meet Julia.

“We want to come to Mr Drayton,” said Julia, when they met: “do you know in what direction he is to be found?”

For some seconds Martha could not answer; her breath was, as it were, so taken away by this astonishing womanhood with the dainty shoes, who was suddenly standing before and above her.

“You are going right,” said Martha finally, “but he isn’t here now, he went to London this morning.”

“That is disappointing, then. Is he gone for long? But perhaps you don’t know—”

“Well, of course I know, if he’s my husband. He’s only gone for the two days to buy me some jewels.”

While one might count three, there was a pause, a shock, and a silence; then Julia said with a sweet smile:

“That seems devoted.”

This simple remark loosed Martha’s tongue: her surprise at the patrician presence before her was now abated; and Martha could not let it be thought by anyone that James was devoted.

“Seems devoted is right,” said she: “to seem is one thing, and to be is another. It is only pretence, if you knew all. I’d say to you what I’d say to any woman younger than myself: never let a man get over you by his hypocrisies. It comes and it goes by fits and by starts, and the men are all the same.”

“Oh — but-when a man takes a train, he means business!”

“To tell you the truth, I take little notice of what he does mean,” replied Martha with an indifferent laugh, glad of someone new to talk to, and rushing at once, like a Boer-wife on the veldt, into gossipy familiarity with a perfect stranger of her own sex: “but after all, nobody can know a man but

his own wife. He's one thing to the world, and another thing to her. If I were to tell you some of the things that that man has done to me—"

"Ah, no, better not."

"Oh, I am not going to screen him: how would you like to be locked up five years in an old tower?"

"Oh! I mustn't hear!" cried Julia, laughing, with a pretty movement of the palms towards her ears.

"And how would you like to have your child taken?"

"No, no, no, really, really, I mustn't hear!" laughed Julia animatedly, with comic, self-protecting gestures: "he's an awful friend of mine—"

"Oh, he is. That accounts, then—"

"Good-bye!" Julia put out her hand with sharp decision, and Martha had to take it.

"What name shall I say?" called Martha after her, as Julia walked away.

"No name. I may write to him."

With rather a stumble in her walk she went back to the chaise, got in and sat down with a sigh.

"Well?" asked her brother.

For a minute Julia did not answer. She sat with her chin supported on her palm and a gaze into the distance of her long-lashed eyes, in a posture habitual to her in pensive moments; and presently she said:

"That lady is his wife."

Nothing more was said. The chaise turned round, and drove away from Corton.

The brother and sister took train the same night for London. But the colonel found some pretext for accompanying Julia only as far as Norwich; she went on to London, but he returned northward toward Corton. He had a cane with him.

He slept at Felmingham that night, and the next afternoon at three o'clock sent a stable-boy to inquire who was at Corton.

At that very hour of three Hartwell and Dulaunay, just come from London, were driving down the forest lull from the ruin to the pavilion. Hartwell sat silent in the trap, wondering how he was to present Martha to the count. If he had really been a friend of Drayton's he might possibly have known that Drayton was married. He said presently:

"By the way, Dulaunay, do you recollect how long previous to my motor car accident our friendship began?"

Dulaunay bridled with a grimace.

"But, sir," he now said boldly, "you are droll! I have never of my life seen you before that night, when we met the one the other at the station of Liverpool Street."

"Ha! What, then, were you doing in my brougham, my friend?"

"But I had put myself there for the shelter from the rain!"

"I see, I see. But is it possible, sir, that you have enjoyed bed and board, salary and world-wide travel at my expense four years and a half without the least formal claim upon my purse?"

"But! — has not sir enjoyed my society in return?" cried the excellent Frenchman. "Devil! you are droll, "Drayton". How possibly did you think to know me that night, when you never saw me of your life before?"

"Let that remain unexplained, count, and do not puzzle your brains in vain," said Hartwell: "I had reasons. As for your society, certainly it has been worth the money, and, I sincerely hope, will not fail me now or henceforth. If we are not quits, I admit myself your debtor. But be that as it may. I am now, Dulaunay, about to present you to my wife."

"Your wife! but no!" went Dulaunay, in a maze at all the impossibilities which confronted him.

“Yes, sir.”

“But, sir,” said the Frenchman hotly, “permit me in that case to warn you frankly that your conduct to Lady Methwold excites the resentment of a man of honor.”

“Say nothing, my friend,” — Hartwell patted the count’s hand, his manner now much more elderly, sorrow-stricken, and humble than heretofore— “say nothing: you are not my judge; and He will take care that my sufferings are adequate.”

The carriage containing Hartwell and Dulaunay drew up between the Portico, and the statue of Pan, and there was Martha in her lounge under the portico, roused from sleep to an instant thought of her jewels.

She was duly presented to the count as Mrs Drayton, and before dinner poured into Dulaunay’s ears the whole story of her wrongs, the tower, the child. After dinner she strolled, glittering with the new diamonds, accompanied by Hartwell and the count, in the forest; they sat for a time on the old well between the last of the sunset and the pale risen moon; after which, as they were strolling again, Martha said to Hartwell:

“I forgot to tell you that two of your friends came to see you in a chaise last night. It’s little wonder you left me to follow those sort of women, they’re all so grand and fetching. Dear me, they do know how to get themselves up, and no mistake! I never saw such a creature, so tall, she seems to carry a wind with her that blows people away — But I’ve let her know pretty plainly how you’ve acted by me, James. Don’t think I’m going to screen you, for I’m not. I told her right out about the tower, and about taking that poor child away—”

Hartwell stopped still, with a face in which the deepest pain and shame were visible, for he guessed at once that “the tall creature” of whom Martha spoke must have been Julia.

“And there, I believe,” went on Martha, “comes the very gentleman that was with her.”

Hartwell, looking up, saw Colonel Lord Forlong coming down the avenue in which they stood, and quickly he whispered to Dulaunay: “Take her down that alley—” He himself then walked quickly to meet the colonel, while Dulaunay and Martha walked back toward the well. The colonel was a very tall man of forty, with a certain straddle of the legs in his walk; his chin was a mere aristocratic bone with a dent in the middle of it: he had cold grey eyes; and Hartwell’s eye flashed a little when he saw the expression of that face of the colonel.

They met at a spot where the faint light that was neither of day nor of night made a pattern through the leaves on the moss, for the day was done, but the night was only so far come that the bright colors of poppy, gorse, and tassels of the silver lime were going out in a monotony of shadow.

The two men stood face to face, and looked at each other.

“Well, Drayton, is it true you’re married?” asked the colonel, whipping his right leg.

“Yes, my lord.”

“How long since?”

“Oh, a long time.”

“Well, you escape with your life, Drayton; but you owe it only to the fact that we are Englishmen, more’s the pity for this once. On the continent a mad dog like you would certainly not be permitted to live. As it is, I’m sure I don’t know what to do with you, except flog you.”

The cane lifted.

“Ah, my friend, wait, wait,” said Hartwell quietly: “I see that your cane is slender, and my jacket is thick—”

In two sharp movements Hartwell had his jacket off and dropped to the ground; he then stood in his waistcoat and shirt-sleeves, with a slightly bowed head and hanging arms, waiting. He had on no hat; and his hair was now growing thin and grey.

Swish! the cane cut him on the head, with a flagrant brand all down the left cheek; the colonel concentrated into it all the rage of his arm, and struck as if to annihilate, with his lips nailed together; Hartwell just winked a little.

Again it came, cutting the left arm; and again, at the neck.

Once more the cane lifted — But Hartwell's hand now went up checkingly, and he said: "Enough — you are avenged:" nor was there any disobeying that almost fatherly mildness and authority; no further blow was struck; the colonel looked contemptuous, turned and strode away, more caned perhaps than caning; and still like a statue with a bent head Hartwell stood there with the wheal ablaze on his cheek, while a breath of wind stirred his hair; all the little birds, the reed-wrens and titlarks and thrushes, tweeted sleepily their last lingering good-nights in the nooks and cradles of their great dormitory, where the lights were going out: and the worthy Hartwell heard in these little voices a new tone that night.

But before the wheal on his face was quite faded, on the fourth day after his flogging in the avenue, strange new bitterness was raised in the cup of which Hartwell had to drink, for he received a letter from Julia, dated at Berlin — a long and rambling letter, which, though it said nothing in particular, and said it in a cynical one, was yet touched with a great despair; ostensibly the letter was only about the few presents which he had given her, but between the lines he saw her desolate, overtaken by trouble, she who had always fared prosperously through life and never known a great sorrow; he could picture her sitting by herself for hours, leaning forward with her chin on her palm, with an absent gaze of her long-lashed eyes, in a

posture habitual to her in certain moods; and Hartwell asked himself as he read her letter, "Am I to suffer her to die?"

The whole letter showed to Hartwell that she suffered greatly. The temptation to see her, without any self-avowed object, now again assailed Hartwell, stronger than ever before. He spent half a day with her letter, hidden in the forest, reluctant to return to the house, lest he should put on a coat, and take a train to go to her; he felt that the power permanently to withstand this impulse was not in him; that he would surely go: that it was only a matter of time. On the other hand, to leave Martha desolate revolted him; he wished desperately to stand by Drayton's wife; and in this war-tug of motives his brow grew wrinkled with care and long deliberation.

If only the young Bobbie would bring the girl, Rosie, then Hartwell felt he might abandon Martha, and abandon her happy; each day he expected Bobbie anew, or at least, a letter: but Bobbie did not come, and did not write.

He returned toward evening to the pavilion on the day when he received Julia's letter, determined to bear and wait, but to despatch Dulaunay to seek Bobbie: and that very night Dulaunay started away from Corton on that quest.

XXIV. HARTWELL WAITS IN VAIN



IN ORDER TO see what evil effects had befallen the poor Bobbie Hartwell, that he did not write to his father, we must go back some weeks to a slumbrous June afternoon, when Bobbie was walking along a country road on which he might have imagined himself the only living being in the world, it was so lonely there though only two mites behind him lay Birdlip, a village in the mountainous part of Gloucestershire. Not a cloud was in the sky, and hardly a breath in the air: dust lay visibly on the wayside cowslips and buttercups; the poet was in undress, scarfed at the waist with something rare in silk with a Tyrolese hat on the back of his curls, but his light boots, unsuited to that climate, were growing hot; in his hand was a note-book, in which, as he went, he pencilled down every fugitive thought which occurred to him; in English elegiac verses.

After this he turned down into a shaded and secluded path, steep and rough with stones, where he met a flushed tourist toiling up, rolling his bicycle, proving that there was at least one other person besides Bobbie in England; Bobbie and the bicyclist even passed each other without any greeting, which they would hardly have done on a really desert island. At the bottom of the hill Bobbie saw an unpretentious but solid house a little to the left of the path; and he opened the gate, went up the garden walk, and rapped at the door. Here in this secluded dell was just where the Chancellor of the British Exchequer comes to bury himself when the House rises, though Bobbie did not know that; he asked a very neat young girl who answered to his rap whether by chance one Rose Drayton lived there; her

glance at his pretty face was approving, and she smiled as she answered: No; my name is Rose, but not Drayton.” Did she by chance know the name of one Elizabeth Seward? “No,” she said.

They exchanged a smile as they parted, a Marconi kiss of their lips and eyes; then Bobbie went on his way on the same path which he had descended.

He went on up the path, till he came to an avenue of Spanish chestnuts, with a stile at each end; beyond the further stile was a wood on rough hilly ground; and into this wood Bobbie came. Here was a bit of true England. Bobbie’s heart was young: and, stopping over his notebook, he scribbled an appropriate verse.

But as Bobbie scribbled, he walked on, not looking where he was going to, and while scribbling the last word he was startled by a silvery voice which cried out:

“You’d better look out, sir!”

Bobbie did look out, and in doing so, saw a sweet girl of seventeen years, a mystery of muslin, roses, and a Dolly-Varden hat, standing beyond a stream into which he had been on the point of tumbling: and breathlessly Bobbie muttered under his breath: “By Jove, that’s rather a picture!”

“I am extremely obliged to you, he said aloud,” catching off his hat and they stood silent, she like an Etna of blushes, and he like Vesuvius. She had rumpled reddish hair, some freckles, the bluest eyes cast down, and seemed to him the sweetest loaf of of home-made that the collusion of that Gloucestershire sun and earth could ever have kneaded, baked, and turned out.

He suddenly remembered that he had a subject for talk ready-made, though the stream was not very narrow, and one had to lift one’s voice a little.

“I have to ask, if I may,” he said, unable to look directly at her, “whether you know a black-haired girl hereabouts called Rose Drayton?”

“No,” she answered, her eye resting aside on his silken girdle: “but, then, I know hardly anyone. My name happens to be Rose, but not Drayton; though I know that name, too, for my step-father was named Drayton.”

Bobbie hesitated a moment after this, and then remarked:

“One guesses your first name.”

“How does one?” asked Rosie, and there was something very shy, fresh, and wild about her, like the first snow-drop peeping through the grasses, shy, yet quite brave and unashamed.

“If you had not been called Rose,” answered the young poet, “roses would have craved a new name so as to be like you in all things.”

Rosie very gravely pondered that answer, and gravely she replied: “That doesn’t seem very serious talk.”

“It is absolutely serious talk,” replied Bobbie with considerable earnestness; “to express half that is in the heart, the tongue must often be content, to seem extravagant.”

“And what, then, sir, is in your heart, which makes you say that roses crave to be like me?” asked Rosie.

“Why, admiration of you and of roses.”

“It occurs to me to say that you admire me too quickly.”

“Not quickly at all,” protested Bobbie, “for I know you well, since you are in all the woods and on the hedges, being a rose, and I have plucked you and kissed you since I was a little chap.”

“I felt nothing of it, then,” said Rosie gravely, with a shaken head, tearing a rose to pieces.

“No,” explained Bobbie, “because I had to do only with copies of you before, and my kisses were cold; but now, you see, I have found the original

of the roses.”

“It may be possible that you don’t mean quite so much as you say, sir — not that I suppose that you would say it otherwise.”

“The truth is, that I do not say so much as I mean. But am I permitted to come over to your side?”

“To mine?”

“Yes.”

“How could you?”

“Is there no bridge anywhere?”

“There is one up yonder, but it does not lead into these grounds. These grounds can only be got into by the gate in the front wall, and that is always kept locked.”

Two hedges, twenty yards apart, came down to the very brink of the stream at right angles with it — hedges yards thick, all bound up in bindweed and clematis; joining these two ran a similar hedge parallel with the stream, with a white gate in it; and in the space between the three hedges, the charming girl stood. Beyond the cross-hedge could be seen a neat red cottage, breathing an azure-grey smoke which no wind routed that day.

“Then, you are rather a prisoner,” said Bobbie.

“I am afraid I am, sir.”

“Shall I cross the bridge, up yonder, and go round to the gate?”

“You would not be allowed to come in.”

“Then I must only walk through the stream, if I may.”

“You?”

“Yes.”

“Ob. no! If I had kept indoors, you would not have wished to — I hardly know you yet—”

“But it is simple for you to know me instantly through and through,” said Bobbie. “As for my name, it is Robert Hartwell—”

“Then we have the selfsame initials to our name, sir!” cried Rosie with meeting palms: “for I am Rose Harper, and we are both R. H.!”

“Now isn’t that an odd thing?” said

Robbie, “and you are a Rose and I am a Robert, for Robert means the same thing as a Robber.”

Rosie cast a shy, pleased underglance at him, for instantly to the lively organs of her fancy he appeared in the light of a robber of old romance, adventurous to the death, and gallant.

“Is it not strange? It seems to me now that half-an-hour since I was just like those benighted savages that we send the gospel to, who never heard of the fullness of life, but that now I know and have everything. But — I will come over.”

“Oh! I don’t know why you wish to! Perhaps if you had never come—”

“But—”

“You would get wet.”

“I might: but what can that matter?”

“No! — I don’t know what to say to—”

“Then, trust to me.”

“Oh, I do! But why should you come to this side?”

“To hold your hand, and kneel, and kiss it, just once: then I will call you the dearest saint—”

“I am so certain that you will get wet — !”

“I think not,” and now Bobbie no longer hesitated, but went down the bank and waded to the knees through the stream to the other side; and there he knelt in the blossoming grasses, as he had said that he would, and kissed

the little hand of Rosie, who looked down at him with the demurest and gravest eyes.

“Come, here, then,” slid said, suddenly brightening, and went before him to an inner corner of the orchard, where there was a slab of sandstone, supported askew on two low posts in the grasses under the shadow of two of the hedges and of an apple-tree; the rill flowed near it, and was at their feet when they sat on the slab.

“Well, I said that you would get wet,” remarked Rosie.

“One must cross Jordan to get into the Land of Promise,” answered Bobbie; “and I was not even aware that I was wet, till now you remind me; I rather thought that the waters had parted before me. Isn’t this a charming retreat in which you live? — so shaded, so cool, so full of trees and flowers; and you in it. Oh, I couldn’t tell you what this day and the chance it contained is to me! I never was half so much in luck’s way, I never was half so happy, and I do thank you for letting me be where you are. I think you live in Heaven. I wonder if I shall be able to come again, every day, for a long time, and just sit near you without saying a word, and be blessed?”

“I don’t know,” answered Rosie: “I hope so, since that would please you, but I am not free to do all I like. If we were seen now, I should be kept even more a prisoner than ever.”

“How a prisoner?”

“It has been so with me for five years,” she said, “I don’t know why. My mother brought me from South Africa when I was twelve years old, and since then I have been kept a kind of prisoner, for I am never allowed to go beyond the front gate, except to church on Sunday mornings, and then I am led by the hand like a child. My step-father, who was a terribly big man with a black beard, was very angry with my mother for coming from South Africa when they met in London, and—”

But at this point the interview was cut ruthlessly short, for Rosie started and turned pale, and Bobbie's eyes, following hers, saw a large, florid woman with her bare arms akimbo, standing at the white gate in the cross-hedge, watching them. Rosie got up in a scare to run to her, but understanding that this was the end of her episode, unless she was both bold and cunning, with the swift artfulness of her sex she turned back a little to Bobbie in the nick of time, and whispered to him: "I shall be watched now: don't come in the day, sir, but at night — when the clock strikes twelve—"

The caught miss then ran with light heels toward the woman, in a poetry of motion, as Bobbie thought, for he stood up to look after her flight among the fruit trees; he saw the woman seem to scold Rosie, though he could hear nothing, for the white gate was some distance away from the slab, and he also saw her shake her finger at himself; then she disappeared with Rosie a prisoner; and Bobbie sat again on the slab alone for a long time, a new-hatched chick fluttering in his boy's breast, and squalling with a wide bill after Rosie, its little mother, for food.

Bobbie scribbled in his note-book no more cynic elegiacs that day, finding Venus a "stern mother," not to be taken airily; that notion which his father entertained for some time soon after this date that the young man may have met with foul play was thus true in the sense that Bobbie was seriously wounded, not in the head with revolvers, but in the veins with an arrow. He forgot the smart Mayfair mood, he forgot his father's mission, nothing was important and fair to Bobbie but Rosie. Something of that affinity which Hartwell felt toward Martha for reasons which have been hinted at, undoubtedly made itself felt also between this son of Hartwell and this daughter of Martha. They met again that midnight, "when the clock struck twelve," as the romantic Rosie expressed the solemnity of that hour, and at the sandstone slab, where the ooze from the rill caused a growth of

moss and violets between the stepping-stones, Bobbie knelt to her again, and prayed to her, "Tell me how to love you and thank you deeply enough for this deigning;" and Rosie answered gravely to this, "Does it seem to you so much that I come here to meet you, then, sir? It seems to me that the way would have need to be long and rough, but I should tramp all of it to meet you.

"Oh, immense of you to say it, really!" whispered Bobbie at her ear. "Greatly good and sweet of you! you love me, too."

"Well, I think that I love you, sir," answered Rosie in a low voice, while Bobbie felt her bosom struggle passionately like a captured wild-fowl upon his heart, "if this giving up of myself is loving."

They parted when the moon sank behind the west hedge, leaving the orchard in shadow; but the next night they met again. Bobbie then heard the little history of Rosie's life from the time when her stepfather had separated her from her mother in London, brought her to Gloucestershire, and committed her to the care of a woman, on the understanding that Rosie was never to speak to anyone, except to the lady who came thrice a week from Cheltenham to give the girl her schooling; Rosie had twice run away from her "Aunt," or keeper, but had been retaken, and since the failure of her second flight, had lived as shut away from the world as some fair Rosamond or damsel enchanted in a maze.

The lawless and robustious Drayton had in fact, locked away from the world the only two persons who knew that he was a married man, namely, his wife in the tower at Corton, and her daughter in this Gloucestershire nook, when they suddenly presented themselves before him in England, he just at that moment being on the heights of elation at Julia's astonishing consent to marry him.

While Rosie was telling her history to Bobbie, she happened to mention her “aunt” (i.e., her keeper) by the name “Miss Seward;” whereat Bobbie said, “Ah, if it were only Elizabeth Seward,” and to this Rosie replied, “Her name is Mary; there was an Elizabeth, my aunt’s sister, but she died years ago.”

On the whole, no shadow of a suspicion that here might be the very Rosie whom he was sent to seek occurred to Bobbie: for one Rosie was objectionable, had black hair, under sixteen, and named Drayton, the other was sweet, fair, seventeen, and named Harper.

They met four midnights in all, and sat on the sandstone slab by the rill in the shade of the hedges and the apple tree; and at the darkening of the moon Bobbie kissed her goodnight, waded back into the regions beyond Jordan, and trudged home to his inn at Birdlip, unconscious of his wet trousers and of all the length of that lonely walk: but on the fifth night when the excellent fellow waded back through Jordan, he waded with Rosie in his arms. A vehicle was waiting for them down in the glen, and they drove to Cheltenham.

And so it was that when Dulaunay, despatched by an agonised Hartwell, came down to hunt for Bobbie a month later, no trace of Bobbie could be found. Bobbie was a married Adonis, occupying an apartment in the Rue de Rome in Paris, and the charming Rosie was learning to conjugate the verb “aimer.”

Hartwell had said to Bobbie:

“Will you marry her whom I wish, or whom you wish?”

And Bobbie had replied:

“Whom you wish, sir, with pleasure.”

Hence Bobbie was in a quandary. Each Sunday night, on returning home with Rosie from some party or cafe, he resolved to make a clean breast of

his marriage that week: but he always put it off, and after a month, still the more he delayed, the more ungrateful became the task. The truant boy had a profound awe of Hartwell, who, he felt, would be terribly outraged, and must, moreover, be in trouble on account of the mysterious miscarriage of his own marriage; and possessing, meantime, a substantial balance at his bankers, Bobbie still put off the day of accounts, forgetting the flight of time, or shutting his eyes to it, as people in such a state of mind always do. Finally, he determined that before writing the news of his marriage to Hartwell, he and Rosie would return to Gloucestershire, together seek out Rose Drayton, and with her as trophy and douceur, make their way, erring but still useful, to his guardian. The young husband and wife accordingly started back for England toward the end of September; but they could find no Rosie Drayton; soon gave up the search; and returned to Paris for a while.

XXV. HARTWELL MARRIES A WIFE



OSWALD DRAYTON'S IMPRISONMENT was shortened only two weeks by the Home Office, so that he did not get out until the middle of September. On the morning when he emerged from the Holloway gates, there was Hartwell and a carriage waiting to receive him, and Oswald said "You?" with a curl of the lips.

The old club-land life was rather over for Oswald now, for though some in that land do make short-cuts to fortune, and save time by stealing, between saving and serving time a distinction is made, the maxim being, as among the Spartans, "be not caught," or as in the fairy-tales, "the hand of the princess, if you do it well, beheadal, if you miscarry." Oswald, therefore, when Hartwell asked him and insisted, went down to stay at Corton.

"How did the wedding come off?" he asked in the train; and his mood of weary disgust was penetrated with astonishment when Hartwell replied:

"I did not marry Lady Methwold, Oswald."

This was amazement enough, but at Corton amazement after amazement awaited Oswald, first when Hartwell made the introduction: "My wife, Oswald — my brother, Martha;" then again, the same night, when Oswald met Barnes, with a paralysed right arm, and saw Hartwell cutting Barnes' meat for him. Hartwell, after an elaborate search, had finally unearthed Barnes in a wayside alms house near Northrepps, and, almost by force, had brought the afflicted inn-keeper to Corton. During the day Barnes was under the care of Mrs Gissing in one of the two chalk cottages, but he dined

every night at the pavilion with the gentry: and though he still dumbly scowled at the supposed slayer of his daughter, that constant frown was growing day by day less fierce.

But still greater was Oswald's astonishment to meet the next day a woodman felling trees, with a beard grown back from the chin, who, when asked his name, said: "Gissing."

Oswald's cigar brightened and burned quicker.

"Was it you, Gissing?" he asked, "who once lived with a wife and daughter in a cottage called the old Manor Farm, near Overstrand?"

"It wor, sir," said Gissing.

"Then, where have you been?"

"Been out to Hong Kong."

"What on earth for?"

"Seeking a bit o' work, sir; seeking a bit o' work."

Oswald threw out a breath of pleased laughter. Gissing, at any rate, was now here; and Gissing, his wife, or his daughter would furnish quite as good proof that Drayton had known Letty Barnes as the shreds of Letty's letter which Oswald had tried in vain to steal.

But for some days, Oswald's amazement was so engaged in watching what seemed the dementia of Hartwell, that he did nothing with regard to the Gissings: for a rapid series of events had caught Hartwell, as it were, in a whirlwind, and hurried him into action the most outre, as we shall now see.

The first of these events was the definite news, on the day after Oswald's release from prison, that Julia was really affianced to the young prince of the archducal house of M —— ; it was no longer a mere rumor, but was soon the chatter of society over Europe; for this high marriage of a subject with a prince, of course, could only be solemnised by a special dispensation

of the Emperor. Even the date was now fixed for the February of the coming year.

Hartwell's eye flashed with the old vigor as he read it in his study at Corton, and, pacing rather wildly, he thought to himself, "Ah, she'd leave them all for me, if I only go to her. She'd leave them all for me; and I I know that I shall go, too."

Hartwell's temptation to go to Julia was strong that day: for Julia happened to be near him in London, whither she had just returned from somewhere in Warwickshire.

But he decided to sleep, or rather to go to bed, upon it, and as the next morning the same evil mind possessed him, he began to make arrangements to go to her, not leaving his room meanwhile, nor allowing himself to see Martha.

But at eleven o'clock Dulaunay arrived suddenly with the news that neither Bobbie nor Rosie could be found in all Gloucestershire after three weeks' search by himself and a hired agent: and at this disaster Hartwell bowed his head.

Martha was every day growing more insistent for the promised appearing of Rosie and the "fairy prince."

And that same afternoon that Dulaunay came back to Corton a letter with the Birdlip postmark reached Hartwell, through London, from one Mary Seward, who said:

"I have to tell you, sir, the sad news that your Rosie has disappeared from the house, no one knows where to, though it is supposed to be with a young gentleman whom I saw in the orchard with her one day two months and a half ago. Five mornings after this she was missed, her bed had not been slept in, and Britton, the stableman at West Bridge House, says that

one foreday he drove her and a young gentleman, who had hired a carriage at West Bridge to Cheltenham. I should have written you this sad news long before, sir, but to tell the truth, I was afraid you would say it was my fault, which, God knows, it was not, and besides I did not despair of finding the child. I hope you won't put the blame upon me, or won't think much harm of it because I did not write to tell you of the death of my sister Elizabeth four years since, as I am a poor woman, and did not know but what you might be taking the child from me and giving her to someone else, my sister being dead. I have drawn the bank money in her name, and that, I know, was wrong, but I hope, etc., etc."

A long rigmarole followed this.

Rosie, then, was gone; Bobbie, too, by the way, was gone; and Hartwell's mind, numb with its constant care, did not once conceive that Rosie and Bobbie may have gone in the same boat.

Hartwell had embarked on the grim task of "acting well:" he wished to stick to the wronged and bereaved Martha. If he abandoned Drayton's wife, he now felt that he must publicly abandon Drayton's name and estate also, much as these had become part of himself by old possession. That abandonment, too, of name and estate could be made, should be made, if only he would not be left quite nakedly poor: and that day when he received the news that Rosie had run away, he telegraphed to Birmingham to know definitely the date of the trial of his electrical invention.

After several failures he had got an efficient working-model of it, though a certain bird of ill-omen, an expert, had predicted a breakdown when the trial on the large scale should come to be made. However, the thing was being installed, and was to be tested before a board of experts that year: but

the answer to his telegram that day was that the trial could hardly take place before the end of November.

That was two months away, and seemed two ages.

He felt that long before then, still retaining the name and estate of Drayton, he would abandon Drayton's wife, who was not his wife, in order to go to her, whom he loved; he felt that nothing could save him from this — unless he married Martha before witnesses who knew him well. And within five days after hearing anew of the engagement of Julia and of the loss of Rosie, he had, in fact, become Martha's legal husband.

He had taken Martha's hand two evenings after hearing of the loss of Rosie, as he and Martha were sitting on the well in the glade at sunset, and he had said to her:

“Martha, I have to make a painful confession to you, and to ask you for what, I think, will not be denied me — your sympathy and help. I am at present, Martha, in the pangs of a really serious temptation, the temptation to abandon you again, as I abandoned you before—”

“Then, why don't you?” cried Martha. “I want none of you, so don't think it! Go — go — don't you stay for me.”

“No! by your side I stay — And do not be angry that I am even tempted, Martha, but let me be pitied, let me be helped. The temptation, I say, is not slight, and without support I must needs succumb to it, in spite of my sincere affection for you. And since I feel that this support would be furnished me, if I marry you afresh?”

“Marry who afresh?”

“Marry you, Martha.”

Oh! the excellent Martha clapped her two hands to her sides! pierced and twisting with sudden, high laughter.

“Oh, this is rich!” she laughed. “Why, what’s the matter with the man? people will say I’m gone crazy or turned spooney in my old age! a man of your age having these harum-scarum larks running through your head! You ought to be ashamed for your grey hairs—”

“I am delighted to have made you merry,” said Hartwell, with a smiling eye, “which you too seldom are, Martha. My decision, however, in this matter is fully formed, and cannot be laughed away. The day after tomorrow we take a picnic to Norwich, and there we will be married before a Registrar, you giving your self as a widow, and I as a widower—”

“But what’s the matter with him?” she cried. “Think of my doing such a ridiculous thing as that-my own lawful husband! This is only some new move!”

“No! no new move. Say nothing, but listen to me, since I work, not for myself, but for you. I am a new man to you of late — admit that, Martha and though never again can those closest relations which once existed between us be renewed, let a new binding be effected since there are reasons which suggest it. As to the assumption of people’ that you were not married before, only Oswald and the count will know of the new marriage, and whatever they may tacitly assume will not, I think, much trouble you or me.”

In the end her merriment died wearily out, and two days later, the party of four, Hartwell, Martha, Oswald, and Dulaunay, went to Norwich, a special licence having been procured. Hartwell was particularly careful that Oswald, whom he believed to be still his enemy, should be there to see, so that no evasion of the bond might ever be possible to him; and with grim lips and a bright eye, wantonly throwing away his life, he went through that ceremony. Oswald stood agape with mere wonderment at this rite in the

Registrar's room; Dulaunay was like a machine made to mutter to itself a periodic "*mon Dieu*," but done before their eyes that strange deed was.

Like people with a weakness for the bottle, Hartwell had "signed the pledge," never more now to leave tea for wine, or Martha for Julia.

XXVI. HARTWELL SENDS DULAUNAY



AUTUMN BURNED WITH slow combustion within the forest; “the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness” passed into chilly October, stripping the trees of their leaves, and turning the brackens brown; but still Oswald Drayton could not reach the end which he strove after.

From the first Gissing proved intractable, could not for the life of him remember ever to have seen the master and any young lady at Overstrand. “But, my good sir, I understand that they stayed a week with you,” said Oswald. “Not with me, master, not with me,” said Gissing, washing his hands of all knowledge of the matter, whispering of it sparingly even to his good woman in the dark nights on their bed.

“But you saw my man, Walker? You told him so?” said Oswald; and Gissing thought to himself: “If Walker was his man, that only proves that he don’t wish no good to the master. Lord be praised, I ain’t let out aught.” He denied that he had ever seen Walker, cleaned himself of the whole matter, as one picks burrs from the clothes: for in this old man’s bosom was now a deep-seated fear, reverence and gratitude for Hartwell.

Oswald, in his slow way, set himself to the siege of Gissing. He would stroll out in the mornings after breakfast through the forest and home coverts in the direction where Gissing, alone or with Anderson, was engaged in trimming, clearing, felling or making solid huts of dry twigs, and he would enter into leisurely chats about the winter prospects, the harvest, the weather, east-coast fishing, mould and bone dressing, Hong Kong, or how the birds were. Gissing could talk with considerable

information, and even as he worked on, let his tongue run freely, but when it came to be a question of his two lodgers of live years before, he shrank like the sensitive plant, and lost his memory.

One evening, at the end of October, on returning home to his chalk cottage, whom should Gissing meet but Oswald. At a table covered with a clean, coarse cloth, on which were shrimps, water-cress and bread and butter, sat Oswald drinking tea out of a delf cup, and Mrs Gissing acting as the hostess. On the bench under the ivied lattice window, through which the very last beams of the sunset shone, sat Barnes, leaning forward with his left elbow on his left knee, all his paralysed right side seeming to hang behind, as if reluctant to follow the lead of the left: and there was a curious eagerness in his eyes, as if what had been said between Oswald and Mrs Gissing interested Barnes.

“Good evening to you, sir,” said Gissing to Oswald, “this is an honor, I’m sure. But you’re having a late tea; it must be nigh the dinner hour at the big house.”

“Yes,” answered Oswald, “you had better take Barnes round now.” (Barnes always dined at the pavilion with Hartwell).

Gissing laid his axe and spade in a corner, saying with a certain tone of irony in his voice: “Come along then, Mister Barnes, come along” and he directed a look of warning toward his wife.

Barnes was now almost like a child, enfeebled in mind as well as body, and always meekly obeyed whatever was told him. He rose, took Gissing’s arm, and went with a trailing right leg down the two broken doorsteps, and through the woods. As Gissing disappeared, he shot one more meaning look at his wife.

Oswald lit a cigar, while Mrs Gissing, a large clean-faced country woman, moved round the table, making a rattle with the crockery, looking

flushed and uncomfortable, for she could not prevaricate reposefully, and the questions already asked before the entrance of Gissing had flustered her. Such a visit, however, as she was now undergoing had been foreseen in the household, and her proper course of conduct in such a case had been frequently discussed between her and Gissing.

“So, then, you do not wish to tell me,” said Oswald. .

“Oh, dear! it ain’t that I don’t wish to,” she answered, sitting with an averted face, her arms rolled in her gingham apron, “but you know yourself that it happened five years ago?”

“That what happened five years ago?”

“Why, what you’re after hearing about, I should think! You want to know if ever I saw master with a lady — is that it? or if ever they lodged with us on the farm. I think that’s it. And I say it’s too long ago for a body to call to mind—”

“You admit, however, that it did happen.”

“Me? Admit? Oh, sir, don’t say that o’ me, sir! I declare he’d put a saint out — ! No, sir, it’s the last thing I’d do — admit. There were people always comin’ and goin’ at the Old Manor Farm, and how is it likely I’d call to mind what you say yourself happened five years ago? No, dunnot say that o’ me, sir.”

“But Mr Drayton’s face is one that one remembers. Be frank with me: he is my brother, you know, little as he looks it, and you may be sure that I have a good reason, for his sake, for wishing to know. Surely you remember seeing him somewhere before he brought you here?”

“I cannot say that I call it to mind.”

“Then, how came you here?”

“He wanted a hand on the land.”

“Hand on the land — How came Gissing to go to China of all places?”

“Better ask him that himself, sir.”

“You tell me.”

“Seeking a bit o’ work, sir, seeking a bit o’ work.”

“Preposterous nonsense! He has bribed you all well, hasn’t he?” muttered Oswald, rising with a flush of spite, envy, and defeat all over his shining head, while Mrs Gissing, catching the word “bribe,” said sharply:

“We ain’t received any bribe from master, sir, so don’t think that. Gissing ‘ud lay down his life any day for master, I do believe, without that, and so’d I, if it came to that, and so’d our Sarah, I’m sure. It ain’t any bribe that you, or he either, could give us that ‘ud buy what he’s gotten o’ us, and that’s gratitude and love o’ the heart: — and that’s why, sir.”

“You mean that’s why you wallow in lies?” said Oswald, flushed with envy and jealousy: “how has he got from you this infernal love o’ the heart? The man must have bewitched you, my good woman!”

“Ey, he’s a decent lot, the master!” said Mrs Gissing half to herself, with a jerk of the head.

“And little Sarah is in the conspiracy of silence, too, is she?” muttered Oswald, going out: “we shall see into that. It is their own fault—”

He decided to get the truth from Sarah. But he walked to the pavilion with a feeling of misgiving: for he had said too much to Mrs Gissing, had openly showed enmity against Hartwell, and there was the possibility that the Gissings might conceive the idea of accusing him to Hartwell, who, for the present was his protector against the world. He resolved, therefore, to hurry matters with regard to Sarah.

On Friday nights — and this was one — whist parties had become an institution at the pavilion. Martha, like many old-fashioned people, had no small skill (of a technical, hand-and-fast sort) in the conduct of her hand, and, with Hartwell for her partner, generally won her rubber, though

Oswald and Dulaunay made a strong combination against them. As this was the only item in their life at Corton in which Martha displayed the least interest, the count made it a point always to be present, even if he was away during the earlier part of the day.

That Friday night, accordingly, the party of four sat in the room which was used as the drawing-room, a large, quaint apartment on the ground floor, looking through French windows upon two lengths of the portico.

Of the four only the count chattered and “made to laugh,” or rather made to smile in the case of Hartwell, for Martha did not find him amusing after the first few days, when his foreign being had ceased to excite her surprise at an undreamt-of-type. As for Oswald, he had lost his smile in Holloway, and sat saturnine, silent, prim, his handkerchief-corner stuck neatly, from the pocket of his snuff-colored coat; now he largely handled his moustache, now made a sound of lassitude or contempt of life with a corner of his mouth; and his eyes remained fixed on the cards, save when he let them rest a moment on Hartwell with an evil glance. The Frenchman he regarded with the vague contempt which he felt for whatever is more intelligent, bright and worldly than Pall Mall, and anon his lips curved slightly downward at the mere sound of Dulaunay’s chatter. The count was telling an adventure which had happened to him near Buda-Pesth with an attaman of zincali, and had got to where the gipsy’s daughter won his heart, when Sarah Gissing, about ten o’clock — for the sitting-up was late on whist-party nights — brought in two decanters, curious old cut-glass vessels with “port” and “sherry” marked on bands of old gold round their necks, and laid them on the table together with cake and biscuits; and with her came the retriever, Mascotte, a recent purchase of the count, which laid its neck on Hartwell’s thigh, and awaited a caress.

Sarah had just returned from taking Barnes to her parents' cottage, and perhaps in consequence of a sharp walk back through the wood, was already rather flushed: but this flush deepened to the deepest carmine in that moment while she stood at the table. Hartwell saw it — could hardly fail to see it — and divined that the count had touched her foot with his under the small table. But this time Dulaunay was innocent. The culprit was Oswald.

Sarah was a slight girl whose rustic simplicity one might compare to the rabbit's, in spite of her nearly five years of exile in Birmingham. She was rather pretty, though thin, and though her eyes had a rather silly stare of preoccupation or flurry, and her upper-lip only closed with effort, at all events, sufficient had passed between her and Oswald in the way of gallant patronage on his side to leave her in no doubt as to who had touched her foot, and she blushed with that virgin excess, to the roots of her hair, to the tips of her toes, a redundant flood, which is possible any longer only to the rustic in these islands.

That betraying blush was seen not only by Hartwell but by Dulaunay, who muttered to himself: "But hold, she knows to blush, that girl there!" and Sarah put down the tray with such a clatter, that Martha looked up with a suspended card, flaying, "My goodness, what is the matter with Sarah?"

During three days after that night, Oswald's intrigue with Sarah progressed apace, but into its progress it is needless to enter, since it did not advance far, for on the third evening old Gissing, returning homewards from some forest work, which lay in a different direction from his usual haunts, spied Oswald and Sarah through some bushes standing under a tree, Sarah's head bent and smiling, and Oswald's forefinger under her chin. The old man's lips set wilfully, and he called out: "Here, Sarah, I want you! — excuse me, sir."

The girl at once followed him to the cottage; no word was spoken; even on going in, Gissing said nothing to her, except with his eyes; but he took Mrs Gissing into an inner room, and there held a family council. The task of giving a piece of the family mind to Sarah was left to Mrs Gissing, and she gave it without stint, and Sarah was soon in a state of tears and filial resentment. The altercation raged for an hour, while Gissing merely paced and looked on, as Napoleon from a hill surveyed the drama of Waterloo, expressing only with his eyes his scorn and indignation.

And that night Martha and the household at the pavilion awaited Sarah in vain: for Sarah, though now a woman of twenty-two, was kept a prisoner in the cottage.

The next morning at ten, while Martha was sitting out on the well, enjoying the 'Indian summer' with a novelette in her hand, and Oswald and Dulaunay had gone out with Steve, the three dogs, and double barrels, Gissing stood at the door of Hartwell's impromptu laboratory and study. It was a small room at a back corner of the pavilion on the upper floor, hung on three sides with rugged arras, while on the fourth were some new shelves, a new table, a new installation of gas and water, with a crowd of glass objects, and the odds and ends of the apparatus of research. Hartwell sat on an old oak chair at an old desk with a pen in his hand, but with his brow on the desk, as Gissing could see through the half-open door.

Gissing cleared his throat, and Hartwell lifted his head, staring a moment without seeming to see anything.

"Come in, Gissing — What, then, has become of Sarah?" he said.

He shook the old man's hand with a long shake and a meaningful pressure. There was only one chair, so Gissing stood, holding his hat with both hands.

“It’s her I come to talk about,” said he. “I come to tell you that I don’t want her to come back here no more. My good woman is sending her down Overstrand way to stop with a friend for a time.”

Hartwell looked at him with a smiling eye, remembering Sarah’s blush; and he said:

“You shall be well pleased. Do not send her away. I will speak with the count.”

“It ain’t the count; it’s your brother, Mr Oswald.”

“Ah? Out of the dry cometh forth sweetness. Well, then, Mr Oswald must be reasoned with.”

Gissing was silent and scratched his head, seeking for expression.

“Look you here,” he said, presently, “you’ve done everything for me, haven’t you?”

“Except what I have done against you, my friend,” said Hartwell in a lower voice.

“Ey, A’ forget that, A’ forget that there! — I give it all back to ye with love and brotherly feeling. You’re a hard man, and what you once set your mind to it’s got to be done; but for every kick that ye gave to me and mine, you’ve given me a kiss for it, when we was helpless, too, and ye didn’t need to, save out o’ the love and kindness o’ your heart — God bless you, good luck to you!”

The back of the old man’s rude hand slowly wiped a tear from his eye.

“Gissing, I see that I must call you a Christian,” said Hartwell, “blessing them that have cursed you.”

“There worn’t no cursing,” said Gissing; “what you did to me, it wor my own fault, after all, trying to get money.”

“No! it was my fault: as to that let doubt be now dismissed, Gissing. What, however, has this to do with Mr Oswald’s gallantries toward Sarah?”

“That’s why I come to you, to tell you that it ain’t Sarah he’s after, not for herself, but it’s the secret that he’d be winning of her.”

“Which secret?”

“Why about you and the young lady that stopped at the Manor Farm.”

Hartwell pondered that: Oswald wished to know about that.

Gissing brought his lips nearer to Hartwell’s ear, saying in a secret voice:

“The youngster, Walker, that come at the first to the farm five year ago, seeking to ferret out about you and the young lady, he was Mr Oswald’s man! and Mr Oswald has been after me and the good woman, too, of late, seekin’ to make us own up to it, and seein’ as we wouldn’t, now he’s for pumping of Sarah. So you’d better be on your guard.”

“I will. Is that all you have to tell?”

“That’s all.”

“Do not send the girl away. Good bye.”

“Good-bye.”

“And my thanks, Gissing!”

“That’s all right between us.”

The old man went away, and Hartwell, rising, paced the room.

What he now clearly saw was that Drayton must have done some very serious wrong to this unknown girl; the fact that for five years Oswald had been seeking a witness of Drayton’s and the girl’s acquaintanceship proved this, as did also the fact that Oswald, a poor man, had originally offered Gissing so large a bribe as £200 to bear witness against Drayton.

Where, then, was the girl? what was her name? In all that time could Oswald not find her? Was she dead? What had Drayton done to her? Had he — ? Hartwell shrank from a terrible question which presented itself to his mind. If he had now remembered Oswald’s interest in the murder of one Letty “Barton,” and his own reasonings about that murder, and if he had

connected this memory with Drayton and the girl seen by Gissing, the truth must have dawned upon him that Letty "Barton" was really a girl done to death by Drayton. But he did not think of that. A foreboding of calamity, however, a definite expression of spirits, took possession of him; he understood that here was a question of life and death.

And now his mind naturally recurred to the shreds of the letter which Oswald had tried, and failed, to steal: for since Oswald was so earnest in the matter of Drayton and the girl, it might well be that those shreds related to the same matter. By what series of chances, he, Hartwell, had not even now read those shreds he did not know; but he resolved to read them at once.

He resolved also to let Oswald know that his unbrotherly hostility was no secret, and that he was-disposed to resent it.

He waited till lunch-time, and while the three men and Martha were at table, with Sarah serving, he said to Dulaunay: "Count, I have to beg you to take a trip to London for me by the 2.21 train, if you will. It is a question of opening a wardrobe in my bedroom in Addison-Road with this key and searching something among the pockets of the coats in the left hand compartment, till you find an envelope containing some shreds of paper: these I want to examine at once. Will you do this for me?"

Handing the key to Dulaunay, he fixed a look upon Oswald, who became red and then white. Hartwell had not "an eye like Mars' to threaten and command," but he had an eye like Ulysses' to threaten while it smiled, an eye teeming with magnetic influence, which Oswald felt, but which, unfortunately, could not terrify the Power which arranges the course of events.

As they moved away from the table after lunch, he said close to Oswald's ear, "I desire you, Oswald, to have no further talk with Sarah Gissing."

Oswald made no reply, he had no time; he understood that the order was final; and taking his hat from the hall, he went out walking alone in the paths of the forest, with a bosom in which boiled all the poisons of rage, hatred, a sense of weakness and thwarted effort, humiliation and belittlement, shame and care. Hartwell had given him the command in the tone in which one checks a naughty schoolboy; and with Oswald's other bitterness was mingled the bitterness of an enforced change of opinion, a revolution of theory held through a life-time: for whereas since boyhood he had despised "James," Oswald now found that willy-nilly he revered "James," and suspected that he himself was despised, and rightly despised, by that "James" whom he had despised, and had believed that he had rightly despised. He had, therefore, to endure the constant whisper of his consciousness: "You have been a fool in a club, and nothing that you or Pall Mall ever thought was true;" and this added to the other shames and rages of Oswald.

XXVII. THE SHREDS



MEANTIME, DULAUNAY WAS getting ready to set out by the 2.21 p.m. train. So small an incident as a trip to London, which could not excite the most excitable of Britons, was an event to the count, brought a light to his eyes, and formed, when it was over, the subject of a detailed narrative in his journal. He came down drawing on his gloves, in a frilled shirt-front, and a large hat somewhat cocked aside, said a formal good-bye to Hartwell and Martha in the portico, promised to be back by eleven p.m., and, as the trap was not ready, went in a heat and hurry to the stables, though there was no need for haste. He waited in the stable-yard, a small quadrangle of red-brick in the heart of the forest behind the pavilion, and hurried the young groom, who was called Gloucester, in harnessing one of the two horses which were kept at Corton. Gloucester then put on another jacket, and they set off.

But in the second avenue from the stables, a stoppage occurred: for, in passing Oswald, Dulaunay waved a good-bye, and, as if this action had inspired Oswald with the devil in the shape of a sudden thought, he called out when the trap had passed six yards beyond him: "Hi! I think I'll go with you—"

The trap stopped, Gloucester got out and sat on the drop-seat behind, and Oswald drove to the station, where they took the train for London, bidding Gloucester be there for them with the trap at 10.45.

Oswald could hardly have explained to himself this sudden impulse to go to London: he had no definite object; a moment before he had seen the trap

in the avenue he had had no thought of going from Corton; but precisely like an inspiration it had entered his head, and there he was in the train.

It must be that the brain works independently of one's will, as in dreams perhaps. Oswald's consciousness had contained in it the fact that the count was going to bring those shreds of Letty's letter, so long coveted, so greedily coveted by him; and his brain must on a sudden, as a trap passed him, have evolved the conclusion that it might possibly be as well if he were near Dulaunay during the next hours.

During that journey to London some strange mists of thought floated through Oswald's mind — thoughts of chloroform, of knocks on the head, and main force. He saw himself holding a saturated handkerchief to Dulaunay's face on the journey back to Corton, or inflicting a blow with the head of his stick, or wrestling with the Count in panting agony for the shreds of Letty Barnes' letter. All the way such visions infested his spirit, even as he smoked and chatted. But he knew that they were visions and nothing more: Oswald was not made for such deeds; the most that he could do was to conceive them, and be guilty of them in will. So much was no different in action from his dead brother, James.

When they arrived it was not far from dinner-time, and not expecting much in that way at Addison Road, they walked down the Strand and dined in an underground club of Dulaunay's. There they took a cab for Kensington, and, arriving there, were welcomed by Miss Scatchett, who said to them in the inner hall with a certain smirk of mystery:

"You are just too late, gentlemen, to meet the young married couple: they had an early dinner, and left twenty minutes since for Corton."

"Which young married couple?" asked Oswald.

"Why, Mr and Mrs Hartwell," answered Miss Scatchett, with the same smirk of mystery.

Silence fell, while the minds of Oswald and Dulaunay digested the words. Dulaunay's eyes travelled quickly to and fro between Oswald and Miss Scatchett.

"But hold," said he, "is it Bobbie that she wishes to say?"

"Yes, sir, Mr Bobbie Hartwell!"

"Is Bobbie, then, married?"

"To as charming a bride as you could desire to see! I almost imagined that you would know by this time, though I understood from Mrs Bobbie that there is some difficulty. He was extremely nervous about going down, but I have not the least doubt, as I told him, that all will be well, if he allows his bride to plead his cause. She really is charming — rustic as a wood-nymph, yet quite well-bred — in short, charming."

"Well, I was never so astonished," cried the Count; "that lost Bobbie married! This, then, explains his long absence and silence, Oswald: he had fear of what 'Draytong' might say. And now at last he returns married. It is as though the 'Prodigal Son,' returned to his father with a lady on his arm, followed by a valet and a chamber-woman — Have they attendants, Miss?"

"Oh, yes," said Miss Scatchett, "a man and a French maid, of whom the man remains here and the maid has gone with them. They came direct from Paris, intending to stay here only a few hours before proceeding to Corton, but they stayed three days, hesitating to face Mr Drayton. I understood in private from the bride that Mr Bobbie had been intended by his guardian for someone else, and hence the trouble. What makes the history delightfully romantic is that Mr Bobbie appears to have been somehow despatched into the country to 'seek' the lady who was intended for him — 'seek' is the word that was used — and while seeking her, he found the actual Mrs Bobbie all too charming to be resisted, and—"

“It is so, then: Bobbie is married!” exclaimed Dulaunay, with a buffoon laugh; then seriously: “I fear that “Draytong” will not be disposed to show himself content there.”

“Serves the clown right,” muttered Oswald, “this may check his zeal in going about adopting strange boys.”

“Well, so much for Mr Bobbie and his sweet bride!” said Miss Scatchett. “But you, gentlemen, have you dined?”

“Yes,” said Dulaunay, “we are not here but for a few minutes, to get some papers from Mr “Draytong’s” wardrobe, so we will not need to give you any trouble. That would have been interesting, Oswald, to witness the reception which “Draytong” gives to the two young married! but they will be at Corton by ten, an hour before we arrive there.”

Little Miss Scatchett now rushed off in those brown silks which were part of her personality, and the two men moved into the morning room, where Dulaunay half sat on the table, his mind all occupied still with the marriage of Bobbie, while Oswald threw himself on a couch, palish and inwardly agitated at the thought that those shreds of Letty’s letter, which he had so longed for, were about to be brought out from their secret place. The disgrace and ruin which his attempt to get them had cost him only made them the more infinitely an object of his greed; and they were about to be carried carelessly in Dulaunay’s pocket! yet Oswald’s goaded brain could invent no means of touching them.

Dulaunay’s tongue still kept on running on the subject of Bobbie’s marriage, saying:

““Draytong’ will assuredly be very angry, I know it. He was most eager that Bobbie should marry Rosie whom he sent him to seek, and I believe it was the failure of Bobbie to return with her which pushed him to the marriage with Martha.”

“But who the deuce is the ‘Rosie’ whom he sent Bobbie to ‘seek?’” asked Oswald, reclining with his hat over his brows: “what is it all about?”

“Have I not explained it to you? Rosie is the good Martha’s daughter—”

“My dear sir, I take, of course, no interest in the family-tree of the good Martha,” said Oswald with that half yawn of indifference which men make when they are secretly agitated, “but how on earth came this ‘Rosie’ to need any ‘seeking’? There seems to be a very absurd tangle somewhere.”

“But have you not heard the good Martha recount her history?”

“I may have,” answered Oswald: “but one does not give oneself the pains of storing up the gabble of low women like this good Martha. I find the creature very offensive.”

“But no, she is not offensive! at least I do not find her it! What would you have? the average of humanity is not sublime, my friend. At any rate, Martha has recounted me that the Rosie whom Bobbie and then I were sent to seek is a daughter by her first marriage, her first husband’s name being Harper, so that Rosie’s name is Rose Harper. But here is that which is odd! that “Draytong” was apparently ignorant of that fact, until I myself told him! for he sent both me and Bobbie to seek this Rosie Harper in the name of Rosie “Draytong”! What can be more singular, my friend?”

“Oh, the man’s mad,” said Oswald.

“Or is it not rather Martha whose mind is not of the strongest?” asked the Count with perplexed brows: “it is certain that she has made me statements which cannot be credited. She has said to me, for instance, with insistence, that she and “Draytong” were really married before the ceremony which you and I witnessed at Norwich. This surely is among the things which do not permit themselves to be believed! — that a man should remarry his own wife. The truth must be that “Draytong” and Martha were together before marriage, and only married when we saw them marry at Norwich. And yet

— strange circumstance! “Draytong” himself, on the day when I was about to see Martha for the first time, said:—‘I am about to present you, Dulaunay, to my wife.’ Moreover, “Draytong” once long ago told the Lady Julia that he was married. Does not all this confirm that which Martha says, that she was legally married to “Draytong” long years before the ceremony which we witnessed at Norwich? Only, it is not credible! One does not remarry one’s wife at any cost. If one commits the bigamy it is always with a third person. And yet, if “Draytong” was not already married, what possible power could have caused him to abandon the marriage with his beloved Julia? *mon Dieu*, I understand nothing, nothing, there!”

Dulaunay’s two hands rose toward his head, as if inclined to tear out his hair in an access of puzzlement. Oswald, too, who understood nothing there, made a sound of contempt with his lips, saying: “Queer people ought to be put into asylums. I have long since ceased to puzzle out the vagaries of my excellent brother and his distinguished wife. But very likely they were married before. I have heard the woman say that she is from South Africa, and the man was there a long time in his youth, I believe.”

“But, if they were married before, what, then, could be the motive of a second marriage? It is not conceivable!”

“Heaven knows. I don’t care. Better go and get the shreds of paper he sent you here for—”

“But hold — you say that “Draytong” was in South Africa in his youth? But no; there, I think, you are mistaken: for I remember distinctly that Drayton said to me, when we were discussing a voyage to South Africa in the yacht, that he had never been in South Africa—”

“He lied for some reason. He once lived there.”

“Lied? But permit me to be frank, Oswald, and to say that the tone which you adopt in discussing your brother is not pretty, my friend. Mr

“Draytong”, I am able to assure you, is a man of strong honor, though there may be some mysteries in his life. If we consider his abandonment of the excellent Julia, it becomes clear that his motives, whatever they may have been, were motives of the highest sublimity, and so difficult to accomplish that, as we see, they have even silvered his hair. To me personally “Draytong” is, on the whole, the most venerable human being, the heaviest brain and the strongest heart, which it has been my destiny to encounter: and, you will admit, I am not without experience of men. As to his statement that he had never been to South Africa, I am forced to believe it, for I now remember several incidents which, when we reached Cape Town, prove that he was a stranger to the country. If, therefore, he did marry Martha before that inexplicable ceremony at Norwich, it was certainly not in South Africa.”

“My dear sir, think as you like; it is of no importance,” murmured Oswald.

“No, the fact is,” pursued Dulaunay, “that the good Martha is not entirely credible on all points. She may have had an illness which has weakened the mind, and indeed, she shows the traces of it in all her air. The history, for instance, which she daily repeats of having been locked up in the old tower five years by “Draytong” belongs to the ‘Thousand Nights and One Night.’ It is not compatible with “Draytong’s” present devotion to her.”

“But I have asked the man, Steve, if it is true about the locking up in the tower,” said Oswald, “and as far as I could understand the fellow, he rather seemed to admit it. Beautiful mediaevalism of the gentle James, that imprisonment in a tower! But I think that I should myself have kept Martha under lock and key, if she had been mine: the wonder is that he ever let her out to bore the world.”

“But I find her very well, the good Martha!” cried Dulaunay with opening arms: “we cannot all be brilliant wits and great minds like you, Oswald. But I see you are of a bad humour to-day. Well, then, I will now go up and get the shreds of paper, and we will then at once return to Corton, that we may hear how the two young married have been received by “Draytong”. That would have been a situation worthy to be seen! “Draytong” will not have permitted himself to flame into an anger, I think, but he will have looked at them sideward with a certain vivacity of the eye, the significance of which the gallant Bobbie will perhaps be likely to remember, oh, la, la! Well, I go up — But no, you are wrong, Oswald, to credit the statements of either Martha or Steve as to that imprisonment in the tower. Steve is *toque, maboule, loufoque* — how do you say?— ‘daft.’

“No, that would not have been able to happen, my friend. The unfailing chivalry of “Draytong” to the somewhat commonplace Martha is in reality one of the sublimest of spectacles, and for us, who daily witness it, it is not possible to imagine that he once shut her up five years.”

The Count said these last words on the stairs, going up for the shreds, for Oswald had followed him out of the morning room, rather to Dulaunay’s surprise, since Oswald did not usually give himself any unnecessary trouble; and still discussing “Draytong,” Martha, Rosie, Bobbie, and the position of affairs at Corton. They entered Hartwell’s room on the first floor, with Oswald, who was a shade paler now, at Dulaunay’s heels. And Dulaunay inserted the key which Hartwell had given him into that wardrobe which contained the shreds of Letty Barnes’ letter to Julia.

XXVIII. HARTWELL IS TRAPPED



IT WAS NEARLY night, and as Dulaunay opened the wardrobe, and began to feel in the pockets of the garments hung up there, he reached aside and pressed down an electric switch, filing the large room with light. Meantime, Oswald paced to and fro between the heavy Henri Quatre bedstead and the wardrobe, conscious of the preciousness of the seconds that were even then passing over him, but conscious also of his lack of power to rise to the height of their importance. He felt that if now, while the wardrobe was open, and while the shreds were not yet found by Dulaunay, he could invent some means of making Dulaunay go out of the chamber for one minute, some excuse, some ruse, in that minute he could secure the shreds: here was the "Golden Opportunity," the chance that comes only once for over: but even as the chance passed and passed, Oswald was unequal to it. The flying moments, compared with the action of his intellect, were like race-horses compared to an ox stuffed with grass which heavily trots after them. The finding of the shreds, meantime, was no momentary matter: Dulaunay dived into pocket after pocket, sometimes bringing out other papers or letters, which he opened to see if they contained any shreds, half-absently running his eye over them, and still chatting about Hartwell, Julia, Martha, and about Hartwell's great electrical invention, the testing of which was to take place in three days' time, on the Tuesday of the following week, this day being a Saturday. Oswald, pacing to and fro, uttered not a word, nor heard a word of what was being said; even his footsteps were inaudible in the thick carpet; so that all at once, when the Count's talk was arrested by one of the

papers over which he had glanced, perfect silence was in the chamber for a minute or two, broken only by a whisper of "*Mon Dieu!*" uttered under his breath by Dulaunay.

The paper at which Dulaunay was then staring was a marriage-certificate. He had found it in a breast-pocket of a coat of Hartwell's; and it recorded the marriage of James Drayton and Martha Harper in the town of Colesberg, South Africa, over sixteen years before.

Hartwell had found this certificate of marriage a couple of years before this time in an old trunk of Drayton's at the estate in Bucks; it had happened during his long yachting cruise over the world, before he had fallen ill at Siena, had there seen Julia on opening his eyes, and had become engaged to her; he had put the certificate in the pocket of the coat in which it was now found by Dulaunay, and had left it at Addison Road on his return journey from the estate in Bucks to the yacht.

Again Dulaunay breathed the exclamation, "*mon Dieu!*" as during a minute or two he stared at the old marriage lines. He had, as he had just said to Oswald, proof on proof that "Draytong" had never been in South Africa, apart from "Draytong's" own assertion that he had never been there: yet, here was an equally strong proof that "Draytong" had married there.

Now, two seeming facts, mutually contradictory, yet each equally proved to be certain, always pressingly spur the mind to prove to itself its own sanity by getting at the actual truth: and this was what now happened to Dulaunay. He put the certificate into his pocket, then after another half-minute's hurried search found the shreds for which he had been sent, put them, too, into his pocket, said to Oswald, "I pray you to wait me here some minutes, Oswald," and, going out of the door, again murmured blankly to himself, "*mon Dieu!* I understand nothing there."

He ran up the stair as if in haste to catch or find something that was eluding him, entered his own room, closed the door upon himself, threw himself upon a couch, shut his eyes, and lay frowning with thought. He felt that he was on the verge of unravelling some extraordinary thing, and that the darkness which still surrounded his mind was like that dense darkness of the foreday, when men yet have an instinct, of the coming light, and wait with assurance for its appearance.

He lay in deep thought a considerable time with one hand on the certificate of marriage, while below Oswald continued to pace, thinking bitterly that now the shreds were in Dulaunay's pocket, and the great chance, never to come again, had been allowed to slip; there now occurred to Oswald more than one plan by which he might have secured the shreds while Dulaunay had the wardrobe open, and not only had he now the plans, but now, when it was too late, he felt the courage, the capacity, the address, which three minutes previously might have been sufficient to secure him the shreds, while his breast broadened at the feeling which he spurred in himself that for the future he would not fail to be equal to all the exigencies of life; but at the very same time a remorseful whisper of his consciousness — that whisper which is said to increase the torments of hell — said within him: "A fool is a man who is wise too late; and if you had a second chance, or a hundredth, you would still be your self, and would still lack a capable soul."

He waited so long, that he grew weary, stopped pacing, searched without motive in all the pockets of the clothes in the wardrobe, found nothing of any interest, and finally went to one of the front windows of the room, looking out, leaning on his stick, with his hard-felt hat, which was a delicate shade of brown, tilted on his forehead. It was night now, the street lamps lit, and a pelting shower of rain was falling; he saw the yard and the breadth of

the street beyond looking like a plain grown with a thick short crop of white grass, caused by the rebound of the splashing rain; there stood the cab in which he and Dulaunay had come, waiting for them; and on the top of that, too, and all along the top of the front wall, sprouted the crop of white grass; in dashed the cringing figure of a butcher's man with a tray of meat for Miss Scatchett's household, and disappeared behind an angle of the house; it was a quarter of an hour before he dashed out again: and still Dulaunay did not come. Oswald looked at his watch: it was ten minutes past eight.

The Count still lay in the dark room above, thinking out the mystery of Hartwell's life, and before his mental review passed nearly every incident of his connection with Hartwell, begun just about five years before, one rainy night at Liverpool Street Station.

More than anything else the strangeness of that meeting now struck him. He had sat down in "Draytong's" brougham to escape from, the rain; and "Draytong," suddenly appearing, had proffered him his hand. "Draytong" had asked him about things at Addison Road, about the health of Miss Scatchett, had taken him for an old acquaintance — . Was it not odd? Where could the mind begin to penetrate a mystery so dark? The strangeness of the thing had more or less faded from the consciousness of the Count in the course of years: but when one sat and reconsidered it, then that strangeness was even wild, was even exasperating to the reason. Reason said, "It never could have happened"; but memory, at war with reason, replied, "I did happen."

"Draytong" had said in the brougham as they drove toward Addison Road: "You do not ask me anything about my motor-car accident—" and at one time Dulaunay had thought that a blow received in that accident may really have injured "Draytong's" brain, as "Draytong" pretended, causing him to mistake Dulaunay for someone else; later on Dulaunay had believed

that “Draytong” purposely played a comedy, pretending to an old acquaintanceship with the Count, through having taken a fancy to him at first sight; many theories, in fact, had at one time, or another been built up by Dulaunay to explain that singular commencement of the friendship between himself and Hartwell: but none of those theories had been satisfactory, and they seemed wild enough this night when a host of other incidents, all evidently connected with one great original mystery, were called up in his memory, and passed before his criticism.

There was the motor car accident— “Draytong’s” mind had not been injured thereby: that was certain; no sounder intelligence existed than “Draytong’s.” But something had occurred at that accident! some imbroglio with a man named “Hartwell!” There were the ravings of “Draytong” during his illness at Siena; there, was that perplexity depicted on his face when he had said: “Am I Hartwell; or am I Drayton?” and when he had said again: “The faces are one — how if the natures be one also? and which of the two am I, am I?” Those had been words of no meaning then, either to Julia or to Dulaunay; but Dulaunay remembered them, every one, and now, when he faced and questioned them stubbornly, they seemed to whisper to him a truth, though afar off, as it were, and in a language which he did not understand. There were also the delirious man’s moments of agitation, his hoarse whispers: “The dead know not anything — I will change clothes — Hartwell shall be Drayton, the beggar the millionaire — the coat, the waistcoat, now the collar — no one on the road, McCalmont dead!” And there were the somnambulisms, those haggard, wandering nightmares, when, staring blindly at the mirror, “Draytong” had often again repeated in pain those names of Hartwell and Drayton, and been uncertain which of the two he was.

The mystery seemed to be the mystery of two men, then, not of one: two men “whose faces were one.”

Dulaunay had been so sure that “Draytong” had never been to South Africa before that trip in the yacht! but, the marriage certificate proved that he had been there. As soon, however, as Dulaunay took it for granted that “Draytong” had certainly been there, had married Martha there, he found himself confronted with a host of dark facts, such as that “Draytong” had not apparently known that “Harper” was the name of the daughter of the woman whom he had married as Martha Harper: “Draytong” had apparently supposed that Rosie was his own daughter, and was named Drayton! How account, moreover, for the fact that “Draytong” had remarried that same Martha who had already been married by him in South Africa? How account for the fact that “Draytong” had sworn to Julia in the rocca at Siena that he was not married? Was “Draytong,” then, infamous? No, the truth must be that “Draytong” had never married in South Africa, and “that the marriage certificate related to another man who had taken the name of “Draytong.” And Dulaunay at once rushed to the conclusion the name of that other man must be Hartwell.

And “Draytong” and this unknown Hartwell were so precisely alike that Martha, the wife of Hartwell, believed that they were one.

That was odd! and yet not so odd; the Count remembered how “Draytong” came to be so unlike his brother Oswald. Julia had told him the story — How “Draytong” was the image of a captain who had extravagantly terrified his mother. But since this South African Hartwell, having “the same face” as “Draytong,” must also be the image of that captain, then there may have been two terrified mothers — Dulaunay decided that this must really have been so.

Hartwell, therefore, had taken the name of “Draytong” in South Africa, and there married Martha Harper. This was what the Count at first concluded; but at once this theory was faced with a great number of difficulties. With what motive, then, had “Draytong,” the rich man, permitted Martha to think that he was Hartwell, the poor man? With what motive had he abandoned the beloved Julia to marry Martha, Hartwell’s wife? How came Oswald to be so certain that “Draytong,” his brother, had not only been, but had lived, for years, in South Africa? The Count felt that his theory was wrong somewhere.

For some twenty minutes his thoughts toiled, without progress, in this strait. Then there came a moment when he said to himself: “Since one of the two men, Hartwell and “Draytong,” has lived in South Africa, but the other has never lived there; and since the one who lived there was Oswald’s brother, and the one who never lived there is the man I know as “Draytong,” therefore the man I know as “Draytong” is not Oswald’s brother; but Oswald’s brother is certainly named “Draytong”; therefore the man I know as “Draytong” is not really named “Draytong”, but is really named Hartwell; and Hartwell took the name of “Draytong”, not in South Africa, where he never lived, but in England, at the motor-car accident, where the real “Draytong” was killed, where ‘the dead know not anything’ where ‘the beggar became the millionaire’ — and ‘the clothes were changed’ — the coat, the waistcoat, now the ‘collar’ — ‘no one on the road — ‘McCalmont dead,’ and ‘the dead know not anything.’”

At this thought Dulaunay sat electrified, pale but for a stain of crimson on one side of his face, as “when a great thought strikes along the brain, and flashes all the cheek.” The mystery lay solved, and every incident which had arisen out of it, every motive of Hartwell’s conduct, was now clear to

the understanding, which was henceforth like a vault flooded with light, the key having once been found to throw open the door.

Thus, with hardly any new facts to guide him through the maze, Dulaunay, by the mere passage of time and ripeness of his consciousness, together with a little thinking, came out into daylight. He even wondered now why he had not seen, years before, what he now saw; but this would not have been possible for that very reason, that his consciousness had not been ripe, that a sufficient length of time had not matured the fruit of knowledge, even though he had had clues to the mystery of Hartwell's life which no one else possessed. The knowledge of the truth is, really, like a fruit which cannot be plucked much before it is ripe. It was always, for instance, an open secret that it is the earth, not the sun, which goes round: but men greater than Solomon could not attain to it, till it somehow bent down to the grasp of men. The fruit may, indeed, be plucked a little before it is ripe by the "men in advance of their age," etc., but these Galileos suffer those sharp cracks on the knuckles which one Mother Eve suffered, whereas, if she had not plucked, but waited, the fruit of knowledge would of itself, in time, have dropped over ripe, into her lap; she might then have eaten it, and nothing would have been said. Dulaunay, however, was not of this aggressive Galileo-type, but simply a vivacious mind, receptive of ideas when they were presented to him, so that only in the fullness of time was the knowledge of the whole truth about Hartwell born of itself, after a short travail, in him.

His first feeling was a natural exultation at his discovery, the chuckle of self-congratulation, and the busybody zest of one who alone holds the key to a scandal of great magnitude; he laughed flippantly within himself, thinking: "Here is a history, this affair here, oh, la, la!" Then, when the levity of his first amazement passed off, he was struck by an impression of

the greatness and pity of it all, of the gravity of the issues which spring from human action, and the abyss which the heart is. Hartwell, whom he still in his thoughts called “Draytong” — Hartwell, the respected, the grave thinker about man and God, whose work had been crowned, whose tone suggested a moral strength incapable of frailty, who was adored by one of the most admirable of patrician women, this Hartwell was one of the great impostors of modern society. Indignation and shame now flushed Dulaunay’s brow. He did not understand that Hartwell was not bound by the moral code of “a good Catholic” and “a man of honour” like himself; the excellent Count had accepted without question “a moral code” and “a code of honour” which had been made for him long before he was born, and he did not reflect that a man of profoundly original and vigorous mind like Hartwell cannot consider himself subject to any ready made code, but must needs start afresh, as though he were the first man who ever lived, looking into the nature of things with his own eyes, and making his own code, which may be right or wrong, according to the depth of his insight. Hartwell had never suffered one qualm for assuming the name and estate of Drayton; the word “impostor” was a less contemptuous word to his mind than the words “dervish” or “curate”: but to Dulaunay it was a word full of shame.

But that was only the first glaring fact about Hartwell which struck the mind, that he was an impostor: there were other facts of a different sort; and lying on the sofa in the dark room, the Count saw them all in a clear light — saw them with murmurs of reverence, and with pangs of pity. The motive with which Hartwell had married Drayton’s wife was no longer obscure: it was in order that he might cut off with a ruthless knife from his heart the temptation to abandon her for the beloved Julia; “In which case,” thought the Count, “that is not astonishing that the hairs of that erring, but venerable head, have silvered themselves.” The truth of what Martha constantly

asserted, that she had been isolated from the world for five years in the tower at Corton was now for the first time believed by Dulaunay; it was the dead Drayton who had thus isolated her, and it was Hartwell who had set her free, at a moment when her freedom meant the ruin of all his hopes. The Count was able to guess that at the time when Hartwell vowed to Julia at Siena that he was not married, he probably did not know where Martha was, or if she were dead or alive, though he must have known of the fact of Drayton's marriage to her; then, on the eve of his marriage with Julia, Hartwell had gone down to Corton, and had discovered Martha in her prison. What a war in the mind or the ill-fated Hartwell must then have taken place! The contrast between the two women — Martha and Lady Julia — presented itself strongly to the Count's mental vision: the one so special, and also so beloved, the other so common and cheap, and hard to love. If on that discovery in the tower at Corton, Hartwell desired, even to madness, the death of Martha, that would have been only natural; he must have desired it: it required no very deep sympathy to be able to perceive what at that time could not have failed to transact itself in Hartwell's soul. He had vowed to Julia at Siena that no impediment existed in the way of their marriage, and the continued existence of this Martha, this pseudo wife suddenly discovered in the tower, meant not merely the wreck of his and Julia's happiness, but it meant that Julia and all who knew of his vow, must needs despise him as the most perjured of ruffians. What even "a man of honour" and "a good Catholic" might, in so harassing a situation, have done, or might have been tempted to do, was terrible to think of; at least he might have left Martha in the isolation where Drayton had placed her, running the risk of her existence some day coming to light, and he might still, in spite of her, have married Julia; this, indeed, would have been very natural: for Martha at that time was nothing to Hartwell; she was Drayton's

wife, and Drayton had isolated her. But Hartwell had compassionated her, had liberated, married her; and these reflections stirred emotions so lively in the Count, that he had an impulse to hasten straight way to Hartwell, to kiss his hand like a disciple, and to say: "I know all! and I condemn, I pity, but above all I revere you."

How and why that marriage with Martha had been made necessary was now very evident: Bobbie had been sent into the country to seek, the girl, Rosie, in order that, when Rosie came, Hartwell might be able to desert Martha without leaving her desolate; the rash engagement, meantime, of Julia with the Arch-Duke's heir must have powerfully spurred Hartwell to cast Martha to the winds, to prostrate himself at the feet of his beloved, and to tell her that he was not so perjured a wretch as she could not fail to suppose him; but Bobbie had not come with Rosie: Bobbie had, apparently, been occupying his time in conjugal escapades with another than Rosie; and finally Hartwell, finding his human nature all too weak for the task which he had assumed, finding that he could not be a faithful husband to her who was not his wife, had brusquely ended the conflict with in him by a suicide of his heart and hope, and had made Martha his legal wife.

No great effort of penetration was needed on the part of the excellent Count in order to make these conjectures about Hartwell's late sufferings and motives; within the last few months he had seen as it were years added to Hartwell's age, a resignation in Hartwell's smile, a silent experience of grief in his glance, the tufting of his hair with grey, and a stooping of his shoulders as under a heavy burden. The Count had inwardly bemoaned his friend without fathoming the full cause of all this: and now, fathoming it, he muttered to himself at one moment: "Here, then, I think, is a piece of human clay not without cracks, yet a master-man (*un homme maître*), and worthy to be loved."

His first practical decision was to hie straight to Julia and tell her all: and as this occurred to him, he leapt up from the couch, at the same time hearing Oswald's voice outside on the stairs calling: "I say, aren't you coming? We shall miss the train." To which Dulaunay called back: "I come at the instant even! Wait me!"

He stood a minute longer where he was, confirming himself in his decision. Yes, he would go to Julia. Two days ago she was in London, he knew, and probably still was. He would tell all that very night. This would cause him to miss the train, but there was no necessity for him to return to Corton that night: he would give Oswald the shreds for which he had been sent; Oswald would take them down to "Draytong," and he himself would at once call upon the admirable Julia.

His nerves danced with excited anticipation at the greatness of the effect which his revelation must produce upon Julia; the zeal of a disciple to preach Hartwell to her so possessed him, that his Gallic impetuosity forefelt the impatience which would be his during the slow cab drive between Addison Road and Brook Street. He knew that in preaching Hartwell to her, he would be preaching to ears eager enough to hear; nor was he under any obligation to Hartwell to keep secret what his own wits had unearthed. Next to "Draytong's" friendship, his intimacy with Julia was the most precious of his flighty life's experiences; here was the first lovely woman whom he had learned to love without desiring for himself; he desired her for another; and this unselfish flame had long been the source within him of much pure, and rather novel, emotion. She had taught him long before the rupture with Hartwell to regard her as a dear friend and sister, unique among women, and high aloof from his ordinary gallantries; but since the rupture she had become to him that which is more than a friend — a friend in despair, for whom he could do nothing, and her image in his heart had now acquired

something almost of saintship, halloed with the sacredness which a great misfortune, borne with resignation, confers. Since the rupture he had been much in her company, both in London, and abroad; at a score of meetings had they discussed in private intimacy the strange, disastrous conduct of Hartwell; but the Count's words of consolation, in the dark as he himself was, had had only the value which friendship and sincerity gave them: to say and many times repeat that "Draytong for ever adores you, Julia," or that "Draytong is the soul of honour," or that "Draytong if not deranged" had not been to prove that it was true. He had seen Julia desperately drifting into marriage with the Gross-Herzog P ——, and for her sake, not for Hartwell's, had tried his best to warn her back, but without effect. He now hoped that what he was about to tell her might even yet avert that marriage. He felt himself the good Providence of Julia and of Hartwell, and, full of this busy, self-important feeling, he rushed out of the room and down the stairs: Julia should know the whole shameful and sublime truth of how "Draytong" had sinned, had achieved, and had suffered: and she should judge him for herself.

He met Oswald awaiting him below at the door of the morning-room, and he said hurriedly:

"I regret to have made you to wait, Oswald. Something has arrived to me which will prevent me from returning to Corton to-night."

"My dear sir, you are erratic," said Oswald: "I am not going to stay here. I shall simply go back to Corton with out you."

"But, yes! why not? It is even that which I supposed that you would do, my friend. We have little need, I think, of the protection one of the other? I, of my part, will sleep here under the auspices of the good Miss Scatchett, and perhaps you will tell her this presently for me. On Monday, in the afternoon, I will rejoin you at Corton. Only I pray you to let me take the cab

which waits us at the gate, and to find yourself another, since I am pressed to arrive somewhere; you will perhaps also be good enough to place in the hand of “Drayton” this envelope which he sent me to seek, and to make for me my compliments and excuses to himself and to the excellent Martha.”

In saying this, he had taken the envelope containing the shreds from his pocket, and he handed it to Oswald; nor would he have believed even an angel, we may suppose, who had said to him then: “This act of yours is a stroke of destiny by which you work the total overthrow of him whom you love.”

Oswald’s hand went out and took that envelope which by no use of his wits he had been able to touch, but which now of its own accord came in to his possession.

He had learned at least one good habit in the distinguished circles in which he had moved, the habit of hiding his emotions under a reposeful exterior; but he was unhinged in a rather singular way by this event, it was so great and sudden: he neither reddened nor turned pale, but he became quite awkward; he took the envelope sheepishly, like a man detected in a theft, and, having taken it, still held it out a little toward Dulaunay, as if offering it back, or as if afraid of seeming to be too greedy to rush it into his pocket; and he smiled a maudlin smile, which, put into words, would have said: “It is nothing to me, this envelope; I am not really so very anxious as you may imagine to take charge of it, nor so overjoyed to have it burning between my fingers; my blood is not tingling with suppressed elation, nor shall I laugh and shout the moment your back is turned, when I shall fully realise that you are really gone, and have really left this thing with me; no, all this is only your fancy, and you have still a chance to change your mind, and take the envelope back from me.”

But Dulaunay did not even notice that shamefaced smile, much less understand its meaning. He even now did not know anything about Oswald's imprisonment by Hartwell, he had been abroad at his chateau at the time, and the sensation caused by the scandal had been mostly local in the West End clubland; nor had Hartwell mentioned it since to Dulaunay, nor had Julia, nor Oswald himself. Even if the Count had known it, he might still have given the envelope to Oswald, for he had no reason to think that the shreds were of any special weight or secrecy; he knew, indeed, that Oswald did not seem to love his supposed brother; but then Oswald, who had been specially glum of late, seemed to love no one with much heat. On the whole, Dulaunay handed the envelope to him without a doubt or afterthought in his mind, said *au revoir*, ran out into the rain to the waiting cab, and started for Brook Street, in order to tell Julia all.

Oswald, for his part, re-entered the morning room; threw the envelope on the table; and began to pace with his usual limp, his hat pushed back on his head, his two hands in his pockets, and a flush now on his bald brow; for the moment he looked like an elated book-maker, who has won something; as he paced, his glance rested frequently on the envelope; and suddenly one breath of laughter, which was hysterical in its essence, broke from his lips.

"James, James," he murmured presently in a deep voice, and suddenly again gave vent to a short laugh.

In those minutes the whole look of life was moving before his consciousness into transformation, like the gradual working of the shades, of night into morning. This was the hour of Oswald's exceeding satisfaction. After a life which had been hampered by a chronic lack of funds, he loved money for its own sake, and that simple-looking envelope on the table made him very rich. And beyond the actual facts of his great luck, his fancy, becoming exalted, painted him with a rapid brush many warm visions of

happiness and power: he hoped that by a display of his new wealth, he would now regain a footing in those empyrean circles from which his false step in attempting to steal the shreds had cast him like some Lucifer; there even floated through his mind a thought of Julia, and the possibility either of winning her after all, or of being somehow revenged on her; but dearer than all else was the luxurious power which he now held in his hand of crushing him whom he supposed to be his brother.

His feeling toward Hartwell at this date was entirely different from what it had been toward the real Drayton. He had disdained and also disliked Drayton with a certain distinguished weariness; but he respected and truly hated Hartwell. This new feeling was more complex and far more heartfelt than the old. In real hatred — though the statement may seem strange — there is much of love; for hatred and love are different forms of the same sickness or infection, and are so near akin that the hand that is raised to strike sometimes falls with a caress. The fact about Oswald was, that he had been caught in the draught of Hartwell's stronger nature, as a boat is sucked into the wake of a ship: he was compelled to feel deeply in some way toward Hartwell, to love or to hate, and he hated; but this hatred suffered many of the pangs of love. When, for instance, Hartwell had caused him to be cast into prison, Oswald's heart had been wounded in a manner in which the real Drayton never could have wounded it; he had sobbed to himself: "I never supposed that he would crush me so; he forgets; he does not care, that I am his brother." By the time he had come out of prison, a settled venom against "James," a longing for revenge, had taken possession of his mind; but this ill-feeling was not a simple, but a complex, feeling: he had been glad to be taken to Corton because Hartwell was at Corton, he liked the whist party nights when for two hours and a half he might sit morose in Hartwell's immediate presence; he was as jealous as a jealous lover of the

count, of Martha, of Julia, of Bobbie, because they occupied some of Hartwell's thoughts; he was morbidly sensitive if Hartwell in any trivial way in the routine of daily life at Corton seemed to slight or despise him; Hartwell had become his heart's disease, haunting all his emotions: and if Oswald had not wished to stab his "James," he would have wished to embrace him. Hence the doggedness with which he had questioned the Gissings in order to obtain the desired clue about Letty Barnes; for it was now necessary to his peace to be in some sort of relation with Hartwell, to act upon him, and be reacted upon by him in some way, to touch him at one point, to be his master somehow, or his slave somehow: he was inversely "in love" — *epris*, as the French say, "taken" or "captivated," as we say; and because his hatred was this inverse sort of morbid love, therefore it was all the more genuine, heartfelt and terrible.

He rang the bell, and sat to the table. A footman in half-dress came in. "John," said Oswald, "I want you to find me some gum and a pair of scissors, — as quickly as you can."

The man went out and in a few minutes returned with the gum and scissors. Oswald then spread the shreds before him on the table, and began to fit their edges together. He found the work deeply interesting, every fit being to him a childish pleasure of achievement. He cut with the scissors small oblong patches from a letter taken out of his pocket, put gum on them, and fastened the shreds with them, without letting the patches cover any of the writing. In the end he got a nickety, stiff letter, but easy enough to read. Only one shred was missing in the centre, the one on which was "cruel bru," and this he had safe, though not with him.

He now read the letter through. It was all that was needed to prove Drayton's intimacy with Letty Barnes, and its nature. Letty warned Lady Julia against marriage with Drayton, sketched the history of her own

relation with him, spoke of their meeting on Cromer Pier, of their stay at the Gissing's cottage, of the "scream" which she had heard coming from the tower at Corton — just such a letter as a wronged and jealous girl would write to her lover's future wife, full of self-pity, of over-anxiety for the future wife's welfare, and an unbridled animus against the wrongdoer. Adding to the letter the points which Hartwell's own frequent reasonings on the murder had made clear, the chain of proof against Hartwell as the author of Letty's death was complete.

Oswald again paced the room, feeling now ill-at-ease, almost wretched, the reason being that in this new world of happiness in which he suddenly found himself he stood with nothing to do, while all his being demanded instant and boisterous action. He did not know how he was to live through the night, and longed for the morrow. A rush of happiness always has this restless effect, as if an increase of vitality were pumped into the limbs, impelling one to run and exert one's vigour, but one finds oneself bound and must remain inert: by the time one can act, one has worn oneself out with inward fretting, and the pleasure of action is spoiled. Oswald longed to fly to Corton; but he could hardly go that night, had missed the train, and if he took a later train, Gloucester would not be at the station to meet him with the trap. He thought of telegraphing to Hartwell, and at first the telegram was short: "Sleep well," then it grew in his thoughts into "Sleep well for my sake, James," and then his thoughts added and added to it, till he had quite a long telegram in his head, but he did not send it, uncertain whether he should sign it "Oswald," or "your brother," or "your dear brother."

After half an hour, in order to do something, Oswald rang again and when the footman appeared, said to him, "You might send Miss Scatchett to me John."

Presently the alert, bird-like figure of Miss Scatchett looked in. There was always something out of joint between this lady's littleness on the one hand, and the queenliness of her position; on the other, she seemed ever stretching to be taller than she was; her silks, however, her mistress air, and the real dignity of her old-established maidenhood, combined to keep her on her throne of state. She had been the real Drayton's housekeeper for seven years before his death.

"Miss Scatchett," said Oswald, "I wish to speak with you. Sit down." He was now reclining on a lounge, pretending to himself and to her to be languid and uninterested. "I wanted to know how many servants you keep here."

"Five at present," she said, without showing the surprise which she felt; "the normal number is—"

"Well, you may at once send two of them away," he said wearily, interrupting her: "treat them liberally, you know, but you have no need of them. I have to tell you also that in a month or six weeks I shall be shutting up or selling this place, and then, I suppose, our connection will terminate, Miss Scatchett."

She perked the head as a somewhat startled canary might, and with eyes just so innocent and mild as a bird's looked at him with grave interest; The words seemed crazy to her, and she said: "I'm afraid I do not quite follow you, sir."

"I suppose not. Well, then, I must tell you that you are no longer in the employ of my brother, but in mine, Miss Scatchett. This place is mine, all that he ever had is mine. I need not be at the pains to explain how this has come about, but it is so. My good brother has got himself into certain embarrassments, and has transferred everything to me. I mean to make some enormous changes — But do not let this upset you. I shall settle upon

you personally a substantial annuity, and probably get you another place as good as this, or better. I mean to be liberal to the bounds of dissoluteness. Mr James Drayton has rather collapsed, Miss Scatchett."

She continued to look with grave interest at Oswald; he seemed sober, he seemed sane: yet in the words, even in his calm air, there lurked something of lunacy, limbo, and intoxication. Miss Scatchett had to believe, yet did not quite believe. "This is surely surprising, sir," she said, at a loss what to say: "I heard from Mr Drayton on Wednesday, and he said not one word—"

"No doubt. Yet it is as true, Miss Scatchett, as that that light is shining. Who lives will see! My brother has run too far and too fast, Miss Scatchett, and now has got into difficulties. He has pretended to think nothing of me, to despise me; but now all, all, depends on my whim. That's rather a good thing, don't you think? where it says, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner' — that's rather good. Well, that is all I had to say for the present, Miss Scatchett. Good night — . Who lives will see."

Miss Scatchett stood with a suspended air and mild eyes of meditation; then she started slightly, and said: "What you say is certainly startling, sir. I only hope that nothing lamentable has occurred. But at least may I await instructions from Mr Drayton himself before dismissing the two servants?"

"If you like," said Oswald, with a very heavy sigh and sudden weariness of this playing at action: "be good enough to leave me now."

"Do you sleep here to-night, sir?"

"No, I go home to my chambers."

"I presume that Mr Dulaunay has returned to Corton?"

"No. I believe he's coming back here to sleep. But you won't see much of the Frenchman for the future, I fancy, Miss Scatchett."

Miss Scatchett went out musing with a sideward head upon this extraordinary interview; and a few minutes afterwards Oswald, to avoid a meeting with Dulaunay, left the house.

He arrived in a cab near ten at his chambers, two top-rooms in a small street of small houses running parallel with Piccadilly on the south side. He found his Irish servant, Magee, whose only work of late had been forwarding letters, entertaining two men and a woman in the sitting room with Saturday night cordiality, whereat Oswald grumbled, but not very loudly, for he was afraid of Magee, whom he could not live without, whom he had thrice turned away, only to take him back after a few days' misery in some new servant's hands; and ordinarily the word "Magee" was the word more frequently uttered by Oswald's lips than any other.

After the rout of Magee's party, Oswald threw himself into the semi-circular lounge which shut in the copper-vaulted fireplace, sighed, and seemed lost in reverie, while Magee, a handy, small fellow, born to be a valet, stood expectant of orders. The small room, in which taste was the rather self-conscious mistress, was cosy with the red glamor of the lampshade and the fire flickering on dull-red tiles; all was primly elegant; the few unobtrusive pictures exactly fitted into the wall-spaces in which stood the oak, the plain Donegal carpet, and the terracotta walls made a harmony of color.

"I am sleeping here to-night Magee," said Oswald after a time. "I suppose you wish me to the devil, if the truth were known, but I am independent of you now, my friend. Why didn't you come down to Corton to me?"

"Had no orders, sir," said Magee on one knee, unlacing Oswald's boots.

"You don't wait for orders, when you want to do anything, Magee. You didn't want to leave town, I suppose, of you would have come. But I mean

to make you skip for the future, if you don't look after me. What's all the news about?"

"Only old news, sir—"

"Yes, I believe your bulls are a pose, my friend. You are conscious that if you didn't make bulls I should have kicked you to the devil years ago, Magee."

"Sure, sir," said Magee, "you couldn't make a bull out of me not if you were to kill me just now. I've been that put about by what happened to you, sir. Thank God to see you looking so wonderfully hearty, sir, after the miserable treatment you've been put to, sir."

"I suppose you guessed that I was innocent, Magee. It wasn't banknotes that I wanted to take, but a letter which I knew would convict the ruffian of a crime. But I've got it now at last, Magee."

"Sure, I knew that you were innocent, sir," said Magee, putting Oswald into a dressing gown: "I knew it very well even before your brother's letter to the paper saying that it wasn't any banknotes that you were after taking from his wardrobe—"

"Which letter to which papers, you idiot?"

"Sure, I thought that you would know, sir! That's funny that your brother himself hasn't told you, sir. He wrote to the papers saying — well, I've still the papers put up in some hole in my bedroom and you can look through them with your own hands, sir. It is supposed that it is this letter of your brother that was the means of narrowing down the length of your sentence at the tail-end, sir; but, as I said to Lady Methwold's Thomas, 'It is all very well for him to be writing letters to the papers now, but all the ink in the world shall not whitewash Mr Oswald—'"

"Better hold your tongue, Magee," said Oswald, whose lips from old habit seemed to find a pleasure in uttering that word "Magee" on every

occasion. "I suppose you are more or less drunk again. I smell, it on you. Haven't I many times forbidden you to carouse in my rooms with your friends, and drink my spirits?"

"Sure, sir, I know that that much is all right between us," answered Magee. "What can you expect? when the cat's away, 'tis but natural if the mice take a few liberties with his tail, sir."

"With his cocktail, you mean. Better hold your tongue, Magee. What, by the way, is all the news? Is anything going on?"

"Nothing special, sir. You must 'er heard sir, of the bankruptcy of Sir Aubrey Payne; then again, on Tuesday evening last Lord Cyril Letchford struck her ladyship a back-handed blow with the palm of his hand, as they were going up the great staircase at Rodeleigh Hall after dinner, and her ladyship is reported to be laid up and ear-marked for some time to come with a handsome black eye, sir; then again, Lady Methwold and her aunt, Lady Wisden, left town yesterday afternoon to spend a week at Marston House, in Norfolk, with the Farnums—"

"They, did, did they?" muttered Oswald. "Lady Methwold is a subject which will have to be considered; Magee, you had better go to Pagani's and tell them to send a supper."

"Yes, sir. Supper for breakfast tomorrow, sir?"

"No, for supper to-night. I could eat something now, and drink, too. I will have a bottle of Yquem. The little economies are over now, Magee. I happen to have become a rich man since you saw me last, so you can look out."

"A rich — ? You, sir? Sure, I congratulate you and myself, too, sir, if that's so?" said, Magee, standing in suspense.

"It's as true as that, that lamp's burning."

"Sure, this is a bit of news, then! How did it happen, sir?"

“You will see, if you live. Go and get me the supper. First of all bring me the newspaper that you say contains my brother’s letter.”

Magee hurried out, soon returned with the newspaper from his room in the basement, and hurried out again for the supper; and while he was gone Oswald eagerly perused Hartwell’s letter, exculpating him from the full scandal of the charge which had been brought against him. The letter was a short, and formal statement of facts, in which, however, Hartwell did not spare himself for his share in the false impression produced as to Oswald’s guilt; and, as he read it, strong emotions of hatred, not untinged with emotions akin to love, like darkness streaked with fireflies, boiled in Oswald’s breast. He saw that “James” must have felt sorry for the unbrotherly wrong done, and bitterly he murmured: “Too late, James! too late!” The fact that “James” had felt sorry for him stirred up afresh Oswald’s self-pity and sense of injury; and the fact that “James” had not felt sorry in time gave rise to a tyrannous longing in Oswald’s mind to teach “James” a lesson for some vague “next time.”

“Too late, my friend! I’ll teach you for next time,” such was Oswald’s thought. He would crush even to the dust; he would not spare; “James” should be without a five-pound note. But mixed with all this spleen was the warm, tearful, maudlin feeling that, as James had felt sorry, so at some distant day he, Oswald, too, would relent, and be sorry; and he forefelt already the melodramatic joys with which in that day he would turn again to James, shower royal mercies upon him, and say: “You are my brother, after all, my own flesh and blood.” Such are the pranks which the feelings play in a smitten and poisoned heart.

He went to bed somewhat heated with wine after the supper; but there was no sleep for him, his brain was so plagued with fiery thought. After some hours all the food in his stomach was used up by this work of the soul,

and about four in the morning he had to get up hollow with hunger, and eat a crust of bread, which was all he had, in spite of his new riches. Thus the greatness of his happiness, joined with nothing to do, became to, him a care to groan at.

At sunrise he was up and writing in his dressing-gown to Hartwell, though it was Sunday, and the letter would not pass through the post for many hours; he covered three sheets with writing, pouring out abuse, upbraidings, threats, a river of bile, though he knew all the time that he would never let such a letter go from him into the post. He tore it up presently, and afterwards wrote a short command to Hartwell to meet him at his chambers at two on Monday afternoon: and this was duly delivered at Corton on the Monday morning.

As for the Count, he had returned to Addison Road soon after Oswald left, and spent, for his part, almost as sleepless a night as Oswald, thinking over that secret thing which he had found out about "Draytong's" life, thinking, too, of his disappointment in not meeting Julia, for, on going to her house in Brook Street, to tell her all, he had heard that she had left London the day before to stay at Marston House, in Norfolk, an estate only six miles from Corton; and he was kept awake, too, by the strangeness of the fact, of which Miss Scatchett had told him, that Oswald had not taken down to Hartwell the envelope entrusted to him, but was sleeping at his chambers in London.

XXIX. WHERE WAS HARTWELL?



ABOUT THE SAME hour that Dulaunay came back to sleep at Addison Road that Saturday night after failing to find Julia, a chaise containing Bobbie, Rosie, and Rosie's maid was passing along the dark road from Felmingham to Corton. It was not the Corton trap, for that passed them on the road at a slow walk with Gloucester, the groom, who was going to Felmingham to bring Oswald and Dulaunay home to Corton, though he was destined to await them in vain that night. Bobbie's chaise was one of the peculiar basket-chaises of Felmingham, which he had procured with some trouble at that late hour, and the journey to Corton was long drawn, for speed was not exactly the strong point of that particular horse and driver of Felmingham; the road, moreover, was not good and very gloomy of a dark night like this. That half-hour of rain between eight and nine, when Oswald at a bedroom window had seen the breadth of Addison Road like a plain sprouting with a crop of white grass, was long since over but the forests here about Corton still dripped with it through all their depths, the air was still haunted by a drizzle, and the party in the chaise were in waterproofs. Even where the sky would have been visible at another time, neither sky nor star was now to be seen; the eye could not pierce the darkness two yards ahead; and the silence was broken only by weird sounds in the woods. The young bride, who was now wearing loose jackets, clung to her husband's side, and when, they spoke it was in melancholy murmurs.

"Perhaps he will be asleep, Bobbie," murmured Rosie, "he" being the word by which Hartwell was now named in all their talk — that terrible

“he” who had, sooner or later, to be faced and confessed to: and now the hour for it was come.

“He may be asleep, darling,” said Bobbie, “people in the country do go to sleep early, I know, though I don’t feel that he is asleep. It would be rather a good thing if he were, don’t you think?”

“Do you feel that you would like him to be, darling Bobbie?” asked Rosie in a subdued voice.

“Yes, for then I should have one more whole night in which to think out what I am to say to him.”

“Haven’t you thought it out yet, Bobbie?”

“I am afraid I haven’t, darling. I have thought, of course, for months, but not thought out. Nothing possible has occurred to me to say. The difficulty is to avoid being blatantly ridiculous! ‘How do you do, sir? this is my wife’ — one can’t say that, you know: it is portentous, it really is *bete*. I do wish now that we hadn’t brought Ernestine with us, Rosie. I tried to hint to you not to bring her and you would. It looks like springing a whole heavy family, with hat-boxes and nursemaids upon him, I confess, I — I — feel absurd.”

Rosie had a minute’s silent reflection, and then said:

“Miss Scatchett thinks — that — it! would be better, if I go in first alone, and see him, while you pretend to be busy outside with something. I — will, if you like, Bobbie.”

“But do you think you could?” asked Bobbie, sorely tempted to hide himself behind her bravery: “You might find it trying, darling.”

“But, I ‘will,’ Bobbie, if you like.” she repeated, with a catch of the breath, clinging to him: for she had never seen Hartwell, who was to her merely some vague dragon.

“But what would you say, darling? How would you present, yourself?” asked Bobbie, with a perplexed brow.

“I should say: ‘I am Mr Robert Hartwell’s lawful wife, and we are come home,’” said Rosie bravely.

Bobbie could not resist a twinge of laughter at the “lawful,” it sounded so aggressive; and he said:

“No, I don’t think that would do, Rosie. It might be the most diplomatic way, but it would be too great an ordeal for you. No, we will go in together, I a little in advance — ah, Heavens! I do wish the thing was over, don’t you? I shall say: ‘Allow me to present you, sir, my—’ If we could only find some equivalent to ‘wife!’ it sounds so deplorably heavy!”

“I don’t see anything so very wrong with ‘wife,’” remarked Rosie. “But couldn’t you say: ‘How are you, sir? I am the husband, sir, of this — ?’”

“Oh, but ‘husband’ is worse! I’d rather say you are my wife than say I am your husband: there is something apologetic in ‘wife,’ but ‘husband’ sounds like a challenge. Our tone must be calm, but not self-assertive. I wish to goodness it was over, don’t you? I wonder what he will say! He wouldn’t dare be cross with you, I think: if he is, you won’t say anything, but leave it to me to answer him — Oh, well, I don’t care: we must only trust to Providence.”

“I wish it was over, don’t you?” sighed Rosie for the tenth time. “I only hope he will be well asleep when we get there. Is it far now?”

“It can’t be very far now, I think,” answered Bobbie: “I have only been down here once and he told me then that he was going to live in a place buried in timber which they call the Pavilion. So that must be where he is. If he is asleep, we can probably get in without his knowing till to-morrow: the servant who opens to us is sure to know me.”

“But perhaps the servants are asleep, too,” suggested Rosie: “in knocking them up, we may wake ‘him.’”

“Heaven knows. I don’t care, dear. We must only sit tight, and trust to Providence.”

“You see what a heap of trouble I have brought you into, Bobbie. He must have had some deep reason for wishing you to marry the other Rosie, and he will be terribly angry with us. He may cut you off with a shilling.”

“Let him do his worst. ‘I’ had a deep reason for wishing to marry this Rosie, and no other, that’s all. I only wish the dreadful business was over. It can’t be very far now.”

“I am sorry now that I brought Ernestine, or wore this hat,” said Rosie, after a silence: “he will think that I am fond of dress, and can’t move without a maid. But I didn’t wish to leave poor Ernestine by her self at Addison Road, where no one speaks French. Oh, dear darling Bobbie, we must be getting very near now! Just give me your hand — feel my heart, how it is beating. I wish an accident would happen to the chaise to keep us back.”

“Don’t be afraid, dear, you make me nervous,” said Bobbie.

“How cold your hand is!” murmured Rosie: “I can feel, it through my glove; keep it here under the jacket to warm it. Don’t be too nervous, darling! perhaps it will be all right — Oh, dear! we were too young to get married — What would dear Lulu and Paul Schrapps and all those Paris people think to see us quaking in this way to come home? That old Spanish fortune teller in the Rue de Moscou told me that a calamity was hanging over us, Bobbie, and that is why I kept you from coming; I am sure that my influence helped to keep you from coming, but I am terribly sorry now, dear, I ought, to have made you come long ago, and then it would have been over now, and we should not have had to suffer to-night!”

“It will be all right; don’t be afraid; we can’t be far now,” said Bobbie in a tone of nervous preoccupation. All their remarks were disjointed and abrupt.

“His brother, Oswald, and Count Dulaunay may be up and with him,” remarked Rosie, “and they will be a protection perhaps. He would hardly be very cross before them. I don’t think I shall like Oswald much from what you tell me, he is too short; but I shall like the Count. Is it far now, I wonder? I wonder if Mr Drayton will notice me, or like me?”

“He notices every earthly thing the moment his eye rests on it,” answered Bobbie: “he’ll probably know how long we have been married, where we have lived, and all about us in a wonderful way by his first glance. That would be quite in his manner. He is a man of science, trained in what they call ‘expert observation—’”

“Oh, he must be very terrible, dear darling Bobbie!” murmured Rosie.

“But he is not — don’t think that,” said Bobbie, patting her hand absent-mindedly “you mustn’t be afraid of him, darling. He is only cold in manner. Remember all that he has done for me: I was a poor working boy, as I have told you, and he—”

The chaise began to bump down the steep forest road that passes by the little lawn where the statue of Pan is, before the Pavilion. They were at Corton; and suddenly their hearts got colder as the chaise stopped, and at some moment they saw a single light in the Pavilion near by on their right.

Bobbie said something to Ernestine in French in a hushed voice, she seized a valise and a hat-box, and the party got out; the driver was then dismissed and, turning on the narrow road with difficulty, rumbled very slowly away into dense darkness. The night was indeed very dark, and the forest seemed to hide within itself some unspeakable secret; from the Pavillon sounded the baying of a dog.

The young husband put his arm round his wife's waist, and held her to him, as if to protect her from the spirit of awe which was in their situation and in the greatness of the gloom about them.

They walked by the statue of Pan across the lawn to the Pavilion. The single light came from the drawing room on the ground floor, the old room used for the whist parties and for living in; but it was so dark in the portico which surrounded the house, that Bobbie stumbled over a cane chair there. The dog now bayed close and angrily within one of the doors opening upon the portico, and at this door Bobbie knocked with his umbrella; but he had to knock thrice before a girl came rubbing her eyes — Sarah Gissing, who had been sitting asleep in the drawing-room. She did not know Bobbie, and stared at the visitors; as though they were part of her late dream.

“Is Mr Drayton still awake?” Bobbie asked in a low confidential tone.

“Yes, sir,” — Bobbie's and the poor Rosie's hearts sank — “at least he has not gone to bed.”

“Is he — there?” asked Bobbie in a low voice, indicating the drawing-room.

“He isn't, sir. We dunnot know where Mr Drayton is, nor Mrs neither. They must have gone out after dinner somewhere; but they didn't say they were going, nor where they were going to. And I'm sitting up, now, waiting for them.”

Bobbie's and Rosie's hearts rose again: the ordeal was put by at least some moments.

“But Mr Drayton's not married,” said Bobbie: “you speak of Mrs Drayton.”

“Yes, sir, Mr Drayton is married.”

“To whom?”

“To Mrs, sir.”

“I see. But where would, he be? can’t you guess?”

“I can’t, sir,” said Sarah. “There’s nowhere for them to have gone to. Gloucester — that’s the groom, sir — has been searching about the woods for them, but he couldn’t find them; and I’m sure there’s nowhere for them to have gone to.”

“How do you mean? they must be somewhere, you know. They haven’t gone in a carriage apparently, but mightn’t they have gone on foot to pay a visit somewhere?”

“No; sir, they never pay any visits.”

“And Mr Oswald and the Count, are they up?”

“They went to London to-day, sir. Gloucester is gone to fetch them, and they’ll be here after eleven.”

“Well, I don’t seem to know you, but I am Mr Drayton’s ward, and this is my lady, and her maid. We are going to stay here, so you will prepare us two rooms, and meantime we shall sit up till Mr Drayton comes home.”

The party of travellers had now entered the drawing room; Ernestine was sent up with Sarah to see to the rooms; Bobbie and Rosie sat in their ulsters, and waited, with silent glances at each other. It was half-past ten; it became eleven; and still Hartwell and Martha did not appear. Bobbie poured some wine from a decanter, with a gold ring marked “sherry” round its neck, and made Rosie take it, with a biscuit from the whist table. Then Sarah and Ernestine reappeared from above stairs, sat at a respectful distance, and all waited as silently as a party at a wake. Rosie sat with relaxed bent shoulders, and occasionally glanced at Bobbie with a glance which said nothing but the obvious fact: “Well, Bobbin, here we are, then, waiting. Destiny has brought us to this point, so far and no farther;” and Bobbie’s eyes rested on her with a glance which said precisely the same obvious thing. Their sense of relief at Hartwell’s absence gradually ceased to be

acute, and even as they sat indolently enjoying that absence, they began almost to wish that he would come; and the candles in the candelabra burned lower.

“I suppose he is quite certain to come some time to-night,” called Bobbie to Sarah.

“Oh, certain, sir,” answered the good Sarah, who had very little reasoning power, and, besides, was dying with sleep.

Ernestine, too, seemed very sleepy, and so did Rosie. At half-past eleven Bobbie sent the two servants to bed, saying he would sit up, and he wished to send Rosie also, but she would not go; before midnight, however, she had thrown off the splendid hat, and was asleep on his lap with her head on his shoulder, while Bobbie watched alone.

A minute before midnight Dulaunay’s retriever, Mascotte, which had been asleep in the fireplace, again began to make a noise, and soon a man’s head peeped in at one of the windows — it was Gloucester’s, who had just returned from his useless drive to Felmingham to bring home Oswald and Dulaunay. Instead of Sarah, whom he expected to see in the lighted drawing room, he saw a young gentleman with his lips laid on the forehead of a girl asleep on his lap. Gloucester knew Bobbie, however, and called out: “Beg pardon, sir, is Mr and Mrs Drayton come home yet?”

“Not yet, Gloucester,” answered Bobbie, wondering who on earth “Mrs” Drayton could be, since he knew that it was not Julia.

“It seems funny, sir,” said Gloucester: “you not long come, I suppose, sir?”

“I came by the 9.50.”

“Everybody gone to bed, sir?”

“Yes, I sent off the girl. What, then, can have become of Mr Drayton?”

“There’s no telling, sir. I was wondering, sir; whether anything couldn’t be done?”

“In what way do you mean? I suppose, Gloucester, that he has gone to London or somewhere?”

“He’d hardly walk to Felmingham, sir. Mrs Drayton she couldn’t half walk it, I know, if she tried.”

“Then where is he?”

“No telling, sir,” said Gloucester, scratching his head.

“What about Mr Oswald and the Count — not turned up?” asked Bobbie.

“No, sir, I went to fetch them, but they haven’t come — I feel a bit queer about Mr and Mrs Drayton, sir.”

“But why so? there are no wolves to eat him, or precipices for him to fall over. He must be somewhere, Gloucester.”

“Can’t think where they could have got to, sir — But no doubt it’s all right — Well, good night to you, sir.”

“Good night.”

Gloucester departed to the stables; put up his horses, and sought, his bed with a head nodding toward sleep. And ten minutes after him, Bobbie, too, gave up, took a candle, and, following the directions which Sarah had left him, found his room, and was soon floating in cloudland in the affectionate arms of a being who was half Rosie and half Morpheus.

Where, then, meantime, were Hartwell and Martha?

After dinner that evening, at which he, Martha, and Barnes had sat alone, Hartwell had gone up to his study to write a business letter to Birmingham about the trial of his electrical machine, which was to take place on the Tuesday following; he had left Martha with Barnes in the drawing-room; she was then reading a novelette at the dying fire — dying, for the night was very warm for November, though inclement; but when Hartwell had

come down again near eight, Martha was no longer there: he had questioned Barnes, and Barnes with his left hand had pointed dumbly out ward, to show that Martha had gone for a stroll. Hartwell then went into the portico and paced about, glancing anxiously anon at the clouds, or peering down the path in the forest. Sarah Gissing came presently and took Barnes, and Hartwell saw her lead him slowly across the lawn to the edge of the forest on the left, where the path commences to mount steeply toward the ruin and the chalk cottages. Ten minutes passed after this, and still Martha did not appear. Then suddenly that rain which in London, too, Oswald had seen from Hartwell's bedroom window, came pelting, whereupon Hartwell ran in, seized his hat and an umbrella, and ran down the forest path to the right to find and cover Martha.

But he could see no sign of her in any direction.

One of her favorite spots for sitting and reading was the well in a glade of the pines, and to this glade he went. It was a very solitary spot, though only a ten minutes' walk from the Pavilion stables, and here could be heard the many sounds which went on in the pines, and the music that was made in there always, as it were great choral happenings taking place far away in Heaven, the shout of numbers without number, strange rumours of which seemed to be brought on the breezes to the ear of the listener; one of the pines, in fact, was so close to the well that Martha, sitting on the coping, would often hear queer rumbling noises going on within its trunk when the breezes swayed its tall top. The well had long fallen into disuse, and was almost hidden by the grasses, nettles, and coarse fern, which nested in it. On the side where the half lid was, the ground was quite a swamp, but on the other side two slabs in the mud made the approach dry. Hartwell had not liked Martha to be there, for a mist arose from the depths of the well, and he

had even thought of filling it in, but had hesitated to do so, since she seemed to like it.

When he now entered the little glade, which was called the Round Point, Martha was not to be seen. He called to her in the pouring rain, but received no answer. The night was getting very dark. He ran from the glade in another direction.

XXX. IN THE WELL



HARTWELL SEARCHED FOR an hour, till near nine, but could not find Martha. He thought that she might have gone, not down, but up hill, and up there might have taken shelter from the rain in the Gissings' cottage or in Steve Anderson's; but she had not been in either of them. He returned to the Pavilion with a flash in the eye. The rain had now almost ceased. He went into the drawing room; she had not come home. He stood in the middle of the room, thinking it out; and there an intuition of the truth for the first time flashed across his mind.

Martha's vitality, as has been said, did not amount to much: she often fell asleep, or fainted, at hardly a moment's notice; and Hartwell now thought that she might have sat to read on the well alone, there fallen asleep or fainted, lost her balance, and tumbled into the well.

He was not a man who easily lost command of himself, but this thought turned him white, and his lip trembled. The instant feeling in him was the ugly one that she might be dead, and that it was not he who had killed her.

He was agitated inwardly; but his actions were cool enough! He felt in his jacket-pocket, and found that a box of matches was there; he then walked into the next room across the passage, searched in a drawer, and found a ball of twine. He then came back to the drawing room, took a candle, puffed out its light, and now hastened out with these things through the drizzle toward the Round Point.

As he made his way thither in the now confirmed darkness, some sinister thoughts, or feelings rather than thoughts, like unclean snakes lifting their

heads, occurred in his mind. If he did not let them speak aloud, they at least whispered and hissed in his consciousness. Human nature has not yet rid itself of the traits of its brutal ancestry, and is often not pretty, in spite of one's long effort to live well; Hartwell was surprised and shaken by the suddenness of this thing, and what he felt was that, if she were dead, then he was free; that, if she were dead, he had not killed her with his own hand, and yet he was free.

He felt that Julia's engagement with the young Archduke was of no importance; that in the face of his freedom, of his resurrection, all that would vanish out of existence like a mist.

He did not know that at this very hour of 9.15 the shreds of Letty Barnes' letter were already in Oswald's hands in London, and that he, Hartwell, stood that moment in peril of losing all, or of being hanged. He made towards the Round Point, and his pace quickened to a run.

Stopping over the two slabs in the mud, he stood by the well, and gazed into its depths; and as he gazed, stooping over the brickwork coping, the gold pin that was in his tie, shaken loose perhaps by his run, fell out, and, down there below made a faint splash and echo. He called down once the word "Martha," but the well called back only the echo of his own voice.

He straightened himself, and tying the candle tight with the twine at a point somewhat nearer to the wick than to the bottom end, lit it under his hat, for it was drizzling; and he proceeded to lower it carefully into the well, peering over. The candle, as it went down, lay obliquely between upright and horizontal, but the flame turned upright, and was scorching the string, seeing which, Hartwell quickened the rate of paying out. In the impure air down there the light burned feebly, but still it lived, and was a yard or so from the surface of the water when the scorched string parted, the candle splashed, and all was blackness down there again. But for one moment

Hartwell had seen something white — a guess of the eyres, a mere glimpse of something; and this convinced him that Martha was there.

Dead probably — but also possibly not. The well was hardly so deep that she would necessarily strike the east side of its wall in her fall; the water, he knew, was hardly so deep as to prevent her from being broken to pieces on the bottom. It was possible that she was not dead; she certainly soon would be — if he waited — thinking about it — wilfully wasting time: and from his bosom there came a growl of disgusted self-conviction which uttered the words: “Robert Hartwell!”

He now ran fast enough — up a rising path in the pines, over a ditch and a stile, down a stony way, to the stables; and as he entered the quadrangle he called out sharply, angrily, with flashing eyes, “Gloucester!”

Gloucester, however, did not happen to be there; he had been smoking in the kitchen at the Pavilion since dinner, and at this very time was out with a lantern and umbrellas, searching for the master and mistress, Sarah Gissing having just before discovered their absence.

Hartwell called him several times, and, not receiving any reply, understood that whatever was to be done must be done by himself alone; only one man, Gloucester, was on the place, beside Steve Anderson, Gissing, and Barnes, who were far enough away. Oswald and Dulaunay were in London; and Hartwell, not sure whether Gloucester was at the Pavilion, would not spend the four minutes necessary to run there, but, plunging into one of the stables, came out with a coil of small new rope on his arm, and then started back again, through the pines with running feet, which trod on a carpet made of tiny stems, the dry stems of the pine-leaf; and as he ran he cast away his jacket, and then his waistcoat, first placing the matches in his bosom. His plan of action was already formed in his own mind. He intended to let down over the axle of the old windlass a length of

the rope sufficiently long for the two ends to be within his reach when he stood at the bottom of the well. He would then fasten one of the two hanging ends under Martha's arms, and hauling at the other part of the rope would thus hoist her to the windlass. For his own descent into the well, he would cut off a length of the rope — he had a penknife in his trouser pocket — and tie one end round the axle. When he was down, and had Martha hoisted to the axle, he would go up again by his own rope, grasping not only it but Martha's rope as well, so that she should not slip down again meantime. This would be almost equivalent to taking his own weight plus Martha's up a swinging rope. But, he was still very strong, though not what he had been, and, she being very light, he was confident that he would manage it somehow, even if she slipped back down a little as he climbed up. He might even possibly find a projecting stone or something at the bottom, to which to fasten the rope after she was hoisted, while he climbed by his own rope.

Coming therefore to the well, he set hurriedly to work. His first care was to ascertain the depth, and this he did by tying a stone in an end of the rope, lowering it, listening for the splash, and marking the depth by a knot in the rope. He then proceeded to cut off from the rope a length equivalent to double the well's depth; but, having done this, he found that only about two yards of the rope was left for his own descent. He had not thought of this possibility of the rope running short; and he was eager now to have the poor Martha safe in his arms.

For a moment or two, he did not know what to do: to run back to the stables or to the Pavilion was to lose another fifteen minutes; he soon remembered, however, the old rope attached to the wheel and axle, reached out and felt it; a chain and hook hung at its end; and there it had lain coiled round the axle under its tin hood for many years. Hartwell had a doubt

whether it would bear his weight. It was so rotten and frayed, though quite three times stouter than the rope from the stables. He set to turning the wheel, letting the old rope move down through his outstretched left hand. It was certainly thin at some points — he could not see, but he could feel. That, however, was the only alternative to going back to the stables, and he was afraid to go back lest, on the way, he should feel glad at the delay. He decided to run the dreadful risk: and in the depths of the soul, something darkly whispered him that, if instead of killing Martha, as he had once thought of doing, he should happen to die for her, then somehow that would not be a bad thing for the stars above the glade to see, or for that music in the pines to make a theme of.

Sitting on the brickwork he quickly had off boots, trousers, shirt, threw the new rope over the axle with its two ends let down to the bottom, and, as gently as he could, he hung his weight on the old rope. He was very brawny, and in his working man days in the Birmingham factory, had often tackled weights and tasks that others had shied at. His descent into the darkness was attended, therefore, with little trouble, save a growing unease in breathing the stagnant air down there, and his feet safely touched the water and the bottom slime.

Now, at the actual experience of that place, he no longer believed that Martha could be alive, its mood was so chilling to the lamp of life like caverns of the deep sea and the raw breath of mermaids; an impression of awe touched Hartwell; his lips pronounced in a low tone the name of Martha.

There was a slow dripping sound in the darkness. He did not know whence it came; but it was water dripping from Martha's hat, and from one end of the new rope.

He had the matches under his vest, and after some efforts got one of them alight; it burned quite feebly, but he saw her; and at once, seeing her, he realised afresh that she might be alive. She seemed to be on both knees, with her back against the wall, her head and neck above the surface of the water, her eyes closed, her mouth open, her hat still on her head. He concluded that, after falling, she must have been more or less conscious of drowning, and in her struggles must have instinctively taken that position at the moment of fainting; whether the water had protected her limbs from fracture on the well's bottom, he could not tell; the expression of her face was like death, but he saw no blood, and life was at least possible. As the match went out, something half-floating touched his left thigh. It was her handkerchief.

He lost not a moment now, but, putting back the matches under his vest, where he also had his penknife in case of need, he made a loop at one end of her rope with a knot that would not run. As he now moved to take her into his arms, his foot struck upon something, and slipped: It was a wooden pail or bucket, water-logged and sunken to the bottom, there long years before. He recovered his footing and standing over Martha, soon had her in his left arm with a sense of surprise at her lightness, which the pressure of the water caused to seem still greater than it was in reality. Without stopping to ascertain if she were dead or alive, he pressed her to his heart, for dearly Hartwell loved her, now that he was there to save her, dearly "as a father pitieth his children," and as he passed the loop under her arms, with her back toward the length of the rope, his lips found and pressed her cold cheek in a kiss more blessed than any which he had ever given to Julia; more blessed and more blessing, for it is scientific to say, that magnetic virtues streaming from so pure and fervent a kiss may have given to Martha a fresh lease of life.

The loop having been well adjusted, under her arms, Hartwell proceeded to hoist her up by pulling downwards at the other part of her rope. The axle was smooth and the rope came easily, but his difficulty was to keep on his legs; the ground was so slippery. Several times there were jerks and narrow escapes from falling, and when she was gone some yards up, as he was moving backward, to prop himself against the wall, a nail standing in the mosses, on the bottom, ran far into his left heel, causing him such pain that he had to hold her weight with one trembling arm, while with the other hand he slowly drew out the nail, which he put inside his vest. He then continued to haul her up, and soon could dimly see her form as she rose higher and still higher in to the less dense darkness, up there above, while the well resounded with echoes at the continued rain that dribbled down from her clothes and body into the water, resounded too with echoes at the labor of Hartwell's breath; with echoes even of the movement of the rope on the axle; he started with something like a fright at the dropping of one of her shoes when she was nearly up, it came with such a sudden hum, and then a splash, and long reverberation; at last he felt the check up there above and saw that she had reached the axle.

He now moved round the wall this way and that, the rope grasped with the double turn round the right hand, feeling with the left to see if he could find any projection such as are seen in some wells, suitable for him to make the rope fast to; but he found none, and lost little time in searching. He next groped with the left arm, till he found the old bucket, against which he had stumbled; it had an iron handle, and lifting it by this, but holding it still under the water, so that its weight remained almost nil, Hartwell contrived with his left hand to tie the rope to its handle; he then let Martha down two or three feet, whereupon the bucket rose full of water, above the surface, its weight now acting as a considerable counterpoise to Martha's weight, for it

was of large size; so that Hartwell could now climb up his own rope with less difficulty in holding Martha from slipping back down.

Grasping now his own old rope and Martha's new rope also in both hands, he put his foot in the hook at the end of the old rope, and began to climb — with a renewed misgiving in him as to whether his rope would bear him, though he now thought of this with a less chilly sense of peril than before, for use gives confidence. Up then, he went, hand over hand, each clutch of the hand grasping not one rope, but two — a -much more earnest business than his coming down, more jerky, more swayed, more doubtful as to its issue. The well was now full of sounds, hoots, omens; the bucket was slipping up and up, foot by foot, drawn up by Martha's weight in spite of his grinning effort to keep Martha steady, and he could hear the water in the bucket wash over its rim, as it swung to this side or to that anon, to splash in a mass into the water of the well, these sounds interrupting the steady watery sound of the wet which dribbled profusely down from his own clothes, and from Martha's; he could hear, also, the echoes of his own respiration, the echoes of his palms clapping in turn upon the ropes; the well seemed to listen to everything, to mock everything, and to be a gnome enjoying itself with banter at Hartwell's vain struggle to escape and reach that remote top; terribly remote it more and more seemed to him — a goal for a Hercules to reach, and then drop dead at. When he had got to the middle of the height, it looked no nearer than before; Martha had then slipped down several yards, and a sort of rage to reach the goal akin to madness by this time possessed Hartwell's whole being. With a wild face, with jerks and gasps, and staring eyes, and a gaping mouth, he struggled on.

But a little beyond the half-way point, the old rope parted at a thin place, and cut his labours short.

What now followed happened perhaps in two seconds, though it cannot be so rapidly described. Hartwell felt that his rope was gone — the instant splash into the water of the lower part was reported by a shout of the well — yet he felt that he was not all unsupported in empty space, though he was descending, for he was clutching still to Martha's rope with one hand, and her weight was counterbalancing his; if he had continued to hold on, slipping meanwhile down Martha's rope, he could have reached the bottom with perfect ease and safety; but he was instantly conscious — as his own rope snapped — that if he clung on to Martha's rope, his weight, and the weight of the bucket, would in some seconds drag her back up the axle, from which she had slipped down a few yards, and there crush in her chest, or break her back. At this half a thought in that wild moment, his fingers relaxed from her rope — and with a loud shout he fell back ward.

And at once up there above, at the axle, would have been audible, but for the watery uproar of Hartwell's splash, a humming which grew in vehemence: it was Martha coming down, and the haste of her rope running over the axle made the humming. But though she fell from the top, and Hartwell only from half-way, her fall was much less terrible than his: for she was counterbalanced by the weight of the bucket of water which, as she came down, moved up with increasing speed. The bucket was tied near the middle point of the rope's length, and happily she reached the water half a second before the bucket reached the axle — happily, for if the water had not broken the impetus of her fall, before the bucket struck the axle, the shock of the sudden stoppage of the bucket at the axle must have killed her; and as the water protected her, from the shock of the bucket's stoppage, so the bucket as well as the water protected her from the shock against the bottom of the well. For though the bucket's handle was torn away from it by its impact upon the axle, yet that temporary check must have lessened the

force of Martha's impact upon the bottom; however it was, she received little or no injury from that second fall.

And she had no sooner struck the bottom than she was up again, for Hartwell lifted her. He was still under the water, momentarily stunned, when she had come; she had come more or less upon him, and as he rose with a dislocated left shoulder, he brought her with him on his breast, uttering a bubbling sound of calamity and pain, as his head emerged from the drench.

He rose to his feet, but tottered, slipped, floundered, and then knelt with her against the wall, a long time, gasping, his eyes closed, his face leant against the mosses and weeds, which all down there covered the wall of the well.

While he knelt there, the facts of his situation passed dismally and wearily through his mind; there were only two hopes: that the bucket had been stopped at the axle, in which case, since the bucket was at about the middle point of the rope's length, both ends of the rope would still be at the bottom of the well; he could thus draw Martha up again into the pure air, and find or invent some means of making fast the end of her rope below while he slept; for he knew that he must soon sleep, and then slowly die of the narcotic poison contained in the air which he was breathing; it was true that the candle and match had burned in it, and that where a candle burns a man may breathe; but where the candle burns very dimly it is certain that the man will not breathe very long. He felt already that he would have sooner or later to give in and sleep, as Martha slept, and his hope of finding the other end of the rope was his only hope for her; for himself, he had no hope, except a rather faint one, that they might be discovered and rescued in time, either by Gloucester now, or by Dulaunay and Oswald later on when they returned from London. He had little hope that the women servants

would have the instinct to make an organised search because of the temporary absence of himself and Martha; and as to Gloucester, he was a rather slow minded fellow. Hartwell's hope in this direction, then must rest on the return of Oswald and Dulaunay; they would hear from a servant of his absence; might then very possibly come to the round point and would at once see his clothes by the well. They would be at Corton by 12 — two hours and a quarter; he believed that he might keep awake till then.

But, as we know, they did not return to Corton at all that night: Dulaunay's discovery of Hartwell's secret, and his drive to Julia to tell her all, had made him miss his train; Oswald had the shreds of Letty's letter, and instead of coming to Corton wrote a command to Hartwell to come to him. Instead of Dulaunay and Oswald, came Bobbie and his charming Rosie, but Bobbie, knowing nothing of the habits of life at Corton, of its seclusion and uneventfulness, did not see that the absence of Hartwell and Martha at that late hour necessarily meant danger; he supposed that they were paying some vague visit, and were "somewhere," while Sarah Gissing, on the contrary, was of opinion that they could not possibly be anywhere.

At the moment when Martha dropped back to the bottom of the well, at about fifteen minutes to ten, Gloucester had actually been seeking the missing pair with umbrellas, but had not come to the round point, where he could not suppose them to be, since he knew that in the round point there was no shelter from the rain which was falling; he had now returned to the Pavilion, had left the umbrellas there, had hurried to the stables to harness the horse, and without discovering the removal, by Hartwell, of the coil of rope from the stables, was off to Felmingham to bring home Oswald and Dulaunay.

Whatever hopes, therefore, Hartwell had in Gloucester, or in Oswald, and the Count, were not to be realised; his hope, also, of hoisting Martha up

again into the fresh air came to nothing: for, when he painfully lifted himself from his knees, and groped for the rope end knot attached to Martha, he could not find it, since, in fact, it was yards above his reach, Martha having dragged considerably more than half the rope's length over the axle with her; nor did Hartwell need to grope long to guess how things were, for his foot again struck on the bucket, which now again lay at the bottom of the well, and he understood that, since it was there, its handle must have been wrenched off at its impact on the axle, and the rope must then have run well beyond its middle point on the axle after Martha, taking the handle with it on one side of the axle, while the bucket fell down on the other side.

He thought, however, that there was still a possibility that the missing rope end might be within his reach, and with Martha at his bosom in his right arm, he moved blindly about, forging through the water which reached to his middle, feeling for the rope end with moans and groans. He did not yet know that, even if he found the missing rope end, he would be unable to draw up Martha a single yard, since his left arm hung useless at his side; but there was nothing else for him to do, except to seek and seek the rope with hopeless obstinacy throughout the small circle of his dungeon. He made no attempt to strike any of the marches under his vest, for he knew that they were soaked, and the permanence of the darkness of that place, where no ray came, soon had an inner darkening effect upon his mind also, quenching the mind's power to hope, or to picture to itself any reality save the well, and the water and slime in it, and the dark sounds that had their old home in it remote from light and the human world. The task of bearing Martha on his bosom, and searching in the dark for the rope end, seemed to have been born with him, while Gloucester, Oswald, Dulaunay, became to his mind like people known an age ago in another state of being, and the possibility

that they might come to rescue him and that burden which he bore like a doom on his breast seemed more and more visionary to him. The semi-circle of only half-darkness above, between the lid and the coping, ceased as the hours passed, to speak to him of nearness with the upper world and the one star visible in it to him not visible that dark night to people above, finally seemed as more remote from his hopes and his powers than the Pavilion, or Gloucester, or the coming of any human aid. He could do nothing but grope, and groan and stare upward. A tight feeling, as if his chest was tied up, oppressed him; at one time, for about half an hour, he became conscious of great agony in his left arm; but this gradually passed off as the narcotism of the carbonic gases worked upon his senses. He became very heavy, more and more disposed to give up and die.

But he endured till some time after Dulaunay and Oswald should have come, till some time after Bobbie and Rosie and Gloucester went nodding to their beds about midnight; and then he could sustain his own weight and Martha's no longer; he mumbled something, and abandoned himself to the charm of what was wooing him.

In a sullen way, to save himself and her from death from drowning (though he did not know at all if she were dead or alive), he pulled down the rope from the axle, and placed the bucket with its bottom upward against the wall; he then sat on the bucket, his back to the wall, his head and part of his chest above the water; and placing Martha between his legs with her feet on the well's bottom he tied her to his body round and round with many whorls of the rope, her face to the wall, and a considerable part of her body above the water; so that, so long as he did not fall off the bucket during sleep, she could not fall either, but if one drowned, both would drown. And this done, Hartwell leant his head on the mosses of the wall, and the well echoed his last waking sigh.

XXXI. THE SEARCH



THE NEXT MORNING at an early hour there was discussion in the servants' room at the Pavilion, between the women servants, when Sarah announced that the master and mistress had not come home; and at first the discussion was marked by mere surprise, at a casual event, till the most original of the three uttered a word of misgiving, whereupon it was not long but that misgiving proved catching like fire or fever, a fear that had been asleep in them all woke up, and finally they were telling to one another their certainty that something was wrong: which proves that truth is rank, and a gram of it once cast forth will grow.

"I'd better go and see if Gloucester has anything to say about it," suggested Sarah.

Gloucester was sweet on Sarah, so that her errand to the stables would combine something of coquetry with business; her mood at the moment was grave enough, but the heart is deceitful, and subtly mixed its own undercurrents in her motives. At once Sarah started off with her rather silly scare of flurry, calling back over her shoulder: "You had better take up the hot water to the young gentleman and lady, Ethel, and try to wake up that lazy French girl again." She ran to the kitchen door, where she met the milkman with his hand raised to ring, dropped to him the news that the master and mistress were missing, and ran up an alley in the pines toward the stables.

It was a bright Sunday morning, after the rainy night, everything, including the air itself, looking washed and fresh, and the smell in the pines

full of health and liveliness; but Sarah's anticipated pleasure in rousing Gloucester to give him startling news and saucy smiles was dashed by the appearance of Gloucester himself in the alley bearing a sack of fir cones for the kitchen fires.

"Master and mistress got home?" he asked at once, before Sarah could speak.

"That's just what I was coming to you about," she replied: "you ought to have searched for them when you got back from the station last night, for something dreadful has happened."

The consensus of opinion in the servants' room that something dreadful had happened was the same thing to her simple mind as a proof that it had happened.

"What's happened?" asked Gloucester, startled.

"Something dreadful," she repeated, with certainty.

"That's only what you think," said Gloucester; "I had a talk with young Mr Hartwell, who was in the drawing-room when I got back from the station last night, and we both agreed that there wasn't anything that could 'er happened" — and the mere agreement between Bobbie and himself was as good proof to Gloucester of the one view as the agreement in the servants' room was proof to Sarah of the opposite view.

"Girls always know too much," remarked Gloucester.

"As much as the men, I dare say," said Sarah.

"Yes, they think so," retorted Gloucester.

"You must have had your head full of them last night, I should think, or you would 'er done something," said Sarah.

"Well I don't know," replied Gloucester; "I might 'er had my head full of them. I looked up to your window to see if I could see any light—"

“I didn’t come here to hear any sauce,” said Sarah, not quite truly. “Something must be done at once.”

“I don’t know what to do, then. Nothing that I know of couldn’t ’er happened to them, not at Corton.”

“But it stands to reason they must be somewhere, Gloucester,” protested Sarah, though she had previously laid it down as a dogma that they could not be anywhere; “and they haven’t gone off the estate, or master would have had the carriage, Ethel says, so they wouldn’t be far, and ought to be looked for.”

Gloucester walked by her side with a puzzled brow; to seek them on the estate, two grown up people, where there were no wild beasts, except poachers, seemed to him childish; he could imagine nothing, save the possibility that for some queer reason they had slept at the Gissings’ or at Anderson’s cottage; but, as he and Sarah came in sight of the back of the Pavilion, they saw old Gissing, to whom, at that early hour, the day was already old, for he was always up and abroad with the lark; he was now trudging towards the kitchen, in his Sunday waistcoat, but without any jacket, for a good morrow to his daughter and the others, when Gloucester and Sarah came upon him, and told their tale of the missing two.

The old man thought it over deliberately, with his wrinkled, lax brow bent toward the ground, and the first thing that came into his head was the possibility that Oswald had done some evil to his brother.

“What does Mr Oswald and the French Count say about it,” he asked.

“They aren’t at home,” answered Gloucester, “They went to London yesterday, and last night when I took the trap for them, they hadn’t come back.”

Gissing thought it over again, and said: “Seen Anderson yet this morning?”

“Not yet,” was the answer.

“He’d likely be at that broad on the yon side of the ruin, Gloucester, you run and fetch him, and I’ll wait about here till you come.”

Gloucester hurried off, Sarah went into the house to wait on the young married couple, and Gissing paced up and down the alley with a look of care on his face till Gloucester returned with the sullen Anderson striding like a giant in his top-boots. The three men then held a council on the state of affairs, or rather, two of them, for Anderson contributed only grunts, and finally Gissing said:

“Anderson ‘ll search all in them woods to the west of the ruins: I’ll take them grouse and low ground shootings to the north; and you, Gloucester, will go all through the pines and the coppice wood, down beyond that frog pond to the shooting range; and we’ll all meet again on the lawn in front.”

The three men then separated, and spent three hours of search without their breakfast, each in his agreed part of the estate.

Bobbie and Rosie, meanwhile, breakfasted gaily in the dining room, inwardly enjoying the respite granted them by Hartwell’s absence with a childish zest in the present, and a child-like freedom from the troubles of the future, and of the past. Unused to the sorrows of life, they had no fear that any calamity had happened to Hartwell; Rosie occupied most of her morning in going over the old house, admiring its shabby antiquities, and feeling the charm of its romantic situation there in the heart of the forest.

Bobbie was looking out upon the portico near ten, when he saw Steve Anderson come and take his stand near the statue of Pan on the lawn, then in some minutes Gloucester, and finally Gissing; he saw them lay their heads together, and understanding that they had returned from the search for Hartwell, hurried out to join them, leaving Rosie in vague misery.

When he came up to the men, he heard Anderson saying, for the third time:

“I’ll swear they aren’t anywhere down there.”

“No, and they aren’t in the pines neither,” said Gloucester.

Gissing said nothing; the old man’s face was the very expression of care; and at no time was he a waster of words.

“Searched in the Round Point?” asked Gissing of Gloucester presently.

“I looked into it,” replied Gloucester: “they’d not be there, you know.”

Gissing looked hard at him, and after a minute said:

“Wait you here till I come back.” He trudged away down the forest path, and turned into an alley to the right, towards the Round Point: for an instinct of the truth had been for three hours ripening in the old fellow’s mind, and now had ripened into a thought.

XXXII. HARTWELL GOES UNDER



BOBBIE, GLOUCESTER, AND Anderson waited Gissing's return for about fifteen minutes, wondering whither he had gone, dropping occasional remarks and guesses. The sun was now high and bright, with few clouds in the sky, and though winter was near there were still many of the sounds made by birds and wildfowl in the woods.

Then a running figure was seen in the shadow down the path, beckoning, while still far off, and it was Gissing. When they hastened to meet, him, they saw him pale with that touching pallor of the flesh of an agitated old man. He gave no explanation, but said hurriedly:

"Gloucester, you run and put the horse in the trap, make paces for Felmingham, and fetch the doctor; tell him it may be a case o' drowning; you, Anderson, and the young master, go with Gloucester to the stables, and bring, between you, to the Round Point, them two ladders, and all the rope you can find. Look sharp, now, I'll be at the Round Point when you come."

The other three ran off behind the house, toward the stables, while Gissing retraced his steps down the path; in the alley to the right he unswung the door of an old hut, and took it with him; when Bobbie and Anderson ran down the footpath in the pines to the Round Point with the ladder and rope ends, they found Gissing bent down over the coping, with a lost stare into the depths, and on the coping they saw Hartwell's clothes, which the ferns and grasses had hidden from Gloucester's running glance earlier in the morning.

The two ladders were lashed together, and lowered into the well; but they did not reach the bottom; and it was necessary to lower them with a rope, the other end of which was then made fast to the nearest, of the pines. Few were the words spoken; Bobbie's face had lost its roses, and was stamped with a painful distress; anon Anderson growled to himself; Gissing seemed stricken dumb, and when he wished anything done, made signs with his hand. Sweat-drops stood on the old man's white brow, as he stripped off his Sunday things, put his box of matches between his teeth, stepped over the well, slid down the rope to the ladder, and thence went down to the bottom.

He found Hartwell sitting just as he had set himself on the bucket many hours before, and Martha lashed to him with her face to the wall; Gissing struck a match, peered at their faces, and cast up his eyes to heaven. There was some blood in the water.

He quickly found the rope end, unwound the rope from them, and taking Martha with the rope under her arms to the foot of the ladder, laid her on it, and, leaving her there, ran up with the other rope end, which he threw to Anderson from the ladder head, calling out: "When yon feel me jerk the rope, then pull away."

He then went down again, placed Martha with her back to the wall, and jerked the rope; Anderson and Bobbie pulled above, and Martha went up, raining her wet into the well.

Gissing next supported Hartwell in his arms, waited till the rope came back, and getting the loop under his arms, jerked the rope. As Hartwell, too, went up, but more slowly than Martha, the old man accompanied him all the way on the ladder, step by step, his eyes fixed loweringly on that pathetic figure, once so vigorous and masterful, but now so helpless, so drenched in disaster, and apparently in death.

At the top the faces of Hartwell and Martha were seen to be of a fixed expression, with a bluish tinge in their pallor; there they lay, Martha on the door in the grass, Hartwell on the coping with some froth on his white lips, both with the look of the drowned.

Not a word was spoken now, Gissing signed to Anderson and Bobbie to take up Martha, and to Anderson to help him take Hartwell upon his own back, though Anderson would have been far better able to carry all that weight than the old man, and it would have been better to carry Martha on the back, and Hartwell on the door: but Gissing arranged it otherwise. They then set off, Gissing bent under his burden in front, the others bearing Martha on the door behind. As they drew near the Pavilion, Bobbie wanted desperately to put down the door a minute, in order to run and get Rosie shut away from the terrible sight, but he could not venture to do this, and when they came to the lawn, Rosie, who was looking out, tearfully for Bobbie, saw the scene of tragedy slowly coming, and while they were tramping by the corridor stairs, she caught a glimpse of the two blue faces, and nearly fainted. By this time the women servants had got a scent of the horror, by seeing Gloucester dash off in his trap for the doctor, and they were in the corridor. One of them relieved the winded Bobbie of his end of the door at the foot, of the stairs, but Gissing bore his burden to the very couch in Hartwell's room, where he deposited him, and then dropped into a chair, panting painfully.

Martha meantime, was taken to her own room; brandy was poured between the teeth of both, and they were in bed in dry clothes before Gloucester arrived at noon with the doctor.

The doctor told Bobbie that Martha would not live, but that Hartwell would do well, though his arm was seriously injured; little could be done till the nurses, for whom he had sent from Felmingham, should arrive. He

himself waited at the Pavilion most of the day, Gloucester meanwhile taking journeys to bring the objects required by the doctor, and in the afternoon to bring the nurses. Bobbie and Gissing sat with Hartwell, while Sarah and another servant was with Martha. Rosie was below, looking out in low spirits through one of the French windows of the drawing-room, occasionally catching a sight of the Parisienne, Ernestine, enjoying the beauties of nature down an avenue of the forest. Near three, Rosie was called to a tardy lunch. In crossing a passage, she saw Bobbie and the doctor coming down the stairs, lingered till the doctor went into the dining-room, and retaining Bobbie outside asked him in a low voice: "How are they Bobbie?"

"Looking better — You oughtn't to have peeped, you know, Rosie."

"But, Bobbie, I have something to tell you: you mustn't laugh — promise me first that you won't laugh, if I am wrong."

"Well, I promise."

"Bobbie, you promised not to laugh," replied Rosie, "but when I peeped and saw them, I seemed to recognise them both; she looked something like my mother, and I'm sure he is the image of my stepfather, for I remember him very well — and the same name, too, 'Drayton.'"

Bobbie, after staring at her a moment, said: "That seems odd."

"I am sure that there's a great resemblance," said Rosie.

"It must be some coincidence, I suppose," said Bobbie. "My guardian has only lately married, apparently, so he couldn't very well have been your stepfather five years ago; and yet — by Jove, if it were only true! No, it is only some coincidence. Come, have some lunch."

The coincidence, however, haunted the young couple that night, and was much discussed between them; accordingly, the next afternoon, three hours after Martha had opened her eyes, Bobbie let Rosie go into Martha's room:

for just the opposite of what the doctor had foretold came true, since Martha recovered herself more quickly than Hartwell, the fact being that Hartwell was a very strong, still breather, so that during the hours in the well he had breathed more of the poisonous air, and far more deeply, than the worthy Martha; hence, by four o'clock on the Monday afternoon, Martha had Rosie locked in her arms, but it was not till after five that Hartwell became conscious.

Hartwell lay still for some time, till, turning his head a little, with a twinkle in his eye he saw Bobbie, who was reading a book by the bedside; in a far corner, looking down at the floor, sat the old Gissing; a nurse was at the dressing-table, tidying. So far Bobbie had heard nothing of how Rosie had fared in Martha's room, which was some distance away: for Rosie was lying in bed with her mother; who, all taken up with the gladsome fact of her daughter's presence, would not let Rosie depart in order to call and exhibit Bobbie to her; and presently Bobbie, looking up, beheld the knowing twinkle in Hartwell's eye.

"Well. Bobbie, is that you?" asked Hartwell.

"I am glad to see you so well, sir," said Bobbie, springing up.

"What about my wife?"

"She has recovered consciousness, sir, and is doing very well.",

"Excellent. When, then, were we brought up out of the well?"

"About 11 o'clock yesterday morning, sir. This is Monday evening."

"Not till 11 in the morning? Who discovered us in the well?"

"Gissing, sir."

Hartwell's eye turned and dwelt with a grave meaning in it upon Gissing in his corner, who made a sudden, glad gesture of greeting with his arm toward the bed.

"And Martha is really doing well?"

“Yes, sir.”

“What became of you, Bobbie?”

“I was in Paris, sir.”

“Kidnapped, my friend? Imprisoned?”

“No, sir.”

“Why, then, did you not write to me?”

“It is rather a long; story, sir. I know that I was wrong, but perhaps if we wait until you are a little stronger—”

“No, tell me now.”

“The fact is, sir—”

“That’s a man: don’t be afraid.”

“I was married, sir.”

“Ah! married! that solution never struck me. Of course, that was it. I also — I also got married, Bobbie.” And in these last words was, a sorrow and reproach which wounded the young man, though he did not understand why.

“I do hope that you will be able to forgive me, sir,” said Bobbie, earnestly. “I feel terribly that I have been undutiful and a coward. I made you a promise which I have not kept; but in looking for the girl of your choice, I found my wife, if one may say so; and I was terribly tempted to disobey you by the love—”

“Say nothing, my friend,” said Hartwell. “Your existence was probably not allotted you with the sole design of accomplishing my wishes, and accordingly you do nothing of the kind. You have done as your father before you did, married unadvisedly in your youth, and as you have sown, so you will reap.”

“I have hoped that you will be able to forgive me, sir. I think if you only saw—”

“You have displeased and ill-used me, sir, more than you dream. I had pledged my word that you should marry her whom I sent you to seek; this marriage of yours places me in a doubly false position; and at one period of my life — take my word for it — you should have bitterly experienced my resentment. A letter from you some weeks ago might have — well! but what has to be will be. You are forgiven, if your companion proves to be as healthy in mind as she seems to be in body.”

“You are awfully good and kind, sir, really,” said Bobbie, warmly pressing his father’s hand with a light feeling that the ordeal was nearly over.

“I am sure that you will be fond of her, sir: she is quite as healthy in mind as you seem to know that she is in body.”

“I know from one of her red and crisp hairs, which you carry about on your person, my friend. I will see your agreeable companion, if you will bring her. First, go to Martha with my compliments, and ask her how she does.”

Bobbie turned to go, but before he had made a step, one of the two doors of the room opened, and in the opening appeared Martha, looking very weak and white, with a dressing gown thrown round her, supported by Rosie and Sarah Gissing, and anxiously followed by a nurse. Martha was all sighs, and yet was smiling. Hartwell sat up on his elbow, considering her and Rosie with a vivacious eye, while Bobbie ran to them, brought Martha, and placed her in the easy chair, in which he had been sitting by Hartwell’s bedside.

“Well, James,” sighed Martha— “Rosie, is this the young man?”

“Yes, mamma,” answered Rosie, her eyes fixed upon Hartwell with a rather scared and stand-offish expression, even though she now knew that it must have been herself whom Bobbie had been sent to seek; but she had

acquired the habit of thinking of Hartwell with awe ever since her marriage, and moreover now saw in him the terrible stepfather who had separated her from her mother, and had shut her away from the world five years ago.

As for Hartwell, when he heard Martha say “Rosie,” and Rosie say “Mamma,” he understood all, that Bobbie had unknowingly married the girl whom he had been sent to look for; and at once a feeling of lightness and warm happiness, which communicated itself to every heart, became his mood. He put out his hand and shook Rosie’s, saying, “I am glad to see you,” while Rosie smiled and blushed like a fresh rose.

The good Martha was sighing as much for joy as for her feebleness, saying incoherently: “Well, he seems a nice young man — Why don’t you come and kiss your mother, boy? Look at the pair of them! People say that marriages are made in Heaven — but there’s no love like a mother’s love. James, why ever didn’t you tell me they were married!”

“I wished to surprise you, Martha,” said the worthy and ever artful Hartwell, with a benign and dancing eye.

“My goodness, that little girl, who would have believed it?” sighed Martha: “Can you see how it is with her, James? It’s a pair of them, my goodness; I only hope that that young man is legally married to her. I hardly know her, she’s that grown, and such a pretty girl she’s got, too.

“Look at her colour, and her eyes, the image of Harper’s, and red hair like his; it used to be as black as mine when she was a child. Boy, why don’t you say something to your mother, and let me hear you talk? He really is a very nice young man. She couldn’t have done much better. Well, everything turns out for the best, after all. I never felt so strange and happy as to-day, like my first find second wedding days, the third don’t count, for though I’ve been married thrice, I’ve only had two husbands — enough to make anybody laugh—”

Martha laughed droopingly and faintingly; she was in a species of happy distraction and flightiness of mind, almost, resembling hysteria.

“Well, I am glad to see you happy, Martha,” said Hartwell, “and your happiness makes me happy also. Rosie, are you glad to have found your mother?”

“Oh yes, papa, thank you,” said Rosie with a curtsy.

“Bobbie, I congratulate you on having found a charming wife and an excellent mother. Let me now see you embrace your mother.”

“I’m charmed, sir, I’m sure,” said Bobbie, with his little superior smile, and kissed Martha on each cheek.

Martha now began to cry for joy, saying:

“Oh, yes, it’s good of you, James give the devil his due, after all. You didn’t act well by me, locking me up in that tower five long years, and taking the child away. No one could say that you did, James; but still, give the devil his due, you’ve made up for it now; oh, yes, one must say that much for you, James.”

“I have done nothing,” said Hartwell, frankly, now, “the young man will tell you that it is all a happy chance—”

“Oh no, it isn’t,” answered Martha, blindly: “you’ve given her back to me, and married her to the fairy prince, as you said you would. I never believed that you would, because I know that you are always such a one for saying what you don’t mean. But you’ve done it right enough; and I daresay you’ve thought hard of me for nagging at you when you meant all the time to do it. Oh, yes, there’s no saying but what you’ve acted well by me lately. I know what you did in going down that well, after me, and nearly getting drowned your self; for Rosie has told me; and you look about as pale and weak as I do, I’m sure—”

“I couldn’t help myself—” began Hartwell.

“Oh yes, you could,” drawled the worthy and excellent Martha. “It’s a wonder to me that you didn’t leave my poor old bones down there, so as to marry that other tall woman, got up like a princess, who came to see you that night, for I shouldn’t be surprised if you have one of those sort of women in your eye all the time. But you thought more of your old woman, than of all the lot of them, when she was in danger, didn’t you; and risked your life, too — Oh, no, I’ve got to kiss you for that, James.”

Martha at last gave to Hartwell her first kiss since he had released her from the tower, lifting herself slowly on the arms of the easy chair, bending over and laying her lips upon his — a kiss so sweet to Hartwell that his eyes closed with rapture.

But Martha had not much room in her mind for any of the many emotions which thronged in it that day, except for her love of Rosie, her pride in her, and that sense of novelty and excitement with which one receives a fortune or a rich present. She turned from the bed to receive a cordial, which one of the nurses had brought, and drank it, looking up into the charming face of Rosie, with her arms around her; while Rosie looked at Hartwell — her awe now partly gone, and smiled to him, and Hartwell returned her smile with a beaming eye.

“And as to the Count and Oswald?” asked Hartwell, “where are they, Bobbie?”

“They went to London on Saturday, I am told,” answered Bobbie, “and haven’t come back yet.”

“That is odd; haven’t they written?”

“They may have: some letters came this morning.”

Among those letters was one from Oswald, commanding Hartwell to be at Oswald’s rooms in London that (Monday) afternoon at three; but as Bobbie made a movement to go and got the letters, Hartwell said, “well,

never mind, we shall see later,” for at that moment Rosie was at his head with a brush in her hand, about to brush his rumpled hair, and Hartwell took her little hand and kissed it, saying at the same time to Bobbie, “All’s well that ends well.”

“I’m charmed, sir, I’m sure, to have so exactly carried out your wishes,” said Bobbie, with his little smile of self-approval. “Saul went out to seek his father’s asses, sir, and—”

“And became one of them, Bobbie, though he found a kingdom. Let nothing be said, my friend — Well, this is charming to have my hair brushed by such interesting hands.” Hartwell looked up at Rosie, with soft eyes, and she smiled with him. “But you were a naughty girl to run away; I heard all from Mary Seward, and was cross with you.”

“It was he who carried me away,” answered Rosie, slyly, all blushes and lowered lids, indicating Bobbie with the brush handle.

“Ah, ah, it was he; let the blame be with him, then. But, tell me, were you, on the whole, moderately happy with Miss Seward?”

“Yes, papa, only I was lonely sometimes. I wanted mamma.”

“I see all; but you are to believe that if it were to do again, I should not do it, but should keep you by my side, to protect and cherish you.”

“Yes, papa. It is all right now, since you sent Bobbie for me in the end. But why did you tell him, papa, that I had black hair, and that my name was Drayton?”

“You had black hair at one time,” said Hartwell, for he had just heard Martha say so, “and as for the name, let nothing be said; you can readily conceive that since I now consider you my own dear daughter, you were no longer Harper to me, but Drayton.”

This equivocal answer fully satisfied the mind of Rosie and of all, for they were all in that mental state in which the present alone seems of

importance, and whatever points remained mysterious to any of them, were put in the background as of little moment in the face of their actual happiness.

Martha meanwhile was plying Bobbie with questions as to the place and date of his marriage, as to the strangeness of its privacy, and of his long absence from Corton, or praising his good looks and sprightly air, or giving vent to proverbs such as that there is no love like a mother's love, and that marriages are made in Heaven; then she turned to Hartwell, laying her cheek affectionately on his right hand (the left was in a sling), causing Hartwell's eyes to soften; and immediately afterwards, in her happy restlessness of mind, she was ogling with mock propriety at Rosie's condition, pretending to be scandalised that that little child, who was only so high a short time ago, should think of being a mother.

In the midst of all this, Martha's nurse came interposing with the demand that Martha should return to bed. Martha protested, but Hartwell said: "Go, Martha, and I will rejoin you presently in your room." Whereupon Martha was lifted by Bobbie and accompanied out by Rosie, who at the door, turned to give a parting smile to Hartwell, for between her and him there had already sprung up a secret understanding of amity and love.

When they were gone, Hartwell lay on his bed with closed eyes, drawing together the frown of his brow with his fingers, feeling that he had never been half so purely and deeply happy as in that hour; for as it were, a taste of sweet waters was in his breast, and a sound of that rhythm, which leaves the creation in a dancing march; he called the old Gissing to him, after some minutes, and with out saying anything, held the countryman's hand in his.

While he was doing this, there was a tap at that door of his bedroom' which opened into his little laboratory and study, and in came Dulaunay, with excited eyes, his hat on his head, and a hand-camera in his hand, for,

fresh from London, he had just heard below, for the first time, the story of Hartwell's and Martha's night in the well. Hartwell called out, "Ah, Count, here we are, you see," and Dulaunay, going to the bed, took the sick man's hand with a gaze of new interest in the "Draytong" who was no longer "Draytong" to him, new interest, reverence and curiosity.

"I have heard — But, *mon Dieu!* you have the pale air!" breathed the Count; "is the arm, then, broken, sir?"

"Is the arm broken, nurse?" asked Hartwell.

"Only dislocated at the shoulder, sir; it will be all right in a few days," answered the nurse.

"I am conscious of no pain," said Hartwell: "I am well! I am strong!"

"How many hours, for example, were you there — down in that well," asked Dulaunay.

"Over twelve, my friend. If you had come back, as you promised, you would have drawn me out."

"Yes, I avow my fault, but how could I have been able to divine that which would arrive? In that which I did, my intention was good. But as to the excellent Martha?"

"She goes well also."

"It is very well. But that which astonishes me is your audacity to descend that well alone. I can feel the terror of it in my nerves — phrrrrr. And it was Martha that you went to seek?"

"My wife, Count."

"Precisely sir, your wife."

The excellent Count said no more, but taking off his cap laid his lips on Hartwell's hand.

"And as to the two young married!" he cried, with fresh animation when this deep act of homage was over; "have you then seen them?"

“Yes, I have seen them,” said Hartwell, smiling.

“Oh, la, la, have you been, then, angry?”

“No, I have been content. The lady whom Bobbie has married is the same whom I sent him and you to look for in Gloucestershire.”

“Not possible!”

“Yes, thank God.”

The Count gave vent to a buffoon laugh, crying out:

“Oh, la, la, it is even the history of Oedipus. He has, then, married, rightly, by mistake, the young Bobbie. Here is that which it is to be tricked by the destiny. He wished to play the prodigal, and finds himself, probably with disgust, the good son. Miss Scatchett told me in London — By the way, “Draytong”, have you received the envelope with the shreds of paper from Oswald?”

At this question Hartwell’s eyebrows lifted.

“You don’t mean that you have given them to Oswald?” he asked, struck by a pang of vague apprehension.

“But yes,” answered the Count. “I was pressed to arrive somewhere Sunday night, and gave the envelope to Oswald that he might bring it to you, that which he undertook to do; but when I returned to Addison-road more late, Miss Scatchett said me, to my astonishment, that Oswald had not gone down to Corton, but had the intention to sleep in London. Yesterday, therefore, I rendered myself at Oswald’s apartment in order to ask him why he had not brought the envelope, since I knew that you wished to receive it at once, but Oswald was not at home; this morning again I went to see him, and again he was not at home—”

“Well, let us hope that the matter may not prove serious, Count.”

“How? Do those shreds contain anything of secret, then?”

“I have no idea what they contain,” said Hartwell. “I only know that by this time Oswald has read them, and that that may mean mischief.”

“Oh, my head of magpie!” exclaimed Dulaunay in despair. “What vexing circumstances. How could I have been able to be so stupid, so—”

“Well never mind. Perhaps it is not of importance,” said Hartwell. “Oswald may even have sent the shreds, for I have not yet seen my letters to-day. You might look for me, Count, on my desk in the study, and see if there is anything in Oswald’s writing, also any Birmingham letters about my electrical machine, to be tested to-morrow. Bring those, and leave the rest.”

Dulaunay hurried into the next room, but immediately returned, saying that there was no letters, for they had not been put, as usual, on Hartwell’s desk that morning, but handed to Bobbie, who had put them somewhere else.

“Well, never mind; another time,” said Hartwell, who was too happy in Martha’s happiness to be greatly troubled by vague possibilities. “I have to go to Martha’s room, where I hope you will join us all, Count, after dinner.”

By this time it was six o’clock, and the lamp was alight. Dulaunay helped Hartwell to rise and dress, conducted his rather feeble steps to Martha’s room, was presented to the blushing Rosie, and felicitated everyone. Then those that were well went down to dinner, while Hartwell remained by Martha’s bedside, till later on all reassembled to spend the evening in Martha’s room, an old-fashioned apartment looking by two windows upon the lawn and upon the forest, lighted by candles in sconces, and panelled in old brown oak. Martha wished for whist, so a small table was drawn to her bedside, where she and Hartwell played against Bobbie and Dulaunay, while Rosie sat with her head on Bobbie’s shoulder, and one of her hands in Martha’s. The Count acted the wild boy, with a touch of the

buffoon for Rosie's benefit, telling droll stories, which when they tended to become too French were checked by a glance of Hartwell's happy but doubtful eye, while Rosie had only to lift her eyes to meet the Count's musing gaze of admiration. The blinds were drawn, and a bright fire burned in the grate, for outside a wintry moaning of the wind was heard. In a far corner of the room sat the dumb Barnes, who had been brought upstairs after dinner to see Hartwell, and had remained there ever since without a movement, watching the family party at their game.

Martha for the first time played loosely, and lost a rubber. "I can't believe my eyes," she said constantly. "Here have I been expecting to see the same little girl that I lost five years ago, and look at her now. Why, the boy and girl ought to be at school instead of thinking of such things.

"No," said Hartwell, who approved of early marriages, "they have done well."

"They are even in an excellent school," said the Count, "in which they are the teachers one of the other. Bobbie, my friend, my compliments. Your taste is even exquisite, if madame will permit me to say it. I raise my glass to you both."

The Count clinked his glass with Bobbie's and Rosie's, then with Hartwell's and Martha's and all round the glasses clinked. On the table were the old decanters, with loose gold rings round their necks marked Port and Sherry, together with cake and biscuits.

"Martha, I drink to your excellent health," said Hartwell with a lifted glass.

"Thank you, James," replied Martha, "and I drink to yours, too, James."

"Shall we always live here, and never go away anywhere, or be separated?" asked Rosie.

"Would you like that?" asked Hartwell, gently.

“Oh, I should, papa,” cried Rosie, “for I do so like Corton. I never dreamt that there could be such a nice old place, looking just like a fairy place. I hope that we shall be always here, and just like this every night, you and mamma, and Bobbie and Monsieur le Comte and I, and no one else. Bobbie, listen to the sound of the wind in the woods.”

“You shall be well pleased,” said Hartwell. “Here we will stay, and you shall be the young Queen of Corton, and we all your court, for I see that you are fully worthy to be our Queen, and our darling also.”

Bobbie’s eyes rested a moment on his guardian’s face with a grateful and reverent look.

“James, don’t fill the child’s mind with flattery and fancies,” said Martha. “You are going to spoil her; I can see it already. I daresay the child knows how sweet and pretty she is as it is, without any telling. Just look at her!”

While Martha was saying this, Dulaunay was leaning over the table towards his partner, Bobbie, asking in a low voice, “Do you know, by chance, where is Marston House? Somewhere in Norfolk—”

“Someone told me yesterday that it is about six miles from here,” answered Bobbie. “Are you going to see Julia there?”

“Sh-h-h,” went the Count, for Martha had just finished occupying the attention of Hartwell, who, however, had heard the whispered word Julia, and lowered his eyes awhile.

The lateness of the sitting-up that night was without precedent at Corton. Dulaunay sang the Toreador’s song without any accompaniment, and Rosie, in a frail, sweet voice that trembled, sang “La Bondeuse,” in French. Several times the glasses clinked together all round. Even to Dulaunay the charm of the domestic pleasantness and peace in which he found himself communicated itself.

Between all of them were continually interchanged fond glances, smiles full of gentle meanings, pressure and touches of the hands, and words of kindness and affection. Martha saw her James in a milder light, with forgiveness and remorse for having so long misunderstood his repentance and change of heart toward her, while upon Rosie and Bobbie she looked with the fullest satisfaction of her maternal yearnings. Hartwell, for his part, felt a pious joy at Martha's friendship for him, which almost repaid him for all the sacrifices that had at last won him it. He could easily forgive Bobbie the pain and anxiety which Bobbie had caused him, seeing that the young man's escapade had turned out so fortunately; while, as to Rosie, every hour that passed seemed to water and endear the happy understanding which had sprung up between Hartwell and the charming girl.

The two nurses at last combined to interpose, and put an end to the family reunion.

When Hartwell, after saying goodnight, had reached the beginning of the corridor leading to his chamber, Rosie ran after him, and embraced him there in the dark with an upturned face, for all her fear of him had now turned into a hearty and sweet familiarity.

"My dear one," murmured Hartwell, as he strained her to him with his right arm, and laid a kiss on her forehead.

The next (Tuesday) morning, every one met everyone else at breakfast, for the new happiness had given to Martha new life, and the night in the well was already being forgotten; after breakfast the family went out, Martha among them, to the glade in the pine, wood where the well is, that all might look down into the dark depths, and enjoy a shudder at the contemplation of what had been, and of what might have been.

They were all still there at half-past eleven in the forenoon, when the Count proposed to photograph them in a family group, for the excellent and

erratic Frenchman had lately taken up photography as a hobby. His proposal was hailed with delight by Rosie and Martha, and Dulaunay ran away toward the pavilion for his camera, plates, cloth, and tripod. It was a bright November day, a little less than five years since Hartwell had taken upon himself the name of Drayton; the air was rather crisp, and masses of cloud in the sky betokened rain before very long; but still the day was sunshiny and pleasant. Dulaunay returned with his apparatus, planted the tripod amid the fern, and placed the party on the coping of the well; Hartwell sat with his arm round Rosie's waist, and Rosie's head on his shoulder; Bobbie, smiling the little smile with which he scribbled his smart elegiacs, held Martha's hand, and waited. The worthy and excellent Count, who was as busy and flushed as though the fate of kingdoms hung upon the outcome, dived under his cloth, re-emerged, called out directions, pleaded with silent motions of the palm, and subsided again under his cloth; he had just cried out: "Now, rest tranquil, all!" and was about to let fly his catch, when Oswald suddenly appeared on the scene within the scope of the camera, spoiling everything.

Oswald had just arrived from London. He looked at all the members of the group, and without a word or gesture of greeting to anyone, to the alarm of all he said to Hartwell:

"James, I wish to speak to you at once."

Hartwell was about to tell Dulaunay to finish taking the photograph, but a second glance at Oswald's face, which was as pale as death, caused him to change his mind; he pronounced the words: "I come," rose, said to the ladies, "You will excuse me," and went after Oswald, who had turned again into the alley leading to the road in the forest, which runs past the lawn before the pavilion.

Up to this moment Hartwell had not read his Monday's letters, nor those of that (Tuesday) morning, he was so preoccupied with the new charms of family and home-life which had just arisen for him like a little oasis in his desert; he was intending to read the letters after lunch in his study, where he meant also to await the telegram from Birmingham, which was to tell him the result of the trial of his electrical machine. He had not therefore seen Oswald's letter commanding him to go to London to meet Oswald; but judging from Oswald's face and manner, and knowing that Oswald held those shreds of whose contents Hartwell knew nothing, save that they must be very important, Hartwell had a foreboding of calamity, as he followed Oswald through the forest.

Oswald walked some five or six yards in advance, never looking behind. His limp seemed to be accentuated that morning: he leant markedly on his stick; his hat was tilted forward on his forehead. Hartwell came behind, he too limping a little (on account of the nail which had pierced his foot in the well), in a long silk jacket and a broad hat, his left arm in its sling. The alarm uppermost in his mind was that in some unguessable way the shreds had revealed to Oswald that Hartwell was not Drayton: but he was about to find that the reality was even worse than this.

They passed across the lawn into the pavilion. Oswald turned into the drawing room; but Hartwell, looking in after him, said, "Come up to my study," and went up the main stairs. Oswald followed to the back of the house. In the little study, or laboratory, Hartwell sat on the chair before the desk, which was the only one there, pushed up his hat from his brow, and said: "Now, Oswald."

Oswald limped twice through the room before answering; in fact, he could hardly speak at first, his breath was so short. He had come to the great moment of his life, and it was too much for Oswald. The previous night he

had written a second letter to “James,” ordering “James” to come to London; but early that morning he had been unable to bear his impatience any longer, and had taken a train for Norfolk; and now that he was here, he could hardly command his breath sufficiently to speak; the mounting of the stairs had had upon him the effect of the climbing of an Alp; his chest heaved; his face for a minute or two was the picture of agitation.

“That’s a man,” said Hartwell, encouragingly, “let us hear.”

“I wrote you,” panted Oswald, “why did you not come?”

“I have been ill; you see my arm in the sling; I have not seen your letter,” replied Hartwell.

“Oh, well, worse luck for you: you have kept me waiting and looking out; you have made me suffer” — and as Oswald said this, a little colour returned to his face, he got some breath, and his agitation at the presence of Hartwell’s personality began to change rapidly into a mood of fierceness and tyranny.

“I am sorry,” said Hartwell, to have made you suffer. But what is the matter?”

“You know: the Frenchman has told you that I have Letty Barnes’ letter.”

Hartwell’s mind was clear, for his pulses continued to beat quietly: and he at once concluded that this “Letty Barnes” was the girl with whom Drayton had stayed at the Gissings’, as Gissing had told him; that Drayton may have murdered her; that she must have been Barnes’ daughter; and that this explained Barnes’ old mania for taking his life; but he said, in order to be sure:

“Who is this Letty Barnes?”

Oswald put his hand to his breast pocket, drew out Letty’s old photograph, which he had one day stolen from an album at the Anchor Inn,

five years before, and held it some distance from Hartwell's eyes, with a cruel smile, saying: "I think you know her, James?"

"Letty 'Barton!'" breathed Hartwell, remembering with a pang all his reasonings about the murder of that girl.

"You have yourself told me, and proved to me, all the facts about the murder which are necessary to hang you," said Oswald; "all that was needed was some proof that you were acquainted with her on the night when you stopped at the 'Anchor' in your motor car, and her letter proves that you were then her lover. You haven't a leg to stand on. Why didn't you burn those shreds long ago, James? What a fool you are, after all! Oh, you are a fool — you are, you know, you are. Writing pamphlets on evolution! turning man-of-science, eh? adopting strange boys? but what a fool you are! Will you ever put me into any more prisons again, James? — for doing nothing? Couldn't you see how rash and blind that was? Didn't you understand that my day would come? that though I might wait for years, yet I never, never fail in the end? and that when I strike I always strike dead! Ah, you are a fool!"

Oswald limped about striking the floor with his stick, beside himself in a rage of wounded self-love, as he pronounced this speech; all his pallor was gone, and his face was now flushed, though even so, he hardly looked like one who "always strikes dead." As for Hartwell, his lip trembled a little; with a rapid mind he had already reviewed the facts of the situation, and, without having any need to read Letty's letter, he understood that the net of proof was complete about him, that at last the evil doings of Drayton had brought him into a fix from which there was hardly any way of escape: for, from Oswald's intense words, he saw that Oswald was in a state of mind morbidly inflamed, jealous, and spiteful, and would not spare. Hartwell's shoulders seemed to bend lower under this sudden infliction of fate; he

smiled steadily, mincingly, as usual, but with paler lips; his eye wandered to the side of the room, at which the research apparatus stood: all that was over for him now; he thought of the dear ones whom he had left in the glade of the pinewood: that was over, too; in a singular way he saw the complete vision of his history so far, what he had done, what he had suffered, the course in which his life had been destined to run, and had run; and this was the end. He stood confronted with the gallows.

“So, Oswald, you accuse me of the murder of Letty Barnes?” he said, quietly.

“You are merely a poor fool,” answered Oswald, with a laugh, revelling in this abuse, in this word “fool,” as men sometimes rush in and trample with a profane joy on what they have long been forced to revere, and revelling all the more in it, because he suspected that Hartwell considered him to be the very thing which he called Hartwell, and that Hartwell’s silent opinion was worth something, whereas what he himself loudly insisted on was worth nothing. “You are merely a poor fool; why that shred with the ‘cruel brute’ I got out of a coat that you gave me yourself, and all that about a struggle for a letter and the rest might never have been discovered, if you hadn’t blabbed it.”

“Well, then, I have been a poor fool, as you say, not only in respect of this matter, but in others, in all others, perhaps—” Hartwell said this with a bowed head, and an almost elderly meekness and resignation.

“You put me into prison, James,” said Oswald, smiling: “was that sweet to you? Did you forget that I was your brother? That first night in the cell I felt sure that you would do something the next day to get me out; but you stuck to it, Jimmy; even the magistrate tried to turn you; everybody felt pity for me; only you, who alone knew that I was innocent, were hard. Are you

sorry, now, Jimmy? Do you bitterly repent now? Down to your knees, you beast! Too late! Too late!”

Oswald’s fist suddenly lifted to strike, while Hartwell held his head away from the blow with winking eyes; but it did not descend; Oswald turned and limped about the room, all breathless again.

“Do not any more embitter yourself by such reflections, Oswald, than you are already bitter,” said Hartwell: “I understand your resentment, and consider it just. Tell me now how you intend me to expiate my transgressions.”

“You wrote a letter to the papers, clearing me,” said Oswald; “Magee says that you got my sentence shortened by two weeks. Yes, you did that. For that I don’t mind letting you live; and if you have any cash here at Corton you may keep that much. All else you will hand over to me to-day, all scrip, title deeds, banking accounts, ownerships, and policies. I have stamps with me for the conveyance and authorisations; and you are not to leave this room without me, or send any letter or telegram, until all is duly done.”

There was a silence when this was said. Hartwell was bent over his knee, his brow on his hand; he turned upon Oswald a look, not fierce, but full of power and import; and he said:

“But, Oswald, the terms are hard.”

“Pretty ruffian you must have been, ah Heavens! to maul in that way a poor girl!”

“Let my transgressions be admitted. But, Oswald, you reduce me in one day to poverty.”

“To the very dregs of beggary!”

“You forget my wife, my ward, and my ward’s young wife, who will be left unprovided for.”

(In his prison in Hobham House five years before this, the old Gissing had once used almost these identical words to Hartwell, which Hartwell now used to Oswald).

“I cannot forget what I never remembered,” answered Oswald. “There is no question of those people, who ever they may be. Let them work, or beg. Your wife is almost worthy of you—”

“She is more than worthy of me: as to that say nothing, my friend, lest you incur my displeasure. But, Oswald, I say that the terms are cruelly hard: you must modify them; you must relent and be merciful.”

“I am sparing your beastly life; don’t flatter yourself, my good fellow, that you have anything more to hope from me. You might as well plead to that wall. I detest you cordially, and should enjoy seeing you starve on the streets; I daresay Lady Methwold would, too, and might toss you half-a-crown.”

“Be that as it may — But, Oswald, your terms are hard.”

“We had better get to work. You are not to argue.”

“But, Oswald, I am a crafty man: are you not afraid that, if you pressed me so hard, I may do something to baulk you of that affluent future to which you now confidently look forward?”

“No, I am not afraid, Jimmy. A ‘crafty man,’ are you? — impotent fool. Show me one sign of your craft to day, and I break off everything, and send a telegram to Magee to hand over the girl’s letter to the police. Come, we had better get to work.”

“No, you must give me time. I am not alone concerned. I refuse to decide without reflection. I will tell you my decision at five this evening, if you will so far accommodate me.”

“I don’t see why I should, but I suppose that I may,” said Oswald.

“You remain a prisoner here though, if I do; you are not going to send any messages to your bankers; I shall lock these doors.”

“I have no intention of sending any message to anyone, I assure you. But lock my doors, if it pleases you to make me your prisoner. When I have come to a decision, I shall ring for you.”

“No, you won’t be able to ring, I am going to break the bell ropes,” said Oswald: “I will come to you at five.”

By this time Oswald was quite calm and well mannered again. He locked the study door, broke the bell ropes in the study and in the bedroom, locked the bedroom door on the outside, and put the two keys in his pocket.

As he passed by, the study door again, on its outside, to descend one of the back stairs of the house, he saw the back of Dulaunay hurrying away down the stairs: for the Count had been listening outside the study door to what had been said. Alarmed by Oswald’s sudden appearance in the glade, and by Oswald’s order to Hartwell, Dulaunay had followed them, understanding that something grave must have happened; and since that something undoubtedly arose out of his own fault in handing over the shreds to Oswald, the Count had thought it within his right to listen to the outcome. He went away from the study door appalled by what he had heard, made his way to his own room, and there remained in great distress of mind a long while.

Hartwell, meanwhile, sat a prisoner where Oswald had left him, with a back bent as it were under the load of sorrows which the dead Drayton had left behind for him. He found himself touched by the grim Hand.

Death stared him in the face. His enemy was as relentless as Hartwell himself had once been to others.

However “crafty” he might be, there seemed to be only two possible courses of action open to him now, apart from consenting to Oswald’s

terms; firstly he could declare that he had not killed Letty Barnes, that he was not Drayton; or, secondly, he could shoot himself. Any of the three would save him from the gallows, which he had no intention of undergoing: and between these three he had now choose.

If he chose to declare that he was not Drayton, nothing could be easier for him than to prove it: there were those who had known him familiarly as a working man in Birmingham, while Drayton was a financier in South Africa and London; as to that there was no difficulty. There were a thousand proofs, if he chose to call them up, any one of which would be conclusive, that he was not Drayton.

But if he said he was not Drayton, then Martha, Bobbie, and Rosie would be beggared: for Martha was no longer Drayton's widow, she was Hartwell's wife; Oswald had seen her married to Hartwell; and the moment Hartwell, Martha's husband, ceased to possess Drayton's wealth, Martha would possess nothing; Rosie, Bobbie, would possess nothing; everything would be Oswald's, who was Drayton's heir.

Willingly enough would Hartwell have cast off Drayton's name now, and have returned to the working man life in the old scenes, in order to clear himself of this loathsome charge; he was weary of all the cark, which Drayton's name had brought, him, all the frustrate longing, the hunger of the heart in the midst of wealth, the indigestion — staring at a banquet; even the laboratory he could now have left with little regret, for at the age 43 he already felt elderly, and he knew that Nature will not show Her secrets to weary men, but only to “the violent.” He could have cast, it all off with a sigh of relief, or at least of resignation. But, if he escaped from the fix in this easy way, he saw in fancy his dear ones suffering that poverty which he had known well and still remembered, whose cruel spur had urged

him that, night on the Norwich Road to put on the clothes of the dead Drayton.

That way of escape, then, would not do. It would not be right for him to be Drayton so long as that was convenient, and cease to be Drayton the moment it became a question of bearing the brunt of Drayton's crimes at the expense of others, who were innocent; nor could Hartwell let his marriage with Martha prove Martha's ruin, and the ruin of her daughter, and of his son.

If, again, he accepted Oswald's terms, still retaining Drayton's name, and bearing the stigma of Drayton's crime, that, too, was a way of escape; but the result to the others would be the same: Oswald would have all, the others nothing. The third way of escape was suicide.

Hartwell sat several hours brooding over all this on his chair by the desk: but all the time he was conscious of what the end of his reflections would be, nor was he the man to shirk that terrible end. Suicide was not immoral, to his point of view, especially such a suicide, not committed for his own sake. He would die that day as Drayton. His will was already made, leaving all to Martha.

But there was still one other loophole of escape — his electrical machine.

He expected to hear the result of the testing not later than 4.30 that day, and hence had put off giving his answer to Oswald till five. If that turned out well, he could declare himself not Drayton, and still be fairly rich; Martha, Rosie, Bobbie, would still have an arm to protect them; and somewhere in Hartwell's mind was even a thought, a hope, illogical and vague, of Julia.

All, then, depended on what, even as he sat a prisoner, was going on in Birmingham.

Between twelve and three o'clock, he heard three several tapplings at the locked study and bedroom doors, the handles of which were turned by someone. The first time it was a servant who came to call him for lunch; the second time he heard the call, "James," in Martha's voice; the third time it was Rosie, who, in a low and awed voice, called, "papa," and afterwards went away on tiptoe. Hartwell did not answer any of them. About three o'clock he got up, his decision fully formed: if the news from Birmingham was good, as he quite hoped, that would be well; if it was bad, he would end his life, and that might be well also. He went into the bedroom, and stood at a window looking from the east side of the house upon the forest quite near it. It was now raining heavily and drearily. Hartwell tapped idly upon his teeth with the handle of a pen, watching the rain beat on the flat roof of the portico, and on the sodden bed leaves which were everywhere; a few wet sparrows on the portico and in the branches moped like children in punishment, and seemed to wait upon heaven for the rain to pass, before resuming their life of movement; there was no wind, and no sound in the house or without it, but the sound of the rain and the rain water in the spouts.

Hartwell presently turned to get what he had come from the study for, his will. One by one, during the course of months, his trunks had all found their way down to Corton, and now rather cumbered his room; from one of them he took out a cash box which contained his will and three five-pound notes, this being all the money which he had with him. He put the notes on the mantelpiece, intending them to be useful, till the household should adjust itself to the fact of his death, if he died; as he was doing this, he heard a tap at the bedroom door, and a voice say at the keyhole, "'Draytong', can I speak with you at the hole of the lock?" It was Dulaunay. Hartwell stood quite still; looking at his door, without making any answer. After waiting

two or three minutes, he went softly into the study, sat at the desk, spread the will before him, and read it.

During the next hour he was adding codicils to it, which he knew that the main legatee and executors would carry out. To Bobbie, personally, he left an annuity of £1000; to Oswald, one of £800; to the Count D'Artenset-Villiers, one of £500; to the Gissings and to Barnes, conjointly, one of £300, directing that Barnes should continue to live with the Gissings; to Miss Scatchett one of £100; to Steve Anderson, one of £70, with some other small bequests to his captain, stewards, Drayton's old mistresses etc. To Julia he left the manuscript of a half-written book, which he was writing at the time when they were to have been married, but had not continued since, also some little things which she had given him; to Rosie he left the ring which he had worn for years on his little finger; and he directed his body to be cremated three days after his death.

When this was done, he wrote a little note to Rosie in a tone of gallantry, telling her to be as kind and good as she was sweet and charming; he added in a postscript that health was the main business of a human being, and gave her a few simple rules how to keep healthy and live happily; and under all he put three crosses, meaning kisses. He then took the will back into the bedroom, locked it in to the cash box, and the cash box into the trunk, for he had told Martha where he kept it; and now again he stood by the window, looking out at the rain.

It was now past four o'clock, and already the day was darkening. He began to be rather anxious about the expected telegram from Birmingham for, assuming that by now everybody in the house must know that he was Oswald's prisoner, whoever took in the telegram might hand it to Oswald and Oswald might not give it to him. But his doubts were laid to rest at 20 minutes past four, when there was a tap, and he saw a telegram envelope

pushed under the door. He went softly, and picked it up. The envelope had been torn open by Oswald, for below Oswald was playing the tyrant, and ordering everything with, a high hand; but he had not probably understood the meaning of the words on the telegram, and not caring, had let it come to Hartwell. Hartwell's hands trembled as he picked it up, and, seeing this, he would not read it at once, but put it on the table, went and stood by the window till he was quite calm, and then returned and read the telegram on which his life hung.

When he understood its meaning, his eye flashed, he pressed the leaf of paper to his lips, and looking away towards the forest, he pronounced the two words: "I come."

The telegram consisted of the words:

SURPLUS WORK COUNTERBALANCED MORE THAN 5 PER CENT BY FRICTION. CONDENSERS DO NOT ATTAIN LIMIT OF CHARGE. TENSION TOO GREAT, QUANTITY TOO LITTLE. CRANK BROKEN. BROWN AND LISTER WITHDRAW. FULLER DETAILS TONIGHT AFTER INTERVIEW WITH GANOT. PRICE.

This as much as to say that the invention had not been a success in practice.

Hartwell looked at his watch. In half an hour his time of grace would be up, and Oswald would come. He did not mean to see Oswald again and at once, lifting a big trunk off another, he unlocked the bottom one; it was full of things and he could not see well, for though it was only half past four, the day had turned out very cheerless and wintry, and the room was dim. Hartwell placed two old brass candlesticks on a chair by the trunk, lit the candles, and sat on the floor to search the trunk. After throwing out some of

the clothes, he found a brace of revolvers, which, he knew were ready loaded, and these he took.

In putting back the clothes he saw some rude clothes of his working man days a pair of boots much worn and torn, cord trousers, a greasy old jacket, a cloth hat, a dirty old scarf, and two red handkerchiefs; Bobbie had had them five years before, as the last relics of the father whom he supposed to be dead; and Hartwell, who prized them, had taken them from Bobbie. His eye smiled now upon them, and he replaced them carefully. In putting back the tray of the trunk into its place, his eye rested fondly upon the little packet of letters in it which Julia had written to him. He took off the elastic band from them and read them over by the candle light.

Among them was her last letter to him, written at Berlin, weeks after the rupture, and this, too, he re-read, till he came to where she said "We seem to be the perfectly helpless victims of some freak which has occurred somewhere; we can't help anything, not being born or dreaming, nor crying, nor dying," and at this Hartwell's heart was wrung, some travail in the nerve of tears overpowered his hard-headedness, and for the first time since boyhood the strong man gave way to weeping which distorted his mouth and shook his frame; he laid his forehead on the trunk and wept; nor was it mere self-pity that so keenly and deeply probed the worthy Hartwell, but pity for the littleness of man, and the bigness of his care; in his thoughts was that old haze of fire, that "nebulae," the living Father of our world and of ourselves, which held in the humor of its loins every tear that has since been shed, every frenzy every oddity, every rhythm, and all the pathetic tale of our earthly lot; and since it had held those very sobs which shook Hartwell, those sobs were too potent to be choked down, and had to break out. He was hungry, too, and cold, for there was no fire in either of the two rooms.

He got up presently, took the two candlesticks, and one of the revolvers, and, going into the study, put them on his desk. He sat to the desk. He had little time to lose before Oswald should come. His eye rested fondly a minute on his letter to Rosie, which lay on the desk before him. Then he drew, or tried to draw, two deep breaths, and, without looking at the weapon, he put out his hand, and took it up. The bitterness of death made him sick. But his face was grim, though a little pale. He opened his mouth and pointed the revolver into it; his eyelids were closed, and winked a little.

But he was interrupted by a violent shaking of the study door; and by the shout: “‘Draytong’, ‘Draytong’!” Dulaunay had been peeping through the key-holes, from which Oswald had removed the keys, had heard Hartwell’s sobs by the trunk, had seen the revolvers taken out, and the sitting with one of them to the desk in the light of the candles. All the afternoon, in fact, the Frenchman had been spying with a boundless agitation upon Hartwell; he had spent a day of flurry and distraction of mind, trying to soothe the two distressed ladies, trying to reason with Oswald, who, however, had insulted him, trying to torture out of his own wits some plan of action. At his call Hartwell started and sprang to his feet, shaken with ague from his head to his feet, shaken even more violently than the Count was shaking outside the door: for the nervous disorder caused by the interruption at the moment of death was, of course, shocking, and nearly deprived Hartwell of reason.

“Let me speak with you! come to the keyhole!” pleaded the Count in French.

Hartwell could not have answered, if he would, and would not, if he could.

“In the name of God, Drayton!” pleaded the Count outside.

Hartwell did not answer. He fell again into the chair, and his head dropped upon his arms over the desk, his right hand clutching the weapon;

and so he remained several minutes, while the Count stooped at the key hole, trembling violently, and staring at Hartwell.

But all at once the Count was gone from the door under the impulse of a sudden decision; with a wild face, without any hat, he flew out of the house toward the stables, found Gloucester in his room, made him saddle quickly one of the two horses, and, while Gloucester was doing this, made him describe carefully the way to Marston House, where Julia was, six miles away to the east of Corton; and Dulaunay set off at a gallop through the wet and now dark evening.

XXXIII. A FORTUNATE MEETING



HARTWELL, MEANTIME, SAT with his head on his arms, incapable, for the time being of accomplishing the act of self-destruction, not only because he thought that Dulaunay might be still spying, and there is something immodest in the act of suicide before a witness, but because he was so unmanned by the interruption. But as he sat so, a key was put into the study door, and Oswald, again with a very agitated face, entered the room. “Now, James,” said Oswald, with his hand on the inner handle of the door.

Hartwell had quickly pushed the revolver into a pigeon hole, where it was hidden; and he turned a haggard face to Oswald.

“I say no, Oswald,” said he. “Oh, you do?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Aha!”

“My friend, is their no compromise possible?”

“None, by God! your chance is past—” At once, Oswald slipped quickly out of the door in a flame of rage; locked it again upon Hartwell, and, almost as wildly as Dulaunay had run, ran to the stable. There, Gloucester, at his command, put his own saddle on the other carriage horse, and Oswald galloped away to ward Felmingham to charge Hartwell with the murder of Letty Barnes, and bring about his immediate arrest.

Hartwell, for his part, knew why and in what mind Oswald had gone, and did not intend to be arrested. Those unexpected words “I say no” had shattered Oswald’s dream of affluence, and he ran from the study door a mere missile of hatred, forgetting or ignoring everything, except the hunger

to be avenged which drove him. But however he might hurry, Hartwell knew that he could not return with the police in less than two or perhaps three hours. Hartwell, therefore had that much space to live in.

He got up and paced the rooms. To the most jaded man, to the man of strongest and coldest mind, suicide must be bitter when it comes to the point; but tenfold bitter must it be for a man who has come to the point, and been baulked, to come to the point again. The instinct of escape now arose in Hartwell; but it arose without any accompanying hope. He had the thought how excellent that would be, if he could get to the coast, escape to France, Belgium, or Holland, and in some obscure country place make his living as a laborer. But he almost knew that it could not be done: his appearance was too well marked, the police of the country too well organised; and he would not put upon himself the indignity of shaving off his beard. If he put on his working man clothes, however, that might prove a slight disguise.

About half-past 7 he decided to try this, taking with him a revolver to be used against himself at the first sign of any danger of arrest. He went back to the trunk from which he had taken out the revolver, took out his working-man clothes and boots, and, after undressing put them on. He tied the old scarf round his neck, put on the old cloth hat; and, looking now into the mirror, he smiled, recognising his old self. He then put into his pocket one of the three £5-pound notes, which he had laid on the mantelpiece for Martha's use; and in one of the two old red handkerchiefs, he tied up his watch and chain, two books, a few trinkets, and some biscuits from a box which he generally kept in his room to eat out of during the night. He ate some the biscuits. He then took his oak stick, hung the little red bundle on it, shouldered it. He gave a last look round the bedroom and stood a minute by his laboratory table; he took the revolver from his jacket pocket,

examined it, replaced it; lastly, he put out the candles, and stepped from a window on to the roof of the portico on the east side of the house. The leap from there to the bottom was considerable, nor could he climb down by one of the slender pillars which supported the portico arches, for the roof projected somewhat; but he ventured the leap and came down safely in a patch of fern and mimosa.

He sat some time where he had fallen, listening if anyone had heard, for the kitchen was not far from there; but no sound save the rain fell upon his ear. He went under the portico, stepped on tip-toe northward along its east length, until he came to the drawing-room windows, and between the curtains of one of them he warily peeped. The candles were alight in the rooms, and there was Martha asleep on a couch with her head on Rosie's shoulder, and Rosie looking disconsolate with inflamed eyelids, and Bobbie sitting near her. Hartwell looked at them sorrowfully, some minutes, and then went away eastward through the forest, shouldering the bundle in his working man clothes, as on that night five years before when he tramped the Norwich Road, before he had seen Drayton: but this time he went with his left arm in a sling, and a limp in his walk: for after five years no one is the same man, but the hand of God has been upon him, and has changed him.

He went, however, with some buoyancy, glad that at least one more night was left him to continue to live in.

This night was quite as dark as that night on the Norwich Road five years gone, and much more rainy, though the air was very still, and, as it were, breathless, with that breathless stillness which suggests the phrase "a dead calm." It was about 8 o'clock; the forest was black, desolate, and dripping, and brought back to Hartwell's mind the impression of one of the scenes in that terrible long dream, in which the spirit of Drayton had

seemed to converse with him in these woods six months before. He passed through the Round Point, with its well, and thence onward through the pines by a narrow path, soft though uneven underfoot, which mounted till he came to a ditch and a stile, and from that point bent downward. The dullest yokel, if he were belated thereabouts, must have been touched with some awe at this place, for few things could be more benighted and awful at such an hour than that congregation of pines with no leafage but at their tops, towering among the fern in a sort of lank stand-at-ease like a host of sentinels, and though no wind blew, there was still an everlasting echo of music among them, if one listened reverently to hear it; and anon a cone dropped and broke the stillness, as though one of the strange great sentinels spat.

After 10 minutes, however, as Hartwell trudged on, the pines became sparser, and he entered upon a fairly large open space, surrounded by pines, on the outskirts of the estate; in the middle of the space being a frog pond covered with moss, and not far from the pond an old hut. Hartwell had hardly entered this open space, when he was startled by the neigh of a horse; he stopped and listened, for there was no question of seeing anything move more than 6 yards from the eye; but the neigh was not repeated; and hearing nothing, he continued on his way, which leaf him close by the hut, between it and the frog-pond; but as he passed the hut, a figure peeped out of it after him, ran softly after him, and, peering into his face, put a hand on his shoulder.

“James,” said the voice of Julia, for it was she.

“Julia!” breathed Hartwell with a lifted hand.

At the ‘same time Dulaunay came out of the hut and joined them.

The Count had gone to bring Julia from Marston House as the last possible means of stopping the suicide of Hartwell, and she had promptly

ordered a horse and come. On the way Dulaunay had told her all, how that Drayton was dead, and Hartwell was not Drayton, but a working man; how and why Hartwell had married Martha; how Drayton had murdered Letty Barnes, and how Hartwell was reduced to suicide by Oswald's terms, for Martha's sake; all Hartwell's motives had been made clear to Julia; and the telling of all this, on horseback, had left them no time to discuss what Julia should do when they came to Corton. They had therefore dismounted on coming to rough ground, tied their horses among the pines, and taken shelter from the rain in the hut, while they spoke of what should be done. Dulaunay was about to run to the pavilion to see if Hartwell still lived, when Hartwell's step was heard by them, and Hartwell passed the door of the hut.

"Where are you going, James?" asked Julia.

"I — But how and why are you here?" asked Hartwell.

"The Count fetched me to stop you from suicide, James. Am I able?"

"Julia, the Count does not know my reasons."

"He does, and he has told me, everything. I still call you 'James,' but I mean 'Robert—'"

"Ah? the Count knew that. But you are getting wet, let me take you back into the hut."

They turned to the hut, and stood at its door discussing what could be done, Dulaunay in a hat borrowed from Marston House, Julia looking tall and shadowy in a waterproof which she struck with her whip, for she was high-strung, and her words came fast from her lips, though with a perfectly business-like detachment; some strings of her wet hair draped her face under her hard felt hat. She led the council, and on her shoulders mainly the burden of the situation seemed to rest; Hartwell only spoke when he was asked a question; Julia, and the Count briskly exchanged their views.

“He will be caught not later than to-morrow,” said Julia, “if he attempts to escape like this.”

“He should accept the terms of Oswald,” said Dulaunay; “Martha and Bobbie will not starve.”

“Will you, James?” asked Julia, “and I undertake that your wife and son shall be suitably provided for.”

“You are kind,” answered Hartwell, “but that must not be.”

“What is far better,” said Julia, “would be for him to say openly that he is not Drayton, and snap his fingers at everything.”

“I divine that he does not do that,” answered Dulaunay, “because Martha and the rest would equally in that case be reduced to poverty.”

“If you are arrested, James, do you mean to do what the Count stopped you in doing this afternoon,” asked Julia.

“That might be wise,” answered Hartwell.

Julia after a short silence said:

“If you will undertake, James, not to do that in case you are arrested, but to declare yourself innocent and not Drayton, then I make you the business offer to become your wife.”

“You cannot become my wife,” answered Hartwell, “for I am married.”

“Oh, I understand that that has been a merely formal marriage,” said Julia; “I should not hesitate on that account to become your wife in fact, though not in law, if that will induce you to keep alive. I make you the offer, if you will undertake.”

“You are kind. But Drayton’s widow will at once be reduced to poverty, the moment I say that I am not Drayton.”

“But you would have me. And as my husband you would be rich.”

“I thought you were affianced?” said Hartwell, with some touch of chronic irony in his tone.

“Oh, do not jest. I can manage that, then. Do you undertake?”

“No!”

The decision came sharply, whereat Julia, in a hurried movement, stopped and laid her lips on Hartwell’s hand, understanding the terrible strength of the temptation which he had refused.

Then at once the busy discussion recommenced between her and Dulaunay, a mere series of remarks revolving round a few ideas, without reaching any end, while all were conscious of the preciousness of the moments that were being wasted. Finally, the Count said: “Oswald must be returning with the police or it may be, has returned,” and at this Hartwell, who was inwardly distressed, and ashamed at this discussion of his hapless lot, and was eager to be gone and alone in the dark, said: “I will go.”

Julia now turned ghastly pale, and her womanly strength giving way, she suddenly cried out, “Oh, is there no way out?” and began to weep with her forehead on the Count’s shoulder.

“Dulaunay, you are to blame!” murmured Hartwell, with some bitterness. “I thought, my dear Julia, that I had caused you the last distress which you were to owe to me,” said Hartwell, “but there was still this last. Let me be forgiven .”

He could say no more. Julia had now sat down on the stump of a tree with a smooth top, which was used as a seat, in the middle of the hut: she had soon dried up her tears, and with her chin on her palm, sat gazing out. Hartwell stood awkward and burdened, not knowing whether to go or stay, and for some minutes nothing was said. Then, suddenly, Julia rose, and without, saying a word, walked suddenly out of the hut, looking meditatively downward with a bent head. She went toward the frog pond, and was soon lost to the eyes of Hartwell and Dulaunay, for her walk quickened, and the rainy murk of the night was so thickened, that all that

the two men could guess of her movements was that she was about, for some reason, to make a circuit of the pond (she wished, in fact, to be alone to carry out a thought which had risen in her mind). She was absent five minutes. Neither of the men cared to follow her; and Hartwell was again reproving Dulaunay for bringing her there, when Julia was again with them, re-appearing even more suddenly than she had gone, for she had come running a little, and was rather breathless.

“I have it,” she said, in a rapid speech, laying hold of Hartwell’s sleeve. “Emile, be prepared for a long ride to the coast. James, this is what I think is the way out: to-night you, as Drayton, commit suicide. I and Emile will take a hat and coat of yours to the cliffs at the coast, and leave them there with a confession of the murder and its discovery by Oswald, written by you, in one of the pockets, to explain your suicide; I know a spot near Happsburg, where the sea washes high up to the cliffs. Your jacket and hat will be found there; you will be supposed to have thrown yourself into the sea, and your body lost, as it may well be just there; you, as Drayton, die; you will, as Drayton, be made. Drayton’s widow inherits; to-morrow morning you, as Hartwell, turn up again in Birmingham, mix with your old acquaintances—”

“Oh, adorable Julia!” murmured the Count, at Julia’s ear.

“Now, that is feasible,” said Hartwell, reflectively: “it never occurred to me.”

“Let us not lose time,” said Julia: “has anyone got matches to write the confession by? You, Emile, will hurry to the house, and get the hat and jacket. I will await you here; and then we two will ride to the coast. James will walk all night, making westward, and take a train in the morning at some village station for Birmingham. After a month or so in Birmingham among his old friends, he can fearlessly emerge upon society, as Hartwell;

and then, if he does not still consider himself married, he can marry, or take whom he pleases.”

“You are ingenious,” remarked Hartwell, at Julia’s ear, in a confidential tone of banter.

“I derive it from contact with Birmingham, James. But what about matches?”

“See, here are some matches!” answered the Count, “also a pencil, and the white half of a letter.”

“That’s splendid. Be careful, Emile, to bring a jacket with some Drayton papers in it, so as to heap proof on proof. Better run now. The only thing is the sick arm; that may identify Hartwell with Drayton; could you manage without the sling, James?”

“Yes, that is of no importance. But you are very ingenious.”

“I do not desire any ironical flatteries, Robert,” answered Julia, ironically; “I might have been ingenious before, if you had done me the honour to make me your confidante; but you chose to be reserved. Now, Emile, you are to run.”

“You can easily break open the study door to get the hat and jacket, Count,” said Hartwell.

The Count wrung Hartwell’s hand, and crying: “Till we meet again!” vanished into the darkness.

“The farther westward you are when morning breaks the better, James,” said Julia; “let us hurry with the confession.”

Hartwell stood silent in the darkness, strange motions at work in his breast, and then said: “You are in the right. I will write.”

Julia struck one of the matches, and handed him the paper and pencil. Hartwell put the paper on the stump, and knelt at it to write. Julia knelt beside him, and struck another match. Their faces, beshone by the faint

light, were close together. Hartwell began to write in Drayton's hand. The match went out, and Julia struck another.

Their silence was full of ecstasy, Hartwell was amazed at his salvation, and foresaw a wonderful future; while Julia marvelled at the happy clairvoyance of her own heart, for she knew that she was out of the maze by the womanly instinct of a heart driven to bay and at its last resort.

"Have I won you now, James?" she asked in a strained low voice, "in actual truth, at last?"

"Let me write," said Hartwell with a certain mock dryness: "I am an imposter."

The sound of water dripping from the eaves of the hut was heard, the rushing sound of the rain, which was just then pouring hard, the dark sound of a frog splashing in the pond, and no other sound but these watery ones; a drop of water from the not very sound roof fell upon Julia's cheek, another in the dry dust, another on Hartwell's old greasy jacket; they were very alone there together, and might have fancied themselves the only survivors of a flood which was not yet over, and might last for ever. Their hearts beat, poignantly. When the matches went out, Julia struck another, and held it in a hand which rather shook.

"Oh, as to that," she said, "what Emile has told me has caused me to know no more of you than I knew before, only more of your history. I knew you were in proportion as I liked you, and two weeks after that night when we first met in Garlot Park I knew you inside out. Nothing could add to that knowledge. If Emile had proved to me that you had committed crimes, I should still know of you what I know, that you are a great mass of integrity."

"Well if ever I have meant well, and have suffered for doing it, this is my consolation," said Hartwell, more to himself than to her.

“Oh, I am not blinded by any infatuation,” said Julia presently: “Emile or my brothers, for instance, would certainly condemn what you have done in taking Drayton’s place and all that, and I should think the same as they, if you were not you: but what my heart knows is that you could not have considered it wrong, since you did it, and that your opinion of right and wrong must be worth very much more than theirs or mine.”

“That may be,” said Hartwell: “but having once admitted that anything can be wrong, as I do now reverently admit, a wrong does not become right because one considers it right. I say that my iniquities have been many, Julia.”

“But still grand, dear, as your confession of them is grand, and your suffering for them. It is all very well for shallow people — No, don’t be humble before me, I beg of you, or I shall cry for pity. I heard, you know, of my brother Charlie’s escapade with you down here, and how you took it; he meant well, but I told him after I heard it that it was merely upstart of him in your case just when you were sacrificing everything, too, for that poor woman; who was nothing to you, as if some quixote had taken upon himself to cane Jephthah—”

“Let that be forgotten,” said Hartwell: “your brother did well, nor was his action a discomfort to me, but rather brought me something of the relief which lies in an expiation. But I cannot at present look behind — It seems incredible, Julia, that such a future as you present to me can still be mine.”

“We have deserved it, James, if patience is anything,” said Julia, striking a match: “does it, seem, then, very bright to you?”

“It seems bright enough!”

“What, to have me always with you?”

“Julia, no, let me write.”

“Just think, I shall have a stool in your study, if I ever let you go there; I shall cook; and make your slippers, and pamper you; we shall live a year on an island; at midnight if you are haunted by a ghost, it will be I; in the morning on opening your eyes the first thing which you shall see will be my smile. I shall be with you; you shall be mine — no more biology—”

“Julia, you talk. Julia, sweet name, graven in my heart — but, you see, I cannot write—”

“We have waited enough. We have lost life. It is time now — I do so love you—” Julia whispered this, as it were secretly, in a voice of passion; her face happened to touch Hartwell’s; a heavy drop leaked through the roof, splashed upon the match, and put it out, for outside the deluge of water now washed down lavishly with a loud noise, so that at several points the leakage, more and more invading and menacing their little island of dryness, was going on actively, dripping upon their hands, their heads, the paper, the dust, and trickling down one side of Julia’s face; in that wet darkness their breasts caught fire; suddenly their lips met by an impulse beyond the power of their wills; and for some time only the noise of the storm of water was heard, and a dark splash in the frog pond.

When at last Julia lighted another match, no more was said for a long while; they breathed hard, their faces were pale with only half-smothered emotion. Hartwell wrote the confession of murder in silence on the wet paper; and Julia, like a bondmaid, struck matches, from minute to minute to see to write.

XXXIV. HARTWELL RE-EMERGES



THREE PAGES OF notes, taken down from the mouth of my principal with regard to the history of Hartwell still remain to me: but they do not seem to me to contain anything of great importance. It need only be stated that the admirable Julia's plot was duly carried out; the next day at noon, Hartwell, on stepping to the platform at Birmingham from his train, was arrested as Drayton for the affair of Letty Barnes: but he was once and for all liberated, two hours afterwards, for the proofs which he had that he was not Drayton were overwhelming; moreover, by the hour of his liberation the jacket and hat of Drayton, who had "committed suicide," were found at the coast: if Drayton was dead, and Hartwell was alive, then Hartwell could hardly be Drayton.

Some time before the marriage of Hartwell and Julia, it was a disputed point between two lawyers, to whom a supposed case had been put by Julia, whether Hartwell was legally married to Martha. Even if this had been so, it would not have prevented the union of Hartwell and Julia; but the lawyers differed; for the law on the point is far from clear. The fact that Martha supposed the man whom she married to be another than he really was made the marriage invalid in the opinion of one expert especially as it had never been, as lawyers say "consummated," but from this view the other expert differed. However the truth was, the death of Martha a month before the marriage put an end to the importance of the question, Martha's vitality, never strong, was reduced to a thread by her night in the well, and the excellent woman passed quietly out of life in a sleep.

She left all her recently gained wealth to Bobbie, the husband of her daughter: whereupon Bobbie, who was soon let into the secret by Julia and Dulaunay that his guardian was his father, insisted upon making over the whole, with Rosie's consent, to Hartwell. So that Hartwell in the end rightly possessed all that wealth of Drayton which he had so wrongfully possessed; and Corton became the favorite residence not only of Rosie and Bobbie, but of Julia and Hartwell, and of their respective families.

As to Oswald, when he saw his dead "James" re-appear one night before him at a dinner, calling himself Hartwell, with Julia on his arm, the astonishment in the jaded brain of the poor Oswald may be imagined. In spite of all the explanations that were heaped upon him, he spent the rest of his life in an uneasy sense of bewilderment at this matter. Hartwell gave him a considerable annuity out of the widow Drayton's estate, and had him often with him at Corton and elsewhere.

So much has been given me to write, and I have cast it into the conventional "novel" form, with conversations, chapters with titles, etc. If in this form the facts do not give that sense of romance which properly belongs to fiction, I have at least tried to effect this by the addition of fanciful details here and there, and my failure, if I have failed, must be put down to the essential difference of aspect between a chain of invented details and such matters of fact as happen in our midst. Still, fact has always a certain value of its own, nor are our characters mere cut-and-dried photographs of living people, but to whatever extent they are lifelike, the author is deserving of some of the credit, for though they have been described to him, he has seen only one of them in the flesh (the one called "Oswald"), a short time nine years ago, together with a photograph of Hartwell (or rather not of Hartwell, but of Captain Jenner, of the *Africa*), and a miniature of the really beautiful Julia. Nor, on the whole, is it of much

importance, so long as an indulgent reader has been amused, and has understood the moral significance of the man's fate which has been sketched.

THE END

The Lost Viol (1905)



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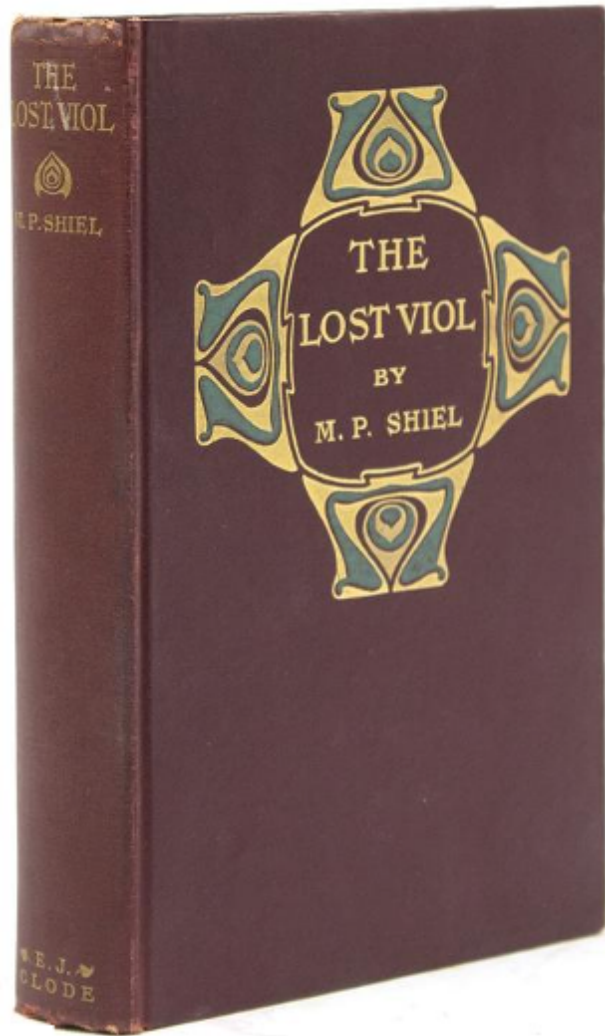
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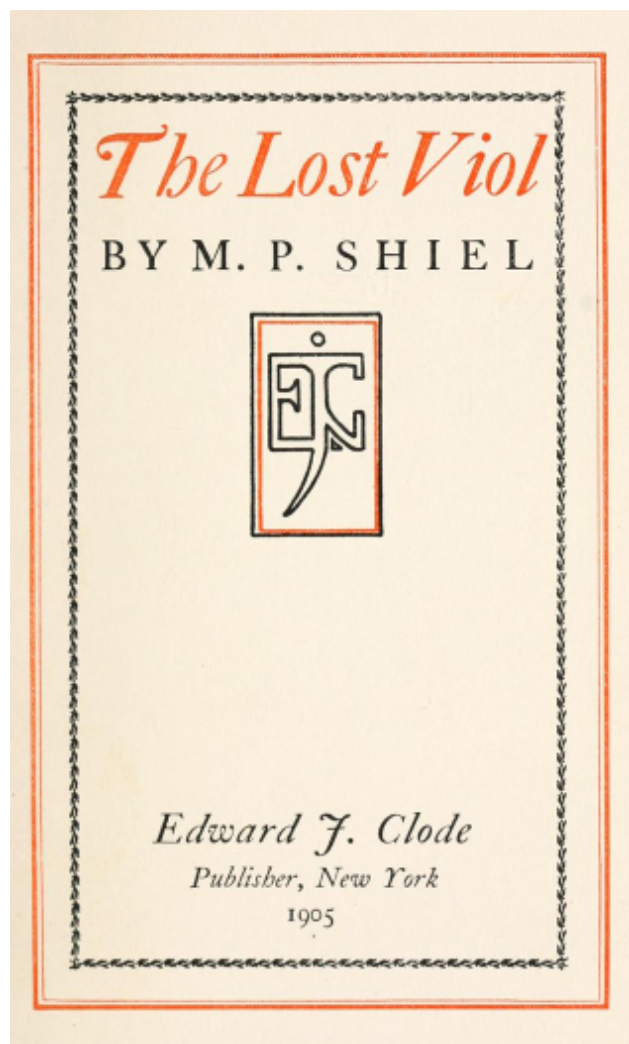
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CHAPTER I



“YES, A GRAND night,” was the thought in Miss Kathleen Sheridan’s mind, as she passed into the west lodge-gates of Orrock Park on the evening of the 21st of November, ‘98: an evening of storm, with the roar of the sea in the ear. The young lady stopped at Embree Pond in the park to watch the sheet of water shivering to its dark heart under the flight of the squalls; then with her long-legged walk (she was a hunchback), went on her way, showing in her face her delight in this bleak mood of nature.

Some way further, however, on hearing the hoofs of a horse, her expression changed to one of very real fright, for she had a thought of one Sir Percy Orrock, beheaded by Cromwell, whose ghost gallops about on a headless horse in rough weather; but this turned out to be only Mr. Millings, the land-steward: for, on coming round to the manor-house, the young lady found Millings there talking to Sir Peter Orrock, who at a window was holding his ear forward to hear the land-steward’s news.

“Good evening, Mr. Millings,” called Miss Kathleen, laughing from ear to ear, with strings of black hair draping her face. “Well, uncle, I have been sketching it all on the heath — witches on broomsticks, ‘strange screams of death in the air.’ That silver lime of Farmer Carr’s is blown flat. Uncle, if you ask me to stop and dine, I may consent.”

“Hm,” muttered Sir Peter to himself, “better stick to your own dinner. Go on, Millings — same old story, eh?”

“Same old story, Sir Peter,” answered Mr. Millings: “there won’t be any of Norfolk left soon, at this rate. Mrs. Dawe’s cottage gone, and with it her

son, James Dawe, and three of the boats—”

“Well, it is their own fault!” called out the little maid, “living on the edge of the cliffs, when they know—”

“Got nowhere else to live,” muttered Sir Peter. “Dawe drowned, Millings?”

“No, Sir Peter, but I’m afraid I must say rescued at an awful cost: he was rescued by Miss Langler, who has just been taken home to Woodside in a dying state.”

“Hannah? Hannah Langler?” breathed Sir Peter, turning very pale.

“The lad was carried out two hundred yards,” said Mr. Millings, “where he clung to the bottom of one of the three boats; on the cliffs I found a crowd watching him, including Fagan, the coast-guardsman, who told me that the lifeboat was coming round from Wardenham; but I thought from the first that it would come too late, for I could see Dawe nearer in every time the lighthouse beam swept over him: and so it proved, for, as the lifeboat-light appeared round the north headland, Dawe was thrown up by a breaker on a strip of sand—”

“But Hannah?” said the baronet.

“Miss Langler was in the crowd with her father,” said Millings; “she had been holding up Dawe’s mother, who was fainting, but when Dawe was all of a sudden lying on the strip of sand below us, I saw Miss Langler running among the fishermen, begging one and another to save him before the next wave. ‘There’s nothing like venturing,’ I heard her say twice or thrice, but they answered that that would only mean two deaths instead of one, and I fully agreed with them. When the next breaker drew back from the cliffs we all looked to see Dawe gone with it: but there he still was, and I now heard Miss Langler cry out to Horsford, the lighthouse-keeper, ‘Now, now,

Horsford, venture now,' and then, all at once, I was aware that she herself was going down the cliff-side by that little foot-path near the church-tower."

"But, God's name, man, couldn't some of you stop her, a whole crowd of you there?" said Sir Peter.

"It couldn't be done, Sir Peter, I regret to say. Two or three did make a try to hold her, but she was gone like the wind. Personally, I confess, I was rather paralyzed: she looked pretty small down there in the mouth of the sea, like a fly in an engine at work; it was rather painful. Old Farmer Langler fell on his knees; no one had a word to say. I don't suppose it lasted ten minutes on the whole, but I shouldn't care to live through it again. Dawe's a heavy lout, a head taller than she, and twice she was felled by the sea with him in her arms. When a wave withdrew, we saw them still there, and another wave coming. Two of the womenfolk fainted. I with some other men ran half-way down to see better, and got drenched. However, she won back to the path with her unwieldy prize, and there gave in. We then ran down and got them somehow to the top; Dawe was taken to the postmistress's cottage, and Miss Langler home to Woodside. Both are in a pretty bad way, they say."

"Well, it is her own fault!" called the quaint maid shrilly against the wind from the outer hall. "Hannah has a secret pride in her physical powers which stood in need of a ducking."

The baronet muttered something, turned from the window, and in five minutes was passing out of the house, well wrapped up, with his rusty top-hat pressed on his head, and a footman swinging a lantern before his steps.

"What, going to Woodside, uncle?" asked Kathleen, who still stood in the outer hall, "how wonderfully good of you!"

The baronet did not answer. She went out with him. Beyond the east gates they saw the lighthouse beam traveling over land and sea in turn, the

one thing which the storm could not fluster. A drizzle, like spray caught from the sea, struck the face. It was very bleak. They met only a manure-cart whose driver saw, head-to-wind, his horses' manes, tails, and forelocks floating out at random on the streams of the storm. Sir Peter was silent, but the quaint maid had ever something to say in her laughing way. "Isn't it fine?" she cried out: "one feels as if one were oneself the storm!" Then presently: "Did you read all that about Chris Wilson? That boy is going to be the maestro of the day, you'll see. He has won the year's prize-violin, and been publicly embraced by Strauss. Yvonne writes me that he's the wildest of madcaps, and leaves broken hearts in every capital: this is the boy that I am supposed to be engaged to."

At this Sir Peter stooped sharply to her ear, saying: "Better drop that talk, and think of something besides men."

"But what do you mean?" cried back Kathleen: "wasn't it arranged before I was born that he should marry me? Not that I care at all, or would marry him, if he wanted me"; in a lower tone she added: "you have no humor, mon oncle."

"This is Hannah Langler's birthday, too!" she called out presently: "did you know? She will remember the date of her ducking. Isn't it an extraordinary thing that on each of her birthdays that girl receives a present from some unknown person? This time it is a ring that must have cost two hundred pounds."

"How old is she today?" asked Sir Peter, stooping to her ear.

"Twenty-four."

"No — twenty-three."

"Excuse me, uncle, twenty-four. But what does it matter to you, really? I believe you cherish some sort of odd weakness for this Langler girl. She tells me that every time you see her you whisper into her ear always the

same words, 'Uglier than ever, I see.' Well that might be a pleasantry, if she were pretty, but as what you say happens to be true, it is hardly polite, is it? The rector has suggested that perhaps this yeoman's daughter is destined to become — Lady Orrock. I told him that things of that sort don't happen."

"Hm!" muttered Sir Peter; "talk too much."

Kathleen now went up a lane on the left leading to her own place, "The Hill," while Sir Peter and the footman went on down yew and hawthorn hedges, till the light of Woodside Farm appeared; and great was the wonder of the old farmer and of Mrs. Langler when they saw Sir Peter come to see Hannah, for the baronet was a rather crusty and rusty type — tall, with a stoop and an asthmatic chest — from whom a jerk of the head was about all that people on the estate expected in the way of friendliness.

Sir Peter saw Hannah, who lay unconscious from her drenching, stayed a little with the old couple and old Dr. Williams, and then trudged back to the Hall.

He sat up so late that night, sniffing his three dried apples, that Bentley, his old house-steward, became uneasy. He was writing a long letter; for his discovery that night that Hannah Langler was twenty-four, not twenty-three, as he had somehow thought, was now hurrying him to an action which for fifteen years had lain planned in his heart.

"Better," he wrote to his nephew Chris Wilson, "come here for two or three months, and let me see if I like you. As I have not seen you since you were sixteen, and then only for a few minutes in Paris, it is impossible for me to know what sort of being you are: but I was attached to your mother, and if you have any touch of her, it is possible that both myself and the young lady to whom I refer may care to have you permanently about us. Your income, if I remember rightly, hardly amounts to more than £500, and if Miss Hannah Langler will marry you, she will have from me a jointure of

£3,000 a year, and will, moreover, be my heiress: in which case you may decide to give up scraping fiddles for the rest of your days,” etc., etc.

This letter went off to Paris the next day. Four days later came the reply, written apparently in a heat of haste:

“My dear Sir and Uncle:

“I am obliged by your most kind invitation to Orrock Hall, and delighted that I have so near a relative as my uncle to remember me. I shall certainly come to visit you, if the good people here will let me, and I will marry whomsoever you desire, since that is your caprice. You should expect me, therefore, let us us say, next Tuesday. Ever yours sincerely,

“Chris Wilson.”

CHAPTER II



THE APPOINTED TUESDAY came, but Chris Wilson did not come with it; nor did he send any excuse.

After a month Sir Peter wrote again, angrily this time; in two weeks the answer came from Vienna, saying that Chris would find it a “genuine delight” to visit so near and dear a relative as his uncle during the month of February next. But February, March, April, and May passed, and Chris Wilson did not come to Orrock, nor send any excuse.

Once more Sir Peter wrote, no longer an invitation, but a letter bitter to the point of invective; he received no answer to this, but on a day in June when no one expected him at Orrock, Chris Wilson sat in the Wardenham train from London, with the score of *Fidelio* open on his knees and three violins about him.

At Wardenham, of course, no carriage awaited him, and there he stood, a violin-case in each hand, looking up and down the road with a pathetic dismay. He believed that he had written to Sir Peter the date of his coming, and had perhaps expected a procession with flags to meet him, but no one even noticed him. “Well, the languid people,” he said with his meek smile, for it seemed to him odd that any one should be unconscious of his arrivals and departures.

At last one of the donkey-baskets peculiar to Wardenham was got; an old box, which was the master’s, and a more costly portmanteau, which was the valet’s, were put into it, and they set off through a land of cornfields and farms, past the lighthouse, the windmill on the hill, the village with its

clothes hung out to dry in the sunlight. Anon the sea was in sight with sails on it, and the cliffs in their colored carpet of poppy, thistle, and sea-daisy; and anon the basket-chaise was among hills of heather and fern. There was hardly a sound, save the martin's wing, the bee fumbling into its lavender-bed, and dream-laughter borne from some boys and girls playing cricket in a meadow. Three men mending a net before a cottage door, among them that Willie Dawe whom Hannah had rescued from the sea, seemed to work in a doze. But Chris Wilson, who was a native of cities, and was being jolted in the lanes, had no eye for all this, and cried out anon to his driver: "Is it far, my friend?"

Beyond the ruined church-tower on the cliffs, the chaise turned inland between hedgerows full of wild yellow tulip, and in a lane promenaded by geese passed Woodside peeping through its nest of old trees. At Woodside gate stood a young lady, looking up and down the lane with shaded eyes, who suddenly felt ashamed of her hair, but the moment the chaise had passed, beckoned eagerly, whereat another young lady spending the day at the farm ran out to her.

"Too late," said Hannah Langer: "a Wardenham chaise with a young man in it, my dear! the squire's nephew, I believe, has violins — you should have run quicker! Saw without seeing me at first, then suddenly realizing a petticoat about, looked back and smiled at me with little nods in an easy, cheeky kind of a sort of a way—"

"Did you nod back, Hannah?"

"Get thee behind me, Satan! Of course not. But it wasn't done anyhow, my dear, but prince-like—"

"What is he like, Hannah?" asked Anne, highly interested.

"Not handsome, I think — broad-faced — stout — a bit overgrown — more body than head, top of his nose browned, my dear, like an apple just

turning, a split cloth hat cocked well back, so that I could see his hair parted in the middle, spreads out behind in a mass of curls over his shoulders — brown, lighter than mine, his eyes blue and heavy — drowsy, tipsy-like — forehead small and flushed—”

“You saw enough of him all in a moment!”

“But it was that quietly wicked little smile, with little movements of his eyebrows —— !”

“He must be fast, Hannah.”

“But a dear boy, I should think.”

“I wonder if Miss Kathleen will be falling in love! for all that girl thinks about is love and marriage.”

“Poor little dear,” sighed Hannah, with a change from very gay to very grave: “it is her poor little body that’s to blame for that, Anne. I believe she is ever wondering if everybody finds her as plain as she finds herself: the big doubt of her life, that; so she’s ever on the watch with her sharp grey eyes to solve it one way or the other, with a fear of the verdict trembling in her poor heart all the time.”

“Hannah, sometimes I believe you see right into people’s hearts,” remarked Anne.

“Know what’s in Kathleen’s, anyway,” answered Hannah with a pleased laugh: “she would give all she is worth and a penny more to enter somebody else’s mind for one minute to watch herself, and, of course, she cares most what the male gender thinks of her, so every farm-lad she sees, she asks herself, ‘How does he like me?’ And to think that she’s doomed to stew in that pot to the day of her death! Ah, we ought—”

A voice from the farmhouse called “Hannah!” and “Coming, mother!” called Hannah— “no peace to the wicked” — and ran away inward.

The chaise and violinist, meanwhile, had arrived before the low front of Orrock with its array of many-shafted oriels; whereat Sir Peter, hearing of it, hurried from his work of docketing old documents in the library, and found Chris Wilson tapping with his foot on the floor of the inner hall.

“You Chris Wilson?” asked Sir Peter, gazing over his glasses.

“The same, sir,” answered Chris.

“Well, what do you want now, sir?”

“Absolutely nothing, sir,” answered Chris, with his meek smile.

“I don’t like erratic persons, sir,” said Sir Peter. “I don’t allow any one about me to be erratic, except myself. You promised—”

“Then you are my own uncle, sir, for I am of precisely the same turn of mind myself. If you are as erratic as your footman, I have only to wish you a good day—”

“Stop, sir; did you not promise to be here since the month of February last?”

“I’m sure I can’t remember, sir. What happened in the month of February last are among the things in which I no longer take an interest. I am here now; let that suffice you.”

“Why, he chooses some of his words something like a Frenchman,” muttered Sir Peter. “Why on earth, sir, didn’t you let me know that you were coming?”

“Didn’t I, sir? I think so.”

“Hm! memory wants brushing up. But, sir—”

“May I remind you, sir, that I am holding an Amati fiddle in a terrible draft? If you invite me to come in, I will.”

“Then, sir — come in.”

Sir Peter turned inward muttering, and the stranger was presently led to his own apartments, whence he would not stir for the rest of that day; till

late into the night sounds of music — studies in chords, songs — were heard coming from behind the locked doors of the musician's quarters, so that near midnight Sir Peter stamped his list slippers in one of the library bear-skins and covered his ears with his palms.

The next morning there was much ado when Chris sent Grimani, his valet, to ask that, since *dejeuner* was to be “breakfast,” it should be put off to ten o'clock. The baronet at first refused, but yielded afterwards; and Chris came down in a better mood, asking as he sat to table: “Have I been in this place before, sir?”

“I think you have when a boy,” answered Sir Peter.

“Charming place! Does the whole of this place become my property at your death, sir?”

“No, sir, unless I am foolish enough to die without a will; and you should not contemplate my death, sir.”

“God retard it, sir. I don't contemplate it, I only conceive it. May you live a thousand years.”

“Hm — and you ten thousand.”

“By the way, sir, was my mother an elder sister of yours, or a younger?”

“You don't know much about your family, my friend.”

“My good sir, if you had ever produced four simultaneous A flats on the violin before the age of, say, twenty, you would understand that my time for family histories has been short.”

“Why, the fellow takes offence for nothing,” thought Sir Peter.

“So you know more about your violin than about your mother, sir?”

“My violin is my wife,” said Chris.

“Got three wives.”

“A full harem, sir! and all are sirens. But was my mother older or younger than you?”

“Younger, sir.”

“What would be my own age now, sir?”

“Memory gone crazy!” muttered Sir Peter.

“I remember my nineteenth birthday,” said Chris, “my father being then still alive, but since his death no one tells me anything.”

“You are now three months over twenty-two, sir.”

“But as to your other sisters, sir, there were — how many?”

“Your aunts Margaret and Jane, sir.”

“I remember; one married the Marquis de Pencharry-Strannik. And the other?”

“Jane married an Irish judge named Sheridan.”

“Both dead, sir?”

“Yes. Your mother, too, is dead, sir.”

“I know it well, sir, for though she died when I was quite young, I loved her with enthusiasm. Excellent woman! And my two aunts, did they leave behind them any family?”

“Each left one daughter: Margaret’s daughter is Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik whose place, ‘Chateaubrun,’ is near Toulouse; Jane’s daughter is Miss Kathleen Sheridan, whose English seat, ‘The Hill,’ is not a mile from here. She’s pretty sure to come peeping about here today, so you’ll see her, if you don’t lock all the doors of the place!”

“Are they charming people, my two cousins?”

“I know little of Yvonne, though I’m supposed to be one of her guardians. She was here five years ago when she was sixteen. I believe she’s considered a beauty, and a leader of fashion in the south of France. The other one, Kathleen, is a spiteful little hunch-back—”

At that very moment the quaint maid herself entered, laughing with all her beautiful teeth, while Chris rushed headlong from the table to meet her,

and hung over her hand in a rapture.

“Heartiest welcomes to Orrock, cousin Chris,” said Kathleen; “we have not met since you were a little thing of six—”

“That meeting is delightfully stored in my memory,” murmured Chris. And Sir Peter went, “Hm!”

“I had no idea that you were come till late last night!” said Kathleen, putting her bunch of pink hollyhocks and grasses into a china bowl. “Uncle Peter, you might have sent to tell one! The difficulty now that we have him will be to keep him!”

She played her fine eyes so coquettishly, that Chris said:

“I will stay as long as you wish.”

“That is sweet of you, then. But the wonder is that you came! Did Uncle Peter write to ask you?”

“He never told me! If I could flatter myself, now, that I was a motive—”

“Who else?” said he, half with his lips and half with his eyebrows.

The little maid’s eyes rested upon him, and she thought to herself, “Is not this a dear boy?”

“But how are we to amuse him?” she asked. “He won’t like wild flowers and sea-bathing, you know, Uncle Peter, nor Friday-night whist-parties, nor the county people, nor the Marstons and Iliffes. We must have dances—”

“Can you accompany?” asked Chris.

“Why — yes.”

“And excellently, I am certain.”

“Oh, I know that hardly any woman can accompany, but you try me and see!” she laughed, half-nervously, half conscious of a cleverness that was quite Puck-like.

But something was not right with the musician’s chocolate! he gave one sad look of reproach at Grimani, whose clasped fingers were heard to crack

for nervousness; and this for some time threw an awkwardness over the breakfast.

“I don’t know how you will find Uncle Peter’s pianos,” said Kathleen when they rose, “but I think something of my own grand; better let me take you to the Hill at once!”

Chris let her do this before lunch, and stayed with her for hours. The moment he was gone the little maid flew to gaze in her mirror at a yellow face wedged between high shoulders; she smiled, and her young mouth was enclosed in a series of wrinkles, like brackets; she walked, and it was from a waist up at her chest. Or perhaps the mirror lied a little to her eyes? She had that doubt, that hope, within her. Chris had been meant for her before her birth, and she was born like this, if the mirror was quite true. She knew pain and fear in that hour. Many had been her loves and fevers before, but Chris Wilson compared with other men was like a moon wailing music in its orbit, and upon him henceforth her ambitious heart was set.

Nor was she in despair. “He is delighted with me!” she said to one Miss Olivia, her companion at the Hill since childhood. “He told me that he had rarely met an accompanist who so foreknew the ‘history of his emotions’; and in going he said, ‘Thank you very much: you are among the virtuosi.’ I never dreamt that I could play like that, Olivia; my soul seemed to mix with his, and my fingers became his.”

“What a terrible lot of Schubert!” said Miss Olivia. “But do you think Mr. Wilson really great?”

“Divine, you mean,” said Kathleen. “This boy is one of the sons of thunder, and lords of the soul, I tell you. From the moment his bow touched his Amati’s sweet, sweet A to his last note, it was all up with me, Olivia. Oh, the technicality of his infinite cadenzas, his heavenly grace — and his

hands! just made for stopping intervals, with two of the fingers quite deformed by his awfully high bridge. I must go out.”

“But it is near dinner-time, and drizzling — !”

“I don’t care, I can’t stop in the house.”

It was already dark, but Kathleen went out, and within an hour a stable-boy was galloping to fetch Dr. Williams to her bedside.

“Miss Sheridan has seen Shuck, sir,” the boy answered when the doctor asked what was the matter— “Shuck” being the ghost of a headless dog which travels furiously across-country from Marsham to St. Fay’s about that hour.

“Tut, tut,” said Dr. Williams, “your mistress has caught sight of a white rabbit, boy.”

“Whatever it was,” said the boy, “she went out for a walk and ran back screaming all the way at the top of her voice, and you’ve got to come at once, doctor, for she’s very bad.”

Kathleen was subject to these transports and break-downs, and for a week she lay tossing, with those two images, “Shuck” and Chris Wilson, blazing like day-stars in her fever.

During this time Hannah Langler had been greatly exalted, for Sir Peter had had her to dinner at the Hall, and Hannah had heard his whisper at her ear, “Mustn’t tell you how ugly you are to-night, because you are my guest.” She was, indeed, from of old, quite at home at the Hall, for she would allow no hand but hers to make Sir Peter’s special pound of Jersey butter at Woodside, and liked to bring over presents of cream-cheese, lark’s eggs, sometimes helping old Bentley in the management; but dining among the great ones was rather another matter. The news of a strange creature at Orrock was abroad, the “county” was coming to hear him play, and all among the “county” Hannah found herself, with a rose in her hair, and on

her finger that mysterious ring, sent her — by whom? — on her twenty-fourth birthday. It was Sir Peter's will.

"Can you accompany?" Chris asked her when she begged him to play.

"Oh!" she laughed, "Hymns New and Old is my musical level!"

"Never mind, I'll play for you."

He struck round his long Tourte clouds of rosin, tossed his hair back, chinned his thick-stringed Bergonzi, and flooded the drawing-room with Rode's air in G. Hannah gazed as if alarmed at something happening without or within her, and at one point pressed the hand of Mrs. Horsnel, the rector's wife. Chris had chosen his fiddle of greatest sonority to move her by mere power; and she, too, admitted him, in Kathleen's words, one of the "sons of thunder."

"Isn't he a dear boy?" murmured Mrs. Horsnel when it was all over.

"Yes," breathed Hannah, like one who sees the sea for the first time.

Some time afterwards when Chris and Sir Peter were alone late at night after a card-party, the baronet suddenly asked: "What do you think of Miss Langler?"

"Nice and plump," said Chris.

"That all you see in her, my friend?"

"No, not all, sir. I like her immensely; she has both power and charm. How came she by that scar on her forehead?"

"A little mule in the village which wouldn't let anyone ride it; must take it into her head to tame it — used to be a regular tom-boy, got on it barebacked, the thing threw her off, and kicked her there."

"Well, she seems nice and healthy But the English have no instinct for dress. Why on earth should she wear her hair brushed back in that fashion?"

"Free country, sir. By the way, are you in love with the Honorable Edith Cardew? I have noticed you—"

“I may have thought of undertaking her conquest, sir; it is my habit to be in love, but, frankly, Norfolk is not rich in seductions of that sort. I’m afraid I must announce my departure, sir. I came for a week, and have been here perhaps months now, kept by your own good company, and Miss Kathleen’s perfect accompanying. She is among the virtuosi.”

“You are not — er — taken with Miss Hannah Langler, I see, sir.”

“Taken? But stay, stay: didn’t you once write me something about marrying some one, sir? and wasn’t this very Hannah Langler the lady in question? It was so. I have often wondered what brought me to this corner of the world; it was that! You promised me some thousands of pounds a year.”

“Well, I’ve heard of the musician Beethoven forgetting his own name, and you are almost as bad. You can’t think much of money, sir?”

“On the contrary, sir, I admire gross, handsome sums of money to an extent that might be called a weakness; I am supposed to be a spendthrift, but I throw away only silver: I am pound wise, but shilling foolish.”

“So, if you married Miss Langler, it would be for the money only?”

“Let me see. You know, sir, that on the Continent marriages are commercial contracts, and that I have a Continental mind; but it should not be difficult to me to get fifty wives with far larger dowries than some few thousand pounds a year; so that, if I married Miss Langler, it would be partly for the money, partly to make myself agreeable to a wish of my good Uncle Peter, partly because the lady is rather pleasing to my fancy, and partly because I don’t consider the matter of great importance.”

“That ends it, then, that ends it; you take the wrong tone, sir, in speaking of that lady,” said Sir Peter, sniffing one of his dried apples quickly with alternate nostrils. “If you think, because you can scrape fiddles—”

“What horror, sir; you know nothing about bowing; one does not scrape, one strikes—”

“Hence the term fiddlesticks, sir,” said Sir Peter. “I say that if you think you would do Hannah Langer an honor in marrying her, then you shall lose her, Chris. My proposal to you arose solely from my wish to do a great kindness to my sister’s son — but I despair of making a fellow like you understand what you get, if you get her; will have to teach you that herself in time. I know her; have watched her twenty odd years; and if you love not only a bright companion, but a most faithful hand on your head when it aches, will love her. I fancy she’s taken with you, fancy so, she can’t hide much from me, and in that case you are in luck’s way. And let me tell you, sir, that in marrying her you marry no farmer’s daughter, but a lady of ancient lineage and high race—”

“Ah, I thought there was some mystery—”

“Not much mystery. I’ll tell, on the understanding that herself nor any one ever learns facts from you. Her father was an old friend of mine” — Sir Peter meant himself, for none but him was Hannah’s father— “who married a farmer’s daughter, and had this child by her. My friend’s father was a baronet, alive at the time of the marriage, marriage had to be kept secret, and five months after child’s birth its mother died, leaving child on its father’s hands. Well, my friend knew a farmer-couple named Langer in Devonshire, worthy people, who were childless, and deciding to bring up his child in the social status of its mother, status which he always considered by far the best, he fixed upon these Langers; offered to buy their Devonshire farm from them, and to give them instead the large farm they now have here, together with an annuity, on condition that they took little Hannah, and let it be understood in new county that she was their own child. All this arranged by lawyer’s-letters, and to the present old couple

don't know who is Hannah's father, though they may suspect, may suspect. That, at any rate, is all the mystery; baronet's daughter instead of farmer's."

"That makes her all the more interesting, sir," said Chris. "I must take the matter seriously, I see. It might produce a rather eccentric and pretty effect, an English country-girl for one's lawful wife"

CHAPTER III



THIS THING SEEMED to stick in Chris Wilson's vague memory, for three days later he put his cloth hat on his curls, and took a stroll to Woodside, where he begged Mrs. Langler to take him to Hannah, was led upstairs to the foot of a ladder which he climbed, then stooped through an opening, and found Hannah in a sweet-smelling loft among festoons of apples, thyme, and marjoram. She let slip a cry on seeing him, rather vexed, and quickly let down her skirt which had been pinned up in front.

"Charming, this place," said Chris, panting.

"Can't shake hands," said Hannah. "How on earth came you up here, so near heaven?"

"Near Hannah," said Chris, sitting on a tub.

"Oh! a man may not flirt with his grandmother in aloft!"

"But I have come expressly to court you."

"You mayn't find that all milk and honey, even so high up! I could lock you up nicely in here till you had done every scrap of this work. I am pretty ruthless, too, if I take a thing into my head."

"Provided you lock yourself in, too."

"Ah me, how Somebody finds mischief still. You had no right up here, Mr. Wilson."

"You called me Chris last night."

"Because you had the heroism to call me Hannah! But give him an inch and he takes an ell, of course."

"L is for Langler. Shall I take a Langler?"

“His Majesty is pleased to hunt today.”

“I find you admirable.”

“Do you? If Miss Edith Cardew — but I won’t utter rashness with my lips. Come, work first and play after; help me with these artichokes—”

“You would not be jealous if you were not in love.”

“Who?”

“You.”

“But what has brought him here this day, for my sins? I’d as soon think of being in love with the Archangel Israfil! Well, no peace to the wicked, I suppose — must just make the best of a bad bargain.”

In such talk they spent an hour up there, Chris murmuring short remarks with his quiet smile and movements of the eyebrows which said for him most of the little that he had to say, till he dropped the remark, “Seriously, I think of marrying,” whereat she, with a spin towards him, said quickly:

“Seriously? of marrying Kathleen?”

“Some one else,” said Chris.

“Ah, well, now that I have the chance I am going to say my say about that. You don’t mean any harm, but you are too friendly with Kathleen, you know.

“Oh! you can’t dream what misery you may be making for this poor girl, Mr. Wilson! You have a way, for instance, of hanging over ladies when you shake hands in a sort of silent rapture; but you shouldn’t to her. Oh, my heart aches! It isn’t her fault. Promise me this now, and mean it.”

“I like the eyes; nice and clear.”

“Ugh! it is no good; he can’t be serious. I’d like to — beat you!”

“Kathleen has nothing to do with the matter. I wish to marry you.”

“Oh! that would be nice! to be Mrs. Fiddle!”

“But seriously.”

“How many strings to your bow, madame? That would be nice! With bells on her fingers, and bells on her toes, she shall have music — !”

“No, but seriously. Will you?”

“But you should not say such things, Chris, O, you should not, it is not right to me — !”

“But don’t think that I am jesting. My Uncle Peter and I have even spoken together of it.”

“You and Sir Peter have spoken of you marrying me?”

“Quite true.”

At this Hannah stood silent with her back to Chris, dashed away a moisture from her eyes, then with instant swiftness was on her knees, fondling his hands, saying, “Don’t say it, if you don’t mean it, dear; mine isn’t summer-love, but the whole silly Hannah, with her heart and everything thrown in, for good. If you knew how I have prayed to be saved from loving you, for you are like water slipping through one’s fingers; only an angel could have and hold you. Sometimes I’ve longed to beat you, and smash all the fiddles; but tell me once in my ear that you love me, that you do love me—”

Chris smiled with little nods, meaning “yes,” saying, “I like the hair, quite a burden of womanhood here behind, nice and fat,” whereat Hannah leapt up with rather a sobbing laugh, saying to herself: “It will be a work to be Mrs. Fiddle, I know; but I’ll tackle it gladly, since it is His Will.”

His Will! But while some marriages are made in Heaven, some are made on the Continent, and this of Chris was rather of this latter type. Hannah, however, could dream of no motive, except love, in the mind of Chris, for she knew nothing of Sir Peter’s hand in the matter, and in her joy believed that here was the heavenly type. When Chris returned to the Hall, he was

able to tell Sir Peter that Hannah was willing to marry him within four weeks, before Chris should quite sicken of Norfolk.

Hannah had been on the point of becoming a London hospital-nurse, but all that was changed now. No secret was made of the affair, and the countryside was in a state of wonder; old Mr. and Mrs. Langler pondered it in their hearts; the quaint maid was made ill, and when she heard of the dowry that Sir Peter gave with Hannah, her amazement went mad. She now understood that Sir Peter was the cause of all, and she was as angry with the old man as with Hannah.

Everything was made ready in haste; the five villages round Orrock and the coast forefelt what was coming; great things were in the air; Woodside no more recognized itself; partridge-shooting, dancing, and guests were at the Hall, hearing strange music at night.

All this, however, was upsetting for Sir Peter, who was of a fretful and fidgety build, and delicate in the chest. Some days after Kathleen had risen from her fever, she came down to the Hall, and found the old man in an exhausted sleep. The house-party had gone out picnicking, and, hearing this, the little maid had wandered in search of Sir Peter to ply him with questions about Chris and Hannah. She found him with some documents on his knees breathing in sleep among the nine thousand volumes which made the fame of Orrock; and she made long steps from one white bear-skin to another, so as to come softly to him.

The thought came into her head, "If you slept on for a week, our wedding would have to be put off."

Sir Peter was in a nook, with an oriel window on each side of him. Kathleen softly opened a leaf of one oriel, and looked out at the autumn sunlight on the land. "He always disliked me," she thought, "and I have always disliked him for it. Why should they dislike me? I have two eyes,

one nose, like human beings — perhaps they guess that I am myself, the sole of my kind, and that there's something in me that rankles and is at war; for it is all a struggle with me somehow to hold my poor head above water — a weary thing, God knows. Do they see into me at all? I should shriek with shame; but not even God could quite know this knot of nerves. Then, if they don't guess, why do they dislike me, and make me hate? As to that old man there! I'll look out through that other oriel to see the glass-houses."

She softly opened the oriel on the other side of Sir Peter, without closing the first, and looked out anew, thinking, "There is quite two acres under glass on this side. He is well asleep; that isn't my fault if he sleeps where there is a draught, and he hasn't had asthma lately, so it is nothing, and not my fault. What could have put this marriage into his head? By what witchcraft has Hannah Langler enthralled him to this extent? He has a lot under glass over here; there must be a dozen gardeners. Not that I should wish to harm any one, even if it was in my power. But oh! how I am trembling!"

She turned inward, and without closing either of the windows, fled away over the bear-skins. She reached home in such a state of panting and fever, that she had to be put to bed, while Sir Peter, for his part, slept on an hour in the draft, and awoke hoarse. The next morning he did not rise from bed; three days later he was so ill, that it was decided that the wedding of Hannah and Chris must be put off; in a week it was given out by the doctor that Sir Peter was dying.

It was in this state of affairs that old Bentley wrote the news to the baronet's niece and "ward," Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik; and on the ninth evening of Sir Peter's illness, Kathleen, walking in Orrock Park, heard a voice scream out "Kathleen!" and, looking round, saw a chaise with two

women, one of whom was leaping out to rush to her; in a moment she was being kissed by the young marquise, Yvonne.

“Yvonne! you?” cried Kathleen.

“It is I! I arrive from Paris,” panted Yvonne.

“You smell of Paris, and of all the scent-bottles on earth—”

“Such an escapade, my dear! I arrive alone with my chamber-woman, in order to see our uncle who is dying; is it not that I am good?”

“And tall, and astonishing, and most wonderfully pretty, Yvonne! It is four years since — | You know, of course, that your cousin, Chris Wilson, is here?”

“You yourself, wrote you not to me of it? Am I not here? therefore, I knew it!”

“The darling English that you speak, Yvonne! p’tite jaseuse! I believe I could never be jealous of you, you are too much like a bird-of-paradise.”

“Oh, no one is jealous of me, my dear, I have too good a heart. In effect, I am without a single defect. I am rich, I am free, I am pretty, and I have a good heart.”

“Delightful of you to say it! Are you going to stay with me at the Hill — or at the Hall?”

“The violinist, where stays he?”

“At the Hall.”

“Then, me also, I stay at the Hall.”

“But you have heard that he is to be married?”

“I have heard it! And as to the lady, is she charming?”

“A yeoman’s daughter, Yvonne — just think! — without graces, without beauty. It is such a scandal. You have just come in time to rescue Cousin Chris, thank Heaven.”

“Oh, the heavy role! I only play in comedy.”

“But you will do this, won’t you? This match is all through Uncle Peter, who has taken a crack-brained fancy to the girl, and is giving vast sums of money with her. Remember that Chris is our cousin, and not rich like you and me, so it is our duty to rescue him from this mercenary person. All she has is super-abundant health and a back-bone — I dislike her. Besides, you are about to fall in love yourself, for every woman at once says of him, ‘What a dear boy!’ He looks so meek and demure, yet one guesses the wayward fires in him—”

“Oh, save me from fires! Chateaubrun is already purgatorial! But if my Uncle Peter dies, Mr. Wilson may no more marry—”

“Uncle Peter won’t die. Ah, I couldn’t live in England afterwards.” The little maid said this rather to herself, but Yvonne, hearing it, asked:

“You love much, then, our uncle, my poor Kathleen?”

Kathleen answered by asking: “Aren’t you afraid of ghosts, Yvonne?”

“Ghosts? Not at all!” said Yvonne. “In France one no longer believes that the spirit lives after death, my dear.”

“I don’t either, not with my head, but I do with my nerves; I know that there are no ghosts, but I live in a horrible terror of them, Yvonne.”

“My little cousin droll and dear,” murmured Yvonne. “But shall we go farther?”

“Droll and little without being dear,” thought Kathleen, shrinking on a sudden like the sensitive plant.

They drove through the darkling park together to the Hall, before which they found a knot of men, Chris Wilson among them, and with an evil eye Kathleen saw Chris start at sight of Yvonne, whom he had never met before, and, on being presented, hang over her hand in a rapture. Chris had seen nothing French or dazzling for months, so Yvonne came like an armed man upon him, and he went with her into the Hall with quite a new briskness and

heat in him (his hair lifting in a mass at each step), like a fresh fizzing-up and ado in stale-gone champagne.

CHAPTER IV



“WELL, IS HE a dear boy?” Kathleen asked Yvonne one evening in her laughing way.

“Of my part, my dear,” answered Yvonne, who, being in England, duly spoke in Engleesh, “that which I repeat to myself is not that he is a dear boy, but that he is dear to another. I have a good heart, Kathleen, I must not take part in a treason.”

The quaint maid, standing with her hat on beside Yvonne, whose yellow hair was being ondules, said again, “But is he a dear boy?”

“I know nothing of it — there! Leave me tranquil,” answered Yvonne.

“Tranquillity and Chris don’t live in the same parish, Yvonne.”

“Oh, pas tant que ça!” went Yvonne. “And is not Miss Langler, of her part, admirable? Why, you told me that she is without charm! Me, on the contrary, I find something of even angel-like in her eyes which twinkle and smile, and in a certain light on her forehead.”

“The beauty of holiness heightened by perspiration—”

“Well, for me she is beautiful in her type,” said Yvonne. “And her devotion to the bedside of our Uncle Peter! No one would imagine that she has a lover whom she adores. Miss Praed has told me that during three days and nights she will not once sleep, and still remains gay and fresh; what a Britannic physique!”

“And if you want to make her your slave for life, just tell her ‘How splendid and strong you are, Hannah!’ She is vainer of it than a coquette of

her dresses. However, it is not her business to nurse Uncle Peter, there are the proper nurses; but Hannah knows where her nest is feathered.”

“No, she is not mercenary, my dear, I am sure of it. But a little jealousy is the salt of country-life, is it not?”

“You should be jealous!” said the little maid with lightning eyes.

“And why?”

“Isn’t there some danger? Do be careful, dear. Chris, I can see, likes her racy bell of a tongue with its touch of buffoonery, and her warm-hearted moods and changes. While she is away from everything at Uncle Peter’s bedside, you should be specially killing —

“Oh, as to that, my dear, let neither Miss Langer nor you have any delusions,” said Yvonne. “It is only because I have a good heart.”

“That’s where to fire her,” thought Kathleen— “in her sense of another woman’s rivalry: she is more emulous than she is lovesick.”

“There! it is finished,” said Yvonne before the mirror. “Is it not that I am charming to-night? Let us descend.”

All day Yvonne would lie torpid, like a Spanish woman, but began to brighten up before dinner, and shone out at night like a moon, dimming every star. Then would be the feast of music in an old drawing-room, with a gallery and a chimney-piece made of the figures of Alchemy, Astronomy, Justice, and Truth, Hannah at such times being mostly absent with Sir Peter, who had twice rallied and twice got worse; but one night, stealing into the drawing-room and sitting apart in shadow with a long cloak on, she saw and heard what put her into a heavy mood. Chris and Yvonne were sitting together, and Kathleen playing a polonaise; when Kathleen rose, Chris said to her, “Now, you played that with great fancy and virtuosity,” whereat she made a mock courtesy, and glanced round to see what everyone was thinking of her. Yvonne then said, “Chris wishes that I play with him a duet

of Spohr, Kathleen, if you will accompany us,” to which Kathleen answered “Certainly,” trying to dry her palms in her already wet little handkerchief, for these evenings with Chris were to her like the hours which go before a death on the scaffold, fierce with an inward excitement which was betrayed by her sweating palms and the blaze in her eyes.

The three cousins, Chris, Kathleen, and Yvonne, then moved to the piano, Yvonne with Chris’s Nicolo, and Chris with his loud Bergonzi. Hannah’s eyes smiled with pleasure upon the smart movements of Yvonne’s body and right elbow, even while the music that streamed from Chris brought a tear to her cheek. Some genteel hand-clapping went round when it was finished; and as the three cousins sat again, Yvonne said: “What a violin, this Nicolo! Puff! one may blow it into the air; it is nothing but a soul which cries out before one touches it.”

“Pity it lacks power in the G,” said Chris.

“Where did you get it, Chris?” asked Kathleen.

“A present from the Baronne Veszcolcza, a Hungarian.”

“Ah, those Hungarian ladies!” said Yvonne in French, “they know how to give!”

“And take,” said Chris.

“Are you going to stick to your Nicolo for concert, Chris?” asked Kathleen.

“Only for chamber-music. I want to get a Joseph del Gesu.”

“Rather than a Strad?”

“I think so; more carrying and masculine. Paganini played one, which I have seen in the Genoa town-hall blushing like an angel.”

“Are there many about?”

“A fair number, with many counterfeits; but you know them at once by their grim scrolls.”

“There’s a theory that each composer is suited to a certain maker,” said Kathleen. “Handel to a Strad, Mozart to a Maggini—”

“Oh, I adore Magginis! so full and plaintive,” said Yvonne.

“It is his violas that count,” remarked Chris.

“I have seen one in London,” said Kathleen. “A queer thing with short corners and upright sound-holes.”

“Delicious orange varnish,” said Chris.

“Sweet! orange and golden; and such purfling.”

“My maternal grandmother brought into our family a viol d’amore with seven strings,” said Yvonne. “At least, they say it is a viol d’amore; oh, so quaint! But one can induce wonderful arpeggios from it.”

A fourth person now joined in to tell of another viol d’amore which he had seen, or thought that he had seen, and the talk went on about makers and labels, Mittenwald and Cremona, Joachim and Lulli, and, at last, about how Calve plays Carmen and how Coquelin plays Cyrano, till, dropping into French, it became doubly-Dutch to Hannah in her shadow under an old gallery; and sitting there with her chin on her palm, she became ever more grave, thinking: “What part could you take, Hannah, in all that chatter? Oh, I see it more every day; it will be a work to be Mrs. Fiddle! I shall have to screw all that into my hard nut if I am to keep him a year. But there’s nothing like venturing; it shall be done. French first, then music from A to Z.” She got up and stole away through a little Gothic door as quietly as she had come in.

Just then Chris was murmuring to Yvonne: “Nice moonlight, I see; I might take you out to the cliffs.”

Yvonne’s eyes mused upon him in a certain French way, and her lips formed the word “No,” with a smile.

“It is nothing,” said he; “we are now in England, not in France.”

“But I am French.”

“Kathleen might come.”

“In that case, perhaps. I wish first to go to my Uncle Peter’s room, and I may bring back Miss Langler to go with us!”

But at Sir Peter’s door Yvonne learned that Hannah was not in the house. “I have forced her out for a breath of air,” said one Miss Praed, a nurse; “she will not be back till one o’clock.”

“Is he better now, my uncle?” asked Yvonne.

“Yes, I think it will be all right now. But two hours ago it was touch-and-go with him, I can tell you. The doctor said that he wouldn’t live through the night. Miss Langler got on the bed with him again, and kept breathing into his mouth.”

“But what could that do to him?”

“What good? I don’t know. She said that she felt impelled to act in that way. Certainly, he rallied wonderfully after it, and this is the second time, too. Chance, perhaps.”

“Well, tell her, will you, when you see her, that I came to see if she wished to go out with me and my two cousins,” said Yvonne, and ran off to get ready.

It was eleven o’clock, a full hunter’s-moon was abroad in the sky, and there could be no stranger stillness than that in which the country slept, nothing stirring anywhere save ground-game, a squirrel in the fir-wood, or the white owl on a well in the courtyard of some old gabled farmhouse. Without knowing it, the three cousins chatted and laughed in lower voices, the moon and the earth were in such an elfin tryst. They passed by Woodside, lying dark but for one gleam among its old trees, then up the lane by cottages of cobble, with the mill-house and the lighthouse on the right and left. But when they came under the group of Spanish chestnuts

before St. Peter's churchyard, and could see yonder the ruined tower where drowned sailors are laid, the little maid was for hanging back, not liking graves and dead people, nor had they gone ten steps further when she turned white, and whispered "What is that?" to Chris.

Chris could see only the graves in their grasses and poppies, and one ghost-ship becalmed where the moon-shine gloated upon the sea, till Kathleen whispered again, "There!" and he now saw at one point among the grasses a shade like a sitting form. Wishing to be brave, he whispered to the ladies, "You wait here," and alone went forward.

When he had got near enough to the form he saw that it was a tall woman seated in the grass in a hooded cloak, with her back toward him; just then she was gazing up into the sky, speaking aloud to herself, and he heard the words:

"Who God possesseth in nothing is wanting, Alone God sufficeth";

Immediately afterwards she melted into tears, repeating the same words with her brow on a gravestone, and was so taken up with her thoughts, that Chris was able to lay his lips on her hand before she saw him.

"Why, it is you!" said Hannah, leaping up. "I was just preparing for a tussle with a ghost."

"Extraordinary to find you here," said Chris.

"Oh, I often sit out here late at night. This slab here covers the brick grave of your mother's family; so here Sir Peter will come some day, and you perhaps, Chris, and I, too, now, no doubt, after we have had our fling. Meanwhile, it isn't a bad thing sitting out on graves. If they make you cold below, they warm you up above. I've heard 'em say some things, I can tell you."

Chris laughed at her lively tongue — as near laughter as he ever got.

“But how came you here?” she asked. “Am I to flatter myself that you followed me from the Hall? Say yes.”

“No; I came with Kathleen to see the moonlight. Yvonne came, too.”

“Ah, there they are. Let’s all run down to the sands and have a good romp.”

“But have you had any sleep?”

“Oh, I’ll sleep tomorrow or some time. Never say die when Shuck and all the fairies are about. Look, you can even read the names on the gravestones, the moon stares so, like a big baby let loose in a bazaar.” The other two now came up, and all went downward by a path on the cliff-side. Yonder, along the cliffs, was to be seen the spot where Mrs. Dawe’s cottage had been carried away by the landslip a year before, when Hannah had rescued Willie Dawe from the waves, and, ever vain of her mannish feats, Hannah wished now that Kathleen would mention this to Chris; but the little maid was mum as to that and everything in this neighborhood of graves. At one place they could see a strange thing — coffin-ends sticking out from the cliffside, and when Chris asked, “What are those things?” Hannah answered, “Coffins! All this coast is going, you know; every year the sea wears away a bit, like a cake of soap left in a tub of water. So many a poor corpse that died on its bed round about has found in the end a watery grave.”

CHAPTER V



“WELL, IT’S ALL over,” said old Mrs. Dene, the house-keeper, only nine days after that moonlit midnight in the churchyard and on the sands. “And it has been like a whirlwind, hasn’t it? Perhaps one may have a little peace now.”

“Hasn’t Sir Peter been splendid?” answered Miss Praed, the nurse. “To think that only ten days ago he lay at death’s door, and there he is now in his white waistcoat, looking as hard and dry as a pebble.”

“But he doesn’t believe that his recovery will last long,” said Mrs. Dene, “and I believe that that’s why he insisted on hurrying on the wedding. Well, it has been a trying time for us all. My dear, you can’t realize the strangeness of this marriage, not being one of us. To me it is like some great dream—”

“But why so strange? They make a fine match,” said Miss Praed. “He just wanted some one like Mrs. Wilson to keep him in order—”

“Yes; but if you had told me four months ago that some day Hannah Langler might come to the Hall to eat her wedding breakfast, I should have thought you crazy! It is true that Sir Peter always had a sneaking liking for her; used to whisper into her ear, ‘Well, uglier than ever, I see’ — he said it today again, I think, as they were sitting to the breakfast — but those were about the only words he addressed to her for years. She used to bring round a special pound of butter every three days, but seldom saw Sir Peter, though I have caught him prying after her from a library window. At any rate, no one could possibly have foretold all this sudden — And yet, do you know,

Hannah has latterly been receiving rich birthday presents from some mysterious quarter? Perhaps Sir Peter — I don't know what to think!"

"But what a jolly bride!" said Miss Praed. "Between-maid Jane says that early this morning you could hear her clear voice singing hymns a mile from Woodside. Did you notice her cry once, though, during the service?"

"Did she cry, really?"

"Aye, she did — was going to, anyway — he was just putting on the ring — and I saw her face work, but she made a fight for it, and pulled through dry-shod."

"And hasn't she been blooming ever since, to be sure!"

"Hasn't she? I followed her out when she went to the villagers' marquee; she sat at one of the tables, and in five minutes had the lot of them in fits of laughter at her jokes and stories. She is a wonderful mimic and romp."

"Always was. But, between us, isn't our highly-gifted bridegroom just a little — how shall we put it — absent-minded?"

"It strikes me that Mr. Wilson's eyes have been following another woman more often than his wife today!" said Miss Praed, bluntly.

"The marquise has looked sweet, it must be admitted," said Mrs. Dene. "What a costume! and her manners have a certain absolute bouquet, to which, I think, none of our ladies ever attains: there's an equal distinction in each case, but mademoiselle's has, besides, a naturalness, an easy worldliness — the difference between very old wine and wine not so old. One can't blame the men: I've wanted to take her in my arms myself."

"But a man should be in love with his bride," said Miss Praed. "I'd just like to give the genius a piece of my mind in some quiet spot! I had a suspicion of something before, but today it was as plain as a pike-staff. And his poor, dear bride, for all her sharp eyes, quite unconscious of everything! Oh, it puts me in a rage!"

“And what a day of mishaps,” added Mrs. Dene, “all through our gifted bridegroom. First, the lack of a frock-coat, then the forgotten ring, then the missing of the train—”

The two gossips drew back from a rush of dancing couples sweeping past them. The married pair had started off on their honeymoon at four-thirty, but half-way to the station had turned back when Hannah’s watch showed that the train must be already gone — this lateness being due to the violinist’s practise after the “breakfast,” for five hours’ practise a day was his habit, and for lack of it he had felt like a fish out of water, wedding or no wedding: so he had missed his train, as fiddlers do; and when the carriage came back amid laughter, the evening had been turned into a rompball, many of the guests staying on.

Mrs. Praed and Mrs. Dene were still deep in their gossip when Kathleen in pink crepe came making her way among the dancers, to ask Mrs. Dene if she knew where Yvonne was. Yvonne was out on a balcony among some men, and out there Kathleen, taking her aside, said at her ear: “Yvonne, Chris pleads for one last word with you.”

“Kathleen, I cannot,” was the sad answer.

“He is pacing about a corridor up there like one out of his mind. We can’t let him suffer like that, dear. He says he didn’t realize that he really loves you till this afternoon when you pinned the flower in his coat and he smelled your hair, and he says that music will be hateful to him, if you don’t do something to cool his fever. Grimani tells me that he has dashed down his Nicolo, and broken one of the blocks. A boy is a strange mechanism, Yvonne, and this is the wildest and dearest of them all. Come. Won’t you have pity on poor Cousin Chris?”

“Alas, my dear, what can I do there?” said Yvonne with a sad naivete. “I too am enamored, and what may not happen if I go to him?”

“Never mind, only come, and leave the rest to Providence.”

“And this is his day of marriage, mon Dieu, mon Dieu! Where, then, is his wife at present?”

“Wife, indeed! If she is his wife, it is you who are to blame, Yvonne, for I warned you. Why, she isn’t even jealous of you; she thinks that he is hers —”

“Oh, as to that, no woman has the right to be so unconscious! But if I go, it is on the condition that you assist at the interview, Kathleen.”

“Come, then.”

But no sooner had they come to Chris, than Kathleen left Yvonne with him, though she hid behind the pedestal of a statue near enough to hear. The corridor was dim, but still the meeting there was most imprudent, seeing that in a bedroom not twenty yards away old Mrs. Langler was busy round Hannah, putting her in a gown, packing, hinting, fussing, with the tears and petty ministries of mothers at such a time. It was near eleven o’clock. In the morning Chris and Hannah were to depart for the Continent.

The French “interview,” meantime, went on in the corridor, Yvonne touching her eyes with her handkerchief, her face turned from Chris, he in a grande passion, pleading, while the little maid peeped with an evil eye. To most things that Chris said Yvonne replied ruefully:

“But your wife, mon ami, your wife. I have a good heart.”

“But one is not expected to be in love with one’s wife!” cried Chris. “Certainly not on the first day of marriage! I do her no wrong: it is the custom of the world, except in this quixotic country of Quakers. Why am I to be different from every one, merely because my parents were English people? am not English — !”

“Oh, but she is, mon ami. She expects you to love her, I am certain of it,” said the rueful Yvonne.

“And I do love her very much,” said Chris. “Dear excellent girl! But as a wife only, not, of course, as a sweetheart. How can I, when I am in flames for you? At least give me some hope. Promise to see me in Paris.”

“Mon ami, no — no, mon ami. Oh, Chris, let us love henceforth apart and in silence, carrying, each of us, the image of the other as a holy and sad symbol in the soul.”

“You do love and pity me, then, Yvonne? Tell me how much you pity me,” said Chris.

“Mon ami, you know well that I love you with all my heart.”

“But what shall I do? How can I sleep to-night? How am I to practice tomorrow? I seem to be in the greatest trouble! I have eaten very little. Can’t anything be done for a poor man?”

Yvonne’s cheeks dimpled into a smile. “The remedy is even more abstruse than the disease is painful,” she said.

“Could you not come with me and Hannah on our honeymoon?” asked Chris. “You could come in our train tomorrow—”

“Heaven! what a proposition,” murmured Yvonne, casting up her eyes. “You see, you are only a dear, spoilt child. No, mon ami, I must go now; your wife awaits you, Chris. But see, since my woman’s heart is weak, I give you one proof, the last forever.” Holding his face between her palms, Yvonne kissed him with a tender chastity on the lips, once and once again. Chris took those kisses with a blessed face, and was about to clasp her, but her caress all at once changed into a smart escape down a near stairway, whereat he, left alone, leant his forehead on the arras, and shed some tears.

Hannah, meantime, as Yvonne had truly remarked, awaited her husband in a boudoir of the suite which the married couple were to occupy for the night. She believed that he was still at the ball, and wondered that he was slow in coming, for he had said that he would be with her soon. She sat on a

footstool in a flowing robe, her ears on the alert, thinking that this, then, was how it felt to be a married woman. All that day she had been riding on some dream-whirlwind — she saw it now, looking back — and marriage was going up in a balloon! But in a few days she would be on good old terra firma, and the old Hannah once more.

“Only be with me,” she murmured, “only let Thy strength be perfect in my weakness.”

But Chris did not come. Mrs. Langer, who could not be got rid of so soon, peeped in with the awful whisper, “Isn’t he come?”

“He will soon come, mummie,” said Hannah.

Ten minutes later Chris entered, and Hannah was up to him, saying: “At last! They have hardly let you speak ten words with me all day. But now I’m the woman in possession. Shall I lock all the doors of the cage? Shall I? But, then, how will the dishes be brought in? You must be hungry and tired, too.”

A table stood laid for two near an apple-wood fire.

“I can’t eat,” said Chris with a forlorn smile, kissing her on each cheek.

“Oh, I have set my mind on our supper for two, so it must be. What a day of strain — the fierce light that beats upon a bride — I don’t think that marriages should be so public. But now I feel in a nice harbor, with my captain on board, and the everlasting hills round about. Say that you will eat something, and I’ll ring: who is it that would do anything to please me?”

“I, I think.”

“Cool as a cucumber with eyebrows! genius gone weary! but so dear, so dear.”

“Do you love me, Hannah?”

“There, he asks me that. It is the one duty which I perfectly fulfil: even in God’s delicate scales I love you as much as I ought to.”

“You are very good. I’m most fond of you, too. But my dear girl, I am enerve. I can’t feel musically; I am hungry, yet can’t eat; I don’t seem to want to smoke; no one seems to know what to do for me.”

Chris threw himself upon a sofa, and Hannah, petting his hands, said: “You want a good sleep, that’s it; we won’t eat anything, then, but I will make you a nice glass of syllabub, and put you to bed; then I shall brush your hair till you go to sleep, and watch over you all night.”

“I couldn’t sleep, you know. I seem to be in the greatest trouble.”

“Trouble?”

“Perhaps the good people oughtn’t to have made me marry, Hannah. I shall probably make every one unhappy. I have begun badly already—”

“But what is it?” asked Hannah in a state of astonishment. Made you marry, Chris? How have you begun badly already? If you mean missing the train—”

“No, don’t ply me with questions. You are the last that I should tell, perhaps.”

At this Hannah did not say anything, but kissed his hand, took off his boots quickly, ran and put on his slippers; then, sitting again on the footstool, said, “Shall I make the syllabub first, or will you tell me first?”

“You had better not know, perhaps,” said Chris.

“Yes, I had,” said she, “and there’s no way of escape; you are hemmed in between the back of a sofa and a curious woman, so it may as well come first as last.”

“You would only make a conjugal scene, and give me a headache. I wish I was in Paris or somewhere. This place has brought me into foolish embarrassments.”

“But tell me; there’s nothing like making a clean breast of things; tell Hannah. That’s what I am for, you know, to bear everything of yours. I’m

the sea; you can't put too much into me. I'll either bear or swallow the lot. Conjugal scene indeed! I am such a little pet, aren't I? That is just why I can't stand women, because they are all so puny and silly. Come, better tell. I can't guess — yet I thought I knew you all through—”

“I'm afraid I shouldn't tell you; and yet it might be better, for I suppose you will find out. My dear girl, I am in love.”

“And not with me?”

“My poor—”

“Not with me, Chris? not with me? on my wedding night?”

“Oh, I am most sorry!”

“Why,—” her head bent down upon Chris's leg while he, murmuring over her, kissing her hair for some time, but soon changing to peevishness again, said, “I knew that you would make a scene.”

At this she was up on her feet, and old Mrs. Langler, peeping from the inner room on hearing a river of words, saw Hannah, tall and bright, striding up and down, pouring out her anger against some “she”: it was all “she” — she going about like some one with the measles, spreading mischief and vanity, doing evil continually and not good — she using her God-given beauty and trumpery arts as a poison, not as a medicine, of life — and so on. It all fell upon the head of the poor Yvonne, who had done her best, or her second-best, to be good, while the guilty Chris got off without any blame. Hannah had never been jealous of Yvonne — for strong natures are little given to jealousy — but at once now by a flash of instinct she knew that Yvonne was the canker, without needing for Chris to name Yvonne.

“It is not Yvonne's fault,” Chris managed to say in the midst of her flow of words; but this only stung Hannah the more, that he should defend Yvonne; and “Horrid Frenchwoman!” she said, with a touch of bile now.

But in the very middle of a sentence her stream of words dried up; she turned to a window and stood there some minutes, humming to herself, playing a tune on the window-pane, till, with sudden swiftness, she was sitting on the footstool again, saying to Chris, "Let's shake hands!"

"We are friends for life now, Chris," said she, "and nothing can alter that; cut me into ten bits, and in each bit you'll find a friend cropping up: friends first, and other things after. So tell me everything, and then we shall know how to go on. First of all, are you very badly in love?"

"I'm afraid I am," answered Chris with a troubled brow. "I am like that, I suppose: I go crazy after things."

"That's the genius maggot, you see. But ah, Chris, an ounce of good conduct is worth a pound of genius, believe me."

"You are very likely quite right. Perhaps, if the truth were known, I am not at all worthy of you."

"No, don't say that to me, dear: it is because of my utter unworthiness of you that this has come about. But what I want to know is, why did you wish to marry me in the first place? Did you love me, and then change? and if so, oh, why didn't you give me some hint of it, even one day before our marriage? Then I should have saved you."

"My Uncle Peter hurried on everything so bewilderingly," answered Chris; "and it is only this afternoon that I began to be so much in love."

"Oh!" cried Hannah with a laugh, 'only this afternoon.' It is the Frenchwoman's bridesmaid's dress that you are in love with! I believe that I am the true love, really. Hers is only passion, not love."

"What difference between passion and love?" asked Chris. "That is one of those quixotic phrases which you English trot out so confidently, as though there were the least reason in them. Love is a passion."

"At any rate," said Hannah, "haven't you been in love like this before?"

“Never half so seriously, I’m afraid.”

“You have. This only seems more serious because it is the last; it will pass in its turn, and the everlasting Hannah will remain. Did I ever tell you about Mrs. Simpson in the village and her son? She lives apart from her husband, and her son, Fred, a ne’er-do-well working at Wardenham, comes to see her once a month. So the first time he came, she asked, ‘How are you going?’ and when he answered ‘Grand, mother,’ she said, ‘Well, better go and tell that to your father, I want none o’ you here’; second time it was the same, ‘Grand, mother,’ and ‘Go to your father’; third time he said, ‘I’ve broke my arm, mother, and lost my job.’ ‘Well, come in, boy,’ she said, ‘you’ve got nothing for a father now, but a mother’s gratis.’ Well, that’s Hannah, gratis, whenever you need her, as you will. But meantime, whose side, Chris, do you mean to take in the fight between that woman and me?”

“Is there a fight?”

“To the death!”

“Then I will take your side, if you tell me what you wish. But be sure that I shall never cease to be in love with Yvonne.”

“Oh, I shall have you all straight in three weeks. You would cease tonight, if I showed her to you with her hair all shaved off. So you must help me by promising, firstly, not to see her again without my leave.”

“She won’t let me see her.”

“Won’t she? She ought to be ashamed of herself for her miserable lack of self-restraint! Yes, she will, fast enough, if she gets the chance. So promise me that.”

“Well, I’ll try to keep from seeing her.”

“That’s a brave. You see, you do love me, or you could never be so dear and good to me. So promise me, secondly, not to go away from me. Promise me that. Of course, we can only live together on a footing of friendship—”

“Perhaps we had better part, Hannah. It would be most awkward—”

“It will be awkward for us both, but awkwardness is always the wages of some one’s kicking over the traces, and I am prepared to put up with it, if you will. I foresee that that will be best all round: so say yes for me.”

“Well, perhaps I had better do as you wish. I believe in your wisdom and goodness. But better let me think it out first for myself. Perhaps I could smoke. I will put on my boots, and walk out in the park; early in the morning we will talk again. You ought to go to bed, I suppose. Oh, I am in the greatest trouble now, on both our accounts. I had no right in this place, —” etc., etc.

“That one yonder is your room,” said Hannah. “I will tell Grimani about the lights, and leave the syllabub on this table. All else is ready for you. Good night, Chris: I hope for better—”

She could say no more, and his back was hardly turned when all her strain and self-rule tottered and was half in ruins. Stumbling to the frightened Mrs. Langler, she said in a weak voice, “Mummie, I am not well to-night,” and gave way to a sob on the old lady’s bosom.

Chris, meantime, went down by a back stair to think out alone the question of parting or not parting from Hannah. Down there in a shrubbery stood Kathleen, gazing up at the windows of the married couple: and she, seeing Chris come out, followed behind some way, and then joined him.

CHAPTER VI



IN THAT DOUBLY-LOCKED journal of hers the little maid wrote some days later:

“I was hiding on the wedding-night near those three steps at the chapel-side, watching to see the shadow of Chris or Hannah pass by their windows. It was after eleven. I was all trembling with cold, but enjoyed the suffering in that physical way. For a long time I saw nothing. Lights were going out here and there in the windows. Bentley came to the door opening upon the little courtyard by the housekeeper’s room, shutting up for the night. The guests had mostly gone to bed. One could still see the glare on Frean Hill of the wedding bonfire. There was a bright half-moon, and a frost. Once I saw Hannah’s shadow at a window; she must have stayed there five long minutes. How I wondered and hoped then! Since she was alone there, I guessed that she had found out everything from Chris’s manner, and had made a row. I prayed from my heart that he would leave her straight away, before she could have the triumph of sleeping once with him. What a darling thing is marriage, after all! Those windows were to me the windows of the seventh heaven, from which I was shut out in hell. Yes, I suffered. But the battle is not to the strong, but to the fin.

“After seeing Hannah at the window, I waited on about fifteen minutes, when the door which Bentley had just bolted was undone, and, to my wonder and joy, out came Chris. He looked strange to me in his frock-coat, more stout and heavy; his hair fell rumpled over his shoulders, he had no hat, and was smoking a cigar. I thought I must die for the shocking, slow

thumps of my heart. But I would not let him out of my sight, for I thought, 'I have him now, and if he ever goes back to Hannah, I must in truth be a paltry, feeble being.' He went westward, and I followed till we were between the rhododendrons and Embree Pond: then all at once I found myself saying to him, 'Well, Chris, this is not well, a bridegroom wandering alone on his wedding night. I am so sorry for you! I assume that there has been a row.'

"'Not at all,' he answered. 'I have told Hannah everything, but she took it beautifully. I am most wretched, Kathleen. I think Hannah the most perfect lady I ever met.'

"I thought to myself, 'Present company not excepted'; and I thought, too: 'He would soon get fascinated by her like the rest of them, if he once lived with her.' So I said: 'Yvonne isn't in bed yet; shall I try to induce her to come out here to you to hold another consultation?'

"'Do you think she'd come?' he asked quickly.

* That would be splendid of you! But then, I promised Hannah not to see her.' "'But surely,' I said, 'that is no promise, to promise the impossible. You would go mad, if you kept it, for I know men, they go mad if they don't have what they want, especially geniuses like you. People think that I am a foreigner in the world, Cousin Chris, an outsider who can make only purblind guesses at the nature of others; but, really, I am just like everybody in every respect, though it is sad to be even thought outside the pale.'

"'Never mind, never mind,' said he twice, patting the hunch. But why, why should I have said all that about people thinking me different? It was so dragged in! He must have guessed at once that it is I who know myself to be different, and only spoke out of the fulness of my own heart; and when I said 'I am like everybody, and so can guess their nature,' he must have thought instantly, 'It is because she is not, that she is so eager for me to

think that she is.’ And to say ‘in every respect like every one’! I wonder if he thought that indelicate? He must have understood that I wished to reassure him as to my completeness in case he ever wishes to marry me. Oh, God, how I have betrayed myself to Chris on every occasion, if he has the least insight! I can’t help it. In his presence I get into such a stew, my hands become like wet rags. I say out the first thing that rises to my tongue, revealing to him my inmost nature, and then I hurriedly cover up my blurtings with obvious lies and half-lies and turns of meaning; and afterwards what tortures in grieving over every word that I have said, and in seeing too late what I might have said! That day when I drew the caricature of him in his presence in my sketch-book, shall I ever cease to feel the bliss and shame of it? I did it in a few strong lines, and he took up this bony hand and said, ‘This hand has craft; you are one of the artists’; then, slowly, he pressed his lips on it. Lord, how it poured from every pore of me. I laid my head on his shoulder, and fainted. Oh, Chris, what did you think of me then? Did you not kiss me once while I slept in you?

“With regard to his promise to Hannah not to see Yvonne, I said to him: ‘But you should not help a woman for whom you have no regard against Yvonne, who loves you too. Better let me run and fetch her.’

“At this he got into a sudden temper, dashing down his cigar, and crying out, ‘But, good God, can’t you let me be? I tell you I made a distinct promise! Do you all wish to drive a poor man m-m-mad?’

“I was so startled, that all I could find to say, very foolishly, was: ‘This is all due to Uncle Peter.’ I had no wish to drive a poor man m-m-mad; but I suppose he was irritated by my tempting him to do what he was longing to, yet could not do, because of his pledged word to Hannah. He seems to be a stickler for what he would call ‘his honor.’ Men must have been originally made on the moon, or else was.

“‘What I came out here for,’ Chris next said, ‘was to think out alone the question whether I am to live with Hannah, or what to do.’

“‘If you wish to be alone,’ Chris, you have only to say so,’ I said.

Mmm,’ he went, with his murmur of pitying good-nature, ‘my own dear friend, forgive my peevishness, and stay by my side, I beg. You see what a plight I am in. If it was any one but Hannah, I shouldn’t care in the least, for really a wife has no claim upon the amorous longings of a husband. But Hannah is a personality apart: her pain seems to wound me in a wonderful way, and it is keener, I know, than she has wanted me to guess. She still wishes to live with me on a footing, as she says, of friendship—’

“‘But the false relation, Chris,’ I murmured.

“‘Grotesquely false,’ said he, ‘in the case of an English wife. Still, I somehow feel a longing to please her, Kathleen.’

“I began to see now that, if I was to keep him from her, it must be by showing that the separation would be for Hannah’s good, as well as his own; so I set to work. By this time I was not so excited, and I brought out my arguments, and pleaded so well, that I actually began to feel like Hannah’s best friend, for one must either speak as one feels, or else feel as one speaks. I wonder if I should have made a great actress, a great anything, if I had tried. There is something special somewhere in the little box. But perhaps everything in me faltered and went crooked in sympathy with my back. At any rate, I shed tears, and enjoyed them, when I spoke of ‘the tragedy of poor Hannah’s life’; I showed that if he lived with her, that would only be making her ‘pain’ permanent, which time would otherwise heal. ‘Don’t see her even once again,’ I pleaded; ‘you still have time to catch the twelve-thirty train—’

“‘But what will the good people think?’ he asked.

“‘Oh, Chris, which good people?’ I said to him. ‘How can that matter, when your life, and the life of poor Yvonne, and of poor dear Hannah, are all at stake? If you mean Uncle Peter, hasn’t it all happened through his own quixotic folly? Let him bear the consequences; an old man’s feelings are not to be considered as against the lives of three young people. Go now: don’t let us waste the precious minutes in talk. From what I know of Hannah, she will certainly try to find you, but if you make that impossible by merely going under another name for say six months, by then all will be well. Don’t let a soul know where you are, except me — not even Yvonne, if you can help it, for you know her ‘good heart,’ and she may think it her duty to tell Hannah. If you would like to hear from time to time how your wife is getting on, I will meet you anywhere in England or France, as often as you please, to tell you; or I could even let you know by letter, if you are not anxious to see me.’ So I kept on, heaping words upon him, and it is pretty easy to throw dust in his eyes and persuade him, when he isn’t being hurried the opposite way by one of his heats. He walked by my side staring on the ground, his forehead all puckered with perplexity. At last he said, ‘But could I get off without being seen and worried?’

“‘Easily,’ I said. ‘You can leave Grimani behind till tomorrow, when I will tell him where to join you. We won’t take a carriage from the Hall stables, but one of my own.’

“‘But my violins,’ he said with a start.

“‘Can’t you leave them for one day?’ I asked.

“‘I couldn’t!’ he said.

“‘Then I will run now into the house, and get them,’ I said promptly, to save more words.

“‘But I must write a line of farewell to Hannah—’ he began to say; but I cut all that short — no time, no time. ‘Come, Chris,’ I said, ‘it is now or

never: aren't you decided to go?'

"‘Yes, quite,’ he said; and from that moment he became as eager and breathless as I was. He ran half of the way back to the Hall with me, then I showed him Hewersfield Lane, and told him to wait for the carriage at Shooen’s Clause. After watching him start up Hewersfield Lane, I ran my fastest to the Hall, then in by the little courtyard door, and flew to find Grimani. I found him on a sofa in Chris’s private sitting-room; he couldn’t have long come back from the bride’s suite, I think, yet he was certainly drunk: not with alcohol, though — some other drug. I panted to him, ‘Quickly Grimani, give me Mr. Wilson’s hat and three violins,’ and that man looked at me, and went off into the sweetest, scornfulest chuckling. I’m sure I never heard laughter so pure, so full of delight. I understood at once that it must be due to some drug, but oh, I was cross! However, I hunted out for myself all the fiddles and the old cloth hat, Grimani laughing for joy at me all the time, and with them I flew. Only fifty minutes were left before the last train, and I have never got home from the Hall so quickly. I ran direct to the stables, knocked up everybody, ordered the brougham, then into the house, woke up Olivia, borrowed five pounds from her, then back for the stables. I met the brougham coming, got in, and drove fast to Shooen’s Clause.

"Chris was there, waiting by the hedge-gate. I beckoned in advance, and he got in as the carriage stopped. I was all but mad with haste and excitement there alone with him in the dark of the brougham; and how I loved him then! I wanted to go with him to the world’s end, at least to the station; but I didn’t dare. Little time was left. ‘You have only nineteen minutes to get to Wardenham in,’ I said to him. ‘Here are the violins, your hat, and some money to pay your fare.’

"He pressed my hand, saying, ‘You are a treasure; you forget nothing.’

“‘Tell me where Grimani is to join you tomorrow’

“‘Say at the Langham Hotel in London.’

“‘And you will write me soon? You promise?’

“‘Can you doubt it?’

“Then all at once my heart and soul were in my mouth, for I found myself saying: ‘Good-by, Cousin Chris, kiss me.’ I felt as if I had cast myself into an abyss and was falling forever, with something whispering at me, ‘Suppose he won’t?’ It seemed an age before he kissed me on each cheek French-fashion. If I could only have been satisfied with that! but I went crazy for more while I had him at that last moment of parting, and I fastened my lips to his, and couldn’t stop, but kept on. He dared to draw back from me. At least, I think so. I have an impression that I was irksome to him, that he felt sick at that sort of kiss from me. Oh, may thunder crush me, since shame doesn’t kill! After that I knew no more, till I found myself lying near the hedge, the brougham gone. I don’t remember getting out.

“I came back home, they put me to bed, and I slept from sheer exhaustion. The next morning I took one of my long early rambles, and gathered a fine lot of grasses for my botany-table; came home laughing, and Olivia said, ‘Why, you are looking as fresh as a rose this morning.’ Yellow roses, my Livie. She didn’t know what was in me. I asked for news from the Hall: she hadn’t heard, and I was impatient, so drank just a cup of coffee, and went down. It was only just eight. No one was down. I walked about the breakfast and morning rooms, waiting. Bentley and some men-servants came and went. Presently in looked the white face of Mrs. Langler, and vanished. Ten minutes later I heard Uncle Peter’s cough on the front terrace. He had been out for a walk; I saw him in his muffler and top-hat, talking with his head gardener. On coming in, he walked straight into the morning room; must have been surprised to see me, looked at me rather strangely

under his eyes without saying anything; I don't know what he could have been thinking of. He always disliked me, and I have disliked him since he fell ill this last time, for it isn't any one's fault if he is weak in the chest. There are things which will not be written: only the heart treasures them. Heaven only grant that he doesn't die for many a long day: I couldn't ever be alone after dusk.

"I had just begun to laugh and say something to him, when Mrs. Langler came in, smiling, but horridly agitated. 'Well,' muttered Uncle Peter, 'how's bride?' 'I was looking everywhere for you, squire,' said she. 'Well, well,' muttered Uncle Peter, 'fine morning for first winter-sowings.' 'Squire, I have to tell you that the married pair are gone.' 'Gone, gone,' muttered Uncle Peter, 'gone where?' 'Gone off to London, squire,' said she. 'What, what,' he muttered, 'Hannah gone without telling me good-by?' 'Oh, forgive her, squire,' she said, beginning to cry, 'all's not well.' 'All not well? What's the matter now, what's it, what's it?' muttered Uncle Peter. 'Well,' said she, 'Miss Kathleen here being one of the family, one may speak before her: they haven't gone together, squire, for all's not well. Mr. Wilson went away last night, and Hannah followed by this morning's train. Not that any one need know it, but they haven't gone together, squire. He left her at eleven last night, didn't come back, and I couldn't get Hannah to go to bed. At three in the morning she went to his apartments, and found out that he was gone away. From then to a quarter past six she sat without saying a word, until she said, 'I shall be starting for Paris by the first train, mother, to look for my husband.' I went on my knees to her, squire, beseeching her only to wait and consult you; but you know that one might as well pray to the tides as beg that girl to alter her mind. She's gone, Hannah's gone. I wanted to wake you up, but she wouldn't let me. She started on foot for

Wardenham at a quarter to seven with nothing but a small bag. She left this note for you, squire.'

"The note trembled in Uncle Peter's hand, and I thought to myself, 'You see now, you see, what mischief you have done by your quixotism'; yet I couldn't help pitying him. I don't know why he took it with such frightful agitation. I heard him read three half-sentences half aloud: 'Gone to look for him,' and 'Do forgive him,' and 'He is as good as gold'; then all at once, before he had read all, the awful thing came: his mouth seemed to go crooked, and he staggered half-way round the table, struggling to keep up, but apparently without power on the left side, then gave in and sank down, bawling out something. It made me feel sick, his vain struggle to manage his left leg. But I was pretty brave, I didn't run, I stood over him while Mrs. Langler ran, calling out; his hat lay on the floor near him, the letter still in his right hand; his sick eyes seemed to dwell on my face.

"He was taken away in the middle of a crowd of them, and I sat there for hours, staring before me. Quite an ado was soon going on on the terrace with carriages, trunks, and departing guests, and, on my right, breakfast, talk, and hurrying feet; but I sat on alone, without moving, in a sad mood, I don't know why. The cook cooks and sweats, and adds the gravy, and then has no appetite for all her work: it is a nice world. Once Bentley looked in with his long face, and told me that Dr. Williams said that Uncle Peter had hemiplegia, a stroke all down the left side. I could have told him that. I sat there till the clock struck eleven, when I got up and went to tell Grimani where he was to meet Chris, but found him lying in the same position as during the night, in a sort of trance now apparently, with half-open eyes. When I shook him, his only answer was a murmur. I then scribbled on a bit of paper, 'Go to Miss Sheridan when you wake,' and put it into his hand. Then I came home. Grimani did not turn up till near four in the afternoon,

looking smart and wide-awake. He is rather a handsome fellow. I asked him what had made him laugh so heartily the night before when I wanted his master's violins: he answered that he had no recollection of having seen me; then I asked what drug it was which he took, and he very modestly answered — hashish. I gave him the Langham Hotel address, warning him not to mention it to any one, and he went away.”

CHAPTER VII



SHE SAYS AT a later date: "It is five months since the wedding, and this of today is only the second letter I have from Chris. I have lived without seeing him, I couldn't tell why. What a passion for itself this little hunch must cherish! Let worlds perish, it says, but let me continue to bulge about under the sun. Life is nothing, and I know it: but still I like it, I cling to it, and a scratch on one little darling hump hurts more than if all the straight backs on earth were broken. What keeps every one from suicide? It used to be fear, as Hamlet and Plato say, when there was hell-fire; but now it is hope of better things tomorrow and the love of one's personality — chiefly Hope, 'the anchor' which keeps life from drifting into death. For me there is only one hope — somehow, at the last, to have Chris. I care about nothing else. No doubt I shall fail in it, as I failed before my birth, as failure runs like a crack through my being, but I live in order to try. I must go out of this place: Chris and Yvonne must be brought together again, if I can do it; if I only had power and craft, Yvonne could be made my stepping-stone to Chris. He writes that he has kept his word to Hannah and not seen Yvonne, that he thinks of Hannah, and would like to come here to see her, if he did not fear to 'reopen her healing wound.' He has no suspicion that Hannah is away searching Europe for him; he thinks that she is still here, for I have written him that I see her, and no one here but me knows where he is to write him. My belief is that Chris is trying to 'be good,' and will return to Hannah, if something can't be contrived to send him off at a new tangent. And it should be done soon, for he comes out definitely on the third of next

month, when he gives his first recital at Queen's Hall. Hannah can't fail to find him after all that publicity. But what can I do? I can only wish and dream of doing. I wish that Yvonne was in England. If Hannah once gets him again, she will keep him. The marriage bond is always such a power in itself, and that girl certainly has some sort of fascination for many people. A fisher-boy named Cooper trudges all the way from Wardenham every Saturday afternoon to ask after her, and the villagers besiege the Langlers with questions and mes-sages. The love of some of them for her really has a touch of passion in it. I hate her. Chris's twenty-five pounds a month continues to come for her, and old Langler forwards it on. What a tax on that poor boy! He has behaved beautifully all round in the money way, refusing, Mr. Bretherton tells me, to touch a penny of the vast sums with which Uncle Peter bribed him into this marriage. I suppose, however, that his beloved Joseph will soon bring him riches — he writes that he has a Joseph now, another present from a lady! He sends me a prelude and fugue of his own writing, with the air of 'get your hair cut' for theme: it is awfully sad. He has been doing orchestral practise at a first desk on the quiet in Berlin under Strauss's baton, and is 'in a sea of music,' working hard — for the recital perhaps. I wonder if he still drinks such a terrible lot of wine. It is rather a pity, but he wouldn't be half so dear without the touch of inflammation in his nose. If he were mine, I should keep him tipsy, and we should live and die in Lethe. Hannah would 'pull him all straight,' as she says in her off-hand vernacular, and just spoil him. The day before yesterday I got a third letter from her, and she continues to write once a week to her parents and Uncle Peter, enclosing hosts of little notes to Tom, Dick, and Harry round about. She irritates me: something in me hisses at the tone of her nature, as cat detests dog. I don't know what she says to Uncle Peter, or he to her. He still babbles when he tries to talk, and old

Bentley, who does all his writing now, has a still tongue: however, he has let out to me that Uncle Peter has several times ordered Hannah back — as though any power on earth was ever going to draw that woman off her quest! She has the nature of a bull-dog. But if she doesn't come pretty soon, she will never see 'her benefactor' again, for since the stroke Uncle Peter becomes every week feebler: so I hear, for I don't see him now, I simply don't wish to.

What shall I do, if he dies? I wonder if I shall peep at the body? I shall want to awfully, I know: but shouldn't I pay for it afterwards, if I am ever so mad! Perhaps I shall see him when his spirit is 'passing,' for he always disliked me. I should simply die, I couldn't live after. I wonder if he will have a white ghost or a black. They say it isn't serious to see anything white, but that the black ones are terrible. At any rate his Hannah is really 'uglier than ever' now, for she takes no notice of his command to come back. She is still at Weimar," etc., etc.

This last was not a true statement, for under the same date Hannah herself writes:

"Arrived in Paris last night after jolly voyage from Brussels: met in train two Americans, named Moore, sisters, very rich, with their English masseuse — elder sister has weak heart, but full of fun; wanted me sudden and quick to go with her to Yankee-land! Not Hannah! for what woman, having lost a piece of silver, doth not seek diligently till she find it? Came back to Madame Brault, and, to my delight, found old room free: 197 francs, 3 francs less — a bargain! Woke up blooming, singing, this morning, and, as usual, Paris brought me luck and high spirits. First of all, walking down rue Scribe on my way to rue Croix des Petits Champs, met full-butt a monsieur on pavement, nice fat Frenchman, beautifully dressed: we couldn't get past each other! He dodged to right, I dodged to right; I dodged

to left, he dodged to left; wherever I went I found him, wherever he fled, there I was, barring his way; we kept it up for a good half-minute, trying to escape each other, but fastened together by destiny. Kept face stern as I could, but a grieved look came into his eyes, and then I couldn't help, screamed right out. He lifted his hat as we got clear, with a look which meant, 'I forgive.' This has kept me going in laughter for the day every time I think of it. Well, Hannah, a merry heart doeth good like a medicine. It is a shout only to live. My soul shall magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoice in God.

"Didn't go straight to rue Croix des Petits Champs, as I had meant, but off at a tangent to rue de Berri to visit the Gauds. Sad news there, Hannah. Every-thing squalid again, children uncared for, Gaud gone back to the absinthe! Saw it at a glance. Just planted myself down, and had a good old cry, in which madame and little Lucille joined. Said 'Never mind, soon pull him all straight again.' First Frenchman, I suppose, who ever signed a pledge, and what I've made him do once, can make him do twice. But what time does news at rue Croix des Petits Champs leave for anything? Must be in London within a week. Pray, pray for them. 'Alone God sufficeth.'

"Thence straight to rue Croix des Petits Champs" — this is the violin-street of Paris— "and to my dear old friend, Meunier. The old soul's joy at seeing me! His face lit up gloriously. Said I was talking French like a *francaise*, wicked flatterer. Had great news for me! What news? No, wouldn't tell: must first hear me play in parlor behind shop on a new Lupot which he has, bought from the year's gold-medalist at Conservatoire; so I in parlor, fiddle 'well up' at chin, he and madame all smiles and fat, listening critically, played air from 'Sonnambula' with variations. Meunier's verdict, that I had got on wonderfully, fine tone and taste, would soon get fluency; hoped I wasn't killing myself. 'Fifteen hours most days,' I told him, and the

astonishment of the pair of them! They didn't say, 'What a woman!' but 'What a race!' as though all Englishwomen were not a lot of dolls. Then, after much sweet fuss and preparation, came the great news: Chris found, the darling of my soul to be mine again. Let all that is within me shout His Name. Meunier showed English newspaper: great stir in musical Lon-don; Chris already known as 'rising star,' 'coming man,' and taker of Vienna 'by storm'; recital on 3d of next month at Queen's Hall; every one on the look-out to be taken 'by storm.' Hannah, too, will be there, will wait at stage-door, will follow Chris home. And then — what next? Shall I be turned out of doors? Don't know. The Lord judge between me and thee. Meunier sure now that Chris must have changed name after leaving Vienna, or I must have found him long since. Strange that he should go so far as that — not kind, not very like him; perhaps put into his head by some friend. I should certainly have found out about Queen's Hall recital without Meunier's help, but so thankful that it was from him and no other that I learned it, for he sent me all the way to Brussels on a false scent, and that must have been heavy on his poor old heart, but now he will say, 'Yes, I sent her on false scent, but at the last it was I who found him for her.' In three days, then, for London: must lose fortnight's pension, paid in advance, 98 francs, 50. Don't care, all in the day's work."

CHAPTER VIII



CHRIS WILSON WAS in chambers in Gray's Inn when the morning of his recital, the third of the month, came round. He had meant to do his day's practice early, so as to have fresh nerves for the evening, but he lay late abed that morning — awake, indeed, but uncalled. The clock's hands moved on from nine to ten, to half past, and it was pathetic, his meek, smiling patience, the stirring of his eyebrows for wonder that Grimani did not come, and his lack of power to rise without Grimani. He was not altogether sorry to be let alone, for he had sat up till four a. m. with a gay crew in Victoria; but when it became eleven, that was too much, and Chris began to call out for Grimani.

There was no answer.

At last, at twenty past eleven, Chris leapt from bed: and he was no sooner on his feet than he had a fresh insight into the value of time, like a fresh sense and pair of eyes, of which he had been bereft while he lay pleasing himself abed. And he became on a sudden very angry.

Hurrying straightway, therefore, into Grimani's room, Chris began to use strong words, but soon saw that they were wasted, for Grimani lay in the trance which the Arabs call the "kief" — the last of the three states through which one passes under the power of hashish; so Chris, without more words, fell upon his valet, pulling and beating him.

When he had got Grimani more or less awake, he said to him: "I will bear it no longer. Off you go this very day, and this time I mean it. It is

simply pitiful how you neglect me. Get me my breakfast quickly, call the woman in, pack your trunk, and never come back to me again.”

Grimani, in a bad temper at being hustled down thus suddenly out of heaven, began to answer back that he was glad enough to get out of such a place, that, if he took hashish, Chris took wine, and it was six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, etc., etc., whereat Chris fled from his valet's tongue with the words, “Off you go.”

Grimani then pulled himself together, and got the breakfast. Not a word was said while he waited at table, till, toward the end, he asked, “Do you really mean me to go away?” to which Chris answered, “Yes, off you go; I mean it this time.”

“C'est tres-bien!” (All right!) said Grimani in the tone of a threat.

He did his work, summoned before her time the house-woman, or “laundress,” as they are called in the Inn, and lingeringly packed his trunks, half expecting Chris to come and make friends before it should be too late. But Chris was now in another world, with a fiddle under his chin. At last Grimani, having no excuse to stay longer, went to be paid his wages, still hoping that Chris would say something pleasant. But Chris paid him with a flushed forehead in an irritated haste at being stopped in his morning work; and Grimani left the room with his check in a grim, Italian mood.

He knew that that night was to be one of the greatest in Chris's musical career, and he made up his mind that Chris, if he played at all, should play badly. Grimani and Chris had been so long and closely bound together, that to be turned off in this way was, naturally, a painful shock to the valet. Something of this kind had, indeed, happened often before, but had never gone so far; and a Neapolitan does not go unavenged. Grimani, accordingly, after being paid, went back to his portmanteau, and took out a little tin box. This box had in it a substance something like greengage jam, but paler; it

was hashish, the so-called “fat extract” of cannabis (hemp boiled with butter). One takes only a teaspoonful of this in order to get up into one of Grimani’s heavens, but Grimani now took out nearly a tablespoonful of it; he next took out a decanter of wine from a cabinet in the sitting-room, poured in the hashish, shook it up, put back the decanter; from the next room came the music which Chris was making. The Italian’s lips were banefully set; when his wicked work was done, he made haste to leave the flat.

He knew that Chris, before setting out to play, always drank of the Alicante wine in that particular decanter, which followed Chris from city to city. Grimani was sure, therefore, that the very hashish for which he was being sent away would not fail to bring him his revenge.

That, on the whole, was a day of flurry and trouble for Chris. About one p. m. a mob of idle young men came upon him, and the “laundress” being gone, no one opened the door to them. “Grimani!” shouted Chris, but no Grimani answered. Chris had to let them in himself, and ever and anon broke in upon the babel of their talk by shouting “Grimani!” in a pathetic way, till it dawned upon his memory that he had sent Grimani away; then he had to go out to meet several people, such as his accompanist, a famous Polish pianist, Hill’s, the hall-manager, his agent, and some others whom he was bound to see, but either forgot, or had not enough time. Late in the afternoon the quaint maid with Miss Olivia called upon him, but no one opened to them. When at last Chris returned home to dress with four or five young men at his heels, it was already time for the concert to begin. In the midst of his dressing he ran and poured out a tumbler of the wine drugged by Grimani, but some one speaking to him drew off his mind, and he was in such a prickly heat of haste, that in the end he rushed out of his chambers without having drunk any of the drugged Alicante. Chris was always late

for concerts, and for everything; so the tumbler of drugged wine was left standing on the table of his sitting-room.

When he drove up with his friends to Queen's Hall, his audience was already getting restless for him. Hannah wrote of it that "Though I didn't know who was who, I felt that 'everybody' was there; I well in front, area, five shillings; he scandalously late; crowd waiting on one boy; Hannah's heart wild as a bird. Then these eyes saw him — frock-coat, stout, forehead flushed with haste, nose a bit shiny, and very modest and dear he looked, with his meek, drowsy eyes, his meek, dear smile. People clapped; he and H bowed; in another half-minute he had one by the ears — fugue of Bach. That wasn't much, perhaps, but, if I were paid, couldn't describe how it all went on after the Kreutzer bit, I in a kind of ecstasy, and toward the end a scene of really high-wrought excitement throughout that hall, not at all the ordinary applause, but bursting out uncontrollably, like cries of the heart; I, too, clapping without knowing; old gentleman whispered agitatedly at my ear, 'The first English maestro.' During the Kreutzer his E string went — hundreds of opera-glasses bent upon his fingers — didn't mind a bit, on he went, his two hands all over the place at once, plucking, striking, darting, face flushed, hair trembling, octaves coining like one note, harmonics precise as fate; seems greatest in f and bravura passages, 'rides the storm,' has a Joseph now from somewhere — sounded to me like a Joseph; and all the time something whispering to me, 'This boy who is shaking this hall as one shakes a child by the shoulders, as one stirs a pot, as angel troubled waters of Siloam, he is married to you, Hannah, all this crowd strangers to him, but you his own wife.' I cried and laughed, proud of him. Yes, Chris mayn't be a saint or a hero, but a hero in his way, like Samson 'brings down the house,' can do one thing wildly well, is God's workman. If a man can do his work, forgive him all his sins. Chris doesn't play to audience, plays to

himself, audience just happens to overhear him playing. That's right! — in all art, in art of living: 'Let not thy left hand know!' Hearty sincerity, 'the inner life': then don't much heed what anybody thinks, just jog stubbornly along the right path, humming to yourself, 'Let's all be jolly, boys.' Chris has this sincerity and inner musical life, and it streams from him in psychic waves which thrill those capable of being thrilled by high things: that's his secret. Others stir, seldom so powerfully. Hall continued to be crowded long after concert, handkerchiefs and programs waving, recalled eighteen times, gave two extra pieces, a Lied, and nocturno out of M.N.'s Dream; felt pained for him coming and going in and out so often; even when hall had slowly emptied, still a sprinkling of enthusiasts calling him back, ladies pressing upon stage-steps to shake hands, then outside another mob besieging carriage, he meek and good, shaking most hands. Procession of four cabs full of men followed his off, don't know who they were, friends: the sixth was mine.

"The lot of us to Grosvenor Square, stopped at big house with porch, where all went in, I waiting in my cab with the empty cabs: something told me he didn't live there, waited a long time, drizzly dark night, hardly any one about there. Then heard fiddling in house, not his at first, but presently his, I was certain, then piece after piece by him. Didn't know what to make of it, at last got out of cab and rapped; asked footman if Mr. Wilson lived there: 'No, was there, didn't live there.' 'Whose house?' 'Lord L 's,' musical patron and amateur. Waited till near mid-night, when out they came again, pitched into waiting cabs, and away, I following, noisy laughter from cabs in front. They got out in narrow street near Leicester Square, and into drinking-place called Gambrinus.' I waited twenty minutes, till they came noisier than ever, then followed to quiet sort of nook called 'the Albany,' behind Regent Street — residential chambers. All went into a house, I

waiting with other cabs to see if he would come out, my heart weary for him. One o'clock, half past, two: London well asleep. Soon after two they came again, he arm in arm with loud-laughing, bearded foreigner. The five cabs started off once more, I, as usual, following ten yards behind; in Piccadilly they parted, his going eastward into Long Acre, I after him. Drove into Holborn, where he and two others got out at a gate and rang bell; night-porter opened, they went in; soon I, too, rang, went in, passed through one square into another, and saw them just entering house, he between the other two, arm in arm. I followed into house, and, guided by their noise, went up quaint, rickety stairs with large banisters to second floor. Waiting on landing, heard them behind massive black door which had 'Mr. Chris Wilson' on it in white letters; could just see by light burning on landing below. Knew now where he lived, so ran down and out to gate again, paid cabman — ten shillings after a wrangle! — then in again and up to landing before door. Why couldn't I have waited till next day now that I knew? If I only had! Impulse and warm heart will bring these silly, erring feet into some nice trap some day, Hannah.

"Waited on landing fifteen minutes for two friends to leave, heart literally in my mouth. It had come to the point now. Something said to me, 'It would be far better all round to wait till tomorrow, especially as you are in such a blue fright now'; but the more everything in me urged flight, the more my feet stuck where they were. Headlong self-will passing itself off in the guise of 'duty that lies nearest,' and what has it brought me into now! Oh, it was God's will to humble me horribly that night, that I may know better the poor thing that I am.

"They came out at last, the two friends — miserably tipsy; I stole into the dark higher up the stairs, till Chris had slammed his 'oak' after them;

then all was still, till a town-clock struck three; hung up there on stairs fully five minutes, then with a rush was down, knocking at his door.

“Heard him coming, laughing to himself, and the moment he saw me he upset me by bursting out into heartiest laughter! ‘What, a woman?’ said he. ‘Chris, it is I,’ I said. ‘Who are you?’ he asked, laughing. ‘Look at me, Chris,’ I said, ‘it is Hannah.’ He thought it over a moment, then said, ‘What, my own lawful wife?’ — and he went off afresh into the same delicious giggling. Oh, he was tipsy! I should have had to laugh, too, if I hadn’t been so jumpy. ‘If you are glad to see me,’ I said, awfully agitated, ‘I will come in for twenty minutes.’ ‘Mmm,’ he went, ‘my own dear friend, I am charmed to see you; come in instantly.’ Another moment and he was laughing again, his cheek against mine, arm round my waist, drawing me to sofa, where he sat beside me. It was cozy in there, those old rooms most artistically furnished, with a French touch. I felt all shut in with him, alone in a world, and couldn’t help being soft-soaped at my hearty reception, but didn’t quite like the wine-inspired kisses or mocking laughter, and made up my mind sharply, inflexibly (as I thought), to tear myself away within five minutes, for my fiddler began to be pressing, and when I was coy, said, ‘Mmm, are you not my wife?’ as though nothing had ever happened between that boy and me! But that wasn’t good enough for Hannah, though inwardly pleased as Punch, and I thought, ‘He shall never say that I got over and bound him irrevocably to me when he was tipsy: it is urgent that I go quickly!’ It was hard to do, he so fond, endearing, boy-like, but still I was on the very point of going: I remember that much distinctly. Then, why, as a matter of fact, didn’t I go till two P. M. the next day? What a mystery! Did I, too, get tipsy? Seems utterly impossible! True, haven’t drunk wine for ten years, except in church, but I hardly took more then than at Holy Communion! Two sips, perhaps three. Did that get into my head?

Wonderful sort of wine! No, can't think that: no head so weak. But something did happen to me: am as sure of it as of sitting here. In any case, the shame, the weakness and pain of it!

“There was a tumbler half full of wine and a decanter on table near sofa where we sat; twice or thrice Chris sipped from tumbler; I was talking about recital, just ready to fly, when he, left arm round me, held tumbler to my lips with his fond murmur; I shook my head, but when he pleaded ‘Oh, just a little Alicante,’ sipped a little. Have a fancy now that it tasted funny — buttery like: not sure; but from that time remember clearly nothing, nothing that happened: all like wonderful, but most shameful, dream. Either once or twice afterwards, I sipped more Alicante; don't remember; it might have been a dozen times, really, I lived through that night in such a profound haze. Haze of tar-rainbows! Ungodly Utopia! The state I allowed myself to get into! What, what can have happened to me? Every power of mind and body seemed so enlarged! How enormously I loved that night! How we two giggled to each other! Shame, to my last breath. Was it really? No good thing in me, then? Seem to have utterly forgotten promise to myself to fly from him! Can any will be quite so godlessly forgetful? And the wicked pride which puffed me! Remember feeling that whatever I did must be right, had been a fool all my life, but now was ‘all there,’ all the world fools, except Chris and me; and this kept growing, I fancy, beyond measure into impiety, till at last I said, satisfied, ‘Well, I am God; and Chris is with me in the Heavens.’ Can't be too sure, all very muggy and far-off; only know that I must have either gone raving mad, or very drunk.

“Another woman might have sworn that Chris drugged wine! Have heard of such things. But impossible to him in any case, and in my case how foolish, being his already. No, something happened inside my brain,

the will of God to humble my womanhood to the dust. Shall I ever laugh again?

“Some time or other I fell into a sleep full of trances and visions that seemed to last a hundred years, and though I only dimly remember whatever I did, I clearly remember whatever I dreamt, for reality seems to have become a dream, dreaming the only reality. When I woke was by the side of Chris, who was asleep. Had never known complete wretchedness till that moment; woke sane, slight pain in head, conscience heavy, like waking in Hell, and, like stab to the heart, a guess, a knowledge of all. Clock pointed to one-thirty — in the day! but room still very dim. Sat up quickly, pulled myself together, saw at once my life done for, since Chris would and must hate me always for tricking him into this while hopelessly tipsy. Dared to pray, even then, for a bruised reed He will not break, and has regard to the humble in heart: and answer came quickly — a flood of inspiration, saying, ‘Get away quickly, for since he was so very tipsy when you came, and his memory always bad, he may forget that you were ever here; then all will be as if nothing had happened; tomorrow or some time you can come afresh.’ Looked close at dear face — fast asleep, eyes a little open; in a moment was up, dressing, never dressed so quickly, not minding buttons, hair anyhow, laces all over the place; was in the act of rushing out with jacket hanging over arm, hatpins, umbrella in hand, when something said, ‘But suppose, suppose: may you not some day need proof that you once passed a night in these rooms?’ Stopped, thought it quickly out; made up my mind to take away something peculiar, precious, which would be at once known, if ever tendered as proof and pledge. Looked about — four violins; didn’t like to take, lest he might want, but, hung up here and there, museum of out-of-date fiddles, old viol d’amore, six-stringed Duiffoprugcar, small viol di Gamba with neck gone, a rebec, crowth, rotta;

took viol di Gamba, then, to make sure, took from dressing-table watch and chain, old amethyst ring with intaglio, and nail-brush engraved with word 'Chris' in silver; then made escape.

"Outside on 'oak' five cards pinned up — visitors — also bit of paper with 'Mrs. Hewett, the laundress, called, but could not get in.' What a sleep! All those people knocking, and neither of us hearing a sound!

"Finished dressing on landing, went down, broad day seeming strange to my eyes, got into first cab, and home to Guilford Street. Fresh trouble waiting there for Hannah, as sparks fly upward! Letter from mama: Sir Peter really dying at last, asks for me. Should have started at once, but not equal to it today; head still going round, round, hands shaky; but nothing must keep me from his death-bed: sent telegram, 'Come by early train tomorrow.' Am writing now in bed, half-past ten: last night at this time was following his cab about London, self-sure, silly, little dreaming what trap lay waiting for my feet. How much has happened since! The short distance we see before! 'A little longer lend Thy guiding Hand to these dark steps, a little further on.' To-morrow morning by the nine-fifteen for home. Will write first a note, 'Am at Orrock'; then, if he remembers and cares, he will come to me."

Hannah did duly depart the next morning to Sir Peter Orrock's dying bed, after writing a word to Chris. But her hope that Chris would forget all about her visit when he woke was perfectly fulfilled. Hashish has that effect of blotting out and drowning real happenings under dreams, and Chris had already well drunk of the wine drugged by Grimani before ever Hannah rapped at his door and appeared before him. Even the little that Hannah in her diary remembers of what happened after she had drunk is remarkable, and due only to her very powerful memory. As to Chris's memory, it was even weaker than hers was strong, for it often happened to him, when his

head was full of music, to stand still in a street and look about in a lost way, asking himself, 'Am I in Paris now or in London? Whither am I going, and for what?' When therefore he woke from the hashish it was with all memory of Hannah's visit cleared from his mind. She, for her part, had the instinctive feeling that he would forget because of her own very vague memory of all that had happened: hence she had taken the viol and other things as her proofs, and had done well.

Chris, on missing these, made up his mind that he had been robbed by a burglar, and was furious at the loss of his viol di Gamba. He meant to put the matter into the hands of the police, but shirked the boredom of it, and soon forgot.

CHAPTER IX



MEANWHILE, HANNAH HAD left off the chase of a husband to give herself to the dying man; the strain of her mind turned from Chris to Sir Peter in the easiest way; and as to her nursing, Miss Praed, the nurse, said to Mrs. Dene, the housekeeper, "Certainly, whatever her hand finds to do she does with her might; and she is a born nurse, though rather untidy sometimes."

Miss Praed had not left the Hall since that first breakdown of Sir Peter's due to sleeping in a draft seven months before.

"It is extraordinary, too," answered Mrs. Dene, "how the old man rallied when she came. He was expected to die, you remember, that very day of her arrival just five weeks ago, and he is still holding out. I suppose it is because he is so wonderfully attached to her, for he no longer tries to hide it."

"Or it may be simply animal magnetism," said Miss Praed, "the actual passing of power out of a powerful life into a dying one. When old King David was dying they put a young damsel into bed with him, and that kept him living; and so it may be in this case, for I never knew anyone with such beaming health as Mrs. Wilson. Perhaps we all rise better after sitting near those sort of people, and that's why we like them, being just conscious that we get something out of them."

"But is Hannah quite well at present?" said Mrs. Dene. "Hardly quite herself, I have thought — a little falling off in the laughter and fresh color. Haven't you noticed anything?"

Miss Praed smiled mysteriously at this, saying, "Perhaps she and the genius have met oftener than we suppose!"

"Oh, no — nothing," said Mrs. Dene. "They have not met since the wedding day; I have questioned Mrs. Langer — there's nothing, nothing."

"Oh, Mr. Wilson, shall I never meet you again to pour out to you a piece of my mind?" sighed Miss Praed, just as Hannah herself passed swiftly through the apartment, smiling upon them with her eyes; for another nurse having just taken her place at the sick-bed, she was going out for her night-walk. Coming home again had been a gladness to her, she had such a love for small things, and for each tree and face in the old place; but even now, after five weeks, she had not yet peeped afresh at everything, and that night she went all along the cliffs, watching to see what fresh bits the sea had washed away during her months of absence, for she knew every yard of the coast, and wherever change had taken place her memory stored it. A yard more had gone just where Mrs. Dawe's cottage had slipped, and three more coffin-feet were showing — for the coffins are buried with their feet to the east. Up and down the cliff-paths she climbed and slid, or walked along the broad sands, nothing moving in the vast of nature but her, for it was late, the harvest-moon was shining as on that night before her marriage when Chris, Yvonne, Kathleen, and she had strolled thereabouts together; and lonesome she looked in that scene, yet she was of it, the soil was in her blood, the sea had a meaning there which she knew by heart from of old. Paris and London were nice as shows, but here was home and the old rock: and she looked at everything with the feelings of an owner.

After her long stroll she sat down in her favorite spot, the Orrock grave in old St. Peter's churchyard, and there had a spell of what she called "the blues." Her future was so dark. Chris would leave London again before she could leave Sir Peter. Writing again to Chris, she thought, was no good; she

had received no answer to her note, 'I am at Orrock'; but she had such a settled faith in her power of "influencing" every one, that she did not doubt that all would be well, if she once got the chance of "influencing" him at close quarters. However, he would be off again somewhere, and she was most eager now to be with him because of a thing which lay locked in her bosom, unknown, she believed, to any one.

But the thing was known to the quaint maid, who about that time wrote of it, "I am burning with fever. Hannah is going to have a child. What a depth of reserve must be in the woman! Her mother or no one has the faintest suspicion! I haven't slept the whole night; read it all in her diary yesterday, for, with all her innate secrecy, she hasn't a scrap of caution, and leaves things about. I knew that she keeps a diary, and have often felt a wish to read about her travels, little imagining that it would ever be gratified, or that I should read the awful things that are in that book. Yesterday when I went down to ask after Uncle Peter, Miss Praed told me that Hannah was with him, so, in passing by Hannah's room, I went in, I don't know why — the pleasure of doing something unseen — certainly, I had no thought of her diary: but there on the top of her clothes it lay. She is by nature untidy, I have heard her mother say, and only tidy by habit; her trunk lay open, a black note-book on the clothes. I pounced upon it — her diary! — one of the entries only a day old. I stood just inside the door, ready to drop it and fly. How very little courage must the gods have breathed into this box at my birth! little courage, much desire. If I had been caught, I should have died, but if I had had to die, I should still have read. There was no real danger of any one coming for hours perhaps, the house up there as soundless as the grave, and I might have read the whole thing at my ease, but read only a few pages, then threw it back, and ran. But I had seen enough.

“She hasn’t written it down in so many words, but from hints in the last few pages it is evident that she is grosse. I nearly fainted. She was at Chris’s recital! but how the woman locks things up in her interior! She has given every one the impression that she has not seen Chris, and now she will have to pay for it, for she is evidently in a pretty scare at what is going to be born without any assignable father. Yes, she was at the recital, followed Chris about London in a cab, then forced herself into his chambers at three in the morning when she knew that he was tipsy. This is the staid Hannah Langer! What a scandal! Uncle Peter’s pet! the ‘saint of Woodside!’ ‘How enormously I loved that night,’ writes this saint on the spree. If she had dropped dead at his door! How dared she? What claim has she upon Chris, when he has shown clearly how he regards her? Her calm self-assurance! How I hate her! And after wantonly drinking with him and getting excited, to insinuate to herself that Chris drugged the wine, and to whine to God to forgive her on that account, when she had well eaten her cake! Oh, Hannah, we are all saints after the fifth act. ‘Follow me as I follow — Chris!’

“After eating her cake she proceeded to steal Chris’s viol de Gamba, his watch and chain, a ring, and a brush, thinking that, if he forgets everything, these would serve as proofs in case of motherhood; so this explains the mystery of the ‘burglar’ of which Chris told me in London. Chris apparently has absolutely forgotten that any one was in his chambers that night, so that, if the proofs were stolen from Hannah — but that way trouble lies, I mustn’t think of that.

“The things must lie in her trunk — unlocked — easy enough to get at; she is careless; and I will surely do it, if I let my mind dwell upon it like this. Lord keep me out of all madness and dangers.

“Uncle Peter won’t last many days now, and when he is dead I shall certainly have to fly from here; so, if I am to do anything as to the viol and

trinkets, it must be quickly. They don't belong to Hannah Langer; I am Chris's cousin; and they should be easy enough to get, if I only had the courage, if I am not too hopelessly ill.

“If she becomes a mother, possessing these proofs, she will have Chris. Chris is bete, a stickler for his French ‘honor.’ There isn't any hope left — unless I steal the things from her; and I will, even if I drop with them in my hands, ...” etc., etc.

CHAPTER X



THE LITTLE MAID was soon making her threatened attempt to take Hannah's viol and trinkets; her diary shows her thrice in Hannah's room, but each time she found Hannah's trunk locked, and the fierceness of her wishes was such, that she was even dreaming of forcing the lock, when on the fourth morning, as she was returning from one of her early walks, Miss Olivia ran out of the Hill-house to meet her, saying, "Well, — have you heard the bell tolling?"

A bundle of ferns and grasses in Kathleen's hand trembled.

"Sir Peter passed away at four-fifteen this morning," said Miss Olivia.

"Thank God, I was asleep, Livie," breathed Kathleen in a meek voice.

"He passed away peacefully in Hannah's arms—"

"Don't say 'pass away,' say 'die.'"

"But how pale you have gone! Come, bear up, now. We shall be going away somewhere, and you will soon be quite all right again."

"Livie, I have been in Scoble's Cave all alone for twenty minutes, getting dolomites, never dreaming —"

"Well, but you didn't see anything! You see, it is all right: you are not going to see anything, believe me. Cheer up, now. We must all die, death isn't so very much—"

"Isn't it? Hasn't the very air become sick with it? Oh, promise me, Livie, that you will be my friend and stick well to me!"

"Of course, I shall stick to you," said Miss Olivia; "what nonsense! You will soon be all right, I tell you! The funeral will be on Friday—"

“Am I bound to stay till the funeral?”

“Why, what would people think? It is only four days away! Mr. Bretherton has charge of everything, is already at the Hall, John says, and you know that he doesn’t let the grass grow under his feet. Well, well! Sir Peter is gone, I can’t realize it; one by one we all go, and it will be my turn some day.”

The quaint maid would not be alone all that day; in every sough of the autumn wind a ghost sighed away for her; death was in her water and food. But the fly braved the lion in his very den; for toward evening she went down to the house of death, which fascinated her. Hannah with the nurses and some cronies were there, all in one apartment, telling and hearing tales of Sir Peter’s life; and Kathleen came also among them. It was after dinner; the one lamp in the apartment left in shadow the portraits on the wainscot; in a chamber near lay the body. Mrs. Langler told of one ghost, Mrs. Dene of another, and Miss Praed, who was a spiritualist, of a third, while Kathleen, saying never a word, drank it all in, with Miss Olivia petting her wet hand. The little maid suffered; but there is a bliss in that kind of sickness, as when men can’t help casting themselves into precipices, or die adream in snow, or revel in the trances of drowning.

“Ever heard of Jig-Butt?” asked Hannah of Miss Praed.

“No,” said Miss Praed, all ears for the twentieth anecdote.

“His name is Butt, but we call him Jig-Butt,” said Hannah with twinkling eyes: “little ten-acre farmer with a wall-eye. A set of them were dancing at the Orrock Arms, when Sir Peter passed, heard the noise, and looked in. Everybody dancing, except Jig-Butt in a corner. ‘Well, Butt, why don’t dance?’ asked Sir Peter. ‘Lord bless us all, squire,’ answered Jig-Butt, ‘if a man can’t jig, he can’t jig.’ So ever since then he goes by the name of Jig-Butt.”

It cannot be written as she told it. Her perfect way of taking off Sir Peter and the squeaky country voice saying, "If a man can't jig, he can't jig," set all the cronies laughing.

"Poor old Jig-Butt," said Mrs. Dene, as her laughter died down.

"Tell them, Hannah, about Sir Peter and Harriet Davis," said Mrs. Langler.

"Oh, 'Rest I cannot!'" cried Hannah, nothing loth, with lively eyes. "Greatest liar in the world. Locked up her husband in their cottage one day, and when she came back found him dead. So, five months after-wards, getting somehow into talk with Sir Peter in the home-covert, and wanting to interest him in her, she said, 'I've heard an awful voice in the night, squire, at my bedside.' 'Hm, and what did voice say?' asked Sir Peter. 'Squire, I heard it say, 'Rest I cannot — rest I cannot — rest I cannot' — three times.' Sir Peter thought it over, and said, 'Better not go telling that to any of boys about, woman.' 'You think not, squire?' asked Harriet Davis. 'I do.' 'Then, squire, I wunt,' she said."

"Ah, he had a wonderful dry way with him," said Mrs Dene.

"Aye, and a kindly heart, a kindly heart," added Mrs. Langler. "There never was another like him, no, nor ever will be."

"Look at what he did to Mrs. Dawe," said Hannah. "You know, Miss Praed, that all this coast is going, the churchyard itself — you must have seen the coffin-ends sticking out — they say that some day the sea will be up to Orrock Park; well, Mrs. Dawe's cottage went two years ago this November, and being left homeless, she didn't, of course, expect to have to pay lease-rent on the bit of useless land left; but Sir Peter said she must, a bargain always a bargain for him — hard as nails! and oh! she was in a way, poor thing. Two days before Lady-day she received a heap of bank-notes — hundred pounds — brought them to show me, quite broken down, choking,

made me feel lumpy myself, didn't know where it all came from, never found out. Because he did it to the least of these, God accept him."

"And he was awfully good to those Prices, too," said Mrs. Dene, wiping her eyes.

"Ever heard of Brother Kate?" asked Hannah with sparkling eyes. "She's the eldest of the Price family. One day Sir Peter met her brother Tom — a boy of six then — so he said to Tom, 'Got an elder brother, boy?' Now, Tom had had an elder brother, but he was dead, and the silly fellow answered, 'Yes, sir.' 'What's name?' asked Sir Peter. Tom got confused, mixing up the dead elder brother with his elder sister, and he answered, 'Kate, sir.' So ever since the whole family goes by the name of 'Brother Kate'; and if you're fond of black eyes, just murmur 'Brother Kate' to yourself when one of them is about."

"They practically owe their farm to Sir Peter," said Mrs. Dene.

"What is that story?" asked Miss Praed.

Hannah told this also, ending it with a red nose-tip and wet eyelashes, and so they went on, telling anecdotes of Sir Peter's pilgrimage here below, with anon a weird story, talking of the funeral, of the opening of the grave, of how the estate might be devised, and of the chances of Chris and Yvonne coming. It was near ten o'clock when the quaint maid spoke almost her first word, and then secretly at the ear of Miss Olivia—"Come with me"; and they two went out, almost unmarked by the others, who were taken up with their talk. In the corridor outside Kathleen whispered to the other, "You wait just here, till I come back."

"Kathleen, you are not going to dare look at the body?" said Miss Olivia, staring.

"Perhaps I am, yes, I am," said Kathleen. "Don't come after me, wait just here, and if you hear me scream, run to me round that corner."

“But you mustn’t!”

“Sh-h-h — have pity!”

Kathleen, as she whispered this, was gone. In that corridor was a door of the death-chamber, but, passing this, she went round a corner into another corridor in which was also a door of the death-chamber. Miss Olivia thought that she would go in by that second door, but Kathleen had no intention of seeing the body, and only made that an excuse for her going away, crafty even in her utmost terror; her aim was to get to Hannah’s room for a fourth try at the trunk, while Hannah was gossiping. It had taken her two hours to screw her courage to the height of daring the dead man to this extent, and now she was in for it. On she hurried with that long-legged walk which hunchbacks have, and that swaying aside of the head at each step. The passing of the second door of the death-chamber was awful to her, but the corridor being more or less lit, it was only when she entered the gloom of Hannah’s room that her fears became as it were mortal, and her face had the ugliness of death. There was no electric set in the house, she did not know where to look for matches, had neither the power nor the time. When her eye fell upon the trunk and saw it shut, her heart accused the ghost of shutting it against her; and when she tried and found it unlocked, her heart accused the ghost of leaving it unlocked, in order that he might touch and blight her during her search for the things. She stooped at the trunk, groping to the bottom, every instant awaiting the icy hand. When she found the viol, she understood that she had been allowed to find it only in order that he might touch her during her search for the smaller things, and her hairs bristled when the wind stirred the arras. But Hannah’s clothes were not many, and Kathleen had soon in her hand the watch and chain, the ring, and the nail-brush, all in a little cardboard box. She had enough wit left to pat

down the clothes and shut the trunk again — the work of an instant; and with a gurgle of escape found herself once more outside in the light.

But having now got the things at so much cost, what was she to do with them? She had not thought of this, having never believed that she would really get them. Hannah, she felt, would soon miss them: they must not, therefore, be taken to the Hill, even if she could pass through the Hall without being seen with them. She had no furnace into which to throw them. If she buried them outside the Hall, she felt that the earth would cast them up again, and the burying would take time — with Olivia waiting for her. In the end, the thought arose in her to hide them in the library bureau, and catching at the first suggestion, she was off at once. A near stair led down to a lobby which opened into the library, and down this she stole swiftly. But there was no light down there, and her terrors now again thickened upon her. When she stumbled over a bear-skin in the darkness, she moaned; but she went straight, and reached her end. Knowing that a bunch of keys often hung in the center of the bureau, she groped, but could not find it; the darkness was deep there; and it was now that it flashed upon her that this was the spot at which she had once opened two oriel windows while Sir Peter slept. Not another instant would Kathleen stay in that place: she just pushed the viol and cardboard box in the space behind the bureau, and moved away, her soul flying, but not her feet, for she feared to fly, rather moving slowly, with moans. It was only when she saw the light above the stair, that she flew, and only when she was up in the corridor again that she screamed a little, and presently fell with a sob into Miss Olivia's arms.

“You have looked at the body?” asked Miss Olivia.

The little maid could not speak, but she nodded. She was got home at once, and had to stay in bed three days, even though she knew that at any moment Hannah's things might be seen in that rather open place between

the bureau and the wall. Every hour she waited to hear that Hannah had missed them from her trunk; but no news came. Those three nights she surrounded her bed with a crowd of women till a late hour, reveling in the terrors of the ghost stories which they told; when they went away, Miss Olivia remained to sleep with her.

“Will you be able to get up for the funeral, do you think?” Miss Olivia asked her.

“You know that I shan’t,” answered Kathleen, who did not intend to be up till the day after the funeral, in order then to remove the viol and box from behind the bureau.

“But you must try to be up for the reading of the will, you know,” said Miss Olivia.

“The will?” breathed Kathleen — she had forgotten about the will. It lay in that very bureau; it would be read on the evening of the funeral, probably; people would then be crowding about the bureau, might see the viol and box; or the bureau might be moved. She at once made up her mind to be up and at the funeral the next day, and to remove the viol and box before-hand.

After three days of thought she had decided to hide the viol in a coffer of which she knew in a disused region of Orrock Hall, if she could reach it unseen, and to bury the box in a sea-cave. She was wariness itself, understood that hidden things have a way of working up into daylight, looked forward fifty years, and meant to run as little risk as possible.

On the funeral day she did not drive down till near the “lifting” hour, so that she might act at a time when every one was taken up with what was going forward. A number of people were already there, their carriages, with the hearse, being drawn up before the house. The little maid easily escaped from among the mourners, got into the library, and saw behind the bureau

the viol and box quite safe. She was too soon, however. It would be ten minutes yet before the “lifting,” when the eyes of the servants and of every one would be preoccupied. She looked out from a window at the glass-houses, but her knees trembled so under her, shaking even the black plume in her hat, that she had to sit down at the bureau. It was open, Mr. Bretherton, the lawyer, had been at it, and it now came into Kathleen’s mind to read the will. In this she had no motive save that of doing something secretly wayward, and of filling up the time of waiting; so, unlocking three drawers and a panel, she penetrated to the nook of the will, for from childhood she had thoroughly known the mazes of this old piece of cabinet work. To her surprise, the will was in duplicate, for Sir Peter had lately sent over for the copy at Bretherton’s in order to make some notes, but had been surprised by illness and death. Kathleen glanced down the parchment, and her glance caused her to spring up with wonder in her looks: everywhere she saw “the said Hannah Wilson”; it seemed as if every-thing was to be Hannah’s. She herself was rich and not miserly, wanted none of her uncle’s wealth, but she was offended at the “wrong” done to the absent Chris and Yvonne in favor of this outsider, for the estate was not much entailed; and she was also afraid of the power of riches thus put into the hands of Hannah. An impulse to meddle in this overcame her, and when she again locked up the drawers of the bureau, the two copies of the will had been pushed into Hannah’s viol through the sound-holes.

This new impulse drove her to run to hide the viol rather sooner than she had meant; so, covering the viol and box as best she could under her cape, she came out into the lobby, ran up the stairs into a corri-dor, passed Hannah’s room. No one was to be seen, but just there by Hannah’s door she heard behind her a step running up the stair. A sense of the unseen power that is in the world at once turned her faint. The crazy thought came into her

mind that the step was Hannah's, who must suspect, and was following her; for it sounded like a woman's step. In fact, it was only Miss Olivia's, who was seeking for Kathleen; but there was a moment when the little maid, bewitched by it, was on the point of stopping, of dropping every-thing, and of screaming out. However, she ran on. The trinkets in the box and the two wills in the viol made sounds, being shaken up, and the steps continued to chase her, for Miss Olivia wished to ask whomever it was that she heard before her where Kathleen was. Here was real trouble for Kathleen, unlike her ghostly fears in this, that in one's fear of ghosts there is always a doubt whether they are really any ghosts; but here was real trouble and shame. When she came to the first door of the death-chamber, the steps behind were about to turn a corner, and in another moment Kathleen would have been seen, if she had not plunged into the room with the corpse. There she stood, staring with her eyes at the coffin, staring with her ears at the footsteps. The footsteps came and went past, but even when they were no longer to be heard, Kathleen stood rooted, unable to move. The coffin was on the bed, the dead man in it, the sheet which had covered it already drawn away, the lid lying askew on it. The chamber was large and airy. No one was there. It was a sunshiny afternoon of autumn. Outside in the dying year a wind arose with the voice of the viol, and died away with that universal meaning at which the soul faints. The little maid now lacked the power to run any farther: her eyes stole round the chamber, seeking a temporary hiding-place for the things. There was the wardrobe. She stepped toward that on tiptoe, her eyes fixed on the coffin. But the wardrobe would not open to her: she should have turned the key twice, but was too much out of herself to think of this; and while fumbling, she heard a troop of steps coming. Now she stood at bay, feeling herself undone: her eyes moved basely a little from side to side. But all at once her craft sprang up and

flourished in spite of all things against her, and she was in action the most gallant, as when little timid birds face a wolf. Her eyes, still fixed upon the coffin, saw the safest, surest hiding-place in the world. She guessed that the foot-steps were those of the undertaker and his men, coming to screw down and “lift.” She understood that no eye would peep into that coffin again forever: and she was soon touching what she loathed. Pushing the lid a little more aside at the foot, she fixed the viol between the two legs of the dead; in placing with it the little box, her hand touched what was as cold as marble. When she had fixed the viol and box, she drew back the shroud over them — all in some seconds. The footsteps were now near, but she had still time to take one flying peep at the face, she could not help it now that she was so near: she dared to lift the face-cloth a little, and saw ...

When the men came in the little maid was kneeling at the bedside, sobbing faintly, one of them bore her away, while the others hurriedly screwed down, for they were some minutes late. Kathleen lay on a sofa shaken with sobs almost till the funeral started; a month afterwards she wrote in her diary, “I am perfectly convinced that he scowled at me.”

“We had cards given us,” she wrote, “to show our places. I drove behind Sir George Iliffe, in front of whom were Hannah and her parents. Olivia kept plying me with smelling-salts. The tolling of the bell was awful: that, I think, is the worst of all, the soprano of the knells shivering at the grave. Who invented bell-tolling? How wild a soul! What a poet! No one knew how much was being buried: only I. I felt old and wrinkled; for doing certain things makes one old. Moral people are best off; but there never were any, and never will be. We are all alike, a saint is the same thing as a sinner, and all men are liars. Very regrettable but true: fie, the hand of the Potter shook. I shan’t care; when you are once on a road, you must go on. J’accuse, et je defie! I didn’t fashion my soul any more than I fashioned my

back, and we are all humped inside, a happy-go-lucky crew. Look at Hannah, with her ‘How enormously I loved that night!’ — praying, nursing, hymn-shouting Hannah. Christian talk, that! modest behavior! I wish she had dropped dead. She would have loved just the same ‘that night,’ if she hadn’t been married to Chris, and if she hadn’t loved so ‘enormously’ I shouldn’t have had to bury her viol and things deep in brick whence even the hand of Time shall never unearth them. Yes, Uncle Peter, you loved her and disliked me, in each case without cause; but you shall guard her treasure well from her for me. ‘The wicked’ mostly have their way and ‘flourish,’ and the rewards of vice and virtue are about equal. Vice is brackish afterwards; there is a certain failure of satisfaction after the deed is done; but virtue is bitter beforehand, though nice after: so they are about equal. I am pretty happy in my own way, and will jog along. It is only a month since the funeral, and already I am no longer afraid during the daytime; this old Chateaubrun of Yvonne’s is too charming a place to harbor many ghosts. But I suffered truly that day: the tolling of the bell, and the dead-march, it can’t be uttered what they sang to the very quick of me. I wouldn’t go into the church, but the march reached me outside. Then, standing about twenty yards from the grave, I looked on at the lowering, the horrid ropes grating; Olivia could not get me away; I stayed to the very end and after it, till only Hannah was left, with Mrs. Langler and old Watts, the relieving-officer, who was one of the pall-bearers. It was nearly night, and still they stood there, looking down, Hannah with a red nose, at the foot of the grave toward the sea. She did not know all that was just under her feet,” etc, etc.

CHAPTER XI



“CHRIS WAS STAYING with Count Orsi and giving concerts at the Fondo in Naples at the time of the funeral,” writes the quaint maid further. ‘Yvonne was at Chateaubrun, entertaining, so couldn’t come. I didn’t mean to leave the Hill for two days, for I was not ready, but the first thing I heard on opening my eyes the morning after the funeral was that Hannah was gone; and I at once made up my mind to go, too. How crazy, I thought, must she be to be with Chris! She had hardly had the decency to go home from the grave with her mother, when she was off. She must certainly have hoped that Uncle Peter had left her something, but she didn’t even stay to see if there was a will, or what was in it. Even if Chris had been nothing to me, the mere heat of the woman to have him would have made me wish to disappoint her; but what irritates me most is her calm assumption of ownership in Chris, as though she was anything to him. At any rate, she was gone, evidently without missing the viol and things from her trunk — believing them still there! She will never now be able to trace even where she lost them. I felt that if she once got at Chris, who had been trying to be good, and had not seen Yvonne for months, then Chris would easily become her prey, and that nothing could prevent this — except Yvonne; and I at once telegraphed to Yvonne, begging her to invite me to Chateaubrun, since I couldn’t stay at the Hill. I got the answer at noon, ‘Come at once’; and Olivia and I slept in London that night.

“It is an ill wind that blows no one any good, and the death of Uncle Peter, besides making me nearly twice as rich, has left me as free as a bird.

True, he never presumed when alive to meddle in my goings and comings, but he was my ‘guardian’ — tender ‘guardian’! — and I had the consciousness of his old eyes and grumpy censorship being always there. That first night in London I had such a feeling of liberation and of being out on the spree; and Olivia and I enjoyed ourselves thoroughly, like Bohemians. Piccadilly Circus is no fit place for ghosts, mon oncle.

“As soon as we got out of the train at Liverpool Street, I sent a long telegram, like a letter, to the Orsi Palace, telling Chris that since Uncle Peter had died intestate, and most of the oof would be his, it was essential to his interests to meet me after his farewell at the Fondo, so that I might talk over matters with him; and I added that I was on my way to Yvonne at Chateaubrun, which would be a good half-way meeting place.

“I thought to myself, ‘This will furnish an excuse to his conscience, for he can say to himself that he is only coming on business, and, if he has the least longing left to see Yvonne, he will deceive himself, and come.’

“The next morning I left for Paris, and reached Toulouse at 2.15 p. m. the day after. Yvonne was outside the station in a carriage, and almost her first words were, ‘There is a telegram for you at the chateau.’ From Chris! ‘I shall be with you on Thursday the 5th.’

“How I expected him on that 5th! and on the 6th and 7th the same wretchedness over again. He didn’t come, and I began to make sure that Hannah had entrapped him.

“But at eleven in the morning of the 8th, I on the terrace saw him coming. I waved my handkerchief like a flag of victory. There he was in the old short jacket, the Tyrolese cloth hat on the back of his curls, and Grimani (taken back at last!) with the elaborate case of the Joseph in his hand. Ah, what a different Chateaubrun it suddenly became that bright day! The cicadas, the trees, became parts of an orchestra, the world turned into an

Olympian concert-hall. There was no end to the music till dinner, and, oh Heaven, what sweets that day! It was one swoon to me. Music isn't music in England, it must be here in the South, where the sun ripens the heart like a grape, and sets the blood whispering like passionate wine; and I am sure that nobody in the world can really accompany Chris but me: he as good as said so; I do it by nature, with an over-perfection and an over-ease which purrs and becomes voluptuous.

“‘This is a surprise, monsieur,’ said Yvonne on shaking hands. I had not told her a word beforehand, for I wished her to be taken by surprise, but she got through the meeting with perfect chic and unconsciousness — much better than he. ‘Didn’t Kathleen tell you that I was coming to talk over some affairs?’ he blurted out. Yvonne looked at me and said pointedly, ‘Kathleen is always at her best when she speaks, but she often has reasons to be silent.’ I disliked her for it. I, too, have a tongue with a point, and it may sting some day.

“She took no part in the music all the afternoon; her manner was as if she and Chris had not met before. The old baronne d’Estampe, looking like a dame Louis Seize, played her old chords and arpeggios on the harp, and Arbos gave his canzonets: the rest was Chris and I, Yvonne meantime keeping up an elaborate gaiety and aloofness. She loves Chris, *cela se voit*. In the evening Chris and I in the pine-avenue: Yvonne declined to come; and I unwisely glad of it. He liked the chateau: ‘Charming place!’ I told him the names of plants, and showed him their structure. He said, ‘You know everything; you are both virtuoso and savant.’ I suppose I am a special little one — better somehow perhaps in my essence than anybody! If I could only always feel it, have the pluck of it! Then I should not struggle and stew in this self-consciousness.

But I am only conceited when alone. My soul has no skin, every wind blisters it. It is the hump! — this millstone, this prison. ‘Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body?’

“I pretended great interest in his Orrock affairs, advised this and that. ‘But,’ said he, ‘how comes it that our good Uncle Peter died without a will? I distinctly remember his telling me that Hannah was to be his heiress.’

“‘It happened so,’ I said; ‘old men are capricious, Chris.’

“‘Or, more likely, it is a mere accident,’ he said. ‘Perhaps I ought to make over to Hannah all this property. It will be only fitting, for Hannah, you know, is not really of yeoman race—’

“‘What do you mean, Chris?’ I asked, too soon, for he said, checking himself, ‘I am under a promise.’

“What could he possibly have meant? I pressed him, but he wouldn’t tell. Something he has dreamt! Hannah would laugh to hear that old Langler isn’t a yeoman. As to making over his inheritance to her, I treated that with derision, telling him that the world is a practical place, not cloud-land. I hope I persuaded him, but am not sure. He couldn’t be so feeble. I asked him if he had seen Hannah since the wedding night: his answer was, ‘You know that I have not been to Norfolk since.’ This relieved me, showing that he still imagines her down in Norfolk, that he has really forgotten her night in his London chambers, and that she has not run across him during his delay in coming to Chateaubrun from the 5th to the 8th, though she was then pretty certainly some-where about Naples, seeking him. I thoroughly enjoyed that walk with him up and down the pine-avenue, but I saw that he still thinks so much of Hannah, that, if she once said to him, ‘A child is going to be born to you and me, I swear it,’ he would be inclined to believe her, however deeply buried in brick the proofs of it may be — unless he had first got well entangled with Yvonne, and so become deaf to Hannah.

Yvonne, as before, was the pivot. I asked him how long he would be staying at Chateaubrun? He answered meekly, 'I have not been asked to stay. I shall go back to Toulouse to-night.' This did not suit me. When we got back to the terraces they were all pacing about in the moonlight, with something eighteenth-century in the scene of statues, waterworks, and pacing groups. Yvonne was with de Marsillac. I left Chris with madame la baronne and Marthe Wesendonk, and joined her. 'Chris,' I said 'is going back to Toulouse presently.' 'Is he?' said she, 'then I must give the necessary orders, or will you see to everything?' 'I will see to everything at once,' I said. At this we both stood silent, until she asked, 'Has he a courier? Will he be sleeping in Toulouse?' 'Yes,' I said, 'but you know, Yvonne, that there is no really comfortable hotel in Toulouse.' 'Oh, everywhere is a palace to poets,' said she; 'but is Lady Wilson with him at Toulouse? I forgot to ask him.' 'There is no Lady Wilson, Yvonne,' I said, 'you know that, though there will be one in three days' time, if Chris is sent away.' 'I'm glad of that,' said she; 'you pronounce it like a threat, but you must mean it as a promise, his wife is in all respects so admirable a lady.' 'That is just where the danger lies,' I said, vexed, 'in the fact that he thinks more of her than of — any one.' 'You excepted, I am certain, Kathleen,' she said. 'And you, perhaps,' I retorted in my rage. '7 perhaps and you certainly,' she said: 'That is an exception and a half.' She referred to my dwarfishness, of course, and the smartness of her repartees don't lessen their smart; but her half-a-cousin has finesse, too, in plenty, when collected, and my revenge may come. I dared not hit back then: my object was to get her to ask Chris to stay, and I was afraid to exasperate her, though I knew that she was hungering to keep him. For a minute I was in too much torture to speak. We stood half turned away, threatening each other to go, but lingering, afraid to part. At last I began to say, 'Well, I will go and tell Grimani,' when she said, 'Have you

finished the discussion about money matters with your cousin?’ ‘Not quite,’ I said. ‘Well,’ said she, ‘as he is such a wanderer — it is nine months, for instance, since I had the honor of meeting Monsieur Wilson.’ ‘That’s not his fault, Yvonne,’ I said, ‘he was under a promise to Hannah Langler with regard to you.’ ‘To me?’ ‘Yes, she really would be amused, if you send him away.’ ‘But this is the second time you speak of “sending him away”! Have I not asked him to stay?’ Thus ignominiously mademoiselle gave in to her heart’s lusts. Nothing of the sort had been done, of course: she had been tempted to, had resisted all day, and now could resist no longer. We are all alike, hunch or no hunch. I said, ‘No, you may have meant to ask him, but have forgotten.’ ‘I was almost sure — Well, perhaps you will repeat to him my request, Kathleen,’ she said, going quickly off to rejoin de Marsillac. That was nearly three weeks ago, and Chris must be riding back with her now from the picnicking at La Risolette,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XII



“HANNAH,” CONTINUED KATHLEEN a little later, “is in Paris. I have a letter from her. She has heard from her parents that I am at Chateaubrun, and asks if I can give her any hint as to the whereabouts of Chris! I am afraid that Chris is also at Chateaubrun, and enjoying himself very much indeed, but what business can that be of Miss Langler of Woodside? She flew from the graveside of Uncle Peter to Italy, knowing that Chris was playing at the Fondo; but by the time she reached Naples he had got my telegram summoning him to Chateaubrun. He stopped on his journey to give a concert at the Milan Scala, and she followed to Milan, but a day too late. Chris had left for Chateaubrun. So, on losing him, she went back to Paris, which seems to be her headquarters, and is there waiting till he turns up somewhere.

“She writes a lot of tattle about Orrock affairs, such as that my groom Parker has influenza, that a bit of coast has slipped just south of Wardenham, etc., etc.: no one would imagine that she has a great grief gnawing at her. No reproach at not being left anything by Uncle Peter, not a mention about the viol and box; but this mayn’t mean that she hasn’t discovered their loss, for miss (or Mrs.?) certainly doesn’t wear her heart on her sleeve. She must have found out by this time; and what a tenfold mystery to her! They are buried pretty deep, my Hannah, and you feel now, don’t you, how headlong and naughty it was of you to forget all the hymns and texts, and force yourself into Chris’s chambers that morning?

“I doubt if she will ever now get Chris. My scheme here has prospered more than I care to witness. Chris is as badly in love again as ever he was at Orrock, and Yvonne ten times more so. No Frenchwoman loves quite disinterestedly: Chris with two decorations, fore-run by a shudder of expectancy in every town which he enters, is not the same boy of ten months ago; and because he is more, she loves him more. I alone should love him as well in rags, so no one has any real right to him but me.

“The day before yesterday Yvonne went into a sort of hysterics. It was down at the village, where a lot of us had gone to patronize the fete in the afternoon. We had left Chris at the chateau, practising in his rooms. Yvonne drove with de Marsillac, flirting as ostentatiously as usual. I was in the brougham with the Comtesse Choderlos de Hanska. We left the carriages at the Villa des Sapins, and walked down to look at the fete. It was jolly — a great crowd of people in bright-colored clothes. I don’t know how de Marsillac lost Yvonne, but presently she was missed. I suspected that she might have a rendezvous with Chris, and this sent me looking for her in the Sapins (pine-wood). She had no rendezvous, however, for I and the comtesse, who would come with me, found her sitting alone on a tree-trunk in the forest-glade which they call ‘le Rond Point.’ There she sat, her face buried in her hands; and the moment the comtesse spoke to her, Yvonne burst out into the most astonishing laughter and sobbing, like hysterics. Her face was just crimson, and I never heard such a thing, it made me want to laugh and cry myself.

“Old Choderlos de Hanska put her hand on mine as we two were driving home again, saying, ‘My dear, after what we have witnessed together, there is no longer any indelicacy in expressing ourselves to each other, for here, you have seen, is that which demands discussion.’

“So it seems, madame,’ I said, thinking to myself, ‘Words, mere words.’

“‘If ever a poor child was in the grip of a tragic destiny,’ the old chatterbox went on, ‘it is this.’ ‘But why tragic, madame?’ I asked.

“‘Because the cause of that which is about to over-take her is in herself,’ she said, ‘and because she has struggled so desperately and so vainly against herself and her destiny. It is said, my dear, that “even the gods weep to see a good man struggling in vain with misfortune.” Here you have a good girl, striving with all her heart to keep the moral law, but little by little losing ground and hope. It has even made me shed a tear to notice her punctuality on her religious duties at the church of late.’

“‘I tried to imagine the old monkey’s tear tearing a ravine through paste, like a geologic river; she daren’t cry, except in the mornings. ‘But I thought that Yvonne pretends to be a pantheist,’ I murmured.

“‘Ah, my dear,’ said the old windbag, ‘but when we need a God, we reconstruct Him. Yvonne’s father and mother were both good Christians, and this disease in her blood is all the more awful to her because, having been practically her own mistress since their death, she has grown accustomed to feel the responsibility of her conduct and of her high name. For the first time, she now finds herself dragged along a path which is repugnant to her principles and her tastes.’

“‘Why doesn’t she marry Monsieur de Marsillac, who adores her?’ I said, ‘then as a married woman she could more properly contract a liaison with Monsieur Wilson.’

“‘I have taken the liberty to advise her in that very sense,’ said madame, ‘but the poor girl has answered me only with her shoulder. Yvonne’s mother was an English lady, and her own point of view is modified in an English way. No, there is no solution but one: it is much to be desired that Monsieur Wilson could be induced to depart from Chateaubrun.’

“‘You should try to induce him, madame,’ I said.

“‘77’ murmured the old thing, lifting her hands in dainty horror.

“‘It cannot be done, madame,’ I said: ‘it would be intolerable, if any one presumed to interfere. And what would happen, if he did go? Yvonne would only become ill.’

“‘She is ill now,’ madame answered: ‘Ernestine assures me that she paces her room far into the mornings, and has dreams from which she awakes with cries; and you have observed her looks.’

“‘I’m afraid I can’t sympathize with all that fuss,’ I said. ‘The affair is a very ordinary one, only Yvonne happens to be of noble blood.’

“‘But that is not precisely where the thorn pierces her, I am certain,’ said madame, ‘but in the fact — is it not a fact that Monsieur Wilson possesses a wife?’ ‘I smiled without answering.

“‘I happen to have reasons for believing it, my dear, and you know that nothing ever escapes my old lips, so you may be open with me. In fact, Yvonne has as good as admitted it to me — an English wife. Well, I believe that that is where this poor child is excruciated: she is unwilling to wrong that other woman. It seems a little unworldly, but then Yvonne is a young girl, with a still tender conscience. Tell me, is not the name of that wife “Hannah”?’

“‘How can you know, madame?’ I asked.

“‘Tell me if it is so, and I will then tell you how I know.’

“‘Well, yes.’

“‘I thought it! For, two mornings ago, Yvonne, on being startled out of sleep by a vase dropped from Ernestine’s hands, broke into sobs, repeating many times that word, “Hannah, Hannah.” She had been dreaming of this “Hannah,” and there, be sure of it, is where the ache lies.’

“‘Well, it seems a ease for the physician,’ I said— ‘a little phosphorus, perhaps. This only comes of people allowing their desires to wander upon

forbidden objects.’

“‘It is true,’ said she, ‘the earth has sun-stroke, but from habit I prefer it to Utopia, my dear. This poor child can’t be stoned by me, for, providentially, I also am not without sin. You, no doubt, are: it is all a relation between temptation and strength. In the case of Yvonne, you have a poor child fighting a real battle in loneliness, without help or sympathy. Her guardians are merely well-wishers; her friends are merely visitors; you, her cousine, recommend phosphorus; I, her great-aunt, try to be distressed, but at my age, after the life of fashion, one is no longer distressed at anything, except at a disturbance in one’s habits. Old people are as selfish as babies —”

“‘Oh, but you are not in your second childhood in that respect, madame,’ I murmured, giving it back to her for her ‘temptation and strength’; she answered something, but the carriage was passing over gravel, I didn’t hear, and immediately afterwards we got out.

“Yvonne arrived soon afterwards, ‘retired,’ and did not appear at dinner, which was a failure. Chris had nothing to say, de Marsillac’s Parisian lightness seemed to have got a wetting, and the Conseilleur Municipal and old Choderlos de Hanska were allowed to talk to the air absolutely without pause. Chris escaped at the first chance. I didn’t know where he had gone, went to spy, and after a search saw him in that out-of-the-way balcony behind the armory on the south, near the precipice. He was pacing up and down pretty quickly. The trellis-work being thick with vine, except over the three steps in the center, I got up to it without being seen, and sat down on the old horse trough there, just to be near. He made those old worn dalles of the balcony hold ground. I didn’t know before he ever went there. Couldn’t see him, but could hear his tread, and smell his cigar, the darling god; buried my head in its wrap in the vine leaves, and closed my eyes. It was

dark there in spite of bright moonlight, the air heavy with maples and wild sarsaparilla that grow down to the precipice-edge, hosts of cicadas screeching, with a tinkling of the piano from far away. Chris must have had some musical thought in him; now and again he hummed, just a murmur. I was enjoying too deeply to move, but after a time had begun to think of speaking to him about the signing of the lawyer's documents from England, when I heard some one with him. My heart all at once was beating awfully. It was Yvonne. 'She is not too unwell for this,' I thought, and I pushed my ear well into the bush to hear.

"'Ernestine has told me that you were here, Chris,' I heard her say, 'so' — something lost — 'the answer which you demand of me.'

"'Mum, mum, mum,' from Chris; I couldn't hear! They stood fifteen yards away.

"' . . . Believe me,' from Yvonne, 'risen from my knees before my Creator to come here to you, hum, hum, hum.' If they had only spoken in English! I might have caught more.

"'Mum, mum, I prefer you to all things,' from Chris: 'nothing is sacred but you . . . God is less than Love . . . mum, mum, ethics is for unmusical souls who need a lower guide . . . Love in itself is right, and is enough . . . love like ours . . . love, love' — they say it must have been grand to see Will Shakespeare in love, but wild-hearted Chris! I felt to my heart the boundless throbbings of his, but couldn't hear! the cicadas screeching in my ears.

"'Do not mistake me,' from Yvonne: 'the doing of what is right has been made too terribly hard a task! Hum, hum, hum, I have suffered, mon ami, yes, I have suffered, hum, hum, but I love you too much, Chris, my soul . . . I am too ill now . . . I can no longer bear it . . . the great decision of our lives rests henceforth with you.'

“‘Mum, mum, mum,’ from Chris, ‘nothing is so great as infinity, mum, mum.’ I heard her better than him, he mumbles so, his tongue is in his fingers.

“‘In ten days my guests will have departed,’ from Yvonne; ‘you love me . . . tell me then . . . you are my supreme . . . do not fear . . . claim that which is yours, nothing shall dare oppose you . . . seize me, have me, destroy me, kill me . . . death . . . I know that it will end all, hum, hum, hum.’

“‘ . . . destiny,’ from Chris, ‘the grave itself, mum, mum, Love like ours . . . is itself a law-giver . . . destiny . . . cannot be defeated, mum, mum,’ then the wretched castle-bell began that sort of curfew which they ring here, and for two minutes I could hear nothing.’

“‘ . . . these sorts of relations,’ from Yvonne . . . ‘ashes, hum, hum, contempt . . . twenty years . . . Virtue alone is incorruptible . . . poor mortals . . . nets for our feet . . . the road to death, mon ami!’ — with a sob.

“‘To-day is as good as tomorrow,’ from Chris— ‘better, for we are younger today . . . next summer as unimportant as last summer, mum, mum, you may love me less.’

“‘ . . . dreams,’ from Yvonne, ‘Hannah, your wedded wife . . . a good woman . . . speaking to me, pleading with me, warning me, as plainly as I see you now . . . a very strange thing . . . you can see that I am ill . . . the voices of destiny, hum, hum, hum, will end in sorrow.’

“‘ . . . Things are as they are,’ from Chris, ‘we did not make the world . . . excellent woman! . . . out of relation with my longings . . . dare everything, sacrifice everything ...’

“‘Yes! yes!’ from Yvonne; ‘my guests will have departed . . . twelve days . . . Venice . . . even one year of heaven . . . I shall have lived . . . afterwards one may die, hum, hum, hum, Ernestine, mon ami . . . must go away . . . soon, soon.’

“‘...Write it in a song of joy,’ from Chris, ‘how amiable! . . . thievish feet of love . . . Mmm . . . joy forever . . . kiss ...

“‘Yes! give!’ from Yvonne, now first tutoring him— ‘Oui! donne!’ — and I knew that they were kissing. For some minutes I must have fainted away just then, I don’t remember the moment at which Yvonne left him. I wondered at myself for letting her go without flying at her; it seemed that nothing was left me now but to throw my wretched frame into that precipice not twenty yards off; but I had no strength left even for that, I simply sat with my head in the vine, and suffered my forlornness. Lord, what a pain it is! I felt how God had made me ugly, wretched, unloved, wretched, wretched, unchangeably, Lord God, Lord God. If their sweet carryings-on were bad for Hannah, they were as bad for me; but it was all my own doing, I had no right to complain. Why had I brought Chris here? To keep him from Hannah, forsooth! with some notion in me that, since he is married and can’t be Yvonne’s husband, then, at some far-off day, he may somehow be mine. Weak dream! He thoroughly belongs to Yvonne now anyway, may always, and what do I care whether he is Yvonne’s or Hannah’s, if he is not mine? Certainly, I never felt toward Hannah quite the same cat-o’-mountain rancor that I felt for Yvonne that night. I don’t know what kept my hands from her, for I longed to see both him and her struck down in the height of their selfish bliss, the two wantons. If I hadn’t fainted when they kissed, perhaps I should have done something, for in my highest moments, when I am white-hot, this little hunchback towers a head taller than everything, casts off fear like a cloak, and her will is done. No one had better make me mad. “Chris remained alone on the balcony a long while; he must have brought one of his counterfeit Guarneriuses with him, for he presently began to play, rendering an Ernst reverie with delicious peace and intimité.

He seemed to do it to console me. I waited on till he went away near eleven.”

CHAPTER XIII



“THE SAME NIGHT,” continued the quaint maid two days later, “that Chris and Yvonne met on that south balcony, Monsieur de Ballu, the notaire, came over from Toulouse on a visit. In passing through the salon, meaning to go to bed, I saw his old rat-face, which resembles Robespierre’s. All these old fogies down here have an eighteenth-century air to me. De Ballu is Yvonne’s parrain (godfather), and one of the guardians and administrators. I noticed him deep in talk with old Choderlos de Hanska in a far part of the salon, while his mountain of a wife spoke with Olivia and the Conseilleur Municipal. Little did I dream what trouble that old man was even then hatching for my poor head.

“The next morning, while I was being dressed, Olivia came with the news that Chris had gone off to Toulouse. ‘What on earth for?’ I asked. She didn’t know. I went down late with a headache to second dejeuner. A few people were still there, among them old Choderlos de Hanska, who, as she rose from table, passed by me, saying in that sort of court whisper in which the French monde is expert, ‘All will be well: Monsieur Wilson has gone to Toulouse to interview Monsieur de Ballu.’ Before I could say a word the old windbag was gone, with her finger on her lips. I was perfectly astonished. What, I wondered, could Chris possibly have to say to this old French lawyer, or he to Chris?

“I was soon to know! Chris came back about two-thirty o’clock. I was at a window of that huge old room on the ground floor which they call ‘the salle,’ looking out for him. He got out of his carriage precipitately, looking

flushed and radiant. As he was passing by me, I stepped out to him. ‘Why, Cousin Chris,’ I said in a wretchedly sycophant voice, ‘I have hardly spoken a word with you for two days.’ I was the last thing in the world of which he was thinking at that moment! ‘Mmm, my own dear friend,’ he said, ‘forgive me. Much has been going forward — but you will soon hear.’ ‘What is it? You have been to Toulouse—’ ‘We will speak together,’ he said, and was gone with a wave of his hand. As he entered the house, I flew to watch, and caught sight of him going up the branch of the stair which leads to Yvonne’s quarters; so whatever was the matter concerned Yvonne.

“I was on thorns. I went searching, for the second time, for old Choderlos de Hanska. They said she was taking siesta; then I found Olivia at the salon piano, and asked if madame la comtesse had not said anything about the object of Chris’s interview with old de Ballu. ‘Not a word,’ she answered. I had to wait about in suspense, the house very still and dull, a party of them having gone riding to Moulin Chantepleure, the rest were scattered about the salon, verandas and terraces, or taking siesta, the sun blazing, the ladies as lightly clad as a man could wish, and strains of studies in chords reaching one’s ears from time to time. They have always been sweet to me, those strains of Chris’s riddle, for I have thought then, ‘He is not near her now, nor thinking of her.’ At last Choderlos de Hanska came, with a raw look of sleep in her eyes, — ghastly old thing, I hate her. I’d rather be a young hunchback than an old beauty. She melted into smiles and nods on seeing my anxious face, and I got her out to the salon balcony, where we were alone. ‘What, then, is happening?’ I asked.

“‘Ma chère, it has all come about by the most extraordinary Providence—’

“‘But what?’ I asked, dreading a rigmarole. ‘Is it possible that you do not even yet surmise that there is about to be a wedding among us?’

“‘Between?’

“‘Monsieur Wilson and Yvonne.’

“‘A wedding?’

“‘A wedding.’ ‘I suppose you jest, madame,’ I said, ‘since you know as well as I do that Monsieur Wilson is already married.’

“‘Ma chère, I never jest after siesta,’ said the old hag. ‘Don’t be so astonished. When Providence wishes to witness a situation, it devises it. Listen, and you shall hear. Last night Monsieur de Ballu was here. You must have seen him. He and I were in conversation, when he happened to mention the case of one of his clients who, having set up a business in London, married an English lady, but the marriage was unhappy, and the young man, on returning to France, married a lady of Toulouse. I had no idea that this could be done, and expressed my astonishment at it, but Monsieur de Ballu assured me that the affair was quite formal, since the marriage in London had not taken place before a French consul, and was therefore null and void in France, the bridegroom being a French citizen.’

“‘My heart ceased to beat; I could only just groan something about ‘some mistake,’ and ‘what madmen could make such a law.’

“‘Laws are like the scheme of things, my dear,’ she said, ‘they only seem mad because we others do not know the spirit of them. At any rate, when I heard this, Monsieur Wilson and Yvonne of course leapt into my mind. I ventured to recount everything to Monsieur de Ballu, and it was then decided between us that all would be well, provided that the musician is really a French citizen, and provided that his English marriage did not take place in the presence of a French consul. If these two things are so, he can marry Yvonne, and I have just received a telegram from Monsieur de Ballu assuring me that they are so.’; ‘But is not Hannah, then, his lawful wife?’

“‘Oh, yes — in England; not in France.’

“‘So a Frenchman can have two lawful wives in Europe?’

“‘Yes, four or five.’

“‘Oh, but, madame, what lunacy!’

“‘I thought you would be pleased,’ she sighed. ‘I am most pleased!’ I answered, like a fool, ‘but who,’ I groaned, ‘could be expected to know this obscure French law in the country parts of England? Chris married in all good faith, not dreaming — no one dreamed — We all assumed that Chris was an Englishman: his father was English-born, his mother an English woman—’

“‘All that does not alter the law, *ma chère*,’ she said. ‘French laws are not made for the benefit of English ladies, but for the amusement of French men. And, after all, what harm is done? One wife in England and another in France are only two, nor can they be jealous the one of the other, for each will consider the other a mistress. As for me, I am a good Catholic, my dear, but, between us, Mahomet was also a prophet. And, as a matter of fact, is not polygamy more general in Paris than in Cairo — ?’

“‘But at any rate, Hannah is his wife in England!’ I cried. ‘English law isn’t going to permit him to remarry in France, even though French law does.’

“‘No, his marriage in England is final from the English point of view,’ she said, ‘so, if he remarries in France, he will return to England at his own risk, Monsieur de Ballu even says that to a bigamy of that sort English justice would show itself extremely severe — if it knew of it. But then, geniuses are exempt from everything.’

“‘They are not — not in England! I cried, for I couldn’t restrain my rage, ‘and that settles it, for Chris will often have to be in England, and surely Yvonne would never expose him to this awful risk—’

“‘That is not the point with Yvonne, the risk,’ she answered; ‘she has not thought of that, and, in fact the risk is very slight, my dear, whatever you may say of it. But the point with Yvonne is the other lady. She absolutely refuses to marry Monsieur Wilson. After his interview with Monsieur de Ballu this morning, Monsieur Wilson hastened with the good news to Yvonne’s apartments, and Ernestine, who partly over-heard their interview, tells me that Yvonne first waltzed about the room with glee, then suddenly changed, and in the end refused to hear of the marriage. She said that, even if she was willing to wrong the other lady to the extent of entering into a liaison with her husband, bearing the shame of it while enjoying the sin, yet she was not so wicked as to shelter herself behind an international quibble and legally usurp one who is already another’s. “The word ‘wife’ has no plural, Chris,” the poor child said. I don’t know in what grammar she found it; in my time it was ‘wives’ that had no singular, except in the breviary. So for the present there is a deadlock. But sufficient pressure, you may be sure, will be brought to bear upon Yvonne to induce her to be more worldly.’

“‘Pressure by whom?’ I asked; but before she could answer, a flunkey brought her a card. ‘From Monsieur de Ballu,’ she whispered me, and went off, leaving me undone. At that hour the day before such a thought as Chris marrying Yvonne had never entered a human brain; it had all come through the cackle of those two old geese. And it was I who had brought Chris to Chateaubrun! Much thanks did I get for it! I, who had done all for her, was forgotten, ignored, and she swimming in joy. I felt that if ever I should see her the wife of Chris — They have no right to make me mad.

“I wouldn’t believe a word of what the old hag had told me, but at once sent Olivia to order a caleche, and by four o’clock we were off to Toulouse, leaving old Choderlos de Hanska and Monsieur de Ballu in an interview with Yvonne. In Toulouse I put the case before the first lawyer I could find.

He told me that it was true, all, all, that Choderlos de Hanska had said — Chris could marry Yvonne. What a sudden, undreamt-of thing! I had never conceived anything but a short liaison between them, for I always had a girl-to-girl fondness for Yvonne, and could have borne to see that: but this was lifelong union. I understood that Yvonne might say no to the marriage at first, and be on the stage, as all Frenchwomen always are, but I felt that she couldn't long resist the bliss and greatness of owning Chris for life. When I got back to the chateau I went up to the sort of flat to which Yvonne 'retires'; at the top of the stairs Ernestine, hanging about in a state of suspense, whispered me: 'Madame Choderlos de Hanska and Monsieur de Ballu are still in conference with her. She is about to yield.'

"Then a head peeping out between the portieres of Yvonne's ante-chamber, said, 'Ah, it is you, mademoiselle' — old Choderlos de Hanska; she put her lips to my ear with the whisper, 'I have left Monsieur de Ballu alone with her.'

"What for?' I asked.

"It was essential.'

"But why not let Monsieur Wilson do his own persuading, madame?"

"He is not to see her again till all is settled. He has very sagaciously handed over the whole affaire to the tuteurs (guardians).'

"While speaking to me she was touched from behind by Monsieur de Ballu, and they two entered into a whispering with gesticulations which must have lasted twenty minutes, rivers of words. Then Choderlos de Hanska sailed through the little salon, and went in to Yvonne alone, while Monsieur de Ballu sat in the little salon, a book on his knees, but his ferret-eyes fixedly leering at Yvonne's door. I waited in the ante-chamber, feeling all out of it, but after a time ventured to peep into the little salon and say to Monsieur de Ballu, 'May I see my cousine now?' Silly! I ought to have

walked in boldly, for at my question that old Jack-in-office cast up his eyes and hands to heaven, then shook his head crazily, stopping and beginning again, meaning ‘A thousand times no.’

“I wished to warn Yvonne of the danger of a second marriage to Chris when he should go back to England, though I knew in my heart that the danger was mainly theoretical, since no one would be busybody enough to act in the matter, even if it were known in London; but I wished to frighten her with it; so when I had withdrawn again into the ante-chamber, I stood near the portiere, feeling shy and out of place, but clinging on.

“Presently Choderlos de Hanska opened Yvonne’s boudoir door a little, and beckoned to Monsieur de Ballu, who went in. This was French ‘intrigue’! Then came Chris almost on tiptoe along the darkling corridor, with pauses and listenings.

“‘Have you seen her?’ he whispered to me; ‘is she about to yield?’

“‘Yes, Cousin Chris, but—’

“‘Sh-h-h’ — with his finger on his lips. He stole off again. My heart failed me. I had nothing to say to him to which he was not deaf.

“Then came a heavy bonhomme with creaking boots and an air of business — one of the tuteurs, I suppose; I had never seen him before. On seeing me, he said at my ear, ‘Is she about to yield?’ Monsieur de Ballu had just come out again from Yvonne, so he and the newcomer met warmly, and went off into whispering, of which I could only hear ‘about to yield,’ ‘will not yield,’ ‘it is necessary,’ ‘mon ami,’ ‘the testament,’ ‘the code Napoleonique,’ ‘the English law,’ the ‘tuteurs,’ ‘yield,’ ‘yield,’ — a thousand times over. Presently Choderlos de Hanska came out, the three whispered together, and the two men went in to Yvonne. I asked Choderlos de Hanska who was the heavy man, and she said, ‘Monsieur Tombarel, the mayor.’

“Then came Olivia, all fuss, wanting me to go to dinner, and I had to, for I was famished. Neither Chris nor Choderlos de Hanska appeared at table, where everyone seemed trying to be unconscious that something was going on. As I went up the stairs again, Ernestine ran down to meet me with the breathless news, ‘Maitre Bibesco has arrived! It is said that she is about to yield.’ I neither knew nor cared who Maitre Bibesco was, but on peeping into the little salon I saw him — a huge Danton of a man with a lowering brow. There were now four of them in there at Yvonne. I hung about the corridor and portieres for hours, waiting my chance to see her, or send in a note, but it never came; one by one, or two, three, four together, they were with her. The to-do that those people made that night! The chaos of words, the plans and shifts, the wine that they drank! They were just in their element, with an ‘affaire’ to let themselves loose over. About eleven I left them, and went to bed shivering and burning at once.

“The next morning, as I lay abed, Ernestine ran in to say, ‘She has not yielded, but it is believed that she will yield this afternoon at about two’ — and rushed out again. Ten minutes later Olivia was saying to me, ‘She has not yielded.’ I said, ‘What, have you, too, caught the epidemic of “yield”?’ Presently my own maid brought me in a note from old Choderlos de Hanska, scribbled with the words, ‘She has not yielded, but signs are not wanting. Monsieur Tombarel will be with her at eleven.’ I said to Olivia, ‘It is all French play-acting, she will “yield” soon enough; but in that case my mind is made up what to do.’ I had resolved during the night: I should tell Hannah all, and let Hannah defend her rights. I might have got dressed in time to go to warn Yvonne of Chris’s danger from English law before any of the tuteurs were with her, but I would not now be at the pains, for I felt that nothing in the end would keep her from ‘yielding’; and my mind was quite made up that one wife is enough for Chris.

“But the fuss all that day! The arrivals and departures, the telegrams, the mounted messengers! Though I was kept informed of most things by one or another of them, still I couldn’t grasp what it was all about, nor could conceive how the ‘affaire’ had become so mightily complex in so short a time. “What made it worse was that those with Yvonne sent hourly telegrams to those in Toulouse: ‘She is about to yield,’ ‘She does not yield,’ ‘Send both documents,’ ‘Your presence is essential,’ ‘Consult Leyds of Paris as to droits de tutelage,’ ‘Influence of Madame de Ballu would prove most useful auxiliary at present juncture,’ and more. Besides, there were the three visits of the physician, who himself became one of the arguers and persuaders. Near two o’clock in the afternoon Choderlos de Hanska told me that Yvonne would become dangerously ill if the strain continued; she had fainted some minutes before in attempting to sit up in bed. I pitied her, but pitied myself more. Twice she sent for Chris to go to her, but Chris was not allowed to go, her longing to see him being one of the means used to persuade her. But soon after three Ernestine ran to me with the news, ‘It is finished: Monsieur Wilson is now with her. She has yielded.’

“My mind was quite made up. I at once telegraphed to Hannah in Paris, ‘Will you be at the same address the day after tomorrow?’ At six I got the answer, ‘Yes.’

“Yvonne’s rooms were still more or less full of her friends enjoying the after-taste of their victory; so, not wishing to see either her or Chris, I simply wrote her a note, saying that Olivia and I were going to Cannes to meet some one, and should soon be back.

“What on earth Hannah would or could do now I couldn’t imagine, but I knew that she would do something effective, and I was determined to set her on the back of Yvonne. One wife at a time for Chris, ladies. At 7.15 I left Toulouse for Paris, arrived at,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIV



“BY ELEVEN IN the morning I was at 14 rue Boissy d’Anglas,” continued the little maid three days later. “The concierge told me that Hannah lived at Madame Brault’s, a pension at the top of the hill, so up and up I climbed — to the fifth floor, troops of work-girls hurrying all about the dark stairs. Hannah wasn’t in, but was expected in to déjeuner at noon, a servant said. I answered that I would wait, and was led into a little salon, where I sat a long time, trying to keep my palms dry. When any one came in I felt relieved that it was not Hannah. I don’t know why I should have been so nervous.

“At last Hannah swept in, vomiting her energy like a volcano, uttered a cry, and caught me in her arms, chattering French, slurring her r’s daintily like a Parisienne. She had quite a chic hat and coiffure, with a stole tossing about her, and looked tall and smart, no sign yet of anything coming. I always disliked the girl, but if I had not, I should have liked her. I ceased to be nervous the moment she flew at me and took me to her. She set me down, knelt before me, and caressed my hands, pouring out all the paltry news of a letter received by her from Orrock that morning, without letting me speak.

“‘Well, it is home again to see you,’ she said at last. ‘What brought you to Paris? Tell me about yourself. I believe you have news for me. You know where Chris is.’”

“‘Chris is at Chateaubrun,’ I said.

“Her palms just lifted a little from me, as if hurt, then came back.

“‘With Yvonne?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Oh, the rogue! he oughtn’t to be.’

“‘I enjoyed her struggle to hide her pang and dismay under a light air.

“‘Hannah, things have come to a fine pass at Chateaubrun,’ I said, ‘and I have come all this way to tell you, because you know that I have your interests at heart, and I could not say everything in a letter. Chris has been at Chateaubrun four weeks—’

“‘And you didn’t tell me,’ she put in.

“‘How could I?’ I said. ‘Yvonne is my friend, too, and my hostess. It was delicate.’

“‘So true. But tell me.’

“‘Prepare yourself to hear the most startling news, Hannah—’

“‘Come, Hannah, sit tight,’ she put in.

“‘Chris is going to marry Yvonne,’ I said.

“‘Again her palms started up a little, and slowly came back upon me.

“‘He can’t do that,’ she murmured.

“‘He can,’ I said, ‘there is a law in France—’

“‘Give it to me in the good old home brogue,’ she said, for I had been speaking in French without knowing, so I changed into English, and told nearly everything. She listened at my knees at first, but presently getting up, stood at a window with her back almost turned to me, but listening attentively. When I had said all, she stood silent awhile, then, chucking up her head, said, ‘Nice young lady that.’ I was astonished at her coolness, but thought to myself, ‘Since she is cool, she will act all the more effectively.’

“‘As to Yvonne,’ I began, ‘she ought to be ashamed—’

“‘So ought you,’ from Hannah.

“‘But why?’

“‘For staying in such a house.’

“‘Oh, as to that—’

“‘Well, God grant them joy.’

“‘You take it coolly, Hannah.’

“At this, she suddenly spun round upon me, crying out in a startlingly loud voice, ‘Oh, my dear, the flames of these fires, such is His mercy, cannot touch me!’ Her face was crimson with passion. I was frightened by the woman’s shout. She then turned sharply to the window again, and I could see her trembling from head to foot. The ‘flames of these fires’ did touch my Hannah. Perhaps she had been reading Dante: something like that was what Beatrice said when she came from heaven into the flames of torment. There she stood, silent and trembling; but in a minute or two I heard her humming ‘viens, pou-poule,’ to herself. I didn’t venture to say anything, I was so startled. Presently she spun round again, picked up a fiddle from the piano-top, and said, showing it to me, ‘I have been practising on it — fifteen hours a day sometimes — for a year, in order to make myself a little worthy of him. That’s all thrown into the deep blue sea now.’

“I was sorry for her at the moment — and alarmed at her resignation.

“‘But why thrown into the sea?’ I said. ‘Don’t take it so coolly, Hannah!’

“‘My dear,’ she answered, ‘at this moment there are ten thousand poor people lying with their death-sweats on their forehead, all worse off than I, and they have to face and bear it. What can’t be cured must be endured.’

“‘But,’ I said astonished, ‘you don’t mean that you are going to allow Yvonne to have it all her own way with your own husband?’

“‘Really, Kathleen!’ she answered, ‘what can you think of me? Am I to strive and cry? One must have some self-respect. I have been following Chris about, not merely because I am married to him, but because I believed

that his infatuation for that woman didn't amount to much, and that he really loved me at bottom. But when he proves beyond doubt that he does love her, and cares nothing for me, what's left for me to do? I go back to England to-night.'

"As she said this, all my hopes fell to the ground. Not a doubt had crossed my mind that she would find something strong to do to stop Chris and Yvonne; and now I saw my voyage to Paris taken in vain, and I saw Yvonne in sure, lifelong possession of Chris. I set myself to plead with Hannah with tears in my eyes. I tried her on every side. 'You can never marry again, as long as Chris lives,' I said. She laughed, crying out, 'Oh! one marriage is plenty for a lifetime!' Then I dared to say, 'Of course, I don't know whether you and Chris have ever been together all this time, but, if so, think of what may come, and he another woman's husband.' Her eyes, I thought, rested sharply on me a moment, as I said this; then she laughed rather wildly, but made no answer. I tried every argument, and still she remained 'untouched' by 'these fires,' till it occurred to me that I hadn't yet mentioned about the risk which Chris would run from English law, if he married Yvonne. That did it! While I spoke of it she stood staring strangely at me, and then just breathed: 'You don't mean that he can be imprisoned in England?'

"'I do mean just that,' I said strongly, seeing the effect I had made: 'Imprisonment, penal servitude, infamy — his high career blighted forever, Hannah,—'

"'No one will know,' she said in a low voice.

"'But how do you mean? I said; 'can a public character like Chris marry without every one knowing?' Then, seeing the necessity to clinch the nail, I invented a story, and added: 'Besides, there's a man staying now at Chateaubrun named de Marsillac, who is madly in love with Yvonne and

hates Chris; he and Chris have fought a duel, he knows that Chris was married before, and he swears that the moment Chris marries Yvonne he will communicate the fact to the London police—’

“‘My boy,’ she murmured, with her lips trembling.

“‘What will you do, Hannah?’ I asked. ‘You can’t stand quietly by and witness such a disaster.’

“‘She didn’t answer, sat down with her palm under her chin, thinking of it. I had said all that I could now, and felt worn out. It was for her now to act, and I watched her with interest to see what she would do. Presently she sprang up, threw her hat one way, her stole another, and stood again at the window, looking out. I saw her hand steal up and wipe away a tear. Then she said behind her shoulder, ‘Surely the woman doesn’t know all this?’

“‘She does — of course,’ I said.

“‘And Chris, too?’

“‘Yes, of course.’

“‘So it’s no use any one writing to warn them?’

“‘Not the least, I’m afraid.’

“‘But the woman must be mad!’

“‘People who are in love don’t mind the future,’ I said.

“‘In love,” she repeated with contempt.

“‘Will you do something, Hannah?’ I asked.

“‘Will I breathe?’ she answered. ‘Chris is my friend, Kathleen — a one-sided affair no doubt, but still — that’s all right. Husband-and-wife isn’t so much — one flesh — but friend-and-friend is one soul, you know. That goes pretty deep, that. I shall do something, of course; don’t know what. That will be told me later, perhaps.’

“‘But they are to be married soon!’ I said.

“‘Well, we’ll see.’

“Soon after this, dejeuner-bell began to ring, and three people came into the room. Hannah wished me to stay, but I wouldn’t. I told her that I wanted to return at once to Chateaubrun, so that Yvonne might not suspect that I had been to Paris. She kissed me coldly, I thought, at good-bye. Ah, my Hannah, there is more between my soul and you than you know: I should have liked to like you, if I had not disliked you. Anyway, she will be doing something strong and effective,” etc., etc.

CHAPTER XV



HANNAH DID, INDEED, do “something,” going in the first place to the British consul five minutes’ walk, from the rue Boissy d’Anglas, got there the address of an English solicitor, and set off in a cab to find him. But at his offices near the Grand Boulevard, she learned that he was away for a week. It was late then, four o’clock, and knowing of no other English solicitor, she determined to make short work, to go to England, and consult a London expert the next morning.

She drove through London at that early hour when men are washing the streets with hoses, went to her old lodgings in Guilford Street, and by ten a.m. was getting from her detectives in Berners Street — the detectives who were trying to find her viol and trinkets — the address of an expert in international marriage law.

By eleven she was shut in with the great man in a room in the Middle Temple. “Deep as he is long!” she wrote of him. “Never in my life beheld such a paunch: ‘first,’ it says to great little man, and he comes trotting after; and not only legs ridiculously short for what’s up above, but trousers too short for legs.” It was Mr. G ——, the little judge-bullier, an Irishman, since dead.

Mr. G —— stood with his back to a fire, gowned and wigged, ready to step over to the courts, his hands in his large pockets; and Hannah, sitting veiled by a table before him, put her case.

“And you wish to know?” he asked.

“Firstly, whether he can legally marry the French-woman.”

“Is it certain that no French consul was at his first marriage?”

“Quite.”

“Then he can marry in France.”

“Yes. Secondly, I want to know how English law regards this legal marriage in France.”

“As bigamy.”

“Yes, I had heard that. But I want to know what would be the actual consequences to him in England? Surely, since he is a Frenchman, and is only acting according to the laws of his country, no English judge would actually punish him for it?”

“There you are mistaken, madam. Just the contrary — a ruffian of that sort would catch it pretty hot, I can tell you, from an English judge.”

“He is not a ruffian, only a wild boy.”

“What, to leave his English wife, and marry another woman? Shameful conduct.”

“His English wife is hardly very worthy of him, perhaps.”

“Pardon me there, she’s a long way more than worthy of him; for I know.”

“But apart from that, I want to know, thirdly and lastly, what can be done to save him?”

“Why, what do you suppose can be done to save him? except to induce him to behave himself in a respectable manner.”

“‘His paunch laughed,’ wrote Hannah; ‘shouldn’t have known that he was laughing, but saw it going, and drew my own conclusions.’”

“But something must be done,” she said. “He is not an ordinary man, Mr. G — : just think, his career will be only half a career, if he never comes to England — Can this be allowed to hang over him?”

Mr. G —— looked at his watch, smiled, and said almost tenderly, “What can I do, madam?”

“But I felt so sure in the cab coming to you,” persisted Hannah, “that I was being guided, that you would suggest some way out. Oh, pray, think for me! I myself am so utterly at a loss — Perhaps if you only knew who he is! — such a big lot is at stake.”

Mr. G —— . with a puckered brow, said: “I only wish I knew what you mean, and could help you. What way out can there be? The law is clear: if a foreigner comes to England and breaks the law of England, he must suffer. The only thing that could cause the law to condone or forgive such a gross bigamy is the wife’s previous misconduct, or the wife’s previous bigamy, of which the husband knew before his own bigamy, and which he could prove.”

“As he said this,” wrote Hannah, “it was as if God spoke to me by his voice. Sat electrified — all clear before me. Had known with certainty when I crossed that threshold that a message would be sent me, and here it was.”

“Well, that can be done,” she said to Mr. G —— .

“What can, madam?”

“Could not his wife marry illegally, and contrive to let him know before his own second marriage that she had done so? Then he will always have the excuse to plead that she abandoned him before he abandoned her.”

“One part of him,” wrote Hannah, “again went shaky.”

“You can’t be serious, madam,” said Mr. G —— .

“Could it not be done?”

“It could be done, certainly; all sorts of breaches of the law can be done: but woe to the woman who dares do that, I tell you.”

“Why so?”

“Doesn’t she commit a bigamy in order to save a man from the consequences of his bigamy?”

“That’s no sin, if her second marriage is unreal.”

“It’s a crime.”

“Oh, crimes that are no sin: I’d commit any number of them before breakfast.”

“Well, I never yet met a woman who respects the law,” said Mr. G — .
“But, madam, if the lady in question is a — friend of yours, do let me warn you most solemnly against any such step on her part. I never heard the like! Tricks of that sort can’t be played with the law, mark you: sooner or later it finds means to avenge itself. There now, I shall consider that I have earned my fee of you, if I have taught you this.”

Hannah hardly heard. She was all inwardness, thought, and feeling; the “law” of Mr. G ——— was hardly to her the highest sort of law; springing up, she warmly thanked and shook hands with the lawyer.

She drove from there to a timber-yard in Lamb’s Conduit Street, leaning over the cab-doors, eager to arrive, an impulse now upon her from which nothing could have turned her. At the gate of the timber-yard she had a fifteen minutes’ talk with a young workman named Willie Dawe, the same whom she had rescued from the sea at Orrock. He had come up to seek his fortune, and she, who knew everything about each Orrock life, had often seen him in London. After her talk with him, she drove the short way to the Clerkenwell Town-hall, and arranged for a marriage there in three days’ time.

But during those three days her heart seems to have often failed her; her diary was filled with doubts and fears, self-accusations of “impulse,” of “pride,” of “stubbornness,” of “self-will,” of “self-love,” of “rashness”; passionate prayers for “guidance,” again and again repeated; terrors as to

the future of her child, and of herself; love-cries of her abandoned heart. But if she imagined that to accuse herself many times of “stubbornness” could make less stub-born, she was mistaken, since one can by no means fly oneself: in reality, though all things else in her shrank and were weak, her founded will never budged. “A tailor the ninth of a man,” she wrote, “a genius nine men; so as I stepped from town-hall with my Willie, thought to myself, ‘This your tenth marriage, Hannah.’ Said to my Willie: ‘Understand now, Willie, what I didn’t tell you formally before, though you guessed, that I am not really a widow, Mr. Wilson still alive, so your marriage with me not binding on you, you can marry again whenever you like.’ ‘I guessed as much, Miss Hannah,’ said my dear boy, ‘that’s all right between us’ — shy as a squirrel, looking lovely in Sunday best. I said, ‘Here’s the £2, and mind how you spend it, hear you are a gay one for the girls and the beer; but promise to get back to work this afternoon, and to come to see me sometimes.’ Promised, and we parted fondly. To-night typewritten letter to be posted to Chateaubrun. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.’

CHAPTER XVI



MEANWHILE, THE QUAIN'T maid at Chateaubrun was writing: "But why does she wait? If she means to do something effective, now, now, is the time, before every one here gets to know of the impending marriage. I thought that she would have been here days ago, and been at Yvonne like a fury. But nothing done. I have written to her at Paris, beseeching her to come, to do something; but no reply. Of what, in God's name, can Hannah be thinking? I am certain that she said she would do something: when I asked her if she would, she answered, 'Will I breathe?' Then why doesn't she come? The marriage is fixed for the 12th before the mayor. Yvonne is crazily excited. She was in bed again yesterday: one day as gay as a bird, the next down in bed. Old Choderlos de Hanska repeats in a court-whisper that she is 'In the grip of a tragic destiny,' whatever that means. Chris just smiles and stirs one eyebrow," etc., etc.

On the day after the date of this entry the little maid was sitting alone in a grape-arbor at the entrance of an avenue near the chateau, some torn envelopes by her side — the post had lately come — and a volume of Kant lying unread, for she was in distress, since among her letters was none from Hannah.

At that hour of ten it looked like noon, so glaring was the Southern morning.

Presently Kathleen heard a step, peeped out of the arbor, and saw Chris coming quickly, looking flushed, an open letter in his hand. "I heard that you were here," he said to her, "just read that."

Kathleen took the letter and ran her quick eyes over the typewritten words:

Dear Sir:

Are you aware that your wife, Hannah Wilson, has lately contracted a second marriage in London? This is the truth, as you may at any time convince yourself by applying at the Clerkenwell Registry-office for a copy of the certificate.

Yours always,

A Friend.

The quaint maid went awfully pale as she read this! for her sharp wits at once pierced to the truth that Hannah had really now done “something,” but the opposite to her hopes, making the new marriage safe for Chris instead of fighting it tooth and nail.

“What do you think of it?” asked Chris.

“It is true,” she murmured, sitting down.

“But it can’t possibly be true,” said Chris.

Kathleen could hardly speak, and disliked Hannah far too much at that moment to be at the pains to explain to Chris what must be Hannah’s motive.

“To me it is merely incredible,” repeated Chris.

“You ought to be glad.”

“If Well, I suppose I ought to be glad in one way, if it can possibly be true: but, on the contrary, I am most sorry. This woman bears my name, and I was prouder of it, Kathleen, than I realized till now, it seems. I should have something to say to the good gentleman concerned, if I met him, I think!”

Kathleen did not care, nor answer: she felt too ill.

“Can Hannah Wilson be base?” asked Chris with opening arms. “If that be so, I shall never again trust a human soul! What have I done, that she should abandon me in this fashion? I who have wished to do all that I could for her, and was about to make over to her most that our good uncle left me? But this letter must be a libel: her soul had for me the noblest perfume —”

“You couldn’t have both Hannah and Yvonne, Chris,” murmured Kathleen.

“But why not?” asked the astonished Chris, “since they would not have met each other? How sorrows come unmerited upon one’s head! It is as when one owns a ring or a precious stone which he never sees, but when it is lost, he has a feeling of poverty. Can nothing be done for me? Will you write, Kathleen, to the office in London, and find out if this is true?”

“If you like,” answered Kathleen, and that day she made Miss Olivia write, she herself being in bed with a racked brow; but before the answer came from London a great grief had fallen upon Chateaubrun, so that when it came, and Chris was shown the proof of Hannah’s marriage, he saw it with bewildered eyes, for he was then bereft of Yvonne as well as of Hannah.

The day after the coming of that typewritten letter from “a friend” was one of the last of the grape-vintage in that part, and it had been arranged that a party from the chateau should go out as reapers to a vineyard named l’Adhemar, two or three miles away. About three, then, in the blazing afternoon they set out gaily in several kinds of carriage, the ladies looking as much like peasant vendangeuses as they could, with straw hats, and coarse gloves on their hands.

Chris and Yvonne drove together with Monsieur de Marsillac and the old comtesse Choderlos de Hanska; Kathleen and Miss Olivia were in an old-

fashioned sort of yellow painted coach with some men. Yvonne was rather feverishly gay that day, but Chris was absent-minded: the affair of Hannah had put him into that large, yearning mood in which music is often written, so he had been trying to write his sigh, but had done nothing excellent: and this failure, this musical flea and unrest, was fretting his mind. He had said nothing as yet to Yvonne about the typewritten, letter from London; was waiting to have it first proved or disproved.

As to Kathleen, it was odd that she went with the others that day, since she had worked herself into a fever at what would certainly now take place before Monsieur Tombarel, the mayor, in five days' time; however, no one guessed at her headache and hot skin, for she laughed and talked with the rest.

When they came to l'Adhemar, the vigneron and his family, who expected them, gave out reaping-scissors and baskets, and with a crowd of boys and girls the party went out to the terraced hills, scattered, and reaped with the other reapers.

Yvonne in the vines had filled her basket, had borne it to one of the carts, and was again filling it, when she called out, "Monsieur Wilson! are you there?" — for each reaper was hidden from the rest, the soil thereabouts being deep, and the scene very different from those scrubby vineyards of central France which, however, yield the choicest wine. L'Adhemar gives one of those strong wines, like Hermitage and the Provencal crops, which are reaped almost as late as port; and here the hills are thickly grown, with trellises and espaliers reaching well above one's head.

Chris called back in answer to Yvonne's call, followed the direction of her voice, and soon came upon her. They were there together in a little cave of shadow made of the hairy leaves, of the tendrils, and of the purple

grappes (or bunches), Yvonne's gloves already soaked, for at every wound made by the scissors in the vine, sap poured plenteously out.

"You see, it is already 'she' who seeks 'him rather than he her,'" she said to Chris, looking like a saucy vendangeuse, and holding up in her lips a half-crushed grape to his; Chris fed on grape and lips together, whereat she, pretending to be outraged, said, "But, monsieur, this is very English conduct! Oah, shock-eeng! seeing that I have not yet the honor to be Madame Wilson."

"Five days," murmured Chris.

"Four and eight hours: tell me if it seems long."

Chris nodded, gazing into her eyes, and smiling.

"Sometimes, mon ami," sighed Yvonne with sudden soberness, "I have a sharp sensation that it will never be; four days — it is infinitely far, and that which is infinite has no end."

"I get very little sleep," said Chris.

"I sleep very well, but my sleep is full of dreams of one person, a woman, who is never angry, but always smiles: and this causes me to suffer, Chris."

"That will soon be well."

Yvonne sighed.

"After all," she said, "an injustice has been done to us mortals: the problem of life has been made too deep and hard for our blind understandings."

"We were not made to think, but to feel," said Chris; "whoever enjoys is the true worshiper of the Father. The grapes live rightly in their voluptuous nonchalance. In five days we shall be as defiantly perfect and happy as they."

“Very well, I am ready, let us defy: but you must give me a lot, a lot, a whole ocean, to poison the worm. Will you? Tell me.”

Chris said yes with his eyebrows.

“Soon?”

He nodded.

“Yes, soon. One — two — three — four. Do you know beforehand how a wife kisses?”

But their passion was startled by a step. Yvonne pushed Chris from her in a frightened manner (for all this was highly improper in France), and, as Chris disappeared, Kathleen came, looking awfully wan, though trying to laugh, saying, “Oh, you are here.”

“Yes, this is my second basket,” said Yvonne: “and you?”

“I have filled one, but have stopped now, they are too heavy.”

“You do not look well, my poor dear,” said Yvonne, kissing Kathleen’s cheek. “I have been sorry, Kathleen, that we have been so little together lately: you have guessed the cause of it, have you not? But you do look pale today; are you suffering? Would it not be better if you go and sit in the cart over there?”

“I think I will, dear,” said Kathleen, “my head aches terribly.”

“Stay, I will come with you.”

“No, dear, don’t trouble, I can go—”

The little maid turned off, disappeared, and Yvonne was left alone in her little home of leafage. For some ten minutes she now worked industriously, snipping off the cones of grapes, now stooping, now reaching up, and dropping them into her basket; but presently she stopped, looked slyly round, hesitated, and called out, “Monsieur Wilson! are you there?”

There was no answer; she repeated the call twice, but Chris did not come. In fact, he had wandered away, forgetting the vintaging, Yvonne and

all, in his effort to catch a musical something, sad and sweet, which buzzed in his brain that day, but ever escaped him.

Yvonne left her basket there, and went a little way to seek him, but checked herself, returned to her nook and worked again; but she could find no rest without him, and again set out to find him, with death treading close now at her elbow, with, as it were, death in her eyes.

She went down-hill through the trellises until she came to a place where the hillside was rocky and bare, though lower down more vines grew; a level path ran across that bare place, and along this she went: but the setting sun was in her eyes, and stopping at one spot, she shaded them with her hand, looking abroad for any sign of Chris.

She stood there with shaded eyes for perhaps not more than a minute, perhaps two or three; but a second would have been long enough for the fate which awaited her.

Those who knew her well, who were living at the time in the same house with her, have never recovered from the shock of it, she was so young and joyous, so beautiful, just about to be married. When they suddenly saw her lying dead that afternoon, it was like a madness to them, they could not believe their eyes.

On a ledge of the hillside perhaps twenty feet above where she stood was one of the little carts, holding the tonneau (or hogshead) into which the grapes are poured from the baskets. These carts are tilted up-ward toward the shafts and the donkey, and, as the hogshead is usually kept in position by a hook and eye, if the hook is slipped, the hogshead tumbles out at the tail of the cart. The tail of the cart above Yvonne was turned down-hill toward her; Kathleen was in the cart, resting; no one was there at the moment; the reapers were all buried in the vines; and during the short time that Yvonne stood below with shaded eyes, the little maid's hand, by some

chance, knocked out the hook from the eye, and the hogshead, already heavy with grapes, went bounding down.

Kathleen, seeing what had happened below, stood up in the cart, spread her arms, and howled to Heaven; before any one could come she leapt and ran howling up toward the vines with a face of madness; she met two people running to her, and, half-kneeling to them, her hands trembling together in prayer, she said, “Yvonne, Yvonne, come, come,” and dropped to the ground.

Chris Wilson, happily for him, was nowhere near there: he had gone wandering upward beyond the brow of the hills, not caring whither, alone with that sad musical motif which enticed, yet always escaped him. A note of it came to him Memnonian from that choir of colors going down in the west; the leaves in the breeze seemed to lisp to him, “You see, we know the tune of it, but can’t utter it.” He woke up to himself in an olive-wood a long way from l’Adhemar, looked feebly about, and wondered what had become of him. It was getting dark. He set out at random with the aim of getting back to l’Adhemar or to Chateaubrun, meaning to ask his way of any one whom he might meet. But he had soon forgotten this aim, and wandered for another hour in roundabout ways. Near nine o’clock, a peasant who met him in an avenue asked him if he had heard of “the calamity which the lady from Chateaubrun had met with.” Chris listened absently, and went on his way with a dim knowledge in him that something had happened to some one; he had not well understood: the patois of that part was strange to him. It was ten before he at last asked his way at a cottage; and it was midnight before he reached Chateaubrun.

The chateau seemed to be in darkness. He went in by an out-of-the-way door, and found his way up-stairs, guided here or there by a lonely night-light. Without having met any one, he was passing Yvonne’s apartments

toward his own, when he was struck by the strong light coining out between the portieres of her ante-chamber. He peeped in: her petit salon was alight with candles, but no one was there. He went in, and peeped further into her cozy-corner; it, too, was ablaze with candle-light, but without any one in it; he wondered at this, and at the same time was struck by a memory of what the peasant had told him out in the country. Yvonne's chamber-door was a little open, and he could see that her chamber, too, like the other rooms, was ablaze with candle-light. He stood still some time with a beating heart. Not a sound was to be heard, save a very faint clicking sound from minute to minute. At last he peeped into the chamber, went in. Yvonne was lying on her bed, dressed for the grave, in a heap of flowers. No one was there but a nun kneeling in her black robes at the bedside, and telling her beads from minute to minute.

After gazing at the face of his lover for some minutes, Chris went away at an eager walk to his own chamber, in which he found a lamp burning. There he walked to and fro with quick steps a little while, then at an open window put out his arms to the rolling heavens, which was thronged with such stars as one never sees in northern countries; a moment afterwards he turned sharply inward with a crimson, crying face, in a jiffy had paper and ink before him, and for twenty minutes was writing music in a fierce haste and heat of the soul. What he had sought all that day he found now: for this was when his marche funebre quintet in E flat, called "Mortalite" was written.

When it was finished he threw himself on a couch, empty, griefless, hopeless, and very weary.

CHAPTER XVII



“DEAD,” WROTE HANNAH (about Yvonne), “leaving me the humblest creature on God’s earth. What devil could have got into me against that girl? The wicked bile in my heart! That day in rue Boissy d’Anglas Kathleen as good as told me of her noble, brave struggle, letting it out in bits, for she did not want, I think, to say any good of Yvonne, and I should have guessed that the struggle was far greater than the hints; but no, blind to it all — none so blind as those who will not see! And she’s dead now, so young, so young, and so fair, and the sun has gone down forever on my wrath. Oh, forgive, sweet, I’ll never do that again.”

To her self-upbraiding there was no end, month after month it went on, with a grief apparently as fresh as on the first day, the same wearisome prayers for forgiveness, and stream of tears. On whatever subject she wrote it presently turned into a lament over Yvonne: but this much may be left out here.

As to Chris she wrote: “How strangely it turned out! had given him up for good and all, but the very day after my letter telling of second marriage must have reached him, Yvonne met her death, and he became mine in a way once more. But never any more gallopings over Europe after him, Hannah: all that mere holiday-making in guise of right and duty: railway journeys, strange lands, bustle, hotels, fighting-cock fare, like Hodge up for the day in town, all very fine and large, but not doing work of Him that sent me. A woman should have a husband to beat her daily, and if she hasn’t, then must beat herself, put her nose to it, and work. Chastity, chastisement

— same things. 7 will have a husband some day, feel as certain of it now as of sitting here, but not for next three years anyway: it should take him quite the four to get well over death of that dear. I wonder? About that. Then will present myself before him with his son's hand in mine. Meantime, must spend my strength without stint, to quell riot within, if for no higher reason, and not let that little whelp asleep there stop me, either. If women were meant to devote themselves to brats, would have half a dozen at a litter, but one only meant to keep you laughing in play-hour," etc., etc.

"But work at London Hospital unsatisfying," she wrote in another place: "five hundred of us, seem as many nurses as patients. Have never once felt weary, and need something to pull me really down, and take it out of me. Wait, the Lord will provide. Perhaps when I become staff-nurse something better may be opened; but no seeking for 'some great thing to do,' let it be humble, so long as real and tough. Meantime, plenty of warm joy inside, and songs in the night.

"Interview yesterday" (in another place) "with Bailey at hospital: brought news that poor innocent Josef at Madame Brault's had been arrested for theft of viol and things, but released. Over there they call being in choky, 'etre au violon,' so just suited poor Josef with viol. Oh, I was cross! Told Bailey that if any more innocent people to be arrested, then shall stop search altogether. 'What next?' I asked, 'any hope?' 'Plenty of hope,' he answered: 'the field of inquiry now definitely narrowed; Mr. Dene quite convinced now that things not lost in France, therefore in England, and in England must be looked for. 'Looked for and found two different things,' I said: 'you must think I am millionaire.' 'We will drop investigation, if you wish,' he said. Told him 'No, keep it going to bitter end'; then told him dream, twice dreamt in three months, in which Sir Peter appeared to me in shroud, holding out viol and box, in such a marvelous light each time.

Bailey not much impressed by dreams! Agent to go down at once to Orrock, search to be transferred there for the present. New check, £17, like getting blood out of stone. Then in afternoon went all alone to inter-'Varsity match at Lords," etc.

"Twenty-seven today," she wrote on the 21st of November, her birthday: "getting on, Hannah, but as blooming today as ever was — more so. 'That ye may have life, and have it more abundantly.' Spent whole afternoon here in Guilford Street with baby, jaws sore with laughing, when, about five, two newsboys shouting in street: 'Great British disaster,' sixty-five killed and wounded, making me feel pretty choky: no end to the devilish war. Birthday letter from mummie this morning, with two turkeys and pigmeat; wants to know if she can't come up to me, since I won't go down. Yes, when my child has a father, not till then. She suspects that paper-shop address is not my real address, asks if I am 'hiding anything from her'! Imagine her stare, if she only dreamt what lies asleep there! Poor mummie, you will know some day. Meantime, 'Let not thy left hand know!' Each live life in own skin, not burden others with one's ha'penny cares, mishaps, and shames: lock it all up in own bosom, and throw key away. Don't mean to be cross-examined, either; shall go down when I want to, not before. They used to say I wasn't very devoted daughter, and now Mrs. Reid here all hints that I am not very devoted mother: 'How you can bear to leave him, I don't know!' Poor thing: so pathetic. God grant me true, manly emotions, not unreal, like most women's: there are a few other things about beside my mother and child, a God in labor pains and a world squalling, both needing nursing. As for brat, if he is neglected, that's self-neglect, for he is the same thing as myself: some things your own, some your ownest own, and some your own ownest own. Toss him about like doll, kill and eat him, if I chose, and not ask anyone's leave — would only be suicide.

“Mummie anxious about my money-matters, thinks the £10 a month since I refused Chris’s money not enough; doesn’t know that I am putting it all away in bank, and, besides, getting £12 a year as probationer, all found down to uniform. Three months hence will begin to get £2 for second year. Can’t she guess that I am not sitting down idly, waiting for husband to turn up? But why couldn’t I have told her about hospital? Liking to go one’s own way in silence may become a fault. Shall tell her in next letter, without saying which hospital.

“Five sweet birthday-letters enclosed in mummie’s, and others from Bishop W, Kathleen, Sir F. T., and my Willie, who never forgets date of his ducking! He working in timber-yard at Chelsea now; hasn’t been to see me for five weeks. Kathleen with Miss Olivia in Paris, still subject to bad dreams, frights, and breakdowns through death of Yvonne, now and again sees Chris, and would like to know ‘What are your plans?’ But this the odd thing: she says, ‘If you had had a child, that would have been a link between you and Chris.’ That’s odd! This the second time she has referred to possibility of a child, as though she knew or guessed something. But not possible. Have never yet found out whether she knows of my second marriage. She was at Chateaubrun when I wrote news of it to Chris. Do hope she doesn’t know: but all the same a hundred years hence, dear, when we both sleeping in mother’s arms, poppies whispering all the summer, little hunch pulled quite straight then, such is His mercy, and Hannah’s brawl nicely hushed.

“Oh, do so hunger and thirst lately to see the old place once more, the cliffs, geese, graves, Woodside old gables, coots on Embree Pond, the sea. Shall go first chance, but late at night, no one to see: a child, and no husband to show for it, ladies. ‘Avoid the very appearance of evil,’ and ‘Let not thy left hand know.’ But a grave in that place draws me. Is it kept fresh

with flowers? He had a love for old apples and apple-blossoms, so that's what they should heap on mostly. The dead long for flowers to keep them going. How I have abandoned him! That old man's love for me! And mine for you, too, dear. If you hadn't love me so quick, I should have beaten you and loved you first. Shall soon come to you: it's the hospital, the brat, the eternal violin, and the hard, hard reading that have kept me away; must vow to give up cricket-matches all next summer.

“Chris just finished Bavarian tour, says Kathleen, and due in England in four months: will see him then without being seen — only the second time since marriage. What can he possibly think of me after that letter telling of second marriage? Does he guess motive? How did he take it? Would give the world to know. My complete ignorance of his mind now! But wait, all's quite well: death of Yvonne proves him my very own, in spite of all. No end apparently to his achievement: Kathleen says playing double harmonies in rapidest passages, whole melodies in harmonics, in Vienna ties and walking-sticks called after him, his last sonata all the rage everywhere, tours like triumphal progresses. Have a thought of writing to him in assumed name, just to see if he will answer: but wait till my love comes to England.”

CHAPTER XVIII



AFTER ANOTHER MONTH the diary becomes gloomy reading, where she writes of leaving the London Hospital. "Dismissal," she wrote, "for it comes to that. I'd rather they had said plain 'go' than say 'Please ask to be allowed to go.' It was like a thunder-bolt, I had so set my mind upon becoming staff-nurse — only eleven more months: now all dark before me again, nothing to do but stare at Foundling boys at drill in mornings, and moon with baby all day. Wherein hath she offended? Presentation-Bible from probationers at parting, everybody in tears because of my going, I inclined that way for same reason, yet going all the same, bewitched, not knowing why! Matron must have heard something somehow — about child? about second marriage? Seems impossible, but must be. Was down in Chelsea to my Willie yesterday, questioned him narrowly: no, had not breathed a word to a soul. Anyway, bitter and shameful enough. Oh, you could sit down and cry, Hannah, if you only would."

But scarcely two weeks had passed when she was out of this slough of despond, and once more in her brighter mood. It came about through a boy named "Ralphie," of whom she often wrote. She seems to have met him at a little meeting-house Sunday-school in the Euston Road, for she belonged to all the religious sects in the world, and wrote of them, "the more the merrier." "Ralphie's" mother fell ill, Hannah went to see her, and at the bedside met a little St. Pancras-Dispensary doctor who fell in love with her, and brought her into touch with more sick people. In all that part between Guilford Street and St. Pancras there is no lack of wretchedness and disease,

and her days and nights, too, were soon as full of work and hurry as she could wish, though in an unofficial way. After only five or six weeks of it, when she had met several doctors, patrons, and influential people, she wrote the extraordinary words: "My own hospital some day perhaps," meaning that the little so-called "Medical Mission," now in Compton Place, which she helped to found, was already in sight. On the top of all this bustling activity came Chris Wilson, of whose first concert she wrote: "St. James's Hall yesterday afternoon: my same boy, a little bigger, hair worn a little longer. Some difference between yesterday and that first night at Queen's Hall, not the same thrill beforehand, but even greater emotion during, and ado after, concert. If I had had a veil, would have tried to shake hands like the rest, but hadn't thought of veil, and didn't dare. Not according to the plan, Hannah. Wait, only two years and a half, say two years, a man can't love the sweetest ghost longer, then he will take you. I love him as friend, as husband, as little papa, as sweetheart, and as workman: really wondrous tremolo use of left hand now, something like three octaves out of each string, twice changed pitch of G in height of last piece by turn of peg. See program gummed on other side. Came home 'sick with love,' and under strong impulse wrote letter straight away, signed 'Viola.' See copy, ," etc., etc.

"Hip! hip!" she wrote two days later, "answer to 'Viola' this morning from Chris! Never thought he would answer! Here it is:

"4 Gray's Inn Square.

"My dear Viola,

"I thank you infinitely for your letter, which I find no less than charming, and I have a perfect conviction that you are as charming in your person as in your writing. Imagine, then, my trouble, when, having sent my valet

today to make inquiries at the address which you give, he brought me back the intelligence that none such as you lives there, since the place is only a little paper-shop. Let me beseech you, dear Viola, to place me at once in a better position with regard to you. The proof that I am seriously concerned is this letter, since it is well known that I am not fond of writing letters, and am daily compelled to leave missives from unknown correspondents unanswered. But yours has seriously fascinated my fancy, I picture you as a being endowed with every grace, and desire to see you. If you do not let me see you at once, I shall become lovesick and restless, my work will be disturbed, and you would certainly not wish this. Or perhaps you do not care to give me your address at once? but mean to wait till your modesty is appeased by time? In which case, let me remind you that youth is short, that the flowers of tomorrow grow for others, but today is Love's opportunity; moreover, my stay in England will not be long. Do for me, then, what you can in this, will you? For if my longings are balked, everything goes wrong with me. If you can't let me see you at once, pray let me have your photograph without delay. Long as your letter was, it left in me a kind of longing desire for more, rather than a satiety. Your hand-writing, though strong, I find thrillingly feminine; and you have scented the paper with a heavenly art. Why, by the way, do you so object to this word 'art,' and wish it 'left out of the dictionary?' Is it not too old a friend? But we will discuss your letter particularly at our near meeting.

"Sincerely yours, dear Viola,

"Chris Wilson."

"Was rather afraid," wrote Hannah of the letters, "that he might recognize my handwriting, for has seen it once or twice. However, all safe henceforth. Let two days pass, then wrote following:

“Dear Chris Wilson:

“I was surprised and glad to get your letter. Let me say at once that I shall be sorry indeed if your work is “disturbed” through me, but I can’t give you my address, nor even send you my photograph. Does it follow, because you are a great “artist,” that you may send such commands to a woman who merely wrote to express her liking for your fiddling? Just as all men are not fiddlers, so all women are not fiddles, sir! But you won’t go lovesick after a shadow? I happen to know that you once took to your bed through longing for some odor which you had smelled, or dreamt that you had smelled. I don’t call that virtuous. But you shall see me. That is a promise. Not when you order me, but when see fit, perhaps a good time hence, one day I shall certainly present myself before you. And I promise also that in that day I shall bring you in my hands a present worthy of you and me — a rich one — richer than a king’s ransom, cunningly made, richer than Koh-i-noor added to Le Messie, La Pucelle, and all the Strads in the world. That may sound rather wild talk, but I already have the thing by me, am keeping it for you, and you may rely upon my promise. Meantime, as I can’t send my photograph, I may tell you, to keep you going, that I am by no means an old woman, am tallish, no skin-and-bones, every tooth sound in my head, figure straight as a dart and strong in the back, not bad looking up above, nice country color, a little too much jaw perhaps, but laughing, deep blue eyes to make up. Not a bad lot altogether, well-meaning, but stumbling and purblind. That’s Viola. But what surprises me in your letter is your “desire to see” this unknown Viola only nineteen months after the death of Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik. You see, I know things. Am I right or wrong in deciding that “Mortalite” was written with your eyes fixed on her beatified image? I am sure that that hymn is truly of God. You will let

her memory fade with the tenderest slowness? I always think now of white violets when I think of her. These, too, must fade, though watered with tears, but with a lingering, sweet decay. Then I shall like you a lot, and do anything for you. As to my attack on the word “art,” I only meant that all meaning seems to have got rubbed out of it now. It implies artfulness, thought? yes, but was “Mortalite” a work of thought? No: so we have a word meaning thought used to describe works purely emotional and instinctive. I want to consult you about a viola which I have come across lying under a bed in a quite poor house in Islington, looking wondrously like a Maggini, with clear-cut bouts, short corners, and upright??’s, clover-leaves and trefoils on back. I could get it, if I chose, for — how much do you think? — £2, and am haunted by the possibility of its genuineness. Shall I get and send it you? Varnish orange and palest yellow, with dated label. Or will you not write again? I have a whole heartfelt to say to you by little and little, if you will hear.

“Your sincere Viola.”

This letter-writing between “Viola” and Chris Wilson was still in its earliest stage when Hannah’s quietness of mind was troubled by a little thing — the disappearance of “her” Willie. “Hadn’t seen him for four months,” she wrote of him; “began to get anxious, and went down . . . to his timber-yard in Chelsea. Not there, had left months before — without telling me a word! One of workmen said: ‘Dawe must have come into a fortune; saw him one evening five weeks ago at Charing Cross, dressed up like a lord, watch and chain and cane, with a young lady on his arm.’ Can’t be true! Wrote to Mrs. Dawe to ask, and this morning her answer that she doesn’t know where Willie is; says that Kathleen, too, has wanted his address, and she gave it; doesn’t think that since then she has got either

money or letter from him; doesn't say why Kathleen wanted address. That must have been when Kathleen was in England and went down to Orrock about four months ago; she called at paper-shop address thinking to see me, about then. Anyway, my Willie gone, perhaps out of work, clothes shabby, and ashamed to come to me! But strange he hasn't written to his mother. Why did Kathleen want him? Don't even know where she is now — not at the Hill."

"Interview in drawing-room with Bailey," she wrote two days later, "and never was so utterly mystified. Something discovered at last: viol and box seen behind bureau in Hall library on morning of Sir Peter's funeral! If he had said, 'Man-in-the-moon seen playing cricket,'

I couldn't have been more hopelessly astonished. He heard it from under-housemaid Jane, who, when Hall-servants were put on half-pay, and some dismissed, went home to parents in Nottinghamshire; after endless bother Bailey found her down there in a coffee-house, and she is sure of facts: saw the things behind bureau— 'thing like a fiddle, a little larger, only without any handle, and cardboard box like a collar-box' — wondered how they had got there, didn't like to touch, next time she looked they were gone! Must be true, since she can describe them exactly. But the wonder of it! Who, and with what motive, could steal just those two things, and nothing else? Does any one know my secret, and how? Does this explain dreams about Sir Peter? But don't try to see through stone-wall, Hannah, take deep breaths, and possess your soul. Worry about this, however, that I must have left trunk open some time, and no hope for me, if I continue that sort of slovenly life. Only two days ago Drs. Lloyd and Herrick complimenting my 'powers of organization' 'would have been a general, if a man,' when I had the thought, 'but if you only knew some of the things I forget, the silly, childish mistakes and omissions in most important matters';

can't help it! a screw loose somewhere, the sex of the girl, perhaps. "Anyway, so the matter stands about viol and box, and now, with a clue, they may turn up any day. Gave Bailey new check, £11.15; then, when he was gone, the frenzy came upon me to be in the old place that very night! and if old Pat had got worse during absence would have served me just right. Several things forbade me to go that night; no good; had been hearing too much from Bailey about everybody down there, just wrote notes to doctors, was away by the 8.37, and now in a rage with myself for it, like drunkard's awaking. Impulse, and tearing, stumbling self-will. But enjoyed myself thoroughly; walked from Cromer, and between midnight and five a. m. ranged everywhere, saw everything, without being seen by a soul; cloudy, drizzling, with moon now and again a little; sat ten minutes on Woodside side-steps with Rover; at the grave half an hour in the dark o' the moon, boats out on sea at the pots; heaped it with clove-carnations, heartsease, tulip, harebell. Just over Scoble's Cave a bit of cliff gone like the wall of a house, debris still there at bottom, and a narrow slice, a foot thick, from south end of graveyard; makes me sad every time: no end to it. He gives, and He takes away."

The strange fact to what she refers here is to be seen more or less at work all round Britain. Yorkshire every year loses thirty acres; between Spurn Head and Whitby five feet a year are swallowed up; between Bridlington and the Humber a hundred yards are said to have vanished within fifty years. The lane where lovers plighted their troth may be gone before the wedding day, and "soon where late we stood shall no man stand," says Mr. Swinburne. It is rather a painful thing: timber and stones may prop the cliffs here or there, but the North Sea is an army with banners whose march is long and strong, England is being invaded, and where Napoleon faltered God will effect a landing. Ravenspur, once a great seaport, is no more to be

found; Auburn and Hyde are where no one can trace them. In Norfolk, one Cromer is gone, the other going; Shipden and Eccles are “as Sodom and Gomorrah”; and Sheppey has lost three hundred yards within the memory of its people. At some points there is now a superstition against burying in the east side of the church toward the sea, so common a sight have out-sticking coffins become. On the west coast, too — in Wales, in Lancashire, at many points — the Atlantic with a still longer and stronger march is pressing to effect a junction with the North Sea, and it is said that in a certain number of years, which to the Eternal is as an hour, ships will reef their sails in a rough mid-sea where the dream of England was. It is not strange if the poor fishers and tillers of the soil upon whom such-like thoughts are daily forced have a certain sigh, a certain sadness of outlook.

CHAPTER XIX



AS TO KATHLEEN, she had all this time been as quiet as a mouse, and was to be found hobbling to church services. The death of Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik had come upon her as one of those bullying thunder-claps which overawe all men, save heroes. It was with her as when a child touches a hot grate, and touches a grate no more for years. The little maid seems to have been troubled with a doubt whether that death of Yvonne was not in some way owing to her will; it is to be feared that she suspected herself: and at this thing Kathleen gave up Chris Wilson as utterly as Hannah had given him up during those three days between her second marriage and the death of Yvonne: nothing was left in Kathleen but awe of a universe in which there is room for such outbreaks and Gorgons.

But such awes little by little lose their power, and the snail dares to peep out afresh. Kathleen saw Chris Wilson here or there, each time with a renewed feeling of worldliness and enterprise; she began to be bitter again at Hannah's claim upon him, at Hannah's probable hopes and plans; it soon occurred to her that it might be a good thing to make Willie Dawe, Hannah's second "husband," her slave, by keeping him in clover; then she was to be found writing that "Chris is again madly in love, this time not with a woman, but with a dream: she calls herself 'Viola,' he has never seen her, but she has promised to see him some day, bearing in her hand some marvelous present which is to outweigh all the great diamonds! So he told me last night in the lobby of the Opera. What a boy! His romantic fancy dresses her in the rainbow. The correspondence has been going on some two

years now, all about music, art, life, love. ‘She inspires me,’ he told me, ‘guides me, loves me, and in the oddest way knows all about me, Kathleen. Her letters are the very genius of good sense, and yet contain the essence of a certain materialistic mysticism which I can’t tell you of. Moreover, she is the very spirit of Woman, and always somehow about me: sometimes she knows how many glasses of absinthe I take at the cafe, and the next day writes to tell me of it. Yet I never see her; but I soon shall, for she has promised it.’ All cloud, cloud. Who can it be? Some Austrian landgräfin or Russian princess, old, no doubt, and hideous: she won’t send him her photograph — wise woman. I don’t see why I should be so haunted and agitated by it; but it is such a pang to be jealous of the unknown. He is so interested, that the quixote actually keeps copies of some of his own letters. After a lot of praying he consented to let me peep at the packet; he has it in the rue de Rome, and I am to go this afternoon at five....”

“It was well conceived, Hannah,” Kathleen wrote three days later, “but your patience has done for you, you have waited too long. If she had come to Chris, saying, ‘I am Viola,’ may be on the sudden he would have fallen to her; but if I tell him casually one day, ‘Viola’ is only Hannah,’ that’s another matter, the spell will be broken. After all, ‘Lady Wilson’ is an inappropriate name for Farmer Langler’s daughter, with all her talents. I have read the letters; Chris allowed me to bring them to the hotel for two days, read a few of them aloud to me himself: he is gone just daft over ‘Viola.’ Who on earth taught Hannah Langler to write letters? One must admit that she has a calm, strong brain, and some grace in writing which has grown with practice: four or five of the letters are worthy of George Sand, and two or three of Madame de Sevigny. I wonder that she ventured to write them in her own hand! Her second marriage letter was typewritten, but I suppose she thought it too much trouble to get these typewritten, and risked

it. Oh, if I had her calm audacity! I am bold, too, but only in white-hot fits, and then all too bold, perhaps, little hunch. Chris must have seen her handwriting somewhere, if only in Orrock church, but, of course, forgot it. He provokes me with his simplicity, men have no wits. The moment I saw the writing I felt almost certain, and soon I came across this bit: ‘I know a countryman named Butt, who, sitting still in a place where every one was dancing, was asked by a certain squire, “Well, why don’t you dance, Butt?” “Lord bless us all, squire,” answered Butt, “if a man can’t jig, he can’t jig.” So ever since he goes by the name of Jig-Butt. Well, the same with fiddling: if a gel can’t scrape, she can’t scrape.’ Then, of course, I knew my Hannah: who else on earth but Lady Wilson cares what name Mr. Butt of Orrock goes by? She is essentially ‘of the people,’ but has got some finesse by dint of willing.

“I have spent two days over the letters, which would fill a volume, and it is to be hoped that Chris has been edified. She writes with enough aplomb! ‘I under-stand that you have a tendency to give up practise now, and are taking to a mute, and though I repeat to myself that you must know better than I can what you are about, I have searchings of heart as to this. Consider if it is well, beloved. In the sort of feverish life which you lead “the inner life” becomes doubly precious? . . . When thou hast entered into thy closet, pray: for “working is praying,” even when it is playing.... I myself am living a full, robustious life just now, and sometimes, after some sleep, can only just keep my feet from dancing all over the place. The last time I ran over to France, just to see your face, I did not once sleep for ninety-six hours afterwards, and some days, having only time for one meal, I carry pastry in my pocket, so whenever my envelopes reach you greasy you will know from what pit they have been drawn.’ Three whole letters are a discussion of the meaning of ‘virtue’! She had written ‘ladylike arid unvirtuous,’ and,

Chris not agreeing, she answers: 'I have been hunting down "virtue" today, and find that the Greek is from ar, a male, and in Latin the same, from vir, a male. So virtue means vigor? In which ease Tannhauser was merely unwell? and the Venusberg a slum? Virtue is health of mind? health is virtue of body? A burglar is in the room of a sleeping saint: which of the two is the more virtuous? the burglar? for "virtue," "vigor," "health," "life," "joy" are all one? You can choose any one of them you like, and throw the rest out of the dictionary.' If she had her way, not many words would be left in the dictionary, apparently: she wants 'art' to go, and elsewhere 'spirit.' 'God is a spirit,' she says, 'but what is a spirit? don't know, so look in the dictionary, and find that the people who wrote it had no idea either. As applied to Alicante wine, I know well what it means: and you, perhaps? But otherwise, it has no right to be about, since we don't mean anything when we say it, but thinking that we do, trick ourselves.' Her cocksure tone of 'having authority'! I wonder that it never occurred to me to enter into such a correspondence with Chris: I could have done it just like her, or better. Her phrases are, 'be ye therefore perfect,' and 'that ye may have life, and have it more abundantly'; twenty, thirty times these recur, her 'life' meaning mere 'health': au fond she is a materialist. Some of her little bits are not bad: 'The first duty of a modern man is to be modern, the second is to be modest, to know himself primeval, and feel the romance of Time'; 'health, like wealth, is the product of daily industry: happiness consists in martyrdom, torture, athletics, physical and mental; but oh, how easy is this yoke, and how joyfully light this burden!' 'I have found out that the "ma" of little children really means "food," but as food comes from mother, "ma" soon gets to mean mother'; 'health, I take it, isn't the mere absence of discomfort and sin — that's only a first step up Snowdon and Mont Blanc — but a choky lump of worship inside, tears in the eyes, and laughter all down

below'; 'in the present stage of things there are existing together ape, underman, man, and over-man: the product of the extremes is equal to the product of the means'; 'a quick memory, and a certain two-eyed faculty, meaning the power of seeing one thing through the right eye at the same moment as one sees another through the left eye — a question of athletics — these, I think, are the makings of the saint, of the superhuman and divine man'; 'the most important part of the body is the soul'; 'I went to see Sandow perform last night: to me he is a true saint and holy one, or at least a true half-saint; if he were as good a Christian as he is an athlete, meaning that if he kept his nerve-matter, or soul, in as good form as he keeps his muscle-matter, he would be about four times greater than all the martyrs, seers, and prophets'; 'was Shakespeare Bacon? Bacon and more! Say Bacon plus Ham: and hence was the father of the little Hamlet;' I find that my head is a magnet, though a feeble one: if I put an iron hairpin gently on my forehead, it sticks, even when I turn the forehead downward'; 'athletics is about the most effectual form of prayer: the answer hardly ever fails'; 'a moral man would live two hundred years without a hole in his teeth'; 'the higher the animal the longer his life: some animals only live a few seconds; man will be living hundreds of years a little later on'; "'purity of heart" is a hearty preoccupation with hard fact, and impurity a preoccupation with soft delusion: most nuns and nurses are impure in heart, often preoccupied with "the world," though pure in life, while the poor Magdalens of the streets are pure in heart, preoccupied with the pretty hard fact of board-and-lodging, though impure in life'; 'I think, dear, that the air which we breathe is full of sparks of life and of the Holy Ghost: people lying dead are only dead because they can't breathe it, while most living people about are only half alive because they only half-breathe it'; 'when you have walked a long way, and begin to feel tired, give yourself a rest by running'; 'how excellent

to be perfect! how perfect to be excellent!’ ‘to be happy every morning, and to attain to joy every afternoon, isn’t this the whole duty of man?’ ‘I am a great one for conscription, not, of course, the conscription which teaches people to kill, but one which would teach athletics; why the Governments don’t at least wash and drill each of its citizens, male and female, every morning, it is hard to say: even the horrid Continental conscription seems better than none at all’ — and so on. She sent Chris a Stainer tenor, I don’t know where she got the money to buy it, and Chris promptly replied by sending her — his Nicolo. After this, ‘Dear Chris Wilson’ suddenly changes into ‘Beloved,’ and ‘Dear Viola’ becomes ‘Adored’ and ‘Darling Viola.’ But all the thanks he got for his Nicolo was an elaborate eulogy of Mittenwald at the expense of Cremona: ‘There is something so much more Dorian in the mood of a Stainer than in all the Bergonzis, Storionis, and later Cremonese, to say nothing of the earlier. Plato would have played a Stainer, they are so wide-awake and virtuous, like Highland troops on the march with all the flags, drums, and bagpipes going; I’d rather even a Barak Norman or a Klotz than a Nicolo, though I love my Nicolo, since some of your passion still trembles in the sound-post? Last week, however, I came across a grand pattern Strad in a bishop’s house, and must admit myself fascinated; I cuddled the golden belly against my cheek; played from ‘Walküre,” and “Joy, O Joy!” When the finger-tips just brood over the strings, an electric thrill burns between, as with meeting lips, and the whole thing hums like a dizzy brain. I noticed, as you say, one of the??’s a thought lower than the other, and now have my own theory as to that.’ . . . ‘I find myself in communion with you,’ from Chris in answer, ‘in a transcendent way; I am but little a mystic, and do not know the ways of the spirit; but you are certainly, as it were, my wife, and with me; just now, in playing for my amusement “Du bist die Ruh,” I had an intimate sense of your

womanhood and of your presence, like a vision. That will be interesting to have you accompany me on the piano: I am curious to know what will be the emotional outcome. I have a notion that still higher achievements in sensation will be mine when you are at my side. But how long? I invite you to be good to our youth.’ ‘It won’t be long now,’ is her answer, ‘it would have been sooner, if so many ties didn’t bind me here; I am like Gulliver bound — the threads can be snapped, but then the little ones would be hurt. Others, however, are being prepared to fill my place, and very soon I shall leave all to follow you.... You are my business in life and one thing needful.... Some women in my place would have a blue fright that you would unlove them at first sight: not I. I shan’t breathe any the quicker when we meet, but shall come carelessly into my own somehow, like blind kittens born into they don’t quite know what age or nook of the universe, but understanding that it is into their proper planet, to their own mother, and that they have a right to make a noise, and be kittenish . . . In my hand no price I shall bring, what I bring will be priceless, and brought not in the way of purchase-money, but as free gift; and in my face you will see the eyes of a friend: for no less than this, I believe, will be my pride when I shall come to review my life, that I, though a woman, was capable of friendship. “The ordinary sufficiency of women,” says old Florio, “cannot answer this conference, the nurse of this sacred bond, nor seem their minds strong enough to endure the pulling of a knot so hard, so fast, and durable, and this sex could never yet by any example attain unto it”; and he says: “So many parts are required to the erecting of such a friendship, that it may be accounted a wonder if fortune once in three ages contract the like. It is a great and strange wonder, for a man to double himself, their mutual agreement being no other than one soul in two bodies, according to the definition of Aristotle; they can neither lend nor give out to each other; and

each doth as wholly give himself unto his friend, that he hath nothing left him to divide elsewhere, and is grieved that he is not double, and hath not many souls, that he might confer them all upon this object.” As for Viola, when she had only heard your name, before ever she had seen you, her heart quickened with friendliness, and was qualmish and fain for the altar of sacrifice. You speak of me as your “wife”? Truly, I am that: but if I were no nearer you, you should never see Viola.’

“It is a mercy,” continues Kathleen, “that I didn’t tell Chris who ‘Viola’ is, for a sentence in one of his letters to her has become an awful temptation to me. He says: ‘That will be interesting to have you accompany me on the piano;’ he feels that ‘Viola’ will do it well, but he already knows that I do, and there is no reason why he shouldn’t be made to think that I am ‘Viola.’ Only, my heart beats too madly at the mere thought: I could never do it for that reason alone. But since he knows my handwriting, I could hint that I naturally got some one to copy the letters out for me. I should come in for some at least of Viola’s spoils. All is fair in love, in war, and in everything. Not that it is pretty: but to be rich one must steal; all rich men are thieves, and all poor ones are would-be thieves. We are as alike as peas, the whole mass of pudding. Honesty is only a form of snobbishness, a means of looking down in turn upon one’s richer neighbors who look down upon one. Still, one goes horrid, really, if one does such things, one gets worse and weaker, till some day one does something ineffably outrageous. I hope I am not going to do this thing. And could I? It would be horribly dangerous for many, many reasons! Hannah will soon be coming to Chris with his child’s hand in hers; if the child is at all like him, she won’t need the proofs buried in St. Peter’s churchyard; even if the child is not like, Chris won’t doubt her word when she has once explained her motive for marrying Willie Dawe. But mightn’t I poison Chris’s mind against her in advance by making Willie

Dawe tell Chris that the child is his, Willie's? Many things occur to me now, many; my head is rank with fraud; and something is going to come of it, for they haven't any right to tempt me, and make me mad. "Chris will be in England within a month," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX



IT WAS, INDEED, just a month after this that the little maid drove one night from the Savoy Hotel, where she was staying, to Gray's Inn with a young man beside her, to whom she said on the way, "Well, you are looking quite smart and prosperous: have you a house of your own now?"

"Thank you, miss, I've taken the house in Camden Town," said Willie Dawe, a lank fellow, with a loose mouth.

"And I suppose you are not so foolish as to do any work now?"

"Thank you, no, miss; I'm taking it easy just for the present, thanks to you."

"Having a good time?"

"Thank you, miss, pretty fair, thank you."

"Well, you are a lucky fellow: it is only because I have known your mother so long on the estate. That's why. If I were you, I should thoroughly enjoy myself while I could, for suppose I were to die or anything, what would become of you? You could never go back to the old workaday life, after tasting ease and pleasure."

"Thank you kindly, miss, thank you," said Willie Dawe.

"But you could have been twice as well off, if you had followed my hints: for she would have been compelled to give you as much as you chose to ask for."

"Thank you, miss, I didn't quite like to do that, miss," said Willie Dawe with a blush.

"I don't see why not."

“I don’t fancy she has so over-much for herself, miss, begging your pardon.”

“Her father is a large farmer, with plenty of money laid by. But you are fond of her, Willie.”

“I, miss? fond of her! Not me, I’ll swear.”

“You are. You like her better than me for saving you that time from the sea.”

“No, miss, no, I tell you; don’t talk of that, miss, please, begging your pardon.”

“She only did it to show off her physical powers. She cared nothing about you.”

“No, miss, thank you.”

“Have you never once seen her since I came across you? Are you sure?”

“Miss Hannah, miss? Not I, miss!”

“I have told you not to call her ‘Miss Hannah’: say ‘my wife’; it is only the truth: you married her; she is your wife, and the mother of your child.”

“Well, miss, since you say so.”

“Didn’t you admit as much to me yesterday?”

“I did, yes, miss, in a way, thank you.”

“Well, all you have to do is to repeat the same tale to the gentleman. Don’t be abject before him, he can’t bite you. Just show the certificate, say all that I have suggested, and claim your rights as a father and husband. By the way, I have thought that you would like to see Paris, and am giving you an extra thirty pounds to-night: Paris is an awfully gay place. Oh, here we are.”

The carriage drew up in Gray’s Inn, where Chris Wilson still stuck to his old chambers. Kathleen and her companion, both of them pale and trembling, went up, were let in by Grimani, and went into the room where

Chris was; Chris was half a minute before he could tear himself from his desk, then leapt up and rushed, with a murmur of “My own dear friend,” to Kathleen’s hand.

“Is that a letter to ‘Viola,’ Chris?” asked Kathleen, showing her pretty teeth in a nervous laugh; “you were so deep in it—”

He gave some little nods, meaning “yes.”

“This is the young man whom you are expecting, if you haven’t forgotten my letter,” said Kathleen. “I am afraid he has a grievance against you, and has brought it all to me. I have known him since I was a child; he is one of your own Orrock subjects, so I felt bound to be interested.”

“What have I done?” asked Chris meekly.

“You know that this is the — husband — of some one?”

“So you wrote to say.”

“Well, some busybody has been filling him with the notion that you intend to claim the child as your own.”

“I didn’t know that you had a child, my friend,” said Chris gently to Willie Dawe.

“Now, Willie Dawe, are you satisfied?” asked Kathleen. “I told you that Sir Chris probably knew nothing whatever of the matter.”

There was silence.

“What made her have him?” asked Chris, more with his eyes than his lips.

“Tell Sir Chris everything,” said Kathleen.

“I and my wife grew up neck and neck together down at Orrock, sir, begging your pardon,” said Willie Dawe, trying to remember what he had been told to say.

“But it is an incredible thing!” said Chris, his arms akimbo, looking down with disgust at Dawe, who was sitting at the last edge of a chair.

“Show Sir Chris the copy of the certificate,” said Kathleen.

“But have I not already seen one?” asked Chris: “spare yourself the pains, my friend.”

“The affair took place at the Clerkenwell Town hall, sir,” said Dawe, his eye-corners ever wandering round to where Kathleen sat.

“Let it be so,” answered Chris: “I don’t at all question the formality of your proceedings. One only hopes that you never play at cards, for certainly you are most lucky in love. Have you only one child?”

“Yes, sir.”

“A boy? a girl?”

Dawe did not know! His eyes swam round to Kathleen.

“A boy,” said Kathleen quickly at a venture, flushing.

“How old?” asked Chris.

“About — four years, sir.”

“But don’t be agitated. I have no thought of taking your little one from you; it is true that I once went through the marriage ceremony with your wife, but we parted the same evening, and I have never seen her since. Her son can’t be mine. I don’t know why you are agitated.”

“It isn’t that, sir, it isn’t that, begging your pardon,” said the unfortunate Willie.

“Why did she marry you, my friend?” asked Chris.

“My wife and I grew up neck and neck together, sir,” repeated Willie, with an eye on Kathleen.

“And still you are neck and neck under the same yoke. That is idyllic! though in the books of Moses it is forbidden to yoke the ox and the ass together. But did you dare to marry her, knowing that her first husband was alive? or did you believe that he was dead?”

“She told me—”

“Well?”

“That you were dead, sir.”

“She?”

“Yes, sir, and that she — wor — glad of it.”

“But the fellow is a traitor and a liar,” muttered Chris with a flushed forehead. “Go away now, go, go,” and he brushed Willie Dawe away with motions of his hands, following and brushing him out.

When he returned Kathleen was alone, with him, except for Grimani in another room, but the little maid showed no haste to go away, as would have been only proper. It was after eleven in the night.

“I hope you did not want him to stay for any reason, Kathleen,” said Chris; “he became intolerable.”

“It is all right,” said Kathleen. “I thought it would be a curiosity to you to see him, so brought him.”

“But I am grieved to the heart! How is one to explain to oneself this grotesque and beastly marriage, like Brunnhilda marrying Ghunter of her own accord? It can’t be the same Hannah Wilson whose pure eyes I knew — For that matter, ‘Hannah Wilson’ is a common name in England: why may not this man’s wife be another Hannah Wilson?”

“No, Chris,” said Kathleen, “don’t let us delude ourselves with any such hope: it is the same Hannah. Even Lucifer went wrong, and Hannah has gone so very far wrong, that even her parents and I are not permitted to know her true address.”

“Can all this be my fault?” asked Chris with opened arms.

“Why, what do you mean?”

“I was a mere boy then,” Chris muttered. “The good people should not have caused me to marry. God grant that it is in no way my fault.”

“Oh, Chris, how can it be your fault? People go their own way and nothing can stop them. And perhaps she is as happy in her sty as you in your heaven. Well, I suppose I ought to go now, and leave you to your ‘Viola.’ I dare say in your heart you are wishing me to the dickens.”

“Mmm, my own friend,” groaned Chris. “Grimani! — let me offer you a glass—”

“No, thanks, no wine: it is all right, Grimani. Continue your letter to darling Viola. Can I have a peep, I wonder, at this last one?”

Chris shook his curls, with a smile.

“I shall see it all the same,” said Kathleen suddenly: for though she had finally made up her mind not to pass herself off as “Viola,” the little maid now on a sudden yielded to the temptation, blind to all the hundred risks and difficulties of tomorrow, her mind in the presence of Chris was always in such a state of flurry and weakness.

“How will you ‘see it all the same’?” asked Chris.

“Never mind, I will,” answered Kathleen, looking up at him with a pale smile.

“But I don’t mean to keep any copy,” said Chris.

“I shall still see it.”

Chris looked at her, and said eagerly:

“Kathleen! do you know Viola?”

Kathleen smiled mysteriously, without answering.

“Do you know her? Tell me, my friend!”

“I know her very well; and so do you.”

“I have seen her?”

“Oh, Chris, how unconscious you are! She is nearer, much nearer to you at this moment than you dream; the girl who is nearest to you, now and always, is she.”

At these words Chris stood in pain: her meaning seemed plain; he was not given to doubting the words of women; and all at once he saw melting that whole cloud-cuckoo-town which the word "Viola" meant to his fancy. He could not speak, but stood looking at Kathleen in a pathetic way.

"Chris, are you sorry?" she asked, standing up, putting her poor trembling hand on his shoulder.

"No," answered Chris: "are you Viola?"

"I hoped in that way to show you — to win you," said Kathleen with pantings and passion, "and I have succeeded; if you don't take me now, the reason will be clear, you will insult me, you will be a brute without pity. I have not loved you as a man, but as a god above all Gods, for years and years; have pity—"

"Kathleen — my dear friend—"

"For years and years, mind you, Chris! I have dragged my soul through ignominy after you! Re-member that! But I will be a slave no longer; to-night — this very night—"

At this she fastened her lips to his; he, somehow, wished to get free: and at his effort, the little maid threw back her head, and piled scream on scream. Grimani ran in and bore her to a sofa, where she continued to utter screams and sobs and laughter, while Chris darted about in a flurry, seeking he knew not what. They had only liqueurs to give her, her furs and hat were taken off, her forehead sprinkled with water, and a doctor sent for; but before he could come she had got somewhat better, and while still in shameful agitation insisted upon being taken to her carriage. Chris parted from her with the words: "I will write to you."

When he went up again, he stood for a long time with his forehead resting on the mantelpiece; then, noticing the letter which he had been

writing to “Viola,” tore it slowly into two pieces, which he threw upon the fire; then sat and wrote to Kathleen.

At that same hour Hannah’s other husband, Willie Dawe, was lurking in Guilford Street at a corner of the Foundling wall, hugging himself for cold, but watching without a movement a certain window which he oftentimes liked to come and watch. It was now after one o’clock, some snow was falling, the night murky, and no one to be seen, save a policeman, whose tread came and went like echoes in desolate Balclutha.

A faint light was in that second floor window which Daw watched. Behind it lay Hannah, sleeping, but hardly undressed, with a sick girl-child of the lowest class asleep on her arm. For some time nothing happened: Dawe shivered and watched, Hannah slept, the policeman strolled; but soon after the Foundling clock struck two a poor woman came hurrying southward, passed by Dawe, went to the house of the lighted window, and rang a bell which was so strung as to ring in Hannah’s room. At its first tinkle, Hannah was awake and up, settled the sick child comfortably, had on her boots in a jiffy, cast a glance at her little son in his cot, caught up a stethoscope, and ran down the stair, still dressing herself in her flight. Dawe guessed that the bell rung was hers, that she would presently appear in the street, and ran to hide himself: but he had hardly time to do this when she was down and hurrying northward into Brunswick Square with the poor woman. He followed some way, peering after her through the murk and snowfall, and presently saw that she had left the woman behind, and was running forward alone. Swift and happy feet, running to do well.

CHAPTER XXI



THE KIND OF night which the little maid passed after that scene with Chris may be guessed. She saw, for one thing, that she had put herself into a fine fix in pretending to be “Viola,” since the real “Viola” would soon be writing again to Chris, without saying a word about the scene! Miss Olivia and a maid watched through the night by her bed, each holding one of her quaking arms.

And the morning’s post only made things worse! Chris wrote, blaming himself for what had passed, and inviting himself to Kathleen’s suite at the hotel on the second evening thence, “in order that my dear friend Kathleen and I may better understand each other.” “Never shall I cease to remember ‘Viola,’” he wrote, “nor all the fresh flowers which you have sent me during two years in your charming letters.” All this was well enough, but in a postscript he added: “Shall we not have some music? My Bergonzi and your Nicolo will make our evening complete.”

He meant the Nicolo which he had presented to “Viola”! innocently meant it, but the little maid at once had the guilty feeling that he did it in order to test whether she was really “Viola”! and she was now, as it were, in fire. To tell Chris that she had not the Nicolo with her would, she felt, be most lame; nor are Nicolos to be got like hairpins; even if she could buy one, Chris would know it from his own at first sight, at the first note. She felt that she would gladly part with all things in life to have “Viola’s” Nicolo for two days.

Her first thought was to hasten to Hannah, and, somehow, to get the Nicolo; but she did not know where Hannah lived.

She had often asked Willie Dawe for Hannah's address, but Dawe had protested that he did not know it. That, however, was her only hope now, that Dawe had told a falsehood in some wish to keep Hannah's secret. And by eleven the brave girl had overcome her breakdown, and had had Dawe brought to her.

"I don't know where Miss Hannah is, miss," answered Dawe many times.

"Well, it is a pity for you," Kathleen answered, "for I have made up my mind to give you nothing more unless you can find out for me before mid-day."

Beads of sweat stood on Dawe's forehead; after some time he said that he knew where Miss Hannah used to live —

"That will do," said Kathleen; and Dawe then gave Hannah's address.

So by two in the afternoon Miss Olivia was at Hannah's door, Kathleen waiting in her carriage round the corner of Guilford Place. But "Mrs. Wilson" was not in.

"When will she be in?" asked Miss Olivia.

"Ah, now you are asking something puzzling," said Mrs. Reid, the landlady.

"I will call back about four."

"What name shall I say?"

"Well, perhaps I should prefer to surprise her: we are friends."

Miss Olivia came back to see Hannah three times that day before nine p. m., but always in vain.

By that hour Kathleen was in a high-wrought state, and had to be put to bed. But when it was near midnight, nothing would satisfy her but she must

get up, and go to see if Hannah was in. Miss Olivia was asleep after her sleepless last night; and the little maid dressed and went out in a kind of stealth.

At Hannah's door she alighted from her cab. But her heart failed her when her hand was on the knocker. What should she say to Hannah? How explain her knowledge of Hannah's address? Hannah would think her wondrously eager to have the Nicolo, springing up at that hour of the night to borrow it! Would Hannah lend the precious gift? All these painful questions passed through the little head. There she stood, with a cowering heart, unable to knock, unable to go away. The door was a little open, as often in that kind of Bloomsbury caravansary, and she was peeping in when the sight of a man coming in the passage sent her skedaddling. He came out, slammed the door, and went his way. Kathleen now stood on the further side of the street under the Foundling wall, and thence watched the house. A light was in a window of the second floor, on which, as Dawe had told her, Hannah's rooms were, and her heart stopped to see on the blind a shadow like Hannah's: it was gone in a moment, came again, and was gone, flitting actively about. The quaint maid's soul was thrown forth of herself upon that window, as when on Hannah's wedding night she had watched the bride's windows at Orrock. For a minute or two the shadow was no more seen: then Kathleen was aware of Hannah herself down at the front door. Hannah came out, slammed the door behind her, and started northward into Brunswick Square, her face bent down, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, almost running; her nurse's uniform could be heard brabbling in the north wind; she hardly left Kathleen time to run to hide under the tree-shaded west wall of the Foundling, when, on the other side of the street, she hastened past into the square. Kathleen had come to see her, and there she was, quite near, but the little maid dared not speak to her.

Hannah gone, the little maid went back a few yards to her former stand, and again watched the window. Though robed in layers of fur to her feet, she began to suffer from cold, for those were frosty days, the pavements were caked in snow and ice, and a half-moon in the clear sky looked like a traveler lost in a cold waste.

But still Kathleen stood where she was, doubly fascinated by the window now that Hannah was gone. Her eyes wandered between it and the front door. The door was now fastened, but it was not long before a girl came out with a jug, and ran to a near beer-house — in haste, for it was just when the beer-houses are shut up; she left the front door open, and Kathleen ran to it.

The trouble of her heart was great, for whichever way things might go, she foresaw shame: if she took the Nicolo from Hannah's room, the real 'Viola' might write to tell Chris of its loss! But her keenest care was the meeting with Chris on the coming evening, and leaving the further future to take care of itself, she hastened in. The passage was lit, but the stairs in darkness, save for a tin lamp on a window-ledge over the first landing. She met no one. On the second landing were two front rooms: that on the left was the lighted one; in the other, a smaller one, Hannah's nurse-girl slept. Kathleen tapped at the door on the left; there was no answer; she went in, and closed the door behind her without making a sound.

Her next task was to get her breath: the little mass of furs stood swelling and sinking, amazed to find itself there. Round she cast her eyes: the bed was rumpled, the gas turned down, a fire burning, and there on an easy-chair by the fire lay the pampered Nicolo, a soft silk handkerchief covering the strings. But the little maid's eyes were fixed on quite another sight now than the Nicolo — on Hannah's little boy asleep with flushed cheeks. He had golden hair, fairer than both his father and his mother. "He looked like a faint water-color of an angel," Kathleen wrote of him long afterwards: "I

didn't know before that flesh could be so ravishingly lovely; yet the image of Chris." She stood a strangely long time, staring at the child in its cot, forgetting the Nicolo; and her face took on a look truly elfin, wannish, as it were of Mephisto or of Erl-king with sword and crown, one of her eyebrows pitched up beyond the other. Strange temptations, forecastings, wrought in her quick mind then, yet, as it were, in a dream, and all that she went on to do was in sleep-walking; for by living waywardly a long while the little maid seems to have reared up now within herself a second creature which in high moments arose, pushed her aside, and acted instead of her.

There was no fear of not being able to get the child down to the door without being seen: that could be done; the danger lay in his awaking on the way, and screaming! In the end, she turned the gas very low, threw her muff on the fire, took off her fur cloak, and with endless cares got it under the child; his clothes lay folded on a chair; she put them on his breast, his boots and socks into her pockets; on his clothes she laid the Nicolo with its slackened bow; and wrapping all in the fur, got the bundle in her arms. It was no slight burden for her, the child being nearly four years old! But that second Frankenstein self which was doing all for her was strong, and, in spite of stoppages on the stairs, the child was hardly shaken. But it was a journey! She seemed to be bearing a horse — with the eyes of multitudes upon her — during an age. But she met no one. Down in the hall she had to put down the burden on a table, run to open the door, and run back for the bundle — all in bright gaslight. But, like the defaulting lodgers who steal out trunks from such like places, she got out safely.

She hobbled toward Russell Square, and there was another waiting for a cab — another age in which she grew old. She met four people, but they took no notice of her bundle, the child was so hidden in the fur. When at last

she was putting him into a cab, the little boy awoke, stared at her strange face, and began to cry. But all was well then.

She told her driver to drive to Hampstead, and thence drove back southward to the Hotel Metropole, by which time the child was weary of crying, and dressed. She took a suite of rooms; wrote to Miss Olivia at the Savoy Hotel that she would be away most of the next day; and lay all night with her boy in her arms.

Her first care the next morning was to get other clothes for him, to burn his former ones, to hire two good nurses; and she spent the day in bribing her boy to love her, till it was nearly time to go to meet Chris at her suite in the Savoy Hotel, when she set out with the Nicolo in a new case, leaving her boy with his new nurses....

CHAPTER XXII



“DON’T LET US try to talk here, Chris,” said the little maid that night in her Savoy Hotel salon; “there is something to be said between you and me, but it can’t be said in this garish place, with five of my enemies amiably bivouacked about us. If you can make time for me tomorrow evening before dinner, I shall come to you.”

“I am in your hands,” said Chris. “I shall try to be disengaged, but perhaps—”

“Oh, there is nothing outre in my going now to your place alone, and you have no fresh scene to dread from me. Our meeting will be too serious for that. In a wild moment I let out before the time who wrote the ‘Viola’ letters, but tomorrow I shall come more seriously to you as ‘Viola,’ bringing with me the precious gift which ‘Viola’ promised.”

“My own friend,” answered Chris with compunction, “it is I who should be bringing you precious gifts for your goodness—”

“No, I; but we won’t talk of it now: let’s play the Prometheus now, as you promised. Come, Olivia.”

With the Bergonzi and the Nicolo they played a two-fiddle overture, the maestro saying afterwards to Kathleen, “Your virtuosity is no less refined on the violin than on the piano”; he was eager to please her, for the fact of her quaint body and of her hopeless passion touched his heart; but the interview of the coming evening was most irksome to him beforehand, though his curiosity was stirred at the wonderful gift to be given him. However, he made up his mind to go through it with a good grace, and then,

his London concerts being over, to fly from the quaint maid and from England.

But when Kathleen appeared before him at six the next evening, Chris uttered a cry and rushed with a murmur to embrace the boy whom she led by the hand, the boy was such a pretty picture in his sailor dress.

“Have I seen him before, Kathleen?” he asked.

“No.”

“How delicious a being! How dainty a traumbild of color! This is Eros himself, and his mother’s limbs could have sprung only from the sea-foam: cluck, cluck, kiss me.”

Chris sat on a sofa with the sulky boy on his knee, while Kathleen, sitting near in an armchair, said to her boy, “Tell us your name, will you?”

The answer “Chris” was got out of him after some coaxing.

“Chris!” cried out Chris the elder.

“And whom are you like, Chris?” asked Kathleen: “like this gentleman?”

The boy did not answer; Chris looked into his face with growing astonishment, for the likeness was indeed striking; then looked from the boy to Kathleen.

“This is the present which ‘Viola’ promised to bring in her hand, Chris,” said Kathleen, “and now she has brought it. Is it truly priceless? Are you fully satisfied?”

“A present! May I have the boy?”

“Yes, if you have the heart to take him from me.”

“But I am so wholly at a disadvantage, you see! Who are the parents of this wonderful child?”

“Can you not see your own image in him? Whose child should I bring you as a present but your own, Chris?”

Chris was pierced with laughter.

“My own?” he cried: “is this boy a son of mine?”

“Yes, Chris.”

“But are you certain, my friend?”

“Chris, can’t you see?”

“Oh, how splendid! He does, he does resemble me, if the celestials can resemble the autochthones. He is indeed my very self: what, can you play the fiddle, lad? You soon will, I can see: look, Kathleen, a blind man could tell that he has music in the breadth between the ears, blessed darling, kiss, kiss. But, Kathleen, are you quite sure? I must confess that you surprise me. Why have I never heard of his existence before? Who, then, is his divine — mother?”

“Chris, can you not guess that even now?”

“I declare I have no idea!” cried Chris staring, with one twinge of laughter; “let it suffice that he is mine, my own image and likeness! My own dear ‘Viola,’ you have indeed more than fulfilled your promise! But where, then, is his — mother?”

Kathleen moved shyly on her seat, and turned away her face.

“Tell me!” said Chris.

A blush overspread the face of the little maid, making her younger and prettier.

“Think whom he resembles, Chris, beside yourself,” she just murmured.

“I — have no idea!” said Chris at a loss. “Is it the Baroness Vescz — ? No, I am foolish.”

“No, not she,” murmured Kathleen, her blush deepening to red, as she added, “Is he not like me — a little — about the eyes?”

“Mmm, my own best friend,” groaned Chris, who, leaning forward, had just caught the little maid’s words, “yes — about the eyes — since you say so — he does distinctly resemble you.”

“Well, then.”

“But—”

“Don’t press me, Chris: I am only a girl.”

“Oh, but tears! — don’t cry, don’t cry. Forgive me: I don’t understand — I am so utterly at a loss—”

“Who but his mother could have brought him to you?” asked Kathleen through sobs, with a covered face, whereat Chris, though half-crying for sympathy, again had a throe of laughter.

“But don’t cry,” he said: “it is all right, I don’t know why you cry; at present you speak of a mystery, but all will presently be made clear.”

“He is yours and mine.”

“Quite so: don’t cry, don’t cry.”

“You don’t believe me, but it is true.”

“Well, I am most flattered: don’t cry.”

“You think me crazy, but did you never suspect that—”

“Well?”

“That I am—”

“What?”

“A little mother, Chris?”

“I didn’t know. It is the very highest dignity on earth.”

“It is sweet to be a mother, Chris, yes, it is sweet to the heart, Chris: little did I dream before, but now I know — to have something which is your very, very own, as that boy is mine.”

At this the little maid wept afresh, for for two nights she had been wallowing in the feeling that the boy was, really, her offspring, as little girls are their dolls’ true mothers, and as a hen will think a pheasant-chick truly hers because she has hatched it and it is under her wing.

“Is this divine child yours?” asked the simple, good Chris.

“Yes,” murmured the little maid, weeping quietly, without meaning to tell an untruth.

“I felicitate you from my heart! But—”

“Oh, Chris, don’t doubt my word.”

“If I don’t! I was only going to say—”

“You are his father, Chris: you can see it for yourself.”

“Precisely! But, my own best friend,—”

“Listen, Chris: I am only a girl, and it is hard to say, but it must be said. There is a night of your life which has passed out of your memory. It is the night when you gave your first great London recital, at Queen’s Hall. Try to remember it. After the concert you went to several places with a lot of men, and drank a good deal. I was in love, and followed you in a cab; then I was mad enough to come here, and you let me in.”

“Good God!” murmured Chris under his breath.

“Try to remember,” went on Kathleen: “that same night a burglar somehow entered your rooms, and stole from you a viol di Gamba, your watch and chain, and some other things—”

“I remember,” breathed Chris, with a look of horror.

“And do you remember sleeping till three or four the next afternoon? I was vexed with myself, and left you asleep about two in the afternoon. But I needn’t have been so vexed, for I see now that my only fault was in coming to your door, since something or other that we both drank took away our senses, our memory, and everything. This accounts for the late sleeping the next day.”

“Something that we drank?”

“Yes: isn’t it a fact that Grimani takes hashish?”

“Yes.”

“Well, you won’t remember, but I do, that just about that time you dismissed Grimani, and I have come to the conclusion that Grimani must have put some hashish into your Alicante that day, out of revenge; for I happen to know that he does take hashish, and I have lately found out that the symptoms of hashish are the same as mine and yours that night.”

“Good God, can this have happened?” groaned Chris to himself, with a hopeless brow on his hand.

At this point the unhappy boy, who had wriggled from Chris’ knee to the floor, and had been looking from Chris to Kathleen and from Kathleen to Chris, turned down his mouth, and began to cry, saying, “I want mama.”

“He means his nurse,” remarked the little maid: “come, Chris, to mama, come.”

It was while she was saying this that there was a knock at the front “oak,” and half a minute afterwards Grimani looked in, saying, “Lady Wilson to see you, sir.”

“Who?” asked Chris.

““Lady Wilson,’ she told me, sir.”

“Can it be Hannah?” asked Chris of Kathleen.

“Oh, God!” breathed Kathleen, half rising with a face of terror, “we mustn’t meet.”

“Tell the lady that I am not at home for the moment,” said Chris to Grimani.

“I told her so, sir, but she came inside, and said that she must see you at once.”

Instantly Kathleen caught up the crying child, and ran away with it into Chris’s bedroom.

CHAPTER XXIII



“DIDN’T I HEAR a child crying?” asked Hannah, appearing heatedly before Chris without being asked in (the crying was no more heard, for Kathleen had closed three heavy doors between).

“What do you want?” asked Chris feebly.

“I was almost sure — Was there a child here?”

“Yes; but what is the matter?”

“I thought I recognized — Oh, it is only my silliness,” she sighed, dropping into an easy-chair. “Every child I hear, I think — Bear with me a moment, I am so tired.”

She sat with closed eyes, and Chris stood looking at her with a wrinkled brow.

“I come to you in great trouble,” she said, “all that I had — a good half anyway — My child has been stolen: I come to his father; perhaps you can do something. Tried not to come, but my feet brought me.”

“Do you say that I am his father?” asked Chris, with half a laugh.

“Yes, then.”

Again on a sudden Chris was pierced with laughter, for every one wished to accuse him of fatherhood.

“This is sufficiently barefaced,” he said.

“Oh, well,” she sighed.

“Is it not really so? What can you mean? You wear the livery of an honorable profession.”

“I am quite worn out. Give me a few minutes, then I will tell you. You needn’t be afraid, you will believe everything I say.”

“Well, I hope so. Grimani I — let me get you some wine.”

“Yes, but not Alicante” — her eyes twinkled a little— “I have tasted your Alicante before.”

“But when?”

“Over four years ago, that night of your first recital at Queen’s Hall.”

“What, you, too? Grimani, a glass of — shall we say Chrypre, Muscat?”

“Yes, Muscat, and if you have any biscuits: I haven’t tasted since yesterday.”

“Quickly, Grimani, some mortadel sandwiches.”

“That’s right. He’s gone — somehow — somewhere. I went out night before last at half-past twelve to be at a deathbed; he was gone when I came back, vanished, don’t know how or why: God knows.”

“Your son?”

“Yes.”

“Have you communicated with the police?”

“Of course. No clue. No one to suspect. Oh, my soul is sorrowful unto death, Chris Wilson.

“Never mind, he shall be found for you: don’t cry.”

“Oh, I am not crying, but it’s a nice old wrench, you know, like having your jaw carried away. I was fond of him.”

“Don’t cry, don’t cry: he shall certainly be found for you.”

“You think so? But what will you do? What can you?”

“I can spend money, if that is any good.”

“That’s no good, I’m afraid. If the police can’t find him, no one will. Are you never to see him, I wonder? You would merely have worshiped him: he is the loveliest — and the picture of you, only fairer.”

“Ah?”

“He has your mouth, your eyes, your hands—”

“He might leave me my hands, to practise with.”

“There, he jests. Don’t believe, really? I almost forgot that I hadn’t told you. Well, I feel better now: you shall hear. On the night of your first recital, I came here to you” — she told the whole story of her entrance, of the wine, of the strange drunkenness, of her waking and flight the next afternoon with the viol di Gamba, etc. Chris listened looking out on the Gardens. Having just been hearing the very same tale from Kathleen, he could only assume that one of the two had heard of the escapade from the other, and was an imposter. Both could hardly be true.

“Were you and I alone here that night?” he asked.

“Yes; I didn’t see Grimani.”

“No other lady was here?”

“Lady? Of course not.”

By this time the little maid, who had now quieted the child, and left it in an inner room, was holding her ear at a keyhole, and undergoing the keenest strain of mind at what she heard.

“And as to the viol di Gamba, the watch and chain, and the other things which you took,” said Chris, “do you happen to have any of them with you at present?”

“No; I have lost them.”

“Lost them? Not all of them.”

“Yes.”

“But how?”

“They were stolen out of my trunk, I suppose. For five years I have been trying all the time to find them. No good.”

“So that what was purloined by you was in turn purloined from you?”

“I couldn’t purloin what was my own, you know.”

“No, I forgot: they were your own. But first your ‘proofs’ were stolen, and now the child itself? You are very unfortunate.”

“Yes; but don’t blame me for that.”

“I don’t blame you. But can one be so unfortunate?”

“Oh, there are worse things than that. The big woes happen inside. I’d rather that than a sluggish liver, or a cold heart.”

“Hannah,” murmured Chris, “how excellent you — have been.”

“Chris,” she said, “how flattering you — are.”

“I have the utmost faith in your liver, Hannah — though I think I should prefer a sluggish liver to the loss of my only child.”

“If your liver was sluggish, your very pity and grief would be sluggish, too. It is because mine is rather hot for me alone that I came here for your sympathy.”

“Well, I give you that, if you have lost your child, though I mustn’t pretend that my sorrow is paternal. It is the mother that interests me. I see that you are even more beautifully blooming than ever, and looking charming in that costume.”

“There, he is falling in love now. But not now, my friend, not now. Pity me now.”

“Well, you seem to suffer genuinely. Tell me if you have really lost a child.”

She started, saying gently, “Don’t believe, really?”

“Put yourself in my place,” said Chris in pain, “how can I possibly? It is most distressing. Do you still say that your child is mine also?”

Hannah’s eyes rested upon him, but she answered nothing.

“Don’t you see,” said Chris, “how impossible it looks? How long, for instance, after that night of my recital did you marry a second time?”

“About three months after.”

“And you married another man, knowing — ? You wouldn’t have done that.”

“Oh, Chris, you are cross-examining me.”

“Yes, in your own interests: you have made certain statements to me, and I wish you to know that I am more or less awake, so that you may make no more of the same kind. I don’t know what is your motive for saying such things, but I warn you that they are not credible.”

“Well, blessed are the wounds of a friend, Chris.”

“Yes, it is all very well to speak in that way, but drop the queer statements, and then we can truly be friends. What you say is really not credible: you would hardly have lost the viol and all the other things, and you would most certainly not have married a new man, if you had been about to be a mother. You admit that you did marry the man?”

“Yes: that was merely formal.”

“Now comes yet a new statement, you see, and if it were credible, I should rush gladly into belief. What could have been your motive for a merely formal marriage with this man?”

“I’m afraid I must never tell you that: I am forbidden to whisper it even to my own left hand; but it wasn’t a bad motive.”

“But the left hand knows, Hannah, being the ring hand.”

“Yes, but cynicism always runs a terrible risk of being unkind,” she said with a pout.

“My own dear friend,” said Chris feelingly— “yes, runs a terrible risk of being unkind, but put yourself in my place. For some five, six, seven years perhaps, we have not seen each other; during that time, though I have led a busy life, never a week has passed in which I have not thought of you with tenderness and longed to see you, in spite of your abandonment of me, for I

have said to myself, 'Perhaps she abandoned me because I abandoned her.' Imagine, therefore, if I wish to be cynical rather than to be kind. I would give anything. But you suddenly appear before me with a number of statements. At one time, if you had said to me, 'The sky is made of paper,' I should have trusted you. But you admit your second marriage; and suppose I tell you that not four days ago your terrible 'merely formal' husband spoke to me of your child and his?"

"Willie Dawe?"

"I think that that is his name."

Hannah sat over the fire, her chin on her palm, staring.

"My own Willie?" she said presently, "spoke of the child as his?"

"Yes," said Chris with some bitterness.

"I didn't know that he knew that I have a child."

"That is yet a statement."

"They are all pretty true, Chris."

"Granted. But you see why I disbelieve them?"

"No, I don't. I never conceived that you would really doubt me. Let all the world doubt me, but you believe me, Chris."

"What, against my five wits!"

"Yes: I expect that of you."

"By Heaven, you will either drive me mad, or force me to press you to my heart. I love you, if only for your audacity."

"Believe me first, and press me to your heart after, my friend."

"It would be a costly embrace! bought at the expense of my reason."

"Never mind about reason: believe in Hannah."

"I — almost do!" laughed Chris, with opened arms.

"That's brave: make one rough effort against yourself, and then you will."

“You have the very accent and face of truth!”

“There, he’s coming round,” said Hannah, laughing with pleasure: “I shall soon have you all straight now.”

“Do you laugh at my simplicity?” asked Chris.

“No, I laugh for joy because we know each other inside like brothers, and our friendship is sealed up above forever. Everything proves me a liar, and yet you believe me.”

“But I don’t!”

“You do inside — you soon will: keep looking into my eyes, and, the moment you believe, you can kiss me, and be friends.”

“Have I a longing look?”

“Oh, one can see that you are hankering to regain possession: let’s be frank.”

“‘De Vaudace, et encore de Vaudace, et toujours de Vaudace,’”murmured Chris, smiling icily.

“Ah, now, that’s backsliding. No, I’d better go, since you are in this mood. You shan’t see me again for another year” — she sprang up so sharply, that Chris was taken aback.

“Are you going?” he asked rather ruefully: “in another year we shall both be older.” He was ever a miser of his youth.

“Oh, not I!” laughed Hannah, “there’s no need for anybody to grow a day older”; then, with a fickle change of face, looking upward with triumph, she said: ‘They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their youth: they shall mount up with wings as eagles. Good-by!’ she offered her right hand sharply, covering her moist eyes with the left.

“Mmm,” groaned Chris, “don’t cry,” and wished to come near to her, but she caught away her hand from him, and slipped away round the table, saying, “No, believe first.”

“I do, I do,” he said with a flushed face.

“Fully?”

“Yes.”

“There, I have won him!” running to him and kissing him— “and only by a trick” — kissing him— “a fiddler can’t stand tears, even half-crocodile ones” — kissing him.

“Amazing chameleon,” murmured Chris, kissing her, “have you tricked me?”

“Oh, no more backsliding,” said Hannah, dropping again with a fickle change and sigh into her easy-chair, “and no more kissing. Oh, you don’t know, Chris: my soul is exceeding bitter and sorrowful this day, God knows. Aren’t you going to give me my little boy back?”

Chris stood in thought for some time, and then said:

“Listen, Hannah: I will tell you now what was my chief reason for disbelieving your story: it was, that another lady declares that she spent here the very night that you claim; you can’t both be true; and she proved her case by showing me a child, a boy, which is certainly very like me: so I couldn’t believe you. But it occurs to me now that, in case she be false, and you true, then the child which she has may be the very one which you have lost.”

“It is, of course!” cried Hannah, springing up in a jubilee; “he is found! and I’ll never lose sight of him again. Where is he now? Was that his crying I heard—”

“No. Wait. Describe your son to me.”

“Curly golden hair, your eyes, but much lighter and larger, your hands and large mouth, but more like an angel than like—”

“Then it is very likely the same.”

“But where is he? When can I have him? He only likes oaten bread — must be suffering miseries—”

“No, don’t be impatient, wait, wait. I know now what I shall do. You shall see him here — tomorrow evening at this hour.”

“But why? Why? Where is he? Who is this awful woman? Am I to leave my child to her tender mercies till tomorrow evening? Oh, fair’s fair, Chris! Don’t rob me of my child for a whole night and day!”

“But I don’t understand your extreme impatience,” said Chris: “just now you didn’t expect to find him at all, and now you chafe at one day’s delay. You must wait, since I can’t do any better for you. Besides, he is in the hands of a lady who will pet him up, and keep him warm and nice.”

“Oh! he’ll laugh at any one’s petting!” “Still, you must wait: come tomorrow at seven, and I undertake that the child and the other woman who claims him shall be here, too. If he is your son, we shall know it in a moment by his conduct; then we shall be certain that your story is true, for there’s no doubt that he is my son.”

“But, Chris, you submit me to tests and proofs.” “Forgive me, will you? That’s not because I any longer disbelieve you, but as a formal justice to the other little woman, whom I fully believed up to the moment when you came in. Now I shall keep an open mind till your interview, and then I shall judge between you. It will be a cruel ordeal for the liar, but she deserves it.”

“But who can this woman be? I am perfectly bewildered! Some one came to my place four times on the day the child was stolen, asking for me, saying that she was a ‘friend,’ but I haven’t been able to identify her from my landlady’s description. I wonder if it is the same?”

“Probably not. I won’t tell you now. You will see her tomorrow.”

“But she won’t come to be proved a liar! She will hide my child!—”

“No, I undertake that she will come with the child. Woe to her, if she doesn’t. But I have some one waiting in yonder: will you go now? and come back in an hour to dine with me? Do you live far from here?”

“Ten minutes’ walk. But I shan’t come back: too tired and sad. Good-by.”

“Are you pleased with me now?”

“Whatever you do is well done for me: that’s all settled and done with.”

“What, still? Do you still love me, Hannah?”

“Let me go. I will tell you tomorrow night.”

“Why on earth did you marry that horrible man?”

“He isn’t horrible, only unhappy. Good-by.”

Chris just managed to steal a kiss askance from her cheek, and she was gone.

“To-morrow at seven!” he called after her.

“All right,” she said over her shoulder, but—

CHAPTER XXIV



A MINUTE AFTER Hannah was gone, Kathleen came out to Chris leading the boy, looking a picture of nervous flurry and unrule.

“I don’t know if you heard anything, Kathleen,” said Chris, looking at her gravely under his eyes.

“Yes, I did,” said the little maid with a breathless vehemence, with a twitching of the lips.

“Hannah, you see, claims your little one.”

“Base thing! I had told her everything — this is the result — You ought to be ashamed, Chris—”

“Of what?”

“Of being so miserably her dupe — of kissing her like a slave — I told you how low she had fallen — I brought you her husband—”

“He is not really her husband—”

“Yes, defend her, Chris, a woman of the middle-class — a farmer’s daughter — fallen to the dregs of society — I know that I am only a little hunchback, my word is not as good as hers, but not a soul knows me, I will show you all what I am, I am the greatest being that ever breathed, I defy you all—”

“Mmm, my dear friend, don’t—”

“Base thing! Didn’t she dare to claim to be ‘Viola,’ too? It’s a wonder! for I told her about that, too; she could have said that the Nicolo was stolen from her, as well as the child, but she didn’t dare—”

“Oh, but don’t—”

“Base thing! She wants money of you to support her husband, that is the cause of this elaborate acting — and her word to be taken against mine, and she to be kissed and worshiped, and sent away in triumph, and all the time the child is mine, my very own, and every word I say is true — true because say it — no other reason — that’s enough — because say it, you hear, Chris?”

“But, good God, do you wish to drive a poor man mad?” cried Chris with a sudden flush: “can’t you let me speak?”

“Oh, let me get out of here!” said Kathleen, moving sharply to hobble off.

“Stay! stay! Do you understand, Kathleen, that Hannah will be here at seven tomorrow evening in order that she may meet you and the child?”

“But do you imagine for a moment that she will come?” screamed Kathleen, turning upon him with a face of rage. “She won’t come! She knows that the child is mine!”

“She said the very same thing of you, that you wouldn’t come.”

“But I will! Whom do you believe, her or me? I’ll come, if only to punish you, but she won’t! Qui vivra verra!” and the little maid was off, with stamps in her hobbling, dragging the astonished child, while Chris chased her with “Don’t think that I doubt you! I keep a perfectly open mind till tomorrow; but perhaps if you leave the child, I could manage—” but she went out without a backward glance or answer, Chris looking after her with his foolish, meek look till she disappeared down the stairs.

The little maid drove thence to the Hotel Metropole, but, without alighting there, sent upstairs for the child’s nurse, gave the child to her, and said to her coachman, “To Scotland Yard.”

At Scotland Yard she had a ten minutes’ interview with an official, to whom she reported the fact of Hannah’s two marriages, with the dates, then

drove back to the hotel, and spent the night there with her now doubly-dear boy. On the morrow she might be childless, but for that night at least she was a little mother, with her own offspring in her arms.

Most of the next day she spent at the Savoy Hotel with Miss Olivia, who was still in a state of wonder as to the where and why of Kathleen's nightly absences: and sharp at seven the little maid was at Chris's "oak" with the child, to keep the appointment made by Chris.

"Thanks infinitely for coming," said Chris, catching up the boy to his breast, "you are the first to arrive."

"But it is humiliating, Chris," said Kathleen, reproachfully.

"I see that; but bear with me, since it was my only way."

They sat down and waited for Hannah to come. Little was said. Kathleen toyed with her boy, who was now becoming tamer to her caresses. The lamp was not lit; the room, though inflamed by the firelight, grew duskier and duskier. Anon Chris peered at his watch; the ticking of a clock in the room filled the silence; Kathleen, pale at first, after a time brightened up, came out like the sun from all cloud and trouble, and said smiling, "Well, I seem to be last as well as first."

"She is late," remarked Chris.

"But this is tiresome. Do play something, Chris."

"No verve," said Chris with a pathetic smile.

"Til play," cried the little maid, starting up to the piano; she played a polonaise, anon calling out to the boy through the noise with lively glances round, "Dance, Chrisie!" Then she played the third Lied of the second book, and then, with flushed cheeks, a Brahms movement, "Guten Abend, gute Nacht," in the midst of which last Chris leapt up with a start which lifted his hair in a mass, and began to pace about with a red brow. It was eight o'clock.

The little maid stood up with a laugh.

“You won’t ever doubt me again, Chris?” — with her hands on his shoulders, and a happy light in her eyes.

“Forgive my unbelief,” he said absently, patting her back, “you shall be recompensed. Oh, I have been a dreamer!” he brought his palm to his forehead, and threw himself desperately upon a couch: Hannah did not come, and white was black to Chris.

CHAPTER XXV



THE VERY MORNING after that failure of Hannah to come to Chris's chambers for her child, Chris left England for the Continent. The little maid wrote of it: "He felt her non-appearance — keenly, too. Well, let him write a nocturno over it, as he wrote *Mortalite* over poor some one's dead body, and then he won't care any more, when he has once made 'copy' of his sighs. I got his note at two p. m., four hours after he had gone: 'My own dear friend, I find it necessary to leave England at once, but you will be kept always informed of my whereabouts, as I hope you will keep me informed of yours, so that the future of the close relation which exists between us may be fully discussed between us by letter; moreover, we are certain to meet either at Orrock or in some quarter of the globe. Meantime, you may be sure I carry "Viola" about in my heart. Kiss the darling boy for me, mentioning every day to him the name of his father. Ever yours sincerely, Chris Wilson.' He sticks to his 'Viola.' It is rather a mercy that Hannah in her interview with him never mentioned about 'Viola,' or about the Nicolo being lost: I suppose she was too full of the loss of the child to trouble about anything else; if she had mentioned it, that might have shaken Chris's certainty as to me being 'Viola,' for there are already things in the letters against it, such as 'Viola's' description of herself as tall, and the rot about 'joy,' 'health,' 'having life,' and so on. But the mere fact of my having the Nicolo must be to Chris an overwhelming proof that I am 'Viola,' and the fact of no more letters coming now from 'Viola' must be an added proof.

“At five p. m. on the day after the ‘ordeal’ and Hannah’s arrest I went to her place, for I was eager to hear everything; had a long talk with Mrs. Reid, the landlady, and got her to take me up to Hannah’s room, that I might look round the place in which I had trembled and dared. It looked pretty desolate, like a room from which the dead has been carried out. I was frightened, and didn’t go right in, or stay long up there. Mrs. Reid said that Hannah had told her the morning before that she would be giving up the rooms, since she was going to live with her husband thenceforth, that the child was found, and that she was going for it to Gray’s Inn at seven in the evening. ‘About ten minutes to seven,’ said Mrs. Reid, ‘she ran down the stairs, dressed to go out. I happened to be at the front door, looking out for the coalman, so I said to her, “Going for him now?” she smiled and said, “Yes, don’t be impatient, soon have more of him than is good for you.” She looked as bright as an angel, God knows, and an angel is what we all thought her, though I will say she did neglect her little boy sometimes, and made my life wretched about the blessed mice; most people are a bit nervous of a mouse, but not like her, I’ve seen her stand on a bed as white as a corpse—”

““But about the arrest,’ I said for the twentieth time; but it was another hour before I got it all out of the endless old thing. ‘Just as Mrs. Wilson got to the door,’ she said, ‘a boy named Ralphie, who follows her about like her shadow, ran up from the Medical Mission in Compton Place, to tell her that a man from the timber-yard named Giddins was taken worse; she looked rather taken aback, glanced at her watch, hesitated a bit on the doorstep, and at last said to Ralphie, “Well, come on.” She and the boy then ran off into Brunswick Square. Half an hour afterwards I was in the kitchen, when I heard a knock, went up, and found a constable and another man at the door. They wanted to know if Mrs. Wilson was in. “She is out,” I said. “No, she

isn't," said the one in plain clothes, "for there she comes" — and so, true, there she was coming down the stairs with some papers in her hand, for, after seeing the sick man, she must have come in to get something, and now was just starting off again to Gray's Inn.'

"I shivered as she spoke: one minute's difference and Hannah might have got to Gray's Inn. There's some star in collusion with the little hunch. They had told me at Scotland Yard that she would probably be arrested by noon.

"‘She was passing out,’ Mrs. Reid said, ‘when the two men asked if she was Mrs. Wilson. She said yes. “Well, a warrant has been issued for your arrest,” said the one in plain clothes, and at those words I almost dropped — she that every one thought was so good! But you never know who’s who in London, miss. “What wrong have I done?” she asked, smiling with them. “You are charged,” said the officer, “with contracting a bigamous marriage with somebody at so-and-so on such a date.” “How can you know?” said she. “That’s neither here nor there,” said he; “take notice that your words are being taken down—” he had a note-book in his hand. “Well, what next?” said she. “You must come with us to the station,” said he. “Oh, not now,” said she. “Yes, now,” said he. “But do you know that I have lost my child?” said she. “We know nothing of that,” said he, “you must come.” “But listen,” said she. “We can’t,” said he, “you must come.” “For God’s sake, will you?” said she. “We can’t,” said he, “you must come now: if you have any statement to make, you can make it at the station.” “But listen, I am a poor mother,” said she. “Can’t help that,” said he, “you must come at once.” “But if any time is lost, a wrong will be done,” said she, “and you would not like it to be done through you.” “Very sorry,” said he, “but you must come.” “May I not even write a note?” said she. “Not now,” said he. “Well, then,” said she, “if you won’t listen to reason, I am sorry for you.”

“At this she turned and said at my ear, “Tell them at the Medical Mission that I had to go away, and don’t cry, it will be all the same to me a hundred years hence.” She kissed me, and walked away between them, with a little crowd of boys and girls following. I ran out into the drizzle, and whispered to one of the men, “‘Don’t be hard on her, now.’ They took a four-wheeler at the Foundling rank....’

“The old thing began to cry. I was listening to her till after six, then drove back full of pity and fear for poor Hannah, and joy at the awful dangers which I had escaped the evening before. It is a mercy that I didn’t stay at Chris’s later than eight o’clock, for undoubtedly Hannah told the police-station people that her lost child was then at Chris’s place, and some one may have been sent to see if it was true. I don’t suppose that much weight is given to a prisoner’s statements, but, if any one was sent, I was gone when he came; Chris must have been out, too, at that hour, and the next morning early was off to the Continent.

“I meant to go down to Orrock at once, so the next thing was to introduce my boy to Olivia; I didn’t mean to invent any story about having adopted him, for, far from being ashamed of it, I glory in being a mother. That night we had Charlie Podmore with Lady Roden and her Lillian and Aimee, so after they were gone I made Olivia sit at my feet in the salon, and I confessed to her all about the recital night, the drugged wine, the birth of the child — everything. She was amusing with her astonishment, didn’t know to what first to apply her boundless ‘but’s.’ ‘But,’ she said, and stopped, and then said ‘but’ again. I didn’t care; I was too happy; I shall have Chris now at last; I have become quite reckless and jolly; I defy every one and everything; there’s a little star somewhere that winks when I wink.

“‘But you slept with me on the night of that recital!’ Livie managed to get out at last.

“‘I got up while you were asleep, and came back while you were asleep,’ I answered.

“‘But — but—’

“‘Never mind, Olivia,’ I said, ‘reconcile yourself to facts as they are.’

“‘But which facts!’ she cried; ‘you are only acting a part to yourself and to me! — the whole thing is wildly incredible!’

“‘You won’t say so when you see him,’ I said. ‘You will simply sit down and cry for joy that I could be the little mother of such an angel. Chris called him ‘Eros’ — there never was such a child — I don’t say it because I am his mother; try to imagine what Chris’s soul must be under hashish, Olivia, like Uriel clad in the sunset; and I, too, was under hashish, remember: the child is a peg above other children—’

“‘It’s all play-acting!’ she cried: ‘where — when — ? I have always been with you except those three months when you were with Louise at Davos!’

“‘It was then,’ I said.

“‘No, if it is impossible, it is impossible she said. ‘I shall write and ask Louise.’

“‘Louise will deny,’ I said; ‘it is a secret between her and me.’

“‘It can’t be, it can’t be,’ she said. ‘But, Livie, why so?’ I pleaded. ‘Didn’t you think that I was capable of being the little mother of a sweet boy? I am just like everybody, Livie, and more so. It is sweet to the heart, Livie, to be a mother—’

“‘Acting, acting, all acting!’ she cried, shaking her head; and I got angry, saying, ‘Well, we will let the subject drop now, if you please.’

“‘Yes,’ she said, ‘get angry if you please, but have I no cause for anger? What kind of thing is this which you have brought upon me?’

“‘A pure honor,’ I said, ‘not even a hint of disgrace. Chris says that it is the highest dignity on earth to be a mother. And the mother of his child!’

Don't the haphazard sons of kings become dukes? But the world looks upon Chris as far above any king!

“‘But still, Kathleen,’ she said, beginning to sniffle, ‘it is hard on me—’

“‘But no one need know,’ I said to comfort her, and in the end worked her round to a state of mere curiosity to see the child: when I brought him the next forenoon she was as much in love as any one. To-morrow we go down, and shall stay at the Hill till Hannah’s final trial, when I mean to come up for two or three days at the beginning of the season; they say that things will be quite dull until little Teddy comes into his own: all the world is in purple mourning by command. I shall spend the whole season at home with German philosophy, botany, music, and my boy, without receiving at all, but living like a recluse. Perhaps Chris may come to Orrock,...” etc., etc.

“This place,” she wrote later, “is certainly haunted, and nothing could keep me here but Chris’s promise to come down at any moment; but I must reap what I have sown; there have been moments of my life, like that day of the hiding of the viol, when I have certainly danced mad. What could have possessed me to lift the face-cloth? Some hand took mine and did it: and it is now that I am really feeling the effects of it. Oh, the terrors which this scheme of nerves can divine and foreknow! Something lately seems to threaten me, I am conscious of it afar off, it lifts its head within me for a moment and just whispers of eyeballs staring and shrieks of madness ringing through deep vaults of the earth, which some day I shall hear, and there are times when somewhere far off at the back of me ten thousand thunders seem mustering themselves to hurry and burst upon me. What is the meaning of it? Every night now I dream of him, with his rigid face. I oughtn’t to have dared put the things into his coffin. But what else was left me to do? I am taking phosphorus, iron, and salicylate of soda; these last four days the rheumatic pains in the left leg, and the indigestion, have been

worse than ever. Plato says that a healthy body will not make one virtuous, but a virtuous mind will make one healthy. I wonder? Perhaps I could have done better, better for myself. But what is virtue? Poor 'Viola' says mere 'vigor' of mind: but if you haven't got the vigor, you haven't, that's all, as when a man can't jig, he can't jig. If one's vigor of mind may be strengthened by practising goodness, as one's body by athletics, still you must have some vigor to start on. Everything is God's fault. People with heart disease can't do athletics. I shan't care about anything, except the physical pains, and the terrors. Life is about equally troublesome to every one, and I shouldn't change places with poor Hannah now. I have my boy, and some little day I shall be standing at an altar with a certain C. W. That's plenty to have lived for.

"Olivia returned last night at nine, after witnessing the trial. She has been away three days, staying two with Lady Roden; the coronation, she says, is already all the rage; she saw a return of mounted infantry through the Park, and on the second day Hannah in the dock. It has made poor Livie unwell, and I am glad now that I was too ill to go. She sat veiled with the common crowd in a gallery, kept an opera glass fixed upon Hannah, and was struck by Hannah's 'politeness' to every one — so she says. It didn't last long: Hannah pleaded guilty. She looked pale and ill. A lot of the poor in the gallery knew her, and their excited whispering among themselves kept Olivia from hearing much that was said below. She says that 'something about her forehead struck me that day as mulishly stubborn: though it is low, it would be overbearing, but for the kindly twinkling of her eyes, like a rock with bluebells. When she answered the judge or the lawyer she seemed to be treating them gently, like "patients.'" She made them all chuckle by telling the judge that "she tried bigamy because she found marriage a failure.'" They wanted to get the address of Willie Dawe, but she wouldn't,

or couldn't, give it. What could have made Hannah Wilson do such a thing with such a creature surpasses mortal comprehension! Yet somehow I couldn't believe, while looking at her, that she had done any wrong; at one time I wanted to scream, it seemed to me that I was witnessing some piercing outrage, like the rending of a lamb, the harming of the harmless, the trampling of white robes in the mud, and the judgment of the higher by the lower. The name "Lady" Wilson didn't occur throughout the trial. When a doctor from some hospital spoke of the love of the poor people for her, Hannah wept passionately. When the judge was about to deliver sentence, she stood up by the side of her wardress, very pale and austere, and heard his long lecture with lowered eyes. The moment the words "nine months" passed his lips a howl of lamentation broke out a little behind me — a tall man with his head buried in his arms, howling for all he was worth. It was Willie Dawe:

I hadn't noticed him before. I saw Hannah's eyes lift and rest steadily upon him as he was being removed in a fainting condition.' Cutting of the trial is on third fly-leaf. Olivia brought down a heap of papers, but they all say much the same things. Down here not a soul knew a word about anything, till they saw it in the papers. Both the old Langers are ill, and all Orrock, they say, is mourning. This is great Babylon which I have built, ..." etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVI



“LAST NIGHT,” CONTINUED the little maid later, “another quarrel with Olivia — just because I sent for Dr. Williams when my darling pricked his finger. She said that I am ‘exposing myself to the ridicule of everybody by my skittish extravagances with the boy.’ I wasn’t really angry, for I feel pleased au fond to have them all wondering at my adoration of him, but by pretending to be angry I became rather so. ‘I don’t seem to be any longer mistress in my own house,’ I said.

“‘The mischief is that you are too much so,’ she answered: ‘what has come over you of late, Kathleen? You didn’t use to be like this! That child has turned you into a perfect Donna Quixote!’

“‘Even if that be true,’ I said, ‘isn’t he sweet enough to turn any little mother’s head?’

“‘Let his sweetness be admitted,’ she said: ‘but. that is no reason, Kathleen, why the tongue of a lady should be heard scolding through her house every five minutes in the day for imaginary wrongs done to a brat—’

“‘You are not to call him a brat, Olivia,’ I said.

“‘Well, a pretty child, if you like,’ she said, ‘but still a brat, for a brat’s a brat, and what I have said I stick to. I am sure that everybody in the place does the very best for the boy, and to turn away old servants, servant after servant, in your late tyrannical manner for imaginary wrongs — the merest figments of your brain—’

“‘I am the best judge of all that,’ I said: ‘I wish my boy to be the one grand fact of life for every one around me, and whoever fails in the slightest

degree to come up to this standard must go, that's all.'

Well, go your way,' she said, 'but I am only doing my duty to warn you, Kathleen, that your conduct is causing astonishment and ridicule; since the end of May it becomes every day more fantastic, and I won't hold my tongue any longer. Are there to be no bounds to your antics with this boy? I say nothing of his jewel-studded plate, his gold knife and fork, and his ivory cot — those may pass; but tell me if it is a sane thing for a young lady to bare her virgin bosom to a boy four years old, and invite him with tears in her eyes to take his nourishment from her? Look here, Kathleen—'

“‘Whose virgin bosom?’ I cried, the blood rushing to my head: ‘don’t you dare insult my motherhood, Olivia!’

“‘Well, let that pass,’ she said, turning pale with rage, ‘let us admit that you are his mother: but why publish it so? Wasn’t it agreed between us that he should pass as your adopted child?’

“‘Well, isn’t that what I tell everybody?’

“‘Yes, you tell them so! but you take good care that they shall think you his real mother by your mysterious perks, and smiles, and hints, and fantastic carryings-on! I never heard of such a thing! A lady of high birth going out of her way to fasten upon herself so awful a scandal—’

“‘Well,’ I said, ‘if they know that I am his mother, they will also know that Chris must be his father, so I don’t care. I am quite reckless and happy now.’

“She cast up her eyes and hands together, sighing, ‘But where is this grotesque frenzy to end? As to the kittens and the flies—’

“‘I caught no less than five by one sweep of my hand across the table this afternoon,’ I said, ‘and he screamed with joy! My skill is now simply absolute, and he is conscious that no one in the world can really catch flies but his mama.’

“‘But for a girl of your attainments, Kathleen,’ she said, ‘to devote whole days to nothing but catching flies—’

“‘I am not a girl, Olivia,’ I said, interrupting her, ‘I am a matron. Give the devil his due, and don’t eat out your poor heart with envy.’

“‘I!’ she cried, ‘if that’s what it is to be a matron, let me be as I am, thank you! Perhaps as an old maid I shall find some nobler occupation than catching flies. And I don’t know if you think it is a good thing for that boy’s character, Kathleen, to see half a dozen kittens drowned every morning of his life—’

“‘They would be fillies instead of kittens I said, ‘if that pleased my little prince.’

“‘The supply would fall short of the demand,’ she said spitefully, ‘and even the kittens, happily, won’t last, for lamentation and a voice in Orrock among cats can’t go much farther now—’ In this way she kept on, harping on the same old strings, and I let her, for I really like it au fond. I left her to go to watch over his sleep: he is never quite so ravishing as when asleep. How I love him! Sometimes when I first wake in the mornings I have a sharp pang, a feeling that he is not really my child, but by noon I am sure of him, and toward evening I seem to remember the night of my pains when I travailed and bore him; then I rock my love in my arms, and pour the sweet tears over him, and ask him if he, too, remembers. God of Heaven, it is dear and holy to be a little mother, have mercy upon me, and forgive me.

“‘I frightened him out of sleep at two this morning. I had a dream of some one who is dead, and started out of it screaming and sobbing for mercy; the three night lights were all burning: when I looked around there he was sitting up in his cot, staring at me.’”

CHAPTER XXVII



“CHRIS IS BACK in Paris from Moscow,” continued the quaint maid in July, “and makes the Opera-concert on Tuesday the excuse for not coming here at once. He can’t say that I haven’t been patient: but I won’t wait indefinitely; I must have a father for my child, and if I can’t get it by hints and sighs, I must get it by cries and insistence. It is two months now since he practically asked me to marry him — that was the only construction I could put upon his words; but he hasn’t once shown his nose at Orrock, in spite of all his promises, since he first saw the child. His very offer of marriage may be mere words, words; not written for my sake, or even the child’s, but to satisfy his French ‘honor.’ How I have longed and waited! It is scandalous that he doesn’t hunger to see the child. What would happen to me, if I didn’t see him for even an hour? I suppose I should go into a fever. Promises are easily made, my Chris, but they have no weight, and weight is what your little hunchback wants to make her a sweet, humble little wife. There’s one of my tenants on the further side of Shooen’s Clause named Joan Speight who has seventeen sons, all with straight backs. That’s the way, even if it racks you to pieces. Let’s be patriarchal: ‘travaillez, mes femmes!’ Sir C. W. is always ‘coming immediately’; but never comes! He writes to ask his own ‘Viola,’ ‘Will you marry me?’ or something very like it; ‘Viola’ says, ‘Yes: when?’ and he answers, ‘Immediately,’ meaning fifteen years hence perhaps, if then; but it must be within three months, for the dangers of all sorts that will threaten me the moment some one comes out of prison are too awful to think of. He still thinks of his Hannah, ca se

voit; speaks in his last letter of ‘the extraordinary boldness of her statement that it was she who took the viol and trinkets out of his room, when she knew that she did not have them to produce, and when she knew that they were believed to have been taken by a thief. If this was lying, it was that most gallant style of lying which invites and defies disbelief.’ ‘If,’ this was lying! Aren’t we quite convinced, then, by her non-appearance to claim the child? What an obstinate infatuation! He wants to know if ‘the poor woman’ can’t be found by me, in order to see whether she is in need of ‘financial aid.’ He is a divinely unconscious old Chris. Who doesn’t know that Hannah Wilson is in prison? But not he: his head is up in the clouds. The rest of his letter is mostly talk about the different schools, says that he is fast acquiring a degenerate weakness for Italian opera, Giardini, Viotti, sends his last orchestral suite and sonata, longs to be again accompanied by ‘Viola,’ and says that during the height of the fuss and lamentation in Paris at the rumor of his death last month, he was abroad in the cafes with his friends, strangers speaking to him of his own death without recognizing him. I shall write immediately after the concert....”

“... Since he knows nothing about what has befallen Hannah, I wrote boldly yesterday to say that as he is causing me to suffer, and as it can only be Hannah who is at the bottom of his delay, my duty to my child has forced me to think of having Hannah punished by the law for her bigamy, unless something is done for my little one quickly. I wrote in quite a new tone, and I’ll wait and see what effect this has upon him....”

“... Hannah has been seen in prison. Yesterday morning Olivia ran to me in the rockery in a state of excitement, saying that a woman named Harriet Davis, who went to London two years ago, got five months’ imprisonment for neglect of her children, and has just come home again, was with Hannah in Wandsworth prison. We at once sent John packing to

find and bring her, and in the afternoon had her by stealth a lions' time in Olivia's boudoir. But she is known as a liar. She makes out that Hannah is quite a privileged person: had at first to wash clothes and scrub floors, but now is one of the nurses in the prison-infirmary; 'almost fainted' when she saw Harriet Davis. Harriet asked her, 'Are you guilty?' 'Miss Hannah' answered, 'So they say.' One morning Miss Hannah hid the scrubbing-brush of another prisoner, 'just for a lark,' and the woman was going to beat Miss Hannah, but didn't after; another morning there was a riot, the women were going to set upon a wardress, if Miss Hannah hadn't quieted them; for two weeks Miss Hannah was in the infirmary ill. Livie and I sat with 'our chins on our hands, listening to the string of incidents — half lies; this is the same Harriet Davis that told Uncle Peter about a voice which said, 'Rest I cannot.' We gave her some money...."

"... My threat to inform on Hannah's bigamy has drawn a quick reply from Chris. I knew that he would be horrified at me, but I mustn't mind that now. My dream of motherhood may be drawing toward its close, for when she comes out I shall have everything to fear with regard to the child at least, if I don't then belong to his father. Suppose he ever were taken from me? I should be stripped of all, I should die of ignominy, I should be a maid again. I shall repeat my threat to Chris: he seems aghast at the notion of 'that poor woman being sent to prison, ...'" etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII



“ . . . SO I am to be an autumn bride!” she wrote later, “if I don’t go wild beforehand. Livie says that I am ‘cracked.’ She cried on Thursday when she saw him on his little silver throne, looking every inch a monarch with his little scepter and crown, and his purple and ermine; I insisted upon her courtesying, while I knelt, and she burst into tears, saying that it was a shame to play such antics with a poor child. I don’t care, I am quite reckless and happy, but for the physical pains. When I look round my life and see to what a height I have brought it, I repeat to myself, ‘This is great Babylon which I have built.’ Last night I was amusing myself with reading over one of the old volumes” (of her diary), “seven years old, written about that time when Uncle Peter was supposed to be dying, and some one ran over from Paris to see him. I was only twenty then, Chris was twenty-two, some one was twenty-one, Hannah was nearly twenty-five. How time flies! and changes us. I must have been a perfect little goose; the diary is full of laments over my sweating palms and agitations in Chris’s presence. A shrinking little chrysalis I was, as unequal to the world as ‘the rath primrose’; whatever was said had a pang in it for me; if I fancied that a tenant didn’t treat me with homage on the road, I wrote it down, and suffered half the night. Now I am quite reckless and jolly: I want people to look upon me as a little mama, and to stand agaze at my adoration of my boy. But Olivia says that it is only another phase of the self-same sickness, and that ‘Dir kannst du nicht entfliehen.’ I don’t know why she is so surly lately; she forgets that, in reality, she is only part of my establishment. At

any rate, I have changed, I am no longer a muling failure, I have accomplished something, everything; with these hands I have built great Babylon, and there's a trick in Nature that was in league all the time with little me. Seven years ago my highest ambition was to see some one take Chris from Hannah, and now, in a month's time, Chris is to be my own — husband! The quickness of the hand deceives the eye! Pick up your skirts, girls, and dance till you drop! There's a white dress making, and making for me; there's a plain gold ring forged somewhere, which is for me: its maker little thought, as he heated and polished it, that it was for me: but God thought, 'That one is for the little one.' Pity the pains are getting so bad: seven years ago I didn't have my left leg all in cotton wool....”

“... Everything isn't quite smooth. Now comes the news that Willie Dawe tried to hang himself on the third evening after Hannah's trial, but was found and cut down just in time. While I was wondering what had become of him, he was in hospital, and now, they say, is weak in the head. Why should he have hanged himself, when he had plenty of money to go on with? Heaven grant that he doesn't let out anything to anybody about me. Olivia says that his mother has written to him to come down, and I have no means to prevent his coming; but, if he dares blab anything, I shall have him charged and sent to Norwich....”

“... I always love this time of the year; the leaves are beginning to fall fast, and sometimes in the early mornings there are meanings in the winds with which I am so akin, that I could faint for bliss. I wonder if any other soul is ever so pierced to the very quick by their bleakness? It isn't over this earth alone that they sorrow to me, but over the despondence of moons that no glass ever spied. Like me they are forlorn, and they bear me echoes of wailings from worlds where I, too, once beat the breast by chill waters. It is when I hear them, and when I am weeping over my boy, that I am truly

religious, truly pure in heart, and I worship, understanding that some day all my crookedness will surely be blotted out, and my sins will be remembered against me no more forever....”

“ . . . There have been two grand storms within three weeks, and from everywhere come lamentations of boats and houses and bits of coast-wall being washed away. This is a tempestuous, wet place, and somehow the presence of the sea is in all our lives. Some day perhaps the descendants of the hunchback won’t have any Hill to call their own. But they say that the salt in the air is good for rheumatism, though I have had sea-baths all the summer, and am worse than ever for it. Dr. Williams says that is the continual crabs and lobsters, but it is no good, I can’t give them up: I have tried, but ‘Set a hunch to pick a hunch,’ as ex-cook Bassett is said to have remarked. I am not going to break any habits now, I am twenty-seven, and perhaps in any case shan’t live very long. ‘Let us tax and stint and feed ourselves according to habit,’ says Montaigne, and not try to be heroes. I am frail in every part, but do very well as I am without athletics. There was a man whom the Spanish Inquisition condemned to sleep on blunt spikes for fifteen years, and afterwards he couldn’t sleep on anything else. To the average dormant person the familiar is better than the best, and so every one likes himself as he is. If I could only get the rheumatism and indigestion a little better before the wedding, I shouldn’t mind. Ever since that last storm the pains have been sharper. That was an awful night for me. I can almost say that I saw Uncle Peter, though I can’t swear that I was awake: but, if it was a dream, how vivid. I haven’t written the details, and shan’t now, it would make me ill. I woke up every one in the house; many a stronger woman would have died. They say that another storm is predicted by the coastguard next week.... “ “...I have advised Chris not to trouble himself about any divorce from Hannah, however slight the trouble, since there is a

law that after seven years of such a marriage one is free. He has never come across her, except that evening when she went to tell him about the loss of the child, and that doesn't count: only he and I know of it; it would be a far-fetched sort of law that could regard him as in any sense her husband now. He wishes, apparently, to be very punctilious, and is quite 'on his honor.' But what his 'own friend' wants is his solid presence, and no more talk and delays. He is to be at Orrock, positively, on the 5th; on the 1st Olivia and I go to London for two days to see after everything, and will be back by the 4th to receive him; the wedding on the 10th; Hannah comes out on the 27th, when I shall be in Italy. I spent the whole of this morning with Mr. Bretherton, talking of the two estates, and the settlement...."

". . . A long talk this morning" (seven days later) "with Chris in Orrock Park, and I am far from flattered, in spite of his anxiety to be polite. He forgets that I have a pair of sharp eyes, and can read him like a book. I can see that his main motive for marrying me in a hurry isn't love for me, nor even his 'honor' toward the little mother of his child, but my repeated threats to have 'that poor woman' put into prison for her bigamy. If he only knew that I have done it, he wouldn't like me, I'm afraid. He may be making as great a sacrifice for Hannah now, if the truth were known, as she made for him when she married Willie Dawe. I wonder if it is so? If he really doesn't love me at all, there's plenty of poison in the house: I can take back the crooked back to Him that made it: perhaps He will comfort me and forgive me when no one else will. Anyway I feel that I shan't live long to strut in my Babylon; there's a pretty constant feeling now of something hanging over me, the fall of which will crush me. Some times in the mornings I can only lift my head by an effort, I am so weak and weary; and there's a crack running right through me somehow, which any shock might widen, and not one stone would be left on another. Perhaps it would be as

well. C. W., too, is strangely grave: at some moments he looks quite broken-down and lost; then he will take my arm jauntily, and try to be boyish. If he doesn't love me really, I am sorry for him. Perhaps people who are not so accustomed to me as I am to myself see me in an uglier light: it may be so: may thunder crush me, if it is! He has only kissed me on the cheeks, everything strictly French so far, and this forenoon in the park he 'good Godded' me about Hannah. 'It is amazing,' he said, 'that a thought of harming that unfortunate woman could ever have entered your mind!' I answered, 'I believed that she was injuring me and my boy, Chris.' 'But good God!' he cried, 'why do you seek to madden me? I haven't seen or heard of the woman since that night in my London chambers! And, in any case, where is your regard for me to think of casting into the common prison a woman whom you know that I have already wronged and driven to despair?'

"'But don't be angry with me, Chris,' I said, 'I am not very well. I know that I have many faults, and have done many, many wrong things, but they have all been done through love of you—'

"'Well, well,' he said, patting me.

"'Will you always remember that?' I said— 'through love of you. Our parents made a compact before I was born that we should marry, and though some imp must have been grinning behind their backs, the compact somehow embodied itself with my embryo being. I worship you, Chris, and ask you to be kind to me while I live. I know that you don't love me—'

"'Mmm, I do, I do,' he said.

"'Then, will you let me be with you after we are married?'

"'With me! Where?' he asked, starting.

"'Anywhere — wherever you are. Promise me at least that for six months of the year Chrisie and I may live with you. Look, he is bringing

you flowers’ — Chrisie was racing back to us with a lot of harebells and bachelor-buttons; his father patted his back absently, not thinking of him, saying, ‘I am such a wanderer: if you came with me, you would be wretched, and I shouldn’t be able to play, already I abhor—’

“‘On my account?’ I asked quickly.

“‘Oh, no, never think that, my own friend, just the contrary,’ he said. ‘But perhaps, if you will consider Orrock your home, then I could pay you long and frequent visits—’

“‘Chris, you mean to be the death of me, I can see,’ I said.

“‘Heavens!’ he breathed, throwing up his eyes: ‘then, be with me, be with me.’

“‘Is that a promise?’

“‘Yes, a promise.’

“‘It mayn’t be for long, Chris: I feel so frail lately.’

“‘Mmm’ — with a pat. ‘My presence won’t be irksome to you, Chris?’

“‘Not at all.’ ‘And may I accompany you sometimes, Chris?’

“‘Not in public?’

“‘If I may. You know, Chris, that no one can really accompany you but me.’

“‘That’s only the truth. You shall accompany me.’

“‘And Chris, will you love me just a little as your own little — Oh, pray! say yes! I know that I don’t deserve it, but the great God makes his sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust.’

“‘I shall certainly love you,’ he said with apparent sincerity, ‘and at least take better care of you than of the first one.’ Just then Chrisie fell flat in moss twenty yards ahead, and I ran down the avenue to him; when I next looked back there was Chris sitting on a tree-trunk, with his face buried in his arms. I don’t know why he was like that on a sudden....”

“ . . . To-morrow evening is for the settlement of the estates and signing the marriage-documents. C. W., like all Frenchmen, is a stickler for form and nicety in money-matters, and I am instructed to invite friends to ‘assist’ at the ceremony, French-fashion: so it will be rather a function. Mr. Bretherton writes that everything is drawn up and ready, and Olivia is in a state of palish excitement. So much for Babylon, and my little star. But one star isn’t enough to make one happy somehow: perhaps one should be in league with all the stars. God help me.... “ etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIX



ON THE SEVENTH of that month (November), about nine in the evening, while the marriage documents were being read before some dozen people in the Hall library, Hannah, for her part, was sitting in the churchyard a mile away. On account of good behavior in her late trouble she had been let out a little before the term of her sentence, had now been at large over twenty-four hours, and, as the people in London had not been able to give her any news of her child, she had made up her mind to go down to Orrock, to face old Mr. Langer, and to get some money for the further search, since her funds had run low. But, on going down, she shirked the shame of showing herself, shirked the questions, the eyes of awe and reproach, and went first to her old spot in St. Peter's churchyard, to rest and talk with herself.

She was there from half-past seven to nine, sitting in wet grass, with squalls of drizzle beating upon her, for it was a rough night. She habitually treated in this amazingly reckless way that "health" which she considered divine: and, indeed, she was hardly ever unwell. That night, however, a dark fit was upon her — partly a reaction from her flush of freedom the day before, partly a result of seeing round her the wreck of her goods. Her child was gone, her good name, her husband. She felt that to rebuild herself in England now was a hopeless matter, and meant when the child should be found, if ever, to fly to America, where she had some "friends." In this state of her affairs, she came to the Orrock grave to strew no flowers upon it as erewhile, but really to seek a sort of comfort from the dead, since among the living there was none. She made herself fancy that if Sir Peter were living,

he, at least, would know her, would trust her soul, when her own father, mother, and every one were strangers to her. In her heart she called the old baronet "father," little dreaming how strictly true this was; she thought of the tender shyness with which he used to whisper at her ear, "Uglier than ever, I see," and this made her smile and moan: now, perhaps, hovering about her in the dark, or streaming upon the north wind's ravings, his spirit mourned of her, "Prettier than ever." She was somehow sure of his nearness and of his sympathy, and thinking still of him, recalling his ways and words, tears of love wet her eyes.

But even the old grave failed her that night: "East railings," she wrote of it, "standing on nothing, gone askew, only held up by horizontal bar; east half of slab hanging over nothing. Made me feel really homeless, a stranger, as if nothing solid was left. The whole coast transformed: old St. Cuthbert's tower perhaps five feet nearer cliff-edge, three yards gone from east end of Mailing's Lane, sea roaring in great breakers under spots where I have planted flowers when a girl; enough to make the geese and cows cry: hungry wash of the sea ever ravening with rough shout to wreck and bereave. 'Oh, earth, what changes hast thou seen!' Must have been some awful storms while in prison: fifteen of graves clean gone from St. Peter's; no longer the same place. 'Here have we no continuing city'; 'all flows,' changes; but thought to myself, 'the fleece of Gideon at least remains dry,' the mind 'invincible': 'therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.' Things were pretty cruel, none on earth that I could really tell my heart to, the very night unpitiful, not a star, moon, nor light over sea, gusts coming shaky from northeast like flapping sails, no one in wide world, only me, the lighthouse, and the dead, old landmarks gone; but still something left inside, one last Gibraltar, and good old whisper, 'The mountains shall depart and

the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed.’ Through it all, felt strong curiosity to see his coffin, if visible; went to edge at last, and, clinging underneath to railings, poked head up between railings and slab, climbed on to slab, and lay on it, gazing down over east edge. Eyes could just guess out either three or four coffin-ends, five to seven feet down. Hoped eyes would get used to darkness, and lay on face perhaps twenty minutes, but still couldn’t make out anything. Lighthouse beam in passing didn’t lighten even a little the murk under there, and at last something creepy said, ‘Suppose slab tips over with you,’ so was off quicker than I went on.

But no sooner out in the grass again, than I felt myself bested, and thought of climbing down to see; the cliff-face now lay about half way between flat and steep up above, then twenty-five feet down came a ledge, then another, after which cliff-face went down steep; could see ledges and state of cliff-face during passage of lighthouse beam: cliff-face all white, rough chalk, not polished and hard and discolored as it soon becomes, so landslip couldn’t have taken place more than a week or two before; a Y-shaped cake had been taken off cliff from top to bottom, leaving plenty of rough footway up above. Peered along edge, till I came to likely spot about ten feet south of Orrock grave; as I stood there, something said, ‘Better not try it’: wouldn’t listen: but the moment foot was over edge, my heart leapt into my mouth; if I hadn’t been a coward should have turned back, but afraid of being called a coward by myself, so went on — a coward either way. Crept northward and downward toward Orrock coffins, wary step by wary step, clinging on with hands, wind blowing clothes about, white as a sheet, if truth were known, and every instant getting more miserably jumpy. ‘Go back!’ said reason to will; no go: will deaf and blind. In daytime should have felt quite safe, have done worse bits in Switzerland, but up another

street at dark night — with fifty feet below. Was actually among Orrock coffins when foot slipped — or I fancied so, and utterly lost nerve; once a woman always a woman: caught wildly at coffin just above head, caught something, didn't quite know what, something pretty rotten which gave way, and next moment had said my prayers and gone tumbling. Whole rain of things seemed to come with me — had that fancy — like a thousand of bricks. Had caught inside coffin-rim, where lid may have subsided, or else by a handle, and so broken coffin. Didn't fall far, perhaps twelve, fifteen feet, to first ledge, and there lay feeling wronged, like child with cut finger, my hands bruised, face hot, dignity outraged; think I lost consciousness for some minutes, not sure. Ledge five feet wide, happily lower at inner edge than outer. Sat wondering how on earth I was to get back up, absolutely hadn't the nerve to climb; put out my hand to collect my dress, and touched tibia of leg — not yet bare! caught back hand and touched something cold lying on dress — man's watch and chain: seemed to be the one I had taken from Chris; I felt it all over, it certainly seemed to be no other; thought I must be stunned and dreaming, but the same twisted links, elephant guard, covered watch — the very same; was pretty scared: even in blessing, the Hand of God terrible; never was afraid of ghosts in my life, but was then, badly; seemed to stand face to face with that which cannot be named for excessive greatness, and the wind spoke monstrosly to me with human tongue; didn't see Sir Peter, but nearly did, waited, with my hair rising, on the very point of seeing him, breathing his name; at same time lighthouse-beam swept over shiny thing lying on ledge two yards away, the viol: couldn't doubt it the same — no neck, elaborate decoration all over back and belly, sloping shoulders, straight sound-holes long way from purfling — the very same. Understood that they had been buried with Sir Peter: and how awful! couldn't help crying after I had got over ungrateful terrors.

Looked about for cardboard box and ring and brush, but couldn't find: box may have got blown away.

“No difficulty now about getting back up to top: for state of the mind everything, and he that has faith, i.e., tip-top spirits inside, shall say to mountain, ‘Be thou removed.’ Couldn’t very well take up viol with me, started up without, but after some feet up, went back, tore petticoat into strips, tied string round side-grooves, and climbed with end of string between teeth. Got up all right to coffins, stopped and had a look, heart beating foolishly again, one of them all broken, and — no tibias! Climbed twelve more feet to top and drew up viol, which came bumping vocally, that old salt-seasoned pine belly and chrysolite varnish still sound as a nut. Didn’t stop to worry about how it had got into coffin: a haste to lay it before Chris within forty-eight hours had me; thought he was on Continent, and made up my mind not to show face at Woodside, but to go and ask Bentley at Hall where he was, and start off straight to him. Wanted to run, but wouldn’t; walked slowly. Heard something knocking about inside viol, stopped under lamp in Woodside Lane, and picked out through sound-holes with hatpin two folded parchments, copies of each other apparently; saw my name all about; they seemed to be will of Sir Peter: understood that in that case I must have offended some one, though always thought every one sweet on me, the old self-conceit wrong again. Went on past Woodside, Rover howling piteously after me (chained up); might have stopped, for not a soul anywhere about, but didn’t; passed down and on to Brookend, where I washed hands, then through Orrock gates, and by south side made for second inner courtyard, hoping to meet either Bentley or Mrs. Dene on the quiet, when I saw library lighted up.... “ etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXX



ON A SUDDEN Hannah, with a wet face and looking bedraggled, was standing in a corner of the library with the group of people who were taking part in the rite of settlement; Chris and Kathleen were seated at opposite sides of a table, the others seated round it. Though six crowds of candles hung in a row from the ceiling, their light was somehow local about the chandeliers, and still left a gloom in that old hall; extra candles in smooth old candlesticks were on the table, which reflected their light in its surface; the little crowd of people who were gathered round the table with the candlesticks on it looked lonely and local in the bigness of the place; a butler and a footman in yellow stockings hung mutely upon the scene; all were more or less mute and stiff; Chris Wilson had the smile of a saint who is being led to the stake.

“I didn’t know that visitors were here,” said Hannah to him, “I saw your back through the little courtyard door—”

Chris leapt to his feet with the whisper, “What is it?”

“I’ll wait till another time,” said Hannah: “good evening, Kathleen, how are you, Mrs. Horsnel — ?”

She was stopped by Chris pointing and crying out, “But isn’t that my viol di Gamba?”

“Yes, then,” said Hannah, “you may as well hear now before everybody. Some one in the Hall wished me ill six years ago, and hid the things which I took from your rooms. Here is the watch and chain, too. Can’t find the ring and nail-brush. They were buried in Sir Peter’s coffin, and the sea has

rendered them back to me, the hammers of God, pounding doggedly — . Ah, don't mind my weakness — it seems a pretty dreadful thing, and I'm only just out of prison—”

“Prison!” breathed Chris, his mind flitting helplessly from one astonishment to another.

“Oh, you didn't know,” said Hannah.

“You out of prison?” cried Chris with a flush of anger on his brow, “then, why am I going through — What dreadful thing is this, my friends?”

“Nothing very dreadful about it,” said Hannah, drying her eyes, with a broken laugh: “everything nice and clean, and all found. Nothing is dreadful, except — one thing. But how came you not to know, when everybody must know?”

“I seem to have been the victim of some conspiracy! You must all be seeking to drive me mad! Bentley, why have I never been told that this lady was in such a case —

“First of all, Sir Chris,” said old Bentley, “I assumed that you knew; secondly, I had instructions not to grieve you by referring to the matter.”

“Instructions! But from whom?”

“Oh, don't trouble about that now,” said Hannah. “Look here; I found these two parchments inside the viol—”

A guttural voice stopped her with the words, “It is all a lie”

All eyes had been mostly fixed upon Hannah, but now turned to Kathleen, decked that night in many jewels and flowers; they beheld her standing up, leaning forward, her right palm pressed upon the table, her left pressed against her left temple, as though there was pain there, her eyes staring toward Hannah, yet not somehow at Hannah, but at something, it seemed, beyond; when she said in that strange, low voice, “It is all a lie,” every one was hushed: two or three glanced behind Hannah to see whom

the little maid was talking to; but before any one could say anything, Hannah's little boy, dressed in black velvet and gold, ran toward the table out of a recess where he had been playing with one of his nurses: he was running to Kathleen, but catching sight of Hannah, stopped midway between his two mamas, both of whom he loved very much, staring from one to the other, while his father looked to see what he would do, and his mother's eyes danced merrily at him; and presently, as his memory more awake, he moved toward Hannah, took hold of her skirt, and, with his head thrown back, murmured half to himself, "Mama." Hannah just rumbled his hair, and pinched his cheek. "There he was again," she wrote of him afterwards, "like a bad penny, prodigal son come home weary of the world." She did not kiss him before the crowd.

"So, Chris," she began to say, "you had my child—" but was interrupted by a cry from Chris and from all, for the little maid had fallen forward over the table, and at once the rather stiff gathering which Hannah had startled became a noise of tongues. "She has fainted!" "It is a stroke!" "Some water quickly!" "Make room — let me hold her head back!" "Quickly, Thomas, Dr. Williams!" — every one was moving, crowding, crying out something, while Chris, whom the sight of suffering always pierced to the quick, rushed from place to place, calling out what no one heard. In the midst of it Hannah said to Mr. Millings and the butler, "You two take her up," and soon the little maid was being borne away; but when she struggled midway, Hannah took her from the men to her shoulder, and ran up the lobby-stairs, the little boy still clinging to her skirt, the crowd following. Above, Hannah went into her old room whence the viol and box had been stolen, and shut out every one, except the boy and Mrs. Dene, with whose help she undid Kathleen's clothes, wet her brow, lit a lamp, did all that a nurse could, awaiting the doctor, then lay on the bed, almost over the dying girl,

whispering at one moment of the gospel, and at the next pleading with Kathleen to make an effort, and not die. Presently Kathleen, who was breathing hard in the strait and article of death, said in a gross voice, "I buried the things." "Yes, yes," said Hannah, "but make an effort, will you? Summon all your powers—" "I stole him from your room," said Kathleen with fixed eyes. "Yes," said Hannah, weeping, "but Jesus cares nothing about that." Presently again Kathleen said in a feebler voice, "I was his little mother" sinking every moment. "Were you?" said Hannah, "and you always shall be, I promise you that; here he is, if you will only live; it is a question of will, just say, 'I won't die, life is mine' — Oh! if I could do it for you!" "Too late," said Kathleen, "my will is weakened." She smiled in saying this, and laid her right hand on Hannah's arm: it was like a caress. A minute later she reared, fell back, and the room was suddenly still and rid of her death-rattle, as when a clock stops, and a death stillness is heard where a ticking was heard. Hannah's fingers shut down the lids over the sightlessness of the beautiful eyes.

As she was getting down from the bed, a tap was heard, and the voice of Chris, calling, "Mayn't one come in?"

"Tell him I'm gone to London," whispered Hannah quickly to Mrs. Dene, catching up the child, and hurrying away through a side door.

"You can come in," said Mrs. Dene to those at the door: "the doctor will arrive too late."

Some of them went in, and looked at the still face on the bed. Chris, who could not stand such sights, just glanced round the room, and asked, "Where is Lady Wilson?"

"She is gone to London," said Mrs. Dene.

Chris looked dumfounded. He hurried down again to the library, gazed at the viol and watch and chain, read the will, which Hannah had left on the

table. No one was there. For some time he sat with his head buried in his arms. Then he rang for old Bentley.

“You know, Bentley,” he said in a low voice, “that Lady Wilson contracted a second marriage?”

“Yes, Sir Chris: hence her imprisonment.”

“What on earth was her reason, my friend?”

“I have no idea: all the world has been amazed at it.”

“Can you remember the man’s name?”

“William Dawe, Sir Chris.”

“That’s the name! Now, how could this man be found, Bentley?”

“Why, he is at present living with his mother at Woodside, within a mile and a half of the Hall, Sir Chris: he attempted suicide after the conviction of Lady Wilson, but was saved, though they say he’s rather weak in the head now.”

“Could you contrive to have him here to-night?”

“I think so, Sir Chris.”

“Try, then, quickly, will you? Go yourself in a trap—”

Old Bentley hobbled off at his fastest gait; and Chris paced the library with quick steps, till in half an hour Willie Dawe, looking scared, was before him.

“Now, tell me, my friend,” said Chris: “how many children do you say that Lady Wilson has had?”

“Only one, sir,” answered Willie.

“But since I am the father of that one, why did you tell me that you were?”

“Miss Sheridan told me to say so, sir, begging your pardon.”

“Well, let that pass. But might you ever have been the father of a child of Lady Wilson?”

“Oh, God help us! Miss Hannah, sir?”

“I am sure that you tell the truth. But why on earth, then, did she go through a form of marriage with you?”

“As far as I could make it out, sir, she did it for your good.”

“Mine! But in what possible way?”

“She heard that you were going to get married in France, sir, and was afraid that you’d get taken up for bigamy, unless she got married first.”

At this Chris gazed at Willie Dawe without saying anything, then began to pace the library quickly with a flushed brow, till, dropping into a chair, he said to himself, “But it is pitiful,” and buried away his face, shedding tears.

Presently he sprang up, saying, “Bentley! is it true that Lady Wilson is gone to London?”

“I heard Mrs. Dene say so, Sir Chris.”

“But what for, my friend?”

“I have no idea, Sir Chris.”

“But where is she to be found? You, Dawe, do you know her address in London?”

Willie Dawe gave the Guilford Street address.

“Bentley,” said Chris, “tell Grimani that I start for London at once, and find out for me the hour of the next train.”

By 10.15 Chris and his valet were in a train, London bound.

CHAPTER XXXI



NEAR 1 A. m. Chris was knocking up the house in Guilford Street; and presently Mrs. Reid, the landlady, appeared in little more than a shawl.

“I am sorry to have had to disturb you,” said Chris, “but my business is most urgent. Is Lady Wilson here?”

“There never was any Lady Wilson, sir; there’s a Mrs.—”

“It’s the same. Is she not here? Don’t say no.

“She was here earlier in the night, but she’s gone to France.”

“France! What for?”

“That’s more than I can tell you.”

“But it is impossible for her to have gone to France to-night, since she was in Norfolk at 9.30.”

“That’s what she told me: that she was going to France at once.”

“And she left no address?”

“Yes, she did.”

“Ah, good news.”

“She said that if any one called, I was to give him an address which she wrote.”

“Good news. So that was why she came to you?”

“Yes, and to get me to cash a check for her. I’ll run and get the address.”

Mrs. Reid soon returned with a piece of paper on which was written, “Hannah Wilson, chez Madame Brault, 14 rue Boissy d’Anglas.” Chris, looking at the writing, wondered why it struck some fond chord in his soul:

it was because it was “Viola’s” writing; but he was as when one recognizes a face, yet forgets where one saw it.

“This will do excellently,” said he; “thank you very much.”

He then drove to Gray’s Inn; paced his sitting-room in a heat for the morning to come; slept for some time on a couch; and by the first train was off to France. By 5.30 p. m. he was on a fifth floor in the rue Boissy d’Anglas, at that door of Madame Brault’s to which the quaint maid had once come from Chateaubrun, in order to tell Hannah that Chris was going to marry Yvonne de Pencharry-Strannik.

“Is Madame Wilson here?” he asked of the pension-boy.

“No, sir, not here.”

“Is she expected?”

“Not that I know, sir. I’ll ask.”

It turned out that Hannah was not even expected, and Chris drove away in very low spirits. Stopping his carriage at the first post-office, he sent a telegram to one Rowland-Jones of Cavendish Square, London, saying, “Am in the greatest trouble. Pray come at once to me in rue de Rome.”

He passed a wretched night, seeing no one; but when he opened his eyes the next morning, there was Rowland-Jones, a naval officer, a man of square brow and strong eye, at his bedside.

“Oh, thank Heaven, here you are, Jack! How splendid of you,” said Chris; “now I am safe”; and he poured out the whole story of Hannah to Jack.

“But where’s the trouble?” asked Jack: “how could you expect to find her in Paris at five yesterday when she couldn’t possibly have left London the night before?”

“I had forgotten that,” said Chris meekly.

“She’s probably now at the rue Boissy d’Anglas,” said Jack: “heave your old carcase overboard that dream-ship, and let us be there before she goes out.”

“Had any breakfast?”

“No, and no particular appetite: I am in love with your wife, Chris.”

“Isn’t she splendid!”

“There seem to be other sorts of music than the ‘octave and perfect cadence,’ Chris.”

“I shall have her today, Jack!”

“Perhaps: and she you tomorrow. Look alive now.”

“Grimani!” shouted Chris, hastening out of bed, and before long the two friends were driving to the rue Boissy d’Anglas. At Madame Brault’s Chris asked if Madame Wilson was come.

“Come and gone, sir,” was the answer.

“Gone!”

“She arrived at nine last night, sir, slept here, and went away this morning at half-past seven.”

“What is one to do, my friend?” said Chris, half crying, to Rowland-Jones.

“Did she leave no address?” asked Rowland-Jones.

“An address in Normandy, sir, for letters to be sent.”

“Let us have that address.”

“She did not leave it to be given to any one, sir.”

“Oh, but we are exceptions,” said Rowland-Jones: and a battle began between him and the boy, ending in a British victory at a cost of ten francs. Hannah had left the address, “Villa des Lilas, St. Pierre-les-Elbeuf, Normandy.”

“We must be after her instantly,” said Rowland-Jones, as they stepped into the carriage.

“But we have had nothing to eat!” said Chris.

“We must eat train food.”

“Let’s stop and wire to Grimani to follow with—”

“Ah, let’s not mind about Grimani; we mustn’t lose an instant: I’ll tell you why presently.”

But at the Gare St. Lazare they had to wait ten minutes for a train, and during that time Chris wired to Grimani to follow with the fiddles and mute. They then set out.

“Look here, Chris,” said Rowland-Jones over breakfast in the train: “one of two things, either she doesn’t want you—”

“But can any love be like hers for me?” groaned Chris.

“You are thinking of five years ago, Chris; five years is more than a lustrum in the story of a woman’s heart—”

“Oh, she despises women.”

“But we only despise what we are in peril of resembling, lad. We worship the cow, but scorn the coward. Lady Wilson, be sure, is dimly conscious of her nether half, which duly exists. Let’s be in no doubt as to her sex, Chris. Either she doesn’t want you, or — she’s playing a game: quite possibly the latter. Why else should she scurry through Normandy, spend one night in Paris, and then be off to Normandy again in this way? I’ll bet that the woman is only playing tit for tat; you once ran away from her, and she says, ‘Now it is my turn, let him catch me, if he really wants me.’ It’s feminine because simple. Women, of course are just so elementary as the mastodon. I hope that I am right in this case. If so, our plan is to catch her quickly — to pounce upon her by mere grimness of forced marches, or she’ll lead us a dance over half the globe, until funds fail her.”

“It is cruel, my friend,” said Chris.

“It is anything but amusing: and it would be no use our sitting down somewhere, waiting for her to relent and turn up of her own accord. She evidently means to be won by eagerness and strategy, and will never give herself. Ah, I’d rather like to have the permanent handling of this particular gamy lass.”

“My dear Jack, don’t desire my wife.”

“Oh, after you Chris: gamy and bigamy are unrelated, to say nothing of trigamy. We’ll soon see what Elbeuf has in store—”

Ninety minutes from Paris they arrived at Elbeuf, got a trap, and drove two miles to St. Pierre, to find the Villa des Lilas on the top of a hill in the middle of pine forests. But Hannah was not there. “Madame Wilson,” said the proprietress, “after an hour’s stay, left for Gournay-en-Brey, messieurs”: and to Gournay-en-Brey the two friends hastened.

CHAPTER XXXII



AT THE END of three days' hunt after the flights and dodges of "an Englishwoman in blue nurse's costume with a child," Chris gave up, saying:

"I can't Jack — I must have a decent night's rest — I am utterly done for with the damned trains — I am not made for this kind of work—" and he threw himself down wearily. They were now at an old inn in the romantic country round Domfront, in William-the-Conqueror land. They had just been told that Hannah was no longer at the inn. It was about nine in the night.

"But doesn't she ever sleep?" asked Rowland-Jones: "she must have the strength of three mules; and that boy with her — how on earth does she do it? She must have reared him on lioness-milk, the splendid wretch."

"I, for my part, couldn't keep it up to-night, my friend," said Chris. "To-morrow morning we will resume operations—"

"That's as you like, Chris, but never say that Jack Rowland-Jones was beaten by this lady. I am prepared to go on now, and to go on till I am no more; give me carte blanche to act alone, and I even say that I shall have her here within twenty-four hours, if she have the cunning of the devil and the vigor of a cart-horse."

"Do so, if you like," said Chris; "but when are they going to bring us something to eat — ?"

"Just get up now, and write me an authorization to act for you," said Rowland-Jones.

Chris got up, and was in the act of writing out a statement that Mr. Rowland-Jones was his friend, when from behind the old wainscoting was heard the call, "Papa!" and he leapt to his feet.

"That your child's voice?" asked Rowland-Jones excitedly.

"I think so!"

Rowland-Jones darted to one of the two doors, only to find it locked, caught up his hat, and rushed out of the other. Though solidly built and of a certain age, he was nimble, and could run.

Chris awaited his return eagerly. But he had to eat his meal alone, for Rowland-Jones did not come. He sat, nodding with sleep, till one o'clock, but his friend did not appear.

All the next day Rowland-Jones did not come. Chris was like a lost man: had no idea what to do now, did not know where Grimani was, had no fiddles: he could only stroll about and moon, with a forlorn movement of the eyebrow.

And like that first day a second passed. Chris was now in purgatory. But on the third morning he received three letters: one was from his friend, and this he tore open first. It told of Rowland-Jones's adventures during the past two days, and of his failure to catch Lady Wilson. "I actually saw her," he wrote, "at the station at Bayeux. As I rushed upon the platform, I distinctly caught sight of her head in the velvet bonnet looking out eagerly of a window of the train. She drew in at sight of me. The train was already moving; and I just had time to pitch into the nearest compartment, without a ticket. I felt that I had her safe now: we were in the same train — a through train to St. Lo. Imagine my disgust on reaching St. Lo. to find that she wasn't in the train. I can only conclude that, as a signal was against us at one place, she must have leapt upon the metals on the off-side when the

train stopped. That's the only hypothesis: the night was dark. I'm sure I don't know what to do next: she is quite lost, . . . " etc.

Having read this Chris tore open the second letter: the handwriting struck him as familiar: he glanced first to the bottom, and saw— "Viola"!

"Beloved," he read, "it is a long time since I have written you. There have been reasons, apart from the fact that it is you who owe me a letter. But let there be no more letter-writing between us henceforth: for the long-loved day will have come, even as you read this, when Viola will be ready to leave all to be with you. Meet me, then, at the Gare St. Lazare tomorrow at 2.15 p. m., under the clock. I shall have in my hand the gift beyond price which I have so long promised you.

"Yours till death.

"Viola."

Chris was so accustomed to the notion of "Viola" knowing of his doings in mysterious ways that he hardly asked himself how she could know of his stay in that little inn. He had again the old thrill on reading her letter. Already he had guessed that the quaint maid could not have been "Viola," and here was the real "Viola," the romantic, the high-minded, about to show herself, to give herself, at last. He was all at once eager to set out, curious to see her, to see her gift. But into his eagerness stole an awkward thought of Hannah. That Hannah might be "Viola" never entered his head; if for no other reason, because the Hannah whom he had married at Orrock couldn't play the violin.

He was so flushed by Viola's letter, that he hardly had the patience to open the third letter: he did so, however, glanced at the bottom, and saw— "Hannah"!

Hannah had written this letter in a round hand very different from “Viola’s,” and she said:

“Dear Chris:

“If you really wish to see me, I shall be on the sea-cliffs above Barc-la-Forêt tomorrow at 2 p. m. sharp. Barc-la-Forêt is a village two miles north of Coutances. I hope your friend, Mr. Rowland-Jones, continues well?

Your wife,

“Hannah.”

On reading this, Chris was in the greatest joy and the greatest trouble at the same time. One of two ladies, he felt with bitterness, would wait in vain for his coming that day: for he could not be at the coast to meet Hannah at 2 p. m. and in Paris to meet “Viola” at 2.15. He must therefore choose between them the one that he liked the best; and he was so torn by this trial, that, at one time, pacing about the old flagstones of the inn-kitchen, he threw his arms up, crying out that all the world must be in a conspiracy to drive him mad.

However, he had to make up his mind, so, having sent a telegram to Rowland-Jones where to join him, by 1 o’clock, an hour too soon, he was walking about the sea-cliffs above Barc-la-Forêt. In the village itself a fete was going on, and very faint tones of music were caught by his ear among the noises of the wind. It was a boisterous day, but very bright and warm for that time of year. The ground up there was hard, grown in patches with grass and scrub; and pretty far away down below was the sea, a lovely sight, as it were a very great host jogging northeastward on a gay pilgrimage. Chris had to hold on his hat against the puffs of the wind, and presently, tired of its power over him, he lay with his back to a rock, gazing up at the

clouds and blue of the sky: all was large-minded beyond wonder — the sky, the sea, the earth — the whole a-move as at some heyday and fair, and soon he had a feeling that the pillars of all that Walhalla tottered upon him, that the very cliff under him was adrift with the rest of the dream-stuff and pageant; his spirit seemed to swoon into that awful revelry of the Most High; he became It; and no longer knew if he was on his head or on his heels. Scrambling in a scare to his feet, he walked about again with the winds in his ears, eager to hold Hannah in his arms, but grieved to the heart, too, for “Viola.” It was % o’clock. At that hour “Viola,” he thought, was already perhaps on her way to the Gare St. Lazare, and she would be waiting for him in vain, with the gift in her hand, she who had for two years been his spiritual wife, to whom he had sworn many oaths of love. There, however, was Hannah coming up over the bend of the hill, with her legs expressed, and her face held sideward to it, as when a lady is shy, and blushes; and in her hand was the little boy’s. Chris hurried to meet her.

“Oh, you did come,” she said laughing.

“Is it surprising?” he asked.

“It is, a little. What about ‘Viola’? Did you send any one to meet her?”

“I had no one to send. How on earth do you know about ‘Viola’?”

“I know very well. If you had gone to meet her instead of me, you wouldn’t have met her, and you wouldn’t have seen me for another year.”

“Why would I not have met her? Hannah! Are you ‘Viola’?”

“You would have known it, if you had known the handwriting and mind of your wife, as a man should. As for the gift, I’m afraid it’s a little stale to you now, but here it is, such as he is. See, I give him a kiss to give to you.”

Chris took the boy to his breast, saying, “I love him almost as much as I worship his dear, dear mother.”

“You do love me now?”

“Oh, Hannah.”

“Well, it’s nice to hear. Tell it me once secretly in my ear out here on this lonely hill, so that even our child mayn’t hear, and then I’ll never forget.”

“With a joy as deep as being,” whispered Chris, “with a most fresh and wonderful ravishment.”

“All right, that’ll keep Hannah going for some years, like everlasting bread to feed upon in the heart by faith. Here’s my hand, Chris, ‘with my heart in it.’”

Chris took and kissed the hand, and was about to kiss more, when Hannah said, “Look!” and he saw Rowland-Jones and Grimani coming along the cliffs from the north.

“That man and I will remember each other,” said Hannah, with fun in the corners of her mouth.

“Lady Wilson, I think?” said Rowland-Jones when he came up.

“Mr. Rowland-Jones?” said Hannah with a grave face: “surely we have seen each other before?”

“I have had the honor of seeing part of your ladyship,” said Rowland-Jones demurely.

“And not the best part either, I think!” cried Hannah: “I am strongest about the feet!”

“I kiss them with sincerity,” said Rowland-Jones.

“Well, no, don’t take it so abjectly,” said Hannah: “it was only a chance — if I hadn’t beaten you, you would have beaten me. I happened to overhear you in the inn at Domfront when you vowed to Chris that you would catch me or perish, so thought to myself, ‘Well, then, now for it.’ But it was only a chance — My husband’s two best friends are equals, and can shake hands.”

A hearty handshake was exchanged, and they went down the hill, till they came to the village fete, where all kinds of merriment were on foot; and here it came into Chris's head to give himself to Barc-la-Forêt that one day in Time, and play. He had not handled a fiddle for days, and the spirit came upon him. He caught his Bergonzi from Grimani, and struck in with the other fiddles on the green, nor was it long before he alone was playing. Never was the ear of Barc-la-Forêt tickled by the gospel of such a mirth; every one forsook all else, and crowded to jig round the frivolous seraph dropped down among them, wondering that out of that staid monsieur such riches of fun should gush: there he stood — stout, respectable — in his frock-coat and top-hat; the top-hat, however, was rather cocked back, one leg cocked forward, and, if one looked closely, there was a certain butting and instigation of his brow which was in the very spirit of revel and godless company. They all came and jigged, Hannah jigging with Rowland-Jones, till he was out of breath, then with the village-lads, then with Rowland-Jones again, letting slip side-glances at Chris, her legs plying in a stubbornness of glee, answering still to the unrelenting spur of his joy, while still the brook of his improvization flowed on, and the dancing grew ever larger and crazier round the giggle of his G and the skittishness of his tittering chanterelle. It was near five o'clock when he tossed the fiddle to Grimani, smiled with Hannah, and said to Rowland-Jones, "I am hungry, my friend."

They three, with Chrisie and Grimani, then drove in a cart to high-set Coutances, dined there, and went on to Caen, from which Rowland-Jones took train to Ouistreham, the port of Caen, so as to get back to England; while Chris and Hannah went to Rouen; from Rouen they started the next day for Orrock.

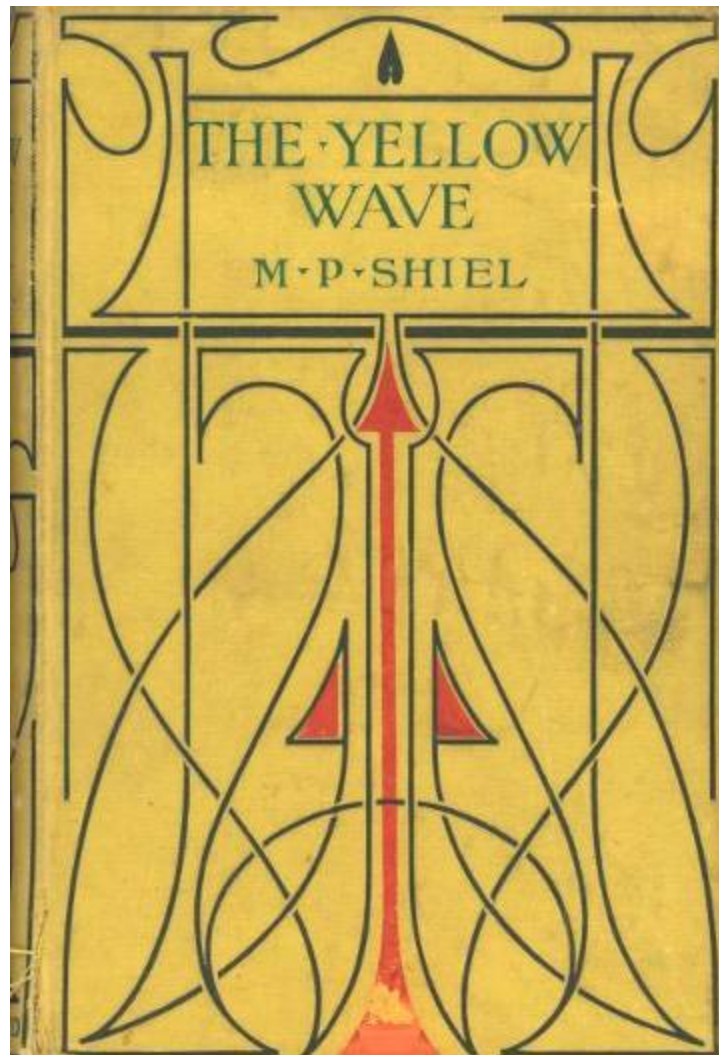
THE END

The Yellow Wave (1905)



The Yellow Wave was first published by Ward, Lock & Co in London in 1905. The novel draws on the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, which resulted in a decisive Japanese victory, much to the surprise of the dominant international powers of the time. The war undermined the prestige and strength of the Russian Empire both abroad and at home. The humiliating defeat and loss of Russian life during the war further exacerbated the anger and frustration at Tsarist autocratic rule and contributed to the 1905 Russian Revolution. This mass uprising of social and political dissent led to constitutional change and revealed the deep and ultimately unsolvable tensions of the Tsarist regime.

The Yellow Wave is to some extent a continuation of Shiel's racist ideas about East Asians that he first voiced in *The Yellow Danger*. One part of the plot is a sinister plan to create a pan-European conflict that would then provide the opportunity for East Asian dominance of the continent. Although Shiel once again exploits the xenophobic fears of white Europeans, the primary focus of the novel is a Romeo and Juliet style love story between a young Japanese man and a Russian woman, who are on opposing sides in the war. The romance increasingly dominates the narrative as the novel progresses, resulting in a richer and more complex book than one exclusively based on exciting the racially prejudiced anxieties of the time.



The first edition'

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THE YELLOW WAVE

By

M. P. STEEL

AUTHOR OF "THE YELLOW PERIL" "THE EVIL THAT MEN DO"
"LORD OF THE SEA" "COLD STEEL" ETC ETC

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HENRY AUSTIN

LONDON

WARD LOCK & CO LIMITED

1905

The first edition's title page



"The man held my left sleeve, walking at his ease." (Page 211)
The Yellow Wave [Frontispiece]

The original frontispiece

CHAPTER I

THE TIGER-HUNTERS



THIS NAME OF “Tiger-hunters,” taken by the well-known Society started in Tokio four months before the war was borrowed from a gang of Korean bandits with whom the Japanese society had nothing to do. There are no tigers in Japan, but there are in Korea; and the Japanese have a saying that “to fight with Koreans is to fight with tigers,” because all the Koreans run away, and only tigers remain to be dealt with.

These Japanese “Tiger-hunters” (Tora-gari) were a half-secret body, whose aims seem to have been at first social rather than political: for, as we know, Japan seethes with the thoughts of our Western Socialists, and is big with change. However, as the war went on, the “Tiger-hunters,” remaining social, became political also, like the “Boxers” of China. With that upstartness of all young Japanese things, the “Tiger-hunters” took upon themselves to have their say even in the strategy of the war; no interest of the nation remained beyond their meddling; and like that “Jacobin Club” which started as a debating-society during the Revolution, but soon became the voice of France, so with the “Tiger-hunters.”

Among them were men of all classes, from Daimio’s son to seller of straw-sandals; they spread into branches as a gourd grows; formed vigilance-committees, correspondence-committees; admission to membership was made with a rite; their headquarters came to be an old

temple-grove among the hills round Nagasaki; and the meetings there were often at night.

Seven “Tiger-hunters” met in the Japanese restaurant in London on the night of the nth of January, when the war was a year old, among them being Baron M — , lately of the General Staff, and now President of the Nagasaki branch of the “Tiger-hunters.”

Hardly a reader will know this restaurant; just where it is one may not tell: but it is in a residential block in Bloomsbury. One passes down a corridor, through a courtyard, up a stair, and knocks at a door on which are painted some Japanese words. It is kept by a French girl and a hobbling old Jap. There are two bare rooms in which one sits and in which one eats; and the electric light over the eating-table looks down upon the oddest way of dining — as it were the grimace of a dinner, dinner and light together making a symbol of New Japan, East and West met at last, and jiggling together to the tune of the funniest ominous yankee-doodle-doo.

Six men — four Japanese, one English, one American — sat round the table. Snacks of raw fish were before them, with a sauce which somehow “cooked” the fish; then came six pans of raw meat and onions on six spirit-lamps, and they cooked the meat, mixing sugar with it, deftly snatching out hot tit-bits meanwhile into their mouths with their chopsticks, like long-beaked birds: for I take it that whereas forks are instead of the claws of beasts, chopsticks are instead of the beaks of birds: but forks are better than chopsticks, for beasts are better than birds. Before the meat was cooked there was a knock, and in came Baron M — , who made the seventh man. The six bowed themselves, *o’jigi*, before him; and the baron ate with them.

At that date there was much talk of peace everywhere — in fact, a sort of armistice had been on foot for two weeks.

It was not that the two peoples were “knocked out,” but that it was now seen everywhere that whichever of the two won the duel, the “balance of power” would be upset: if Russia, that might mean a Slav Asia; if Japan, that would be the Yellow Danger come: either way might be followed by more war, till the fire became a globe of fire.

The hope was, that the issue might be an “as you! were” for the two Powers; and toward this most people were now working.

Peace, however, was hardly the thought in the mind of the yellow races at that moment; nor the aim of the “Tiger-hunters” in especial; nor of Baron M — above all men.

The baron stirred his mass of meat, sugar, and onions over the spirit-lamp, and snatched out hot tit-bits into his mouth like a hungry bird. He sat on the edge of his chair, one leg under it, the other cocked forward, with something very nimble in his air, as though he was on the very point of springing at someone. He was a man of “a fierce countenance.” His paltry body, clad in rough European clothes, his great head, with its scowl and its scanty hair, gave him somewhat the look of a yellow, or rather dark-brown, Napoleon.

Now cups of tea were brought in by the French girl, tea clear as water, with a greenish tint in it. The Englishman, Mr. Paul England, and the American, Mr. Allan Petersen, talked together in low voices. The others were silent.

Dessert came — pickles — improbable tit-bits of salted vegetables; for whereas we others eat salt with meat, they ate sugar, but whereas we eat sugar for dessert, they ate salt.

Suddenly Baron M — leapt with a sort of fierceness to his feet, and his face grew black-red, in the manner of the tragic actors of Japan. He said in French:

“My friends, the time Seems come for us to make the move which was long ago foreseen by the honourable society, led by me, to which we belong. It was foreseen that when our arms began to spread westward, then would come the white ‘intervention,’ this talk of ‘peace’: for we know of a fear in the heart of Europe, lest our struggle with first one and then the other shall become a struggle against all together, and lest all together prove like sea-froth in the Whang-Hai when the autumn typhoon begins to blow.”

“Hear, hear,” muttered Mr. England, rocking backward on his chair; Mr. Petersen, too, said: “*Vive le Japon!*”

“Meantime,” went on the baron, “the war must go on to its end. This talk of ‘peace’ seems serious, but we here are fixed upon other things. The proposed wrecking of a Russian supply-train by us is good; but I say now that I do not think this enough. I say that each nation should be afresh inflamed by an outrage done by the other; let us so contrive, therefore, that an outrage shall be done, not only by Japanese upon Russia, but by Russians upon Japan also. Suppose I say, let a Japanese be assassinated by a Russian in the streets of St. Petersburg? I offer myself as the Japanese to be assassinated.”

“You, baron?” cried everyone round the table.

“My friends,” said the baron, “I, too, know that in my head I carry the future of Asia. But am I alone in this? Japan is the breeding-ground of heroes, the mother of all unbridled greatness. In many beside me the seed of Change has been sown; many will press forward to fill my place. Moreover, in this one respect I am unique, that I alone may be fairly certain of assassination, if at the present moment I stay only four or five days in St. Petersburg.”

“But why so?” asked several voices.

“Because General Prince Devriloff is at present in St. Petersburg,” said Baron M — .

“But for what reason does Devriloff so specially hunger for your life?” asked Petersen.

A struggle seemed to take place within Baron M — ; he sat again on the edge of his chair. After a minute he said:

“You have all heard of the tragic death of my wife, the Baroness Umé (Plum-blossom). I will tell you now how it was.

“But for this Devriloff, and for me, this war may not have been just yet. We could hasten it, he being a son-in-law of whom you know, and I being whom you know; and he longed for it in the hope that I might die in battle, as I longed for it in the hope of seeing him a prisoner in the dungeon of my yashiki.

“It is now nine years that Prince Devriloff has lived in fear of me, knowing that some day a dagger of my race will not fail to find his heart. Once in Tokio, accordingly, twice in Kioto, once in Paris, his agents have attempted my life. Thrice I have attempted his.

“Nine years ago Devriloff was a military *attaché* in Tokio. My wife’s name was Umé. Devriloff first saw her at the Imperial Birthday-ball. This is a man of maniac passions. Devriloff became enamoured of my wife, Umé. But the women of our country do not sympathise with these intemperate sicknesses of the affections. When Devriloff declared his passion to the Baroness Umé, Umé declared to him her passion for her husband and for her boy, Yoshio, then nine years old. The Russian, however, looks upon us as a race nearly allied with the ape, and the rebuff of my wife was to Devriloff no more than the prank of a foal. He had patience.

“Of all this Umé, who must have suffered much, said nothing to me: she was afraid for my life, and afraid that, if she told me, my danger would be

still greater. I only know the pitiful details of the persecution which was brought to bear upon her by some leaves which she left behind her on her death. I was away from the seat of Government for three months at the Yokosuka Naval Station, and during that time Devriloff often threw out threats to have me done to death unless the baroness departed from her duty to me. My poor wife was brought to such a state of terror by this foreigner, that, as I now know, She once attempted in my absence to take her own life in order to preserve mine.

“She was still a young woman, tender-hearted and timid. During three days after my return to the capital I noticed in her manner a good deal of agitation, and reproved her for it, a reproof which she received, alas, with a cringing submission to her husband. She would pray me not to go out alone. In the early mornings I would see her prostrate with tears at the household altar; but I did not understand any of these signs; and since, as you know, much piety is looked upon as a fault among the women of our people, I too often chided my lady for her prayers and tears.

“On the third day after my return to Tokio, Umé was forced to meet Devriloff in the grounds of my palace. She then told him that, since he was fixed upon having his will, or upon killing me, let the deed be done that night; immediately after my death, she said to Devriloff, she would be found less hard-hearted. Devriloff must have been a fool to understand so little the temper of the women of our people: but he believed her. Umé described to this fiend a spot in which she wished him to believe that I slept; she told him that she would find means to persuade me that night to let down my hair before I went to sleep — for I still stubbornly wore the old samurai queue — so that he should know by a touch in the dark that it was I. Devriloff was to cut off my head, and take it away, in order that the crime might have the look of having been committed by one of our young *soshi*

for Conservative-political reasons. This having been arranged, Umé endured the embrace of the Russian, and they parted.’

“All these details I have in the writing of my wife herself.

“That night before we lay down to sleep, Umé spoke to me of our son, Yoshio, dwelling upon his beauty, his good and gentle conduct, and his love of the fine arts; she said that he would be an honour to his country and to his father, My wife then bade me a tender and reverent good-night, and I was soon asleep. I calculate that she must have risen from my side very shortly after this. She went and lay down in the spot where she had told Devriloff that I would sleep; and she awaited the assassin’s knife in her own throat. Honourable friends, I do not know how long she lay there waiting, what prayers she said for her boy and for me, nor what thoughts about the life and death of us mortal beings passed through her spirit during those hours. But in the dead of the night her head was removed from her body. She must have died dumbly, for if there had been any outcry or very deep groan, I, who sleep lightly, must have heard it; but I heard nothing.

“The assassin, on going outside, must have seen by the moonlight whose head was in his hand. Was the assassin Devriloff himself, or an agent of Devriloff? I do not know. Whoever he was, he must have been pierced with some feeling of terror or pity at that sight, for he dropped the head on a bridge in my garden, and there, half-buried in lotus-blossoms, with the hair loose, it was found the next morning. My friends, my companions—”

The baron was forced to stop, though his face still showed no sign of feeling.

“Such,” he continued after a minute, “was the fate of my wife.

“The same day Devriloff fled from Tokio. He has thrice escaped me, and four times I have escaped him. But between that man and me there remains a point to be settled.

“I have little doubt, therefore, that if I go openly to St. Petersburg while Devriloff is away from the seat of war, my death may follow. In the hand of Yoshio, my son, it will remain to avenge his mother; and my death should raise an outcry in Nippon that will end this peace-talk.

“As a matter of form, I had to put this proposal before you Tiger-hunters, and I await your honourable reply.”

Before anyone answered, the other four Japanese hurriedly laid their heads together with whispers and noddings; then one of them whispered with Messrs. England and Petersen, who also nodded their heads with energy; and finally one of the Japanese said aloud to Baron M — : “We agree to this.”

They soon afterwards left the restaurant, and drove in cabs to the Embassy in Grosvenor Gardens; the next day, these seven, together with Yoshio, M— ‘s son, a young man of eighteen years, started with passports for St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER II

THE PAVLOVNA BALL



THE PEACE-PARTY IN St. Petersburg was fairly strong, including most of the Cabinet and Asiatic Committee, the Tsar himself, the Duchesse Marie Pavlovna, and “Miss” S — , the celebrated agent at the court of Korea before the war. On the same side were also the merchants and middle-class; while the enthusiasts for war were such as Cienkewitz, Alexeieff, Devriloff.

The Japanese party of eight had therefore no sooner arrived than the New Year festivities took on a tone of added gaiety on their account. They did not appear at the Winter Palace itself, but the semi-official peace-party entertained them at a round of functions. As for Devriloff, he kept to his house on a pretence of illness.

Meanwhile, the one person in St. Petersburg who realized the danger to peace which lay in the Japanese visit was Miss S — , for she knew the story of the blood-feud between M — and Devriloff; and she feared that one or the other would be done to death.

St. Petersburg wore its usual winter aspect of jollity, like a city of children at a Christmas party.

Shops and public offices were closed, and all classes were giving themselves to New Year calls. Snow was on the ground, the *droshky* was no more seen, and the streets were wild with sledges full of rosy-red beauty in all its furs.

On the fifth morning after the arrival of the Japanese, Miss S — , one of the busiest intriguers for “peace,” paid a visit to the Devriloff Palace in the Great Morskaia. She wished to know how Devriloff was filling up his time in bed, and lavished caresses upon Nadine, the General’s daughter, whom she found in a boudoir. “Dear child,” she said several times, “you grow more beautiful every day; there is no longer any doubt that you are about to be the *belle* of Petersburg society.” She kissed the cheeks of Nadine with warmth.

Miss S — was a lady past middle-age, a stout, motherly type, but with strong eyes which made likely the story that her power over the King of Korea had been due to hypnotism.

As for Nadine, she was a girl of sixteen who had only just made her *début*, but formed like a Venus, hairy with black hair, a shade of moustache on her lip, and blazing eyes that betokened passion.

“Are you going to the Pavlovna ball to-morrow night?” asked Miss S — after some talk.

“Yes, my aunt,” replied the young girl; “the *duchesse* herself is to chaperone me.”

“It is such a pity that your poor papa will not be able to go, Nadine, since the ball is the event of the New Year. He still keeps to his bed, then?”

“Yes, my aunt,” answered Nadine; “he has a fever caught during the campaign. But I think that he may still be able to go to the Pavlovna ball, for he said something to me in that sense when I visited his bedside this morning.”

“Ah, he said that,” thought Miss S — . “He “foresees, then, that he will be well by to-morrow night... Well, Nadine, that will be charming to have with you your papa, who must be doubly dear to your heart after his

exposure to this terrible and wicked war. I suppose, Nadine, that for the present he receives no one — attends to no business?”

“No, my aunt,” answered Nadine, sipping her chocolate with *ennui*, “I do not think so; the doctor... Oh! but do you remember old Ivan Shtcherbakoff whom you saw at our Kharkoff palace last year? This dear old Amurski Cossack nursed me in his arms—” the lovely girl’s palms met in a clap.

“Well, what of Ivan Shtcherbakoff?” asked Miss S — .

“Papa has had him come up to the capital to nurse him, and Ivan Shtcherbakoff is here!”

“To nurse him!” breathed Miss S — ; and at once she thought: “Then it is by Ivan Shtcherbakoff’s hand that M — is to die! for the prince is not really ill, and needs no one to ‘nurse’ him, least of all an old Amurski Cossack like Ivan Shtcherbakoff; and since he thinks of going to the Pavlovna ball to-morrow night, therefore he must have arranged that the deed shall be done between now and then.” But before Miss S — could pump anything further from the young girl, General Prince Devriloff himself stood in the doorway, robed in a dressing-gown barbaric with gold and crimson.

Miss S — leapt up to receive his kiss on her cheek, and, congratulating him on his getting up, led him to a chair.

A laugh came from the General’s throat which seemed to utter the sound “gol, gol, gol.” He was a gallant, huge figure of a man, hairy with flying sheaves of beard, and a great black head flat at the back.

“So, then, as I hear, you are for the Pavlovna ball, General?” said Miss S — .

“It is possible,” answered the prince.

“The Japanese are to be present.”

“What, the monkeys? Gol, gol, gol!” laughed the prince.

“Oh, papa, I like them, the Japanese!” remarked Nadine, her cigarette-smoke paying out from her lips like incense from a thurible of coral; and, in fact, the young girl’s *penchant* for the nation which her father so hated was to be seen in the style of her boudoir, which was crowded with Japanese art, Kyoto silks, and lacquer of green, crimson and gold. Nadine’s morning-gown itself was sashed with Japanese work, and in her hair were two of the flower-pins which they call kanzashis. Over everything were strewn masses of violets: these, however, were not there because they were liked, but for another reason which may perhaps be told later on.

“Here is a cosmopolitan young lady,” said Prince Devriloff, “who admires the enemies of her country and displeases her father. What? Gol, gol!”

“Well, that is the whim of a child,” said Miss S — . “And admit, General, that the Japanese have their good points, too. They die with *éclat* — they die bravely.”

“Don’t apes?” asked the General. “Apes are brave! What? And it is no more to kill one of them than to kill an ape.”

“Oh, papa? *c’est trop fort*,” cried Nadine.

“The General is not serious,” said Miss S — .

“I am. This war against them is only a hunting expedition,” said Prince Devriloff. “It is like shooting big game in Transcaspia.”

“But the big game are rather capturing the men, aren’t they?” said Miss S — with some spite.

“What!” cried the General; “they are only defeating themselves! It is not a war, it is a hunting expedition! As to you, young lady, I desire you to be careful lest one of those creatures touch your hand at the Pavlovna ball. Their national disease is leprosy: the monkeys all have it more or less, I think. What? Gol, gol!”

The morning's tittle-tattle went on in this way for some time. Miss S — seemed in no hurry to depart. She turned the talk upon Ivan Shtcherbakoff, the Amurski Cossack whom Devriloff had brought up from the country; and she went away sure that this Shtcherbakoff was to be the agent in Prince Devriloff's hand of the death of Baron M — .

As she stepped into her sleigh, all her show of leisure before the prince and Nadine gave place to the greatest eagerness. The sleigh flew from the Devriloff palace toward the suburb of Novoya Derevnnya, a quiet quarter of the town, all gardens and villas; but she went thither by a roundabout road, and alighted some way from the house which she wished to go to, namely, the villa in which Baron M — , together with his son and two of the Japanese, was staying.

She was led up to a drawing-room, and soon the baron joined her with his cold bow.

From a room near by came a sound of music — the twang of the *koto* — made by the young man, Yoshio, who was a poet, a musician, a master of several arts; and, as Miss S — and the baron spoke together, outside one of the two doors stood one of the two Japanese listening, and outside the other door the other.

“But, monsieur le baron,” said Miss S — after some beating about the bush, “you cannot be called a friend of peace.”

“I am sorry, if that is so,” answered Baron M — .

“Is it not so?”

“It is well known that your judgments are always correct,” said the baron with a bow.

“The Russians are famous for doing private injuries to citizens of the countries with which they are at war,” said Miss S — ; “yet you and your party come here. It is discouraging to the workers for peace, monsieur.”

“I am here by the courtesy of the Russian authorities—” began Baron M — blandly.

“But you stay with us; you linger five days. It becomes excruciating, monsieur le baron!”

“What! you wish me away — I who am your guest? That seems little hospitable.”

“But let us be sincere. You expose yourself to such terrible dangers!”

“Do you happen to know, then, of someone who wishes to assassinate me?” asked the baron.

“Ah, that smile of you Japanese, which would defy the lightning itself!” said Miss S — . “But the danger is nearer than you may think, baron. Whatever were your real motives in coming to St. Petersburg, everyone may not believe them to be so harmless as I do; and others may seek to do to you beforehand that which you are believed to wish to do to them. You will, I think, be at the Pavlovna ball to-morrow?”

“I hope so.”

“I have heard that Prince Devriloff, who has been ill, foresees that he will be well enough to be there.”

“Ah,” answered Baron M — , “the prince and I have met, I think. Nine years ago it was, in Tokio; three months ago we almost met again near Liaoyang, when I was the guest of an officer who was occupying a position with only 1,000 men, while the prince, with 9,000, was hardly ten versts away. If he had attacked, we should have been undone; but we plied his spies with false information as to the strength of our supports, and he forewent the pleasure of meeting me. He did not know that I was there, and fate was against the meeting then. But perhaps at the Pavlovna ball we may meet again?”

“I doubt that... Look here, there is a man called Ivan Shtcherbakoff,” said Miss S — suddenly, “who is a — fanatic. I have this news on good authority, and you may rely upon it. This man is sworn to take your life between now and to-morrow night.”

“Yes! What kind of man?” asked Baron M — with a show of alarm.

“A peasant: tall, raw-boned, sallow, with a long beard, a soldierly carriage, and a scar across his brow. Beware of him, baron.”

The baron smiled, storing up Shtcherbakoff’s appearance in his mind, but for the opposite reason to that which Miss S — wished, namely, in order to expose himself to a man with this appearance.

But at the same time that Baron M — stored up her description of Shtcherbakoff, the two Japanese listening outside the doors were also making a note of that description for their own ends.

Miss S — went away satisfied that she had done a good stroke for “peace,” and that Devriloff would be baulked in his designs upon M — this time. As for M — , left alone, he paced the room twice with quick steps, then, looking out of one of the doors, called “Yoshio!”

Yoshio hurried in with a brush in one hand and a painting in the other, which he looked at even as he ran. This must have angered the baron, for he caught the painting out of the young man’s hand and tore it into four pieces, muttering the words: “Too much girl’s-work.”

The young man stood with a modest air. He had a touch of pink on the cheeks, was slim, and really beautiful, as some Japanese are in youth.

“Yoshio?” said the baron.

“Yes, father,” breathed the boy.

“You are almost a man now.”

“Hai, chichi uyi (yes, father).”

“Have you forgotten your mother?”

“Iya, chichi uyi (no, father).”

“Yoshio, when nations are in a state of war, many an act which at another time no civilized man would do in certain ways or places becomes legitimate in just those ways and places. The time is now come for you to avenge your mother’s death; and, in doing so, you will be avenging your father’s also, for I am about to die at the hand of the Russian, Devriloff.”

“Father!—” the lad stared at his father.

“Remember that you have been trained to suffer with an unmoved face, Yoshio. Is death more terrible than life? — you are not to feel, much less to show, any distress. That is why I am in this city, in order to die, so that my death may rouse our country to break off this talk of peace; and it will be for you to avenge my death and your mother’s in one stroke.”

Yoshio stood with a redness in his eyes which betrayed his excitement.

“The night after to-morrow,” continued Baron M — , “the attempt upon the Russian train takes place — I have this morning received a telegram from Messrs. England and Petersen to that effect; on that night, therefore, our party should be well on its way southward. I shall no longer be alive; the guidance of our little band will devolve upon Kotohito, and you will obey him as if he were your father, supposing that you are not then in a Russian dungeon: for to-morrow night at the Pavlovna ball you will avenge your mother with this kokotana (dagger) of the Choshu samurai, and it may be that you will be seized by the Russians.”

“But at a ball, father?” asked Yoshio.

“Yes. In an alley of the Pavlovna grounds, which are dark with trees, stands a greenhouse full of tropical greenery: I know it well of old. In this greenhouse you will take your stand, and will wait till Devriloff passes. Devriloff will be at the ball; he will know that I am dead; he will fear nothing; and he will pass just there by the greenhouse alone, since Kotohito

will induce him to pass there by a ruse which I have already planned. That ruse does not concern you; all you will have to do is to stand in the greenhouse till Devriloff passes; then act promptly, deeply, surely, like the son of your father, whose spirit will watch you, and your mother will be comforted, Yoshio. When the deed is well done, you will drag the body of Devriloff into the greenhouse, where the greenery will give you abundant opportunity to hide it, and where, if you are lucky, it may remain undiscovered some days. On the night following, the supply-train will be wrecked by our two white friends, and Kotohito will then at once fly southward with you and the others beyond the Polish frontier, where the two whites will meet you all at the agreed tavern in Kônigsberg.”

“And you, father, die?” said Yoshio with a tremor in his voice.

“Do not refer to that again, Yoshio!” answered the baron.

“All that I had mused upon — the poetry of life — the perfume of women — will be nothing to me henceforth,” murmured Yoshio; “but to hear is to obey... I only suggest that, as I step from the greenhouse, I shall say to the Russian, ‘Defend yourself!’ A son of the Choshu blood is not afraid of a Russian sword, and I shall be sure to lay the slayer of my mother and father at my feet.”

“But will the boy be silent?” cried Baron M — .

“Without making one sound you will strike to the heart of him who without a sound cut off the head of your mother in the night.”

Yoshio bowed himself before his father.

For two hours after this talk with his son the baron was in talk with the two other Japanese in the villa with him; he spent some hours more in writing, and went out alone on foot as the shades of evening began to fall.

But the moment he had passed out one of the Japanese, whose name was Kanin, was hurriedly dressing himself in a disguise in which he left the villa

four minutes after the baron, looking like a bearded merchant-Jew of Astrakhan in a fur cap and coat. This disguise was done with a minuteness so Japanese that Kanin's own wife would not have known him; and Kanin dogged the steps of Baron M — , who little thought that he was being shadowed by one of his own people.

The night deepened, till the full moon rose in the sky.

Those streets of Novoya Derevnya were empty at that hour. It is the Bayswater of Petersburg in tone, and the Highgate in plan, with its villas and gardens. Everyone was dining, and then from the villas came the genteel sound of the piano. Hardly a sleigh dashed along the white, broad streets.

Baron M — strolled a long way with the deliberate aim of exposing himself to the knife or pistol of the man Ivan Shtcherbakoff, who, he felt sure, must be on the look-out for him by that time; and Shtcherbakoff was indeed tracking him, but with such skill that the baron was on his way home again before he spied Shtcherbakoff lurking under the shadow of some trees in a garden.

Baron M — now stood still in the middle of the road, admiring the moon with a poetic face worthy of his son Yoshio, awaiting meanwhile his death-blow.

The Russian thereupon stole from his hiding-place, and came so near to M — , that M — was able to assure himself that the man was really the agent of Devriloff, as described by Miss S — . But hanging quite near to the baron was still the merchant-Jew of Astrakhan, who was Kanin in disguise; so that Shtcherbakoff, who had long been cursing this inconvenient witness, and waiting for him to walk away, did the baron no harm.

In the end Baron M — , surprised at the Russian's backwardness, but glad of another night of life, returned home, certain that the man would be chidden for his delay by Devriloff, and that the next night, the night of the Pavlovna ball, the hand of the assassin would not fail to act.

CHAPTER III

THE SUPPLY-TRAIN



MEANTIME, MESSRS. ENGLAND and Petersen had got their *permits de séjour* transferred from St. Petersburg to Moscow, and from Moscow had taken the short railway journey to Vladimir.

In all these provinces of “Great Russia” — Vladimir, Nijni Novgorod — the peasantry was on the brink of famine; reserve battalions of the 13th corps had been called out, and some of the fields were without winter-sowings; in Moscow the mind of rulers was taken up with a certain new Liberalism, and with the roar of the hungry; at Vladimir Messrs. England and Petersen saw shoplooting by *moujiks*, and a march-past of a unit of the 2nd ban, with old and weak men in it.

All this unrest made the movements of the friends freer. On the third night, soon after sunset, they started out of Vladimir on horseback by the highroad that leads north-eastward toward Myt, having with them all that was necessary for the mining of the railway.

Both were Japanese citizens, though Western by race, both seasoned “Tiger-hunters” and Orientals.

Mr. Petersen had done many a mile of railwaymaking for the Chinese Government, and had begun a Chinese dictionary. Once an engineer, he had lately come into wealth, and had struck work; but he remained what he had always been — an adventurer.

Mr. England, also a man of means, had long ago gone out to Japan to study the nature of the light given off by fireflies, which he found to be the same as the X-ray. He had wandered over Nippon and Kiu-siu on foot, clad only in the blue-cotton *yucata*, and was more Japanese than the Japanese.

He was a pundit, and also a dreamer, but his dreamings were always hard-headed. He lived in the future, saw it full of surprises, and would often say: "To-morrow will have no more likeness to to-day than a son has to his father. Heaven is paved with good intentions"; anon he cried out: "Three cheers for everything!" And Mr. Petersen was always to be found by the side of Mr. England, because he liked to hear Mr. England tell these dreams.

Both were mere onlookers, wondering how the fifth act will be. Once in a way, as now, when they had to, they took a hand in the acting; but mostly their interest was that of onlookers, keen enough, but as people on one world might look on at the burning of another.

Mr. England was a small man with a big head, a tiny, rather crooked mouth, and a quiet smile. Mr. Petersen, on the contrary, was a large Yankee, who loafed through life with his two hands in his trouser-pockets; but he had an energetic way of spitting and of dashing the ash from his cigar which seemed to say: "If I were roused, I could act." He and Mr. England had passed through much together, and had become "Tiger-hunters" on the same night.

"What do you think M — : — will really do?" asked Mr. Petersen that night of the going out from Vladimir.

"Eventually, you mean?" said Mr. England.

"Yes."

"I never had any doubt that M — is the man of destiny," answered Mr. England; "his fate is to write the word 'China' over all Asia. And, of course, *his* Asia will be a Socialistic Asia."

They were lying on their elbows in cavalry-cloaks and Astrakan caps in one of the oak-forests of central Russia, with their horses knee-haltered in thicket half a verst behind them, and with the railway in a cutting a hundred yards yonder before them. The thermometer was at — 19° F., yet they were not cold, so dry was the air; the moon wandered in a cloudless sky; not a hut nor a bell-tower was to be seen on the broad landscape, only snow, moonlight, and forest. They waited for the supply-train which they knew to be coming on her far journey northward, that they might hear and see that which was to happen to her. Mr. Petersen's cigar-smoke lingered in the air unrouted by a breath. It was eleven o'clock. The two "Tiger-hunters" spoke in a low murmur of chat which was like an accompaniment to the moonlight.

"But don't you think that there's a really serious danger that M — may be killed in St. Petersburg?" asked Mr. Petersen.

"Oh, I think that Kanin may be depended upon to get himself killed instead of M — answered Mr. England. "Kanin is as sharp as a weasel. Nor is it of any importance who is killed, as far as stopping the peace-talk is concerned, so long as it is a Jap killed by a Russian; and when M — sees Kanin dead he will begin to look after his own life. I don't think I have any real fear for M — ."

"Still, it's ticklish," said Mr. Petersen. "I shall be relieved to hear that M — has got through. I say, what a purpose, after all, is carried in that little man's head."

"I believe I know the very night when it clearly arose there," said Mr. England, "and perhaps it was partly through me. We were sitting on the verandah of the British Embassy in the Imperial City, M — , Prince Ch — , and I.

A State function was going on inside, but we were alone, smoking, with moonlight on the lotuses in the court. M — had lately been appointed Brigadier-General in the Northern Chinese division through Ch — 's influence, and we were talking about that. Ch — said that M — was driving the Chinese soldier too hard; M — replied that the Chinese soldier needed just that driving to make him the best fighting-machine anywhere; 'but,' he added with a touch of despondency, 'when he does become this, Heaven knows whom he is to fight with. The yellow races seem to have no destiny. Here we are sure enough, but nobody can guess for what far-off purpose we are here.'

"I then put in my oar and said something which made M — look at me. I said that in a crowd of a thousand people there are not a thousand present, but a thousand and one; that not only is each man an animal, but human society, considered as a whole, is an animal, a living creature, an 'organism'; that every animal, or organism, is made up of organs — the heart, the liver, and so on; and that so, too, human society, being an animal or organism, is made up of organs, the organs of this huge organism being the different nations, each having its special function, as the heart and liver have in a horse; but, I went on to say, all the organs of an animal are not at all times in a state of activity, and I gave as an instance the organ of love, which lies asleep in a child up to the age of — eighteen sometimes. It lies asleep, I said, but when it does wake, how much interest does it add to the individual's life, touching everything with poetry, spurring the noblest organs, and making life seem worth the living!

"I then went on to compare the yellow race as an organ in the organism, Human Society, with this organ of love in the individual, and to compare the long sleep of China and Japan with the sleep of this organ during the individual's youth; and I said that the wake-up of China would have similar

effects upon the animal, Human Society, which the wake-up of love has upon the individual. I saw M — glance at me; you know those Jap aristocrats, they would not betray an emotion if they saw the moon falling: but he glanced at me, and three years later he reminded me of what I had said that night.”

“Yes, that’s bully,” said Mr. Petersen; “but how? You mean through Socialism, perhaps.

But is it quite certain that Japan must become Socialist all through in the near future? and if so, why so?”

“It seems to me a biological law,” answered Mr. England. “What does Japan since ‘68 remind one of? Here is a people racing through in forty years the whole political growth of the rest of men in as many thousands of years. That, you know, is the same phenomenon as the racing through by the embryo in the months before birth of all the stages of evolution, from jelly-fish to man, which life as a whole has taken millions of years to crawl through. Japan, therefore, is to the world of nations what the coming of an individual, and he a great! man, is to any given nation. A great man races through the mental evolution of his race, catches it up, and goes yet a step beyond his age; so Japan is bound to catch up the most evolved ideas of our age, and going yet a step beyond, realize them. Now the most evolved idea of our age is social equality. Therefore it is a biological law that Japan must realize this idea. She would have done it without this war with the country that stands for all the darkness of the past; the war only makes it doubly sure.”

“I guess it will be shooting the rapids, though, for poor little Nippon,” said Mr. Petersen, half absently, with his ears cocked to listen for the coming of the train.

“But Japan is the land to do it! — with or without M — and the Tiger-hunters,” answered Mr.

England. “It needed just such a people, mobile and hot with zeal, to pioneer our western nations with their Mammon-worship and heavy-baggage social crawl. Think of that scene thirty-seven years ago when the daimios in a body laid their lands at the feet of their country, and try to imagine that in England! Always when it has become a question of touching the land, the nobles have threatened civil war. In Japan they did it of themselves. What a Pentecost was there, Petersen! Never, surely, did the gods see so bright a sight among men. The nation in which it happened can’t be conquered. By herself she is strong, and she has the might of China to wield. Japan is the head, China the body, that head and body making Hercules. Hence I look forward to the near portent of an Asia Asiatic and Socialistic from the Frozen Sea to Ceylon.”

Mr. Petersen began to reply, but stopped short with a “Hist! here she comes!” as the sound of a train arose upon their ear. A minute later they saw far away through the moonlight haze a tarpaulined line of trucks coming over the large-gauge metals. She bore a load of compressed forage, with messbeef, coal, ammunition and other war *matériel*. Messrs. England and Petersen held their breath as she grew louder upon them out of the distances of the plain, drawing toward her doom; she passed them, went still fifty yards beyond, and at a junction with a loop-line, meeting with what awaited her, broke out into noise: there was an explosion, a scream of steam, a huddling of lorries and wagons, then wreck and silence.

(This matter was reported by two fanciful newsagents as an “attempt upon the Tsar”; but, of course, it was nothing of the sort.)

The two Tiger-hunters lingered long enough to hear the shouts and talking of a few men, then, seeing that their help was not needed, stole away

to their horses, and galloped back to Vladimir.

CHAPTER IV

NADINE



BUT IN ORDER to follow what happened to Baron M — and the other Tiger-hunters who were being lionized by the peace-party in St. Petersburg, we must go back a night to the Pavlovna ball.

It has been told how the evening before the ball-day, the baron had gone out in order to expose himself to the knife of Devriloff's agent, the Amurski Cossack, Shtcherbakoff, who, however, had hesitated to strike on account of an inconvenient witness, a merchant-Jew of Astrakhan, who was Kanin, the Tiger-hunter, in disguise, Baron M — returned home for that night; but, sure that on the next night, the ball-night, the blow would be struck, he would not go to the ball in the sleigh which took the others, but decided to walk, dressed for the ball, all the way from the suburb Novoya Derevnja to the Prospekt, believing that during the walk that for which he had come to Petersburg would happen to him.

But neither did Kanin go in the sleigh to the ball:

Kanin declared to M — toward evening that he was unwell.

“What is the matter with you, Kanin?” asked the baron.

“I have pains in the limbs,” replied Kanin; “my head aches; I have also a rheum of the chest.”

“All that is only a weakness of the mind,” said Baron M — . “Better rouse yourself, and go to the ball with Kotohito and Yoshio.”

“I should like to,” answered Kanin, who, in truth, did not look quite well, “but I feel too ill. I am about to go to bed.”

“It is a weakness of the will,” said Baron M — with some contempt; “believe me, I have noticed lately, Kanin, that you tend toward an effeminate way of life.”

“Well, perhaps that is so, baron,” said Kanin meekly. But he would not be moved, and effeminately went to bed.

As for Kotohito and Yoshio, having made ready for the ball, they bid adieu to the baron. Tears sprang to Yoshio’s eyes, in spite of all he could do; a lump was in his throat, he could not utter a word: for he felt that this was his last farewell to his father; but not even a softened look came into Baron M — ’s eyes. Yoshio stepped into the sleigh, having about him the dagger which was to strike Prince Devriloff in the greenhouse allée; and Kotohito and Yoshio dashed off from the villa.

Baron M — was already dressed. He turned inward from the door after seeing his son and Kotohito drive off, and started to go up the stairs, with the thought of bidding farewell to Kanin in bed; but he was offended with Kanin, and, changing his mind, turned back, put on his hat and coat, and walked away.

But if he had gone to Kanin, and had by chance drawn off the bed-clothes, he would have seen Kanin strangely dressed in the disguise of a Russian *isvostchik* (cab-driver); and the moment the street door shut after M — , Kanin leapt from bed, threw on a full-skirted fur coat and fur *shapka*, such as the droshky-drivers wear, and hurried out after the baron.

They two then walked four versts through the city, Kanin dogging the steps of M — , so that at first M — thought Kanin a new agent sent by Devriloff to kill him; but later on the baron’s keen eyes became aware of Shtcherbakoff, some minutes after Kanin, too, had spied Shtcherbakoff.

It was after midnight, and the same full moon by which, the night after this, Messrs. England and Petersen were to chat by the railway-cutting, rode in the sky, shedding a blue light over the city of snow.

But in one of those unlighted slum alleys behind central St. Petersburg into which M — had led the walk the darkness at some points was deep; hardly a brawler was abroad in it; the tumbledown houses on either side showed here and there a light, but were mostly still. M — was on the left side; ten yards behind him on the right side stole the Amurski Cossack, Shtcherbakoff; and about fifteen yards behind M — on the same left side came the *isvostchik* who was Kanin in disguise: suddenly, with the tread of a cat, the Russian, who had on straw-shoes, ran obliquely across the road upon M — , heaved up his blade, and struck deep.



"The *isvostchik* in disguise . . . had received the assassin's knife
in his own heart."

The Yellow Wave

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Instead, however, of striking into a back, he struck into a breast: for with an utter sureness, the *isvostchik* in disguise had dashed himself against M — in the nick of time, causing him to stumble forward, and had received the assassin's knife in his own heart.

It was done very quickly, with hardly a sound. Only, on his quick-panting breath Kanin gave up the word "M — !" and, even as he dropped a corpse, was tearing the false beard from his face.

"Kanin!" breathed the astonished baron; the next moment he had caught a revolver from his coat-pocket to send a shot after the Russian. But Shtcherbakoff escaped.

M — bent over the body. Kanin, to whom he would not say adieu that night, was no more. The warrior allowed his face to soften in that secret spot and moment. Several times he groaned the words “brave” and “Kanin.”

As a matter of fact, from the moment when M — first made his announcement in the Japanese restaurant in Bloomsbury that he meant to die in St. Petersburg, it had been settled among the other Tiger-hunters that Kanin should die instead. Here, in this alley, as the clocks of the city chimed one, Kanin’s undertaking was fulfilled, with no word but that one pant, “M — .”

But the shot fired after the Russian by M — had been heard, several men were running up and M to avoid delay, made off from the spot, after putting Kanin’s false beard into his own coat-pocket.

M — knew the city well, having been a military *attaché* there ten years before. He first directed his steps to the office of the *Novoye Vremya*, and dropped the news that Kanin had been assassinated; he then went on to the *Viedmosti* in order there also to drop the news; but now nearly an hour had passed, and it was already known at the second office. It was known at many points; it had reached the Pavlovna ball. Prince Devriloff had whispered to his own heart: “M — is dead.” M — made for the Pavlovna ball, a late guest, wondering how Yoshio had fared.

Yoshio, at the moment when M — arrived at the Pavlovna palace was in the greenhouse with his kokotana, awaiting, as he had been told to do, the coming of Devriloff.

The young man was in a strange mood, at once excited and sorrowful. An hour before this, about the time when Kanin fell, he had been walking sadly about the halls of the ball, thinking that it must be nearly time for him to go to the greenhouse, when he saw two bright eyes dwelling upon him with a thoughtful look. They belonged to a young girl of sixteen, who was

sitting in a nook made all of palms and mirrors, so that she was seen in many places at once, far and near. The young poet's fancy likened her, so multiplied among the palms, to the fireflies of his native land lighting up their green home with coloured lights. These little creatures the Japanese women shut up in cages, and sell under the name of "Princess Glory."

Yoshio walked away down the length of the malachite hall; it was narrow and long, and looked like a Corinthian temple; but, as he went, he seemed to have eyes in the back of his head to see that multiplied brightness which was behind him. The strains of a Russian waltz, to which a host of couples were dancing, made the lad sad. When he reached the far end and turned round, he saw that the young girl was supporting her chin on her palm, and that her eyes still followed him. She seemed weary, as if weary of an old life, and thinking of a new.

Yoshio went back toward her, not straight, but with a roundabout stroll, so that she might think that she was the last thing in the world of which he was thinking; and at last, after looking at his watch, in order to assure himself that he had no time left for dancing, he came to her and asked her in French to dance with him. Miss S — , who was sitting by her, touched her hand with her *pince-nez*, wishing her to say no, for she remembered Prince Devriloff's command to the young girl the day before not to let a Japanese touch her, on the ground that all Japanese have leprosy. But the young girl (who was Nadine, Devriloff's daughter) stood up briskly at Yoshio's invitation, saying quietly, "Je veux bien, monsieur," and she waltzed with him, though she knew that her father's eyes might be near about her.

During that dance little was said between Yoshio and Nadine. The light steps of the young girl hied after her partner's drawing as faithfully as shadow waits upon substance; for a time her eyes were closed; to Yoshio she was like something in some dream of midsummer-night which chased

him whithersoever he reeled, plagued him with delight, and made him dance. These were new feelings, and the poet thought how, when he was next alone, he would pour this thing out in a river of poetry. When the dance was over, he could not thank his partner, his thanks were so deep. It was only when she said to him, "If you wish, I will go with you to the string-band ball," that he started as from a sort of dream, looked at his watch, and said: "I have a rendezvous with — a man...."

He led her back to Miss S — , hurried off, and made his way through a lot of halls, till he came to a balcony from which a stone stairway led down into the Pavlovna gardens. Only a few people were on the balcony. Down in the garden Yoshio turned first to the left, the greenhouse being toward his right, then dodging, stumbled through a dark cross-path till he came to the spot which his father had described to him. From the moss-path before the greenhouse the light of the moon was quite shut out by leafage; and behind one of the glass doors Yoshio took his stand to await the passing of Prince Devriloff.

The warmth in the greenhouse made him languorous, and the young man became very sad: for he thought that his father was very likely dead; also, the thing which his father had sent him there to do was against the grain; moreover, he thought with an ache in him of the bright young girl whom he had danced with. There is a notion among others that the Japanese know nothing of "falling in love," and in truth, passionate sexual choice, or "love," is rare in Japan, as in England and France; but, being a human hap, it happens everywhere; only, as the Japanese see no need for making a show of having it when they do not, the myth has arisen that they do not have it: whereas Yoshio, waiting in the green-house, so felt it, that tears swam in his eyes.

But soon after one o'clock one of the causes of Yoshio's sadness was removed, for Kotohito, coming to the greenhouse to see that Yoshio was duly there, soothed Yoshio's mind by telling him that his father was not dead, but that Kanin was.

"It is true that I am not quite sure of this, Yoshio," said Kotohito; "but I am almost sure, for I have just heard that one of us has been killed, and now that the affair has ended, I may tell you that Kanin had arranged to die for your father, nor is it very likely that he has failed; so you may take that to comfort you while you wait here. I see that you are quite on the alert, for you nearly stabbed me. Well, keep on like that, and I undertake that in less than an hour the murderer of your mother will present himself to your dagger."

Kotohito then stole away, and Yoshio was again left alone in his lurking-place.

CHAPTER V

THE CHAPEL



ON RETURNING TO the halls of the palace, Kotohito at once sought out Prince Devriloff, in order to assure himself where he was; he spied the prince talking in a group of officers, and next sought out Miss S —— who, he knew, was chaperoning the daughter of Devriloff that night for their hostess, who was Nadine's chaperone *en titre*.

Kotohito, sitting by Miss S — , entered into talk with her in Japanese about the “murder of M — ,” while Nadine sat near, toying with her card, till an epauletted man came up to claim a dance. She rose with an absent-minded air and had gone some steps when Kotohito suddenly went after her, and asking her cavalier's pardon, said in a low voice at her ear:

“I have to tell you, mademoiselle, that in the gardens just now I happened to see standing outside the gate of the greenhouse allée a man named, he told me, Shtcherbakoff. He has pressing intelligence to convey to your father. You should therefore tell your father this, but not as coming from me, since there is a difference of opinion between us.”

“The difficulty will be to find him,” said Nadine.

“I suggest that he may be found in the augite room to the left.”

“Well, then. Will you take me in search of my father before we dance?” said Nadine to her cavalier, who bowed, and led her away through the suite of halls to the left.

Kotohito now went back to Miss S— ‘s side, and took up again the thread of their talk: Miss S — did not show her anxiety about what Kotohito had whispered to Nadine, but she feared further mischief to “peace” that night, feared that the Japanese might try to avenge the “murder of M —”; and the instant she found the chance, she was up and gone in search of Nadine, to find out what was toward.

She met Nadine coming back, and, taking her aside, said in an eager whisper:

“What is it, child? What did the Japanese whisper into your ear?”

Nadine told what Kotohito had advised her to tell her father.

“And you have told him?” breathed Miss S — with a face aghast.

“Yes.”

“And he has gone into the gardens?”

“Yes.”

“Nadine — quickly — go after him! Stick by his side — I have a meaning — try to get him back—” she gave an impulse to the girl’s shoulder, and at once her flurry changed to smiles, as she made a thousand excuses to Nadine’s cavalier.

Nadine, meanwhile, made her way as swiftly as she could to the cloak-room suite, threw on her hooded cloak, and sped down the balcony-steps and along the greenhouse alley, peering into the gloom for her father.

But, even if she had gone to the end of the alley, she would not have found her father, nor, of course, would she have found any Shtcherbakoff, whose presence outside the gate was a fiction told by Kotohito in order to lead Devriloff past the greenhouse. Prince Devriloff, on hearing the news that Shtcherbakoff wished to see him, had, indeed, started off to go to him, without waiting to ask Nadine who it was who had told her this; but the prince had not gone twenty steps when he saw a sight which turned him

pale — the face of Baron M — , who had just entered the ball after his visit to the newspaper offices.

Devriloff was so sure that M — was dead, that for a minute he believed he saw a ghost; panic struck him: he now felt that Nadine's message might be a Japanese ruse to get him into the gardens: and within five minutes the prince was away, in order to lock himself into his own room in his own house.

Meantime, Nadine, hurrying along the alley to find her father, came to the greenhouse, and was passing its middle door, when a figure sprang out in her path: and it nearly happened that the doom which was meant for the prince fell upon his daughter.

“Oh, pardon,” breathed Yoshio... “it is you.”

“Is it you?” asked Nadine.

She had not seen the kokotana, but by peering in the dark they could just make out each other's face.

“It is you?” breathed Yoshio again.

“You here? All alone?”

“I am here to meet — a man.”

“Then, I will go on.”

“Within the door here it is as warm as in the palace. One hears a sound of dripping waters among the trees.”

“But I must go on. I am looking for my father, who has passed this way.”

“No one has passed this way. I was here alone, thinking, and very sad.”

“Of whom were you thinking? or rather, of what?”

“I have been sad ever since I saw you, and danced with you.”

“What is your name?”

“Yoshio M — .”

“M — ? Is it your father whom my father hates?”

“Who is your father?”

“Prince Devriloff.”

“Ah! Prince Devriloff! Yes, they hate each other, your father and mine; and you and I have to hate each other also.”

“Why so?”

“Because there is vendetta between us.”

“Not on my side, then. You kill me, and I will die quietly, and not tell any one who did it.”

“Yes, I should like to, and then kill myself after, so that I might fall near you, and be with you.”

“Ah, but do not speak sweeter than you mean, Yoshio M — . ‘Men’s vows are made of the wind,’ the Russians say in a proverb; and when the wind is gone past, a girl’s sighs cannot overtake it.”

“But men’s vows to girls? I have not made any. You seem to me to be Sayori, our goddess of love and mercy, who has come into the world at a ball. I should only like to throw myself down and pray to you, without saying anything, and perhaps your heart would hear mine, and would feel for me.”

“What would you pray for?”

“I should only pray, without any words, not knowing why.”

Nadine laid her hand on Yoshio’s arm, saying, “and I also, for from the moment when I first saw you in the malachite room, seemed to hear God calling in my heart in a wonderful voice, and it is the good God to whom I come in you.”

The young girl drew Yoshio’s head to her, and their faces lingered in a wonderful joy together, till Yoshio started on hearing the sound of a step. It was some one passing a good way off through the garden, but it reminded

him of what he was there for — to remove out of life the father of her who hung on his breast. This thought, however, lasted only a moment, he led Nadine by the hand within the greenhouse, and there forgot Devrilloff, his father, the war, and everything, in his wish to tell the young girl of half the fondness which burdened his breast.

“But how unhappy we are!” murmured Nadine; “you will go away, and it would have been better if I had never seen you: for what will be the end of it for us?”

“I am not afraid,” said Yoshio; “if even I have to die, I shall think in dying that I have seen you; and I shall not go away; nothing has any power to take me; I shall not go; they could not make me; they have not the right: they daren’t: I’ll die first.”

“Sweet, but, you see, my father hates the Japanese, sweet.... Even if you stay, could we be married?”

“But I do not ask for any marrying, only to see you. Your eyes... they are like lamps of life shining upon me in this darkness. How good of you even to look on me, and be conscious that I am alive! Yet you touch my face.... Oh, I would have rushed upon all the guns of this war to win a little of what you lavish upon me for nothing like this...”

“So fond of me? so soon? poor boy!” murmured Nadine, moving her palms down his face; “and yet it is not so soon, is it? for I think that I have dreamt of you some night in a land full of almond-trees, under a strange moon, and I knelt to you, feeling the good God near in my heart, and called you my Tsar, my poet, my own boy, my sweetheart Yoshio. But as to my father.... Hist! I hear a step coming...”

They started, both thinking that it was Devriloff, and quickly Nadine whispered: "Come to me at four — the Devriloff gardens in the Great Morskaia, the third gate as you pass down the little alley at the palace-back. I shall be there to let you in." She kissed him hurriedly, and slipped out through the greenhouse door.

Coming along the alley was, not Devriloff, who had gone home, but Miss S — , who had come out all anxiety to find out the reason of Nadine's long disappearance.

"My child! have you found your father?" whispered Miss S — .

"No, my aunt."

"Then, where have you been?"

"I have been listening to some music."

"Whereabouts?"

"In heaven, I suppose, it was."

"Oh, fanciful child! So you haven't met your father? Have you seen any of the Japanese in the gardens?"

"Yes, one, my aunt."

"Which one?"

"He is called Yoshio M — ."

"Did he speak to you?"

"Yes, my aunt, he spoke to me."

"Yoshio here? Did he ask anything about your father?"

"He spoke only of myself."

"Well, but where, then, is your father?... And you, what is the matter with you, my child? You seem quite tired."

"It is not weariness."

"Let us return to the ball, and see if your father is there...."

Miss S — was so taken up with the father and her beloved “peace,” that she had no eyes to guess the secret of the look of rapturous experience in the girl’s pale face. They searched for Devriloff together, till they learned that he was no longer there; and Nadine then prayed to be taken home, on the ground that she could no longer bear the ball.

It was then after three in the morning.

Half an hour afterwards Baron M — got free of the political crowd who kept him in talk, and bethought him of going to the greenhouse, in order to tell Yoshio that his watch was useless, since Devriloff had gone home. But when M — went, Yoshio was not to be found in the greenhouse.

All the Japanese then began an organized search for Yoshio. Yoshio could not be found. Kotohito had seen him for a minute in the greenhouse near midnight: that was all that one could be sure of about Yoshio.

The morning grew toward day, and at last the Japanese had to leave the ball among the last of the crowd, without any Yoshio. Baron M— ‘s face wore a dark look. He had the thought that Devriloff may have found the means to do the boy to death — unless Yoshio had taken it upon himself to go home alone.

All this time Yoshio was in a summer-house behind the Devriloff Palace with the furs which enwrapped Nadine: and the conference between the lovers was long and earnest. Nadine said that the only way was for them to defy everyone, and risk all; she knew a “pope” — one of those “white” (or secular) priests of the Greek Church — named Paid Kraszewski, who was devoted to her, and, for the sake of gold, would do all that was needful for the marriage of her and Yoshio that same midnight. She would go to bed at an early hour, and near midnight steal from her room to the church. She proposed also to let into the secret her maid, Anna Pochowski, and her old man-nurse, the Amurski Cossack, Shtcherbakoff, who would die for her, if

necessary, and would have a sleigh ready to drive her and her maid, Anna Pochowski, to the church.

As for Yoshio, he would return home for the present, but would escape and hide from his friends some time before ten in the night, when the Japanese were to take a southward train. Yoshio knew that the Japanese party were bound to leave St. Petersburg that night, since that night at eleven the supply-train was to be mined by Messrs. Petersen and England, and Russia would thereafter become a place for the Japanese to hasten from. If, therefore, Yoshio could hide beyond the hour (ten) fixed for their departure, he would be safe. Yoshio felt his honour and duty wounded by this plot, but love was stronger than all; and so it was settled before the lovers parted near daybreak after many goodbyes.

Yoshio walked in a dream all the way to Novoya Derevnnya, and did not reach home till the sun was high. He found his father pacing the drawingroom of the villa.

“Come here, Yoshio,” said Baron M — ; “where have you been?”

“I have been walking in the august city, *chichi uyi*,” said Yoshio, with a hung head.

“With what object?”

“I have examined the august monuments of the city, *chichi uyi*.”

“Have you accomplished that which you were placed in the greenhouse of the Pavlovna Palace to do?”

“No, *chichi uyi*. Prince Devriloff did not pass that way.”

“Did you abandon your post without knowing whether he would pass that way? Or did you know that he would certainly not pass before you abandoned your post?”

Yoshio hesitated, and then answered:

“I did not know for certain that he would not pass; but I guessed that he would not, the hour being late.”

M — looked at the young man piercingly.

“But why did you go away?” he asked after a minute...”

“I have examined the honourable monuments of the city, *chichi uyi*.”

“Go from me.”

Yoshio went to his own room.

M — touched a bell, and when Kotohito came in, said to him: “Yoshio has got entangled with some lady at the Pavlovna ball. He harbours, moreover, some bashful purpose. Keep your eye on him during the day. I am now going to sit by the body of Kanin.”

M — , who could pass several nights without sleep, soon after this went out, and spent the day with three of the other Japanese by the body of Kanin at a morgue; he also passed an hour in talking over with some officials the arrangements for the funeral, which was to be magnificent, for the crime had already roused much feeling.

The Japanese, however, intended to be gone before the funeral, and after the baron had gazed for hours on the face of the murdered man with fond mutterings of his lips, he set out for the commissariat of police, and gave the hour (ten) of his train of departure, so that the Japanese passports should be at the station at that hour to be given back to his party. He dined at a restaurant near the Liteinyi Bridge, and did not return home till nine, in order to start with Kotohito and Yoshio for the station.

But, to his astonishment, neither Kotohito nor Yoshio was in the villa; the trunks of the party lay ready on the lower floor; but Kotohito had not left even a line to explain his absence.

Baron M — waited on, inwardly raging, till ten; at that hour his train started without him; and still Yoshio and Kotohito did not appear. At the railway-station three of the six Japanese, and a police-official with the passports, were waiting in vain for M — , Kotohito, and Yoshio.

At last, near ten-thirty, a thought struck the baron, and he went out, peering as he went down the street at the gates and walls on either side; and soon he came upon what he half-expected — a cross marked with chalk on a gate; sixty yards beyond, in the next street, he came upon another chalk-mark; and now he knew the truth: Yoshio had fled, and Kotohito, on the track of Yoshio, had left these pateran-marks to show M — which way he and Yoshio had gone.

But the tracking of the marks through St. Petersburg at that hour of the night was a slow matter, and only the toughness of M — kept him to it. It was some minutes after midnight when, in a dark lane behind the Mikhailovski Theatre, M — came upon Kotohito, who, with his back leant against a wall, was breathing heavily.

“He has just escaped me,” panted Kotohito; “found out that I was tracking — runs like a deer.”

“Which way?”

“Yonder.”

“Come.”

The two men trotted forward.

At that moment, in a chapel of a church not fifty yards from the theatre, Yoshio and Nadine were kneeling at a lighted altar, with them being the young woman named Anna Pochowski, also the “white” pope, Kraszewski, also Shtcherbakoff, and the officiating priest. The little party seemed lost in the gaudy and gloomy vastness of the church. Yoshio was married with a heaving chest, for he had been running hard. By the time the rite was over,

he had, indeed, got back his wind, but still his heart throbbed awfully at his feeling of guilt, at his uncertainty as to the future, at his daring behaviour. However, he led out his little ruddy bride to her sleigh with a bold face, and parted from her with a promise of meeting her two hours later in the summer-house behind the Devriloff Palace.

He left the church alone. Having nowhere in particular to go before the rendezvous, he went strolling anywhere, little dreaming that his father was now fearfully and wonderfully near to him, and seeking him at a run. And precisely before the façade of the theatre the ill-fated lad butted on a sudden in the dark upon Baron M — and Kotohito. Before ever the boy could run, M — , without saying a word, had Yoshio's wrist in a grip of iron.

Yoshio's head bowed, and, as he walked along by his father's side, stifled sobs were heard going all down the length of the street. He remembered that Nadine would wait for him in the summerhouse in the cold morning, and wait, and wait, with a sob in her throat.

The Japanese party were able, after all, to set off that night by a later train; for the three at the station had got the giving-back of the passports put off by the commissary to that later train; the luggage at Novoya Derevnja was telegraphed for; and by one-thirty the party, including Yoshio, were *en route* southward.

En route also at that hour from Vladimir were Messrs. Petersen and England. And two evenings later all the seven Tiger-hunters met at the agreed inn in Kônigsberg.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN



THE RESULTS OF the Tiger-hunters' visit to Petersburg were soon seen. The murder of Mons. Kanin, who was an ex-editor of the *Ji* newspaper and a well-known politician, caused a dismay even in St. Petersburg, and in the Eastarage; while as to the mining of the supply-train, though the Japanese party could not be pointedly charged with it, it furnished fuel to the fire on the Russian side: the ministers who were working toward peace threw up the cards; and the war went its way.

But for a month no action of striking greatness took place in Manchuria.

Meantime, be it noted, China had been neutral, except for some Manchu bandits (Chunchuses) and "Boxers," whom the Japanese were using as scouting groups, etc. However, ever since the war began 15,000 rifles and 10,000,000 rounds per month had been pouring from Japan into neutral China.

And one night, six weeks after the Petersburg events. Baron M — sat with Prince Ch — in a room of that Temple of the Sun where the Chinese Foreign Office is in the habit of sitting. They were alone in a black-and-red apartment, a place in whose gaudiness of bronze, lacquer, and painted josses lay some hint of dark deeds and the torture-cellars of grisly queens who have drunken themselves with blood through many an age of romance and intrigue; and so close was the talk, that some of the coloured lights burned out without being marked by the two men.

Ch — , as is well known, was a man of sense but weak in action; and for hours that night Baron M — bent his brow upon the prince with the strain with which one bends a bow, still talking in the tone of a man upon whose words all things are hanging.

“A European war,” said the baron, “is necessary to the yellow race, and, since it has to come, may as well come. We have it in our hands, prince, to bring it about in one of three ways almost whenever we please.

“Ah, you well say ‘almost,’” answered Prince Ch — ; “you are a man made to persuade persons against their will, baron; you fly the world like a kite — it is nothing to you. But how long do you think it would take to wake up and prepare the Chinese in the manner you all are wishing — ?”

“Much of the waking up is done,” said the baron, “for from end to end of Asia the rumour has run that the yellow man has beaten the white in war. When the Chinese coolie thinks of this he looks up into the air and screams out laughing; the Hindoo is glad; the worshippers of the sun far off are ready to help.”

“But the preparing,” said the prince with a troubled brow; “remember that it has taken Japan forty years.”

“In China I could accomplish much of it in forty days. Reform first, then conscription, then the European war, during which we proclaim that at least Asia and Russia in Europe are our claim. As for the money, a governor in China with a sword in one hand and a rope in the other will soon give that.”

“It shall be done what you want, baron,” said the prince, tapping the ashes out of his pipe, “and you shall do it. I have listened to you for fifteen years.... But of the three ways in which you say that a European war may be brought about by us, only one of them, in my opinion, should ever be employed by China.”

“Which one?”

“That one by which Japan so crushes Russia as to force France to fight Japan, and so bring on a European war. Then China would act.”

Prince Ch— ‘s eyes smiled a little at this cautious speech of his, while Baron M — frowned, and was silent.

“What have you to say, M — ?” asked the prince.

“But it was my hope to see a battalion of Chinese Imperial troops start in two days to operate against the Russians,” said M — dryly. “I thought that that was settled.”

“Oh, baron,” said the prince with a weakness of expression, “you are a man made to have his way. I should say to you to-night: ‘Take your seat at the head of the Council, and do as you like’; but, to tell the truth, I am not sure — yet — of the way this war will go. Are you so very sure that the Japanese will beat the Russians?”

“I think that they have beaten them.”

“Well; but still, I can’t help liking to feel the ground under our feet; why not wait and let us see the Russians driven back to Mukden before we bring China into any trouble?”

“Is that the only condition which you demand?” asked the baron.

“Yes; let us see that done.”

“You shall see it, I hope, before this day week. Meanwhile, I see no reason why we should not employ a body of Chinese troops against the Russians, with the object of precipitating possible trouble in Europe—”

“Oh, I am afraid of this,” said the prince, standing up. “You first get the Russians dislodged from Liao-yang, and you have the word of a prince that your seat shall thenceforth be at the right hand of the throne of the Hsus.”

Baron M — now bowed to the ground, saying:

“I myself, I hope, shall send your highness the news of what you ask for, for I start for the front early to-morrow, and thenceafter, prince — you have

said it — no more waiting, but loud action and large. But now, I declare, you look sleepy.” The two politicians soon after this left the temple, waited on by six men with lanterns of white and yellow silks; and saying “since it must be,” parted before the court of the Imperial Palace.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE SEAT OF WAR



THE NEXT MORNING at dawn Baron M — took the Pekin-Newchwang train, and from Newchwang passed northward to Talisu, where the headquarters' staff were. He was alone, for both Messrs. England and Petersen, as well as Yoshio, were at the front.

As to Yoshio, the baron had done an extraordinary thing; he had enrolled the boy as a common soldier in a line-battalion at the front, a harsh step meant partly as a punishment, and partly as a training in the school of reality. At the inn at Kônigsberg where the Tiger-hunters had met after the St. Petersburg happenings, M — , having taken Yoshio aside, had said to him: “Now tell me for what reason you wished to abandon your father and your country, and to remain at St. Petersburg.” Perhaps if Yoshio's bride had been any other than Prince Devriloff's daughter, he might have told; as it was, he had not dared; and from that day the baron had kept a grim silence on the matter. But the moment he reached the Far East, before even going to Pekin, he took care to see Yoshio with a musket on his shoulder.

M — then went to Pekin, spent a week of activity there, and, after his final talk with Prince Ch — which has been sketched, hastened north ward again, with the object of “reporting” to the prince a battle which was about to take place. His share in that battle, which happened ten days afterwards, was much more than that of an onlooker; but when it was over his son Yoshio was wounded and a prisoner. Yoshio was presently taken to the

hospital at Irkutsk, where, in his long idle days, he wrote a letter which was rather a soliloquy than a letter; and from this letter an account of what befel at the seat of war, both before and after Baron M — reached it from Pekin, may be given in Yoshio's own words.

“My dear lady,” he writes to his young bride, Nadine, “I wrote you a letter from Kônigsberg, giving you the history of my arrest by my father on the night, of our marriage, and again I wrote from Marseilles, in each case hoping that our party would remain long enough in those places for me to receive a reply from you: but before my letters could have reached you, my honoured father, who is ever a restless man, took his departure, and we others with him.

“I now write, Nadine, far removed from you, doubtful if what I write will ever meet those eyes into which it was once given me to look — years ago it seems, though it is only weeks. Shall I ever feel that joy again? You are so far beyond my reach now, that I do not often allow myself to hope.

“But I am not without a hope that this letter may reach you, for three days ago several of the Russian wounded here were taken to the railway to be carried back to Russia; one of them was a bugler of the Kuban *voisko*, whose bed was the next but one on my right, and though we could not converse, he was friendly with me, and if I had had anything written when he left, I might have sent it by him. However, if a similar drafting of the sick to the railway again takes place from this ward, I shall certainly find my chance then. Meanwhile, the railway is closed to the post, the telegraph is in the hands of the military, and I am writing secretly with this pencil and soiled paper which the baggage-master has got for me at the spur of a bribe, for we are not allowed by Major Hartmann, the surgeon here, to do any writing.

“You will see from what I have said that I am in hospital here in Irkutsk, with a wound in the right shoulder, and an experience of war which I hope not to renew. I belong to the old Choshu clan of Japan, a set of people who have always been fighters on land, just as the Satsuma clan are those who do the fighting on sea; consequently, my honoured father, who seems to have a love for the sound of guns, is determined that I shall be a soldier like my ancestors, whether I like it or not; and, since he is displeased with me, he has introduced me into the army in such a fashion, that my messmates before I was taken prisoner were a common clog-seller, two carpenters, and a lantern-maker of Tokio.

“I did not know before that Japan had need of her artists to fight her battles, and be shot down by guns; but so it seems now, and I must not say anything, since it is the august will of my honoured father.

“I love my country; but this was not the sort of glory that I wished to gain for her.

“I will tell you something which I heard some one say the night before the great battle of Liao-yang: it was one Mr. England, a friend of my honoured father, and he was speaking to a Mr. Petersen, an American who has become one of our Tiger-hunters. As a general battle was sure on the morrow, they two had ridden from the village of Sintao to see me, having heard that my battalion had been posted in that part of the country. I was one of the inlying sentries when they came upon me at about one in the morning, and glad enough I was to talk with them, for I was frozen, and had a sure feeling in me that that was to be my last night in this world. After giving me a message from my father, they sat in the snow on a knoll, and were talking there a long while about the coming battle.

“I heard them say many things that night about events that are preparing for the whole world, though they may not have thought that I understood,

for they spoke in a low voice in English; but I know English well enough, and I heard Mr. England say, among other things, ‘What is needful for the great men in China is a change of heart. First, the conceit must go from them. The inferior yellow race has been beating the white in war, and everybody is crying out, “It is no longer inferior!” But it is because it is somewhat inferior that it beats; because it is in that stage of development which has a genius for war, whereas the white races are now getting into the stage which has a genius for the arts of peace. At an early stage in development every one could bring down a bird with a stone, and at that game of throwing stones a black Marutse or Batlapan boy can now beat us all, not because he is better than we, but because we are better than he. In the same way the Japs beat the Russian with the machines which he invented for them, not because the Japs, or the Boers, or the Prussians are better men, but because the greatest white nations are just getting past that stage of development which has a genius for war.’

“I was struck by this, because no one likes the Japanese more than Mr. England, and it only shows that there are more glorious things than war, such as painting and poetry.

“Mr. England then went on to say: ‘Now, what follows from this? That the yellow people should know themselves for what they are, and should also know when to act. What are they? They are “*the barbarians*” — like those that overthrew the Roman Empire, and they are the last lot of barbarians that will ever overthrow the rest. And when should they act? Now, because, if they wait, they, too, will cease to be “the barbarians,” will get beyond the stage to which the genius for war is proper, and, in the universal peace that will soon be, they will be trodden under the white man with his much more developed genius for the arts of peace, unless they spread and establish themselves by war, now that they can.’

“From this, and from many things which I have heard, I fancy that greater matters than one thinks must now be going forward in China, and that my honoured father may be the mover in much of it.

“But I think that if those sort of people only knew the miseries, especially for the common soldier and the common people, of all this business of war, they would try to mend matters. I can’t help thinking that this time the country of my dear lady is not quite in the right, for Japan is fighting for her life, as I have been brought up to believe; but they should all have managed to settle it somehow without this rain of blood.

“In this town of Irkutsk things are very bad. A Frenchman, named Tombarel, who was a marker in the 5th East Siberian Frontier Battalion, and now lies there opposite me with a bayonet-wound in his stomach, and his sheepskin cap hung up over his head, has told me that it was always the wickedest town in the world; but now the police have ceased to care, and there is no longer any decency; a dozen murders take place every day; wagonloads of wounded continue to come, there is not room in the military quarters for them all, and I heard yesterday from Madame Krastalinski, my nurse, that three have been foully murdered by the folk upon whom they were billeted. The town seems to have gone wild. As I write, I can hear the hospital-yard full of uproar, the rumble of wagons, whips cracking, shouts, laughter, dogs barking, and a drum beating the recall outside.

“It is five weeks now since we arrived at Taku in a steamer from Nagasaki, where we only stayed one day on coming from Europe. The Japanese whom you saw in St. Petersburg parted from us at Nagasaki, and only my father, Messrs. England and Petersen, and I came on to Taku. I understood that we were going to Peking, but, instead of that, from Taku we went northward to Newchwang, and thence on to Talisu. I hardly knew why, but a fear was on me, Nadine. My father did not speak to me, and I saw Mr.

England smile sometimes upon me, as if to pity or to cheer me. This made me feel that something dreadful was about to happen to me.

“And all the way to Talisu what was to happen was clearly foretold me in dreams, for every time I closed my eyes I dreamt that I was on the battlefield, a soldier; I saw wounds dealt, and wondered how I could escape; I saw my comrades cut down before my eyes, and felt the call of honour to join in the fray and help them, but I would not, and skulked to save myself from the injuries to men’s flesh which I beheld on every hand, and the shame of my flight would cause me to awake.

“These images of fear so filled my fancy, that by the time we reached Talisu I was in a state to be pitied. On the afternoon that we left Newchwang, Mr. England said to my honoured father: ‘I’m afraid that Yoshio is not quite well’; whereupon my father’s eye dwelt upon me, but he made no answer. It was clear that he had some purpose in his mind concerning me, and I almost guessed what it was.

“And the scenes which met my eyes only deepened this sick hue of my mind, for the world seemed given over to war; at some of the most rural places there was something to remind one of the powers that were seeking to overthrow each other; companies of soldiers were in cantonment on the villages, or bivouacked about them; columns were on the march, all making northward, with lumbering regimental and divisional baggage, and squadrons of cavalry and of horse-artillery and, coming the other way, wagonloads of sick men, whose bandages were spotted with blood. Outside Talisu I saw a sight which I think I see again now: it was a Manchu fruit-seller, with a child in her arms, standing by the long culvert which the train crosses before coming to the town; her blouse of blue cotton was more red than blue, and the child was without any head; she held it up for us to see with a screaming sort of laugh.

“Her grief may have been owing to one of those Chunchuses, or Manchu bandits, who were then thronging in the town, for these are a very ruthless sort of people.’ In fact, I could not have pictured to myself such a sight as was to be seen there. We entered it about nine in the night, and found it given over to noise, gloom and lawlessness. Many sorts of troops were here — Chinese Imperial troops guarding the palace, with Chunchuses, Japanese, and Russians with crutches, their arms in slings, or bandages round their heads; in the drink-places were crowds, and the streets were alive with crowds, some peering in the half-dark at notices posted in two languages at the town hall, half of which was in ruins, having been shattered by the shells of our army. Companies with bands of music passed at a quick march towards unknown ends. I saw a squad of troopers gallop suddenly into a screaming crowd without the least care. Regiment after regiment, too, must have come into or left the town during the night, for every now and again I was startled from sleep by the *réveillée* of trumpets, drums beating the tattoo, the tramp of feet, the neighing of horses, shouts, calls, words of command, and the racket made by trains of baggage and artillery rumbling over those rough streets — all which did not tend to quiet my mind, you may be sure, nor to make me in love with that pit of death into which I now felt that my honoured father meant to hurl me alive.”

CHAPTER VIII

PRIVATE YOSHIO



“**I WAS** INTERRUPTED in my writing yesterday afternoon, dear Nadine, by Major Hartmann coming into the ward, and causing me to hide my letter hurriedly. After a night full of dreams of you — for I have few dreams in which you do not play a part, especially since I have had this feverishness — I now go on with the tale of my sorrows, having just taken some good Russian tea and a bowl of rice and barley mixed, a dish which the Russians have copied from us others, though they prepare it in a less tasty manner, I think.

“On the morning, then, after our arrival in Talisu, I was called to the presence of my honoured father in the barracks where we had slept, or rather where I had slept, for my father, who is a very hard man, and can go without food or sleep for days, had been awake all night. I believe it to be a fact that he is now without any status in the Japanese army, yet one might imagine him one of the Genro, if one were to judge by the stir and observance which his presence causes among the military people. When called to him, I found him sitting at a table covered with maps and plans, with a crowd of staff-officers standing all about him, while beads of sweat stood on his brow. I, for my part, was shivering, for it was very cold, and nothing had been offered me to eat that morning.

“Every one straightened himself from bending over the maps as I bowed myself before my father, with the table between him and me, and I saw by

the way in which the officers silently smiled upon me that whatever doom overhung me was known already to them all.

“The thought came into my head that, whatever was to happen, I must show none of my feelings before these men and my honoured father; but it was hard, for I remembered that I was not alone, but had a young wife, whose happiness hung upon my continued existence.

“‘Yoshio,’ said my father, without looking up from the map before him, ‘I am given to understand that a company of the second regiment of the third division is being filled up. Thirteen men of the reserve are about to be led from Talisu for this purpose; how would it be, if you volunteer to make the fourteenth? The honourable colonel here accepts your service beforehand.’

“I made a *plongeon* before my father, with the reply, ‘As you will, father,’ while everything seemed to swim before my eyes.

“My father now looked up at me, and from something in his eyes I think that he approved of my manner, for I ought to know the meaning of his glances by now.

“‘Very good,’ said he. ‘I am leaving for Peking to-night; but if you be lucky and victorious, we shall meet again some happier day. *Sayonara!* Fight well.’

“‘*Banzai*’ (Bravo!), said one of the officers, with a smile.

“That was all. My father is a man of few words. One of the officers handed me a billet, which I took as it were unconsciously, for I was only dreamily conscious of anything, save of a hurtful lump in my throat. A non-commissioned officer, who must have been waiting there for me, then touched me on the shoulder, and I followed him out of the door. But I had hardly got beyond it, when my father was again with me. He put his hand on my shoulder and pressed it tightly, murmuring close to my ear:

‘Remember the heroic spirit of your mother; remember your father, who — loves you. Good-bye.’ I could no longer keep from breaking out into bitter weeping, but my honoured father was gone even while I sobbed, ‘Yes, father,’ to him.

“I was led by my guide downstairs and across a courtyard to an apartment where a few soldiers were grouped round a *kotatsu*, or fire in the floor, making rice-cakes; these were the men of the subsection with whom I was to march to join our company. In a large store-room beyond this I was given a grey doth suit, a yellow-braided cap with a star on it, boots, a sheepskin muffler: in short, the kit of a common soldier. After dressing myself in these things, I received a receipt for my other clothes, and returned to the apartment where my squad sat round the *kotatsu*. I now felt myself so weighted, that I wondered how I was to take long marches in such a state; but the whole, which then seemed to me at least a hundred pounds, turned out to be under sixty, and in a few days ceased to weigh upon me.

“As I sat on a bench at the side of the apartment, no longer keenly suffering, but in a state of idle hopelessness, one of the squad who were at the fire brought me some food and tea, called me comrade, asked what was the matter, and began to cut some capers, pointing his musket at imaginary Russians. This fellow was a clog-seller named Markino, with whom I afterwards became friendly; but at that time his antics could not win a smile from me.

“Soon afterwards in came Mr. England, and sat with me. He has a kind heart, and did his best to console me, dwelling on the wisdom of my honoured father, and saying that, though war is a terrible thing, the human mind is such that it quickly becomes acclimatized to every state of being, and will feel at home amid flaming worlds. After my first battle, he said, I

should be wanting to fight my second; he did not know, Nadine, how much stronger than any other being's is my motive to live. He made an effort to get from me the story of what he called my 'escapade' in St. Petersburg, saying that, if my father only knew the truth, that might lessen his anger. But I would tell nothing.

"Toward noon a quarter-master-sergeant stepped briskly into the apartment; I stood up to the roll-call, and when the words 'Yoshio M—' passed his lips, took my stand with the rest. We fifteen then shouldered our muskets and passed through a courtyard full of limbers, soldiers in undress, and hurrying orderlies. We went out into the streets, and as those barracks stand near the northern part of the town, we were soon marching along a country road.

"Two miles north-west of the town the sergeant, whose name was Kenchio — he is now dead — pointed out to me the trenches on a slope where the Russians made their last stand in this part of the country. These trenches were galloped by a regiment of Japanese sabres, but with terrible loss to the victors. At the bottom of the hill is a long mound of earth — the grave into which the conquerors, the conquered, and their horses, were cast together after this bloody affair.

"We halted that evening at the village of Mingu after a cold, but not unpleasant, march of twelve miles, for as I can both run and walk long distances, I was not weary, in spite of the weight which I carried. Manchuria is a charming land, even in its frozen winter, and may some day become one of the world's chief centres of life; the scenery is varied, there are many streams, now hard with ice, with mountain-ranges, and valleys with happy villages in them, and vast stretches of millet that grows far above one's head, and fruit-trees of every kind. At Mingu we found billets for the night, I staying with a Manchu woman like a giantess, who told me that her

younger son was hanged in Talisu by the Russians for giving information, and that the elder has since taken to the mountains as a robber, swearing vengeance upon every one.

“The next morning the sergeant put tis through some drill-book movements, chiefly, I think, for my good on some hint from my father, for all the others had gone through the training usual for reserve-men. But I had been forced to have it all in my head from the time when I was a young boy, and though a poor shot, I had no need to be a better, for I am now convinced that all the fuss which is made about the marksmanship of land-forces is a needless fuss, since no one ever shoots the man he aims at in a battle, and whenever a man is shot it is always by a bullet aimed at some other man, or not aimed at all: so that all one need know is how to fire off one’s gun, and then leave the rest to chance.

“We set out again on a north-westward road, leaving the railway on our right, and for three days marched in a leisurely way, with stoppages at lonely villages, the weather being bright and cold, and the snow hard under our feet; and passing by those hamlets in the clefts of the mountains, I would often think to myself how well it would be to live there, giving myself to painting, music and poetry, with you, Nadine, by my side; but another fate than this was given me at my birth. My comrades, for their part, took things more lightly than I, singing on the march, and making merry at the villages, so that I was sometimes amazed at their freedom from care, while to the tricks of my clog-seller there was no end; but I think that the Chinese brandy, *samshu*, had oftentimes something to do with this lightness, for I have also seen them stare like men in despair, and my dog-seller confessed to me that his nights were full of dreams of blood.

““Are you not afraid of being shot, Markino?’ I said to him one night when we lay in the dark in the same room.

“‘It is not only that,’ he replied, ‘but I am also afraid of shooting any one. It seems such an outrage to take aim and shoot a human being, one, too, who has not hurt you.’

“I had myself the same shudder at the thought of wounding the flesh of unknown men, and of having mine wounded by them; the whole thing was altogether an abomination, which it was as irksome for me to go into as for one to hold the eyes in smoke, and I do not know what kept the strain of mind which held me to it from snapping, and from rushing back into the easy course of flight.

“However, we fifteen passed on from point to point during six days, witnessing on our route a movement of armies making in the same direction as ourselves, for no day went by that troops of cavalry, mounted infantry, artillery, and battalions on the march did not come up with and pass us, without paying any heed to us. Sometimes we heard of skirmishes taking place at the front between outposts and sharpshooters, with small ambushes, surprises, or night-attacks on one side or the other. At both the villages of Sinno and Chentao we found regiments bivouacked, and from both we learned that a great battle was about to take place. This rumour, in fact, seemed to be everywhere in the army.”

CHAPTER IX

YOSHIO IN ACTION



“AFTER ANOTHER INTERRUPTION, dear Nadine, I again take up the thread of my tale of misfortune. Our squad joined its company on the seventh night at the small town of Ta-mien-leng, in the great barracks built there by the Russians; in fact, it is surprising how much in a few years the Russians have built in Manchuria, for everywhere one comes upon raw blocks of brick like warehouses, with blockhouses and other works, near which sometimes a new, or partly new, townlet has sprung up.

“My squad entered barracks at eleven in the night, when I was dropping with fatigue, and already half-asleep. We were led into a room in which a young-looking officer was sitting in undress at a table, turning over the leaves of a Britannic magazine, *The Graphic*.

“‘All right,’ he said, after looking at the billets, ‘the company starts out to rejoin the battalion at Huamit to-morrow morning at five o’clock,’ and he directed Kenchio, the sergeant, where to seek our quarters. We passed upstairs through a great building, and in a room full of sleeping soldiers I threw my rifle with the rest upon the rack, and myself upon a bed, where I was at once asleep.

“The next morning I felt myself for the first time a soldier in the ranks of an army. I was roughly awakened at *the réveillée*, and hastening down with the rest, answered to the roll-call in one of the barrack-yards, where our company assembled by lantern-light. That early-morning scene, with half

the men yawning and coughing, with the coloured lanterns reflected on the snow, and with only one lonely light in the barracks round us, is still present before my mind. We numbered two hundred and forty men, and the name of our captain was Kansura, who, unlike your Russian infantry captains, was mounted. He gave the command of 'Quick march!' the drums rolled, and we set out toward our destiny with all the dogs of the town barking after us in the dark, but I with a new strength in me at the feeling of being backed by all that crowd of brave fellows who surrounded me.

"Not two hours, however, were to pass before this new courage of mine was to be put to the test. It was about seven o'clock, when the darkness of a terribly cold night was gone; my right-hand neighbour, a Socialist veteran who had fought in both the Satsuma and Chinese wars, and had been telling me the story of his feats and escapes, had just said to me, 'It won't be long now before we bivouac,' when my heart jumped into my mouth at the sound of firearms, and not mine alone, I think, for no one had any thought of meeting an enemy so far south, and we were marching without having sent out any scouting-party.

"It was at a part of the very rough road where the country was flat, but pretty wild with rocks and patches of bush, all white under snow. About three-quarters of a mile on the left front of us was a rough mound or hill; and it was from there, I thought at once, that the fire came.

"Halt!' shouted Captain Kansura.

"As we halted, a sprinkling of bullets took place among us, while everyone darted his eyes about. I could see neither smoke nor enemy; but my eye caught sight of one of our men three yards before me bending his head and shoulders, like one making a bow in the Western manner. I did not know why he was doing this, till on a sudden he snatched up some grass with passion in both his hands, as he dropped sharply to the ground. At the

same time our advanced guard hurried in; behind I heard a pattering upon our company ammunition-cart and our two baggage-waggons, caused by a shower of bullets: and my heart fainted in me, Nadine.

“Happily, our little captain was a man of nerve; he spurred forward and spoke hurriedly with two under-officers, and a moment afterwards the *mot d’ordre* ‘extend’ went forth; nor did it come too soon, for I was aware of men dropping here and there around me, and of a weird noise, like strings of the *koto*, in the air. I cannot describe to you my feelings at this thing. I said to myself:

‘Yoshio, this is the day on which you were predestined to die from your birth, and it is a hopeless case with you’; but at the same time a feeling of resentment against the enemy, which I had not felt before, was mixed with my despair, for it seemed to be against *me* that their undeserved malice was being aimed, and I hated them, and wished to be revenged on them, and at the very same time I was elated with a busy and high sort of feeling, like a wild man enjoying a storm, and thinking to himself, ‘This is the day of days, and the moment of moments.’ Meantime, we were most of us running sideways for our lives, forming in a double line, with ten feet between man and man; now I saw that the fire, which had grown heavier, was passing mainly between and over our heads; and now my Socialist veteran remarked to me, ‘We are going to storm that hill in small details with short rushes from under cover.’

“Almost at the same moment that he said this, I saw the man on my left clutch at the air with both hands, step slowly backward, reel, and drop on a sudden upon his side; at the same moment, too, I heard coming towards me from far away on the left the cry, (Retire!’ repeated from man to man, while behind me I heard Ihimoto, my squad-commander, crying out, ‘Forward! Charge!’

‘*Retire!*’ I shouted at the top of my voice, for the cry from the left had come to me, and in my flurry of mind I did not know where I was nor what I did; but immediately afterwards I saw Captain Kansura galloping toward me and toward the left, with his shako on the back of his head and a very excited face, howling out, ‘Who said retire? Forward! forward!’ Then I was aware of our right flank going forward at the double, and before I knew what I was doing, I was myself running toward the enemy.

“In less than a minute after this our company had disappeared from the surface of the plain, and I found myself hiding behind a rock with only six others, among them being my clogg-seller, my Socialist veteran, and squad-commander Ihimoto. ‘It is no good wasting cartridges yet, men,’ said Ihimoto; ‘we will make a rush for those three maple-trees, and then for that bush ‘; but all the other details of our company were not of the same opinion, for firing was going on far and near over the plain, like terrible kettle-drums tattooing a little, and leaving off, and beginning again somewhere else, while over our own heads whistled a few of the enemy’s shots. ‘They have no artillery, no more than we have,’ said my veteran; ‘they must be some small party, and our men on the right will very likely outflank them — *banzai* (a thousand years)!’ But I thought to myself that this unseen destroyer had all the better of us in his mysterious trenches, and might be there in his thousands for all we knew, only waiting for us to come up with him in order to kill us all.

“After staying a minute behind the rock to recover our wind, we again ran forward, and you may be sure that we ran fast. On either hand I saw several other groups of our men rushing forward, bending, like men making way against wind and rain, then lying behind the cover of rocks, bush or folds of the ground. As for us, we were under cover again in ten or fifteen seconds, before we could have been struck by aimed fire; and I thought to

myself, 'If all goes like this, and we once get at them, let these butchers look out for themselves.' "Again we six rushed forward; it was a longer distance this time, but we had all reached some bush in safety when a rushing was heard in the leaves, and one of us six, a small fellow who wore spectacles, fell dying. We said nothing at this, hardly noticed him, our minds were so set to the work before us, and our minute under cover seemed to me too long, for the rolling of the musketry raised a heat in my brain, and I wished to come at my enemies.

"At the next cover Ihimoto, who was all out of breath, panted to us, 'Now aim to the left of that dip in the hill; let them have it,' and while the thunder-clap of our rifles was still crackling down in our ears, he howled out, 'Bayonets! Charge!' We were almost at the foot of the hill, with little more cover left us, and within a hundred yards of the enemy; we scattered and ran toward the hill, our attack being almost frontal, and it was a case with us at that moment. But we did not go alone, for almost at the same time as we, ten or twelve other groups broke from cover far and near, most of them looking remote and pigmy, forming a straggling line of poor men running forward to save their lives, and seeming a paltry enough crew on the large white landscape before the large hill; but we had hardly reached the beginning of the rising ground, when from far away on my right I heard through the din a sound, a shout, which my ears made out to be '*Banzai!*'

"'*Banzai! Banzai!*' I shouted in the joy of my heart, and all down our line that shout went: for, away to the right, some forty of our men had scaled the flank of the hill, and were 'rolling up' the enemy's trenches with an enfilade fire. Before me on the top of the hill I saw several heads in black forage-caps appear a moment and vanish as we darted after them; but by the time we reached their trenches all that was presented to our volley was the backs of some thirty-five or forty riders in blue trousers and black tunics, leaning

over their horses' necks, flying northward, and followed by a riderless horse; and not one of the hundreds of bullets which we sent after them touched one of them.

“They were a squadron-section of Crim Tartar rough-riders, who had picketed their horses on the yon side of the hill and made three short trenches with loop-holes and covered retreats, so that they had been well covered; but in the middle trench we found a tall, bearded fellow who had received a wound in the jaw, he being their only loss. As for us, we found that this affair had cost us nine dead and seventeen wounded.

“How these Tartars had got into that part or into touch with our company we did not know, for the Manchus and Mongols are on our side, and will not give true information to the Russians.

At any rate, so this matter turned out; and it was a sad thing afterwards to see our dressers and stretcher-bearers searching among the bushes for the dead and wounded.

“We camped in that place, having brought down the wounded Tartar, and when I sat to my breakfast, with leisure to think of it all, I could hardly believe that I was myself. I had been under fire, and had come out of it alive and whole; the thing was not such a nightmare of blood as I had dreamed, and I felt in my pride that I might fight a hundred battles and come through victorious. But at the same time something whispered within me, ‘It would be better not to try it.’

“We broke up camp in a sudden blizzard, after having... I have to stop...”

CHAPTER X

YOSHIO'S MARCH



“AN HOUR AGO, dear Nadine,” Yoshio’s letter continues, “I heard from one of our nurses that a batch of six from this ward will be sent back to Russia by the railway in three days’ time, and I shall then undoubtedly find the means to get this letter to you, for the departures will include my friend Tombarel, whose *volost* (district) is not far from St. Petersburg. This overjoys me to think that we are not utterly parted, for you will hear, as it were, my voice in this letter, you will know where I am, you will write to me; I shall then be afresh assured that you still live on this same earth with me, that you still think of me, and I shall be filled with satisfaction.

“Nadine, I have a thought, now two days old in me: the fact is, I am now getting better; I begin to feel my new health, and I have wondered whether I could not get to Russia and to you by the Siberian railway. It is a daring thought, but if I can escape from the hospital, I believe that I could find means to disguise myself.... No, I will say no more of that yet; I should be shot perhaps; I have not thought enough on it; but if I see even the least chance of doing it, I tell you truly that I should venture down a lane made by the five million rifles of Holy Russia and all her cannon pointing at me, when the prize at the end is the little bright daughter of General Prince Devriloff. Meantime, I will think and watch, though I doubt that so good a fate as this was predestined me at my birth.

“The nurse who has told me of this coming removal of wounded men is, I now hear, one of the great ladies in St. Petersburg Society, and knows your father well. Her name is Madame Krastalinski, and she is one of the volunteer nurses under the Red Cross, in which your Empress is interested. She is friendly with me, and winks at my writing; in fact, I have given her a hint of that happiness and misery which befel me in St. Petersburg, without letting her know who my bride was; and this seems to have touched her kind heart.

“But now I shall not have time to write much more of my experiences of this war, though it pleases me to write it to you, and I could go on a long while without weariness. You must hear, however, how I came to be here, wounded and a prisoner.

“After the skirmish with the troop of Crim Tartars north of Ta-mien-leng, of which I have told you, our company marched a long way over some hilly country, not without scouting this time you may be sure; and we arrived safely near the townlet of Kong-kai-tien, where we came up with our battalion.

“From that time my ears began to be filled with nothing but rumours of a coming battle; we spoke about it, and of our probable share in it, at night in our tents, round the rice-kettle in the morning, and when drowsy men were coming in from outpost. It seemed that a great army of our troops had concentrated in that part of the country within forty or fifty miles; some said that we were as many as 230,000; our major had had one of those poles by which wireless messages are received rigged up, and this became a sort of centre for the subalterns to meet at in the afternoon, in order to talk of the future; the sutler men and women of the country who brought us things to sell were keenly questioned by us, so were our own reconnoitring parties when they came in. On the fifth morning an orderly rode in in haste from

beyond the mountains on the north with a despatch, and half-an-hour later, as I was being marched in frozen from sentry-duty, our major, whose name is Suyematsu, called me and said, 'Your father has just arrived at the front, private, and now perhaps we shall see things quicken a little.'

"I was in no way keen for any more battles, as some of my comrades were, but this put a feeling of warmth and safety in me to know that my honoured father was at hand, though I did not understand the major's talk about things quickening a little.

"It turned out to be true, however, for that very afternoon we broke up our camp, and thenceforward to that fateful morning when I was awaked from sleep by beating drums and cannon booming in the distance, all was movement and bustle for every one of us.

The division of which my battalion formed a part was the third, under General O — , and was made up of 12,000 men, with some squadrons of cavalry, and thirty-six quick-firing field-guns, besides engineers and other such people, and one night, the fourth of March, I saw the whole of these encamped in the snows by the banks of a tributary of the river Hundari to the south of the branch-line of railway to Perm. My company was camped on rising ground to the west, and before I went to sleep I saw the fires of the whole division reaching far away into the night, battalion after battalion, with their guns and their sentries in greatcoats, like a picture in a solemn dream; and I wondered in my heart what fate awaited all this power of men, animals and guns. Yet this great army was only in some sort the outpost of a far greater war-host that occupied the country; and hidden away in the northern night was the war-host of the Russians, as great a one as ours, it was said.

"The next morning I saw column after column of our division march away to the sound of the drums, two of them passing quite close to my

camp, and I felt a thrill to see them, for our little men march very nimbly, as if shod with something pneumatic, and a column of them, swaying from side to side in step to the roll of the drums, puts one in mind of a clicking machine at work upon the road.

“Near noon that day, after I had spent the morning in breaking river-ice for drinking purposes, our company, too, received marching-orders, crossed the river, and at a place near the village of Sintao was digging trenches and making parapets in the frozen ground at the foot of a hill, with a gun-emplacement at the top of it, till near ten in the night. We then set up an entanglement of barbed wires, and scattered a lot of old tin cans about to make a noise in case of a night-attack. By then I was very cold and weary, but my squad was next on the roster for outpost, so I had to go on. I stood leaning on my musket for about an hour after outpost had been taken up, looking at the country, which was fairly level, and lay spread out before me in a dull moonlight, all white and still, but with several points of fire shining through the mist afar off, whether fires of the enemy or of units of our own army I did not know. I gazed upon this scene with a foreboding in me that after the morrow I should nevermore gaze upon any earthly scene, for I did not know where my honoured father was, no longer felt protected by his nearness to me, and I experienced a somewhat bitter satisfaction in thinking that, if I were killed the next day, that would wound my father’s heart, and would serve him right for making me a soldier, a thought that caused my eyes to fill with tears of self-pity; just then I heard one of the other outlying sentries behind a hill to my left call out, ‘Who goes there?’ and presently I saw Messrs. England and Petersen coming towards me, leading their horses. They had ridden from the village to bring me a message of good cheer from my honoured father, who, they said, was with the Headquarters-Staff at Kwang-chang-tse, but was coming further north that same night; and I have

already told you, Nadine, how, as they sat near me on a knoll, I heard them converse of great matters which are going forward, or soon will be, in China, and also how I heard Mr. England praise such things as painting and poetry rather than war. They stayed there till I went off duty, and then I saw them canter away over the snow and into the mist, till they disappeared far off like shadows down the further side of a hill.

“The next morning I was awakened while it was yet dark by my cloggseller, who shook me by the shoulder, and at once I was aware that the day of the battle was really come, for I heard in the west beyond the far hills a booming of great guns, and in the face of every one in the camp was to be seen an air of business and ado. We ate that morning one of the emergency-rations of cooked rice which we carry in our aluminium mess-pans, then, as the sun rose, each one was given his place in the two-tier trench which we had made the night before, only a small scouting-group going out on the horses northward.

“My Socialist veteran, with whom I stood at about the middle of the front trench, told me that we should be immediately attacked, for that Captain Kansura had got information of this. I felt that we should give a good account of ourselves to any body of troops that came within the zone of our fire, for our narrow, standing work was made in rather a Z-shape, so that we could not well be rolled up by a flank fire, our parapets had a waving top so as not to look like a work of man to the enemy’s eye, and we had covered the raw earth with snow shrubs and branches, so I thought that it would take a sharp pair of field-glasses to spy out our position; and away out on the plain we had placed some biscuit-tins, one at five hundred yards, two at a thousand, to mark the range, for the sunlight made them glitter. But the cold was bitter, and we waited, but no enemy came. The men were all making guesses about what would happen to the two armies around us, and

how each was disposed; my squad-commander, jumping into the trench near me, said with a smile, 'Well, Yoshio, are you prepared to kill the bear?' then, with his back against the trench, began to tell me about the armies, whereat five or six of the men gathered round to listen.

"I was amazed at the vastness of the plot which he unfolded, and said to him, 'But can all that have originated, or even be carried, in any one man's mind?'

"'Yes,' he answered with a smile, 'I believe that it has originated in one mind, one that you know very well, too, and I am sure that it is being carried in thousands of minds this morning. If each little pawn in the game, like our company here, only does what is entrusted to it in its isolation, beyond a doubt the scheme as a whole will come off with flying colours and the drums beating.'

"'But how long do you think that it will last?'

I asked.

"'We hope to see it all over within two days,' said he.

"'Is that the main battle going on where we can hear those guns booming?' I next asked, with my teeth chattering.

"'Why, no,' he said, smiling at me; 'that is only a brigade of the 5th posted near Lei-ta-che, making one of the feint attacks of which I told you upon some unit of the enemy's centre. Between Lei-ta-che and Fuhai the enemy's centre is occupying positions on a front some thirty miles long, while our army, if you try to imagine it largely, is a hollow square with a side of about fifty miles, with the mass of its guns and transport somewhere about the centre near Kwang-cheng-tse, and with its back upon Chan-chung. The idea of all this is as simple as it is sweet: the enemy await our attack, hoping to get all the advantage to be got out of defence, and we are

going to attack along their centre, but it is really a feint attack, for we mean to retire in detail all along the line and make them follow us.'

"'But what a butchery of our men during these retirements!' I exclaimed.

"'Yes; there will be some butchery,' he answered carelessly; 'but our troops, as they retire, will fight rear-guard actions, no doubt, so the butchery will be local. Meantime, the real fighting will be in the flanks, of which we here, acting as outpost to our battalion, form part of the right. It is expected that in the heat of victory the enemy's centre will order its flanks to attack ours, thus giving our flanks the advantage of defence. If, having this advantage, our flanks manage to drive back theirs, we shall be able to make flanking movements round their main body in the centre, surround their centre, cut it off from its base, force it either to attack or to surrender, and so, perhaps win the day.'

"'But what a number of points it must have been needful to think of beforehand!' I cried out, 'and what a terrible lot of fighting must at this moment be going on!'"

"' Yes,' he answered; 'and in the carrying out *of so* mighty a scheme, there are sure to be many blunders, but it has come from the mind of one of the greatest of men, and I dare say the end will justify it.'

"' And where, then, is my honoured father at present?' I asked.

"'I hear that he is somewhere not far to the east of Lei-sha-tse, in our right flank with Baron K — and part of the Guards' Division,' said he, adding with a smile, 'and therefore not very many miles from his son.'

"' And who,' I next asked, 'commands the enemy's left flank with whom our right will have to fight?'

"' Devriloff,' he answered, 'and Prisyrewski, the ex-Deputy Governor-General of Warsaw, each of whom commands a division. Devriloff has under him the Guard Rifle Brigade, including the celebrated Preobragensk

Regiment, while Prisyrewski has two of the Grenadier Regiments with some line-infantry regiments; both have also a force of regular and Cossack cavalry, including two battalions of Guard Cuirassiers; so, you see, there should be some fighting in our right flank.'

"'Is our right flank as strong as their left?' I asked.

"'It is to be hoped so,' he said, 'for at our right is really the critical point of the whole battle, in the opinion of most of us: namely, the Fanchu bridge. It is the bridge spanning the Fanchu ravine which extends east and west some five miles; the enemy's left are sure to hold this bridge in force, and, unless we take it, we shan't be able to surround their centre as we intend, so there is bound to be a massacre just thereabouts.'

"He had hardly said this, when I saw three riders dash round the foot of a hillock two thousand yards away, and a minute afterwards about twenty others, Cossacks in busbies, came chasing them, the three in front being part of our reconnoitring group. They hardly seemed to move at that distance, but from the stretching of their horses we could judge that it was a keen enough race; there was an echo of carbine reports, but no one seemed to be hit, and we waited, all of us greatly excited, while they grew larger and nearer, till I seemed to hear the drumming of the hoofs in the snow, and now down our trench I heard the command "Fire!" I did not fire; I was so uncertain and excited, it seemed to me so sure a thing that we should shoot our own three; but a racket of musketry broke out round me, and the next thing I saw was that the enemy's troop had turned tail, leaving three of their men and two horses in the snow. Our three-had not been touched by our fire, for the trajectory of our bullets had passed over their heads, but as they galloped in one of them fell off his horse.

"Nor was any time given us to go to care for this poor man. I believe, in fact, that that troop of Cossacks had only been sent out to 'feel' for our

position, for immediately after the two scouts had come in with the news that the enemy were in force three miles off, guns began booming from somewhere, and I could make out infantry, with cavalry on its flanks on the northern horizon: a minute later shrapnel was bursting upon our hillside.

“From that time I no longer felt cold; I forgot that it was winter.

“For an hour both shrapnel and common shell kept on falling around us, but without doing the least harm, except to the ground and to a finger of Kenchio, my sergeant, which a splinter cut. We stood snugly under cover, for we had a parapet, and though there were no loopholes in it, there were notches like battlements through which to look and point our muskets, and it is likely that the enemy’s gunners did not quite know our position, for some of their shells screamed a long way over our heads; but still, it made us feel rather small and queer, this cannonade; I suppose it was the sound more than anything, the large-minded wrath of their guns against us, vaunting itself through heaven. Kenchio laughed at his cut, but it was a rather jumpy sort of laughing, and I felt relieved when their infantry began to march upon us.

“We had chosen our ground pretty well, with a dear field for our fire, and very little to cover them, except small rocks embedded in snow, and though they had perhaps a thousand men for each hundred of ours, I shuddered for them, and for us, too, for it is an outrageous thing, Nadine, to shoot down men, whose teeth the dentist stops with so much care, every one of whom one would pity with a pang in one’s bosom, if one only knew him well, his home-life, his temptation, and all the tale of his undeserved sorrow and tragic plight in this world. However, one has to defend one’s own life, you see; it was they who were wilfully attacking us, and when the word ‘Fire!’ rang upon our ears, we shot at them, shot at them, with a growing spite, each for himself, fully ten rounds a minute, our gun booming and their four

also, our musketry pouring masses of fire over the zone which they had to cross, and theirs rolling too. Ah, I think I can see them again now, lying down or running, with their dark-green knickerbockers and knee-boots, struggling towards us by extended groups in a loose sort of line to take our lives, but one by one throwing up their arms in despair and failure in the midway.

“They had left their cavalry with some infantry in reserve beyond range, in order to gallop our position no doubt when the time should come, but it was no good; we had orders to concentrate fire on their central units, and these, when they were well within six hundred yards of us, wavered and broke. Men are not machines, but bundles of nerves, and those who were still alive saw death so busy among them that they could no longer stand it, but each for himself, struck by a sudden eagerness to get out of that heat into which he had rashly ventured and to save his skin, began to retire, whereupon all down the line, which must have been three miles long, the rot spread. Yes, they fled. I could have shouted for joy. On the lips of our men I saw a smile of malice such as only my countrymen can show. Kenchio, the sergeant, shouted through the musketry din, ‘the cranes!’ which is a very scornful word with us; he little thought that I was to see him drop dead before me that day. And as they fled, our men massacred them, taking a cooler aim than before, and firing into the middle of groups; and the moment they were beyond range, and their bearers were seen moving out from their advanced dressing-station which had a Red Cross flag on it, we formed up in column, ready for pursuit. Only two of us had been wounded in the trenches, and one killed; nor had our gun even been touched behind its epaulement.

“Meantime, by the telegraph on the other hillside, a message had been sent to our battalion four miles in our rear on the Kirin railway, telling it

that we were about to give chase; a group of four had been sent on ahead to cut down a tree in the enemy's road, so as to keep them back, and we others set out, not following the enemy's rear, but marching first eastward, then northward parallel to the road which we knew that they must take, meaning to head them off at a mountain-pass near the village of Huarin, for Captain Kansura knew the country like a scroll, and as our small unit was very mobile, we covered the ground fast enough.

“By two p.m. we were ambushed in a wood on a steep hillside, covered with rocks and bush; Kansura then sent two young soldiers to scout over the mountains on foot, and twenty minutes afterwards I saw them dropping down the opposite cliffs from point to point like monkeys, so that I wondered how they did not break their necks. They brought the news that the enemy were coming at quick march, and we had not to wait more than an hour when down the opening of the gorge southward we saw their advance sub-sections coming in double column, with flags embroidered with saints, and with their drummers, markers and sergeant-majors stepping out in front. They had not the least thought of our being there, and on the whole this is a hard war for the Russians, because none of the people of the country, except the Tonghaks, will give them any information. At any rate, only a few of them escaped us that day, for while they were squeezing themselves through the gorge, we opened fire, and after the first dozen rounds their white flag went up, but not before one of their random shots had laid poor Kenchio low. We had killed 157 of them that morning; we now took their four guns, their baggage and arms, and by five o'clock had them marching back to Kintao under a guard of our battalion which had come up after the surrender. That, then, was a good day's work for a company of 200 men.

“The faces of those prisoners an hour or so after their surrender actually wore a look of relief and quietness, like men taking their ease at night after a day of storm and stress. As for me, I felt sleepy all that afternoon: my musket was a burden to me, and I shivered with cold. I suppose it was the strain of my mind for hours during the action that made me feel like this when it was all over, though I had not been conscious of any strain while it lasted: but such is war.

CHAPTER XI

YOSHIO'S DEFEAT



“OUR BATTALION MARCHED five miles in a northwesterly direction after that surrender, a march in which I never ceased to hear the booming of guns — in all directions, as it seemed to me, though far away, so that the very air seemed morose, though it was a fine night, with the moon in the sky; and there came into my head a clear vision of Time that night and of the fleetingness of all living things, for this sound of great guns all in the air set me thinking of those great beasts of past ages, big as houses some of them were, which made their roarings heard in their day, but are dead and gone now; and now it is man’s turn to roar and boom in his own way, till he, too, passes away to give place to yet other shapes, who will make their own sorts of noises under the moon, and will vanish like ghosts in their turn; but the moon and the earth will remain, without any inhabitants, and will smile at them all alike.

“Toward the end of our moonlight march we came upon three burned villages, one after the other, and from most of the others in that part the villagers had fled. I was sent out in a foraging-group to one of these villages in a gorge on our left to look for an ox or two, and one of us had the money in his pocket to pay for what he might find, but not a soul nor an animal could we see. Half an hour afterwards, also on our left, we passed a field in which were two wagons and a tent with the Red Cross, and people with lanterns crawling in the moonlight over the trampled snow in search of the

wounded, and forlorn enough they looked there; and a little before we bivouacked we came upon four mountain-gun carriages, with their guns and artillery-store waggons all overturned and shattered, the horses dead, and a gunner sitting against one of the carriage-wheels with his head bent down to his knees, he, too, dead, and you could not think how lonely he looked sitting there in the middle of the moonlight country, with his dragoon-sword and revolvers at his belt, and his brow on his knees; there were parts of the country just there where this gunner sat that were quite sown with shell-splinters, and looked as if they had been ravaged.

“Meantime, the talk among us was all about how the day may have gone for the two great armies, and the word ‘Fanchu Bridge,’

‘Fanchu Bridge’ was in everyone’s mouth, for it had got to be known that this bridge was the critical point for the right flank of our army, and, in fact, in a certain way, for the whole army. I heard the next morning that some Japanese irregulars and Chun-chuses had ridden into our camp with news and despatches during the night, and thenceforward everyone seemed to understand that the day had not gone badly for our side.

“During that night also, a unit of our men left us to march ten miles northward where a regiment of the enemy was posted, and I was told that this tiny body of ours thrice roused the enemy’s camp, making them all start to arms by firing shots among them at such a rate that they fancied themselves surprised by a large force. This was to break their rest and demoralise them for the next day’s work, and no doubt it succeeded, for there are few tricks of this kind which our little men are not up to.

“I only heard this bit of camp-news the next morning, not that I had slept much, for though I was very tired, a pretty steady movement westward was going on over the road near us, making a great row, a movement of baggage, troops, artillery and wounded — toward Lei-sha-tse, I suppose;

and though I was no longer very much afraid of anything, I heard these sounds of war even in my sleep, and I had nightmares every time I slept, seeing again the faces of the wounded, those white faces and the glaring stains on their bandages, their maimed humanity, their sighs, and the look of death in their eyes; for I had been helping to lift some of them that afternoon, and this must have infected my sleep with such like shapes of woe.

“Well, by the next evening I was a seasoned soldier, Nadine, for that day we fought two actions; one at noon, when we attacked, losing a fourth of our men, and having to retire under fire till the three other battalions of our regiment came up, whereupon we rushed the enemy’s position at the point of the bayonet. At one moment bullets were falling thickly about me, and I seemed to have a charmed life, so that I no longer thought that I could be shot, and wondered at myself; and near sunset again, on our march to the Fanchu Bridge, the whole brigade being then together, we had another action, for hearing that the enemy were awaiting us in entrenchments three miles ahead, our brigadier decided to make a *détour*, telling the two Manchu fellows who had brought us the information of the enemy’s gun-emplacements to ride back and let them know which way we were going. The enemy fell into the trap, for hastening across country to take us in flank on our new road, they found us under cover and facing them; they had then to attack, and it was not long before we had them driven back, and were on the march again.

“But as this is the Tuesday on which the draft of wounded from this ward are to start for Russia, I cannot write much more; they leave at three-thirty, and, *mon ami*, Tombarel, has faithfully promised that you shall have what I entrust to him. But I must tell you before I finish how it was my lot to witness some of the carnage about that awful Fanchu Bridge before I was

myself done for. This carnage had been going on, I heard, since five in the afternoon, and it lasted to eleven in the night, regiment after regiment of our men getting cut to pieces all the time, counter-attacks by the enemy, long-range pompoms and heavy field-guns on both sides vomiting tons of metal six miles into the air, mixed with cracking Maxims and musketry. I felt awed when I was still three miles from the outskirts of this great business, for I seemed to be entering upon the region of an outburst of nature; the earth could be felt to quake, and while still far away we saw the redness of it in the air of the night.

“The bridge is at the back of a chain of hills which run along a plateau; over this plateau passes the road from Tsinchan to Fuhai, which then goes on through a sort of rock-tunnel in the hills, and comes out at the bridge. The bridge, a light iron one, could not be destroyed by any high-angle fire of ours, for it was too close under the hills, which are steep on that further side, and the hills themselves were held by the enemy, who were ever anew reinforced from Fuhai.

“When our brigade came up with the fighting line about 8.30 p.m., none of us were fit for any more action that day; a breeze blew a bitter little hail over the wintry plateau, though it could not blow away that smell of powder with which all the air was thick. As for me, I ached throughout my body; I could no longer feel my feet in their broken boots, and I was ready to drop dead and give up everything. ‘Ah, Yoshio, my man,’ said my clog-seller wearily to me, as we stood two hundred yards behind a wood into which shrapnel was bursting, ‘it is a bad case with us this time.’ I did not answer him, for my spirit was dead in me; the wood was on fire in one part, and the icicles about there were crashing down in detail, but the rest of it stood all stiff and dry still, and we felt none of the warmth, though the light of the flames was showing up our line of rifles stretched out all across a shallow

valley from one hillock-top on the right to another on the left; and I thought to myself that this plateau was a new sort of hell in which fire, ice and din, all the three together, were placed in order to wring men's nerves.

“But it seemed that all this was nothing to my honoured father and to Generals O — and K the first and last of whom were at a windmill under which our brigade had passed on its way to the plateau, while O — , our own general, was on the field; they were pouring out men's lives like water upon these terrible hills, for the sake of that one little bridge. Nor did the coming of night much lessen the slaughter, since the moon was bright at most moments, and since the plateau offered little cover for great masses of troops.

“The thought came into my head how good that would be if I were an orderly, and were sent with one of the messages that were passing to and from that windmill some miles behind us, then I should see my honoured father, whom I longed to see once more before I died, and on my knees I should pray him to beg the two generals to spare their poor troops till the next morning; but this was not to be, and there we all waited, shivering to our souls, while every few minutes a long gun which lay between our rear and the town of baggage-wagons behind us sent a shell howling like a devil in flight over my head.

“Foredone as I was, I was glad when the order came to move, and it must have been on a front of at least four or five miles that the brigade moved; we had to support the centre of the firing-line which, for the fifth or sixth time that night, was giving way; our company started toward the wood, and what we had to do, Kansura said, was to *fire*, no matter whither, to lie down and pour, each man for himself, his hundred and twenty cartridges over the hills, as soon as we came within range.

“But the wood almost choked us: it was smoky and dark in there, and some fifteen of us lost touch with the rest, so that when we came out we saw the backs of our company a good distance on in front just disappearing down a hill-side. ‘Come on!’ we fifteen cried to one another, and we started running, but for some reason those in front had started running, too, for when we next sighted them they were as far off as before; we must have hurried on in this way with short stoppages fully two miles, when we saw those before us entering a village-street, whose burned walls stood out as black as ink against the snow and sky; this village was in a shallow valley with some wood on the slopes, and down we ran to rejoin them.

“Before this, some rifle-bullets from the enemy’s position had begun to dash into the snow around us, and I thought that, being now within range, our company was going to use what was left of the village as cover, and thence pour its fire upon those spouting hills, over which swept our searchlights. But when my group of fifteen and I were half-way down the slope to the village, I suddenly saw several groups of our soldiers rushing wildly back out of the village-street, and the next moment I heard as it were a flood of galloping hoofs, a rushing noise rising in power, made by cavalry of the enemy, but drowned in a few seconds in a crash of our musketry. Some of the group with me paused to run back; ‘on! on!’ I shouted to them, for I must have gone wild and desperate, and the blood of my father and of my mother surged up in my veins. I guessed that a counter-attack of cavalry from the hills must have been made upon the centre of our firing-line at the moment of its wavering, and that, having driven back part of it so far south as this village, the enemy’s cavalry were now sabring our company in the village-street; and I ran down calling upon Hachiman, the god of war, to the affray, leading my group of fifteen with their bayonets fixed, whereat some

of the fugitives running up the slope from the village turned back to join in the fight.

“But I had not yet reached the village when I was aware of a new sound of galloping hoofs, and glancing up the slope to my right, I saw a full squadron of our own cavalry rushing down like a sharp shower with drawn sabres upon the flank of the village. At the same time I saw a shell arrive and burst among their front ranks, throwing light upon the faces round the hole made by the shrapnel in their midst; but these grim little men were at once galloping in a body again, keen to spring upon their enemies, and thenceforward I can remember little that happened: for the two bodies of cavalry were all mixed with infantry in a scrimmage in the three or four streets of the village. I myself was mad with rage, I suppose; we stuck our steels into one another’s flesh in silence; the dead were all underfoot, and our boots slipped on them in a slush of blood and snow. I seemed to be struggling in darkness, the moon seemed to have gone out, or else I seemed to have gone blind; I got a cut from a sabre across my brow, but did not know it; I was buried under a horse and a heap of men, but I struggled out, gasping, in order to fight again, in order to look round me and see whom I could wound. I had no longer a bayonet, but a sword in my hand, and I did not know how this sword had got there; when a rider leaned down over his horse and glared at me I gnashed at him and pierced him; meantime, only a little clashing of steel here or there was to be heard throughout the ruins of the village, the rest was done without any sound. It was horrible.

“The enemy must have been in greater force than we, perhaps were reinforced; anyhow, I am certain that at the last our men fled in all directions. I found myself stumbling up an alley of the village over dead bodies, flying from a fierce-eyed man with a moustache, who chased me, and I can see him again now in his crimson trousers and green forage-cap,

for he remains as grisly as a spectre in my fantasy, and I have often since dreamed of this man running all soaked in blood after me to take my life, like a wild beast. He was a hussar, one of those, I think, that they call Grodno hussars, quite a giant, some forty years old; I could hear his laboured breathing behind me, and I ran aside from the alley to a hut for cover; the hut stood rather alone, was not burned out like most of the rest, though scorched, and before it lay the body of a peasant-woman with two goats standing by her; if I had had my musket then, I could easily have shot my hussar from behind cover, but I had only a sword, and he, strange to say, a bayonet, which he held awkwardly poked out before him. He ran me round the hut, and we kept running round, I dodging him this way and that for quite a minute or two; at this game he never would have caught me at any other time; I even thought of killing him at a rush with my sword, but I knew that I could not do this then, nor even dodge him long, for I felt myself fainting. At last I leapt up and caught the sill of a little window in order to climb and hide within, for the hut-door was still whole and was closed, but he was just in time to seize my leg, making me as cold with horror at his catching me as if he had been a ghost. I murmured something at him in Japanese, with my face twisted round to him in an intense fright; I think I murmured: 'Why, man, are you mad to-night?' I also kicked a little the leg which he had seized, and this may have maddened him, for he grasped at me, tore me down, cast me upon the snow, fleshed his bayonet in me, and I remember seeing him running away from me like a shape in a dream.

“After this I lost my senses for I do not know how long; there were forms moving near me at one time, and I tried to call, or did call, to them. Whether it was they who picked me up I am not sure, but I know that at eleven or twelve that same night I was in a Russian field-hospital wagon on

a spring bed, crawling along the downhill road which runs from the Fanchu bridge northward to Fuhai; yes, there I lay in the dark, alive, a very astonishing thing to me. I felt stiff all through, as if my soul as well as my body was frozen hard, and was aching at it. I was conscious of a bandage tied aslant round my head, so that my left eye was covered by it, also of a sickly hospital-smell of wounds and carbolic acid in the air about me, and of the wagon's movement, and of groans and sighs within it, and of the uproar still of that endless war round the bridge; and, as I lay, many pleasant pictures of my boyhood, above all, the midnight scene of our marriage, dear, passed in a strange light before my sight: for these things did not seem to have happened in the same world of ice in which I now lay, but to have happened to some other person than myself in a world farther than the moon.

“And presently, as I thus lay musing, I was aware of a shouting a long way off behind the wagon, the shouting of a very great host of men, who, it seemed to me, were shouting ‘*Banzai!*’ for only a shout of joy could have burst out so suddenly, lasted so long, and rung so heaven-high; and I somehow understood that it was a shout made by my own people. Nor was I long in any doubt about that, for fifteen minutes later a squadron of Russian cavalry came galloping from the direction of the Fanchu bridge, and after them came squadron on squadron; my wagon and three others full of wounded men drew out of their way into a roadside field, and there stood still, while I, by an opening between two flaps, could see through my right eye the moon floating in the middle of the sky, and whatever was passing on the road.

“The field-hospital men, standing by the four wagons, shouted out questions as the troops galloped past us, but no answer was given them, for the stare in the eyes of those riders was that of men in flight; and on they

came, reaching out towards Fuhai, a boundless caravan of cavalry, horse-artillery, transport, pressing upon one another's heels, and casting glances behind them; then came infantry in a scattered march over the road and over the fields, lashing their baggage-horses, body after body of them, in urgent haste to be on, while from the battle-field behind them one could still hear a booming of guns which seemed reluctant to let their wrath die out, even when all was over.

“Leaning against the outside of my wagon were three wounded wretches who had been following it, for there was no more room inside for them; two of them had arms in slings, the third had his jaws in a bandage, and I understood that they would never reach the next village, but would fail on the road, they looked so frail and woebegone in the face of all that world of winter which was against them. Something made me try to lift my head to ask them what had happened, though this was very foolish, for they would not have understood my language, and were too weak to answer me; but I could not lift my head, and I smiled to myself and lay quiet, watching again the teeming procession pouring itself across the country, with now a group of staff-officers cantering neck and neck in a glum silence, and now a staring team of runaways that had been too much lashed, throwing a whole halfmile of the retreat into uproar and disarray.

“What a medley of scenes and sorts of people were in that retreat! What an impression of mass it gave, like a nation migrating with all its belongings! I saw Turkoman troops in their red gowns, horse-grenadiers with epaulettes and lace, sapper battalions, Terek cavalry, and even a troop of Kalmucks, all making a mixture of the rainbow-hues in which the Russian army is dressed; I knew each class of troop by its uniform, for I had been made to study all this years before by my honoured father; and on they all poured lumberingly, with some wounded faces among them, and

prancing chargers, and sudden alarms and shoutings from the rear; I saw heads bandaged with coloured handkerchiefs which peeped out under their caps, while some heads were bare to the drizzle of small snow-bullets which the wind blew aslant; one Caucasian rifle-infantryman passed close to my wagon with a bloody left foot without any boot on it, though the upper part of the long boot was still round the leg, and I knew that long before he reached Fuhai that foot would be eaten by frost. Then at last I saw a face which I knew, even though I had never before seen it, but I had often seen its photograph, and he to whom it belonged had been well described to me from my boyhood by some one, dear; he came leisurely on horseback with another man, a general, by his side, both of them in the midst of a troop of Guard-cuirassiers; and, as he passed by me, I heard him chuckle a little — bitterly, I thought. It was your father, Nadine.

“On he passed with the rest, and then came more infantry, another mass, a great mob of stragglers spreading over the country-side, and then suddenly into my sight there dashed a squadron of our little men, smiling, but without any look of triumph on their hard faces; they took no notice of the Russian stragglers in the fields, but cantered on past them, and past me; then came more, several squadrons of them, one after another, *I* with their calm canter; and between two squad-rons of them came a small troop cantering, in the middle of which I saw, Nadine, my honoured father. Yes, there he rode between the two generals, with a terrible smile, whose meaning I knew, on his lips — a smile was on all their lips; my father was dressed in a rough tweed of European cut, without any cloak or coat that glacial night, and the little hail which the wind swept beat upon his face.

“When he came quite near, not fifteen feet from me, I found strength, I lifted my head: ‘Father!’

I called out, but my voice was as thin as that of a very old man who is dying, and he did not hear me, he was far from hearing me, he did not know that his son lay frozen and wounded in the dark of that wagon which he was passing. I saw him lift a night-glass to his eyes and search the distance in front, looking for I do not know what or whom....

“Nadine, I must stop now.

“I was taken to Mukden, where I first heard of the retreat of the Russian centre, which happened nine hours after our side took the Fanchu bridge in their left flank.

“At Mukden your father visited the hospital; he saw me; he stood over my bed. Ah, if he had but guessed who I was, I should not perhaps be writing to his daughter now. But he could not see in a common soldier-of-the-line the son of Baron M —

“Three days later I was removed from Mukden; all the hospitals of the land were crowded, the more slightly wounded had to make room for the more gravely, so on the 8th of the month I was taken with seventeen others to the railway, and placed in a train crowded with troops; then came for us the treeless waste of Northern Manchuria, and the mountains on the Siberian frontier. I thought that we were being taken to Khabarovsk, whither many of the wounded are taken by river-ambulance steamers; but Khabarovsk, too, was full. We had to cross the ice of Lake Baikal. Ah, that was a journey for wounded men to take! You would weep bitterly if I had time to tell you even a little of it; nine of our seventeen perished on the way, and at the end the rest of us were crazy....

“I must stop instantly: Tombarel, who is dressed, warns me.

“Nadine, I remind you of our marriage. All the fathers, all the wars, in the world are weaker than that. You have allowed me to be your husband. Nothing can alter this for ever.

“Good-bye! Oh, Nadine, let us meet....”

CHAPTER XII

NADINE DECIDES



YOSHIO'S LETTER TO Nadine was duly put into the young girl's hands on the night of March 29 by the Russo-Frenchman, Tombarel, who got for his pains a handsome present. The motherless child was no longer in her father's palace in the Great Morskaia, but was living under the care of the Duchesse Okhta (a grey-haired lady, a relative of Prince Devriloff), in a palace on the Gagarinsk Embankment, almost overlooking the Field of Mars and the Summer Garden.

In the Okhta Palace Nadine had with her her maid Anna Pochowski and the Amurski Cossack, Shtcherbakoff, her old man-nurse and playmate, the same whom Prince Devriloff had set on to do Baron M — to death during the Japanese visit, and who had witnessed the young girl's marriage.

Beside the devoted Shtcherbakoff and Anna, no one, even now, had the faintest suspicion of that headlong marriage at midnight, except the white "pope" whom Nadine had bribed, and the priest who had performed the rite: and these last, for the love of their skins, kept a still tongue in their heads.

And so it was that when, four days after her receipt of Yoshio's letter, the young girl disappeared, no one knowing of anything to account for it, this affair caused a feeling of pity and wonder in the city, even in the midst of the national upheaval. It was believed that the daughter of Devriloff, with her maid, Anna Pochowski, and her old nurse, Shtcherbakoff, had been drowned, or in some way killed; and so strong was this belief, so certain

were the police that the missing three had not gone out of the city, that the police of other cities were not even set to unravel the affair.

Meantime, this young girl, who was only just sixteen years of age, who had been brought up in luxury, who had a love for jewels and gaudy costumes to suit the swarthy hue of her face — this young girl was braving the rigours of the Siberian winter, going to Irkutsk, where she believed that her young husband was.

The terrible news of her disappearance was, of course, at once wired to Prince Devriloff, who was somewhere on the eastern borders of Lake Baikal; but it was some seven or eight days before the almost maddened father could dare to leave the seat of war. After this delay he set out westward to seek his daughter.

Meanwhile, on her journey, the young girl wrote a sort of narrative or letter, perhaps finding a pleasure as Yoshio had done, in as it were speaking to Yoshio in that way before their meeting; so that what happened to her may be given in her own words.

“My little one!” (*mon petit*) she writes, “I received *the History* at ten o’clock in the night of the 16th of March” (she means the 29th in our “New” style, not used in Russia).

“I was at à *soirée* in a salon of the Okhta Palace, when I was told that Anna Pochowski wished to speak with me. On going to her in an ante-room, I found her very pale: a soldier, she said, who had been wounded in the war, had asked for her by name below, and, on seeing her, had whispered her that he had a packet for me from a Japanese youth named — *Yoshio*! That very name was in my heart.

“I bid Anna Pochowski to find means to introduce the soldier into my private salon by an *escalier de service*. I then returned to the *soirée* where I

had been playing bezique; I finished the game, and I do not think that anyone saw in my face what was in my heart.

“I then whispered to the *Duchesse* Okhta, my guardian, that I was indisposed for any more society that night; she wished to leave the salon with me, but I put her off, and was soon running towards what awaited me in my apartments.

“I found the soldier, Tombarel, with Anna Pochowski there, and, after giving him some wine, made him sit by me and tell his story. I kissed his pale, hard cheeks, got from him an oath of secrecy, and sent him away.

“Still I did not open the packet. When Anna Pochowski returned to me, I caused myself to be undressed and put into a *de chambre*; only then, having dismissed her and locked my boudoir door, I sat to read the packet.

“Oh, but how I was able to read in it the sincere soul of my Yoshio, his meekness and — !

I cannot describe to you how well I know you! It is the soul of a boy of whom I have always been conscious, of whom I have always dreamt, who has been my playmate in meadows bathed in a light which was not that of our sun or moon. And how I laughed! you were so frightened at first! and what a warrior you became—’ *mad with rage!*’ And then the hussar with the moustache, and the wound.... It makes me shudder.

“When I had read it all through twice, when it was nearly morning, the will to go to you had grown up in me without my knowledge, and had become a settled thing in my mind; having finished the reading, I found that I willed.

“I felt, from what the soldier Tombarel had said, that you were more seriously ill than you wished me to believe, and that my duty was to go to my husband. I should have gone to you long before you were wounded, if I had known whither to go! I received your letters from Königsberg and

Marseilles, but, knowing that you would leave those places soon after writing, I did not dare to risk a flight from home without knowing where I should join you. Irkutsk is the first settled address which I have had of you since the terrible night of your marriage.

“Ah, Yoshio, what a man of iron your honoured father must be! I, however, am not in duty bound to be afraid of that gentleman *monsieur-là*), and am even prepared, if necessary, to argue a point with him.

“By break of day, I say, I was resolved to go to you. But how? Civilian passengers are no longer carried on the railway; there was the question of passports, the risks of being found out and stopped, and a hundred difficulties. I saw this much at once; but in mazes of this sort I think that a Russian girl with a will will always find a way out, for it is said that if Eve had been a Russian girl, she would have deceived the serpent instead of being deceived by him. Moreover, in Russia everything that one wishes for may be bought, if one has the money, and I had not only my jewels, but a sum of 7,000 roubles in my strong-box. I went to bed to think of it, and presently fell asleep in the full light of morning.

“After a short sleep I woke to find Anna Pochowski with me. I said to her, ‘Hasten and bring Ivan Shtcherbakoff to my bedside.’

“When he came Anna Pochowski was about to retire, but I said to her, ‘You stay, too.’

“I then told them that I had formed the plan of running away to my wounded husband at Irkutsk.

“Upon this Ivan Shtcherbakoff fell to his knees stretching out his hands to me, and Anna Pochowski began to weep silently.

“‘It could not be done, it could not be done,’ said Ivan Shtcherbakoff with tears streaming over his cheeks.

“‘Ivan Shtcherbakoff,’ I said, ‘it can, and it shall, be done.’

“‘Well, well, it was ever a hard-necked race,’ he said, ‘and evil has always tracked them. But not this one, oh, great and good God, save this one.’

“When Anna Pochowski heard him say this, she turned white and fainted away on the divan, and for some minutes my own heart, too, almost failed me, for, in truth, the children of my race have not led happy lives, Yoshio, nor died happy deaths, like other men and women, so that your too honoured father might well soften a little his ill-will (whatever is the cause of it) against mine, who is unfortunate enough already. Did you know that I once had a sweet little brother? He was burned to death at the age of five, dear; and so it has been with most of us — violent, untimely deaths, disasters, separation; in every land our blood has been poured out. Everybody in Russia knows this, and speaks of it. My father’s younger brother, Sergius, fell off his horse and broke his neck on the Kirghiz steppes at the age of thirty; my aunt Catharine was killed in a collision near Paris when I was nine, and I remember it well, it made me so ill, though I had disliked her; my grandfather Alexis was stabbed by a Nihilist in Odessa; my cousin Nicholas, who was to have married me, was killed in a duel at Vladivostock. When one of us dies on his bed people say, ‘He was not a Devriloff’ — I could not tell you; but that is what Ivan Shtcherbakoff meant, and why Anna Pochowski fainted.

“‘But how could such a thing be done?’ asked the old Cossack when Anna Pochowski had been brought to.

“‘Do you not know,’ I answered, ‘that nurses are being sent out by hundreds to the war since the last great battle?’

“‘But you! you would be known.... It could not be done, it could not be done.’

“‘It can,’ I said.

“‘But would she go alone? Would she leave my old soul in misery?’ asked Ivan Shtcherbakoff.

“‘Anna Pochowski will come with me, and you also, Ivan Shtcherbakoff,’ I said.

“‘How could I? I could not! The military only are now carried—’

“‘Are you not still in the Reserve category?’

“‘What, an old man like me? The Reserve category! This only shows her innocence!’ he cried out.

“‘Still, it can be done, Ivan Shtcherbakoff,’ I said, ‘if you but wish it. Are you not still liable to be called upon for the *levée en masse* of your *voisko*? You can therefore volunteer, and volunteers are being caught at for the new *levée*.’

“‘Oh, she’s the devil,’ said he, shaking his head with sorrowful eyes at me.

“‘That is settled then,’ said I.

“‘What!’ he cried;— ‘settled! Prince Devriloff would shoot me like a dog, and have my poor old body thrown to the other dogs, if such a thing came to pass!’

“‘And do you dread Prince Devriloff more, or do you love Nadine Devriloff more, which of the two, Ivan Shtcherbakoff?’ I next said. ‘I should like to know this, so just let me know it at once, that I may be sure for the future.’

“‘ Oh, she’s the darling of all the blessed saints and angels!’ cried out the old Cossack, coming to me, and wetting my cheeks with his tears.

“‘Anna Pochowski,’ I next said, ‘weep no more, for it is to Japan that we are going, a land that is just like heaven compared with Russia or with any other land; my husband will take you thither with me when we reach

Irkutsk, and in the end you will marry a high personage among the Japanese.'

"'You see, she is only a child, with her dreams,' said Anna Pochowski to Ivan Shtcherbakoff, 'and it is you and I, Ivan Shtcherbakoff, that will have to pay the piper, if this happens, for it will be a life's imprisonment in gaol for us. But what can we do? for it is useless trying to go against any of this family when their minds are made up, and it is like father like daughter.'

"I now put an end to the discussion, sending away Ivan Shtcherbakoff with the warning that what he had to do must be done at once. I then laid the plan which I had formed before Anna Pochowski; and two hours afterwards the thing was being done.

"At the Anitchkoff Palace there now meets daily a committee of great ladies, presided over by the Tsarina, who receives the offers of other ladies to go out to the war as nurses. Now, Anna Pochowski has a sister whose name is Marie Paldoff, a married woman living on one of the islands; she had been a nurse before her marriage, and my plan was to make Anna Pochowski and Marie Paldoff volunteer as nurses in the character of ladies of fortune. After they had been accepted, I could take Marie Paldoff's credentials and passport, and go out in her place, with Anna Pochowski and Ivan Shtcherbakoff as my protectors.

"By half-past eleven o'clock, accordingly, Anna Pochowski having gone to fetch her sister, I had both the sisters in my bedroom, and was dressing them richly in my jewels and furs; the rest of my jewels I gave to them to pawn for me, since I had no more ready money than some 7,000 roubles; I taught them how to bear themselves and what pretensions to make before the committee; and they then set off by a back stair in a very fluttered state for the Anitchkoff Palace.

“It happens that war-nurses who will bear their own costs are now being freely welcomed — scores depart from St. Petersburg every week — so that I ate *déjeuner* that day with Madame in a fairly quiet mind as to that part of my scheme. Madame chided me for having dark circles under the eyes, but when she spoke of calling the doctor to see me, I laughed so heartily that she had to laugh too, for I was full of glee and had wings half-spread for my flight over the continents and the oceans.

“When Madame wished me to go sledging with her to pay the calls of the afternoon, I pleaded against this, and escaped to my apartments. I there waited for the sisters, and I cannot tell you of my impatience. They were long, and I began to fancy all sorts of mishaps, even as I knelt before the Holy Mother, beseeching her good graces to me, a virgin-wife; but the moment I saw the smiling faces of the sisters peeping into my boudoir at 1.30 p.m. I knew that all had gone well.

“They were highly pleased and fluttered, these two; Anna Pochowski had forgotten for the time being all her fears, for what girl can help being carried away by the *entrain* of a secret, a plot, and a sudden long *voyage* all in one? For a time I could catch only a chance word of what was being said, for both were breathless and spoke at the same time.

“‘We have been face to face with the Tsarina!’ cried Anna Pochowski, kissing my cheeks, for in Russia, you know, everyone kisses everyone.

“‘As we were going down the Prospekt to the Anitchkoff Palace,’ said Marie Paldoff, ‘she dashed in her sleigh from the Dvartsovie Plastchad, passed by us, and was quietly seated in the committee-room at the palace with a crowd of ladies when we arrived.’

“‘And she gave us these with her own hands!’ cried Anna Pochowski, showing me two ikons of St. Nicholas and two red-cross ribbons; ‘and I

think,' she added, 'that tears were in her blessed eyes.'

“‘I gave my true name and address, as you bid me,’ said Marie Paldoff, ‘and in the morning our passports, certificates, and a paper which they call a *correspondance* will arrive at my house without any trouble, as though we were grand-duchesses!’ “‘I gave my name as Anna Paldoff,’ said Anna Pochowski, ‘and made myself out to be the sister-in-law of my sister — that was laughable! The *Duchesse* Pavlovna — she was in heliotrope silk with an ermine toque — the Princess Prisyrewski — everyone was there! The *Duchesse* Pavlovna said to my sister: “Have you no children?” “No, madame,” replied my sister. “Are you not married?” said she to me. “Not yet, madame,” I replied. She smiled, and said: “It is noble of you to wish to devote yourselves to your country.” And when it was all over and we came out again into the sunlight, I seemed to have had a dream. The commissary of police himself, in his long grey coat, led us out, after verifying the address of my sister from a great book in the ante-room, and we stepped into our sledge with the disdain of ladies of the Court.’ “In this way they went on chattering a long while, describing to me and reminding each other of every detail of their morning’s excitement, and I let them talk, hearing and not hearing them, for now that my plan had come off well, I was rather burdened in mind, for I had a pang when I thought of my father, Yoshio, and when I thought of the boldness of that which I was about to do, and of the terrible fates that have followed the steps of the children of my house. But this Anna Pochowski is a flighty being at bottom, given to fits and ecstasies, and from the moment when her mind became accustomed to the idea of the flight she has never had one *arrière-pensée*, but has been eager for the escapade. As for me, I spent nearly all the rest of that day on my knees in prayer.

“I thought at first that we should be able to leave St. Petersburg the following night, but as I was going in to dinner that first evening Ivan Shtcherbakoff whispered me in a corridor that, though he had been accepted as a volunteer at the recruiting dépôt on the English Quay, the draft of Opolchenie troops in which he was to be sent out would not start for three weeks or a month, since every train was being crowded with troops of the regular army. I could not wait so long, and I would not go without him. I therefore ran back with him to my apartments, and there put into his hands the whole of the 17,000 roubles for which Anna Pochowski had pawned some of my jewels that forenoon, in order that he might bribe with it the sergeant of recruits to give him a correspondance for an early train; he opened his eyes, saying that not nearly so much would be needful, but I would have him take all, lest there should be any risk of failure. He stole in upon me that same midnight while I was at prayer, handed me back more than three-quarters of the money, and said that all was arranged for the train which left the Nicholas Station at 11.30 on the third night thence.

“I could not tell you, dear Yoshio, of my tortures during the next two days, of my impatience on the one hand to set out to you, and also of the sudden pangs and chills in my heart, causing me to shrink back from this undertaking; at one moment I was in the lightest glee and at another in the deepest sadness. One by one these moods preyed upon me, or rather all of them together, though now one and now another was uppermost; for even when I could have danced for joy, I was aching under my joy, and even when I was in gloom, I could still smile, for a ray of light seemed to fall upon the face of my sweetheart: I saw you before me, and you seemed to call me to you. Oh, you should love me well when we meet, for I have suffered, Yoshio, and am suffering now.

“Anna Pochowski called me ‘a passionate young lady’; many times a day this was her word, ‘but you are far too passionate! ‘Madame la duchesse Okhta said that my eyes were ‘burning like black moons,’ and it was true, I could not help it; I had no rest, I was like one writhing in a fire, and was forced by Madame at the last to be seen by the doctor.

“That was at eight in the evening of our departure; by nine Anna Pochowski was taking to the station, by way of the garden, the handbags and the excess of our furs which we did not need for the moment. When she returned, I was writing a letter of farewell to Madame, but I tore it up, wrote another, tore that up, and at last thought that it would be safest to go without a written farewell at all. The time passed faster than I had thought that it would; Madame came from the salon about ten, chided me for not being in bed, covered me in a shawl, bandaged my head with vinegar, gave me my medicine, and so on. Her face wore a strange look, and I almost fainted for fright when she told me that she had scented violets that evening; for this is the token of trouble in our family. I hung upon her neck with sobs when she was about to leave me, but made her promise not to give herself the pains of coming back to my apartments that night. An hour later I was hasting with Anna Pochowski through the alley of the garden which leads to the gate near the Field of Mars. It was a windy night, piercingly cold. We passed into the Nevskiy Prospekt, and there got into one of the public sleighs, our faces being well muffled up. I felt Anna Pochowski, who cringed close to me, trembling violently, and I, too, shivered. At the Nicholas Station we found Ivan Shtcherbakoff waiting in his old busby and great-coat...”

CHAPTER XIII

VIOLETS ON THE SNOW



“I STOPPED WRITING, dear Yoshio, because of our arrival at one of the Ural villages, named Olba, where a draft of local reserves and recruits with *correspondances* for this train had to be taken in, so, you see, I am this much nearer to Irkutsk, this being the 24th at three in the afternoon. I am coming to you!

“At these stoppages it is always the same thing: reserves and raw recruits, and the rush from the train to the great *samovars* of hot tea. Anna Pochowski and I and Olga Zaleski usually go out to the little platform at the end of our car to watch it all, and Ivan Shtcherbakoff steps stiffly out of the train, and looks at me, and tries to smile. He makes my heart bleed.

“‘Ivan Shtcherbakoff will be a dead man long before we reach the river Obi,’ says Anna Pochowski always; ‘it is pitiable that he has no stove in his car.’

“‘Cheer up! cheer up!’ says Olga Zaleski, laughing.

“‘But who would treat even their cattle so?’ tas says Anna Pochowski angrily. ‘Forty of them in that car, and no stove, when the very horses are perishing.’

“Then Olga Zaleski begins to hum a tune, and to play the piano on her left palm. She, too, is going to Irkutsk as a nurse, and at first I was cold toward her, even when she confessed that she madly loved me, for she makes no secret of the fact that she is a Nihilist, and approves of dynamite;

but afterwards I had to like her, her spirit is so gay, so patient of our sorrows in this train, and so helpful to others. When things are at the worst she hums a tune, and plays the piano on her palm, though she has been three years in a political prison, which was enough to have broken another girl's spirit.

"She and Marie Cienkewitz, who also is to be a nurse, quarrel every hour, for if I show more friendship to one than to the other, the other pouts and is jealous. We seem to have been living together in this car for years, and to have known one another since we were born. I cannot imagine anyone but just them taking this voyage with me, and my father and home-life are mere shadows of memory to me compared with the reality of the voyage and of their presence.

"It is always the same thing at these stations: reserve-men, who are farmers and tradesmen of middle age, looking grave or sulky in their uniforms, and recruits, still clad in their peasant-dress, looking wretched and fierce; sometimes a woman faints at the last embrace; always there are tears and crowds, and the *samovar* of tea, and the rush from the train.

"We seem to have left the Urals now, and the next big thing is Omsk. There will be no more stopping for troops, for the cars are crammed with four hundred men, and I do not know how many horses, with military baggage, and a gun on a truck behind; we are going fast, and the train rocks like a ship that lacks ballast. It is cold, yes, it is cold; they say that there never was so late a winter. I shudder at the thought of Ivan Shtcherbakoff in his car, with thirty-nine others; it is only a horse-box of boards, painted in great black letters on the outside with 'Forty men or Eight Horses,' and its one little window is hardly larger than this note-book. Some of them have stoves, but that one has not. How should we here exist without our stove? Oh, may God and St. Nicholas succour the unfortunate!

“I am lying on my face on my shelf writing this, but the compartment is fast darkening; the glass is opaque with icicles; the night will be black; I can only just write, the train rocks so much, and I can hardly see any more now. We are going out into a wilderness of winter, and the engine shrieks out in a sad voice amid these solitudes. I also am sad, and could weep bitter tears....

“Anna Pochowski, Olga Zaleski and Marie Cienkewitz are round about the stove. I hear Marie Cienkewitz say tartly to Olga Zaleski: ‘You have had so much experience of the world, Olga Zaleski! You have run through the whole gamut of the emotions, so that your attractiveness for a child like Nadine Devriloff may well be greater than mine — if it *is* greater.’ Oh, it is, it is greater!’ cries Olga Zaleski with a gay laugh, ‘but do not be jealous because I have lived, while have been wearing night-caps.’ These two ladies seem to have nothing to do or think of, except to quarrel about me.

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“The 25th. Oh, Yoshio, I am very sad! In this frozen land, for the third time in my life, I have scented violets.

“It happened two hours ago, and I am still trembling.

“When I show you what I now write, in order that you may see what I underwent on this voyage, and when you read this about scenting violets, you will not at first understand how much this means to me, though you will not doubt the truth of what I say, that I did really scent them. I hasten, therefore, to explain to you that at the moment of scenting them I felt sure that some trouble was happening, either to myself or to some Devriloff somewhere. This is no fancy, Yoshio: it is *true*. Everyone at home knows that I am a sceptic about many things, but this is true. Nearly all the ladies of my race, and some of the men, have for ages scented violets when any disaster was happening. All my father’s sisters, one of my grandmothers,

my father himself, the *Duchesse* Okhta have scented them within my own memory; and I myself have scented them twice before to-day. I have no explanation to offer of this, for I am not sure that I myself believe the explanation which is given, namely, that a lady of our race in the sixteenth century, whose name was Martha, who was a saint, and who may have an odour of violets in the other world, comes to us to warn us of trouble; but what is certain is the fact that we do scent violets where no violets are — not a mere whiff of violets, but a powerful fragrance of which one can have no doubt.

“My aunt Catherine, who died in a collision near Paris, would not have had a violet in her house or gardens for all the kingdoms in the world. My father, on the contrary, fills the house with them, so that whenever he scents them he may be able to say to himself that the scent comes from the flowers about him.

“The last of us to scent violets, except Madame Okhta, who scented them on the evening of my flight, was my aunt Nadine in Shanghai. She had then been married only two months to her cousin Grigory, and they were on their wedding-tour. On the other side of a river, at a place called Hongku, they had some friends, and Grigory rowed over the river one night in a Canadian boat to see these friends. He did not return the next morning, but my aunt Nadine was not anxious, for he sometimes stayed away. That night, however, on going to bed, she scented violets; the next morning Grigory Devriloff had not returned. My aunt sat to breakfast, and was reading in an English newspaper that the body of a man, half eaten by fish, had been found in the river, when she was overpowered by a scent of violets: only nasturtiums were on the breakfast table, she says. Two days afterwards the skiff of Grigory Devriloff was found bottom-upwards. But some time

before the drowned man was proved to be my aunt's husband, she had a third scent of violets.

"I scented violets when I was nine years old — all the ladies at our Summer-palace scented them that day — when my aunt Catherine was killed in a collision in France. I scented them again when I was thirteen, when my cousin Nicholas was killed in a duel at Vladivostock; and I scented them again to-day.

"We had arrived about one o'clock at Omsk, where the train stopped for the usual outrush to the *samovar*, and the usual uproar. I and my party left the train, found out Ivan Shtcherbakoff in the crowd, and took him in with us to eat something, for in the middle of the day only black bread is served out to the troops. When we had had some soup and a glass of tea, and were returning to the train, I heard one of the station-men say to an officer, 'You will not get far this afternoon, for there are two snow-drifts on the metals.'

"This turned out to be true, for we had hardly gone on eight or ten versts from Omsk, when we came upon a hill of snow, with about thirty men about it, working to clear a way for the train. Snow with flakes as large as my hand was falling, choking all the air, and turning the day into twilight, so that the men of the excavating-party not far away looked like the shadows of gnomes. I had gone out on the platform at the end of the car to look out at them, for usually I do not feel the winter so keenly as most people, and the terrible atmosphere in the car with its stove is often worse to me than the parching cold outside; and I was standing there alone, well wrapped in my furs, looking into the snow-fall as far as the thirty or forty feet limit where the country became blotted out, and hearing the roar of imprisoned voices which came from some of the troop-cars, when on a sudden I scented violets. Ah, Yoshio, what, then, has happened to your poor sweetheart? My father may have been killed...

I was almost fainting, but would not stay there alone another moment; I found the strength to rush back into the car, where I fell into Olga Zaleski's arms. They all prayed me to tell them what was the matter, but I would not, and for fully a quarter of an hour, while I lay on Olga Zaleski's lap, I thought that I could continue to detect whiffs of violets, though that may have been my fancy; then I had to laugh, for Marie Cienkewitz, whom I like very much, too, began to say cutting things to Olga Zaleski; but a sob hiccupped in my laugh, dear, you may be sure.

“Presently Anna Pochowski, taking me aside, whispered me: ‘You have scented violets, have you not?’ And I answered: ‘Yes.’

“Half an hour later the train was on its way again.

CHAPTER XIV

NADINE'S HAPS



“THE 27TH. I have been feeling very unwell; yesterday I did not rise from bed. At nine in the night of the day when I scented violets two dead bodies were removed from the train at a station. I saw their faces in the light of the lanterns, and all the night they haunted my dreams. Another of the men went mad this morning, and it took a crowd of them to get him from the train — a lank young peasant, a Pole, and his eyes seemed once to rest on me — such eyes! We shall all be mad, I think.

“I had no idea before what cold is. Last night our stove went out, and this morning Anna Pochowski, who was up early, happening to put her hand on the metal, took it away all raw, and we all got up in pain. I and Marie Cienkewitz bathed together in hot water, and now the pains are gone; but I feel as if I had been fighting against something a world too strong for me, which at last has crushed me.

“We do not speak much now; even Olga Zaleski says little. At first, at the dinner-table, there was much talk among the twelve ladies, but not lately. The old train-guard, who goes about with revolvers at his belt, tells me that the cold is even worse than in other years. It is too unfriendly to life, several of the horses even have given in; we see from here the press and noise round their bodies when they are being taken away. When I think of the men cooped up in their boxes, cold, unwashed, ill-dad, and breathing a foul air, my heart pities them. At the last station a Uhlan was carried from the

train, hdd up between two others; he seemed to have lost the use of his legs, and I do not think was brought back.

“There are at least four more days of it before Irkutsk — four days, if we meet no snow-drifts; others will be dead or maimed by then, and if I had had any dream of it, I should never have brought Ivan Shtcherbakoff with me.

“And I have another misery, Yoshio, within the last two days — fears that when I reach Irkutsk I may, for some reason or other, not see you. If this should happen, *mon ami*! But it is only the depressing power of this voyage that brings such a thought before my spirit: always the same sound, the clack, clack of the engine, like something gone wrong in one’s brain; always the same scene, a blank of whiteness, with a belt of firs on the horizon, and lonely stacks of firewood: it is depressing, and lately I am haunted with all sorts of terrors. You spoke in your letter of a thought which you had of escaping from your hospital, and I say to myself, ‘Suppose he has really escaped, and has gone to me in St. Petersburg, while I am going to him in Irkutsk?’ But that would be too hard, the gracious God would not allow it to befall us. Or again I say, ‘Suppose he has tried to escape, and has been captured and shot?’ or, ‘Suppose he has got better of his wound, and has been taken to a military prison in some other town than Irkutsk?’ I imagine many things all the day and most of the night; when I sleep the noises of the train turn into words, and speak of fresh woes to my brain. I am indeed very sick, and have nearly always pains in the head; but my hope is in the good God, who brought you to St. Petersburg in order that I might know you and lavish my sold upon you, and in order that we may be together and have offspring, as is usual among married couples.

“The train is now slowing down to enter a station; they come every two hours, and at this one we mean to get out, to escape from the train, and to

give Ivan Shtcherbakoff some mid-day soup and a glass of tea. The armed attendant is going down the corridor, calling out a word which sounds like ‘Bers.’

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At all these stations it is the same set of scenes that happen again, but at this Berski we have been delayed a long while, and something fearful has taken place, for there has been an *emeute*, two men have been shot, and we have all been very excited.

Here, as usual, the officers in their furs were swaggering among the miserable men, whose ikons of St. Nicholas and St. Vladimir are their only wealth, and, ah! I never thought to witness such sights: it is obscene! I have made Ivan Shtcherbakoff give them three thousand of my roubles; but what is that among four hundred, when everything is sold at high prices? for there is a famine, and the peasants whom one sees near the railway-track look starved. Ah, it is a terrible war, and my country has suffered, but God will uphold her cause, for you should not have said in your letter, Yoshio, that you think Russia ‘not perhaps quite in the right this time.’ Yes, Russia is right, and Japan is *wrong*; and this I will prove to you when we shall have met, when we shall have settled happily in our home, and when we shall have found time to talk of such matters.

“But I was speaking of this Berski *emeute*. Though all is over, and the train is again on its way, I can still hear the last quiet sobs of Olga Zaleski, who sits with her face in her hands, weeping at the shooting of the two men. It was horrible, though that was the greatest blessing that could have happened to them, to put them out of their miseries.

“Eight or nine of us ladies were at the buffet, the men were in rank on the platform, and a ration of black bread was being given them. I had noticed anew the stare of some as I went in, while some looked drowsy, like

hibernating animals. All were most sallow, and as unkempt as rubbish. Some blinked at the daylight. I could not write of the odour of them, nor of the hardening of their hearts; they growl remarks as the ladies pass, for they have seen their comrades die by inches, and have lost the feelings of pity and respect; indeed, some of the faces were those of dying men, with tainted noses and ears. One elderly Ural peasant, with whom I have spoken, coughs in a manner that I could not have pictured to myself; his eyes haunt one's sleep. Ivan Shtcherbakoff is very hale and hard, and has had better food than the others, but each time I see his face I again have to vow my life to the care of his old age.

“Little did I think that so sad a crew were about to make such a noise. We others were at the buffet, drinking tea, and listening to an excise-officer of the village, who was telling the news of the war movements since the last great battle, when we heard a hoot of many voices, and Olga Zaleski remarked to me: ‘An officer must be flogging one of them again; I can’t stand it any longer!’ Almost as she said this, there was heard a cry of freedom and wrath which struck into me a feeling of awe. That instant Ivan Shtcherbakoff leapt to my side, and I found myself caught up to my nurse’s breast in his left arm, while he ran with me to the door of the buffet, brandishing a large knife in his right hand. We were met by, as it were, a crowd of furies. The men had broken loose, and were making for the buffet in order to loot it, having trampled upon one of the officers; some other officers were among them lashing with knouts, like drowning men struggling for life; and the din! for every one seemed to be shouting at the top of his voice. I saw down their throats, and their eyes were like mad people’s; but the onset upon them by Ivan Shtcherbakoff with his knife was so threatening, that he got through safely with me, and close upon his heels

came the ladies, so that none of us were much hurt; indeed, the men were thinking of other things than of us.

“They at once filled the buffet, many of them still crowding outside the door for lack of room. We others ran back to the train, and stood on the little ledge, looking on at the riot; there were several noises of woodwork and glass splintering; then, after five minutes of it, there were two pistol-shots.

“But it was an hour before the men were drawn up again; even then some of them would not stop dancing in twos and threes, for they had been drinking vodka.

“Olga Zaleski could not be kept from going to see the two bodies in the very middle of the trouble.

I did not see them, but one was a student whom I have noticed, the other was an *izvostchik* of Moscow.

“Two days more —

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“The 28th. Two more men dead this morning, though it is said to be no longer so cold. Anna Pochowski has not risen, and I made my own toilet. She has flutterings of the heart.

“It is not long now, yet I feel very sad. Is it - that my father is dead? I know that something has happened.

“I ought to be gay, for Olga Zaleski has told me — what I had an instinct of before — that if a Japanese, wounded and taken prisoner, can show that he is the husband of a Russian lady, he would be set at liberty on undertaking not to fight again in this war. All will therefore be well to that extent. But why did Madame Okhta scent violets on the night of my going away? I wish that we were at Irkutsk.

“The 29th. I cannot write anything to-day, I am too near to you! Even the country is looking different, with more woods and hills, and at the last two stations some Mongolian sorts of people in padded clothes. They say that there will be no more snow-drifts across the metals. Anna Pochowski is going through our clothes, brushing the furs, counting the money and jewels, and making ready. Marie Cienkewitz says that I am as wild as a bird, and, in truth, my skin burns. Olga Zaleski has tied up my head like a peasant’s in a handkerchief steeped in eau de Cologne, and, touching it anon, says, ‘Poor little head!’ Tomorrow at this hour you will have been in my arms...

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“The 4th (of April). I have crossed to side of Lake Baikal. The name of this little town is Pirin; here the new train which took us in on the east side of the lake stops three hours. I shall be able to go on in her as far as a place called Dinskaya, up to which point the railway is still in our hands. From Dinskaya I do not know by what means I am to go on still farther, but I shall go on, if I have to trudge barefoot through snow for a year till I come to the Japanese; and I shall claim my husband from them. God only grant that no report of me may reach my father meantime.

“He is alive somewhere about this country, and this comforts me, for I had felt sure that he was dead; but I see now that my scenting violets had nothing to do with him, but with you: it was on the 25th of March that I scented them, and that was the day on which you left Irkutsk.

“Both I and Anna Pochowski have been sick: I suppose that the journey across the lake has been too much for us. She can hardly any more hold up her head, poor girl, but mourns all the time, and foretells for us all sorts of trouble. I try to put courage into her, but she will not hear, and answers always: ‘I told you beforehand how it would be.

“We crossed the Angara river and arrived at Irkutsk at eleven in the morning of the 30th of March. Olga Zaleski had with her the address of a hotel in the avenue called Roitshaya Ulitsa, and to this we drove in a droshky through streets teeming with soldiers, Jews, Buriats, students in their uniforms, priests, nuns, and many sorts of people. Every one seemed to be in the streets and in a hurry, so that the town was like a hive. This pleased me highly, for I was feverish and like one let out of prison; the voyage seemed a nightmare from which I was now at last awaked. Olga Zaleski smiled to see me chattering and pointing at the people with their strange costumes and faces. It was a bright morning, and the cold no longer seemed to us a foe, but a wine. We came to our hotel, which overlooked a church called the Church of Gregory of Nyssa, and I think that I shall never forget this church, it is associated in my mind with so much grief.

“After we had had *déjeuner* in a room on the second floor opening upon a balcony, Olga Zaleski went out to report herself to the Red Cross people, whereupon I sent Ivan Shtcherbakoff to find his way to the military hospital, there to ask about you.

“He had hardly gone when I again began to feel sorrowful. For the first time something seemed to tell me clearly, ‘You will not see Yoshio, since that would be too good to happen to Nadine Devriloff.’ I sat out on the balcony, looking out for the coming back of Ivan Shtcherbakoff.

“Ah, Yoshio, when he came I read my lot in his shy eyes. He said with a mock gaiety that my father was alive and well somewhere on the yon eastern side of the lake; but of you he said not a word.

“‘But what about Yoshio M — , Ivan Shtcherbakoff?’ I asked.

“‘There never was such a person in the hospital, then,’ he answered shyly, shifting his feet, and looking away at the Church of Gregory of Nyssa.

“‘That is nonsense,’ I said; ‘there certainly has been, and there is.’ But now it struck me that you may have given a false name at the hospital, through fear of my father.

“I therefore sent back Ivan Shtcherbakoff to the hospital, telling him to ask after a Japanese boy of eighteen years in the ward where the Duchesse Krastalynski, of whom you had written me, was a nurse.

“Hope had again risen in me. While he was gone, I pictured to myself so clearly the foolish look on my sweetheart’s face when he should hear the words, ‘*Nadine is in Irkutsk*,’ that at one moment I laughed aloud, so that Anna Pochowski called out to me: ‘What is it now?’

“When Ivan Shtcherbakoff came back he told me that he had seen the *duchesse* herself, and she had said to him that there *had* been such a young man of eighteen years in her ward, but that he, together with a number of other Japanese prisoners, had been sent to Liao-yang on the 25th of March, in exchange for some Russian prisoners set free by the Japanese.

“When Anna Pochowski heard Ivan Shtcherbakoff say this she let herself fall upon the rug and fainted away. Ivan Shtcherbakoff fell to his knees, kissing my hands, saying again and again, ‘It will turn out bravely, do not be afraid, it will yet turn out bravely.’

“I did not say anything; I looked away at the façade of the church, with its many pear-shaped cupolas, and somehow I shall never forget them. I grew as it were older in looking at them, for it seemed strange to me that things should be so hard.

“Anna Pochowski soon came to, and now that everything was against me, she, too, turned against me, seeming to find out suddenly upon how laughable an adventure she had been duped to set out with me, calling herself a fool, and calling me a magpie, a trapped bird, while I looked away at the church without saying anything, and Ivan Shtcherbakoff washed my

hands with his tears, beseeching me, saying a hundred times, 'It will turn out bravely, do not be afraid.'

"'But what shall we do?' cried Anna Pochowski. 'We are lost! We cannot return to Russia, for no train will take us, nor can we live here, for most of the money has been given to those wretches in the train, and it is ill to travel in the same sleigh with those who do not look before, as the saying is. Or else Prince Devriloff will catch us, and Ivan Shtcherbakoff and I will be done for; but I was ever the most unlucky child of my mother.'

"'I am going to the Japanese to seek my husband,' said I, 'and I shall be glad if you will come too, Anna Pochowski.'

"'See! she does not despair, the darling!' cried Ivan Shtcherbakoff in a glow; 'she is braver than a lion. But is that a settled thing?'

"'Yes,' said I.

"'We shall have to cross the lake, on the ice. Are you not afraid of the voyage, and of the Japanese?' he asked me.

"'No,' said I.

"'Bravely! bravely!' he cried out. 'But, then, we shall have to be quick, or we shall lose this train, and our *correspondances* will not serve for another.'

"As he spoke I was on my feet.

"In five minutes we three were in a droshky, and twenty minutes afterwards I was again in the train, in my old apartment; yet it was not the same, for the presence of Olga Zaleski and of Marie Cienkewitz was no longer there, and "all was desolate about me. It seems to be the will of Heaven that we of my race should meet with troubles, but I had come far on a long voyage through many snows, and when I thought in how different a frame of mind I had left the car that morning, I could not help casting

myself upon my shelf as the train moved out, and I gave myself to the bitterest tears which I have yet shed.

“Soon after this a nurse who was being sent from the military hospital at Irkutsk to the yon east side of the lake came into my apartment, saw that I had been crying, and entered into talk with me. I asked her if she had seen you at the hospital, but she said no. She told me that fighting between small parties had been going on ever since the last great battle; that some daring Japanese patrols had pushed on far north of Mukden, and had exchanged shots with our garrisons, while, on the other hand, our troops were skirmishing even beyond Liaoyang, which is held by the Japanese. It seems that the Japanese cannot follow up their victory until they have ‘made good’ the ground behind them; but they worry our troops while we add to our army to drive them back out of Liaoyang.

“I asked her if she knew where General Devriloff was, but she could not tell me.

“We reached the village of Baikal on the west shore of the lake soon after four in the afternoon; it was misty, in spite of an east wind, and already the shades of evening were gathering. On either hand I saw mountains like shadows, and before us the lake, with the hull of a ship out on it a little to the right. All was shadowy; the ship, leaning on the ice without any masts, looked as if she had been left there in loneliness for ages; she was the one which breaks the ice and carries the trains across when it begins to thaw: but at present the ice is still three feet thick.

“It was as much as I could do to cheer Anna Pochowski and give her heart for the crossing when, having stepped down from the train to the landing-stage, she looked abroad on the bleak plain of the lake, and heard the noise of the wind. Yes, it indeed blew cuttingly, so that we all flinched

from its touch: far into it we could not see, but in what lay beyond the mist we knew that sickness, pain, and perhaps death were awaiting our coming.

“Meantime, we three could hardly get near the crowd of basket-sleighs, for the troops had made a rush down the flight of stairs to the ice for them, and there was a scrimmage which lasted a long while, each man seeking to be among the next to depart. I saw sleigh after sleigh start off, the jingling of their bells borne to us on the storm even after they had become hidden in the mist, while darkness fell ever faster; till at last I, too, was leaving the white cliffs of the western shore behind, and was off down the rows of poles that mark out the ice-track throughout the fifty versts of its breadth.

“The wind blew against us with as steady a motion as that of a sea in flight; we went forward with the top of our heads turned to it, but it seemed too much for us. Anna Pochowski wailed, but her words were drowned in the noise of its rush past our ears, and very soon she no longer said anything. But mixed with the noise of the wind I heard the voice of our old driver, an old Amurski Jew clad in sheepskins, crooning some dirge or hymn, as all these drivers do throughout the voyage. After an hour or so we had become very drowsy, and I think that this crooning had a deepening effect upon our drowsiness, it was so bleak and strange, for it was like a lullaby crooned not by a man but by the elements of the storm, of the ice, and of the darkness, in order to charm us into the slumber that never awakes.

“Another long hour passed somehow. Anna Pochowski seemed to have lost consciousness, for when I spoke to her she did not answer; she sat with her head drooping, and I put one of my own wraps about her, for the girls of the people cannot be expected to bear up against extremes of hardship like those of noble blood. Sometimes she fell against me, or we all fell against one another, for the ice is not very smooth. We three were alone in our

sleigh, but the troop-sleighs carried five or even six packed together. Anon Ivan. Shtcherbakoff would rouse himself, break our silence, and try to laugh, saying, 'Not much further now, bravely, bravely!' or suchlike words.

"After yet another hour I was aware of a light and of a crowd of sleighs standing still before a house; it was that which is called the 'half-way house.' We managed to rouse Anna Pochowski, and got out, while the troop-sleighs which had been just behind us went on past the house without stopping. This curious little place, built mainly of felt, was full of officers drinking, one of whom called Ivan Shtcherbakoff a dog, and got from me a look which he may remember. There were also a few nurses in the other half of the room. We drank shtchee (cabbage-soup) and tea, and I have never eaten so eagerly; the warmth was nice, and made what we had passed through, and what we had still to pass through, seem the more dark and awful.

"'It was for this that I was born,' said Anna Pochowski, with her forehead on the table, 'in order that I might die in the snows.'

"'Let us trust in the good God, Anna Pochowski,' I said, 'and we shall yet reach the other side of the lake safely.'

"'It is the good God who has sent the cold and wind upon us, and many, many a one of us will never see the end of this matter,' she mourned.

"Upon this I heard the sleigh-drivers outside shouting and dapping their hands, and I said, 'Come, Anna Pochowski, for when there is only one thing to be done, one must do it.' So she rose and came with me.

"But there was a look on the face of Ivan Shtcherbakoff which I did not like: it was pinched and at bay like the face of the dying, and I had fears for him. When we were in the sleigh again, I wrapped him up thickly. As we set off with the wind in our faces and the bells jingling, our old Amurski Jew began to croon to himself the same dirge again.

“All before and behind us were the lights of sleighs like funeral torches, and on a side-track also were the lights of those sleighs which bore the military stores, for some of these heavy four-horsed ones had caught us up while we were at the halfway house; otherwise nothing was to be seen, it was so dark, and the ice had hills and holes which jerked us this way and that. What made it worse was that one of the officers, a major with a dark beard, a rather handsome fellow, must have told his driver to keep by us, in order that he might make eyes at me in the light of our two sleighs, so that for half an hour I was kept in terror of a collision. He little dreamt that I, so young, was already a bride. Twice he spoke to me from sleigh to sleigh, but at last my fierce looks caused him to disappear.

“When we reached Tankhoi on the other side I was torpid, Anna Pochowski was again insensible, and I thought that Ivan Shtcherbakoff was dead. He had to be lifted out of the sleigh, but I got leave from the train-officials to have him in my compartment in the new train. His face was blue, his ears and nose were frost-bitten, and he lay for two hours with his head on my lap, breathing in a terrifying way; I could not tell you what I passed through then. But he is now lying on the rugs in the room where I write this, and is looking better.

“We are now at Perin, as I said before, where the train arrived this morning, and stops three hours. It will soon be time for us to go back to it.

“Between here and Dinskaya, beyond which our trains do not any longer go, there is only one long stoppage, at Karinsk, where we stop two hours. Thence we go on to Dinskaya; and from Dinskaya I hope to find means to travel toward the Japanese, till I come upon some one who will direct me how to get to my husband.

CHAPTER XV

THE PRISONER OF WAR



“THE 6TH. AH, Yoshio, when you know what befell me two days after I wrote the above you will die of pity, if you do not shake with laughter.

“After departing from Perm, where I last wrote, we arrived at Karinsk at about four in the afternoon. It was at Karinsk that Ivan Shtcherbakoff was bound to join the ranks of the Opolchenie battalion for which he had volunteered; but inasmuch as I had not found you, he had made up his mind not to give himself up at the barracks, but to come with me to the end.

“We saw, however, that the risk was great, for notice of his coming must have been sent to headquarters here from St. Petersburg, and Karinsk is not a large town where one may hide oneself. When, therefore, he had come with Anna Pochowski and me to the inn, he left us in order to walk about the country, till the train should be about to start again.

“We two others went into the inn, a house with a far-Eastern look in the middle of a court; the eaves were low, and some of the windows had bars of iron across them, as in prisons. We were led by a stout Mongolian woman, who could speak some Russian, into a room at the back, on the ground floor, and soon were eating a stew of rice and meat. While we were paying the woman for this, she entered into talk with us, telling us that a skirmish had been fought an hour before among the hills not two miles from the town, over twenty men on our side having been killed; also that one of the

Russian generals had just arrived in the town, and some rooms had been taken for his staff in the inn.

“When the woman left us, I looked at my watch and saw that we had an hour and a quarter yet to wait. Our room was small, with one door, one barred window, and no furniture, only a mat and some cushions. We were seated on two of the cushions: and presently Anna Pochowski began to nod, the afternoon to darken, and I also to feel drowsy, for we had not even yet got over our night on the lake.

“But on a sudden I started, I found myself wide awake and listening; I had heard a deep voice say in the room beyond the door: ‘I want to see the quarter-master-general, also the roll of today’s contingent. My train starts at eight, so that our time is precious.’

“Yoshio, I felt myself undone! it was my father’s voice.

“*He* was the general of whose coming into the town our hostess had told me! And he was travelling — perhaps to Russia, to seek for me. If he had but opened that door, he would have found me! I sat with a quickly-beating heart, quiet as a mouse, shrinking even from the hard breathing of Anna Pochowski’s sleep.

“After about ten minutes I covered her mouth with my hand, and whispered into her ear: ‘*Wake up and listen!*’

“My father was still talking, giving orders, and I could tell that a good many people were about him. The thought in my head was, ‘Suppose he comes in here? or suppose he remains there an hour, how shall I get through to our train?’

“If we missed our train, we should not be taken in any other; we could not get through the window, even if we could have reached it, for not only was it too small, but it had a bar across: our only way out was the room in which my father was.

“Anna Pochowski sat staring with her mouth open, and I thought to myself, ‘Now she may well call me a trapped bird, a poor little foolish magpie’; and I lifted up my eyes and prayed as I had never prayed.

“Meanwhile, the time was flying, the evening darkening. I looked often at my watch; it became 5.15, then 5.30; our train started at 6. When Anna Pochowski wished to whisper to me I would not hear her, but pushed away her mouth with my hand, flinching from the least sound.

“I did not know what to do; I could only pray from my heart and make vows to every saint.

I went near to the door, and whispered: ‘Papa, be good to me, and go away.’

“Then I thought I must see where he was, what he was doing, though I died for it, and after some minutes, in which my fears struggled with this wish, I very slowly opened the door a very little, and peeped. He was sitting with his back to my door at a table on which was a lamp, a spy-glass and a cup of water, with papers, large books and maps, and round the table were seven or eight officers on stools, with other men standing near them. They were all busy, and looked as if they might be there for hours.

“While I was peeping at them, my heart leapt anew into my mouth, for I heard a sound behind me, a voice which uttered the one word ‘take.’ I closed the door with a slight noise, I was so startled, for it was not Anna Pochowski’s voice. Only she was in the room, I could see nothing to account for the voice; but I saw her staring at the barred window, and when I, too, looked there I saw something being pushed in from the outside: when it fell to the floor we saw that it was a pair of the green knickerbockers which our soldiers wear.

“I was anew amazed at this, not having any thought what it could mean; we were staring at it, when again we heard the voice say ‘take,’ and at once

another pair of knickerbockers was seen coming in.

“But now all at once I was no longer puzzled, for in that second ‘take’ my ear had caught the voice of Ivan Shtcherbakoff.

“The things now began to come fast, I could not dream whence Ivan Shtcherbakoff had got them — two double-breasted blouses, sheepskin coats, greatcoats, muskets, long-boots; then a crowd of smaller things dropped to us as fast as we could catch them — mess-tins, belts, forage-caps, two of each; last of all came a pair of scissors. When nothing any more came, I darted a glance at my watch, and with my soul on my lips I whispered into Anna Pochowski’s ear: ‘We have ten minutes in which to dress in these,’ for it was fifteen minutes to six, and I knew that it would take us five minutes at least to run to the station.

“Happily, I knew very well the dress of our soldiers: I knew that the kit-bag is hung over the right shoulder and not over the left, that the bandolier with its cartridges goes over the left, and not over the right; I had been too much mixed up with army-people all my life not to know how to wear the belt with its pouches, or not to know where the aluminium water-bottle was to hang; and Anna Pochowski watched me as I put mine on.

“I noticed a little blood on both the blouses, but what dismayed me was the growing weight even without the bayonet, for I felt that we could never run with all that. Everything except the cap, was too big for me, but this the more hid our figures, and as all Russian soldiers wear loose things, except the Guards, the bagginess was a blessing, for only the boots were markedly big, and these the foot-bandages filled out. The instant all was done, I had Anna Pochowski’s hair dropping in flocks of gold under the scissors. While she was doing the same to mine, I glanced again at my watch: it was four minutes to six.

“We threw on the greatcoats and the caps, caught up the bayonets — mine reached a foot above my head when the butt was grounded! Then I whispered, ‘For heaven’s sake do not forget to salute — like this,’ and I showed her how; then, without losing a moment, I opened the door and passed out, walking like a man, but seeing nothing: for my heart on a sudden went weak, and everything swam before my eyes.

“Anna Pochowski followed behind me...

“The group of officers in the room must have wondered where we sprang from; I fancy that some of them glanced up with some surprise, and how I found the courage to salute, and how Anna Pochowski managed not to faint, I do not know; she was trembling long after it. However, I stopped in the middle, and with ‘eyes front’ saluted, taking care not to turn my face toward my father. Whether Anna Pochowski saluted or not I do not know; I do not think so.

“All at once we were running down the court, free and safe, out into the street, Ivan Shtcherbakoff with us, and we ran hard, the dear old Cossack a little ahead, making the pace, and glancing back at us. We had to pull up once, for Anna Pochowski could run no more, but while she got back her wind we walked fast, then ran again, and such a heat to reach the train possessed me, that in the end I was before them both, Anna Pochowski having now been left well behind; but when I ran upon the platform all I could see of the train in the half-dark was a bull’s-eye light moving away from me, and a truck bearing away a gun which pointed at me.

“We might well have been in time, if that would not have been too good a thing to happen to me: for if we had only cast away our bayonets on leaving the inn, that would have lightened us; or if we had not troubled to put on the foot-bandages and some of the other things which were useless to

disguise us, that would have saved time; but we had been in too great a heat to give anything a thought, for the heads of two poor girls in a flurried state are not worth much. I can only think that so it was to be: but when the truck at the end of the train vanished with its gun behind the bush of the plain, everything seemed to be over for me.

“The train took with her nearly all our money and jewels, and those of the furs which we had not cast off at the inn: for I had left the hand-bags in the care of one of the train-stewards.

“Anna Pochowski ran upon the platform gasping out, ‘Are we in time?’ I did not answer her. We sat on the bench on the platform drooping and silent, she trembling, but unable to weep. No one but us was there. The moon rose in the sky over a plain without any trees, but covered with bush, which lay before us. Ivan Shtcherbakoff did not dare to speak to me, feeling how far I was beyond his comfort; I had not the strength to live any further, there was nothing, I thought, to live for; even Anna Pochowski shrank from speaking to me.

“After a time she said in a low voice, ‘Where did you get these uniforms, Ivan Shtcherbakoff?’

“‘I got them from two dead soldiers,’ said he; ‘there was a battle here late this afternoon, and I saw these bodies in some bush while I was wandering outside the town. I returned to the inn about five o’clock to ask after you, for I was anxious, having heard at a drink-shop that the General was in the town; when I questioned the woman of the inn she told me that the General was within, told me in which room he was, and in which you were. I saw that nothing could be done, except to disguise you, so I ran back to where I had seen the bodies, and I stripped them. It has turned out nastily, and it is my doing only, for my legs are no longer young ones, though I ran hard, too, and she sits there like a stone and says nothing to me.’

“‘Ah, it is well enough with her, but it is ill with you and with me, Ivan Shtcherbakoff,’ said Anna Pochowski; ‘the jewels and money are gone in the train — everything: do not talk to me of hope. In an hour we shall be in the Prince’s hands, I in this costume, with my hair cut close to my head, holding a soldier’s bayonet, and it was for this that I was born.’

“At this moment, when she mentioned my father, the thought that he would depart ‘at eight o’clock’ came into my mind, and with it the feeling that, he being once away, everything might still be hoped for: since, if I could not hire a cart to go whither I wished, I could walk, were it across the world; at which feeling I stood up, and was about to tell the others to come with me out of the town, till my father should be gone, when I saw three soldiers talking in low voices and looking at us. I had not noticed them before, so that they must have come upon the platform stealthily, and a fear struck to my heart that they were there to seize Ivan Shtcherbakoff.

“They moved slowly toward us. I saw that they were non-commissioned officers.

“‘What is your name, my friend?’ said one of them to Ivan Shtcherbakoff.

“My old nurse turned sallow, and gave a false name.

“‘When did you arrive in Karinsk?’

“‘To-day, my sergeant.’

“‘By the train from Russia?’

“Ivan Shtcherbakoff hesitated, then said yes to this.

“‘Then you admit you are a soldier?’ asked the sergeant.

“Ivan Shtcherbakoff did not answer.

“‘But, then, why are you not in your barracks?’ asked the sergeant.

“‘I am not for Karinsk, I am for the detachment in Dinskaya, but I have missed the train, my sergeant.’”

““ Of what arms are you?” asked the sergeant.

““I am an old Amurski Cossack who has passed through the reserve category, and I have volunteered for service in the Ural voisko, my sergeant,’ said Ivan Shtcherbakoff in a pleading voice.

““But, then, that is a foolish kind of lie which you have told,’ said the sergeant, ‘seeing that no Cossacks are quartered on Dinskaya. Show me your *correspondance*’

“Ivan Shtcherbakoff had to show this, the paper shivering in his dear old hand. He had not a word to say.

“Meanwhile, one of the other two sergeants had been peering at the divisional number on the shoulder-straps of Anna Pochowski and of myself, and at the regimental number on our cap-bands; and all at once this man cried out: ‘But what in heaven’s name are *these* two fellows doing here?’

“At that terrible moment I could hardly keep from laughing when I saw the foolish face which Anna Pochowski turned up to the man; and this throe of laughter did me good, giving me as it were a fresh start in life. I managed to whisper to her, ‘In the name of God do not betray your sex, whatever happens’: for what I dreaded most of all was to be found out by my father.

“The men then began to question us two, and I found an answer to most things, for all my wits were on the *qui vive*. They asked if we had taken part in the skirmish that afternoon; I answered, ‘either we or our doubles.’

‘Then, why,’ they asked, ‘had we not returned with our companies to barracks?’ ‘Having been touched by lead in the battle,’ I answered, ‘we thought it within our right to enjoy ourselves a little.’

““But did you ever hear of such a thing?’ they asked one another, chuckling.

““You look pretty green. Are you one of the new recruits?’ one of them asked me. I nodded.

“But still, you know enough to be aware that you are skulkers, and that you are about to pay for it with a dozen cuts of the knout, and at least fourteen days in the provost-cells. As for you’ — he said this to my old nurse— ‘you are known, my man; you have been looked for all the afternoon, and it may be that your captain will have a word to say to you. It is not strange that things turn out nastily, if this is the stuff of which the army is made. Come along.’

We went with them up a steep street and beyond the town toward some barracks on a heath. What lay before us now I could not guess, but I rejoiced that these sergeants, though they had taken upon themselves to arrest us, were not of our own regiment, and evidently did not know the faces of the men whose clothes we wore; and I found the chance to whisper again to Anna Pochowski: ‘Stick to me this once more, do not betray your sex.’

“The walk was long; on the top of the heath we could see far off the lighted windows of the barracks, like those of some palace in strange lands, but no living thing, except a few camels and cattle browsing. Only the sergeants spoke. My old nurse strode by my side with a straight neck, like a man being led to the guillotine and having no remark to make about it, only knowing that so the matter stands. I was weary when we reached the barrack-gate, weary of my misfortunes and of the musket. As the two sergeants passed the sentry into the quadrangle, one of them said to Ivan Shtcherbakoff ‘this way’; my old nurse then caught my hand in a secret grip that hurt me, whispered into my ear the words: ‘forgive the old man,’ and strode away after the sergeant. I have never seen him since. He may be dead.

“Anna Pochowski and I were led another way to a small door near a corner of the courtyard, and thence through the building to a room in which

a piquet of six soldiers lounged in their undress round a stove. Our sergeant spoke a few words to them, then looked at the matricular numbers on our uniforms, and left us standing there. A yard or two away I could hear the tread of a sentry whom I could not see.

“‘Ah, Anna Pochowski,’ I now said, taking my poor Anna aside, ‘we are in a fix now, we two, and this is what your love for me has brought you to. But will you be brave still, and not let me fall into my father’s hands? Think how, if you had a sweetheart, you would wish to be with him, for you know a girl’s heart and the hunger that is in it, and think of our confusion of face if we are found out: so let us be women, equal to anything, and more than equal. Whatever is about to happen to us, it may not be for long, for my father is going away, and in a few days, when we see our way, we can say what we are. Promise me not to scream, not to faint.... You do not hold the bayonet well, Anna Pochowski’ — so I kept on pleading with her, kissing her cheeks behind the men’s backs, while she stared upon the ground; till an elderly man with a sword at his belt came in and stood looking at us over the rim of his spectacles for some time, as if we were strange sheep. I think he was a provost-marshal, and with him was the quartermaster-sergeant who had brought us there, and an army-gendarme in a light-blue tunic.

“‘Well, Alen Blinow, and you, Martin Alexandrow,’ said the elderly man at last, ‘what fly has stung you, that you have taken leave of your senses?’

“We did not answer. I understood that he had got our names from the register by means of our matricular numbers reported to him by the sergeant; and I rejoiced that he had no inkling of the truth.

“‘Well, put them in the guard-room till tomorrow morning,’ said he, whereat we went after the gendarme to a near door, at which a sentry was pacing. We entered, our muskets were taken from us, and the door was locked behind us.

“A sloping bench as broad as the length of a man ran round the walls, with three prisoners lying asleep on it. We sat there, and on laying my hand on Anna Pochowski’s, I could feel it ice-cold through her two-fingered cloth-glove and my own.

“There I sat all the night, shaking with cold, yet as it were not feeling it, I was so lost in greater woes. It seemed to me strange that things should be so hard on a young girl who had not meant to do any harm.

“But, as I sat — it was near morning then — a key turned in the lock, the door flew open, and a voice cried out: ‘Martin Alexandrow, come to the roll-call of your company.’

“I knew that I was Martin Alexandrow, for I had been so addressed during the night. I stood up. Anna Pochowski was fast asleep. I could just see her face in the faint light, and gave it a lingering look, for I understood that it must be something important which caused them to bring me out of prison before my trial. Then I followed the gendarme who had called me.

“That was three months ago, and from that moment I have never seen or heard anything of Anna Pochowski. Ah, Yoshio, what fate have I brought upon those two loving hearts that came over the world with me? You should love me well, — *mon ami*.

“The gendarme gave me my bayonet, and then walked so fast that I had to run to keep up with him. We went out into a courtyard, and there I saw a company drawn up in column of sections, with a young captain and his subalterns moving about. The morning was still dark.

“I was led toward my rank, which was forward near the drums; at the left end of it was a space for a small man, for we dress by sizes from the right, and I fell in. It was the place of the man whose clothes I wore, who also must have been a small fellow for which reason no doubt, Ivan Shtcherbakoff had chosen him to strip from among the other dead. The men

of my squad evidently knew that Martin Alexandrow was dead, for they took no notice of me, taking me for one of the new arrivals from Russia drafted into the company, in which there were a good many new faces that morning; but when, at the roll-call, I answered to the name of Martin Alexandrow, the fellow on the right said to me, ‘What, the same name, too?’ to which I answered, ‘It is a common name enough.’

“The fact that our sergeant called out that name proved to me that the captain had had me brought out of the guard-room in the belief that I was really Martin Alexandrow, who had been out of bounds, and had been put under arrest for it. As the company had received hurried marching-orders during the night, and had to be in full strength, this Martin Alexandrow had been sent for from the guard-room; but when I answered to his name, those about me, who knew Martin Alexandrow very well, took me to be one of the new men with the same name.

“Our young Captain Avdéitch, as I afterwards heard, was a new man, just promoted; the former captain had been killed in the previous day’s skirmish.

“Cartridges were given out to us, and when the sun rose we were marching over the country with Karinsk at our backs. I looked everywhere then, hoping to see Anna Pochowski in the ranks, but she must have belonged to another company of that battalion. I have not seen my poor Anna since.

“It turned out, mon ami, that I was No. 4 in the 3rd sub-section of the 2nd company of the 2nd battalion of the 69th regiment, my division being the 17th. Was it not a complicated office for Nadine Devriloff to fill? I who was always thought to be in some way specially a thing of petticoats! I have often wondered, as I marched along in my top-boots, what Madame or some of my *amies de cœur* and adorers would have said to see me in that galley! Some would have shed tears, and all would have spent years in finding out

witty things to say about my fix: but destiny, it seems, does not mind being tittered at, and Madame the Sphinx can stand a jest without making any answer, or changing her stark smile. Still, it was too bad. Not far before me the marker, with the company's flag on his bayonet, stalked like a man gone foolish with pride, and in order to keep step I had to stretch my poor *bijou* legs, not made for such work, while round me stalked the two hundred stupid fellows, never dreaming what a basket of bonbons was in their midst. It was a cold day, though bright, most of our road lying under ice, yet I was soon hot and tired, and how I kept on to the end of that march I do not know; the later marches, however, became less toilsome to me.

“What pleased me was that we were going toward the south-east, and nearer to you, and I thought to myself, ‘I will wait till I believe myself out of danger from my father, then I will stand out as a free girl’; on the other hand, I was frightened at the thought that Anna Pochowski might be given the knout, whereupon her sex would be shown, even if she did not blurt out everything when it came to the point of being flogged.

“My right hand neighbour, a middle-aged carpenter of Perm who was my lance-corporal, asked me from what batch of recruits I had been picked to fill the place of his comrade, Martin Alexandrow, whom he had seen shot in the skirmish, and before I could answer he added that in that skirmish he himself had bayoneted five Japanese one after the other as one might pin spiders — a boast which caused a noise of jeering to arise all round him. I told him that new men were just then being chosen by lot out of the Kovel infantry-regiments in order to fill up the infantry-regiments at the front, and that I had only arrived at Karinsk the day before. I had indeed to say many things, if I wished to be polite and answer questions.

“The fact was, that I was where I was as the result of two mistakes made by two different sets of people, the first set being the men who, in searching

for Ivan Shtcherbakoff, had taken it upon themselves to seize Anna Pochowski and me at the railway station, without knowing by face the two dead men whose uniforms we wore. The new captain also believed me, till he saw my face at the first halt, to be the Martin Alexandrow whom he knew; whereas my messmates and others, in the second set, believed me to be one of the new men with the same name.

“The second fellow to my right, a simple peasant with a nose like Cyrano de Bergerac’s, began to cry out upon my youth, asking if I was yet of the military age, which is eighteen among us; in fact, I became the point of interest of all my squad when the sun rose, one clown hitting it very near when he said, ‘He should be still in a girls’ school, the boy’; another asked, ‘But who could have done his hair-cutting’? while a fellow named Grigory Khartoy, a young mechanic, was taken with such a hankering for me, that in some days it became painful, for he would not let me be in peace with his kindnesses and offers.

“We halted on the top of a rising ground about ten o’clock; our advanced guard came in, the roll was called again, and I had for my breakfast cold water, some biscuit from my haversack, and groats without any taste, till one added salt, which we also carried in our haversacks. The lot of the soldier is indeed hard, so if they enjoy themselves outrageously in their moments of freedom, that is not strange: there sometimes came upon me hours when I felt myself driven to do something astonishing, to dance in the ranks, or insult the flag, or box an officer’s ears, anything to show that I was no ordinary type of soldier; but I understood that discipline is a good thing, too.

“However, I had in my pockets some Malakoff chocolates and some cigarettes, taken from my skirt at the inn at Karinsk, for Anna Pochowski had brought a lot of such things from St. Petersburg, and of these I ate

some. I had also some twenty roubles with which to buy things at the canteen.

“While we were breakfasting our new captain, whose name was Avdéitch, stepped about among the men, to see that they were properly fed, making remarks to one or another; and presently, coming up to me, he says, ‘Hullo, and who are you?’

“‘I am called Martin Alexandrow, my captain,’ said I.

“‘But you are not the Martin Alexandrow who was under arrest last night?’ says he.

“‘No, my captain,’ said I.

“‘Then, whereabouts is that fellow?’ says he.

“‘I could not tell you, my captain,’ said I.

“‘Are you,’ says he, ‘one of the fifteen who came before me last night?’

“I shrank from answering this, for though I did not mind giving false impressions, I had so far made no false statement, but I had to answer, ‘Yes, my captain.’

“‘I do not remember—’ he began, but was now interrupted by a lieutenant who came up and spoke to him, whereat they two went off together. I was sorry then that he did not stay to thresh the matter out with me, for I was sure that no busy company-captain would be able to unmask me, since I did not wish to be unmasked; in fact, a man’s mind, especially when troubled with other cares, is not quick enough to track the dodgings of a girl’s; but perhaps it was better that he went away then, for he never spoke to me of the matter afterwards — he hardly had the chance, I think, for we were busily trying to get into touch with a body of the enemy from that day.

“As I was finishing my breakfast, up comes my friend, Grigory Khartoy, smiling at me, and asking why it was that my left eye is not so large as the right; this little thing seemed to engage this fellow’s curiosity. I told him

that it was no matter, and not to allow his head to be bothered about my eyes: so he went away for the time. Meantime, some markers with a sub-lieutenant were sent out to mark out the next bivouac, and we were all soon on the road again, arriving at three p.m. at the head of a valley, where I saw three camps, beside a small one on the hills beyond, and men moving about among them, with cooking-fires, mobs of horses and cattle, parks of baggage, and batteries of cannon; all arms were there, and one could see that something was happening, or was about to happen, for staff-adjutants, aides-de-camp and despatch-riders were going about between the camps and the village; and while my company still stood to arms, a tall old man, with silver aiguillets and a black-velvet collar on his frock-coat, cantered up with his staff and an escort to review us. He was our general of division, Count Vladimir Pushkin.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PRISONER OF WAR (*continued*)



“THERE WERE THERE a full brigade of infantry, with two companies of our battalion beside my own, and I do not know how much cavalry and artillery. Nor were we allowed much repose that night, I myself being twice roused before daybreak from the deepest sleep which, I suppose, I have ever had. The three companies of our battalion bivouacked by themselves in three lines of tents, with the arms piled before the tents, and a bivouac-fire at each end of each line. I and five others had a tent near the right end of the second line. I was asleep with my belt loosed, when I was roused and marched off by the sergeant of the guard to stand sentry upon the treasure-chest at the rear. I do not know if any enemy was thought to be near, but there was going on a great business of bivouac-guards, with a chain of double sentries on the flanks, with front and rear guards, with a waking picket, and with officers on duty. I stood sentry a weary time, watching with envy another sentry before the commanding-officer’s tent in a line with my ‘treasure-chest,’ for he was by a fire which he poked anon with his bayonet and threw fir-cones upon it; but I had no fire, and the sky, which was thronged with stars, looked down without any pity upon poor lost me. It was no fun, and I thought that leaving one’s home and bed to seek one’s husband may become a hard case. Just behind the officers’ tents something kept on growling in a low voice, and the thought that it was a wolf put me in fear, and left me no peace.

“As soon as I got back to my tent I rolled myself afresh in my blanket and the snow, and had slept but ten minutes (as it seemed to me), when the *réveillée* was being sounded, though it was still quite dark. My five fellows were on their feet, drowsy and growling, so I, too, jumped up, wretched enough, yet interested at having a share in all this starlit to-do and strange way of life. I saw my messmates wiping moisture from their rifles, and I wiped mine; I saw them taking down the tent, and I helped them; each took a sixth part of it to carry with him, so I took a sixth part. Whatever I saw them do I copied.

“We formed again in column, were given the command to march, and started out, I did not know whither, nor, I am sure, did any one else. In ten minutes the bugle blew the halt, and so it went on, for at one moment our section was running, and at another standing still, looking for the main body in the darkness, so that after two hours, when the day broke, we could not have covered three versts, and then we had to send out vedettes to find out where the two regiments were to which we and some cavalry were acting as advanced-guard. Whatever, therefore, was the aim of this night-march, it was not fulfilled, and so with all the war that I have seen so far — a string of blunders on both sides; perhaps an equal number of women would have managed it all more artfully.

“What we were marching for was to ambush a column of the enemy that was making northwestward about thirty miles away — so I heard; but even when the sun was up it was seen that this could not be done, for a thaw had set in, and one for the first time felt in the air that spring was coming. Everything softened, flowed and slushed; the company-horses floundered in it, the carts went on their side, and I spent five wretched days of soldier’s-life on this account, being nearly always wet to the skin, so that how I did not become ill I do not yet know.

“Meanwhile, we went from point to point as we received orders, keeping touch always with the brigade behind. On the third night my company was told off for outpost to the whole force, and I could not have dreamt of such an experience, for it poured with rain all the time, was very dark, and there was a strangeness in the scenes and sounds about me all that night which gave me a feeling of dreaming, or of being in another world.

“We had come to some rather broken country with woods and hills, and had halted for food, as the sun set behind the rain. When the brigade, too, bivouacked a mile or so in our rear, a rider galloped out of it with a despatch for Captain Avdéitch, who, on reading it, picked three fellows out of my section, and sent them on ahead at the quick. As soon as these had disappeared beyond a ridge of the hill in front, our lieutenant called out four squads of us, and marched us off, bringing with us a Manchu man who had been forced to come with us from a village that morning. We went on for fully a mile, wading through two brooks of melting ice on the way, the Manchu fellow pointing anon, till we came to a cross-road, where we were halted, divided into four groups, and spread out two or three miles along the cross-road.

“I and the three men with me were one of the two middle groups, and I was given to understand that we two middle groups were examining posts, while the two end groups were mere posts; the lieutenant told us that the password was ‘Bayonets,’ and the countersign ‘St. John’ — an ironical thing, I thought, and the fellow made us repeat after him ‘Bayonets,’ ‘St. John,’ so that I had to laugh. When he had pointed out to us just where we were to stay, he and the Manchu ran away back behind the sheet of rain.

“The night came suddenly, the rain poured. My friend Grigory Khartoy and I sat together on the ground in a pine wood, but the wood was not thick,

and gave us no shelter. We were not to sleep, nor to loosen our belts, though we might take off our knapsacks.

“Some yards in front of us sat our lance-corporal on a path that ran down a hillock, and thirty or forty yards in front of him our fourth man, a simple peasant who often made me laugh, stood sentry on a piece of ploughed land with his knapsack on his back; but we could not see him, it was so dark.

“Grigory Khartoy presently found a kind of deep and wide ditch in the wood, and crouching down in there we found some shelter among ferns and bushes, whereupon he put his arm about me, and crossing himself every minute, kept on telling me tales about ghosts, miracles and tokens which he or his friends had witnessed.

“In this he was stopped by a sound of horses’ hoofs, upon which we both rushed out into the path through the wood, he shouting out: ‘Halt! who goes there? What is the password?’ To this a voice cried back: ‘What is the countersign?’ Grigory Khartoy then called out sharply: ‘St. John!’ whereat the voice called back sharply: ‘Bayonets!’ I could not help smiling at this. St. John had so little to do with bayonets when he was alive.

It was only two mounted patrols under an officer who had come out from the main-guard to visit us, for half-a-mile behind us, Grigory Khartoy told me, was a body of some thirty men acting as our supports, while half-a-mile behind these supports was the rest of our company, forming our main-guard, which main-guard had to send out patrols every hour or so to visit the supports and the posts, so that it was a tangled business, for beside these visiting-patrols from the main-guard, there was much coming and going of men in the dark; about midnight a squad of flying-patrols, who were sent out on horseback in order to gain information, passed through our posts; and there were others, both mounted and on foot, whose business I did not know. One party of five caused me to fire off my musket, for I had been

told to fire if I saw anything, and had no time to give warning. My turn had come to stand sentry, and I was out alone in the darkness, unable to see any of the three others in their places behind me, when I heard sounds and saw forms rising upon me through the rain. My feeling of responsibility was great, for I knew that at that moment I was the outermost guard of the company, which was the outermost guard of the brigade, so that everything hung upon me; and as the forms which I saw were coming toward, and not from, our army, the wild thought struck me that they must be Japanese. ‘Who goes there?’ I called out, and as an answer did not come very promptly, I forgot about calling three times, lost my wits, and fired like a jay into the air. Before the three others behind me could run up I heard laughter, and afterwards a great merriment and fuss was made over this affair, so that I did not hear the end of it.

“The ‘Japanese’ of my too zealous fancy turned out to be ‘secret’ posts, who had been sent a long way out in front of the line of posts to make observations; they were then returning.

“At last toward daybreak we were relieved, and tramped in through slush to the main-guard, where half the men were in tents with loosed belts and with bivouac-fires. It was like coming home after a shipwreck, I could hardly stand any more, and I thought as I threw myself upon the wet ground that I had had reason to scent violets on that 25th of March, for things were hard on me.

“But I made up my mind to bear, and wait, and watch my chance, trusting in God, who is the befriender of the unfortunate.

“I was allowed to sleep hardly four hours when we were on the march again. The fact was that a body of the enemy was moving about not very far from us, but wished to avoid us until it got supports, and had managed so far to do this. For three days after my wet night on outpost the 2nd and 3rd

companies were billeted upon a village named Tashka, the rest of the force being billeted over a valley which lay at our feet, for the troops had passed through many hardships within the last days, owing to the thaw and other things, and had need of repose.

“I with the rest of my squad was put to lodge with a rich peasant and his wife who lived near the commandant’s house in the middle of the street; they had a daughter of my own age, named Ribkah, and the old fellow reminded me of Shylock, though I was never sure whether they were Jews or Manchus, for they looked like both, as many of those people thereabouts do; but they spoke Russian well.

“I spent the evening of our arrival at Tashka in helping to put up three finger-posts outside the village, and then had to mount guard over the arms of us four for two hours in our cottage. In going to bed when it was late I found the little Ribkah leaning on the door-post by which I had to pass; she looked shyly at me, and I, not to be backward, returned her smile in a mannish way. I was too tired to laugh at the little coquette, and throwing myself upon the matting under the padded blankets that were there for us four, I was at once asleep.

“The next morning, by the light which each billet had to keep burning all night, I saw Grigory Khartoy standing over me, waiting for me to wake at the *réveillée*; and the moment he saw my eyes open, he cried out in a glad voice: ‘Christ is risen!’ and fell to kissing my face. That was the cry all day: ‘Christ is risen!’ but it was a sad Easter Day for us when we thought of all the gladness at home, and saw ourselves forced to work in many sorts of ways, as usual, standing sentry over the park of baggage and artillery outside the village, over the horses in their stables, at each end of the village, at outpost on the alarm-places, and forming postal and telegraphic stations to the nearest detachment miles away. However, money and ikons

were given out from the senior officer's quarters, which was a cottage in the middle of the village, where the flag hung by day and a lantern burned all night; and with this money those not on duty cheered themselves at the canteen and drink-shop. There was worship in the little church, and some dancing in the street towards evening.

“The next night I was told off! by my sergeant to be one of an inlying picket of six who had to keep awake all night in a room which they called an alarm-quarter. We loosed our belts, took our ease, and these fellows rudely jeered at me because I would not help to drink their hidden vodka, beside speaking grossly, and taking from me my last cigarette. I was furious that it was not for the moment in my power to order these dogs to be flogged. In the morning, before being allowed to sleep, I had to water from the village well two horses that were in a little stable made of skins at the back of my cottage, and while I was in the stable doing this, out to me came the little Ribkah to flirt with me, and to tell me the tale that her father had had to sleep in the fields through having forgotten the password overnight, and so being refused entrance to the village. She put her hand on my arm, and looked up into my face, but I, being in an angry mood, said, ‘No, come, we must be serious’ (*faut être sérieux!*), whereat the coquette thought fit to turn up her nose at me.

“When I had slept, and was having a meal in the afternoon with Shylock, his wife, Ribkah, and two of my mates, all sitting in a circle on the floor, in stepped a sister-of-mercy, whose name was Sister Katusha, a sister attached to one of the two field-hospitals of our division, which was following the 2nd and 3rd companies, and was billeted with us upon Tashka. She looked round and said —

““Which of you is Martin Alexandrow?”

““I am, my sister,” I answered.

“‘You are one of six trained stretcher-bearers of your company, I think, Martin Alexandrow?’ said she.

“I had to say yes, for the fellow whose place I filled must have been that.

“‘Then,’ said she, ‘you will come with me now, for the junior surgeon has asked me to get a permit for you to help me to-day on the nursing-staff,’ and she showed me a paper which she had.

“It turned out that one of the junior dressers had died that morning, and as the two ambulance-wagons of the two companies were nearly full of sick men, that was why I was called upon; so I spent an easy and happy day with the sick fellows and two of the sisters, the wagons being drawn up under a tree in an open space at one end of the village.

“I was kept on duty a long time there, and sitting on one of the spring-beds in the wagon I fell asleep; when I awoke a strange thing happened to me, for I did not know who nor where I was. It was late in the night, the sky was full of stars, three sick men lay about me, but I could not tell how I came to be there. This had happened to me several times since I had put on soldier’s clothes that evening at Karinsk, but never for so great a number of seconds before. It was a very odd feeling. But even in my waking hours I had it, for it would come upon me that I could not be Nadine Devriloff, or even Nadine M — , and yet be where I was, doing what I did. Many of the men had fastened upon me the name of ‘the little general,’ because of my small size and proud air, and oftentimes the being of this ‘little general’ and that of Nadine became quite mixed in my head, for the change from what I had been to what I was was too big for my mind, and I could not realize it clearly.

“All of a sudden, while we were still at Tashka, one could say ‘It is spring,’ and the look of everything changed. The red pines had a fresher air,

brooks ran without any ice or snow, one saw the wild rose, the moon-dahlia, and very soon cherry-trees all in their white dress.

“Then all was movement and the break-up of the billet. It was said that we were about to fight a battle. All down in the valley bodies of troops marched; squadrons of Cossacks on large white horses cantered away with a gay air; I could faintly hear the music of the bands, and see the up-hill strain of the artillery-horses. Then, we too, moved in our turn, to form a corner of the diamond-shape in which I understood that the brigade was marching; and Grigory Khartoy, with his moustache wet with vodka of the canteen, would say to me: ‘We are only marching to be food for guns, but Christ died for us, Martin Alexandrow.’”

CHAPTER XVII

THE PRISONER OF WAR (*continued*)



“ON THE MORNING of April 8, the 2nd and 3rd were marching along a rather narrow road in column of squads, when, at about nine o’clock, my heart leapt at an outbreak of firing. It came from far away at the top of a blue mountain somewhat on the left of our front, where part of the brigade was on the march, making me think of some grim bird of old prattling a little with its iron bills in the haze up there, and it was as if I had drunk a glass of champagne, I was at once so ‘elevated,’ by it!

“While we all looked about us, and the halt was sounded, two officers with spy-glasses ran past the column and beyond a ridge in front; then, running back after some minutes, waved a flag, whereat our thicket of bayonets went forward at the quick. I felt like running out of school and playing in a game, for our soldiers, in their long frock-coats with a hood to it, have a very thick, manly, and graceful air, and fear was out of the question for me with such a mass of them all about me. I went in the midst of them stretching out my poor legs, but in the mood of a looker-on, for though I wished them high luck, and was proud of them, my mind was made up to shoot no one, since I was not really a soldier.

“We went two versts or more at the quick, passing frightened people by the roadside or at lonely cottage-doors, anon catching sight of our advanced-guard, and hearing ever more strongly the drumming of musketry and machine-guns. As we began to go up the mountain-slopes, I saw a little

haze rising up near the top, and knew that the fighting must be there, for smokeless powder still makes a haze and a smell when a lot of it is fired by troops in close order; but we had not gone far when all was still, and soon an orderly came galloping down the road, whereat we were halted, and afterwards went on more slowly.

“The trouble had been caused by some mounted-infantry scouts taking up a position on our route, and sniping at some advanced body of our columns. They had been galloped by a couple of troops of Cossacks, but not before great damage had been done by this handful of rifles, no less than eighteen of our men having been knocked over.

“We knew now that heavy fighting was near, and from that moment for three long days and nights the noise of guns was seldom out of my ears, for, even as we marched that day, one or other of our columns was sprinkling the foreground with machine-gun fire wherever bush grew. We were said to have ‘established contact’ with the enemy.

“We passed over much stony country, but in the afternoon came to a greener part, where the brigade camped on a plain overgrown with thistle and long grass; and we had hardly been fed and rested when every one, including outpost garrisons, were at the work of turning the place into a fort. The old Pushkin himself got off his horse to make the trace of the big trench, drawing a curving line some half a mile long a little to the east of a chain of mounds which ran north and south; when this was done, matches were given to a number of men, who set fire to the scrub, and the wind being from the west, a smoke was soon spreading away to the east. By the time these flames had died down it was night, and lanterns were lit all along the deepening trench. Each of our companies carries nearly a hundred spades and axes, beside which there were mattocks, pickaxes, and other things, so that it was a great business, not only the digging, but the making

of loopholes by the help of boards and flat stones, with officers going up and down watching the men; and I thought when I looked down the line of lanterns that we were a lot of midnight gravediggers digging our own graves. I did this work in quite a heat, I do not know why; it amused and put me in a fuss, and though I was soon weary myself, I cheered and kept my fellows to it, till one of the clowns asked me who the devil I was, with my orders!

“We did not dig all along the trace, but made a chain of pits, each to hold twelve men, heaping the loose earth on their east edge, with oblong holes in it to see and fire through. But all this was not nearly done, when firing was heard to the east, whereupon bugles were blowing in the camps behind the mounds; down the line of trenches went the cry, ‘cover up the lanterns! line the trenches I’ and for a time a scene of bustle took place, men pouring in hosts at the run over the mounds and between them from the camps toward the trenches, the trench-diggers running to seize their greatcoats and muskets, horses galloping to and fro, orders cried out in the darkness, and, growing nearer and nearer out of the eastern night, a sound of war, fire-arms mixed with a throng of voices shouting in victory, at which the heart quailed.

“My own curved shelter-pit already had fifteen or sixteen of the loopholes finished out of the twenty-four which we had to make for us twelve. When the firing broke out, I leapt down into the pit, put my musket into a loophole, and peeped through. It was dark in there, and dark outside; there was no moon; some drizzle was falling, the marl in my trench was soft under my feet. I heard two or three speak grimly to themselves through the teeth; our sergeant said: ‘Thank God, our pouches and bandoliers are full’; and the uproar in the east travelled ever nearer to us.

“Then I was aware of men running toward us — straggling refugees on foot and on horse — from one of our outpost garrisons which the enemy had driven in; then I knew that bullets were beginning to drop about us, and in the next pit on my right I heard the voice of Captain Avdéitch cry out, ‘*pli!*’ (*fire!*) All down our line it broke out then, though what they were firing at I did not know, for I could see nothing, till a shell burst fifty yards before the trench; about the same time I heard cannon behind me, for some of our guns had been run up the mounds, and thenceforward the sounds of the battle were like the regular sounds made by a machine at work, which whizzes, booms, wails, sighs, and terribly rattles. The enemy were pouring howitzer and musketry-fire all round our position, and we were replying with machine-gun, field-gun and the rifle. The shouts of Sergeant Krasnastonoff, who pretended to direct the fire in our pit, could hardly be heard by us, and I thought to myself: ‘I am well in it now, and Anna Pochowski should have been here to see my eyes on fire.’ It was hell, but I enjoyed it.

A stream of shrapnel-bullets struck our parapet, and broke down a yard of it; I was aware of the earth raining into the trench. But I was not afraid: I was too highly awake.

“I wished to shoot like the rest, but I did not, at least, I do not think so, though I fired a shot for every one which they fired, and emptied one of my pouches; but I fired low. There seems to be a tiger in men, and a tigress in women; but I would not stain my hands.

It did not last long, certainly not fifteen minutes, for two of our outposts had the enemy’s flanks more or less under fire from the rear; but what saved us, unready as we were, was said to be the burning of the scrub in the afternoon, for when the enemy came within three hundred yards we could guess out with our eyes their front line. Their commander must have

believed that the grass was still there, but it was not, and as things were our fire was too hot for any troops. The ground sloped downwards to the front in a gentle glaucis-like slope from our trenches, with hardly any folds in it, and our bullets easily made way through the ashes of the scrub, which may have even helped us by making the enemy lie with a false confidence behind heaps which were no real cover. At any rate, their fire slackened; we understood that they were in retreat. And now our independent firing ceased, and down our trenches a grimmer sound than any broke out — a volley; then others, coming quicker, as it were, in short-winded grunts. It made one think of a woman as big as the world scraping quickly along in clogs, for the cruel noise came almost as regularly as the stride of a walker — grate, grate, most harsh. Each pit must have done its own volley-firing by itself, for general words-of-command could not be given in that din; when it came up to us, Krasnastonoff directed ours. Sometimes several of the pits went off together, splitting one's ears, and the enemy must have felt as if doomsday was cursing after their heels. I was glad of this, and my teeth ground together.

Then the officers' whistles sounded, the guns died down, and the affair was over. But there was little rest that night for at least half the brigade: for some were making the shelter-pits into one long trench and making trenches on its flanks; others made cover for the camps and communications west of the mounds; others turned a brook nearer to the mounds, so that the men lining the trenches might be able by creeping out at night to fill their water-bottles; and others were sent to a forest far away to the west, in order to get wood for fuel and for building a sort of tower out there, from which the commanding-officer might watch the enemy's movements and the effects of our artillery-fire. We seemed to be determined that they should not pass any further westward than this point.

“As for me, I was put to the worst work, for I was one of the stretcher-bearers of my company, and the slaughter, especially among the Japanese, had been terrible. What I saw that night could not be told, and I shed many tears, for now that the ecstasy was no more, only that which was piteous, cold, and ghastly was left, and I wondered to myself that such a thing could be. A crowd of us, each with the red cross fastened on his left arm, went out over the field with lanterns, and as the enemy’s searchers were also abroad, there were many straying lights in the dark. Here or there one heard a shriek, and then silence, then yonder wailings, and then silence. I helped to bear eight, one of whom I found out myself moving his hand a little under two dead, so as to attract notice; most of them I took on three different journeys, first to an advanced dressing-station where they were given first-aid, then to the main station, where two tents stood, with flags and lanterns hung at their doors; inside these were operating-tables and knapsacks full of bandages, and outside were ambulance-wagons and stretchers. Among, the crowd of stretchers lay many wounded waiting to be seen to, and they gave out a sound of lamentation, while inside the tents the two surgeons and their helps were as busy and cool as butchers. It was weary work bearing through the fluff of the scrub, but if I had not been kept going and coming, perhaps I should have fainted; everybody had on the red cross, and this sign is now mixed up in my mind with whatever is most sickly and lazar-like. From this main station the wounded were carried on to the field-hospital, where Sister Katusha with three other sisters and some doctors took them. It lasted till long past midnight; a hundred and twenty-seven were brought in by our side alone, and among them was — what do you think? — a Japanese girl in soldier’s-dress! It was found out at the main dressing-station. I wish that I had seen her, but I missed it all, and she died before morning in the field-hospital. So each army had its amazon, you see! The thing got abroad

among our men, and there was no end to the curiosity it aroused, so that for two days many could talk of little else. They did not think that the same fact was under their very eyes! But men cannot perceive anything. I have heard my father tell of an English lady who was an army-doctor forty years, and her sex was only found out after her death, when she did not mind.

“The work was over at last, and I got a little sleep in my camp, which had some artificial cover, being in a hollow, of which the east side was dug away and made steep, and good grazing inside for the horses.

“When I was roused the sun was up. I was alone in my tent, and I sat thinking to myself, ‘their attack is as determined as our defence,’ for at more than one point to the far east one could hear firing. The bugles of the 2nd and 3rd were calling the ‘form company-columns’ with their cantering throats, so I and the other eleven stretcher-bearers only just managed to get some breakfast, and I ran to take my place eating as I ran. Two of us no longer answered to the roll-call that morning!

“We had been ordered to go to the support of an outpost to the east; and with our echelon of baggage and two guns we started out, the drums beating before us, the morning clear and warm.

“We marched past the mounds over some thousand yards of burnt plain, and afterwards entered upon more broken country. Only at one point to the north-east could some firing be faintly heard; elsewhere the attacks had cried off for the time.

“We marched six or seven versts which were a pain to me, for a boot-nail had come through my left foot-bandages, and was like a thorn in my conscience all that day. A squadron of Cossacks from the camps came up with us and trotted past — some hundred and forty men and horses; and it seemed to me that nothing could ever conquer them.

“The attack upon the mountain which we were sent to hold was renewed as we came near it; our commanding-officer, Major Sulkowski, having put our ammunition-carts and ambulance-wagons under cover of a cliff, with red flags on the carts, marched us up a rocky footpath; on lower ground half a mile to the left I saw the squadron of Cossacks drawn up in column of sixes. Our fighting-line was in trenches on the further slope of the mountain, and on our slope were a small headquarters’ signalling-station and supply-store, with a dressing-station lower down. I saw men far up bearing the wounded from the trenches, and I wondered at this, for though the dressing-station may have been under cover, it hardly seemed so from where we were, and small pompom-shrapnel was bursting about the top of the mountain. I asked myself ‘how if one of the wounded be *again* wounded?’ for I knew that I must faint, if I saw such a thing.

“The din grew as we got well up the slope, coming mainly from the enemy, for a few only of our firing-line seemed to have been told off to keep up fire, the rest reserving theirs — strict fire-discipline, you know, is the army’s strong point, as my father always says. But, as we others stood halted in line two hundred yards from the top, firing broke out from our whole firing-line. The Japanese firing-line was then so near to ours that they had actually cheered for the charge; but they broke before our thundering trenches, and took to flight. At once we heard the charge sounding from our side, whereat a body of reserves near the top ran forward over the ridge, to fight; and we also, called by signal from the station, ran up, deployed by sections, and lay down under any sort of cover on the ridge.

“Our firing-line, joined by their reserve, had now leapt their trenches, and had run down in pursuit or counter-attack. For a time I could see little, for some folds of the mountain side made dead ground at the bottom, but presently the pursuit spread out over a reach of meadow-land dotted with

woods and houses, and we saw all. They looked quite small, and yet clear, down there, the morning was so bright, and we at the top lay watching a long time the drama below, the runnings and stoppages to fire, till on a sudden, our men were checked by an outbreak of fire from a hill somewhat on their left flank, where the enemy's reserves had taken up a position; yes, our men stopped, and in one minute nothing could be more utter than their rout. They were not very spread out, fell fast, and fled. Ah, that was a sight. We on the mountain-top could do nothing, for, even if the enemy had been within range, our troops in the plain were relatively too near to them for us on the mountain to fire. But other help soon appeared which I did not look for — the Cossacks; out they rode on their tall horses from between two spurs of our mountain, and I clapped my hands, I can see them again now, the wild white horses raging together, with their wild captain ten yards in front of all, calling them, as still quicker the hundreds of thin legs drummed the ground with a steady rise of haste from a hand-gallop to a field-gallop, and from a field-gallop to a flood. I thought that nothing could live before their sabres: but I was mistaken in this.

“The firing-line of the enemy, driven from our mountain, had rallied when their reserves opened fire from a hill upon their pursuers, and our firing line, too, after having been thrown back by the new fire from the hills, rallied when they saw the Cossacks coming; and these two firing-lines, lying down among bush, wood, lanes and ditches, at terribly close quarters poured fire upon each other. We soon lost sight of them, for a village near by, breaking into flames, rolled them in smoke. Neither was a large body, both were disorganized, and it was said that the Japanese lacked cartridges; but on both sides scores were killed. As for the Cossacks they dashed by, and seemingly over, the north flanks of these foot-fighters, taking no notice of them, but racing for the hill, whence the enemy's

reserves were pouring all sorts of fire upon them, while our guns, too, on the mountain, shelled the hill, which we more or less commanded, at long range.

“The Cossacks, meantime, were being fast knocked over, men and horses, though they had spread out over a common and were riding like the wind; till at last they gained some dead ground under the flank of the hill, where two-thirds of them leapt off, even as the horses still ran, every first and third man throwing their bridles to every second man, whereupon the braves could be seen running on foot, extending, and then storming the hill with hardly any cover.

“I wished that I had a glass, for at that distance all forms were as miniature as those seen in the pupil of one’s eye. It was hard to follow, but what really happened was this: that the Cossacks, after a terrible fight, in which they lost a third of their number, took the enemy’s trenches, but, on dashing upon them, found them — empty. It was said that the Japanese had retired from their trenches by twos and threes down a covered retreat — a fold in the hillside — and had quietly taken up a new position further back under natural cover, though it is strange that we on the mountain-top did not notice anything of this. Perhaps, if the truth were known, only a few of them were ever in the front trenches, with orders to retire to the second line some time before the charge; at any rate, when the Cossacks, hot with victory, leapt upon the empty front trenches, they were met with a withering shock at close quarters from the enemy’s second position. Think of their plight, their wretched case! They were perishing like sheep before they could look round them: and they fled like sheep.

“Happily, most of the hillside was dead ground from the enemy’s second position, and half of the Cossacks got back to their horses, which were led to meet them; but they raced back faster than they went, if that could be,

cutting down and trampling on the way part of the enemy's first firing-line, which was once more in retreat before ours. When they again came near our mountain, they were trotting in good order, but sadly, many of the saddles were without riders, and they passed back defeated up the glen from which they had ridden out so grandly an hour before.

"It was then that we on the mountain-top received orders to fill the trenches left empty by our firing-line, for the enemy's reserve had again taken up their front position on the hill, and were firing upon our firing-line down in the fields, though it looked as if they must shoot their own men as well as ours. Perhaps they did; anyway, our firingline was again retiring.

"Having left two sections in reserve, therefore, we ran down the mountain-side, which in some parts was very steep, and in some almost level, till we came to the trenches, and these we lined in a pell-mell way, no one quite knowing where his place was. In three of the flank trenches we found a row of forage-caps stuck up on sticks, in order to draw the enemy's fire, and these three trenches we still left empty, though there were hardly loopholes enough in the others for our two companies. It was then about noon.

"Down in the plain our infantry were retiring in a very broken line, made up of squads, but with some rearguard firing, and without haste; in half an hour they, too, passed from our sight up the little valley by which the Cossacks had gone.

"Then the useless long-range gun-fire which had been going on all the time died down; and all was quiet for some hours.

"I was eating lukewarm groats out of my can when I was again called upon to go down to ambulance work. I shall remember groats all my life: I had grown to hate even the sight of it; but we were on half meat-rations, and there was little else. I did not look thin, however, not then, as I do now; nor

was the food the worst of it, but the ugly faces and beings of my companions, and the dirt and wretchedness which were giving camp-fever to a number of us. I must be very strong, for what caused strong men to break down left me well.

“Captain Avdéitch called me to him one evening when we were in bivouac some days before the fighting began, gave me a rouble, and said, ‘go out and buy a fowl for me, if you can, but whether you can buy it or not, bring it, for you look like a gaol-bird with those eyes’; and in order to get it, I had to hide in a pond an hour — I got two, in fact, though *he* never saw more than one — but it did not make me ill, nor did the great thaw, nor my often filthy hands, feet, body and clothes.

“Well, late in the afternoon, I was back in my trench from the ambulance-work, with my hands and front all red afresh; and now, the wounded being done with, another attack began.

“If I had not loved the army, I should have wished then that the enemy would take our position, in order that I might give myself a prisoner: for I never, except once, had any fear of being killed, since I saw that there were many chances against any given person being killed, and I believed that those chances would save me, whomever else they might not save. I dare say that this sort of selfconceit is the reason that any one is got to fight at all, for each knows that some will not be shot, and he thinks that since Providence has a special care of *him*, he will be among these. I certainly felt in that way, and I was right, you see, for I was not killed. When the danger and uproar was hugest, I was of course ‘elevated,’ but I generally felt that, since I had nothing to do with the matter, it would be very unfair if I were shot, so I left the outcome in the hand of God, believing that He would yet bring me to my sweetheart.

“That evening the enemy’s firing-line, which had been reinforced, twice came within three hundred yards of our position on the mountain-slope, and was twice driven back. Would you believe that both times they concentrated fire upon those poor rows of forage-caps on sticks in three of our flank trenches? And this childish thing may have caused their defeat, for it is a rule in the army to fire hotly upon that part of the enemy which is opposite the part of our line upon which they fire hotly, so our men poured fire upon their flanks, since they were pouring fire upon our dummy ones, and their flanks giving way, the whole line retired for the second time as night fell. We had no killed, and only seven wounded, two by bullets coming through loopholes, and five in the trench next to mine by a shrapnel-shell from the hill to the left where the Cossacks had been killed: it had struck inside the left end of the trench, and the bullets had ricocheted down the length of it, wounding those five.

“That night the companies’ ambulance-wagons crawled back to the field-hospital of the brigade quite loaded with the sick and dying; those who could walk had to drag themselves along on foot beside the ‘wagons. I was with them. Two of those on foot stopped midway, we could not get them to come on, and they were left out there on the plain for I do not know how many hours. Their sick eyes must have seen the stars in a strange light that night, poor fellows.

“Our two companies did not hold the mountain-fort during the night, but were relieved by others, and marched back to camp; nor were we too soon, just escaping an attack on the march, for the enemy had broken through at some small post to the southeast, and we were no sooner back in camp than shell-fire, perhaps aimed during the day, began upon it. As for me, I was very sleepy, and though fire was bursting all about, it no longer even

interested me. I was getting used to it: and wrapping myself in my blanket, I slept soundly to that rough lullaby.

“Once when I stirred a little, I heard in my dream both musketry and gun-fire, I did not know where, and I did not care.

“The next morning, when we stood to arms, Captain Avdéitch made a speech, saying that Major Sulkowski had been complimented by the general on the conduct of the two companies the day before, and ikons of St. Vladimir were given out to us all. Our company had to go alone to relieve a garrison to the north; and we set out to do this in a drizzle which lasted all day.

“Our new post was on a plateau about fifteen feet high at its north end, which end looked down pretty steeply upon a pond and some marshy ground. Away on either hand were mountains. On the south the plateau sloped away to the level of the plain, with some trees and bush on it, and in the middle of it a hollow place in which our baggage was quite safe. Along the higher north edge a line of shelter-pits had been dug the day before, but without any particular head-cover, the diggers no doubt thinking that the pond at their feet, which spread a long way out, would keep the enemy far enough off. It was a lonely place, I could not see a house anywhere, and there we spent an idle long day, hearing a croaking of frogs and to the southeast a booming of cannon which after a time one only heard when one listened for it, and then muffled, like a gong struck by something woolly, while all the day the drizzle drizzled and streamed down our muskets.

“It was only about four in the afternoon that two scouts galloped in from the highlands to our right with the news that some companies of the enemy were making gun-emplacements on a hill four versts to the north-east, and near sunset the pond began to spout with shells bursting. We others lined

the trenches, I in one of the middle ones with five others under my lieutenant. With our boots three inches under mud and water we stood there.

“At first the shells fell hundreds of yards short, but it was soon dear that our position had been spied out, and that they were getting the range. I believe that the setting sun shining a little through the drizzle upon our bayonets may have shown us to them; and I have since thought it a childish thing for our soldiers to go about everywhere with bayonets fixed: but the army is so ‘conservative,’ you see! they will not change anything.

“At any rate, in half-an-hour the cannonade had become searching, and I am sure that I never witnessed one so bullying, so solemn, so changeless in its rigour. The bleak nightfall helped to make it seem as if Heaven was angry with us, and was growing louder and louder with threats to overwhelm us. Our end of the plateau and the pond were covered with glare and drifting smoke. The wind was from the south: I did not know if the firing would be heard in camp, or if supports would be sent us. We crouched under the north wall of the trenches, and I felt, though I did not see, that men were being wounded about me.

“It was pretty dark when musketry-fire began upon us from the north. Who were firing, or where they were, I did not know, for I felt awed, and I simply would not lift my head to look out. I doubt if any one else did. Our lieutenant called out his ‘*tovs!*’ and his ‘*pli!*’ and we fired, but without much aiming, I am certain. Why the men had not been put to throwing up proper parapets during the day I am not sure, but I think that it was the pond which somehow made us feel safe.

“It lasted a long time, shells bursting with awful nearness to us, and we pouring out a quick fire at we hardly knew what. In the midst of it a stupid thing happened to me, for my section-commander put his hand on my back, and told me to run and report to Captain Avdéitch that ammunition was

getting low. It was very disagreeable. I wished to tell him 'you had better go yourself,' but did not; I did not like it though, my blood went chilly. And the fellow made me shout the message after him in the noise of the firing.

"However, I did it. Having climbed out, I ran the gauntlet with a stoop, a distance of perhaps fifty yards, then back. Soon afterwards a man lying on his face above us handed us down a zinc box of cartridges, which were given out. But ten minutes later the enemy's musketry-fire suddenly stopped.

"I wondered, I remember, why this was: it seemed strange.

"It must have been about eight in the night then. I wished that the battle would stop, but the artillery-fire was coming, if anything, hotter. A shell bursting on the edge of the bank over the pond threw a splinter which pitched into my trench, ricocheted, and struck a man named Paul Peresviet. I heard him horribly cry out, and then groan. There were rocks standing out of the grass in all that north part of the plateau, and the shot of all kinds shattered their surface, causing splinters to fly. I longed and prayed for it to be over. I had never been nervous before, but I was now. The darkness seemed to me crowded with terrors.

"Suddenly I heard a most strange sound, Yoshio. It was a good way off, but coming quickly nearer, and what it was I could not guess. It was like hail threshing a lake at first, then it was like cavalry splashing through a marsh, a noise of fretted water, which grew louder, and at last became uproarious.

It was the Japanese coming at the trot through the pond which we had thought too deep to be passable; they had been able to creep up to it in the dark, because our men, hiding their heads from the shell-fire, were none of them looking out.

“It must have been all planned beforehand by the enemy, for as the splashing noise grew upon us, their artillery stopped firing, lest it should hurt its own men.

“I thought to myself: ‘Our position will surely be rushed, and this is my chance, if I do not get killed.’

“We in the trenches were fearfully excited. ‘Fire!’ was the cry, and no doubt we killed some of them; but almost as we fired, the Japanese terribly cheered quite near to us; they had got into dead ground behind the steepish grass-bank over the pond, and they must have scaled its fifteen feet of height at a bound almost. My lieutenant shouted something about ‘charging,’ but there was no time; their terrible fat faces were upon us, they were stabbing with bayonets. I must have been as white as milk; I stood stiff, waiting in terror, my heart in my throat. I can only remember dropping my musket, spreading out my arms, and saying with an unnatural calm in a low voice to a down who wished to pierce me: ‘I yield, I yield.’ I spoke in Russian; it never entered my head that he would not understand, even if he could hear, and only afterwards I laughed when I thought of this.

“He grasped my arm, and dragged me quicker than I could go out of the trench. We two then went a little along the edge of the plateau, then down the bank into the pond, and across it. The water nowhere reached above my knees! Our shins struck upon one dead body. A fearful stillness reigned behind us: the men of my company were being killed, taken prisoners, or flying. The man held my left sleeve, walking at his ease, without saying anything, but muttering to himself anon. He was not much taller than I, but stout and middle-aged.

“We went on over marshy land till we came to a rising path, at the top of which were fir-trees and a bit of broken wall in a lot of bush by the side of the path. On the wall some sort of picket — six or seven men — were

sitting. My man took me to them, spoke a few words which caused them to cheer, left me in charge of one of them, and with the same saunter went back the way he had come.

“My new man then led me on, he too holding my sleeve. We went at a holiday walk through dark wooded country, up and down hills of grass. It still drizzled, and no moon nor stars were in the sky.

“It became very tiresome, we went so far, this fellow and I, alone as it were in the world. I longed to lie down and sleep; and I thought sleepily to myself, ‘He would not treat me with so much disdain, if he knew that I am a girl.’

“At last we came to an empty camp behind a mountain, and I was led to a tent before which stood a sentry. I went in. Three men were asleep on the ground, prisoners also. There were some blankets in a corner. I, too, was about to lie down when a face looked in at the tent-door and asked in good Russian if I wanted anything to eat. I said no, though I was hungry, for I wished to sleep at once; and having wrapped myself up cosily, I dreamt all the night of Ivan Shtcherbakoff bringing me boxes of cigarettes.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PRISONER OF WAR (*continued*)



“IT HAD BEEN my aim all along to be taken prisoner by the Japanese; and it was in my mind, as soon as I should wake the next morning, to say that I was a girl, and ask to be put upon the finding of my husband.

“But fortune was against this, for at dawn we four prisoners and some others were marched away with a field-hospital wagon under a guard. Before we started I said ‘*Yoshio M—*’ to three separate men — they were about the only two Japanese words which I knew — but they took little notice of me. I looked anxiously about for the face which had spoken Russian to me during the night, but it was not to be seen, and I did not know how to ask for it.

“The life which now began for me was less trying in many ways. I sometimes felt almost happy; but it was harder now that I was a prisoner to hide my sex, so that oftentimes for hours or a whole day I was ill at ease.

“But I managed it by one trick or another, for I was afraid to let a mob of common soldiers know that a pretty young girl was in their midst, without at the same time being able to let them know who I was, and what I was seeking. It was my bad luck that not one of them whom I tried could understand any Russian or French. I felt, moreover, a foolish shame and shrinking from saying that I was a girl before I should be sure that the person to whom I said it was one who could serve my ends.

“We tramped over many sorts of country in a picnicking fashion, going always toward the south and east. The Japanese were strict with us prisoners, but not unkind, and fed us well. Three separate camps were visited by us, where we took up more guards, prisoners and wounded, so that we were soon quite a mob. At those camps I thought that if I could only say in Japanese the few words: ‘I want an interpreter,’ perhaps that would do my business; but I hesitated to show my sex without being sure of having an interpreter to whom to explain myself, so nothing was done.

“One thing was certain: I was going toward you. I said to myself, ‘There is time; I will wait.’

“Our flock of prisoners grew to the number of some two hundred. One of them told me that four of the outposts of my brigade had been driven in one by one, that our main position had then had to be abandoned, and that the brigade had retired westward under fire in a very large circle with the guns and baggage in the middle, without much loss. I was glad of this.

“We more and more came into country where the Japanese were the masters. Anon I saw columns of them on the march, looking in the mass like a lot of sunburnt Europeans with gumboil and swollen faces. But they are not ugly to my eyes, for I have a liking for them.

“Every townlet became full of them; they were in all the blockhouses, dépôts, and barracks; their supply-carts moved northward along the roads, their prisoners and wounded southward.

“At last we came to the railway in the midst of a barren country, and by it crossed over barren mountains, till we entered upon a part where plains were, with mobs of cattle, camels, and sheep on them. The ground was still stony there, but we soon came to a country where millet grew as far as the eye could reach. It was getting quite warm now, and fruit was brought to the train, wherever it stopped, to be sold; but I had spent all my pay and had no

wealth left except my watch and a few trinkets hidden in my pockets, so I could eat the fruit only with my eyes, and I dreamt of cigarettes nearly every night.

“I must finish quickly now, for this has to be sent to you to-morrow.

“We were getting near to Liaoyang when I found out that an old Russian prisoner sitting by me had once been a guard to the Legation in Tokio, and could speak a little Japanese. ‘Here,’ I thought, is my affair done,’ and I at once begged him to ask one of our guard where General M — was, for I thought that you would be with your father. The old fellow did this, and the guards, having asked one another, made up their minds that General M — was in Japan, at Tokio.

“That was such a long way off that my heart sank, and I asked myself how I was to get to you without any money. However, with the old soldier near me I felt my feet on good ground, and said to myself that I would keep him in sight.

“But that very night I lost him, for when the train ran into Liaoyang at ten in the night, one half of us prisoners were taken one way, and the other half another. My half was marched to a sort of castle on a hill, and early the next morning was marched back to the railway for the journey to Talienwan.

“I was glad of this, for I said to myself, ‘Talienwan is near to Japan, and in the military prison there some will certainly understand Russian or French.’ But it was a weary voyage.

“We arrived at last, and were shut up with at least six hundred other prisoners. But I allowed three weeks to pass before I said a word about my sex, though I could have done so now any day that I chose.

“The fact was, I was afraid of taking any too hasty step which might spoil all my hopes, so I hung back and clung to my secret. I was not sure

how my story would be taken, whether it would be all believed, whether I might not be sent back to the Russian lines. Moreover, I did not like the look of the governor of the prison, to whom I was made a servant in the second week; and you are about to see that I was right in this.

“I thought of writing to your father, dear, and telling him all, directing my letter to ‘General M — , Tokio,’ if I could get no other address.

But I hesitated. What name could I have given him in my letter? Nadine Devriloff? That would have terribly enraged him! If mine had been any other name of all the names in the world!

But I knew that Devriloff would hardly be pretty to this honoured father of yours. I feared what he might do to poor you and to me, and I hung back from writing to him. Ah, how we are unhappy, *mon ami!*

“I thought also of writing to you, sending you this note-book, and directing it to ‘Yoshio M — , Tokio.’ But I was not sure that you were with your father there! I thought that it might all fall into your father’s hands, and I wished to be wary. I did not know what to do, and weeks passed. It was then that I began to get thin.

“I had a fairly easy life, meanwhile, in spite of the strictness. The Japanese in the town sent all sorts of presents to the prisoners: meat, saké, fruit, tobacco, and we fared well. One morning when we were drawn up in the courtyard the governor picked me out, and said in a sort of Russian that, as my conduct was so good, he wished me to be his servant. I told him that I could speak French, and thenceforward we spoke in that tongue.

“He was a quite shrivelled old man, the old Kujo, with eyes wide apart, and a rag of beard on his chin. I understood that he had been a great lord at one time. I did not like him. His eyes had some hint of wickedness in them; and they sometimes rested on me in a strange way.

“I do not know why he wished me to be his servant, since there was little for me to do. At any rate, I was now almost free, learnt some Japanese nouns, had cigarettes, and was sent out by the cook to buy things. It was an amusing town, not very Russian, for some of the houses had those curved roofs, and the people were Jews of a special type, with Chinese and some Koreans. That made me laugh, the Koreans! (*me faisait rire!*) with their tall hats of gauze, too small for their heads, and their pig-tails! They put me in mind of the people of Laputa in *Gulliver’s Travels*, their air was so solemn and innocent.

“I slept in the Governor’s house at the prison gates. I was a pet of his many Japanese servants, and everything was pleasant. But I could sleep little for the care in my heart, and my cheeks lost most of their redness then.

“One night after three weeks, as I was placing a sort of lacquer stool, with metal pipes on it, at the feet of the old Kujo, he said to me —

“‘I am leaving Talienwan for Japan to morrow night, Alexandrow: I am called home; so your duties by me will honourably end — unless, perhaps, I take you with me.’

“I was startled and glad. We were in a rich little room all alone, the old Kujo sitting on a cushion on the floor, and before I knew what I was doing, I was telling him all.

“‘Monsieur,’ I said, ‘I am not what I seem to you. I am a young girl. For the love of heaven, take me with you to Japan, for I am seeking my husband, Yoshio M — , who is in Japan.’

“The old Kujo knocked the ashes out of his pipe, with his eyes cast down. He showed no surprise; I might have spoken to an image of wood.

“‘*Who* is your husband?’ said’ he presently.

“‘Yoshio M — , monsieur.’

“‘Not the son of the general?’

“‘Yes, the same!’

“‘But he is a boy, I think?’

“‘He has eighteen years.’

“‘Well, he is a boy. He is not a husband. You should not think of him.’

“‘But — he has eighteen years!’ I cried out, for I did not know what to say. The old Kujo’s eyes remained cast down, and I stood in fear of his next words.

“‘Where were you married?’ he asked next.

“‘In St. Petersburg.’

“‘With or without his father’s august consent?’

“‘Without, I am afraid.’

“‘You see, you see,’ said he, ‘he is a boy; he is not a husband. A pretty young girl like you, you might do better.’

“‘But, monsieur, listen,’ I said: ‘you are addressing yourself to the daughter of a prince, and the wife of a noble. I do not need any advice as to the disposing of my destiny. But since I am without money or any protector, I cast myself upon your pity, and pray you to take me with you to Japan.’

“‘But you are a prisoner of war,’ said he.

“‘No, for I am not a soldier.’

“‘How can you prove to me that you are not a soldier?’

“‘I have said it, monsieur; and you see my smooth face, and the grief of my widowhood in my eyes. Here, moreover, is my watch, such as rich young girls wear; my rings, too; my hands—’

“‘Well, well, I know that you are a girl,’ he said. ‘Well, well, all you have to do is to put yourself completely into my hands, and you will find in me a father.’

“‘I bowed before him, but my heart was ill at ease.

“He then began to ask about my father, my marriage, my life in the army; anon he glanced up aside at me, but his eyelids at once dropped again, hiding the unsearchable thoughts behind them. He said that he would take me with him to Japan.

“The next evening, accordingly, we left Talienwan in a large steamer. The old Kujo wished me to put on woman’s clothes, but I thought to myself ‘Not yet,’ and I would not. I was in the old top-boots, blood-stained sheepskin, and greatcoat, my bandolier still full of cartridges. I wished you to see me in that costume, to hear what you would say! Fancy if I set out with a wild heart! for I felt that I was about to meet you. The sea seemed to me a high road to the islands of the blessed.

“But I was soon in trouble of mind again. The old Kujo would have me be a cabin-passenger, though I did not wish this, because of my dress. As the voyage went on, he would not let me be, but wished to make me presents of curios, and to play with my hands and cheeks. This filled me with fear, I was so utterly in his power. One night he became furious with me, as I could tell by his laugh. I was as little maidenly as I could be after that, pretending to like him; but my mind was made up as to what I should do the moment we came to land, for I believed that he meant to shut me up in some castle, and keep me there always for himself.

“We went on through the sea for two nights and two days. On the third evening the ship stopped at a town called Shimonoseki, and it was strange to sleep aboard her that night in harbour, for she seemed to be suddenly dead. The next morning we went on up the Inland Sea to Hiroshima, where we stopped again, and going on thence we came at about eleven in the night to Kobe, where we landed. It was the 29th of May.

“The old Kujo had with him seven servants, male and female, in whom I had lately noticed a change of manner toward me; they must, in fact, have

been puzzled by the lordly treatment given me, and were perhaps jealous. At any rate, I saw that in what I was about to do I ought not to look for help from any of them.

“It was quite a business after landing to set off with the baggage and all. The night was drizzly, and we had to make a journey of eight ri (fifteen miles) to a country-house. The women went in rikshas, the men on foot, some carrying burdens slung on bamboos; the old Kujo went in the sort of closed palanquin which you call a norimono. Two of these norimonos were awaiting our landing, and the old man would have me get into the second. I did so, and the fussy party set off. My heart was beating fast in my bosom.

“We passed into the country, up and down mountains, through wonderful scenes of leafage, streams, crags, hamlets, and temples. Sometimes the moon whitened the clouds a moment, and I could not tell you, I seemed to myself to be dreaming, all was so enchanted that dark night. Japan smelled as sweet as a nosegay whose passion one draws up into the nostrils, but cannot get enough, and one draws it up till one is faint.

“But I was cold with fear, for I was not sure if I would be able to do what I had in my mind, or if, having done it, it would end well; whereas, if I did not do it, I was sure that the old Kujo would be the death of me. Happily, his norimono was before mine, and this gave me my chance, for, at a narrow path where it was very dark with wood on either hand, I stopped my bearers quietly, pretending to have a reason for getting out; I went into the wood to the left, and the moment I was ten yards from them I took to my heels.

“I ran farther and faster that night than I have ever run, or thought that I could — up hill and down hill. I only stopped when I had to, and then ran again. That old man seemed to me, and still seems, to be the devil. I believe that he always knew that I am a girl.

“Think, dear, of my situation that night! I had thrown myself utterly upon God, without any hope, but in Him, being a young girl lost at midnight in the country parts of a land whose language I could not speak. I fell upon my knees in a forest and shed tears before my Maker.

“Before morning I had passed through two villages, but I was afraid to knock at any of the houses lest Kujo might hear of it, and have me. At last, toward daybreak, I came to a flight of steps in a grove, and since I could not stand any more I sat on the top of them, leant my head on a pillar, and fell asleep.

“A man was standing over me when I awoke, as the sun rose. The steps on which I sat led up to the forecourt of a temple, and he was the priest of this temple; his name was Suyematsu, a middle-aged man, with a smiling face. He showed no wonder to see a Russian soldier there, and spoke gently to me. I gave him to know that I could not speak Japanese. He then took me by the arm and led me through the temple-courts, and down a flight of steps to a paper house in a forest behind, where his wife, his two daughters, an infant son, and a grandmother gathered round and spoke of me. The infant’s name is Yoshio!

“I am quick in picking up a language, for I learn it with my eyes and instincts, as well as my ears, I think; so I could already gather something of the mood of what was said, and I understood at once that these people were as kind as angels.

“The little Ohana (thirteen years), the little Oyone (fifteen years), and the little Yoshio, who lives on the back of Oyone, stared at me with their pretty cat’s-eyes; Oyouki (the grandmother) brought me tea and cakes; then Suyematsu and Oyei, his wife, took off my greatcoat, my boots, and seated me on the matting; whatever they did to or for me, they bowed down their heads to the ground before me. For this and for much more I call upon my

husband to shower rewards some day upon Suyematsu, the priest, and Oyei, though they do not wish for any reward.

“I got them to understand that no one was to know that I was there, for I feared the old Kujo. But this was needless, for I have been with them nearly three months; the whole village has known it: and I have heard nothing more of Kujo.

“Within three days I was one of the priestly family.... That made me laugh when I understood that Suyematsu was a priest! He is more like a fisherman.... But Japan is as secular as Russia is clerical, and in all ways they are just opposites: so this is why they are at war, and this may be why you and I love each other so much.

“Oh, I should have spent three happy months in this place but for my care! On the third day I wrote to you in these words: ‘Yoshio, I am here at the village of Oyosaka, twelve ri from Kobe, in the house of Suyematsu, the bonze. I am in great danger, and without any money to come to you. — Nadine.’ This was written with the same gold pencil which I have used always, and so was the address: ‘To Yoshio, the son of General M — , Tokio.’ I understood that, the writing not being in Japanese letters, there might well be some delay in its coming to your hand, but I was sure that it would come, if you were there; and Suyematsu, who took it to post, agreed with me in this. But when weeks passed and no answer came, nor was the letter returned to me, I did not know what to think, and the good Oyei would often point at my cheeks with reproach, for I got thinner with longing for you, and many of my nights were spent in weeping. But everything else has joined together to make me happy! I love the little Ohana and Oyone as my sisters; I love the house, whose old woodwork has a scent like cedar, and gives out a sound like viols or conch-shells when the breezes of the forest hum through its vacant rooms; and I love Suyematsu and Oyei and

Yoshio, and the grandmother, who is as little and ugly as a large monkey, yet the rest of them spend their lives in bowing themselves down before her, so that she is a greater queen than Catherine of Russia.

“The old Oyouki keeps a sort of tea-house or *chaya*, not much bigger than a hut, on the road through the forest. She rises before dawn to pray at the family altar, which is the only thing rich in the house, for it has lacquer, and gilt, and lanterns on it; then she may take me with her through the forest to the *chaya* in the very early morning, and perhaps Ohana and Oyone come too, with Yoshio bound to Oyone’s back. Oyouki keeps her eyebrows shaved and her teeth coated with a black lacquer, while the little Yoshio is not a child, but only a doll, turned out in a mood of fond mockery, with his antic costume, and his head tonsured in rings; this gives to the fat fellow that touch of buffoonery which all the village-mothers purposely give to the infants, so that one’s cheeks puff out with laughter to see them. How foreign and far from me all is! And yet not so foreign, for, going with Ohana and Oyone at dawn through that forest of strange old trees, with large butterflies flying among the fern, it has twice happened to me, Yoshio, that a feeling of memory struck through my soul like a flash of lightning, and I seemed to have known it all before. Yes; it was gone in a moment, but it left behind it such a pain! a longing which could never be told, a sense of the world, and of old time, and of eternity. Was not this strange?

“At the *chaya* they keep tea to sell, with peppermint cakes, millet-cakes, and pastèques of pale colours in a pool; for a fountain which bubbles out of a vase of bamboo makes a pool, in whose clear water eggs, pastèques, and fruit are kept cool. But hardly any one passes there, so that the profits can never be more than a few rin (farthings) each week, and oftentimes the *chaya* has been left to itself, since I who was in charge would go down through the village with Oyone and Ohana to the beach, perhaps to wash

my shirt while they bathed, for in their goodness of heart they do not mind being naked before me; or else we have played together round an idol of granite grown shapeless with age in the heart of the forest; or we have played in the courts of the closed temple, for it is only opened on certain days of the year, though one can spy gilt gods in the gloom within sitting on seats of red lacquer, and in the courts, too, are rows of stone gods with faces which wish to frighten one.

“AU is very decayed and forlorn in there; the courts are rank with bush; only some prayers on rice-paper left before the gods show that any one has come to it for ages; and oftentimes I have spent hours alone in those courts, weeping, and feeling things which words could not tell. All the hot day hosts of grasshoppers shrill there; many grey crabs live in the crevices; and late at night the air about it has a glimmer of its own from the fireflies and glow-worms which swarm in the courts.

“When I am not idle I have a trade, for, by watching the doers of girls’ hair, I soon got the trick of this, so that every one has wondered, not knowing that I am a girl and born to the knack! It takes two hours to do one head, and I am thought to add a coquetry all my own to the art, so that many girls have come to me at the *chaya* and elsewhere. Oyone and Ohana have theirs done once a week only, for the shining mass is not rumpled at night, since they sleep with their necks in a hollow block, and nothing under their heads. That has made me laugh, the way they sleep! on pads not large enough for a child, with night-lights, and Oyone’s long-handled guitar beside her. Yes, they have amused my sadness, these little people, with their little graces, their little hands: everything is in a mood of such droll coquetry! Suyematsu has a garden of dwarf-trees no larger than a table, with mountains and waterfalls in it! No one thinks of walking over the white matting in boots; the woodwork is scrubbed till it seems fresh cut from the

forest; the ware is for fairies to eat from. Sometimes they are just like dolls bowing and bowing by clockwork — their little stoop must be owing to this bowing! but at play they tuck up their long sleeves, and are as noisy as birds.

“How I ought to have been happy in this haven after my voyage and the horrors of war! In some parts the country looks as if heaven had meant to destroy it under snow, but by a fond whim had changed the snow-fall into white and pink blossoms; but in our forest it is not so, for there the trees are huge camphor-trees and cedar-trees, and the leafage is black and heavy.

“One night was a night of *fête*, and the girls trooped up out of the village into the forest with lanterns at the end of lissom bamboos, all in their sea-blue robes and their sashes, all flustered, hurried, full of little laughs and bowings; they then set to search for something on the ground, I did not know what, I was too sad to ask; and leaving the crowd there, I walked home with a sob in my throat.

“No one was in the house but Oyei; she was spinning silk. Something made me throw myself at her feet then, my sobs broke out, and when I could speak I told her all: how that I was a girl, and about the army, and the old Kujo, and how I was seeking for you.

“They had asked me nothing about my history, for even the young girls have wonderful delicacies of feeling; they had waited, perhaps expecting me to speak when I should have picked up the language: and I was now able to make myself understood.

“Oyei said hardly anything. I thought that she took my tale coolly. She went on spinning, without asking any questions. When I had finished she advised me to go to bed.

“The next noon, on returning home from the *chaya*, I found that Suyematsu was no longer to be seen. In the evening I asked what had

become of him, and was told by Oyei that he had gone inland — she did not say what for. It was only on the fifth evening, when he returned, that I understood that that poor woman had sent her husband by the train all the way to Tokio, in order that he might find out where you were. I flew to their bosoms and kissed them with passion.

“We three being alone, I was given to know that you were not in Tokio, not in Japan. Your father had been in Tokio for a short time three months before; but he and you also were now in Pekin, where, it was said, your father had become one of the head men.

“I did not know how I was to go to you: for no one in Oyosaka is half rich enough to buy my watch and trinkets, even if that would pay for my passage. Suyematsu thought that the note which I had written to you at Tokio may have been forwarded to Pekin, that you must have got it by this time, and would come to me. He advised me to write another note to Pekin, and then await you where I am. But I felt that your father would not let you come across the sea to me.

“‘Be of good cheer,’ said Oyei often to me, smiling with tears in her eyes, when she looked at my faded cheek; ‘he will come to you.’ But I fell into a weariness which could not hope.

“When they saw that I no longer ate, on the third day Suyematsu came to me in the inner court of the temple, where I was lying out of the heat in a shade of bushes, and he said: ‘Since it is so with you, I will tell you what I have to say. Do you wish to leave us, and go back to the continent?’

“I sat up, saying ‘Yes.’

“‘Then it can be done,’ said he, ‘for when I was in Tokio I saw my honourable brother, Kotohito, to whom I told all, inasmuch as he has been a quartermaster-sergeant in the army, and now holds an august clerkship in the department of military things. It happens that in ten days’ time a

company of prisoners are to be sent back to the Russians in exchange, and if you still honourably wish to keep up the pretence of being a soldier, Kotohito can manage that you shall be sent back among them: for he will bring the old Kujo to book for his dishonest meanings toward you, and get from him the papers that are needed for you to sail.'

"In the minute that he spoke all my sorrow was gone — I had leapt up, was hugging him, and ready to dance: for I am like that, I suppose, too ready to rush on a sudden into heats of hope or despair; and all this week I have been ashamed of my gladness, since the rest are so sad at my going.

"That very day Suyematsu wrote to his brother, and four days later we received from Tokio the papers which will admit me into the company of released prisoners.

"Suyematsu and I depart in three days' time for Kobe and the barracks there: for it is at Kobe that the prisoners are to be shipped. I hear that there will be a large number of us, for the prisons in Japan have been crowded. The name of our ship is the *Shini Maru*; she will land us at Newchwang, whence the prisoners will be carried north by train to the Russian lines; but at Newchwang you will meet me, since it is not too far from Peking, and, having there declared my sex, we shall thenceforth be always together. This little book will be posted to you this afternoon, directed to 'The Imperial City, Peking'; the mail to Peking leaves to-morrow, three days before I leave, so that you will have plenty of time, after reading this outline of what has befallen me, to come to Newchwang to meet me.

"*Au revoir*, then! I am very excited, but not now as happy as I thought that I should be: I do not know why. I feel a remorse for not having been happier here during these almost three months: for God guided me into this haven of peace, and I ought to have hoped and been happy, but I would not; and perhaps I shall never be given another chance to be happy. Who knows?

The world is strange. The maples are all in scarlet and gold, for Autumn is near, or is come....”

CHAPTER XIX

PASSING SHIPS



THAT BEING THE end of Nadine's narrative, the compiler is now forced to carry on her history in his own words as best he can.

As to the boy, Yoshio, we know from his own story how he had been shovelled into the Japanese army by his father, how he had been wounded at the battle of the Fanchu Bridge, how he had been taken to the hospital at Irkutsk. In an exchange of prisoners he had been sent from Irkutsk to Japan, where he had been received by his father, and from Japan had been taken back to China, where his father now mostly lived, having accepted very high rank in the Court of Peking.

It was the father's fixed will that Yoshio should become a man of war, though the good Yoshio, as we know, was rather made for playing on the koto and samisen, and for painting large coiffures with two sweeps of the brush. Therefore, the father and son had no sooner come to Peking than the son was sent to fill the post of sub-lieutenant in the Chinese army in a little country-place called Fengyun in Chih-li, on the understanding that this was only meant as a rest for him after his hardships in war, and as a training also, since his father intended to find him a place as a sub-lieutenant in the fighting force of Japan.

At Fengyun Yoshio passed two months, during which he wrote several letters to Nadine by the ordinary Chinese post to Russia. These, of course, she did not get, since she was no longer in Russia.

His life in Fengyun was dull enough, being passed in a sort of exile in the company of officers with whom he had nothing in common; but what he saw going on around him ever afresh aroused his astonishment, for some busy spirit seemed to be abroad in that remote little place, making everything new.

In an alley of Fengyun a brick house had lately been run up, which all the day was besieged with people flocking in from the country. It was a recruiting dépôt, and at first Yoshio wondered at this eagerness of simple peasants to become soldiers; but he soon understood that they came because they had to: for they were conscripts. On the faces of all of them was imprinted a look of foolish wonder.

Outside Fengyun also two great buildings had been run up, one of them being a barrack and dépôt for artillery and transport, the other a dépôt for grain, forage, clothing, camp-equipment and mules. Both were quite new, not yet finished. If Yoshio took a ride twenty miles in any direction he came upon others like them.

In the barracks he had two rooms of his own where he moped his time away, with little to do. In the mornings he had to be at drill with his lieutenant, a young Chinaman, but what he saw at drill here was so unlike what he was used to, that it made him laugh sometimes, everything was on so overgrown and gawky a scale: a squad was not made of four or six men, but of forty, and what they called a company here was more like a regiment. Some of the men were armed with old matchlocks instead of rifles, and many had not as yet any uniforms, so that they made a strange-looking crew.

One day a great man passed that way, a general with his staff, who, to Yoshio's surprise, turned out to be nearly all Japanese. Yoshio learned that he was the general commanding the army-corps of that "region," and that he was only one of six who commanded in Chih-li, since Chih-li had been

divided into six "regions," in which six army-corps of a million men each were to be set on foot, each with its own vast corps-cavalry-brigade.

This was told to Yoshio by one of the general's staff at dinner. The lad stared when he heard of an army-corps of a million human beings.

"But is all this done?" he asked.

"It is proposed," was the answer.

"But is such a thing to take place all over China?" he next asked.

"Sooner or later it may be so," answered the officer.

Three days after this Yoshio saw a wretched man beheaded in the market of Fengyun amid the excitement of the whole district, many as it were casting dust to heaven at the thing which their eyes saw, and a howl of dismay rose from the crowd as the chopper struck the neck of the man, who alone remained calm. He was a mandarin, and had been brought to the block in a palanquin surrounded by servants in robes of silk: but he had robbed the people; and on his condemnation-writ, which was nailed up on a pole, Yoshio saw the signature of his father.

The people were being more heavily taxed than ever, but by new sorts of officials; they were being drilled and called upon in many ways; a strange awakening and unrest was, therefore, everywhere to be seen. In all this Yoshio took a very absent kind of interest, for his thoughts were with his young wife far away, as he thought, in Russia. But she was really in Japan, and his astonishment may be imagined when, after nearly two months of that dull life in Fengyun, on July 14, he received from Nadine a note in these words: "Yoshio, I am here in the village of Oyosaka, twelve ri from Kobe, in the house of Suyematsu, the bonze. I am in great danger, and without any money to come to you. Nadine." She had sent it to him at Tokio, it had then come to Peking to his father, who, without opening it, had now sent it on to him at Fengyun.

The letter had taken a month and a half to reach him, the chief reason being the slowness of the country-post in China; but as it had no date on it, he did not know this.

At any rate, Nadine was in Japan! For a long time the young man's brain could not find room in it for this fact. How she had got there, why she was "in danger" (she meant danger from the old Kujo) and why "without money," was far beyond his guessing. What he was to do now he did not know; there was no telegraph at Fengyun, nor was there any, he supposed, at Oyosaka: and he was bound to his post, such as it was. It took his tortured mind two days to make itself up that he must shut his eyes to everything, and fly to Japan.

He was about to do this, when he received a letter by special camel-carrier, ordering him to come at once to Peking, since his father wished him to take a voyage — to Japan!

Here was the very thing which Yoshio wanted, sent him in the nick of time by no other than Bentem Sana of all Mercy, as it seemed. He made haste to set off to Peking with a couple of servants without writing to Nadine, since he felt that he would now be at her side long before any letter carried by the drowsy Chinese post could reach her.

He went by mule till he came to the railway, and after a week's journey arrived on the evening of July 24 in the Imperial City. But it was not till midnight that he saw his father, who then hurriedly entered the room of the palace where Yoshio was awaiting him. The baron gave his son a warm greeting; he had heard good accounts of Yoshio's conduct under fire, and was now pleased with him. His love for his son was silent, but very deep.

"Have you yet seen either Mr. England or Mr. Petersen?" was one of the father's first questions.

"No, father," answered Yoshio.

“They are about to sail, and have promised me to rouse you to go with them to-morrow before sunrise. They have chartered a Chinese steamer called the *Taku*, which now lies on the Peiho, ready to depart.”

“What are they going to sail for, father?”

“In order to watch a small naval action which is about to take place, and which I wish you, too, to see.”

“But — I thought that I was going to Japan!” exclaimed Yoshio with terror.

“Yes; after seeing the battle, Messrs. England and Petersen will go on to Japan for a week, during which time you will have several small businesses to transact for me in Tokio, and will receive your commission as a sub-lieutenant in your old company. This done, you will return by mail-steamer to Newchwang, whence you will go on to the front.”

“But this naval battle that we are to watch, is it quite sure to take place at once, father?” asked Yoshio.

“It seems so. Why?”

“Nothing, father,” answered Yoshio.

The father and son spoke on till the darkest hour of the morning, when they were joined by Messrs. England and Petersen. Yoshio was rather silent; his eyes dwelt gloomily upon a marble bridge and a moat strewn with the white and orange blossoms of azalea; his young heart, to which hope was so natural, had learned already to mistrust the future.

“What ships are these that are about to fight?” he asked Mr. Petersen.

“The only two big ones left of the Russians out here,” answered Mr. Petersen. “They are from Vladivostok, and have been skulking among rock-islands for weeks, but have been driven to sea through lack of provisions, I suppose, and have lately been seen off Fusan.”

“But whence have they got coal?” asked Yoshio. “Perhaps from coal-ships that have run the loose patrolling of the Yellow Sea; one is not even sure that they have coal.”

Yoshio had no need to be roused in the morning, for, though he lay down for a nap, he was the prey of the several fevers of eagerness to set out, of wonder that Nadine should be near him, of thankfulness to her for having come so far to him. At one moment he felt himself a king, since he was so loved by his beloved; at another he doubted whether he was not dreaming; at another shivered at the thin threads upon which his and her destiny hung. Near peep of day he, with Messrs. England and Petersen, was leaving Peking behind him for Tientsin; by noon they were on their ship — a coasting-steamer of 3,000 tons, called the *Taku*.

It was known that the Japanese ships told off to catch the Russians were off Wei-hei-wei, and thither Messrs. England and Petersen made, coming up with the Japanese within four days to the southwest of Korea: and now it was a question of cruising for the enemy.

It had been taken for granted that a battle was on the point of happening, since the Russians were in want of one thing or another, and were believed to be seeking a battle before they should be captured: but there was some hitch, for, from the day when they had been seen off Fusan, they were no more seen for over a month.

Each day, meantime, they were looked out for; hope was kept on the stretch by sea-rumours; the searching ships twice coaled and provisioned from store-ships and colliers, and the search spread all round the coasts of Korea, and among the islands where the Russians might possibly have found a lurking-place.

It will be guessed whether in such a case the heart of the poor Yoshio ate into itself! Here was no flight possible to him: he was a prisoner on the sea.

He saw in fancy Nadine's eyes grow weary with watching, and his own, too, grew weary. Several times he was on the point of casting himself at the feet of Mr. England and craving his pity, but he was always kept back by the old awe of his father, and by that instinct for keeping things dark inborn in Orientals.—'

He would sit silent through the hot days and starlit evenings, hearing without hearing the talk of Messrs. England and Petersen, who sat on their cane lounges in flannels, wearing those umbrella-hats which one sees on the heads of the Japanese rice-growers; anon Yoshio's eyes would bend a look upon Mr. England as if he were about to speak, but would soon become dull and weary again.

It grew on toward the time of the autumn typhoons, but still the dead weather which they had had, with hardly an hour's rain, remained unbroken. Yoshio asked himself if this was never to have any end: he seemed to be bewitched and in chains.

At last one hot morning, the 3rd of August, there arose an event. The three friends were sitting in the cool of the awning, the *Taku* barely moving through the water, with one of the cruisers three cable-lengths on her starboard beam, and two others six knots away on the horizon eastward. The sea was as pale as a dead thing, and the air like its dead breath. The near cruiser looked like a block of iron stuck without any motion in the water, though a little foam spued from time to time round her ram. Her colours had been saluted; a strain of band-music floated over the water from her anon.

Mr. England, looking rosy and fresh (having been causing himself to be dashed with buckets of the warm sea-water), was saying to Mr. Petersen: "Personally, I am no believer in sea-power, though that is an unorthodox view for an Englishman." Whereupon Mr. Petersen asked him: "How is

that, then?" To which Mr. England replied: "Because the modern warship is so very powerful in attack and so weak in defence. Look at that thing, how strong she looks: but she's rather a sham, for one fourteen-inch shell may end her. Therefore I always say that any one battleship is a match for any three. At six thousand yards' range, indeed, three English ships are three times better than one German, or even four times better; but suppose the German is gallant and comes within three hundred yards, pouring out forty thousand rounds of shot during the ten minutes that she keeps afloat? Then, the result of that fight should be that all the four disappear: and where's your sea-power then? In this war there has hardly been any such fighting, so one can't be sure; but if I am right, Britain should be in a close alliance with some army-power: it can't be with Germany on account of race-hatred, therefore it should be with France."

Mr. Petersen was about to reply, when the captain of the *Taku*, an Englishman, came up with his glass in his hand, saying —

"I see, gentlemen, that one of the scouts has come in, and is signalling."

Yoshio at once leapt up in great excitement, for though such alarms had often ended in nothing, his young heart was still quick to hope. Moreover, we know with what excitement even the smallest happenings are taken by those who have long been cooped up in a ship. The others, too, leapt up; and soon a glass was at everybody's eyes. The scout, a swift destroyer, steamed up to within a thousand yards, exchanging signals with the cruiser near, on board of which a trumpeting was now heard, while her sailors, looking very like British blue-jackets with gumboil, began to swarm over her. Fires had been kept banked, and from all the ships smokes were soon pouring over the sea. The *Taku*, too, quickened her step, swung round six points to starboard, and a chase towards the southeast began.

It seemed certain now that things must be coming to a head, and every one was elated. On the *Naniwa*, the cruiser near the *Taku*, many of the steps which are taken before a battle were seen to be going forward: the captain and his staff were on the bridge, spyglasses were the order of the day, torpedo-nets were being got ready; the ships ahead grew every minute bigger to the eye, for they waited for the stragglers; and Yoshio and his two friends grudged the time spent at lunch, lest something should happen meantime, and escape their eyes.

When they again came up, the *Naniwa* had quite a stripped look; her commander was pacing the after part of the forecastle deck before his conning-tower, round which a mass of hammocks had now been stacked; davits and cowls had disappeared, boats had been filled with water, and the decks, too, drenched, so that they might not catch fire. Much overhauling of this and of that, moreover, was still going on, testing of torpedo-tubes, of gun-circuits, hoisting of shells. But it was all a haste in vain: for though yonder lay nearly all the ships of the squadron within sight, and the afternoon sun blazed lower and lower, still no enemy was to be seen. By four p.m. Yoshio's high spirits had died down, gloom again filled his mind, and he thought to himself: "There is never going to be any battle, till Nadine and I, too, get sick with waiting."

However, the commodore of the ships had out a chain of three torpedo-boats scouting towards the south-east, and near three bells of the first dogwatch one of these must have come in, for a still more earnest activity than in the morning now broke out among the ships' crews: things that might catch fire were thrown overboard, coal was stacked round funnels, screens round Maxims, guns cast loose: and half-an-hour or more before the sun touched the sea yellow hulls of Russian ships could be made out by the glasses eastward.

It was not strange if Yoshio's heart now beat wildly, for he knew that the moment the battle ended the *Taku* would start straight for Japan, where he would hasten to Kobe and to the house of Suyematsu, the priest, to find Nadine. Nor was his the only wild heart there, for every heart beat wildly, there was something so shocking in the thought of the fine, whole ships going forward to be outraged by, and to outrage, other ships. They had all hoisted their colours, with some extra colours on masts and stays, and they hastened under forced draught to the battle before the night should come.

Even Mr. England, whose small mouth usually found a great deal to say, was silent now; even the faces of the Chinese crew of the *Taku* were pale: for war as a rumour is one thing, but when the moment comes the mind can hardly believe that such a sight is really about to be seen by one's own eyes; and on the lonely mid-sea where God alone broods it is even more far-fetched a thing than on land.

The setting sun now made a track on the water, and looked through bars of orange and rose on the sky in that sad mood in which the days of autumn draw toward their end. All the ships were well ready by now for their ruthless work: gun-rooms had been turned into extra sick-bays to receive the wounded; chief-engineers were down in the regions of fire near the bottoms, seeing to their steam-power and bunkers; gun-crews and lieutenants were in their places; tops were manned. The Russians no longer looked like toy-ships, but like growing powers which wished, since they must perish, to leave a memory behind them. A breeze breathed over the sea and died away without making any sound; the ships bows passed through reaches of seaweed such as teem over the Yellow Sea; a fearful silence reigned. Mr. England, with the glass at his eyes, murmured to Mr. Petersen: "This is the evening of a Christian Sabbath."

Very soon after this the sound of a gun was heard five or six miles away; at the same time the captain of the *Taku* hurried up to Mr. England, saying, "Are we not now getting too near for safety, sir?" To which Mr. England answered: "Give us one half-knot nearer, and then stop, with our stern to the fight." In the moment in which he said this firing broke out on a large scale, and every one began to be struck by air-waves which caused a feeling of unease in the ear-drum. The *Taku*, then about four miles behind the hindermost of the Japanese, went on another half-knot, and swung round; Messrs. England and Petersen, with Yoshio and the ship's officers, knelt or leaned round the poop and stern-taffrails with glasses at their eyes, while the crew looked over the bows. By this time the air was in so severe a state of shock at the firing as if the world had been cast into a boiling pot, and was bubbling fast and bumping, so that the ear chirped at the hubbub of it.

At about the same time that the *Taku* stopped on the western outskirts of the battle, another ocean-steamer, coming from Japan, also stopped on the southern outskirts of it, about six miles from the *Taku*. She was a boat of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha fleet of steamers, and her name was the *Skint Maru*; she was taking some hundreds of exchanged Russian prisoners from Kobe to Newchwang, to be sent on thence to the Russian lines; and these prisoners, too, with her crew, leant over her bulwarks and watched the battle. She and the *Taku* were just in sight, if any one on either had looked towards the other, but all minds on each were taken up only with the drama of thunder that was taking place before them over the waters.

Few details, however, could be made out by the two steamers: the warships covered themselves in a mist from their hot guns; mists were seen passing through mist over the sea, like ghosts gliding in haste through the land of shadows; there were curtains of mist, smeared with rosy spots and glares, which lingered two, three minutes before they thinned; the twilight,

moreover, was deepening. But the battle could be clearly smelled from afar, and the ear seemed loaded with all the weight of the jabbering quick-firers. It was clear, too, that the fighting was at fearfully close quarters. There were twelve Japanese with a weight of 33,000 tons, and seven Russians with a weight of 15,000, seven only of the nineteen being of second-class size, and the rest third-class cruisers, sloops, gun-boats and the like; and the whole did not seem to cover an area of sea more than seven or eight thousand yards across, so that soon through the stagnant mists leaning masts were spied, and hulls that went lame and humped; water-spouts shot on high, and dropped back showering wreckage over the sea; two of the Russians came within 2,000 yards of the *Taku*, firing stern-guns, then turned and recharged; fires ran through ships, touched their stores of ammunition, and were seen to quiver a moment like sheet-lightning towards the sky. One boatload of sailors, spied by Mr. Petersen, was struck by a shell, and had disappeared by the time the splutter of flame was over. When the shades of evening had well fallen, and the smoke thinned, only two craft were any longer to be seen, both Japanese, one of them being that same *Naniwa* which had lain close to the *Taku* that morning with her band playing; she could not move, for her screws, funnels, and steering-gear were gone; both of her big guns had been struck on the chase; a hole was in her bow: and she was sinking. The other, a composite gun-vessel, could move, but could not long keep steam, since water was rising in her stokeholds; a hole had been torn in her forward bulkhead, all her port battery had been unshipped, and she, too, was sinking. Both were signalling to the *Taku* and to the *Shini Maru*.

The steamers, therefore, having hurried up to the two warships, stopped within fifty yards of each other, and got out their boats. On board one of them was Yoshio, and on board of the other was Nadine, both looking over the sea, but looking only at the wrecked ships, at the coming and going of

the boats, and at the horribly wounded men. Yoshio's glass would very likely have been able to make out Nadine's face among the row of faces that lined the larger steamer, if he had spied that way before the day quite darkened; but he did not do this. As for her, she had no glass; her face was pale at what she had witnessed; her eyes were fixed upon the boats.

It was a slow work: the moon rose up in the sky, the day had slowly changed into night.

The *Shini Maru* could not take in many more men besides her cargo of prisoners, so most of the hundred and fifty on board the two warships had to be brought to the *Taku*. The — was looked to first, for she was in worse plight, and caused a shout to arise from the soldiers on the *Shini Maru* when she dipped and sank a minute after the last of her crew had been taken off. It was then the turn of the gun-vessel, which had no boat of her own that could any longer float; her wounded were brought to the *Taku*, but the *Shini Maru* still lingered on, till the work should be over. Messrs. England and Petersen and Yoshio wished to watch the coming of the wounded, but very soon could no longer bear it, for on the faces of those sailors was a stare of scare and wonder, as of men who have been through that which the heart cannot conceive.

The three friends, therefore, went and sat on the poop, and there was a long silence between them, till presently Mr. England said: "Well, how do you feel?"

"It has boxed me on the ears," answered Mr. Petersen; "the world seems full of grasshoppers, and I think they mean to keep on screaming at me till I die, too. Can you hear me talk?"

"Yes, I hear everything," said Mr. England, "but I hear through the grasshoppers; there is a whole orchestra inside my head."

"Well, it has turned out as you prophesied," remarked Petersen presently.

“Something like. But ah, those men’s faces...”

“Here ends Russia on the sea in Asia, England.”

“Here begins to end the white man both on sea and on land in Asia,” answered Mr. England. “They say that great events take place at the beginning of centuries. I wonder how many people in Europe realize how much bigger a matter this war is than the French Revolution?”

“White men have it on the brain, you see,” said Mr. Petersen, “that it is the white man that matters. It would be such an upset in their way of thinking to see otherwise—”

“But how foolish it is!” exclaimed Mr. England.

“since it is so easy to see that China alone is half the world. Man lives in Asia and Africa, and the white races are there to modify Man; but *they* are not Man. They are the bitters in gin-and-bitters: the gin and the water’s the thing.”

“It is the greatest lark, if that is really so!” cried Mr. Petersen. “I wonder what it will all end in!”

“Intermarriage, no doubt,” said Mr. England. “Remember, Petersen, that Man is not a white animal: white men are a freak, like white mice, or white horses, and will soon disappear. I have heard M — make the same remark, and Schopenhauer, too, you remember, makes it: that is why, says Schopenhauer, a fair woman likes dark men, because she has an instinct to return, in her offspring, to the original dark type of the race; but dark women have no corresponding impulse to marry fair men: in fact, often shrink from them. We fair types are a temporary accident, only human by courtesy. So I look forward three hundred years to one universal race, highly evolved, of a flushed brown as clear as the ruby, with melting almond eyes, and a thick little coral mouth, with little pearls for teeth.”

“The yellow race will have to be highly ascendant first, though, before any such intermarriage could take place,” said Mr. Petersen.

“But we see that ascendancy beginning,” answered Mr. England; “and remember that it will be accompanied by a Socialism proclaimed in thunder by Japan to the whole world, which may still farther tend toward intermarriage. The ascendancy and the socialism are even at hand: China is drilling away, and I have lately heard M — use words which, if they mean anything, mean a European war within some months: for whatever Japan may intend, M — , I am convinced, intends for her nothing less than Asia, plus Russia in Europe.”

So the talk went on, but of it Yoshio heard not a word, his mind was so filled with eagerness to see the *Taku* start away toward Japan. He sat on the edge of his lounge, with one fist clutched, and a fixed dream in his eyes. The shuffling of feet, the loud breaths of the stretcher-bearers going down the companion-way with lanterns, the groans and screams, the stream of talk between Messrs. England and Petersen, the orders that were being called out, the sough of steam in the ship’s funnels, all passed before Yoshio as a scene of little interest: his soul was taken up with but one care, namely, that though he was about to see Nadine, miles of sea had first to be passed over. It became eight o’clock; the two steamers were showing each their three lights; the gun-vessel was low in the water now, and looked a sad wreck in the moonlight; on the *Shini Maru* the prisoners had been given a meal, and were again looking on over the ship’s side.

At last all of the warships’ sailors were in the two steamers. The gun-vessel had not yet sunk, but the steamers made ready to go their ways; their boats were taken in; their throttle-valves shouted. The *Shini Maru* moved first, steamed through a sixteen-point curve, and began to run westward under the *Taku*’s stern.

Nadine was bending over her starboard beam, looking down partly at the rush of the water and partly at the *Taku*, which she was approaching; but at the moment when the *Shini Maru* passed close under the *Taku's* stern, the young girl in soldier's dress sprang up straight and became pale, holding her face upward like one sniffing at, or trying to inhale, some scent in the air; she did not seem at first to be certain that she scented it, but presently certainty seemed to strike her, whereupon she uttered a sob, and ran and caught hold of a sleeve of one of the soldiers near her in a frightened way. By that time the *Shini Maru* was a good distance to the west of the, for the *Taku*, too, had swung round, and was running eastward. In seven minutes the lights of the two ships had vanished from each other, though each could still spy the wreck of the gun-vessel, waiting in the moonlight to go down to her vast grave.

CHAPTER XX

THE RENDEZVOUS



YOSHIO ARRIVED IN Tokio two nights after the sea-fight, and by noon of the next day was *en route* for Kobe; but on getting out of the train at Kobe, great was his surprise and annoyance to see Mr. Petersen getting out also.

The fact was that Yoshio's father wished to keep him in leading-strings longer than was meet, as men of masterful minds are too apt to do to their children, and had told Messrs. England and Petersen to keep an eye on the young man's movements; the two western friends, therefore, felt themselves "responsible" for him, and the strangeness of Yoshio's wish to rush away from Tokio had caused Mr. Petersen to wish to do the same thing, so that the two met on the platform at Kobe.

This, however, Yoshio would not stand: his manner was cold and firm as he said to Mr. Petersen: "I am going to a village near here — alone; I will rejoin you here to-night by eight o'clock."

He then went by ricksha to Oyosaka, the village where Nadine had lived with Suyematsu, the priest. The journey had taken a long time, the country there being mountainous: his steps were therefore eager as he went toward the temple through the forest, for he wished to be back in Kobe by eight that night with Nadine, whom he meant to present boldly to Mr. Petersen. Now, therefore, he ran, and now he walked fast. It was about six in the evening. He came to a sort of hut, a *chaya*, in the forest, and went in to ask if he was

going right. Only the little grandmother, Oyouki, was in there, sitting where the water bubbled out of the bamboo vase and made the clear pool at the bottom of which eggs, fruit and flowers were kept cool. But Oyouki was very deaf; thrice Yoshio shouted to her, "Is this the way to Suyematsu's house?" and still the old Oyouki thought that he wanted only tea and pastèques. She got up to get him tea, talking meanwhile, for she had caught the babble of the water in the bamboo vase, and had the talkativeness of old age, so that she seemed to be made with one ear and two tongues.

Just now she had the fact of Nadine's angel-visit and departure on the brain, and of this she spoke dotingly to Yoshio. Every one in the neighbourhood, now that Nadine was gone, knew that the soldier in the house of Suyematsu had really been a girl; so Oyouki spoke of her as "*she*" without mentioning her soldier's clothes, so that Yoshio did not even now learn that she had been a soldier, nor in what manner she had found her way into Japan: for this main fact was so deeply known to Oyouki, that she took it for granted that it was known to every one. On she mumbled her gossip, thinking Yoshio only a passing stranger as another; Yoshio heard of Nadine's "honourable sweetness" in the priestly household, of Nadine's "honourable note-book" which she had sent on to her young husband at Pekin before her departure; he heard the name "*Shini Maru*" and uttered a groan at the thought that the *Shini Maru*, with Nadine on board, had lain two hours not fifty yards from the *Taku*, with him on board; he heard that Nadine had gone to Newchwang (Yinkow) expecting him to meet her there; and hearing this, just as Oyouki was handing him the tea, he ran from the *chaya* with a cry, and with his hands over his face.

He spent a long time sitting in the forest that night, and did not reach Kobe till the small hours of the morning, having walked all the way.

The next day he was taken back by Mr. Petersen to Tokio, and two days afterwards got his commission as a sub-lieutenant in his old 2nd Division company, and he set off for China to join the fighting forces, having only with him one old servant named Hara.

The young man made his way to Yinkow (Newchwang) with a forlorn hope of still finding Nadine there, though he had no right to be there, being under orders to hurry to the front. As he was entering his inn at Newchwang, a young Chinese officer whom he knew said to him —

“Your father passed through here from Peking yesterday morning”; and he added with a laugh, “he has gone on to the front in order to see the last great battle on this side of Lake Baikal.”

Yoshio had intended telegraphing to his father at Peking to send him Nadine’s note-book; now, therefore, he telegraphed instead to his father’s secretary there: “Send me the packet which has come for me from Kobe”; but he got the reply: “I think your father has taken it to give you at the front.”

During the rest of his stay at Newchwang he had agents searching all the inns for “a young-Russian lady,” for still he had no suspicion that Nadine had been in soldier’s clothes; but by the end of the first day he had given up hope, for he knew that a “young Russian lady” in Newchwang would have been quickly found, if she was there.

After three days’ search against hope he went on northward in his white putties and new summer uniform. He was in the depths of gloom now, but hope still sprang in him, and anon he said to himself: “There is hope yet, Yoshio. Nadine must have told her father of our marriage and won his favour, for she could not else have come on the Siberian railway and got to Japan; on failing to find me at Newchwang she has gone back to her father,

and is still somewhere with him on or near the seat of war. When I get there I shall discover her.”

He saw, indeed, the unlikeliness of all this; but hope is part of life, and because he lived and was young he hoped.

The further he and his servant, Hara, now went, the more they came upon an ocean-current, as it were, of troops and convoyed transport making northward. “Practically the whole of our army is now mobilized,” said a fellow-officer to him at the window of his carriage on the platform at Haicheng; “two hundred thousand troops on each side now face each other yonder to the north on a front of some forty miles, and skirmishing is already going on.”

“Where is my father?” asked Yoshio.

“In your own division with Brigadier Markino: he is facing Devriloff, by the way, who is commanding the 68th and three following army-regiments.” Yoshio’s heart leapt at this, for if Nadine was near her father, then Yoshio would not be far from her when he joined his division.

“They say that this coming battle will be the” most momentous ever fought,” went on the officer, “because if Russia again suffers a defeat, France will now be drawn to take her side, and Germany is only waiting for France to do this in order to join in, too, against England.”

“But what, then, has happened to make you say such a thing?” asked Yoshio.

“I do not know,” answered the officer, “but on a sudden, within the last three days, everyone is to be heard speaking in this way. They say that the moment England is involved in the war; India will be ready to revolt, and that M — . — will then declare the independence of India and Tonquin in the name of China.”

Yoshio's train went on through the passes of the mountains, and during the afternoon of the third day thence he and his man on mule-back passed the sentries of the fortified camp of his regiment, which he found in a shallow valley bounded by a chain of hills on the west. Just there the country had good grazing, with no lack of water and of woods for fuel. The hills were entrenched on their western slopes, with detached flank-trenches, and held by small outpost garrisons. The young sub-lieutenant was led to his captain by the sergeant-of-the-guard, and showed his commission.

"Your father rode through our camp yesterday, and wondered why you had not arrived," said Yoshio's captain; "he is now three miles yonder to the south-east with Markino."

"I will write him at once," said Yoshio, and, going into the company-officers' tent, he wrote of his arrival to his father, asking in a postscript for Nadine's note-book in the words: "Benevolently send me, dear father, by the bearer any letters or packets which you may hold for me," and Hara went off with this note. Meanwhile, a few subalterns sitting round Yoshio told him all the news.

"We are all spoiling for a fight," said one. "Here we have been waiting, facing each other, ten long days, and not a shot fired."

"Then why don't you fight?" asked Yoshio.

"It is hard to tell what the sick Bear is waiting for," said another, "but *we* know what we are waiting for."

"And what is that?"

"We'll tell you, but it is as close as the grave, you know. The colonel was utterly astonished yesterday when he found that we knew; but these things leak out, my boy. Look here, the key of the whole Russian plan is the position over against us: the 68th to 71st hold it under Devriloff, and we mean to rush part of it or perish. Guess how?"

“How?” asked Yoshio.

“Fifty to one the scheme comes from your father, so you should have the luck to get put on to it before some of us others, if you volunteer: it will be hell’s own work for danger, though. Look here, you know how the Russians send round patrols at night to the sentry-posts of their outposts, to see that the lubbers are keeping awake. We used to do it, too, but we’ve dropped that game now. These patrols go tramping loudly from outpost to outpost every hour, so that, if an enemy were hiding in bush near by, he could hear the tramp, hear the password and countersign, see the forms on the skyline perhaps, and know just where the outposts are and the whole lay of the position. Well, the scheme is for four of us to go round as a Russian patrol just before one of the real patrols is due, and stab two sentries; then the force with us will quietly rush the posts, or slip between them, and so be upon the camps before the inlying sentries can give warning. The worst of it is that these are moonlight nights, and we must have darkness. That’s why we are waiting.”

“But what a thing!” said Yoshio, staring.

“You will be volunteering, of course, and cutting us all out?” said one.

“I do not know that I shall,” answered Yoshio. “There are better men than I, nor am I ambitious in this direction, for I am not a soldier because I will, but because I must. But is all that true which I have heard about the danger of a European war? Do you know?”

“True enough!” cried one. “Banzai! the more the merrier. That is, if we beat the Bear this time again. It is whispered that there are declarations of war in the bureaux of more than one European ambassador at this moment; and the last telegrams from Tokio to the army speak of large withdrawals of foreign securities from London by those in the know within the last two days.”

At this point of the talk Hara stood at the tent-door, having now returned from taking Yoshio's note to Baron M — . "Your father is augustly absent," he said to Yoshio, "but I have left your note with General Markino, who will give it to his excellency when he returns."

Yoshio had hoped to get Nadine's note-book that night; he believed that he would find in it some hint of where Nadine was, whether with her father or no, and was very disappointed.

"Whither is my honoured father gone?" he asked.

"To some further camp," answered Hara.

"For how long?"

"It may be for two, it may be for five, days." Yoshio at once made up his mind not to wait to get the note-book before trying to find Nadine; he was not even sure whether his father had not read the note-book, or would ever allow him to see it.

"Hara," he said taking his man aside, "you will at once begin to do that which has been arranged between us. In a few minutes I will give you the letter for the lady, and here is money to hire the cart and mule, and to buy the fruit; you will find a lodging in one of the villages in the valley to the west of those hills, and to-morrow morning you begin."

The next morning, then, at an early hour, Hara was wending across the valley west of the hills held by Yoshio's regiment. He was driving a mule-cart with fruit, etc., to sell to the Russian camp beyond the mountain to the west of the valley. A pigtail swung behind his back, for he was disguised as a Chinese coolie.

I This had all been thought of beforehand. Yoshio had purposely brought the old Hara and no other with him, because Hara had been with Baron M — when the Baron was an *attaché* in St. Petersburg, and because Hara had there learnt to speak some Russian.

Hara's instructions were to get into the Russian lines, to draw the soldiers by the cheapness of his goods, to find out from them just where General Devriloff was, and whether he had a daughter near him; if he had, Hara was somehow to make his way to her with a letter from Yoshio.

Hara's cart wound its way up the mountain-road and came down on the other side to a plain between hills where the Russian camp was, ten miles from Yoshio's camp. It was a clear morning in late August; the country here was leafy and arcadian, with two villages in the valley between the hostile camps; a few huts hung on the mountainsides; waterfalls were to be seen, and streams, and brooks by which sheep browsed. Hara drew near the Russian camp, and passed the sentries; but the next thing that happened to him was a bandage over his eyes, while he himself was dragged between two men towards a colonel who was sitting on a grass-bank, smoking and talking to his adjutant.

"Well, I don't know you; what's your name?" said the colonel to Hara.

"Likien is my name, your honour," answered Hara, who was a cool old blade.

"What have you brought to sell?"

"Fruit, eggs, milk, butter, your honour."

"You are a spy, you have seen my gun-emplacements, I shall detain you in camp," said the colonel, smiling.

"Your honour thinks too highly of me," answered Hara with a perfect smile.

"He's all right," said the colonel, and turned to talk again with his adjutant.

Five minutes later Hara was among the parked baggage, surrounded by buyers. The light-hearted Russian soldier cut capers round him, joked him, clapped him on the back, he sold so cheap. He soon knew from them that

“the General” was in a village three versts to the west; but three of them whom Hara asked if the general had a daughter near him laughed at the idea of this.

The fourth, however, did not laugh, but turned pale. He, or rather she, said, as she took the pears which she had bought, “I — cannot tell; why do you ask?”

“So that I may take her my best fruit to sell,” answered Hara.

“I — cannot tell,” said Nadine.

Hara, after a sharp look at her, said to himself, “*He* knows, if he would tell”; but he had to move away at last without having found out anything about the general’s daughter. He meant to go on now to the next camp to ask there, but when he had gone some yards, Nadine ran after him.

“Why do you wish to know?” she asked, reaching up to him; “tell me, and I may be able to help you.”

Hara glanced keenly into her dark, pale face, which now looked older than it was, for she had the expression of one pined with hunger, and in her up-turned eyes was a yearning and troubled light. The old man trusted her. “I have a message for her, then,” he said, “a letter.”

As he pronounced these words, he saw all Nadine’s blood pass away from her face, leaving it blanched.

She knew that Baron M — was in the opposite camp; she had had the thought that Yoshio might be there also. She suspected now that Yoshio may have written to her, and the joy of this, mixed with the terror that it might be only fancy, turned her white. Yet she shrank from asking any questions which might betray her, for the nearness of her father to her during the last three days had filled her with fears, and she was now all shy and on the look-out for traps and tricks to unearth her. She feared also, not only her own father, but Yoshio’s, the enemy of her house, thinking that perhaps he

had now found out all from Yoshio, and that this carter might be an agent of his to do her some mischief. But after a silence she ventured to ask, "From whom is the letter?"

"That might be telling too much," answered Hara. "Why do you ask?"

"Because," said she, "I know that the lady expects a letter from a certain individual; if this letter is from that individual, I undertake that she shall have it, if you intrust it to me, or from whomsoever it is, she shall have it."

"But where is she?"

"That I must not tell you."

"Are we in a mystery, then? Tell me the name of the individual from whom the lady expects a letter?"

"That also I do not wish to say."

They were again silent, each shy of trusting the other.

"Well, I must only try to find her elsewhere," said Hara.

"Listen to me," said Nadine, "you will not find her. I tell you that I am one of very few who know where she is, though this may seem strange to you. Intrust the letter to me, and I promise that she shall have it without fail."

Hara looked at her face, hesitated, and said, "Do you swear this, soldier?"

"I swear it," said Nadine, holding up her right arm.

"If I were to trust you, when should I return for an answer?" asked Hara.

"To-morrow morning."

"Then, here is the letter."

Nadine took it, trembling, and the moment Hara's cart was out of sight, had the envelope broken open. Yoshio had written —

"Nadine, I arrived at Kobe five days after you had left it. I was on the *Taku* and you were on the *Shini Maru* at the battle. I am here now on the

east side of the valley, in the camp over against the camp of the 69th army-regiment. I do not know if you are with your father, or where you are. Can you meet me, Nadine? In the middle of the valley between the two camps is the village of Momiski; the lane from there which runs south past the old mill without any arms takes one to a frog-pond, where it is quite lonely. I shall be there at the frog-pond every evening from five o'clock for twenty minutes, waiting for you."

The wary and secret Yoshio had put no name to it, but when he heard the news that it had been given to a common soldier he was furious with Hara, who crouched and crawled on the ground at his feet. Hara's only excuse for his rashness was the good face of the little soldier who had won the letter from him; but, as Yoshio had not seen this face, the excuse was without any weight for him. He was now torn with doubts, not knowing whether Nadine was really under her father's protection, whether she might not even be hiding from her father, whether in that case the letter might not get into Devriloff's hand and bring mischief upon her and upon himself. The next day Hara, having again gone to the Russian camp, brought back the two written words: "I come!" which he said the little soldier had handed him for the young lady. But they were written on a piece of wrapping-paper in large letters with a pencil which had no point, and this made Yoshio all the more anxious, for he could not see Nadine's handwriting in the two words, they seemed written by a peasant; nor could he think why she should have to write on wrapping-paper. He suspected some net, some trick somewhere.

However, that afternoon before five, he began to stroll with a listless air about the camp, for he did not wish his going out to be remarked, though his stroll had always a westward drift in it. He paused to look on at the watering of a battery, spied into the great trenches made to cover the animals and wagons, and paused again to see an arrival of provision-carts

convoyed by two armoured wagons. He then strolled on to the hills and over them, exchanging a word with an outpost officer, or wondering at the minute cunning with which the position had been fortified, at the pits and banks which hid the guns from the enemy's glasses, at the rusts in which the high wheels of machine-guns had been sunk, to hide them; some of the trenches were small and redan-shaped, some long, with loop-holes three and four feet apart, and sluices to drain them, and winding ways to the rear for retreat, or for communication with the camp; some were covered in with boards and earth, forming underground blockhouses, others narrow and open, for standing in. And how grim now were the pastoral waves of the hill, made for sheep to browse on! Here or there he came upon a dummy work, a dummy gun, to draw the enemy's fire; from some of the trenches wires led away back to headquarters for giving signals by tugging, and two hundred yards down was quite a cobweb of barbed wire among trees to entangle attackers; beyond these were tar-barrels which could be lighted by pulling a string, to show up a night-attack; and away to the rear, like a mirage in the air, floated a captive balloon. Beyond the tar-barrels Yoshio came upon the road, passed into a lane, and now his stroll became a run. The sounds of the camp, which reached far in the still evening, ceased to be heard by him; the sun biased near its setting in a cloudless sky.

The wary fellow came to within five hundred yards of the frog-pond, and there stopped, shy of going nearer, lest Prince Devriloff, having got hold of his letter to Nadine, had set some trap for his life at the rendezvous. He lay in high grass, and looked down the path leading to the frog-pond, his musket by his side; and he waited to see a bright girl-form come down the piece of ground on the yonder side of the pond.

But no Nadine came that evening. After half-an-hour Yoshio went sadly back to his camp.

He longed all that sleepless night for his father to come with Nadine's note-book; but Baron M — was still absent from that part of the country, nor did the baron come all the next day.

At five o'clock that second evening Yoshio again went toward the frog-pond with even greater wariness, and, lying on his face, waited for Nadine to fulfil the promise "I come!" though he hardly any longer believed that it was she who had written this on the piece of wrapping-paper. But he meant to see the matter through; a fierceness against the world in general was in his mind as he waited; and this evening again Nadine did not appear.

On the third evening, however, Nadine went to meet him. She had not gone those other two evenings for the simple reason that she had been waiting her chance to get out of camp without being stopped, without being asked questions, and perhaps being arrested and found out. Her chance came when her fond friend, Grigory Khartoy, who would have done anything for her, was on sentry post. He let her pass and whispered her the password. With light feet she ran then, till she was breathless, hardly once glancing back at the camp which she had left, as she thought, for ever.

After coming from Japan and failing to find Yoshio at Yinkow (Newchwang), she had been redrafted into her old company, then a mere cadre which was being filled up, and had soon been ordered to the front, where for five days now she had been, within three versts of her father. This had filled her with terror, lest her life's hope of being with Yoshio should never now be fulfilled; but, as a matter of fact, the search for her in the army was no longer an active one. It had once been active enough, for her woman, Anna Pochowski, had blabbed when it came to the point of being flogged three days after Nadine's, Ivan Shtcherbakoff's and her own arrest at the railway-station at Karinsk. Anna had then told all, except the fact of Nadine's marriage, of which she had feared to say a word on account of her

own guilty share in it: so that the prince had soon got to know that his daughter had put on soldier's clothes and had been marched away in some battalion; but by the time he had heard this and could set the search on foot, Nadine was no longer in the army, for she had been taken prisoner; the widespread search had been fruitless, and Prince Devriloff's hair had turned grayer. What had been Nadine's motive for leaving St. Petersburg he could not guess. Anna Pochowski maintained that she did not know. As for the old Ivan Shtcherbakoff, he had died in a guardroom on the night of his arrest at Karinsk. The prince, therefore, was faced with mystery, and with another instance of that fearful destiny which seemed to track the sons of his race. He had taken it with his mocking gruff laugh; but it showed in his hair, his beard, his face, and in a new weight which he seemed to carry on his shoulders.

At any rate, the search for Nadine had now become lifeless because hopeless, so that her fears of the last few days had been without much ground: but they had made her thinner than ever. She now found that she could not run so far as before, and it was a long way to her those five miles to the frog-pond, though she had marched twenty in one day without being very tired. However, she found it a pretty walk; the valley was a shaded landscape in an Eastern tone, with scarlet lilies and large weeping-willows, the trees and creepers now turning yellow or red, and strewn the streams with their leaves. The evening air was clear and drowsy, hardly a sound was to be heard, for most of the people had fled till the fighting should be over. A dog whose master had left it followed the young girl some way; in the village of Morniski she saw nobody but an old woman bearing a tub, and a shepherd smoking on his doorstep. Thence she turned south into a lane, went past the old mill of which Yoshio had written her, and now, though she was tired, she had to run again, for her eagerness drove her. She

had no doubt that she was about to see Yoshio at last, for he had said that he would be at the frog-pond each evening, and she knew that he would not fail her. She smiled when she asked herself if he would love her as much in her soldier's dress; she was glad that he should see her so, for she had a fondness for anything that was extravagant or pert in costume; but she did not look forward to the pleasure of seeing him surprised by that dress, for she took it for granted that he had got her note-book, which told her Story.

At the end of a long lane leading south, she turned eastward upon a piece of ground which went down with a swollen surface to the frog-pond at its bottom, a rather rough spot, grown with some bracken and some pine-trees.

She had hardly well entered upon it when she saw Yoshio, and though he was quite six hundred yards away, she knew dearly within herself that it was he: he was on a path which ran upward through long grass from the yon side of the pond. The breathless call of "Yoshio!" at once leapt from Nadine's lips; but as she uttered it, he disappeared from her sight. The wary fellow had lain down. Three seconds afterwards a bullet rang past her left ear; she heard the report of a musket.

She was soldier enough now to have the instinct to lie down instantly when bullets were flying about. Partly, then, through wisdom, and partly through weakness at this sudden woe, she dropped down. Yoshio, on his side, thought that she was now seeking cover from which to fire at him, and fired thrice quickly: he had not seen that she had no musket. Two of his bullets went wide, but one drove into grass two yards before her, and struck dust into her face. "Oh, Yoshio!" was all she could groan, as she cowered close to the ground, with her right cheek on it, trembling throughout her frame at this reception of her glad coming, for the wrath of heaven seemed to be in it.

Perhaps twenty seconds of waiting went by after this, then came another shot: it passed a yard above Nadine's back.

It now came into her mind that she could not be hidden since the shots were striking so near, and up she leapt in a flurry to ran to the nearest pine-tree four yards to her right. As she made the rash, he fired; the bullet struck off some of the bark of the tree before she reached it; she crouched on her knees behind the roots. But the trunk was not thick, did not cover her well. He fired again. The young girl's eyes stared; her bosom panted for breath.

Again Yoshio shot at and missed her: but she knew that he had only to keep on firing in order to make a hit, and as she dared not ran back toward the lane, she determined to make rashes from tree to tree until she got to the tree nearest the frog-pond, from which she would rush into the open, where it was light, with her arms spread in sign of surrender, trusting in God that he might see her surrender in time before he fired. She understood that he took her for a Russian soldier since she was dressed as one, and that he could never have seen her note-book.

She ran, therefore, to the second tree, and thence to the third in a zig-zag line; and at each of her rashes Yoshio fired. "But how determined he is to kill me!" she thought; "this is strange, my God!" One of the bullets passed an inch or two from her neck, and, on the whole, his aim seemed to be getting better. At the fourth tree he fired well upon her, whereat on a sudden she screamed out his name with all her soul. But he did not seem to hear. As she ran again with a bent back, he fired upon her.



"She ran out with her arms spread."

The Yellow Wave

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At last she was behind the tree nearest the pond, and there lingered a minute with her eyes closed, praying, hesitating. But hesitation meant death, for it was a pine-tree, not thick enough to cover her, and when he had fired twice upon her there, she ran out with her arms spread, calling out, "Oh, Yoshio, do not kill me dead!" But even as she had made the run, Yoshio had fired. His bullet pierced her: she felt the pain of it, and stood still with a bent head; the corners of her mouth turned downward to cry, for it was a pitiful thing; but before any tear came, she suddenly dropped forward.

Yoshio then rose, and came out into the path. He had still ten minutes to wait for Nadine, and he was determined to wait, though he felt sure that no

Nadine would come. His eye from minute to minutes rested with a sullen bitterness upon the form which his hand had laid prostrate on the bank of the frog-pond, He would approach no nearer to it, fearing that there might be others in ambush thereabouts for him.

Afterwards he returned to camp, and reported that, having gone out for a stroll, he had seen a daring Russian scout, and had shot him. But he did not really believe that it was a scout: he believed that it was an agent of Prince Devriloff who had been sent to take his life.

CHAPTER XXI

THE NIGHT-PATROL



THE MOON WAS on the wane then, and the night following that on which Nadine fell at the hand of Yoshio was the one chosen beforehand by the Japanese for the attempt upon the Russian outposts.

But before it was dark that night of Nadine's fall, she was seen by a peasant, half Jew, half Mongol, who was wandering near the frog-pond, picking up a cart-load of fir-cones and faggots to take to the Russian camp in the morning; and he, finding that she was not dead, carried her to his hut, where his wife, stripping her of her tunic, saw with wonder that the soldier was a girl.

Nadine was not "severely" wounded, and, but for her general weakness and despair, would not have remained so long unconscious; the bullet had passed through the left arm without breaking any bone, and it was rather shock and fear which had caused her to faint. At about two in the morning she woke in the dark to find herself on a mat, a bandage and some leaves round her arm, her chest open, her body burning, and two persons near her breathing loudly in sleep.

The first thing that struck her was that her sex was now revealed, unless she could bury herself anew in the army before these people should awake and see her face well. She groped wearily for her things, and put them on. Her limbs ached; her left arm seemed nothing but an ache; she shivered and was hot at the same time.

Presently she stole out of the door. The thought of going to the Japanese lines came into her mind a moment, but she did not know the way to them, nor wished to be shot again; she was weary, without much force of mind left in her. She found her way back to the lane, and passed with slow feet through the village again. The way was endless to her; some of it she passed over in a sort of dream and forgetfulness. The moon could just be guessed from a white smear among masses of cloud, and all that valley was as strange and lonesome as the valley of the shadow of death. Anon the young girl buried her face in her hands and wept bitterly with sobs.

In passing over a brook she stopped, and in a weary manner washed some blood out of the sleeve of her tunic. Twenty minutes afterwards she passed an outlying sentry, then an inlying. Happily she had the password, and was not on the roster for duty that night. She skulked to her tent without attracting any notice, and she dropped down by her mates to sleep with a fevered brow.

But by eleven the next morning she knew that it was all up with the hiding of her sex much longer: for the rumour was flying like gas that a wounded Russian soldier had been found by a peasant to be a girl. It was everywhere; it was in the Japanese camp — the poor Yoshio heard it. On the Russian side, indeed, it could hardly be believed, for no one seemed to be “wounded.” Still, Nadine understood that it was only a question of days, of hours perhaps, when her father would surely see her face.

Prince Devriloff, strange to say, did not hear of it till near four in the afternoon. An orderly from Nadine’s camp had been sent to tell him, but the general was then driving in his heavy carriage about the outposts of a camp six versts to the west of his own; but on returning to his village headquarters, as he stepped from the carriage, he heard the news.

His hand swept down the length of his flying sheaves of beard, while his heart jumped within him.

“Well, who is ‘wounded ‘?’” he asked at once.

“That is the question, my general,” answered the orderly. “No one seems to be wounded.”

“Can the peasant have lied, then? Where is this peasant? Why have you not brought him along?”

“No one has thought of this, my general; but the man shall at once be brought to you, for I know where to find him in a moment.”

“Sulkowski, my horse,” said the prince to one of his staff.

While the horse was being saddled, he got from the orderly just where the peasant’s hut was, then went into the cottage which was his headquarters, and now could no longer hide his impatience from himself, throwing his mighty body about a room full of violets in vases, in plates, in cups, and even in tumblers. The moment his charger came he leapt into the saddle and was off without any escort, without a weapon, save a pistol in his saddle-bag, in order to question the peasant who had taken Nadine into his hut. It was near five p.m. then.

Knowing the country minutely, he rode seven versts with a loose rein, down hill and up, not caring how near he went to the Japanese lines, in which, he knew, his old enemy somewhere was. Baron M — was, in fact, fearfully near to the prince, having at last arrived in Yoshio’s camp: for that night the attempt upon the Russian outpost sentries was to be made.

Yoshio, therefore, now had Nadine’s note-book, which his father had brought him unopened and unread; he now knew her story, how she had become a soldier, and something like certainty had struck to the heart of the young man that it was Nadine whom he had shot the previous evening. But this his brain could not quite take in, it was too horrible, and he went about

his duties during the afternoon as usual, but with a red eye which his father noticed and mused on. Yoshio could not leave the camp much before five, but when he could, he ran to wait for Nadine again, to wait till she should come to him, "for she will come," he told himself. The young man was hardly any longer sane; his chief aim in going was to wait for her to come to him, and he had also the saner aim to find out what had become of the body which he had shot, and to glance once at that dead face.

His father, who was talking to the colonel at the door of the commanding-officer's tent, saw him going, and made a remark on it; whereupon it came out that Yoshio was in the habit of going that way about that hour — a strange thing which had been remarked in the camp, though Yoshio little thought that it had been. "Some love-affair with a damsel of the valley perhaps?" said the colonel, with a smile; to which Baron Murino answered: "Well, it is a fine evening; perhaps I will stroll that way myself."

The baron then walked out of camp, fast at first, and twice caught glimpses of Yoshio's back, though at several points Yoshio started into running. But by the time Yoshio had come near that spot from which he had fired at Nadine he had heard some steps behind him, for the evening air carried far, and not wishing to be observed, he lay in the long grass, and waited for the steps to go by. He breathed to himself the word "Father!" as the baron went past him with quick steps, looking for him.

The baron went down to the frog-pond, skirted it, and went up the rough ground on the other side where Nadine had been shot. As he got near the top of this ground he heard steps coming toward him, and a moment afterwards found himself face to face with Prince Devriloff.

With the prince was the peasant who had sheltered Nadine; the peasant was leading the prince to show him the spot where the girl-soldier had been found.

The two noblemen and generals halted and looked at each other. The baron expected to drop dead instantly, for he had no weapon; so did the prince, for he had none; he had left his pistol in his saddle-bag, his horse being tied up at the peasant's cottage a mile away. Both were pale. Prince Devriloff's lips trembled.

But in some seconds Baron M — understood that he was safe, and he smiled, saying:

“What, prince, still alive?”

“And you?” retorted the prince.

“Oh, I mean to live a long time, and see many days and changes,” said Baron M — : “but you, I can see, have a tendency to — consumption.” Prince Devriloff stooped to the peasant, whispering close: “Run back and fetch me my pistol from the saddle-bag.” The peasant ran off, whereat Baron M — said with a smile:

“No, he will not be back in time: I think it is decreed, prince, that it is I who shall shoot you, and not you shoot me. Yes, I think so.”

“Shoot you?” laughed the prince. “What, do they shoot rats, then? I thought they always drowned them. What? Gol, gol!”

“Yes, you have a pretty wit,” said Baron M — : “even of Russia, the land of clowns, you are not worthy. I shall do a good thing for your country when I pin you at last.”

“Why, whom is this little rat going to pin?” cried the prince, appealing with a red face to the four winds: “I declare I'd make that peasant wring its pestilent little neck—”

“You have already had private dealings with necks, I think,” said the baron, “and you have bloody dreams, prince, confess, in your bed at night. It is said that the dead live afterwards, and come again—”

“What, have Japanese women, too, got ghosts? What? Gol, gol!”

“They have husbands and sons. You had better look out, by the way. My boy, I think, is somewhere not far from here with a gun. He will shoot in the legs, so as to preserve you for my pleasure.”

The prince glanced quickly round at this, and swept his hand down his beard. “Now I have alarmed you,” said the baron; “but I doubt if you are destined to be won in this easy way. Perhaps I shall reach you through your country.”

“My country, indeed! What of my country now?” retorted the prince in the tone of a woman quarrelling.

“It is reported that she is in some danger,” answered the baron with a malice in his smiling eyes.

“What, are you going to invade us all? What?” laughed the prince.

“The rhinoceros has a big body but a little mind, Prince Devriloff. Can you conceive before you see it a war to which this little war of ours is as nothing, in which you shall feel England on your breast and Japan on your back? It could have been done months ago with a scratch of my pen. You have heard of a place called China? It may be done now in a day without anyone taking up the pen. That should be a blaze which will frighten the heart of Russian princes, perhaps.”

“Oh, your European war! let it come,” said Prince Devriloff. “Our success in this war has not been immediate because our men cannot feel that they are fighting with men, but with lower creatures. Let your European war come: then we will fight. Meanwhile—”

“Yes, I am going: God preserve your life, till we meet again.”

Baron M — had kept his eye on the moving figure of the peasant, and, as soon as the peasant disappeared, turned his back upon the prince and walked away. The prince went the other way, muttering and laughing, with an ashen lip. He walked to the peasant’s hut, and giving up now the purpose

of looking at the spot where the soldier-girl had been found, rode off toward the west. He believed the peasant's story, and meant to look before noon the next day into the face of every soldier in the camps about him. He turned his horse toward the camp of the 69th, the nearest to the valley, the camp in which, in fact, Nadine was; but midway he began to be distressed by an odour which he smelled, or fancied that he smelled, and this thing seemed to have a wonderful effect upon the prince, for he became paler than Baron M— 's presence had been able to make him: it was an odour of violets. At one point he was so tormented by it, that he got off his horse and searched among the bush for violets to hold to his nose; but there were none in the valley at that time of the year: those which he had in his headquarters cottage had come for him from Russia. Instead of going to the camp of the 69th he galloped straight for his cottage, in order to be among his violets, continually sniffing out the scent meanwhile, and hardly allowing himself to breathe: he believed that some terrible thing was on the point of befalling him and his.

But when he reached his cottage, he still found no peace; the violets there were faded, and he could not make himself believe that what he scented came from them. At dinner he drank deeply and laughed loud with a forced and mocking gaiety; but afterwards, at about eleven in the night, he had to give way to his mood of gloom and grief; his great head with its flat back fell upon the table, and, as he sat so, his breath puffing audibly from his hairy nostrils, he said to a staff-officer, a close friend, who hung over him, "Sulkowski, do not mind me, I am in a bad way to-night, boy: and all on account of a fancy, an old woman's tale: what? gol, gol! But you do not know, you do not know; there are queer things in the make of the world, Sulkowski; why, I smell it now, man — distinctly — at this very moment, strong, strong, by God! They say that she comes to us when things are about

to crush us with her weak, helpless messages that do no good, and that it is her presence which haunts our nostrils. I feel bad, Sulkowski. Give me some brandy.” In this trouble of mind the prince continued all the night till three in the morning, when he was shocked into other cares by a sound of firing in the direction of the camp of the 69th.

At that hour the Japanese attempt upon the Russian outposts had been made, but had turned out quite otherwise than it had been planned, and this through an act of Yoshio’s, as we shall see.

That evening Baron M — had returned to the camp from his interview with Prince Devriloff in a very grim mood. Soon afterwards Yoshio, too, who, lying in the grass, had watched that interview, returned to camp, and was seen coming in by his father. Now, before this, the baron had asked the colonel of the regiment whether Yoshio had volunteered for service in the attempt that was to be made upon the Russian outpost-piquets, and though not very pleased when the colonel said no, had said no more about it, since the attempt was a most ticklish one, fit to be entrusted only to a set of born scouts. But seeing Yoshio coming into camp that evening, the baron, grim from his interview with the prince, walked to meet, and said to his son: “Where have you been?”

“I have been strolling, father,” answered the young man.

“Where to? What for? Tell me.”

“Oh, father, let me alone!” said Yoshio. Yoshio was, in truth, as has been said of him, hardly sane. He had just seen that the body shot by him had been removed from the bank of the frog-pond, and he was still in his horrid uncertainty as to whether that body was Nadine’s. He was rather deranged. His father glanced at him with a start of alarm.

“Let you alone?” repeated the baron. “Have you said to me, ‘Let me alone’?”

“Father, I am mad!” groaned Yoshio; then the young man screamed out, opening his arms, “Father, I am in trouble!”

“In trouble? My boy!”

“Yes, father, in trouble, in trouble, I tell you!”

“Never mind, you have your father, the friend of your mother. Tell me of it.”

“But I cannot tell you! That is the worst! I never must, for you would horribly hate me and spit at me!”

“Silence, silence. Command yourself. Now tell me.”

“I cannot!”

“You must. Do not disobey me again, Yoshio.” Yoshio hesitated, turned very pale, then with a mad haste thrust his hand into his tunic breast, caught out Nadine’s note-book, and handed it to his father, saying, “Read it then! read it!”

“Shall I find it all here?” asked the baron.

“Yes, all!”

“I shall read it. But what terrible thing can it be that has so troubled and changed you? You displease me, Yoshio. I came now to ask you by what chance it is that you have not volunteered for service in the attempt upon the mountain-posts to-night?”

“Volunteer? I? I did not wish to volunteer, I felt no impulse—”

“Indeed! But you knew that the task is dangerous; men usually ‘feel an impulse’ to volunteer for dangerous tasks: by what chance did *you* not feel it in this case? Tell me.”

“I wish I had now! I only wish I had!”

“It is not too late,” said Baron M — — “Write forthwith an application to your colonel, sign it with your blood, and I undertake that a place shall be given you in the second group with Sublieutenant Gheta.”

“Very well, I shall do this. I had a dream last night—”

“Well?”

“It is nothing.”

“But what is the matter with you? Tell me, boy, since I have asked.”

“It is nothing, father. I dreamt that I saw two ravens sailing in the air and coming, but they turned into black swans. Then they began to moult their feathers in a steady way by handfuls, by sackfuls, by wagonfuls, till it became a snowstorm, only a black one, not a white, filling the space under the skies with a darkness of black snow. That would be a horribly sad thing, too, if it could happen. By the gods, I think that everyone would die of pity, if people should see such a thing taking place.”

“But what is the matter with him?” repeated the father, half to himself: “Yoshio, you displease me.

“But you should be glad, father! You should dance for joy! for I think that I have shot one of the race of him who did my honoured mother to death. By the gods, she is abundantly avenged, my mother!”

“You? Did you see Devriloff just now, then? Have you shot him?” whispered Baron M — eagerly.

“Not the prince himself, but one of the race perhaps! She is avenged, my honoured mother!”

The young man chuckled to himself.

“But is he mad?” asked the baron, at a loss to understand the words which his ears heard, or the odd look of the face before him. But before anything further could be said, the sergeant-of-the-guard came up saluting, and saying —

“I have just brought in two visitors to your excellency past one of the south sentries — Prince Ching and General Ma. By the colonel’s order they have been taken to his own tent, and are there awaiting your excellency.”

“I am coming,” said Baron M — .— “Yoshio, write to your colonel for service to-night.” He pressed the young man’s shoulder between his fingers, and with Nadine’s note-book in his jacket pocket, hurriedly went after the sergeant.

Outside the colonel’s tent he saw the two palanquins of the Chinese dignitaries, and inside he found the dignitaries themselves, as scented and dressed as ladies of the harem, waiting for him. They had come, partly to witness a great battle, and partly to witness the signature by Baron M — of a document which was meant to plunge Europe and the world into war.

To some it may seem unlikely that this that is here stated was really so; it may be asked, “How, if a European war was really so near, did one not read of it in one’s newspaper?” But it is none the less quite true: for there are individuals among us who know that when the inner history of the war comes to be written, the public will be amazed to learn how near the brink of a general war the world at that time stood.

The talk between the two Chinese and the baron lasted till near ten in the night. The Chinese wished the baron to sign the document (one addressed to the French Government) at once; the baron did not wish to sign it till the following evening.

“To-morrow,” he said in effect, “a general battle is almost certain to take place: if the Russian army is then routed, as we expect, there will never be any need to sign this document, for a European war will follow that rout without it. Let us, therefore, wait. If the enemy are not routed, then by six to-morrow evening I will sign.”

Prince Ching, who was as rash and eager now for the unfolding of events as he had once been full of fears, answered to this: “But China is waiting to go ahead; you yourself have done much to prepare her, and we are now masters of everything: why, then, should we be politic and careful of this

and of that? Better sign the document, M — , and let it be sent off to-night to the Wai-wa-pu to be telegraphed to Paris.”

In this General Ma agreed with Prince Ching, but Baron M — merely smiled at them, as if they had been children; he would not sign.

At last the interview drew to an end. The baron, who was inwardly anxious to read the note-book which his son had handed him, had already risen and bowed to end it, when three new arrivals claimed his attention. These were Messrs. England, Petersen, and a leading Tiger-hunter of Nagasaki, a Socialist and newspaper-man, named Kotohito; these, too, wished to witness the battle, and Kotohito had the special aim of beseeching Baron M — to hasten a general war, which he said would, just at that juncture of affairs, bring about the triumph of Socialism in Japan.

This second interview lasted until midnight. The baron then ran out of the tent, asking for news of the night-parties: he heard that they had gone out half-an-hour before, Yoshio among them. He then returned to his tent, and spent a part of the night by his lamp over Nadine’s note-book.

It was drizzling, and a better night could hardly have been chosen for the attempt upon the Russian outposts, though anon a thin moon looked down through the clouds. But it was dark enough, and mutterings of thunder were heard.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SENTRY



THE JAPANESE ADVENTURERS were made up of two groups of twenty men each, each of the two groups being under an officer who could more or less speak Russian. Four of the men in each group had on Russian tunics and forage-caps, these four being meant to be the active agents in the plot, while the other sixteen were to be hidden in bush not far off, till the sentries were killed. Each group-leader had with him a dagger and a small bow-and-arrow. Two thousand yards behind these pioneers a battalion and a half, say 1,500 men, were to steal up.

By midnight the two groups of twenty were passing through the valley, and half-an-hour later parted where the ground began to rise toward the mountain. One group went along a lane north-westward, the second group under Sub-Lieutenant Gheta, a young athlete as sharp as a needle and as dauntless as a hero, went straight westward up a path between cliffs. With this group went Yoshio.

“How do you feel, Yoshio?” asked Sub-Lieutenant Gheta with a grin, as they passed over a wooded plain on the mountain-side.

Yoshio made no answer.

“What is the matter, then?” asked Gheta again. “Do you think we are all going to be killed, eh?”

“I do not care if we are,” answered Yoshio.

The other glanced sharply at Yoshio, saying, "What? But why do you speak in that manner?"

"I do not care either way," said Yoshio.

Again Ghetta glanced at Yoshio's face; he was leader here, and wanted no half-hearted men with him. After a moment he said quietly, "Repeat those words, M — , and I order you back to camp, whoever your father may be." Nothing more was said.

They came to a hill on the mountain-side on which were a few huts in a wood; after crossing this, Ghetta and another man thenceforward went a little before the rest, picking their course, rushing from hiding-place to hiding-place, or else crawling on the belly; whatever those, two did the eighteen behind copied. Any one looking on would have thought that all that wariness was not needed, for it was mostly very dark, and quite black where crags, leafage, or crops were; the drizzle fell always, and the mood of thunder which haunted the air with moan on moan seemed only to add another awe to the silence of Nature through which this little band crept and ferreted on its dark purpose.

At last the silence was broken. "Here they come!" went the whisper among the Japanese. A tramp was heard — the Russian patrol of three men and a sergeant, going the rounds from piquet to piquet. These piquets were five to eight hundred yards apart — small forces of eight or ten men on the highest parts of the mountain round the front of the camp. Well out from each piquet stood a sentry in a spot commanding a view eastwards; the patrols' duty was to visit the sentries; and what the two Japanese groups had to do was to pass themselves off as patrols, kill four sentries in all, and then surprise the piquets, thus clearing a way for the battalion behind.

As the patrol's tramp came nearer, Sub-Lieutenant Ghetta, whose group was lying behind a clump of trees, whispered hotly at Yoshio's ear: "You

others wait here!” and he himself stole out towards the tramp of feet, travelling so fast on the belly through scrub and stubble that in some seconds he was lost to the others’ eyes. He was absent twenty minutes. When he came back he knew the Russian password and countersign, having heard a sentry challenge the patrol.

A mile away to the north-west, the other Japanese group had been not less lucky than he.

They had now to wait nearly an hour, till the patrol should be again nearly due to visit the sentry; but during Sub-Lieutenant Gheta’s prowling after the patrol he had spied a sentry standing so near a thicket, that he had been tempted to shoot from the thicket with the arrow there and then. He had not done this, for that was not quite according to the plot: but during the hour of waiting, this chance of surely and promptly killing one of the sentries so tempted the keen spirit of Gheta, that before the hour was half over, he and his three in Russian clothes had stolen well forward, and were crawling into the thicket near the unwary sentry.

It was slow work in the bush, they prowled so daintily through, thinking of spring-guns and watch-dogs: slow and dark and thorny; but inch by inch they made headway. Yoshio was at the right hand of Sub-Lieutenant Gheta.

At last their heads pried out; they saw the sentry’s form. It was no longer so near the thicket, however, as it had been; and to their surprise the form was sitting down! It was at the foot of a pine-tree, and seemed to have only waited for the passing of the patrol in order to take its chance and go to sleep!

The four on their bellies in the thicket held their breaths, while the very air seemed to watch, Sub-Lieutenant Gheta waiting to see if the sentry was really asleep. He would not shoot the arrow, for the pine-tree rather covered the sitting form, and to shoot and fail to kill would not have done. Ten

minutes went by, the fate of kingdoms, of the world, hanging on the outcome.

Presently the sentry gave out a sigh, rose with a very weary effort, and strolled toward the thicket, three, four yards. The form then stopped, sighed again, hung its head like a sick man, and then turned up its face to the drizzling sky with a gaze as it were of prayer. In that upturned face the eyes of Yoshio, now used to the gloom, saw Nadine's profile. He understood that it was certainly she.

The young man now knew strange pain. She was about to be killed. On the one hand was his duty to an army of men, to his teeming country; on the other his love. Nor had he any time to think and choose. Nadine was not five yards from the arrow which he could feel Sub-Lieutenant Ghetta moving to aim. To say something quickly to Ghetta, to tell him not to shoot, was Yoshio's first impulse; his mouth was at once at Ghetta's ear, but before he could say one word Ghetta's palm was over his mouth, pushing his head away. Ghetta then put his arrow to the string to shoot quickly while the sentry was standing on open grass: Yoshio struck down the bow and arrow to the ground.

At this mystery a smothered groan came from Sub-Lieutenant Ghetta's heart; the next moment he was keenly on his legs, about to spring out to stab the sentry. As he started forward, Yoshio caught his right leg: the sub-lieutenant dropped on his length to his face with a sound which Nadine heard.

At the same time Yoshio was darting out of the thicket to save her; she saw him coming, and before she knew him had fired into the air. A second later, however, he had her lifted to his breast and was running wild with her.

"Treason" was the word groaned in the thicket; and, as there was no longer any question of secrecy, since the piquet had been roused by

Nadine's musket-shot, the three Japanese fired in a rage upon Yoshio and Nadine, Sub-Lieutenant Gheta now remembering in this new light Yoshio's strange answers and manner during the earlier part of the night. "Traitor!" was shouted, but the fugitives were not hit either by the Japanese shots or by those pouring from the Russian piquet, for Yoshio had leapt into a sort of gut or cleft, and was running wild with his burden he knew not whither — down hill and eastward.

In three minutes the night was loud with firing. Each of the Russian outpost-piquets was connected by alarm-wires with the camp, which was soon pouring out its hosts into the mountain-trenches. Miles of the mountain-top broke into crackling, and cannon like watch-dogs began to boom at the darkness, having no other target.

It was all this noise that General Prince Devriloff heard about three in the morning at his headquarters, three versts to westward; it turned his mind from the scent of violets which had been plaguing him all that night to the scent of powder; and leaping upon his charger, he galloped with his staff toward the supposed battle.

A kind of battle was really going on, but it was a battle in which each side was hopelessly in the dark as to the other's whereabouts. The Japanese battalion and a half which had been posted low down the mountain to await the signal of the adventurers, hearing fire on a large scale, believed that they were being attacked; but they knew that they were in dead ground from the Russian trenches on the heights, and therefore believed that they were being attacked from a hill that ran north and south along the mountain-face above them — a belief in which they were strengthened by catching sight of two Russian forms silhouetted on the hill against the sky-line in the glare of a shell shot from the mountain-top; but these two "Russian" forms were only Yoshio in his Russian tunic and Nadine. The Russians on their part believed

that that same hill was held in force by the Japanese when the Japanese replied to their fire, since their mountain-top was in dead ground from fire below the hill; and in this belief they were strengthened by catching sight on one part of the hill-top of some twenty of the Japanese adventurers, who were then in flight down the mountain to rejoin the battalion. Both sides, therefore, were firing in the dark night upon an empty hill, where only Yoshio and Nadine were.

Yoshio, who had a deep breath and could run far, had run with Nadine in his arms as long as he could, then they had run side by side, talking all the time in a disjointed, hysterical way, their aim being to get beyond the hill-top and so reach the Japanese lines, for they had no fear of being shot by Japanese fire; but they had no sooner run up the western hill-slope than bullets from the east — from the Japanese — sang past their heads; at the same time a Russian twelve-pounder burst ten yards from them. “Lie down!” cried out Yoshio and Nadine together; and they lay down, for they could run further neither way, being on an open hill-top between two fires.

“Let us go into that hut there,” panted Nadine.

“It is not bullet-proof,” said Yoshio, “we shall be shot anyway.”

“Do you think that we shall?” said Nadine. “We are together.”

“Come, then,” said Yoshio, “but do not lift your head.”

They crawled on the belly along a dark footpath under trees, till they came to a garden-gate, and by it passed into a hut; there, lying on the earthen floor, they could hear branches crashing down and bark being ripped off where the fire swept in squalls. They could not see each other, it was so dark, but their arms were round each other’s neck, and their faces were together.

“I have felt that I shall die of the wound in my arm,” said Nadine, having anon to lift her voice for the noise; “I could not show it to the surgeon, for

then they would have known that it is I who am ‘the girl,’ and it is getting all inflamed. I have had such a fever to-day! I nearly slept on sentry. But I shall not die now, not of that.”

“Your skin is fearfully hot,” said Yoshio. “Does your head ache now so badly?”

“Yes, it does ache; but that will be well now.”

“No, this hut is far from bullet-proof,” said Yoshio, all their talk being disjointed, hysterical, hardly answering each other’s, but flying off to new subjects. “I wish we could find better cover. Both sides are shooting at tis like devils. They shouted ‘traitor’ after me, the cranes.”

“It was hard to be shot by you,” said Nadine without answering him; “I could not tell you of that. It felt as-if it was the good God who kept on shooting at me, and did not love me any more, so that I had nothing left anywhere. And I pitied you as much as myself. But why did you not get my note-book before? Have you read of my scenting violets on that 25th of March, the day when you left Irkutsk?”

“Yes, I have read it. I shall go out and look for better cover. Did you hear a bullet crash through the wall? It is only made of mud. What a bombardment! — what an uproar! — what have we done to them? Did they expect me to leave you to be killed by them?”

“They must be shooting at one another, not at us; only, we are between.... Yes, and I scented them again when I was in the *Shini Maru* and you were in the other steamer: I am sure that I scented them. And we shall not be killed to-night, or I should have scented them again, but I have not. After all, we are together, and it was not in vain what we have done and suffered, for we are together, if only once. I wish I had some more water. Have you any?”

“I did not bring any water with me. How you are trembling in spasms!”

“It is the fever; I felt as if I must die on sentry, but now I feel all awake, only thirsty, and a bright light seems to burn in my head. How they are firing! The Japanese must be going to charge the hill.... I cannot believe that we are together — together. Oh, you do not know! Sometimes I seemed to be chasing a dream, to have left my home for a shadow, for something said to me: ‘There is no Yoshio, no husband, no midnight marriage, no world, no God, no anything — you have only dreamt all this, and you are a little foolish magpie who has gone out like a Quixote battling after a fancy of your brain.’ Then my heart used to fail me for weariness, for I am only a young girl, and I would then wish for death. But here you are beside me now — I handle you — this can’t be a dream of my brain also. In an hour’s time the dawn will lighten, and I shall then see your face.”

At this moment Yoshio at the top of his voice shouted out in his own language: “Gods, we are undone! Save her!” for he felt himself being buried under a flood of earth, as a mortar-shell from the north-west laid low the north wall of the hut. Under this rage of fire and earth they lay hushed for some minutes, no more daring to speak than if that which is above man had visited them in thunder. At last Yoshio panted to her —

“Nadine. Are you hurt? Speak!”

“Not much hurt. Are you?” said Nadine.

“No. It was mortar, that. Gods, have mercy upon us! Mortar is very searching. It is wonderful that we were not shot. The next will blow us and the hut too away from here, and this is the night of our death, Nadine.”

“Perhaps we may escape,” said Nadine, trembling; “the others may not chance to come so near.”

“Let us move. There is a table just there, which we will put on its side against the wall.”

“But perhaps the next one will strike just where we move to: it might be lucky to keep just where we are, and trust in God.”

“No, come.”

Yoshio leapt up out of the *débris*, Nadine followed him, and in a flurry of haste they tilted up a table of logs, laid one of its edges on the south wall, and lay down between table and wall.

“You are trembling terribly,” said Yoshio.

“It was so terrible,” answered Nadine, “and the fever, too: it moves about in me, and the parts of me where it is not burning shiver with cold.”

“This comes of your going into the army again when you had once left it. You should have stayed in the house of the priest till I came to you.”

“But I was sure of meeting you at Newchwang! And when I got there and did not see you, what could I do but come on with the other prisoners, since I had no money, and no one to help me or to interpret for me in the town? I was only there twenty minutes, and then I had to go away without having seen you... The musketry-fire seems to be slackening, and no more shells are falling now.”

“There is a mortar that has us on the left flank, one or two of them; they will fire again presently, for I had a dream of this.”

“Perhaps we shall escape; this is a large hill.... Did you see Suyematsu and Oyei at Oyosaka?”

“I saw an old woman in a *chaya* who caused me to run from her with the tale which she told me of you.... The whole of that wall is down; the breeze is blowing in the spray of the rain.”

“That was the old Oyouki whom you saw in her *chaya*! Yes, they lead a happy life there; the butterflies in the forest are larger than my two hands, and it is there that we should go to live, if the firing would stop. I could have been happy there, but I would not through longing for you, and

something said to me, ‘You may never have another chance to be happy.’ Do you think — ?”

What Nadine was about to say was broken in upon by a noise and a wind — the noise of a shell which came along the ground, bumped against the table, climbed it, and fell back to the ground without bursting. The table jumped, cracked, and dropped back upon its legs, after jamming Yoshio and Nadine against the wall, and breaking some of Yoshio’s left ribs.

Nothing was said for sometime after this. The drizzle had turned into a rain, for the firing was unsettling the weather, and spray filled the broken hut, though there was not much of a wind. Presently Nadine, frightened at the silence of Yoshio, asked him if he was hurt. Yoshio groaned.

“You are hurt, Yoshio!” cried out Nadine in the tone of an accusation.

“I am in pain,” said Yoshio. “Are you hurt?” Nadine sat up and lifted his head on her thigh. “Oh, lie down,” groaned Yoshio, “lie down!”

“Tell me, where are you hurt?” asked Nadine, who felt her hands wet with his blood.

“I do not know,” answered Yoshio; “in the left side. It was the table. By the gods, that came roughly. Lie down, lie down! It was the table.”

“My little one! My sweetheart!” murmured Nadine.

“Are you hurt?”

“Have they killed you, my little one, my sweetheart?”

“It was the table that did it. There is a mortar, perhaps two, that has our range. I can’t — catch my breath.”

“I can’t help you, can I, my little one, my sweetheart?”

“It has just our range. We should have run before. You run now and risk the musketry.”

“My little one! My sweetheart!”

“Run, and then lie down. It came roughly upon the table, and it was the table that struck me.

“In pain, are you, my little one, my sweetheart?”

“It is my breath. It has winded me. Mortars are awful things. I can still feel you with me; my head is on your leg. Yes, I am dying, Nadine.”

“My little one! But you did love me with all your soul, did you not?”

“Yes, with all.”

“And I have loved you: we have had that much for our own, and have it always, have we not, my little one?”

“Yes, but you are still with me. I should have told you to run, for you will be killed here. Pah, there is something in my mouth. I wish I had some — Oh!”

A rifle-bullet, as Yoshio spoke, had passed through the west wall where the door was, and had entered his breast.

“I think I am shot now, Nadine,” said Yoshio.

“My little one! My sweetheart!” murmured Nadine, bending over his head.

“I am shot. My mouth has blood in it. My honoured father wished it. When I was a boy they gave me a gun, and wished me to shoot birds, but I would not. I only wished to sit in the woods and play the *koto*.”

“Speak to me in French, will you? It is I, it is Nadine, is it not?” — for Yoshio had spoken in Japanese, and in that din Nadine could not understand it.

“It is dark in the grave,” said Yoshio, still in Japanese; “the lark does not sing in it. Is that she still with me? Is it Nadine? Gods! her name is branded into my heart; the dust in the grave will whisper it to me. Kiss me, Nadine; you have been a queen for me.”

Nadine pressed his oozing lips with hers. "I am here, am I not?" said she. "It is Nadine, is it not?"

"Nadine, good-bye," said Yoshio again.

"But I am coming, too, am I not?" said Nadine. "Even if they do not kill me, I have still the wound and the fever, have I not?"

As she said this a little gust of four or five bullets swept into the hut, one of which shattered Yoshio's right knee. He groaned with a deeper pain. Nadine rocked herself a little from side to side, nursing his head, bending over him with murmurs.

For a time Yoshio lay still. All of a sudden, however, in the passion of death, the young man sent forth the gross and bubbling cry of "Water! Water!" a shout which terrified the young girl to the heart.

"Almighty God!" she now screamed out in a passion, "have pity!"

After some seconds of hesitation, during which she quaked from head to foot, she put down his head from her leg, and jumped up to go to seek water outside, in spite of the rain of bullets there, for she had no water with her, having in her fever emptied her bottle while on sentry. But even as she leapt up she was all in the midst of flame, smoke and shrapnel: a shell had burst some yards from the north side of the hut, whereat the walls all fell away. Yoshio was burnt, and Nadine burnt and mortally maimed. She dropped down near the spot whence she had risen.

Presently, finding Yoshio at hand, she raised her body, replaced his charred head in her lap, and so sat, rocking herself, staring and daft with awe, horribly hurt, but still stubborn. In one minute, however, she had to fall back to the ground again.

By that time the darkness was lifting; the musketry-fire which had been going on nearly an hour was slackening, especially that from the heights; and, about ten minutes after Nadine fell, the Japanese cheered in victory,

and, to the astonishment of the Russians, charged up the hill, only to be themselves astonished at finding no one at the top but Nadine with the head of Yoshio on her. They were met by fire from the trenches on the heights, but at the same moment their bugle was sounding the retire, and they ran back down without any loss. In fact, as is the way with night-operations, the 300,000 rounds of shot fired on each side had hurt no one, except the two fugitives who had been caught in the storm of lead.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE END



TWO OF THE Japanese, on gaining the hill-top, had seen Yoshio and Nadine; soon, therefore, some stretcher-bearers with the Red Cross went up to bring them down to the Japanese side.

Nadine screamed out when she was touched, but still would not have her dead friend taken from her, putting out her hand and retaining his stretcher. So the men humoured her whim.

The story of Yoshio's treason was by this time spread through the regiment, but as yet Baron M — only, who had been reading Nadine's notebook, and the colonel knew the cause of that treason. These two walked with the stretchers to the dressing-station.

The surgeon shrugged his shoulders when he saw Nadine, she was so far beyond his skill.

"It is not a soldier, surgeon-major," said the colonel, "but a young girl: something must be done to put her out of her pain."

The surgeon gave her a little morphia. She was then put on a spring-bed in a wagon and taken across the valley eastward. It was nearly day now, but the voice of no bird but the cock was to be heard, the air was wet with rain, the leaves on the ground were soaked, and a bleak wind of autumn blew. The valley was empty: no shepherd gave to the sheep their morning-washing, for the last of the villagers had fled; the battalion and a half had returned to camp. Baron M — walked by the side of the wagon in which

was Nadine, in which also was the body of his son, whose black face he could no longer recognize. They wended up the road to the Japanese hills and to the camp, where Nadine was put on the little bed in the tent which was being used by the baron. All the camp was now gossiping of what had happened, of Yoshio's act, and the muddle of the night-operation.

Baron M — sat by the side of the young girl, the surgeon sat at her head, and the colonel stood at her feet. She had on a coarse blue gown, for her burnt clothes had easily come away from her at the dressing-station. She lay in sleep, panting in a galloping, light way.

Presently the colonel stooped to Baron M — , whispering: "Shall I send to tell her father?"

"No," answered the baron.

"Ah, you think not," said the colonel.

"This girl," said the baron, "is the wife of my son. She has chosen to leave her father and come across a continent to my son. She has no father but me."

"Well, if you think that true—" said the colonel, and nothing more was said. Soon afterwards the colonel went out.

Nadine was then murmuring to herself, repeating the name of her old nurse, Ivan Shtcherbakoff, for she thought that she was at Irkutsk, looking at a church called the church of Gregory of Nyssa facing her hotel, after hearing that Yoshio was not in Irkutsk. Soon, however, her mind came back to her, she opened a little her right eye, the left being blind, and, after looking a little round, said in a whispering voice to Baron M — : "They have taken him from me."

The baron bent over her, saying: "Do you wish him to be here? It might be better not."

"Are you his father?" she asked.

“Yes.”

“Let him be with me,” said she.

“I will,” said he.

The baron went out, and soon Yoshio was brought in, covered over with a macintosh. His head was placed near to Nadine’s, with his stretcher at right-angles to her bed. She glanced at the covered form, and almost smiled, whispering to Baron M — , “You are good.”

The baron bent over her with the whisper, “Not very good.”

“Do not kill my father,” whispered the dying breath of Nadine: “he is already unfortunate.”

“I will not, then,” replied the baron.

“I should like to see him,” said Nadine.

The baron did not answer to this.

“He is my father,” whispered Nadine, “and you are my father. Can I see him?”

“Yes,” answered the baron; “anything that you wish I will do.”

“If I had gone to you, you would have done whatever I wished,” whispered Nadine.

“Perhaps not,” said the baron, “but now I will. Only ask, and I will.”

“Look at him, he lies still,” said the young girl, turning her eye a little with half a smile toward the form under the macintosh.

“Yes, he lies still,” repeated the baron.

“He did not wish to do any harm *ne voulait faire de mal à personne*),” said the young girl.

“Nor did you,” whispered the baron, getting up and going away; but he returned to the tent in a few minutes, after having spoken with the colonel outside, and sat with her. Nadine fell into dreams again, breathing like one very near to death.

It became ten o'clock, but within the bell-tent it remained dim, for the opening was small, and the day misty and wet. At ten-fifteen a Chinaman, led by the sergeant-of-the-guard, appeared at the tent-door with a paper which he handed to the baron — a note from Prince Ching and General Ma, asking if they could see the baron at once.

“Say no,” was the baron’s short answer.

Then on a sudden, at ten-thirty, an agitated man in grey breeches with scarlet stripes appeared at the tent-door, his breath venting in puffs from his nostrils, his swarthy skin now wan. It was Prince Devriloff, led by the colonel.

The prince’s stooped head suddenly prying into the tent took Baron M — unawares, though the baron had sent for him. The baron leapt up from bending over Nadine. The two enemies looked into each other’s face, the prince without any malice in his eyes, for perfect grief casts out malice, but the baron, for one moment, with the malice of habit. Then the baron moved away from the bed as far as he could get, whereat the prince, without saying anything, hurried to the bedside, and stood over his daughter.

He no longer saw there the pert and lovely young girl who had worn her fur toques cocked a little aside, with short dresses fitting her hips like a glove, and the damask-rose in her cheeks; her left cheek was now baked hard, so that her smile was an attempt on the right side only, and she was bald. Sobs that hardly made any sound shook the prince’s bosom as he looked down at her. He had had many calamities in this life, so that his shoulders were rather bowed with them; his infant son had been burnt to death, his race almost cut off, and he had always pretended to take it with a hard-headed mockery at fate: but at this sight of Nadine, his best-beloved, his heart was broken, and, falling down presently by the bedside, he had to

humble himself in the presence of “his old enemy, and give vent to the sounds of his grief.

The surgeon, who had sat with the dying girl, doing what little services he could for her, went out at this, and Baron M — , too, went out, leaving the prince alone with Yoshio and Nadine for some time.

Nadine once again woke to sense between eleven o’clock and noon, turned her dim eye at the form of Yoshio, almost smiled in her momentary way, and whispered the word “Papa.”

She was now panting very fast toward her last earthly goal, with that look of scare still to be seen on her face, as on the faces of those who have come through flames of fire. The doctor and Baron M — were again present, the latter fascinated to the tent, but standing away back against the canvas, as though nearness to the prince was pestilence. The prince sat over his daughter.

“Papa,” whispered Nadine presently, while the prince bent down his ear to hear, “forgive—”

She failed, but on making another effort, whispered: “Forgive Ivan Shtcherbakoff.”

Then, five minutes later, she whispered: “*Je souffre* — I suffer.”

After this she never said anything, but presently seemed, by a motion of the eye and head, to wish Baron M — to come to her. When the baron came, she took his right hand in hers, and tried to draw it to her father’s hand. The baron, however, resisted this drawing, and she could not take hold of her father’s and the baron’s hands together, for she had only one hand, her left fingers being half burned away. She therefore let go the baron’s hand, took hold of her father’s, and tried to draw it toward Baron M — ‘s hand. But her father, too, resisted, kissing her with floods of tears.

Still she would have her way, but still her father resisted the drawing of her hand.

“Just to humour her, then,” whispered Baron M — to the prince.

The baron held out his hand, and the prince took it, each with the shadow of a smile at the down-turned corners of his lips.

A few minutes after this Nadine had ceased to live.

It was then close to the stroke of noon.

By this time the regiment knew the truth that the little Russian soldier who had been killed was a young girl, the daughter of Prince Devriloff; that Yoshio’s treason was on account of this little one; that she, the Russian, was the wife of Yoshio, the Japanese; that she had left her palace home and crossed over half the world through snow, and lived the life of the common soldier, and passed through the flames of war, in order to come to him, and then had found him only to die with him. The little Japanese soldiers spoke together of this in low, and sometimes choked, voices all that day. When Prince Devriloff passed away through the camp, it was between men who stood with their heads bowed and bared, and their eyes on the ground.

In camps news and rumours fly fast, and cause deep emotions. Before afternoon the story was being told and retold, sometimes with over-drawn details, in many of the Japanese camps and in many of the Russian; it had spread by evening through the two armies. When the simple-hearted Russian soldiers heard it, they embraced one another, and shed tears.

The reason of the failure of the night-operation had been telegraphed to Tokio, for Yoshio’s treason was a matter of great importance, since the camp of the 69th Regiment, upon which the attempt had been made, was supposed to be somehow “the key” of the Russian position; but in Tokio also the story of Yoshio and Nadine had the same effect as in the army. The Emperor of Japan ordered his condolences to be conveyed to both Baron M

— and Prince Devriloff, and suggested a funeral with something of military honours for the two ill-fated young soldiers.

The Tsar, on his side, telegraphed much the same thing.

At the funeral the next evening the regiments of both of the two dead were allowed to be present and lined the road through the valley, many of the Japanese bearing branches of the mournful sakaki, the sacred tree of the Shintos. There the big, friendly Russian put his arm about the little Jap, and the Jap, with sweet retort, put his about the Russian, for they mixed together, as they waited for the funeral in a drizzly twilight, till far away the muffled boomings of the drum smote upon the ear and heart, and then, long afterwards, as the funeral crawled nearer, Chopin's dead-march wailing, and then the wheels of the gun-carriage with the coffins on it crunching quite near at last in the mud.

The coffins could not be seen, each being covered with both the Russian and the Japanese ensigns, the saltire and the rising sun; in front of the gun-carriage went the firing-party with their arms reversed, behind it Nadine's company, then Yoshio's; then followed officers of several regiments of both armies; and among these, side by side on horses, pretending to be unconscious of each other, Prince Devriloff and Baron M — .

When the wailing of the dead-march had passed too far off to be any longer heard, or even the piercing cries of the shono-fues blown by the Shinto priests, still the boomings of the drum smote upon the ear and heart of the crowd which lined the road. All stood uncovered, and many tears were shed.

There was no church in the valley; the Russian chaplain read the service over a grave which had been dug in a little grove near the village.

At the graveside stood Prince Devriloff and Baron M — together, for this had to be done for decency.

Yoshio's coffin was lowered first, then Nadine's. The shades of night gathered fast as the marl dropped upon them. A Russian lieutenant presently called out a word-of-command, whereat the firing-party, made up of Russians and Japanese, presented arms; and three volleys were fired over the grave.

All was now over and done; the mourners departed on their several ways from the grave; the two crowds were marched back to their camps; and the two lovers were left to the loneliness of the valley.

But twenty minutes afterwards two men met on foot by the grave — the prince and the baron, for each had only pretended to go away, and wished to brood a little alone by the grave of his child. They gave a start of surprise when they found themselves face to face once more in that dark spot, and nothing was said for a minute or two; then the baron, striking his hand into the hand of the prince, wrung it, saying in a low voice, "the will of God, prince."

He then at once walked away.

As soon as he returned to camp, a Chinese messenger brought him a note, asking if he would now see his two high Chinese visitors. "Yes," was the baron's answer; but before the two Chinese had come to him, he had torn into four pieces that warlike document which they were partly there to see him sign.

Later in the same evening the baron refused to see Kotohito, the Socialist editor, who was also there to urge upon him the uses, just then, of worldwide war. In fact, the baron, more far-sighted than his friends, had everywhere observed during the last two days the growth of a new mood which changed the genius of the moment, and made waiting wise.

The same night he sent to Prince Devriloff Nadine's note-book and Yoshio's belt; the prince in return sent to him some of Nadine's furs which

she had left at the inn at Karinsk on the evening when she first put on soldier's clothes.

From the acorn the oak grows, and great things from small. Nations are made of men, and history of the moods of men. The soldiers, for instance, who had wept together at the burial of Yoshio and Nadine, could hardly just afterwards kill one another; and because of this the course of history was turned.

In Japan the story of the lovers had in two days so wonderfully spread, that even in remote villages torch-light processions bore on banners the names of Yoshio and Nadine. On hearing a mention of those names, men, women and children uttered the cry, "a thousand years!"

In many parts of Russia something of the same kind happened, the story of Yoshio and Nadine soon acquiring in country places the homeliness of a folk-tale. Thus, like the kingdom of God, it spread, the leaven leavening the whole lump, till the love of two children became the friendship of two peoples, and the peace, in its time, came.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BEGINNING



HEAR, HOWEVER, BARON M — prophesying Change! It was two weeks after the peace, in a hall of teeming, manufacturing Osaka, with a great throng of the workers in the hall before him, and Messrs. England and Petersen there, cheering for joy, and many Tiger-hunters; and he cries out:

“Yes, the peace has come, more perhaps through the influence of a foolish boy and a sweet girl than some of you know. Not quietness, however, and good cheer, but work, and a hard lip, is the call of your age. A hundred years ago a word was spoken, honourable friends, and the four winds took it up — *Egalité*! Time is in pain with it, the stars in their courses fight for it; this late war was a war on behalf of it; the womb of the world is in love with it. Would you like to be prosperous, and go far, and be borne on a strong stream? Then, be on the side of it. Say good-bye to the past! — a fond goodbye, if you like, but, if you love your skins, say, good-bye. For the twentieth century, I tell you, will have nothing to do with the sixteenth. To the nation that loves the sixteenth, and the crooning of hymns on fête-days, she says: ‘Yes, love the sixteenth, and croon the dear old hymns at street-corners: but as for Me, I am large and in haste, and can’t wait for you.’ Upon every sort of aristocracy, of bladder importance, or pretty sham, She turns a chill smile: for not fancies, I say, but fact, not loudness but arithmetic, not prestige but merit, shall reap her greatly good things. Yes, the word has been spoken; for a hundred years it has been at work: see how

already its meaning has widened, meaning no more the equality of man with man merely, but of people with people, of woman with man, of peasant with Tsar, of yellow with white — nay, of ape and dog and tadpole with human. A hundred years, I say: but more than that: for its inventor was a Jewish workman with the brain of a God who lived two thousand years ago; but it was invented over again by France — France, the brain of the world, the child of Reason, the wild-eyed mother of liberty, the glory of the past, the grace and leaven of the present, the hope of the future. She will carry it still farther — it will work and work; and it is the destiny of your brothers in China, and of you here also, in your smaller way, to have a high hand in its triumph. Let us, then, be keen and diligent: let us all shout together: Long live the twentieth century! down with aristocrats, whether they be men or nations! long live the revolution...”

THE END

The Last Miracle (1906)



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APPENDIX

THE LAST MIRACLE

By M. P. SHIEL

*Author of "The Yellow Danger," "The Lord of the Sea,"
"The Evil that Men do," "The Yellow Wave," etc.*

LONDON
T. WERNER LAURIE
CLIFFORD'S INN
1906

The first edition's title page

“My domain how lordly large, sublime!
Time’s my domain; my seedfield’s Time.”

THE LAST MIRACLE



TOWARDS THE END of May 1900 the writer received as noteworthy a letter and packet of papers as it has been his lot to examine. They came from a good friend of mine, a Dr A. Lister Browne, M.A. Oxon., F.R.C.P., whom, as it happened that for some years I had been living mostly in France, and Browne being in Norfolk, I had not seen during my visits to London. Moreover, as we were both bad correspondents, only three notes had passed between us in the course of those years.

But in the May of 1900 there reached me the letter — and the packet — to which I refer, the packet consisting of four note-books full of shorthand, the letter also pencilled in shorthand, and this letter, together with the note-book marked “I,” I now publish.

[The note-book marked “II.” has already appeared under the title of “The Lord of the Sea,” and that marked “III.” under the title of “The Purple Cloud,” each in three languages; while that marked “IV.” has been judged unsuitable to publication.]

The following is Browne’s letter: —

“Dear old Man, — I have been thinking of you, wishing that you were here to give me a last squeeze of the hand before I — *go*. Four days ago I felt a soreness in the throat, so in passing by old Johnson’s surgery at Selbridge, I asked him to have a look at me. He muttered something about membranous laryngitis which made me smile; but by the time I reached home I was hoarse, and not smiling: before night I had stridor. I at once telegraphed to London for Horsford, and he and Johnson have been opening my inside and burning it with the cautery, so I am breathing easier now, and

it is wonderful how little I suffer; but I am too old a hand not to know what's what: the bronchi are involved — *too far*, and, as a matter of fact, there isn't any hope. Horsford is still fondly hoping to add me to his successful-tracheotomy statistics; but I have bet him not, and the consolation of my death will be the beating of a specialist in his own line.

"I have been arranging some of my affairs, and remembered these note-books which I intended letting you have long ago; but you know my habit of putting things off, and, moreover, the lady was alive from whose mouth I took down the words. She is now dead, and, as a man of books, you should be interested, if you can manage to read them.

"I am under a little morphia at present, propped up in a nice little state of languor, so I will give you in the old Pitman's something about her. Her name was Miss Mary Wilson; she was about thirty when I met her, forty-five when she died, and I knew her all those fifteen years. Do you know anything of the philosophy of the hypnotic trance? That was the relation between us — hypnotist and subject. She suffered from *tic* of the fifth nerve, had had all her teeth drawn before I knew her, and an attempt had been made to wrench out the nerve by the external scission. But it made no difference: all the clocks in purgatory tick-tacked in that poor woman's jaw, and it was a mercy of Providence that ever she came across me.

"Well, you never knew anyone so weird in appearance as my friend, Miss Wilson. Medicineman as I am, I could never see her without a shock, she so suggested what we call 'the other world.' Her brow was lofty, her lips thin, her complexion ashen, and she was execrably emaciated; her eyes were of the hue of mist; at forty her wisp of hair was withered to white.

"She lived almost alone in old Marsham manor-house, five miles from Ash Thomas, and I, just beginning in these parts at the time, soon took up my residence at the manor, she insisting that I should give up myself to her.

“Well, I quickly found that in the state of trance Miss Wilson possessed very queer powers — queer, I mean, not because peculiar to herself in kind, but because so far-reaching in degree. Most people are now talking with an air of discovery about the reporting powers of the mind in its trance state, as though the fact had not been fully known to every old crone since the Middle Ages; but the certainty that someone in a trance in Manchester may tell what is going on in Glasgow was not, of course, left to the discovery of an office in Fleet Street, and the psychical people in establishing the fact for the public have not gone one step towards explaining it.

“But, speaking of poor Miss Wilson, I say that her powers were queer because so special in quantity. I believe it to be a fact that, in general, the powers of trance manifest themselves with respect to space, as distinct from time: the spirit roams in *the present*, travels over a plain, doesn’t usually astonish one by huge ascents or descents. I fancy that this is so. But Miss Wilson’s gift was queer to this degree, that she travelled in every direction, and easily in all but one, north and south, up and down, in the past, the present, and the future.

“This much I soon got to find out. She would give out a stream of sounds in the trance state — I can hardly call it speech, so murmurous, yet guttural, was the utterance, mixed with puffy breath-sounds at the lips, this state being accompanied by contraction of the pupils, failure of the knee-jerk, rigour, and a rapt expression, so I got into the habit of tarrying for hours by her bedside, fascinated by her, trying to catch the news of those musings which came mounting from her mouth; and in the course of months my ear learned to make out the words: ‘the veil was rent’ for me also, and I was able to follow somewhat the trips of her straying spirit.

“At the end of six months I heard her one day repeat some words which were familiar to me. They were these: ‘Such were the arts by which the

Romans extended their conquests, and attained the palm of victory; and the concurring testimony of different authors enables us to describe them with precision....' I was startled: they are part of Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall,' which I readily guessed that she had never read.

"I said in a stern voice: 'Where are you?'

"She replied: 'Us are in a room, eight hundred miles above. A man is writing. Us are reading.'

"I may tell you two things: first, that in trance she never spoke of herself as '*I*' but, for some reason, as '*us*': '*us* are,' she would say, '*us* will'; secondly, that when wandering in the past she represented herself as being *above* (the earth?), and higher the farther back she went; in describing present events she appears to have felt herself *on* (the earth); while, as to the future, she always declared that '*us*' were so many miles '*within*' (the earth).

"To her excursions in this last direction, however, there seemed to exist certain limits: I say seemed, for I can't be sure, and only mean that she never, in fact, went far in this direction. Three, four thousand 'miles' were common figures in her mouth in describing her distance 'above'; but her distance 'within' never got beyond sixty-three. She appeared, in relation to the future, to be like a diver in the sea who, the deeper he dives, finds a more resistant pressure, till at no great depth resistance grows to prohibition, and he can no further dive.

"I am afraid I can't go on, though I had a good deal to tell you about this lady. During fifteen years, off and on, I sat listening by her couch to her murmurs. At last my ear could catch the meaning of her briefest breath. I heard the 'Decline and Fall' almost from beginning to end. Some of her reports were the merest twaddle; over others I have hung in a sweat of interest. About the fifth year it struck me that I might just as well jot down

some of her mouthings, and the note-book marked 'I.' belongs to the seventh year. Its history is this: I heard her one afternoon murmuring in the tone which she used when *reading*, asked her where she was, and she replied: 'Us are forty-five miles within: us read, and another writes'; from which I concluded that she was some forty to sixty years in the future. I believe you may find it curious, if you are able to read my notes.

"But no more of Mary Wilson now, and a little of A. L. Browne, F.R.C.P.! — with a breathing-tube in his trachea, and Eternity under his bed now. Isn't that a curious beast, my dear boy, the thing you call a 'modern man'? Is he not? Here am I writing to you about Miss Mary Wilson and her freights of froth, and all the time I know what this frame of mine will be to-morrow night; I know and am not afraid. Am I a saint, then? At least a hero? No, I am a modern man, a know-nothing. The Lord have mercy upon my never-dying soul! *if* my soul is never-dying, and *if* ... rather a mess.

"Well, no more now. I know you will think of me sometimes. You will have to, by the way, because I am making you one of my executors. 'A long farewell!' ..."

Here begins the Note-book marked I."

CHAPTER I

MY VISIT TO SWANDALE



I HAVE BEEN asked by the publishers who bring out this book to add yet a mite to the mass of writing which has appeared in regard to the late events, for how are the mighty fallen! and, as when an oak announces its downfall through the forest, so here it was only natural that the little fowl should fly and flap, with outcries (sometimes) of sharp shrillness! Much, then, has been written and said; and if I now place my small word with the books already sprung out of what we call “The Revival” and, rather blatantly, the “Abolition of Christianity,” my excuse lies in the circumstance that during those storms I was much with Aubrey Langler, and that, long before those events, I was probably his closest friend.

I can, therefore, give details as to that gracious life and the strifes in which he had a hand not very possible to another writer.

It was my way to stay with Langler at least thrice a year. My crowded town-life was a rude enough contrast with his eremite mood, so I rarely failed to avail myself of his invitations. Of these he gave me one in the August of the year of the Pope’s visit, and shortly afterwards I started for Alresford (Swandale lies five miles north-west of Alresford by carriage-road).

There happened to travel in the rail-train with me a remarkable man: certainly, I think that I never beheld a larger human being, except in an exhibition. We were alone in my carriage, and I was able to take note of

him. His vast jacket was of satin, and from every button ran two cords of silk, ending in a barrel-shaped ornament of silk, such as used, I believe, to be called “frogs”; his shirt was frilled and limp; and he wore four or five rings. This was enough to prove him a foreigner, though otherwise his dress was ordinary. He sat with his fat legs wide apart, smiling at the world in the most good-humoured, yet sneering way, showing some very long top teeth.

All the time his hand travelled to and fro, fro and to, in a rub along the tightly-clad length of his thigh.

The man seemed most happy. From the manner in which his eyes, half hid by their sleepy lids, hovered anon upon me, I could see that he was longing to speak out some of his self-satisfaction; and after some short time he did indeed speak, saying with a drowsy drawl through his nostrils, exhibiting the sneer of his teeth, and speaking English without a hint of foreignness:

“The landscape is not displeasing to me. Oh no; it is not so bad. There now, you see, that little farm: it is not so bad. But it is not romantic — not *plantureux*. It would be strange to me if the English were other than they are. The English are an exact expression of England — their character, constitution, Church, everything. The cliffs of Dover, now. Cæsar might have foretold their future from their mere appearance as he approached them; a traveller might just look at them from his ship, and go back home saying: ‘I know the English’ — if he be a man of force and grasp and insight. Oh no; that is a little hyperbole perhaps — my little tendency to hyperbole. But, I assure you, the landscape does not displease me....”

In this way he went on purring; did not stop; would not permit me to say anything. His utterance was lazy, nasal; and ever and anon he pipped from his lips, as he droned and rubbed his thigh, a dry pin-point of nothing: this, one could see, was a habit of his being. I cannot now recall a thousandth

part of his talk, but I do recall that, as he droned on and on from topic to topic, this thought roved through my brain: “But what a head! what a fount of ideas!”

The man made upon me an impression of great grossness, perhaps from his big bulk, or his manner of ironing his thigh, or his ejection of nothings, or that wallowing in his own self-satisfaction. Round his chin and cheeks ran a bandage of iron-grey beard; his hair was scanty, and bald at the temples, where his forehead ran up into two gulfs of bare skin, so that the skimpy region of hair on his great head resembled a jacket much too small for the person who wears it.

A few minutes before our arrival at Alresford something led him to tell me that he was about to join the house-party of the Prime Minister at Goodford. His servants, I soon saw, were in the carriage next to ours, for as the train drew up a valet ran out to help his master to alight, but his master coolly made use of *my* shoulder to help himself out as he limped heavily to the platform, and did it with such an air of patronage and old friendship, that, for the life of me, I couldn’t help feeling flattered.

I suppose that to be caressed by a force is always pleasant — the purring of a petted cat! — and I understood that the Baron Gregor Kolár was a force.

For now I knew his already well-known name, inasmuch as, after turning away from me on the platform, he turned again, fumbled fretfully for his card, and gave it me. I gave him mine. Then, with a bow-legged rolling of gait which bowled his head aside at each stride, he strolled to the brougham awaiting him.

His brougham and mine ran along the same road for some distance — Goodford, his bourne, being only five miles from Swandale — till we parted at a meeting of roads, and he passed from my mind for a season.

CHAPTER II

THE WREN



AS I WENT on towards Swandale the thought suddenly struck me that my driver's back was strange to me. I bent forward, and asked him what, then, had become of Robinson.

"I wish I could tell you, sir," was his answer, "but seemingly that's just what nobody knows."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Robinson has been missing for three days, sir," he said— "since Thursday noon, high or low, no one can find him: and cut up is what Mr and Miss Langler are about it."

This Robinson, a very handsome man, well under forty years, was a part of Swandale, and long known to me; but now the carriage rolled over broken stones, and I asked no more. Soon thereafter we passed into the gorge which runs into Swandale.

The fame of this vale is at present pretty far-spread, yet of the "pen-pictures" which have appeared of it I know of none which portrays half its witchery. The piling up of details is, in fact, fruitless, for not the pen, but the brush, is fashioned to paint. I may repeat, however, that the vale is an oval, the gorge being at the south-east, in which already the ear is caught by that sound of waters whose chant pervades the vale (the whole is not more than twelve hundred yards long and eight hundred wide), and one goes on through an air of perfumes to a giant portal, till, in contrast with the

wildness of the approach, Swandale itself dawns upon the eye in all its rusticity — a rusticity attained by the touchiest art, for I think that throughout the dale there was not at that time a coo or a drain not due to the care of its designer. Langler had, in fact, given many years and the mass of his fortune to the making of this garden.

The house is not precisely in the centre of the oval, but towards the north-west, on an islet in the lake, the lake itself being an oval, and it is strange that waters so shaken can show so staringly every pebble and grayling in their deeps: *shaken*, for the ground north of the house mounts in terrace on terrace to the hills, and down these, all rowdy with laughter, darts a rout of waters which wash into the lake. On the wooden bridge looking east over the lake Langler and his sister stood awaiting me.

Langler was now a man of forty, with some silver in his hair, and Miss Emily at this time twenty-seven.

They formed something of a contrast, she was so much darker than he, for Langler had light, wavy hair, parted in the middle over the broadest brow, a brow parcelled up into lax fields by the furrows of “much learning.” He wore no hair on the face, save side-whiskers down the longish hollow of his cheeks, cheeks which looked no wider than the breadth of his broad chin: a massive countryman’s-face, yet with something wistful and ill-fated about the eyes and the thick lips, which ever bore a sad smile. His “bone-in-the-throat” drew the eye by its prominence! He always impressed one as being better groomed than other men, I never could tell why, since he was ever quite plainly dressed, but in the very pink of correctness somehow.

However, in a certain — shall I say cynicalness? — of look there was resemblance between the two — or, say, criticalness, scepticism: both had a trick of screwing up at the cheek-bones a little and piercing into anything new or curious that was in question.

It is commonly known now that both were beings of uncommon endowment, and so kin and kind were they, that they appeared to live, as it were, a twin life.

When we went into the cottage I found waiting to welcome me several men and women servants — a small crowd of much more than ordinary comeliness. Langler said then to me: “have you heard about my poor friend?”

It was nothing new for him to speak so of his servant, so I knew that he referred to Robinson, and replied: “I have heard something. Can’t you form any idea what has become of him?”

“No idea so far,” he answered; “I am giving my mind to it.”

“He should be found, then,” I said; at which Langler smiled.

Miss Emily was rather behind us in the passage, and at that moment I heard her say: “Aubrey, here is John running after us with something.”

I turned, and saw this John pelting up the boards embedded in the soil which served as steps from the bridge to the cottage. He held a spade in the left hand and some object on the right palm; Langler turned to him; and at once I saw that the thing on the man’s palm lived, fluttered a wing, was a bird.

“What!” said Langler, “a wren?”

“Why, it is ill,” said Miss Emily.

“I found it caught in the vine tendrils, miss,” said John.

Everybody bent over it.

“I have never seen it before,” said Langler.

“No, it is certainly a stranger,” said Miss Emily, “and what *can* that be round its leg?”

She was rather palish.

The thing round the leg was a piece of paper, wound with worsted.

And Langler, peering at it, said: “stay, *I* will undertake the cure of this wanderer.”

CHAPTER III

THE STYRIAN



SWANDALE COTTAGE IS very large, covering more than half of the island, but mostly one-storeyed, the roofs being of thatch made heavy with rocks, and the walls of marble kept snow-white by means of snakestone; but not much of the walls is visible, for the eaves of the roof droop so low that parts of them have had to be removed over the doors; and as most of the timber about the cottage is huge, the twilight within broods at noon. At the time of which I write candles burned in most of the rooms throughout the day in an atmosphere smoky with incense; for all within was a feeling of the ecclesiastical, everywhere the Church, monasticism, the vestment, the ritual, the Middle Ages, the mood of the altar.

I spent most of the day after my arrival — a Sunday — with Langer in his study, which was in a corner of the cottage, and looked like a great garret or barn with its black beams, its floor of black and red stone, its arras and bookshelves; the ottoman, fixed into a nook under a Christ in hone-stone, was covered with embroideries of the Armenian Church; three diamond-paned windows looked out upon some flower-beds and lawn and upon a slip of the lake seen through oak and poplar; on the desk stood a pyx-and-cross, with two candelabra of plain old gold, whose six candles more or less cancelled the gloom.

At breakfast I had asked him how the wren was faring, his answer had been evasive, but in the study he referred himself to it, saying, “you asked

about the wren at breakfast, by which I understood you to ask about the paper round its leg. Now, I have been examining this paper, it bears some written words, and as they are unpleasant I didn't wish to speak of it before Emily. However, I will show it now to you."

He opened the pyx, took out a little curl of paper, and spread it on the desk. It was uneven at the edges, had been much begrimed, but with a magnifying-glass I contrived to read these words in the tiniest writing:

"Ich, der Pater Max Dees, bin ein ... ner im Sc ... des Barons Gregor ... *Um Gottes Willen*"; or: "I, Father Max Dees, am a ... 'ner' in the 'Sc' ... of Baron Gregor.... *For God's sake*."

"Notice the material of writing," said Langler.

"Not red ink?"

"No, blood. And the instrument of writing — —"

"Not a pen?"

"No, a pin, as you see from the downstrokes."

"But have you been able to fill in the blanks in the sentence?"

"In two at least of the three instances: for if a man writes with a pin and with blood he is certainly somehow a prisoner, and that seems to suggest the word ending in 'ner', namely, Gefangener. And, having that, we know the word beginning with 'Sc': for he could hardly be a prisoner in anything beginning with 'Sc' except a Schloss. So that we get that Father Max Dees is a prisoner in the castle of Baron Gregor Something; and he begs us *for God's sake* to do something: very likely he was interrupted in the act of writing it."

"But how on earth, I wonder, did he trap the wren in his prison?" I said.

"People in such situations do become ingenious," Langler answered.

"But will you take any steps in the matter?"

“Well, I suppose one must, for mercy’s sake,” he answered: “but what steps?”

“The first thing,” I said, “is to locate our priest: that is, to find out the full name of our Baron Gregor; but that is precisely what may be difficult.”

“No; I think not,” he answered; “you haven’t looked at the thread with which the paper was tied round the wren’s leg: just look now, though I doubt if it will give you any information, but Emily or John would know at once.”

After examining the thread under the glass I said No.

“Well,” he said, “over yonder among my flock are three goats, half-domesticated Styrian hill-goats, whose greyish undergrowth of mohair is woven undyed for underclothing in Upper Styrian villages, and, in spite of its long exposure, I feel sure that the fibre you are looking at is Styrian hill-goat wool, and a thread ravelled from some garment or other woven in Styria.”

“So that Father Max Dees probably is in some Styrian castle?”

“So it would seem, and we shall know which Styrian castle as soon as we run our eyes down some list of Styrian barons — unless there are two or more Gregors among them. At any rate, we shall have some information, and can then take some step to rid our backs of the burden of the matter. But where to find a list of Styrian barons?”

I answered that I didn’t know, but that there would be no difficulty about that. “But a Styrian wren!” I said. “How comes it in England in August — or at any time?”

“We shall have to get Emily to coach you in some of the more glaring facts of country-life,” Langler said, with a nod. “Don’t you know, really, that many wrens are winter birds? And as to the migratory ones, surely you know that hardly any kind of bird is reliable in its migrations. I once knew a

cuckoo — but I won't talk Greek to a Scythian. They drift into strange tribes, you know, at the home-coming; they even change their nationality for a summer or for a lifetime. That bit of paper, remember, has been wafted at least twelve months on the wings of the wind, and mauled in the forests of midmost old Lybia, so that our prisoner may be already free — or dead. In any case, it seems an odd little trait of chance that the thing should come here — to me."

CHAPTER IV

THE RITUAL, THE STREET CORNER, THE DEATH-BED, AND THE BELLS



TOWARDS EVENING OF the same day I was sitting with Langer in a little dingle not far from the water, while down by the water's edge idled Miss Emily, feeding swans. I did not think that she was listening to our talk, or might divine it; but her lightness of ear was always very decided.

I had been telling Langer of the spectacle at Canterbury during Holy Week of that year. For the first time, I believe, since 1870 a Bishop of Rome had been permitted to leave the Vatican, and to pledge, as it were, the return of a prodigal, had pontificated High Mass in the metropolitan cathedral of England.

At that ritual I had been present, and Langer had been questioning me as to the conditions under which *Tenebræ* had been sung on the Wednesday night, and as to certain minutiae of the vestments worn by the orders during the liturgical drama of the Thursday. The rite was fresh in my memory, and he listened, I could see, keenly, as I went on to tell of the conveyance of the Pontiff from the dean's house; of the trumpets of the Noble Guard; of the reception of his Holiness by a procession of clergy, headed by the Bishop of Emmaus; of the last sound of the bell during the Gloria, and the clapper of the Sanctus and Canon; of the consecration of the holy oils, vase, oil-sticks, and chrism; of the twelve trumpets during Elevation; of the Communion, of which twelve bishops partook; of the conveyance of the wafer to an Altar of

Repose; then of Vespers; of the antiphon “Diviserunt”; of “Deus, Deus meus” during the stripping of the altar; and of the ceremony of the night — the cope of violet, the washing and the wiping and the kissing of the right feet of the thirteen....

And as I spoke Miss Emily spun round from over her swans, and flung at us across the distance the words: “thus have they crucified to themselves afresh the son of man, and put him to an open shame.”

“Ah? Is that so?” asked Langer, with his smile.

“Happily,” I said, “nobody any longer cares, Emily.”

“Unhappily,” sighed Langer.

And, like an echo, there came from Miss Emily, who had not heard him: “unhappily!”

“But observe,” I said, “that this whole Canterbury gaudery remains illegal, for I have yet to hear that the Act of Uniformity has been repealed. Wouldn’t the civil power be competent, if it chose, to take action against someone?”

“I think so,” replied Langer, “if the civil power were not far too deeply indifferent to what takes place in Canterbury to rake up against it old laws which have become academic. Even thirty, twenty years ago what a howl of ‘popery!’ Now — nothing....”

“Yet,” I said, “I can’t think that indifference was quite the feeling of the nation with regard to the Pope’s visit; on the contrary, people seemed interested and pleased. With our much of numbness about the Church is there not, really, mixed a sort of interest?”

“In one class,” replied Langer— “in the class which has acquired a liking for charming rites and vestments in good taste. Hence the corporate reunion that has been growing up since the last century, till now it culminates, for the English Church got to see that it must more and more

imitate its great old Mother and her graces if it was to retain any of the interest of the nation. It has, in fact, by this imitation retained *some* of the interest of one class, but we know that it is none of it a religious interest, but an æsthetic one; and as to the lower classes, no sort of interest has survived. In other words, while the dogmas of the Church have become mawkish to all, her dear altar-cloths and subcingula have continued pleasing to some — to you and me, for example.”

“But the end!” I said.

“Ah, the end,” he sighed, and we were silent for a while till he added: “ah, but talking of all that, I have not told you, have I, of our new rector? You shall hear! He is a man with a tragedy in his future, a brilliance in his past, and, to my mind, much loveliness in his present — though *you* may not say so. His name is Burton — a Harrow and King’s College man, the son of a successful undertaker of Belfast. He became a Bell Scholar and Browne’s Medallist before he was twenty-one, and was Senior Classic and Senior Chancellor’s Medallist very shortly after. Later on he was appointed lecturer, and got a tutorship. I don’t know what he did for some years, but I am told that he was offered the headmastership of Ardingly, which he refused: he said, mark you, that he wished to devote himself to *pastoral work*! Think of that for a modern person of that sort! Then the Prime Minister, hearing of his parts, offered him Ritching, which, you know, is in his gift, and at Ritching Burton now is, so you will not fail to come across him somewhere soon. But it is my belief that, if ever Edwards regretted a thing, it is this of grafting Burton under his nose here into Ritching. He has caught a Tartar in Burton, I can tell you. Burton *believes*! He is the last of the, let us say the — Barons. And he has quite the tone of the old-world type of priest and arch-priest — more lofty than Lucifer himself, in his quality of churchman, you understand, though underneath I believe him to

be a dear, humble fellow. The living is worth three hundred pounds, and of that let us say thirty pounds is spent upon Dr Burton. The rest goes in needless ‘works’ among his flock — really his *flock* I mean, for Burton’s intellect still divides the world into Church and Sheep: he actually says ‘sheep.’ He breaks his fast at noon, in Advent and Lent not till five, and I hear of hair-cloths, and of midnight risings to recite the breviary office. Add to what I have said that the sermons which he preaches weekly to empty pews are undoubtedly the most brilliant, impassioned, inspired now anywhere uttered in the English tongue — I have been to hear two of them, and you may believe me — and you get a figure rather incongruously ranged with regard to his age. He, by the way, bans me even more than I love him, pronouncing at my shadow a ‘Retro, Satanas.’ He knows that I am hardly quite ‘of the light,’ and my love of the Church is an added fault in his eyes. However, to his smittings I find no difficulty in turning always my other cheek. On the whole, I assure you, the world will hear of Dr Burton, or Dr Burton will break himself up against the world —— But who is this?”

It was one of the gardeners, named John, who came to say that someone had run over from Ritching with the tidings that Mrs Robinson, the mother of the vanished Robinson, was dying.

At this Miss Emily hurried up from the water, rushing into pinks and whites, calling: “what, Mrs Robinson! not dying?... Oh, my forgetful head! I intended the first thing this morning.... It is grief and solitude that is killing the poor woman. Aubrey, I must go now to her.”

“Well, and I too,” said Langer; and to me: “Would you care to come?”

We hurried to the house, and soon set out — Langer with his broad hat and thorn stick, Miss Emily with a basket, and old Bruno (a mastiff) at our heels.

We wound the north way out of Swandale by a path where we had to walk in single file through aftermath, Langler going first, Miss Emily behind, and as I in the middle reached my hand backward to relieve her of the basket my fingers happened to meet her palm, Langler then talking about Robinson, though at the time I hardly heeded him; he said, however: “if ever midnight darkened with sudden disaster upon the life of any man, surely it was upon this poor fellow. He was an easy, good chap, this Robinson. You knew him, Arthur. What a beauty of mild, large eye was his, and dark-curling beard! Do you know, I often seemed to realise in him my notion of the face of Jesus; certainly, he wasn’t unlike the later French conception of the Saviour. As to his disappearance, nothing can be queerer. He left Swandale at noon on Thursday to walk to Ritching, in order, they say, to bespeak Lang, the blacksmith. Now, a little on this north side of Swandale there lay in a spinney a ne’er-do-weel named Notter; Notter saw Robinson, but Robinson did not see Notter: and what, according to Notter, was Robinson doing as he went by? — looking up into the air, whistling! So that we may say that Robinson was not then running away — had, in fact, no perverse purpose of any kind in his mind. Yet Ritching is less than three miles from Swandale! And he never entered Ritching! that we know. In that interval, then, the poor fellow was whiffed from the ways of men by some injurious magic: and the place which knew him knows him no more.”

“And as to the police?” I said.

“No doubt they are at work,” he answered; “but in a matter of just this kind I believe you will find that nothing but a species of inspired divining, hardly common in the *bureaux*, will accomplish much.”

“Aubrey, there were three strangers in Ritching during the week,” called Miss Emily from behind.

“Ah? Is that so?” said Langler. “I didn’t know.”

“Jane heard it in Ritching last night, and told me.”

“Friends?” asked Langler.

“No, apparently; they were people taking holiday. They put up for several days at the Calf’s Head. Two were foreigners.”

We were now at a gate between two great masses of rock, and passed through it to the path over which poor Robinson had lately gone to his fate. Hence to the dale in which Ritching moons the way is mostly downhill, and we were soon entering the south end of the old townlet.

At that south end of the street stood a group of people singing — a squad of three Salvationists, from Alresford perhaps, and with them a few of the villagers — singing as we drew near, with a certain rollicking swing, and I well recall the lilt and the words:

“At the Cross, at the Cross, where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away, It was there by faith I received my sight, And now I am happy all the day.”

Twice they encored this chorus, some laughing as they sang, others standing silent, with dimples of amusement on that side of the lips where the pipe was not. When this was chanted out sprang a captain, and, himself smiling, began to cry aloud: “Well, friends, you may laugh, but — but —” He got no further, for just then down the path ran bounding a rat, a terrier, a lot of men and boys; I had to draw Miss Emily aside, as, rushing by, they pelted among the Salvationists, who, in their turn, scattered, and joined the chase. Only the captain and his two mates were left.

I caught the captain’s words: “well, here’s a rum go, mates.”

We, for our part, went on our way, I smiling, but on the face of either of my friends not a smile. I could not help saying: “modern Christianity in the modern village does not thrive”; but at once I was sorry for having said anything, for neither the one nor the other answered me.

Only after some time Langler said: “still, the martyrs, dying for it, lifted up their eyes, and saw heaven open. But now, you see, it has come to this.” I heard him murmur to himself: “*And now I am happy all the day....*”

Miss Emily, who had hurried on a little ahead, now vanished into a cottage into which Langler and I presently followed her. On our entrance she had just passed through into an inner room, and we heard someone in there going “*Sh-h-h!*” to her in an angry fashion.

We, too, after a little moved into that inner room. There the mother of Robinson lay dying, and it was there that I first laid eyes on Dr Burton.

He was standing, with a stole on, at the further side of the bed, and a murmur of rapid words was coming from him.

At the near bedside were two of the villagers, with a lay sister from the Poor Clares at Up Hatherley, and Miss Emily; the little place was very dingy, but Dr Burton’s face was towards us as we entered: I saw Langler bow austere, but the Doctor looked through him with a vacant gaze.

The appearance of Dr Burton was impressive: his waistband circumferenced a hemisphere of paunch, so that the hem of his frock stuck well out in front of his toes, and he was also thick about the shoulders, chest, and throat; his brow, invaded all round by close-cropped hair, had a scowl, and his mouth a pout; his complexion was of a red brown. I heard him mutter: “by this holy unction, and through His great mercy, Almighty God forgive thee whatever thou hast sinned by sight....” And his right thumb anointed the eyelids of the dying with oil.

And again he ran on in a rapid recitative: “by this holy unction, and through His great mercy, Almighty God forgive thee whatever thou hast sinned by hearing....” And his right thumb smeared the ear of the dying with oil.

I saw Miss Emily bridle a little. In Dr Burton's left hand was an old Sarum liturgical book in pigskin, and on he droned: "by this holy unction, and through His great mercy, Almighty God forgive thee whatever thou hast sinned by smelling...." And his thumb noted the nose of the poor old woman with oil.

Except this cantering mutter and a death-ruckle on the bed all was still in the darkling room. Miss Emily stood at the head, parted from Dr Burton by the breadth of the bed, I with her. And once more the drone was droning: "by this holy unction, and through His great mercy, Almighty God forgive thee — —"

But now there was an interruption: the little old woman for some half minute had been making some effort — to speak or to move — and now she lifted her head, opened her eyes, and whispered something to Miss Emily. Her words, as I afterwards learned, were: "ah, Miss Emily, tell him to stop ... dear, good soul he is ... my poor son...."

Her head fell back upon the pillow. It was clear that her strength had already been well tried before our entrance, for on a table near the bed were the bell, light, and cross of the Blessed Sacrament, with the pyx wrapped in linen. But at the interruption Dr Burton stopped; his face darkened, and forth went his arm, pointing to the door.

"All leave the room," cried he with a gruff brogue.

I saw Miss Emily's face go rosy, while Langler's eyes dwelt upon the Doctor, and he asked, with a smile: "but why so, Dr Burton?"

"Do it, sir!" cried the doctor in a startling manner; whereupon for perhaps thirty seconds it lasted, the doctor pointing, Langler smiling, till Langler turned, and said "come" to Miss Emily and to me.

We went out, the two villagers following us, leaving the doctor and the Franciscan alone with the dying woman. But in the outer room Miss Emily

sat on a chair, saying: "I mean to wait here till Dr Burton chooses to go away. Send John to me, and don't expect me home until all is over."

"Well, then," said Langler; and he and I started off to go back to Swandale, night now falling as we passed through Ritching and thence on up the rising land towards Swandale, and half way up we halted, and turned together, surveying the scene of the valley, veiled now in the hazes of the Sabbath evening: Ritching church-spire could be seen standing out of a garland of wood; so could a part of Goodford village far in the north-west, and there, too, just vanishing out of sight, a church-spire; and presently there was wafted up to us from the valley a charming noise — church-bells chiming for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Langler said then to me in a low voice: "Arthur, to me it is very touching, such a scene; that Goodford church always reminds me of Bemerton, where George Herbert walked and talked with his Lord, and on the whole, what a language do they speak, those spires, those bells, how noble an expression of men's noblest thoughts of this world through twenty ages! One knows that for the new phasis of the world the old expression will not do; but for myself, though I tolerate the sun, give me Iris and the *Götterdämmerung*. Certainly, she was rather lovely, this old church of the Nazarene, with a loveliness that was so useful, too, to lure and lever the world. Who could have foretold that just in sorrow would have been born such a charm, that the moan alone of a saint could more ravish the sense than the rose of Sharon? And through such a roll of generations, Arthur! The beauty that could so long baffle the law 'they all shall change,' what a charm of life must have informed her! If we who now see her mouthing her mumblings in her extreme age, garishly rouged and dizen'd with trumperies, can still by an effort live again in her youth, how vital a youth must that have been! But that extreme age is really here apparently. Surely the rouge cracks now, and beneath peers the very

saffron of death and putrescence imminent. Look where you like, from the event at Canterbury to our 'now I am happy all the day,' and do not the signs bode the passing-bell and the sexton? Judging only from our experiences of to-day, may we not say with some assurance that we now listen to those chimes for about the last time?"

CHAPTER V

THE TRAIL



LANGLER, LET ME repeat here, was a man of some luck in prophecy; and though those bells of Ritching, which he said that we then listened to for about “the last time,” were about to clash over Europe carillons of summons, shaking the hearts of men, yet even here, it will be said, he was not quite at fault: for death more often than not is forerun by this very kind of flickering: slow decay, then a rage and show of life, then the end and darkness — that appears to be the way.

On the Monday morning after our visit to Ritching, as I entered the breakfast-room a few minutes early, there at a casement stood Miss Emily, and I see her once more as she was then, as fresh as the morning, or as the twines of roses that climbed within the small marble casement. Like her brother, she was not tall, but her figure was highly spirited, with a quite French outpush of bust, reminding one always of Gainsborough’s “Duchess.”

We two were speaking together in low voices when I heard the steps of Langler coming. I may say that I had been begging her for a rose, but she had not given it me. I had prayed, and she was saying, “but I thought that ‘blue is the hue for folk who hope,’” when I heard the steps of Langler, and whispered her, “then some forget-me-nots.”

The room was gaily feted out with flowers, and she glanced round to find what I had asked for; but there were none, and she was saying, “there

are none; it is rather late—” when Langler walked in. I was angry with fate, for it was an anniversary date with her and me; and *jealous*, for into *his* jacket she pinned a rosebud.

On sitting to table she said to her brother: “Aubrey, Mrs Edwards wants you and me to go over to Goodford. I have just answered that we have a guest, and, of course, she will ask us to bring him too.”

“Would you care?” Langler asked me: “they are crude but worthy folk, as you know, and their guests are often well chosen.”

I said that I should be glad to go.

“But as to Mrs Robinson?” asked Langler of his sister.

“She died just before nine,” answered Miss Emily. “I came home with John after eleven, so wouldn’t disturb you, as I had made all the arrangements. Dr Burton went away at seven, came back after Compline, frowned excommunications at me, sprinkled the body, said a prayer from the Alexandrine Liturgy of St Basil, and groaned ‘poor sheep!’ with the very tenderness of the Good Shepherd. I should revere that man, if I didn’t despise him.”

“Ah? is that so?” asked Langler, with his smile.

We spoke through breakfast of Mrs Robinson and her missing son, of the Prime Minister’s guests at Goodford, of our probable visit to him, and again of the missing man.

“Do you know,” said Miss Emily in her dry way, hardly meaning, I think, to be taken seriously, “I have my theory of Robinson? Given a village like Ritching, where nothing odd ever happens, when two odd things happen in it those two will be related. Is that a fair statement of a law of probability?”

“Excellent, I think,” I answered.

Langler did not answer, but was listening, one could see, attentively.

“Then,” said Miss Emily, “I say that three tourists at the Calf’s Head is one thing, and Robinson’s disappearance is another thing; and my theory is that these strangers have kidnapped Robinson.”

“But with what motive?” asked Langler, glancing sharply at her.

“Because,” she answered, while the nerves of her face screwed up into a little energy of shrewdness— “because he was beautiful.”

We were silent at this, till Langler remarked: “ah, there you are hardly convincing.”

“I suppose not,” she replied. “But what other reason? There was nothing special about Robinson except that one thing, his beauty, and that is how I feel. Find out some reason why one English and two foreign tourists should need to kill or capture a specially handsome man and you solve the mystery of Robinson.”

Langler answered nothing more, and we spoke of other matters. He afterwards said that he would be absent during most of the day, and, as some letter-writing kept me from going with him, I saw him ride down the course of the brook and vanish behind the arches of the abbey.

He returned before dinner, and some hours later, when the house was asleep, we two were down by the lake’s brim, the night murky and autumnal, but we could just see some moor-hen or wild-fowl briskly breast the waters, like boats in a choppy channel, moored, yet seeming to move forward, as when the moon is flying through cloud.

I asked Langler if he had been able to do anything for the captive, Father Max Dees; he puffed at his pipe several times before replying, and then said: “Father Max Dees is becoming *too* interesting, Arthur — so much so that he threatens to overwhelm my interest in all life outside himself. How if I tell you that this man, so remote from me and mine, speaking with me

from afar by a bird, now seems connected in some way with the disappearance of Robinson?”

“It sounds queer,” I said.

“Yet it is true; and, since true, mark the luck of Emily in this matter. She said that the mere singularity of two such things as the strangers and the disappearance of Robinson was sufficient to make her think those things connected. Well, the singularity is not sufficient, she was not convincing: but we know that her guesses are of a quality not very common, and it will be some time, I promise, before I again permit myself to slight one of them.”

“You have discovered, then, that she was right?”

“Not directly,” he answered; “but I believe so by one of those processes of the mind which, if they be not reason, resemble it. You will understand me when I remind you of a *third* event among us about that time — the wren, namely, and its message. Now, by Emily’s guess all the three should be interconnected; and if I tell you that two of them are, in fact, connected, I think you will jump to the conclusion that all are so.”

“But which two are connected?” I asked.

“The wren and the strangers.”

“Tell me.”

“I rode out to-day with the object of making some inquiries about these strangers, and also of finding somewhere a list of Styrian barons. Well, then, I went first to the Calf’s Head, and what I gathered there was this: that the strangers are now gone; that they were ‘certainly’ unknown to one another; and that at the hour when Robinson vanished one of the foreigners was sitting on the doorstep of the inn studying the county-map, one was sipping beer in the bar-parlour, while the third, the Englishman, was leaning against Lang’s smithy-door: so that Brown, the landlord, had all these men

under his eyes on that Thursday noon when poor Robinson was undergoing his mystery. However, I had no sooner heard of this *tableau vivant* than my own instinct of wrong, vague before, started into liveliness, the word which stirred my anger being Brown's 'certainly' in saying that the three were strangers to one another. He said it because he had never seen them speak together. Yet these men for days ate, smoked, etc., together, under which conditions men do exchange a word; so what could have kept these apart, except a wish to appear unacquainted? — a wish which argues that they were not so. But their pose at the moment of the tragedy! Brown says that 'they were like that most of the afternoon.' Imagine, therefore, the tale of sips taken by one of them, the countless interest of the second in the county-map, the resource in chat of the last at the smithy-door of Lang — all under the benign, remarking eye of Brown. One can almost assert that, if a wrong was then to their knowledge being accomplished, it would be in just such poses of statuesque guilelessness that they would parade themselves.... At all events, I left Brown with the expectation of finding that other foreigners than these had been in our midst on that mid-day of mystery.

"I then rode over to Goodford, and was told that three weeks previously two strangers had been there — one a foreigner. I went to Ayeling, Mins, St Peter's, Up Hatherley — all within eight miles of Ritching — and learned that the neighbourhood within the last months has been liable to quite a little epidemic of 'strangers,' foreign and English, who did not seem acquainted. I asked whether any of the strangers had been absent on the noon of mystery. In every case I gathered that they had gone for good before that day, or else on that day had remained conspicuously present in the villages.

"But at Mins a very odd accident brought into my way something of a character so wild that my eyes almost could not credit it. You know, Arthur,

the unconsciousness of people when in a foreign land that anyone in it can understand their speech: I had this fact in my mind when at each of the villages I inquired whether the strangers had left behind no leaves, no fragments of paper. I pried into waste-paper baskets, even poked into dust-heaps, but could find nothing. However, I was leading the horse from the door of the Crown at Mins towards the gate when I saw a little stick, so to speak, of paper in the hedge. It had been crumpled up to be used as a pipe-light perhaps — you know the habitual frugality of foreigners as to matches — and was scorched at one end, smeared, too, with soap and atoms of hair, so that someone had used it to wipe his razor on. However, it had on it some German writing, still mostly legible, and I got six almost perfect lines. These were the words which I read: ‘... now — the 15th of June — I have been here three weeks, so I know him well. *I am sure* that he will do for England. He is another Max Dees, as arrogant as he is brilliant, a union of Becket and Savonarola. His name is Burton, and he is rector at a place called Ritching. Your Excellency should find some way of coming down here, for ...’ and I can’t tell you, Arthur, the queer feeling which chilled my veins at the instant when, in an inn-yard of Mins, I chanced upon those words: ‘Max Dees.’”

“It is very astonishing,” I breathed.

“But mark,” continued Langler, “the point at which I had now arrived. I had already decided that, if other strangers were about on the day of Robinson’s disappearance, then the three at Ritching were conscious of what was going on, and that if the three were conscious, then all might be concerned. But at least one of those concerned had that name of Father Max Dees familiarly on his pen’s point; and, looking at the bald record of his captivity which Dees sent forth by the wren, we may conclude that that captivity is unknown to his world — that, in fact he vanished from his

world more or less in the manner of Robinson; whereupon one's mind no longer pauses, but, in lack of knowledge, says at once: 'in each case the same agents, in each the same motive.'

"But, given two disappearances, my divination went on to a surmise which would never have been suggested to me by one only, and I asked myself, 'since there are more than one, may there not be more than two?' And this question no sooner occurred to me than I spurred my horse, and hurried to Alresford, where I have spent my afternoon. At the library I obtained some volumes of the county papers, and though my search was, of course, very hurried, I harked back nearly a year, and what I half-expected I found.

"Most dark, Arthur, is the path of some power which now, to-night, is at work within this Europe of ours — a phantom of whose being and trend one's fancy can form no dream, walking vast though invisible among us, amorphous, yet most actual. And I do not speak of a probability. I am pretty sure now that this is so, and Father Max Dees and Robinson, if they live, are sure also.

"One of the oddest things which I have noticed is the slumber of understanding and of memory — especially of memory — with which we modern people look through the newspapers. I have been reading to-day, with dismay, details which I had undoubtedly read before, but at the first reading must have dully cast out of my consciousness as devoid of interest. May we not, then, define man as 'a dormouse who wakes during earthquakes'?

"The bits of news which I mean were mostly printed small, in obscure corners, and the significance of their considerable number in the papers which I perused is big when one considers that they are country papers, not formal chronicles of world-news. If, then, you find in them mention of two

disappearances of fishermen within four months on the north French coast, you may conceive that not two, but four, may have been the actual number: men vanished; caught quite away like leaves on the midnight wind; and one in the Harz Mountains; and one in London; and one in Naples; and two in Hungary; and one in Belgium; and three in Russia; and one in Catalonia; and one in Savoy — —”

“My good Aubrey!” I breathed.

“Vanished, Arthur,” he said— “gone into the gorge of that dragon. There it stands printed, and all have read it, but none has seen it, so unrelated seems each case in its isolated chronicle. I, however, have been able to read with a larger eye; and as to the palace of torment of at least one of the victims we are not in the dark.”

“Have you discovered, then,” I said, “the full name of the Styrian baron who has imprisoned Max Dees?”

“Unfortunately,” he answered, “there are no less than three Styrian barons part of whose name is Gregor — one a Dirnbach, one a Strass, and one a Kolár — possibly the well-known Kolár — —”

At that name an exclamation escaped me.

“Well?” said Langer.

“But have I said nothing at all to you since I have been here, about Baron Gregor Kolár?” I asked.

“I think not,” he answered.

“Then it is a singular chance,” I said: “why, I came down with him in the same carriage, I have his card in my pocket now. It never once entered my head that he might be Styrian! He is over at Goodford at this moment, a guest of Mr Edwards.”

“Well, then, that fact seems to narrow our round of inquiry to two,” said Langer: “our Gregor will doubtless now be found to be a Strass or a

Dirnbach.”

I made no answer, and we sat there some time silent, looking where some moor-hen or wild-fowl breasted the streaming of a surface agitated by the inrush of the cascade, stationary, yet seeming to move forward, like the moon ranging through flights of cloud.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEETING



THE NEXT DAY we were at Goodford. The mansion is Queen Anne, square and grave, standing on grounds which slope towards the exterior of the domain into oak-dotted swards that droop down to a wooded valley.

That first day at dinner I was able to point out to Langler the sneer of Baron Kolár at the part of the table where he droned amid the silence of his neighbours; and the next afternoon, when some men who had been shooting were standing in a group on a terrace, Baron Kolár, who was among them, left them to lower himself upon a bench close to that on which Langler and I were sitting.

It was just then that I heard someone in the standing group remark: “here comes our eloquent divine.” And I heard Mr Edwards, who had looked round, say in his characteristic way: “what, he still on that same temperance job, I wonder?”

This remarkable man (who started life as a puddler’s-boy in South Wales, then became a typewriter in a London newspaper-office, then editor of a boys’ paper, then of a financial paper, then speculator and millionaire, then — without eloquence, stateliness, “brilliance” of any sort — Prime Minister of his country at the age of thirty-seven) — this remarkable man, I say, gave by his mere manners and appearance some hint of the reasons which underlay his elevation; he himself always accounted for it by

declaring that “he alone knew how to run the Empire on purely business lines”; and, in truth, he looked like a man who could do this.

His face at this period was still fresh and pink, and assuredly he did not look older than a youth of four or five and twenty. His hair swept from the parting across his forehead quite down to the right eyebrow; and against this he waged an old war, ever dashing it back, but down it came again. His eyes darted from side to side, and he appeared ever on the point of pitching at something, and having it over and accomplished. He was not large in stature, and by the side of big Mrs Edwards (who was some ten years his senior) looked rather insignificant. It was suggested by his walk that one of his legs was somewhat shorter than the other.

He started out at once to meet Dr Burton, who came toiling up the terraces swinging a copy of, I fancy, *Paradisus Animæ*. I saw them shake hands, and then lay their heads together, Edwards hearkening, Burton talking. Their walk led them towards Langer and me. Edwards began half to laugh, deprecatingly I thought; his shoulders shrugged; his arms opened; Dr Burton’s brogue swelled; he waxed wroth.

The first words which I heard were these: “and are these poor sheep, then, to be so lost and ruined, Mr Edwards? Always, always the body, and never the soul? And is the protest of the Church no longer of avail with the great ones of the earth, sir? I tell you, sir —— !”

Mr Edwards said: “but, Dr Burton, if you would only listen to common reason! My good sir, what can *I* do? If I were a parish councillor, now — or a magistrate — but I am only a Prime Minister, after all.”

Edwards, by the way, was never averse from references to this fact, with some mirth tacked on. But now he was interrupted by a deep, a bitter word: the doctor looked ireful, and in the very voice of reproof he said: “the matter is not one for jest, sir. I have laid this question before the Bishop,

before the Suffragan of Southampton, before the Bishop of Guildford, the Dean, the Residential Canons; I have appealed to the Licensing Magistrates; again and again I have appealed to you; I have turned right, I have turned left: and everywhere I have fallen in with evasions, with infidel shrugs, with dull delay. Now hear what *I* say as to this grievance: I say that I should not suffer it, no, I should not bear it at all. I don't wish to see this new bugbear in my parish: I will not see it: and if the heavens should rain for a harvest-moon a rain of atheist archbishops and rebellious ministers-of-State and blatant councils, all bound together to impose it upon me, still I say I would not suffer it, no, I would not bear it at all, at all, for God's sake I would not. In the spirit of the blessed St Ambrose, with my own sacred hand I shall abolish it from my sight if it confront me; and afterwards, but not before, will I give up the government that I hold, not of men, but of God."

And as this torrent ceased I just heard snuffled with a drawl near my ear these words:

"Oh, well, he is not so bad, though; he does it very well — very well...."

They came from Baron Kolár, who was gazing through sleepy lids at Dr Burton with (it seemed to me) the fondness of a father contemplating the feats of his boy in the presence of friends.

As for Mr Edwards, I saw him fling his hand at Dr Burton's words. He was a being who gave heed to one thing only — effective force. Pride, high words were so far wide of his interest that they failed even to win a smile from him; he heard them like wind, regarded only facts, results.

"Well, Dr Burton," he said, "I am always glad to lend a helping hand to a parson like yourself, interested in your work, go-a-head, and so on, and so on; I am the same kind of man myself, and there's the fellow-feeling, and so on, and so on. But I can do nothing in this matter — candidly, it would be going too far out of my way; you must approach the proper authorities,

mentioning, of course, that you have my sympathies, and so on, and so on — —”

Here I lost his words. Meantime the baron's eyes were dreamily following the priest and the minister-of-State, while Langler's gaze was fastened upon the baron's face, and I glanced from one to the other, seeking to fathom how much was inherent in what I saw about me.

Presently the Baron's eyes wandered round, as if looking for someone to talk to, and when they lighted upon me quite close he droned in his happy manner: “Well, he seems a worthy fellow, a nice fellow: a little too zealous, like a torrid sun, but he's not so bad. Have you heard him preach?”

“Dr Burton? No. Have you?”

“I went to hear him last Sunday. He does it very well — very well. You should hear him.”

“Yes, I have been told....”

“But you could not conceive; he does not do it badly. He is a man who really is master of his business. He preaches with the progression of a great river. He is destined to become the greatest priest in Europe....”

“Ah? You think that?”

“Wait, you will see. If a man is master of his business, and has self-assertion to make the world cringe before his force, that is all that is necessary. A man is either like leaven or like meal: he leavens or is leavened. The chief thing about any animal is its amount of available vigour. How much of Sun-fire has the man in him? — that is the question. If he has only enough, he can wash the world in his flush, and also if he is taught in what fashion to use it. But this Dr Burton, I assure you, he is not a paltry man. I want you to present me — now.”

“I?” I said, taken rather aback, “I don't know him.”

But at once Langler said at my ear: “*I do.*”

“Mr Langler, however,” I added, “probably knows him.”

At this the baron said, half rising: “Ah, then —— ,” and Langler stood up quickly, saying: “with pleasure....”

Dr Burton had now parted from Mr Edwards, and was passing close by us, wrapped in gloom, his frock brabbling at every stalk with the breeze; so Langler hurried out to get at him, and Baron Kolár goaded after Langler his rolling gait.

At this Dr Burton, as when a bull stops in its career to stare at some new object, stood still, and at once Langler said graciously to him: “Dr Burton, permit me to present to you my friend, Mr Templeton — his Excellency Baron Kolár — Dr Burton.”

The moment which followed was full of misery: for one could not tell what the doctor, still heated, would say or do. I was afraid that he wouldn’t shake hands!

But the baron, with instant tact, spoke. “It was I,” he said, “who asked Mr Langler to present me to Dr Burton. I had the pleasure last Sunday of being in the church at Ritching: that will explain.”

At some moments, when he ceased to show his teeth and measured one with a stern up-and-down movement of the eyes, this man’s face took on an expression of power which could even become compelling; so he looked now, eyeing Dr Burton, measuring him from head to toe, till Dr Burton put out his hand, whereupon the baron pipped a nothing sideways, and showed his teeth.

“Ah, well,” he said in his happy drawl, “it is not often now that one can hear a sermon — not often. The pleasure comes from toillessly lolling and watching the toil of another: but the toil of that other must be real toil, and the toillessness of the hearer must be real also. I confess that I have some fault to find with your pews, doctor: a pew should never be a symbol of the

narrow path that leadeth unto life. Oh, but they are not so bad, though — not so bad. Still, I, now, in Styria, have a church, and the pews are *fauteuils*. A man begins to cherish these little boons when the hair is getting grey. Oh, yes. The later Romans were the only race who truly understood the art of temple service. The courts, too, where men like Cicero, Hortensius, and Pliny thundered, were made luxurious. There must be the felt contrast between another's toil and one's own comfortable indolence. Only, the toil must be real toil. In the matter of books, now, the French have not done so badly in that — not badly. The author thinks and works hard, yet manages so that the reader need merely read, without thought or worry. That is rather good, very nice. I, for example, am no longer a young man: an old fellow gets to feel that people should see a little to his comforts. Everything should be made easy and pleasant. The King of Korea, now: he sits, I am told, through a certain ceremonial on a couch made, back and seat, of four bags of brains. You know the derivation of the word *assiduity*: to sit is to be a man; to sit much is to be civilised. But that is a long tale. What I wanted to tell you was not to disturb yourself about the detail which I heard you discussing with Mr Edwards. I will take the affair upon my shoulders, and see to it that no public-house is opened in your parish to offend your eyes."

As the sense of these words possessed my ears I saw that the astonishment of Dr Burton was as supreme as my own. Langler leant with his well-straightened neck over his thorn-stick, smiling, the lax skin of his forehead twitching a little.

After some seconds Dr Burton said, looking at the baron as at some strange being: "I am sorry, sir, but I am pressed for time. As you see, I am a priest, and my harvest is great, and the labourers are few, so I think you will understand that I have no time for loitering and listening. As to your reference to the public-house, I confess that I do not understand you at all."

Baron Kolár was bestowing upon him a smile of sleepy fondness, and as the doctor half turned to go, the baron's hand went out to the doctor's arm.

"Ah, well, you are busy, of course," he said: "well, it does not displease me to see you so. A man's youth is his ancestry: the best heirloom which he can inherit from it is a habit of industry. A young man should work hard, not for the sake of what he can accomplish in his youth, but because the impulse of his acquired energy will last him through his course in a higher sphere. He buys the habit of strife and empire, and that persists to the end. I am rejoiced to see you stressful and *impressé*. Similarly, the youth of nations should be full of rages; their age suave and luxurious. But with regard to the public-house, now — do not harass yourself about such a nothing, since I answer for it that the difficulty will vanish. I would speak to you, but you are so busy. I will call upon you to talk it over. Tell me when, and I will come, oh yes, I will come."

I was certain that, as the baron stopped, Langler, standing now close by Dr Burton, whispered some word at the doctor's ear. He afterwards told me that the words were: "*you should say no.*"

But at his whisper Dr Burton turned upon him a look of surprise and some resentment, and at once said to the baron: "I shall be at home to-morrow evening at eight-thirty, sir, if that will please you." Whereupon he bowed, and was off.

"Oh, well, he's a nice fellow — a nice fellow," said the baron, summing up the doctor. "In a high position he would be just the man whom the Church needs to push her forward and make her aggressive. What is your opinion of the Church in England?"

His eyes rested upon Langler's face.

"My opinion?" said Langler.

"As to her lasting powers, now, I mean."

“My outlook is vague enough,” answered Langer: “I should say that bishops, church-bells, sermons, and so on, will persist as we know them in England for another thirty, forty years.”

“Ah, you think that. Well, well. I, now, should say a hundred, a hundred and fifty years.”

“That is a long time,” said Langer.

“Not so long. I mean, you know, if nothing happens to annihilate her. It is astonishing how old things will continue to hold on long after they are quite dead and decayed. Look at old oaks and houses! A glass of water will sometimes remain in the liquid state a long time below the freezing-point; the least shake would make it shiver into a glass of ice, but, lacking that, it remains liquid. Well, so with the Church. Especially in a country like England, I give her another hundred and fifty years.”

“You are quite possibly right,” said Langer; “your opportunities for observing may have been better than mine.”

“Oh, yes, I know old England very well — very well. I was once an *attaché* to the Embassy for three years; altogether, I have lived in England eight to ten years. I know the old country very well — not badly. Very nice it is, too — provided one brings one’s own *chef*. The pride of England is not her political potency, but her beef, for in no country in the world is so exquisite a care bestowed upon the culture of cattle, and if a quarter as much had been given to the culture of men, by this time the Angles would, in truth, have been angels. Not that I have a word to say against the culture of cattle. Perhaps after all man himself is not of so much importance as what he eats. Beef is the half of life; the other half is mutton. No, that is a little hyperbole perhaps — my little tendency to neatness and epigram. It is astonishing how, as a man gets older, he runs to seed in that way, for epigram is only an instinctive device for concealing meagreness of thought.

I, for example, am no longer a young man. I begin to get fond of my little comforts. To be candid with you, the cooking at Goodford does not altogether please me, those partridges at dinner last night were not done enough — not enough. Still, they were not so bad — a little underdone — and the wines are very good — very good. But, talking of the Church, I assure you I give her a hundred and fifty years — unless someone has a motive for giving her a push, and then down she goes. Would *you* care to see that done?”

His wandering eyes halted suddenly upon Langler’s face.

“I?” said Langler, “why should I?”

“Oh, well, isn’t there always the danger that a decayed old house may tumble and crush one? If the thing is a groan and a danger it may as well go, and be done.”

“But if it be quaint and gracious and historic,” said Langler, “it may as well stay, even at the cost of a prop or two. While it stands it hurts no one: it is only its fall that may hurt.”

“Well, I see your point of view. You are right, too, in your own fashion. But for myself, the Modern Spirit does not displease me; it is very nice in its way — oh yes. Let us have it in its full noon, I say. Whatever survival of the past stifles it should be quickly excised and suppressed. And if in England the Church is only laughable, I assure you that in other parts of Europe, where it is more mixed up with the life of the people, it continues to be positively baleful. In Austria, for example, one half of the teachers in the common schools are still ecclesiastics! and though the people do not believe in the Church any more than you do here, yet it influences them, it checks and hampers them: they feel that they would like to be quit of it, yet do not quite know how. And, apart from any harm which it does, it is astonishing how many thousands of men might be found in Europe who,

from mere motives of vanity, merely to tell how they took a part in modifying the modern world, would lend a willing hand to pulling down the old building. I believe that that is so. But you, now, you see from a different standpoint. Well, you are right, too, in your own fashion.”

To me it became clear that these two were pumping and sounding each other with some not very evident motive on either side, Langler striking his stick into the turf as he walked, looking downward; the baron looking downward also, at Langler’s face.

Langler said: “I cannot be made a convert, Baron Kolár. Shells, you know, are sometimes quite charming things, and for this shell which remains of the Church, I personally should, under certain conceivable conditions, be even prepared to give my life: such is the whim of my mind. But now you will excuse me — Arthur, you will excuse me: I have some letters.... But stay; I have to ask you a question, baron.”

He had stood still; we all stood still, and Langler and the baron faced each other.

“Well, then,” said the baron gravely, eyeing Langler up and down.

Langler, I must say, was paler than usual. He said: “I have lately had reason to run my eyes down a list of the Styrian nobility, baron, and find that three several Styrian barons have the name of ‘Gregor’ — you being one. Are you acquainted with the other two?”

“Well, yes,” was the answer: “one is a Strass, the other a Dirnbach; easy, good fellows they are. Our Styrian nobility is not what it was; no, the nobilities will soon have to go too. Fortunate thing, they will last through my time. Look at Mr Edwards, now — nice fellow, powerful fellow. It is fellows like him, with fresh, vulgar energies and elementary insights, whom the world needs to guide it now. Oh no, the nobilities must go, too. Do you know —— ?”

But Langler cut short that drawl. He said: “Well, one of these two Barons Gregor unlawfully has in his castle a prisoner, one Father — Max — Dees — —”

He spoke pointedly, his eyes fixed on Baron Kolár’s face; and on his face dwelt the Gorgon eyes of the Styrian.

Some time went by in what was to me a distressing silence, till the baron pipped a nothing sideways — a movement, to me, of relief, as it were setting me free to breathe again, for I felt that Langler had dared to cross a definite Rubicon.

“What about him?” said the baron, a new something in his voice.

Undaunted, though gauntly, leaning over his stick, Langler went on.

“It is my intention,” he said, “to expose and punish this particular Styrian baron as soon as ever I discover his identity; and I speak of him to you in order to see if you can give me any hint as to which of the two is the guilty one.”

The baron’s look had lost its rigour now; his lips unwreathed from his teeth in a smile.

“It is that fellow Strass, you may be sure,” he said; “or it may be Dirnbach, it may be, there is no telling. The nobilities are no longer what they were in authoritative power, and in Styria, I assure you, it is nothing very astonishing that a baron should lawlessly clap a priest into a dungeon; but nice fellows all of them, not wicked, not so bad. I really should not worry myself about the matter, if I were you.”

Langler said: “thank you, baron, I will think over what you have said.” And he walked away to the house.

It was only after two or three minutes of silence that the baron said to me: “your friend is one of the brightest minds in the world, really as extraordinary a fellow as I ever met, I assure you. No one with any respect

for intellect could avoid liking him. But he is a man of books, he is of the scholar type, he is not a man of action — oh no. A scholar should never jog himself into antagonism with a man of action. The man of action may even wish to save and spare him, but sometimes he cannot: for, just as he is vastly stronger than the scholar, so facts and auspices may be vastly stronger than he. By far the safest plan for the scholar is to hatch pastorals in his closet and handle volumes of piety. So amiable a man is your friend Mr Langler, so charming — nice fellow. I don't know if you think it worth while to repeat my words to him. Now I must leave you to talk to Mr Edwards about my friend the doctor ..." and he rolled away on his bow-legs, his hat canted over his eyes in his habitual manner.

That very night, some time after ten, Langler was handed a letter which he called me into the library to show me. It was a card damasked with raised devices in red — a Christ on the Cross — and on it had been scribbled in pencil the words: "You should not interfere."

CHAPTER VII

THE COMPACT



THE NEXT EVENING, as Baron Kolár raised himself on the arm of a valet into the trap which was to carry him to his meeting with Dr Burton, Langler remembered that some matters were going forward at Swandale which demanded his personal managing, and he asked me to go with him.

It was a fine autumn twilight when we set out, a sound of singing following us from the house and laughter from knots on the lawn, and we had a very pleasant ride. At Swandale Langler talked with John, with Jane, saw this and that with his own eyes, the water-cress at the rill under wire, the patch of reaped corn, for now poppies lay low, over the fields of the land the corn-shocks were leant together in lots, and all smelt well of harvest.

Langler wished to return to Goodford on foot, and we were presently trudging back through Ritching.

That something was on his mind I had felt sure; and this proved to be so, for as we drew nigh to Ritching church he said: "I have decided, Arthur, to speak with Dr Burton to-night, since, if this good man runs his rather rash head into any danger, I do not wish to have to reproach myself with too shrinking and nice a silence on my part."

"But danger of what nature?" I asked.

"Its nature is unguessable," he answered; "but of the danger itself one can't, I think, have any doubt. We know, for instance, that Dr Burton is

‘*another Max Dees,*’ and we know that Max Dees is, for some reason or other, in durance. Now, of Max Dees we have two further pieces of knowledge: first, that his imprisonment has features resembling the disappearance of Robinson; and secondly, that he, like Dr Burton, is a ‘union of Becket and Savonarola.’ Well, now, with regard to the vanishing of Robinson, Emily has let fall the view that it was motivated by his ‘beauty’; and though this reason for the disappearance of a man seems even ridiculous, still we have promised ourselves not wholly to ignore her instincts in this matter. *If*, then, she may somehow be right, the reason for the disappearance of Max Dees may somehow be found in the fact that he, too, is ‘beautiful’; or it may be found in the second fact known of him, that he is a ‘union of Becket and Savonarola’: we don’t know: but we know that he *is* imprisoned, and that in some respects he resembles Dr Burton. As to who is the gaoler of Max Dees, I am really no more in any doubt. The word ‘Kolár’ fits very well into the blurred space on the missive brought us by the wren; and the man himself, you remember, made no effort to blind our eyes when asked about the matter, even going out of his way to assure us that the other two Gregors are ‘harmless, nice fellows.’ What a beast that man is! Yet how great a strength of soul is his! Imagine, Arthur (if he is, in truth, the gaoler of Dees), his astonishment at hearing that name on my lips! How *utter* at this moment must be his loss to understand by what marvel *I* could ever have learned that name. I expected at least to see him start, to look abashed a little. But no; his eyes rested serenely on my face: he seemed to be sorry for me, to deplore my indiscretion. Here, then, is a man mighty in mass and stature, all self-assured, whose will, whether it be bent upon good or upon ill, is hardly to be withstood. Such a person is, apart from special considerations, inherently formidable; but how if this person be found trying to convert another to enmity against the Church, and at the

same time be found striking up a friendship with a churchman who in certain particulars resembles another churchman imprisoned in his castle? Certainly, one's mind can't reject a notion of danger; and it has appeared to me that I ought not to hold my peace in the matter, in spite of the *outré* warning of the card which Baron Kolár has been kind enough to forward me."

We had now arrived before Ritching church, which stands well back from the village street in a large piece of land— "park" one may call it — well timbered and dark. The building itself is big, modern, and ugly — one of those churches with huge roofs, red bricks, red shingles, which rather suggest the cult of some latter-day Moloch than of the Carpenter. It is built, however, over some old vaults in which repose generations of the Hampshire branch of the Bellasis family, once of Goodford, now extinct.

We got into the grounds by a gateway in a wall of rubble before the church, and thence, by a path which winds inward through the park some quarter of a mile towards the vicarage, passed on to the vicarage garden. The night was now dark, and we found the house in darkness.

"It looks," said Langer in a low voice, "as if the baron's visit to the doctor has been quite a long one — two hours at the least — for he seems to be still here, if one may divine by the darkness in this front part, which, no doubt, the doctor would have lighted on seeing his visitor through. The baron must have left his trap at the Calf's Head, for I don't see it here. Let us wait outside, then, a little. The doctor, by the way, has the good taste to look out from his study window behind yonder upon a patch of that white vetch which shimmers so bridally in all shades of twilight. Come softly, and I will show it you."

I tracked his tread through thicket towards the back of the old manse, till we began to catch sight of a glow of light emanating from a casement

behind, and a moment later Langler whispered me: “There, you see, is the growth of vetch.”

Five feet farther, and from an angle of a lean-to, we could peer through ivy and rose-bush into a lighted room: in it were Baron Kolár and Dr Burton, standing. Langler laid hold of my arm, and we stood breathless, looking.

The two in the room were deep in converse, the rumour of which reached us, but none of the words.

Presently the baron took his hand from the doctor’s shoulder, took up a book from a table, held it uplifted a minute, kissed it.

He then tendered the book to the doctor, who seemed to us to draw back rather, and I felt Langler’s grasp tighten on my arm, but the baron seemed to press and reason with the doctor; then the doctor took the book, lifted it to his lips, kissed it: and at once the hands of the two men met in a clasp.

Langler whispered into my ear: “but what agreement hath Christ with Belial? Isn’t it written that he who is a friend of the world is the enemy of God?”

CHAPTER VIII

THE FACE OF ROBINSON



TWO MINUTES AFTER that clasp of the hands the doctor passed out of the room with the baron; two minutes later he returned to the room alone, and stood at the casement, with his brow drooped toward his breast, in a brown study.

Langler whispered to me: “you will wait outside. I am going to speak to him now.”

We walked round to the front of the manse, where Langler rapped, Dr Burton presently came to him, and I from outside looked on at the two standing together in lamplight in a parlour.

Langler, I think, was not asked to sit. I heard the brogue of Dr Burton, then in Langler’s hand beheld the piece of paper on which Dr Burton was spoken of as a “union of Becket and Savonarola.” Dr Burton did not look at it, but began to lower angrily, Langler to bow, till at last Dr Burton frowned towards the doorway. Langler bowed, and withdrew.

When angry he had a habit of lowering the eyelids in an expression of hissing disdain, and the street-lamps, as we trudged through Ritching, revealed him so to me. For some time he was silent, but finally, when we were climbing towards Goodford village, he said: “Dr Burton has insulted me, Arthur, and for the moment I find it difficult to speak of him in a Christian spirit. However, he is a good man — I really need just now to repeat that fact to myself — though mewed up in crassness. Uppishness, of

course, is part of the being of every dominant man, and I don't blame him for his uppishness, but only for the fact that it is so blatant and instant. Still, one must take the thorns with the rose, and I promise by to-morrow morning to love him again. Partly it was my own fault, for I should have felt, after the compact which we witnessed, that my warning would be all too late. Imagine how momentous must have been the matter of that compact, Arthur, when Burton could be brought to confirm it with the Bible at his lips, and imagine the craft and the might of will by which he must have felt himself crimped and mesmerised. Here is a man who two days ago began by telling Baron Kolár that he had not leisure to listen to him, and already we find him *in genubus*, with (of all things) *the Book* at his lips. Have you not here a miracle of mind? But given a known individuality, one may deduce certain facts from it. We can assert, for instance, from our sure knowledge of Burton, that the compact contained nothing dishonouring to *him*, that it was lofty and pure on *his* part. It must be so. And since it was Kolár who first kissed, and afterwards Burton, we may say, too, that the first terms of the pact are to be fulfilled by Kolár. If Kolár will do certain things, as he says he will, then Burton will do certain things. But what things? Pity we couldn't catch a few snatches of the talk; yet certainly, even so, I don't think that we are quite in the dark. For Burton's motives were lofty and pure: therefore Kolár's promises of good things did not concern Burton's own self-interests, or not solely. Yet Burton was so enthusiastic as to these promises that he took an oath of repayment: they may very likely, therefore, have concerned his love — the Church. But the Church where? At Ritching? It is inconceivable that Kolár can be so interested in the Church at Ritching as to wish to exact any oath with regard to it. 'Church,' therefore, as between him and Burton, must mean Church on a larger scale; and in the Church on this scale we know that Kolár is, in fact, interested.

But how is Burton, a village priest, to repay services rendered to the Church on so large a scale? Does it not seem as if Kolár's promises do not apply altogether to the Church, but in part to Burton personally, that Burton is not for ever to remain a village priest? Indeed, did not Kolár yesterday volunteer the prophecy that this 'union of Becket and Savonarola' is 'destined to become the greatest priest in Europe'? A singular prophecy, Arthur, from a man whose words in general assuredly have some significance. We may guess, then, that Kolár's undertakings consist in rendering to the Church some good which will include the rise and greatness of the doctor himself, and the doctor swears to use his greatness in some way indicated, or to be indicated, by Kolár. Certainly, such seem the divinations prompted by the facts which we have."

"Isn't it a strange thing," I said, "the interest of Kolár in the doctor, even before he saw him? It is not to be supposed that Kolár is a very regular church-goer, yet he hastened to hear the doctor at once on coming to Goodford. One could be almost certain that the letter describing the doctor as Becket *plus* Savonarola, and asking someone to 'come down,' was addressed to no other than to Baron Kolár."

"Very likely," replied Langler; "and that was chiefly what I had to say to Burton in our interview just now. I tried to persuade him that the baron is no friend of priests, that he probably has one of them a prisoner in his burg at this moment, but because I could make no certain statements his mind was closed against me. On his part, he used the words 'evil-speaking,' 'presumption,' 'interference'; he said 'dare,' he said 'irreverent.' But I won't speak of that interview — it was *bête*. The sentiment that now occupies my mind about Dr Burton is this: 'the pity of it!' One cannot touch pitch and go undefiled. I have often had the augury that Burton is a man with a tragedy in his future, and, if I was right, that tragedy now perhaps takes shape: it

will consist in his 'defilement.' Baron Kolár has prophesied that the doctor will be the greatest of priests: well, if I, too, may prophesy, I say that from being the greatest of priests, as he now is, he will become no priest at all; that by little and little he will drop from his height, will lose perfection of motive and absoluteness of fibre, till on a day he will find himself fingering the dross of the grosser world."

By this time we had got into sight of the lights of Goodford House. On our arrival, as we were passing through the outer hall, a man handed a letter to Langler, which Langler, after glancing through it, handed to me; and I read the words: "Charles Robinson, your groom, is certainly in this neighbourhood, and if you have not found him it is because you have not searched enough. If you have the courage to meet the writer at the north-west corner of Hallam Castle alone at seven on Sunday evening, he promises you that at least you shall see the face of the missing man. — A Well-wisher."

CHAPTER IX

“CRUCIFY TO YOURSELVES AFRESH THE SON OF MAN ...”



IT WAS THE thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, and for what reason I don't remember — certainly, the house-party at Goodford were hardly zealots in the matter of church-going — that Sunday evening quite a party had been got up to go to the office at Ritching. The fact, I believe, was that the fame of Dr Burton's oratory had spread through the house, and dowager and lordling, finding the Sabbath evening empty, yielded to the pique of curiosity and to Mrs Edward's organising genius.

Baron Kolár, too, had everywhere dropped the opinion that Dr Burton was a nice fellow, that he was not so bad, that he was the only living man with whom grandiose speech was a natural function, like sleep.

Langler alone had declined to take part in the bout. Under any circumstances, I fancy, he would have shrunk from that kind of religious picnic; but he had now the special reason that he meant to go “at seven” that evening to the rendezvous at Hallam Castle given him in the unsigned letter.

To me this seemed very foolish, for I argued that no one could know the whereabouts of Robinson except those to whom he owed his disappearance, and during two days I had been praying Langler to ignore the letter. He answered that he had made up his mind to go. But at least he would let me go with him, I urged. He answered that he would rather be alone. What arms, I asked, would he take with him? He said that he was not accustomed to carry weapons about, and would take his stick.

“But you speak,” I had said, “just as though you were not conscious of any danger in the undertaking.”

“Well, I am conscious of danger,” he answered, “but I believe that in proportion to the danger may be the amount of information to be gathered.”

He had said that he would walk to Hallam Castle (three miles), and then, after his interview with the letter-writer, walk from Hallam to Ritcheing church (two miles), in order to get back to Goodford with the house-party in a carriage.

A little before six on the Sunday evening I was leaning with Miss Emily over a bridge in the north park when he came to us on his way to the rendezvous, spoke a few words, said he was going farther, and made me a signal with the eyes to be mum. Twice he waved back at us as he went forward; once and again I saw him stop to bend over a hedge-flower. He was rather pale. I had long understood that his heart was not strong, as small exertions would sometimes put him out of breath.

Miss Emily, for her part, had consented to be one of the party of excursionists, so after half-an-hour at the bridge she and I climbed the rising ground to the house to go to the church.

She said, I remember, that the escapade was a bore to her, so that up to that moment she certainly meant to go.

There in front of the porch when we reached it stood a crowd of vehicles, saddle-horses, drivers, grooms, in the midst of costumes and chatter. Two of the carriages had already started, bearing away cries of laughter at the crowded discomfort within them. I saw the pink brow of Mr Edwards under the neck of a rearing horse; large Mrs Edwards was in a flush of earnestness; Baron Kolár was seated on a cube of marble bestowing his teeth upon the scene.

Miss Emily was not yet ready to start, so ran into the house, telling me that she would be back in three minutes.

It had been ordained by Mrs Edwards that she should drive with Baron Kolár. I was with another party. In a few minutes only two of the vehicles were left; in one of them sat the baron, waiting for Miss Emily. I was in the other with four ladies; the baron's was a cabriolet, mine a car; both waited for the coming of Miss Emily.

Someone in my car said: "she is a long time."

The baron's eyes wandered; he drew his hand backward over his scrap of hair, looking restless; he pipped nothings. Presently he called out: "where is she, then?"

I was unwilling to drive away without her, so I called back to him: "if you will take my place, I will take yours, and wait for her."

There was the objection of space to this proposition; but, without answering, the baron at once got himself down from his cabriolet, and, with ponderous cares, managed to wedge himself into my place in the car, which drove off, while I stood by the cabriolet, waiting for Miss Emily.

She did not come. I waited ten minutes, fifteen. Then I went into the house, full of trouble.

I quickly found a housemaid, and sent her to hunt, but, running back after some minutes, she said that Miss Langer was not in her room. Before long I had a number of men and women searching the house for her; but she could not be found, and my heart sank at the thought that both of them, brother and sister, were where I did not know.

One of the girls said that half-an-hour before, when Miss Langer was coming down the great stair to join the party, she had handed to Miss Langer a note which one of the villagers of Mins had given her. She had

gone away while Miss Langler was reading the note, and did not know what Miss Langler had done afterwards.

As for me, my mind was a void filled only with fear. The house was empty, I had no one to consult, no notion how to act. At last I leapt into the cabriolet, lashed the horse, and went along the road that leads to Hallam Castle: at least I knew where one of the two was to be sought.

It is a ruin in the older Norman mood in the midst of Goodford Manor demesne. On getting to it I made fast the horse, and ran up a dell to the “north-west corner” of the rendezvous: Langler was not there, but it was still light enough for me to see some footprints in moss on a mass of broken ground not far from the castle-wall: whether his footprints or not I couldn’t tell.

I began to call out, but there was no answer, and the footprints passing from the moss, I lost them among stones.

Night was darkening when I went to the other (east) end of the ruin, and entered by a wicket into one of the courtyards. When I had stumbled a little way up a stair I was all in darkness. I called aloud Langler’s name again and again; but there was no answer.

I would go no farther, the steps were so broken, the darkness so crowded with foes and fears; I had no light; so at last I ran back down. He might after all, I thought, have left the ruin and gone to the church, as arranged. That was the first thing now to find out, so I ran back to my trap, and cantered off towards Ritching.

At Ritching I flung my reins to the railing before the church, and ran inward, the middle portal framing a glimmer of light before me. I heard the rise, long triumph, and fall of a royal voice: Dr Burton preaching; and, running up the three steps before the church, I peeped in.

There was no pulpit, no rood-screen; Dr Burton was before the sacrarium; and with his hands behind his back, he was striding sharply a little way to and fro, with swinging shoulders at the turn, like a man moved to wrath.

That evening he had read of the sending out of the Twelve; of the power vouchsafed them over unclean spirits; of the charge that they must take naught for their journey, save a staff only — no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse; and the contrast between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of Christendom may have fired the doctor. He had taken for his text: “crucify to yourselves afresh the son of man, and put him to an open shame”; and at the moment when I entered he was launching a war of language against the modern world and the modern Church.

The party from Goodford formed much the larger part of the congregation, down the nave running a desert of pews, and I think I am right in saying that not more than fifty persons were present, all herded towards the front, looking lost in the largeness of the church. So low had the gas been turned that, though I went peering quite half way up the nave, I could not say whether Langler was or was not there.

At that moment Dr Burton had lashed himself into a really painful pitch of heat. He was tacking to and fro in short runs, rather like lions at the moment when they spy their keeper coming with meat, and loudly he cried out in his brogue: “ye crucify him afresh! Oh, the poor, bleeding hands — so nailed. Oh, the poor, bleeding side — so pierced. Oh, the ravished lamb, oh, the violated dove, oh, the crushed Christ! Have ye, then, no pity? no entrails of compassion? ye dry eyes? ye hard hearts? ye tearless teats? Have ye become men of *wood*? worm-eaten? loth as death? chill as the silver ye gloat on? sallow as the gold ye clutch? May God put fire into you, if it were half hell-fire, ye Monophysites, ye modern men of pure Polar snow! Oh,

look — oh, see: that lip — so sucked: Is there no lust about you that you don't bind it with wild community to your mouth? Those eyeballs ooze a whey of blood: is there no heart in all the Sahara of your vulgar gullets to weep and groan and weep?... Yes, it was pitiful: he was kind, and he was killed, he was good, and he was galled, he was meek, and he was mangled. And will you crucify him *afresh*? In the name of Holy Church, I call the Eternal God this night — —”

But at this point Dr Burton stopped with a gasp, gaping upward all in wonderment; and from his mouth, from mine, from the mouths of us all in the church, there burst a sound.

Yonder in mid-air — under the roof of the central aisle — hung the crucified himself.

That sight will never tend to fade or be blurred in the memory of those who beheld it; if there be memory in Eternity, then always still in Eternity that sight, I think, will be with me.

It was not an optical error — that was the first certainty at which the brain, on waking a little from its deadness, arrived; it was not some magic illusion: a real man crucified on a real cross stood there revealed. From three points of the thorn-dented forehead I, with my eye of flesh, saw a trickle creep, and pause, and creep.

I found myself on my knees on the tiles, with my hands clasped. I forgot Langler — I forgot my love, his sister — and all things else. From the bowed knot of men and women in front of me came groan on groan.

At last! The heavens had spoken....

Yet it was faintly seen, and though I raised my head, and forced my eyes to search the divine horror, the light was most dim, and the revelation seemed rather the spectre of a thing than the thing itself. Only, each detail was perfect, and it was the crudeness of these details which proved its

reality to the mind with proof a hundred times sure. The haggard crucifixions of Dürer and Spagnoletto — all the *macabre* dreams of a painter, graver, sculptor, heaped into one massacre of flesh and of grinning bone — would seem like a child's fancy in comparison with that fact. Still in my dreams I see the sideward hang of that under-lip, and that hollow between ribs and hips drawn out into shocking length, and the irregular drip from the hands, the left of which had been ripped to the finger-roots, and the crown of sorrow, and the dead drop of that tragic brow, it cannot be told....

Perhaps I alone examined details; the rest knelt bowed down; only Dr Burton, with his neck stretched back, stared as if in vision straight upward upon heaven. In myself I felt a kind of rapture, and also of peace; and the words which I murmured to myself were these: “at last.”

All at once, without ascent, descent, or movement, the image vanished.

But still for a longish time no stir nor sound, save some hushed sob, was to be heard echoing through the building.

At last! after the dumb centuries, a sign from the skies, a flag from God; and I thought to myself: “long have been those years in which so many generations of men have wept in the face of the sphinx, craving but one sure word from the callous vault for a morsel of manna to their hunger, and now the old silence is over”; and I remember hugging myself, thinking: “it was true, then! it was not a fancy of man's infancy! it was all quite true.”

Through the church the sobs of duchess and ploughman, of server and acolyte, began to sound in growing volume; I saw Dr Burton lift himself and escape into the sacristy; the others mingled the sounds of their awe, till the echoes became one murmur in the vault. As for me, the burden of my thought was this: “at last....”

But, looking up, I was conscious of a row of teeth, and of Baron Kolár, who, with a raised head, was smiling his benediction upon the scene, and his look was as when he snuffled sleepily of a thing, “well, it is not so bad.” I do not know if anyone else noticed him; but, as for me, filled though I was with my other feelings, for a moment I was most offended.

CHAPTER X

OF HALLAM CASTLE



WHEN AT LAST a movement was made to leave the church I first assured myself that neither Langler nor Miss Emily was there, then I set out upon the drive back to Goodford somewhat behind the crowd of carriages, no sound now to be heard from all that picnic party which had left Goodford loud with gaiety an hour before.

During that drive the mere sight of the trees and fields once more brought down my mind from the miracle to the care which had racked it before I had entered the church. Langler, his sister, both of them, were where I did not know; and at another time my fright at a situation so fraught with darkness might have been even maddening, but that night my heart was the home of feelings so pious that something of hope healed my fears.

My relief, however, was great enough when, in front of Goodford House, I spied Langler standing among the alighting church-party. As I hurried up to him he was just saying to one of the ladies: "I hope you enjoyed the office," but her only answer was: "ah, Mr Langler."

Langler, of course, was quite out of tune with us all at the moment, and he could not perhaps observe the look of our faces, for the night was dark.

As I touched his arm he spun round, saying: "ah, Arthur," and I remember how his tone of the world, his cigar, shocked me: he seemed to me a grosser being than we. I wished to say to him: "Hush! the earth is holy ground."

In a low voice I asked him as to his sister. His answer was: “she is in the house; two hours ago a note was handed to her, purporting — —”

“We can’t speak of it now,” I said, stopping him: “all is well if she is in the house.”

When he looked at me with some surprise I whispered to him: “we are none of us inclined to talk just now: you will soon know why.”

The others meanwhile all going within, in the inner hall I now heard a laugh which I recognised as Miss Emily’s, and I did not know whether it more shocked me or filled me with thankfulness that she was safely there.

“If you had waited one little hour for me,” she said as I went in, “I should have been back to go to the church with you.”

“I will explain all later,” I answered. “I had to go to look for Aubrey.”

“Look for him?”

“You may be told in time,” I answered: “you see, everyone is making haste to retire....”

“So I see,” said she, “but what is the matter?”

“We have all seen something.”

“One would say a ghost.”

“The ghost of God,” I answered, in what she *must* have thought a tone of bathos!

“You imply that God is dead,” she retorted in her dry way.

“He died for us, Emily,” I answered most crassly! whereat she bridled, and said: “*O!*” with such an underlook and depth of satire, that I could not bear to see her so banned from my awful mood, and, with a motion of my hand, left her in haste, for all manner of talk at that moment seemed to me unholy.

On the Monday morning, as I was breakfasting in my own quarters, Langer came to me, saying: “I have to apologise, Arthur, if my manner last

night was at all incongruous with your mood, and I have to add Emily's apologies to my own. We have now heard and read what you saw, and understand how you must have felt."

"You understand something," I answered; "you can't understand all."

"Well, no," said he: "I am only sorry that neither Emily nor I was privileged to be present, so that we might be in the fullest sympathy with you. Did you, Arthur — get a complete sight of the vision?"

He sat beside me, his hand on my arm, and I told him all, word by word, in a husky voice; and he listened with a bent head.

"We are dust and ashes," he murmured when I had finished: "the humiliation of it for us all!"

"Yes, the salvation," said I.

"But the humiliation firstly, I think," said he. "How modern men have taken up and confirmed the seer's word: 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' It was the one certain clue which we had to God. And now that, too, is snapped when we find His way of acting on Sunday night so foreign to His way on Saturday and Monday."

"Aubrey, we know nothing," I said.

"So I, too, say," he answered, "and I say that it is in the proof which the vision has given us of this that our humiliation lies. How shall we ever more trust our reason, or enjoy the pleasures of our mind? We were so assured that His voice is ever small and hinting, that He guides us with His eye; but now on a sudden we seem to find Him glaring and pedagogic — —"

"Still, let us not allow ourselves to criticise the vision, Aubrey," I said.

"No, certainly, we mustn't allow ourselves to do that," he replied: "I was rather criticising the paltriness of our reason, and I was thinking of the damper which the vision will undoubtedly put upon the intellect of the Western world before this day is over."

“Well, since our intellect is unreliable, that won’t much matter,” I said, “and God’s way is best. But I still know nothing of your adventures last night: did you go to Hallam Castle?”

“Yes, I went, and the promise of my unknown correspondent was even duly fulfilled.”

“You don’t mean that you saw Robinson?”

“At least I saw Robinson’s face, according to the promise.”

His words struck me dumb.

“I reached the Castle soon after twilight had begun to darken,” he went on. “It is a low ruin, you know, stretching along the upper edges of a mound, at the bottom of which, on the north side, runs a road through a sort of dell which they call the ‘Castle Dell’; up this road I went in order to get to the ‘north-west corner’ named in the rendezvous. A few sheep were pasturing on the castle-mound; but no other living thing was to be seen, nor a sound to be heard, and I won’t pretend that I was so perfectly collected in mind as I might have been. It is a pity that we should ever breathe shorter than we will, but.... Anyway, I climbed up the dell-road till I came as near the north-west corner of the ruin as I could, for one can’t quite get up to it, the mound at that point being rocky and steep; but after waiting on the road some minutes, and seeing no one, I began to climb a path at right angles to the dell-road leading south on the west side of the castle — a path with steps embedded in the soil. I was on these steps when I heard some sound like the echo of a shout, and on glancing to my left I saw Robinson’s face at a window of the round-tower which forms the north-west corner of the ruin.”

The fact of Robinson’s face being seen at last sounded so strange to my ears that I could only breathe: “but are you sure, Aubrey?”

“Well,” said he, “he was separated from me by perhaps thirty yards, for between the mass of ground on which I stood and that west side of the castle is a ravine or dry moat of about that breadth; moreover, it was getting dark in the dell, which is well wooded; but still I saw him pretty well, and it was certainly Robinson and no other.”

“But did he see you? Did he speak?” I asked.

“He probably did not see me,” Langler answered; “certainly he did not speak. I cried out to him, bending forward over a rail at the edge of the cleft, but he did not answer.... Oh, Arthur, it was a face much marred, believe me! It is my belief that he was unconscious, that he was held at the window for me to see by others whom I could not see. After some seconds he was withdrawn from my sight.”

“But this is pitiful,” I said. “What did you do?”

“I might perhaps have acted more promptly than I did,” he answered: “I see that now, and must confess it to you and to myself. It is certainly to be regretted that the rate of one’s breathing should ever have an influence upon the quality of the mental operations or upon the quality of one’s mode of acting; and here certainly is a little matter to which, it seems, that I, for my part, will have to give some attention on all future occasions. There is no doubt that I lost some minutes in thinking what I should next do: however, as I am familiar with the castle, I did not lose time in running to the west gate near on my left, for this I knew to be fastened, but I hurried down the dell-road to the east side of the ruin, and there climbed the mound by a path in the sward which leads to the east gate. Here I could gain an entrance, for the wicket of this gate has disappeared, but I see now that I ought to have waited outside, and not gone in: help might have come from some source; at least no one could have come out of the ruin without being seen by me. However, I went in, for after the delays already made I felt urged to do

something energetic, and, no doubt, fidgeted. Some people seem to act aptly without forethought, as the fly flies; others act aptly by forethought; and others again, in using too much forethought here, and none at all there, produce those left-handed, gawky results which seem to guffaw in one's face. I hope that I am not of this last type; but on this particular occasion, I confess, I do rather seem to have been outdone — in fact, I was outdone. I rushed without thought through the wicket into the lowest of the three courtyards, which is now a greensward shaded by two walnut-trees, and ran up some steps in the north-east round-tower, my feet, I fear, making some sounds, and once or twice I slipped in the dark, the stones being very displaced. Near the tower-top I turned west over the castle-wall — the wall is really two walls, you know, filled between with concrete, over which runs a footway between field flowers. This footway brought me into a second tower, where some stairs lead up to a similar path on the wall which runs along the second courtyard. It was quite dark in that tower, and I stopped once to consider whether the course which I was pursuing was quite the best; however, having come to no decision, I was creeping on up when I heard a sound behind me, the creak of a door, then at once another creak of another door somewhere; at the same time both doors were bolted, and I understood that I was in durance.”

He smiled at my look of concern, adding: “don't be alarmed, since you now see me here; in fact, having convinced myself that I was really imprisoned, I, for my part, became easier in mind than I had been, feeling the irksomeness of having to fight out this matter taken off my hands, since, being a prisoner, it was now out of my power to do anything; and I resigned myself to suffer with a calm spirit whatever might be in store for me. Indeed, it seems to be often less of a burden and bore to suffer patiently than to have to run, and wage war, and act; at any rate, I felt that my captors

had relieved me of a responsibility in this matter of the rescue of poor Robinson. I stood against the wall on a ledge three feet wide, with a railing at its edge, and the hollow interior of the tower below, and the two doors being grey with age, their surface rough with the carvings of visitors' names, but still stout, I put my arm through some of the holes which have appeared in the oak, trying to reach the bolts, but could not. Then I sat down in a hearthplace, and was sitting there so long, with nothing for the eye to rest on but the bushes at the tower-top massed against the dark sky, that I should have fallen asleep if I had not been roused by hearing some shouts, coming, I thought, from the castle-dell — —"

"They were *my* shouts probably," I said; "and you were there all the time!"

"What, were you at Hallam Castle last night?" he asked.

"Why, yes," I answered, "for when Emily disappeared, and it struck me that you had both been inveigled away, I could think of nothing but to go to the castle to look for you. I shouted your name in the castle-dell, I even went up the very stairs — didn't you hear me call out 'Aubrey'? Hearing no answer, I hurried off to Ritching, to see if you were in the church: and you were in the ruins all the time!"

"Your shouts reached me only as echoes," he said, "and when they ceased I composed myself afresh to rest in my hearthplace, but was soon again startled by a sound — the drawing of the bolt of the door by which I had entered. I leapt up, to find the door open: but my liberator, whoever he was, was not to be seen. I hurried down the stair, but neither saw him nor heard his tread."

"Strange proceedings," I said.

"But with a meaning in their strangeness, I am convinced," said Langler.

"What did you do now?"

“What could I do? I walked back to Goodford village, informed the constabulary that I had seen Robinson, then, very tired, trudged up to Goodford House, only to hear that Emily had not gone to the church with the party, but had disappeared. However, I was examining the servants on the matter when Emily herself walked in.”

“What had happened?” I asked.

“As she was about to set out with the party,” he answered, “a note had been handed her, purporting to come from me, asking her to join me secretly on a matter of urgency at the Cart-and-Horse in Mins. So *outré* a thing, of course, alarmed her, and she started out in great haste. It was only when she got to the Cart-and-Horse, that, looking again at the note, she saw that the writing was not really mine, but a forgery. She then got a trap, and drove back to Goodford.”

“Oh, there is something ominous in all this, Aubrey,” I said.

“Well, so it seems,” he answered. “The note purporting to come from me was handed to Emily by a still-room girl here named Charlotte, and was handed to Charlotte by a villager named Weeks. Now, I have had Weeks over from Mins this morning, and Weeks declares that the note was handed him by a dapper young gentleman, probably a foreigner, who met him a little outside Mins, and offered him five shillings for taking it to Goodford House. Weeks left the stranger sitting in the gloaming on the roots of a well-known yew on the road between Mins and Up Hatherley.”

“But what design,” I said, “could this man have had in enticing Emily from Goodford at that particular time?”

“That is hard to say,” answered Langer; “but you observe that I, too, was enticed from Goodford at that time by a promise which was kept by men whom we need not suppose to be scrupulous in the matter of keeping their word. What, then, could have been the motive of actually showing me the

face of Robinson, as promised? It could only have been to draw me into the tower to his rescue, and so to my imprisonment. But remember that that imprisonment only lasted three-quarters of an hour at most, and during that short detainment it was that Emily was enticed to Mins. It would seem, then, that with the same motive her absence and mine from Goodford House during that particular three-quarters of an hour was a thing to be desired.”

“It wasn’t from Goodford that our absence was desired, Aubrey,” cried Miss Emily, suddenly looking through the half-opened door, “but from Ritching church: for I was about to go to the church, and so did you mean to go to it from Hallam Castle.”

Langler, it seems, had been constrained to tell her something of his adventures at the castle, and he said now, with rather a start: “well, then, it may have been from the church that our absence was desired.”

“But for what reason in the world?” I asked.

“Who knows?” he answered. “Still, it does seem now to be so.”

“But for what possible reason, do you imagine, Emily?” I asked again.

Miss Emily after a moment’s silence answered: “how should I know? But quidquid latet apparebit! we shall know it all some day” — and, saying this, she was gone from us.

CHAPTER XI

BARON KOLAR ON THE MIRACLE



GOING DOWN THE stair later in the day, I was met by Mrs Edwards hurrying up with her large face flushed, and she stopped a little to give into my ear like a cargo all that was on her mind. Her manner was ever homely, one might say petting and motherly.

“How did you sleep?” she said in a sort of whisper, “I hope you and the Langlers are not going to desert me, too: five of the others are off after lunch, and it is too bad, everything will be spoiled. If the miracle had only waited till — but God’s will be done. What a thing! I haven’t got over it yet, have you? Edwards says he will be at the telephone most of the day, and that Dr Burton will have to be a prelate or something. The Queen has been talking with him from Windsor about Burton and the miracle; the whole world seems wild with excitement; they say that no miracle was ever seen by so many reliable witnesses. Poor Edwards is up to the ears in it, I’m afraid he is not very pleased at bottom, and he puts the whole blame of it upon me, as though I had any power to interfere.... I oughtn’t to have got up the church-party, he says — as though I could have foreseen.... Anyway, five of the guests are off, and Edwards says that Society will have to moderate its tone in face of what he foresees” — and some more of this kind.

I told her that I didn’t think that the Langlers would be shortening their visit. “But as to Baron Kolár,” I said, “is he among the departing guests?”

“No,” she answered, “the baron stays on till Thursday. He was closeted an hour this morning with Edwards — Oh, that man! he is too incorrigible; he has told Lady Truscott not to be overwhelmed, since the miracle has some explanation — puts it all down to hypnotism — I must go.” On this she ran on up, and left me.

Below I was at once struck by a difference in the tone of the house. I did not see Mr Edwards, and Baron Kolár too was missing. Langler told me that the baron was at Ritching Vicarage with Dr Burton, and when I mentioned to him what Mrs Edwards had whispered me as to Burton’s probable rise, his answer was: “well, that will be only fitting: moreover, Baron Kolár prophesied it, you remember.”

The afternoon passed into twilight, and still I saw no sign of the Styrian, but an hour before dinner, as I happened to be strolling alone in one of the home-coverts separated by a path from the park, Mr Edwards, without any hat, broke through the bushes, dashing back his hair, and looking pestered. “Oh, Mr Templeton,” he said, “have you seen anything of Baron Kolár?”

I said no.

“Hang the man,” said he, “I have had four men out on his trail for an hour....”

I said that I had understood earlier in the day that the baron was at Dr Burton’s.

“He was,” answered Edwards, “but he isn’t now. It is precisely about Dr Burton that I want to see him, for the Bishop of Lincoln offers Burton the nomination to the vacant Chancellorship and Residentiary Canonry, on condition that I accept at once. Properly speaking, you know, the whole job lies miles outside my interest, and I only wish —— God forgive me.”

“But why all the flurry?” I asked.

“Well,” he answered, “the country, of course, looks to me now to rush Dr Burton into some Grand Lamaship — as though one could at a moment’s notice like this! I assure you, Mr Templeton, soft isn’t the word for the hundreds of unpractical suggestions that have been made me this day by leading men in the country, so what we are coming to from a business point of view is rather hard to say. Oxford is a place up in the clouds! and Cambridge isn’t far below.... I don’t seem to have even a spare deanery into which to fit Burton, and the whole to-do is rather hard on me — all extraneous work and worry — for *I* haven’t studied Church-organisation! if anyone were to ask me who is the real head of it all as things are, the King or the Pope, I believe I’d be put to it to give him a straight answer. However, there’s this Lincoln Chancellorship, and I’m hunting down Baron Kolár to see whether or not he’ll have it for Dr Burton just for the time being....”

At this I could not help exclaiming: “but what voice has Baron Kolár in the matter of the career of Dr Burton?”

“Oh, well,” said Mr Edwards, “you would hardly see the inwardness of it off-hand by the light of nature, for it is delicate in a diplomatic way. You know that Baron Kolár fills such a place both in and out of the Reichsrath that he is one of the four men who really have the world’s peace in the hollow of their hand, but perhaps you don’t know by how far he is probably the most dangerous of the four, for the bottom meanings of that man’s polity remain an unknown quantity, and in order to get at them you would have first of all to draw his teeth, for his mind lurks in a stronghold of which his teeth are the ramparts, and it takes a pretty tricky one to see much that’s behind ’em. Anyway, the Foreign Minister of a country whose chief asset is peace would rather stand personally well with Baron Kolár with a

view to sound sleep at night than with, I was going to say his — own — wife.”

“Quite so,” said I; “but still, what can be the grounds of this interest of the baron in Dr Burton? not political?”

“It is, somehow,” said Edwards, “though I don’t pretend quite to fathom the lees of this particular mind; but from the first he adopted Burton, and, of course, when a man like him chooses to chaperon a parish-priest up the mountains of preferment — —”

At this point a clerk ran up to deliver some message to Mr Edwards, who went off with him, I, for my part, continuing my stroll through the covert till I came out upon a road, where the first thing which I saw was Baron Kolár’s valet reclining in a meadow, smoking. I went through a gate to him, and asked where his master was. His answer was in the words: “perhaps can you that house there under see? there is he.”

I knew the house to which he pointed: it is called Dale Manor, and was then the home of two old maids whom I had long known as “Miss Jane” and “Miss Lizzie” (Chambers), for they were visitors at Swandale. How Baron Kolár had come to know them, why he was there, I couldn’t guess; but, in good nature to Mr Edwards, I walked down three very steep fields, then down two lanes, to Dale Manor, in order to tell the baron that he was being sought.

This Dale Manor, certainly, was a very charming home. I pulled the bell-chain at the wall which surrounds the place, and, on being let in, caught sight of Miss Jane pacing, with gloves and scissors, among her flowers. I think that the sun had already set, and the scene in there was all one of bowery shades and peace and well-being. Miss Jane, I suppose, thought that I had come on a visit, and after asking some questions about the Langlers

and the miracle invited me in. I then asked if Baron Kolár was in the house, to which she replied, with a smile: “yes — *fast asleep*.”

“Asleep!”

“*Sh-h-h!*” she whispered, “he is just under that window there: my sister is watching over him; it must be nearly time for me to relieve her...”

I was too astonished to speak! My knowledge of the manner of life of these ladies, its English primness and reclusion, made all the keener my feeling of the oddity here, for certainly they would have consented to take turns in watching over the slumbers of no other male person, and I thought to myself: “well! such miracles are wrought by great men.”

“I didn’t know that you even knew the baron,” I said at last.

“We have known him for five afternoons,” answered Miss Jane in a hushed, but animated, manner— “since last Thursday! In passing by the Manor he fell in love with it, and rang the gate-bell. I happened to be in the gardens, and, being *naturally* startled, contrived to send for my sister, who after examining him through the spyglass from a window came down to us. It was *so* embarrassing at first! we had no *notion* what to make of the man suddenly sprung upon us, with his great satin jacket and stream of talk, we *couldn’t*, of course, know who he might be, for it was only after a long while that he let out that he was staying at Goodford. He led us round the grounds, criticising and admiring *everything*, then had the head gardener brought to suggest certain changes to him — and there is no doubt that he *must* be a past master of horticulture, forestry, and landscape gardening, you know — then he said that he was tired and thirsty, and had a headache, so we *had* finally to decide to ask him in.”

“It must have been an event!”

“Well, we were certainly put out,” answered Miss Jane, “and poor Lizzie has been taking lavender-water; for Barons Kolár do not grow on every

bush, and it all came upon us like any thunderclap. He sat by that window in the drawing-room, talking, talking in his long-drawn way, and looking sleepy, while Lizzie and I glanced at each other, wondering what next, for my sister and I of course know what each other is thinking without needing to speak. Now, as it happened, Fanny, our between-maid, was ill, and Lizzie had been making some special milk-toast for her, so it occurred to Lizzie to give him some of it, with tea; she had made quite a pile, and never *dreamt* — anyway, it was brought in. Well, he began to eat languidly, but he kept on eating and talking, and, Mr Templeton, he ate up every scrap — yes, every scrap.”

“Poor Fanny!”

“Yes, indeed. My sister and I glanced at each other when we saw the pile of milk toast going, going, and then gone. But he consoled poor Lizzie, who, if she has just a touch of vanity, is to be condoned on the score of her youth — you know, of course, Mr Templeton, that my sister is my junior by three years — he consoled her by saying that he had never tasted *anything* so nice; and it is only just to my sister to admit that she *can* make milk-toast. But he had hardly finished the milk-toast when he began to nod, and before we knew where we were we had him fast asleep on our hands. He muttered afresh that he had a headache, that he wished to be allowed to sleep on the sofa, and that he would like his hair to be brushed while he slept! then he threw himself down, and was instantly asleep. Imagine our plight! What *could* we do, Mr Templeton? Lizzie, who was quite distracted, put a chair under his feet, and proposed to *me* to brush his hair! I simply *would* not! She maintained that it was my duty to assume the initiative, since I am the elder, but I *could* not see eye to eye with her, and at last, after a great deal *too* many words, she decided that, since it had to be done, and I *would* not, then she *must*, being the younger — —”

“That was brave and charming of Miss Lizzie,” I said.

“You think so?” asked Miss Jane, with a weighing look at me: “to tell the truth, we here are not much in favour of adventures and new departures, and rather affect the quiet old monotonies; but since you think so —— At any rate, he slept for an hour; and every afternoon since then he comes, eats a pile of milk-toast, sleeps an hour, and has his hair brushed. What *can* we do or say? We are in the maze of an enchantment! Punctually as the clock strikes four his ring is heard at the gate, and in he comes, happy and smiling.”

“It is an idyll,” I said; “but I have an urgent message for him, if one may venture to disturb his Excellency’s siesta.”

“I fear he would hardly approve of being awakened,” said Miss Jane; “but he won’t sleep long now, I know. We might go in softly, and see them....”

On this we went in, to find Miss Lizzie, all brown silk and mitts, sitting in patient vigil over the Styrian, from whom came a note of slumber. To me nothing could have been funnier than this casting of his gross weight by Baron Kolár upon these dainty ladies, and at the sight of it I was afresh pierced with laughter. Miss Jane now took Miss Lizzie’s place as watcher, while Miss Lizzie came to ply me with hushed questions about the miracle, till at last the baron opened his eyes, showed his teeth in a smile, moaned for happiness, and sat up.

I informed him that he was being sought by the Prime Minister, and presently, after some talk, we two left Dale Manor together for Goodford.

“Dear beings,” he said happily to me of the Misses Chambers, “nice people, charming people, I like them. These are not women, oh no, they are angels. It is astonishing to what differentiations the human species lends itself: here in these ladies you have a type which is not the highest

anthropologically, and yet may be as unaplike as the exactest genius of our age. Primitive creatures spent their lives in a passion of earnestness, seeking their food, and defending themselves from violence; but evolution is toward the appreciation of trifles. The earnestness of the engineer, of the statesman, is still brutish: he bestrides the world wild of eye, while to these ladies a parish is the world, tiny traditions are their life, whatever arises causes them to exchange a code of glances. Nice people, gracious people: their velvet manners, their cushions, their shaded interior — everything nice and luxurious, and, I assure you, they make very good toast — very good. Nor does it displease me to find them devoid of ideas, oh no, there is no need for them to say anything: merely as listeners they have a merit. I am only sorry that this so-called miracle has come to excite and unsettle them.”

“But ‘so-called,’ Baron Kolár!” I could not help crying out: “surely you saw the miracle with your own eyes, like the rest of us!”

“Well, yes, I saw it,” he said; “oh yes, I saw it, too. But this looks to me a case in which it would be well not to place too much faith in the senses. If we know that miracles cannot happen, then, when we see them, we can only regard them as due to some caprice of our fancy; and if Providence is warned beforehand that we shall so regard them, it will be the less tempted to trouble us with any. On the whole, a mood of impassive aloofness seems to me the wisest with regard to what we witnessed on Sunday night. Do not permit it to engage or modify you at all; just say to yourself: ‘let the vulgar millions lose their heads, but let me and my friends watch them with an impregnable eye.’ Or do you not think that my advice is good?”

“On the contrary,” I said, while a flush leapt to my face, “I think it even irreverent, baron — as an eye-witness of such a revelation must needs think it.”

“Oh, you think that: well, you are right, too, in your own way,” he answered. “A religion that was based on the senses would not be displeasing to me, even though somewhat displeasing to reason. Do not imagine me an enemy of piety. I only meant to suggest that the senses are not always sure avenues to knowledge. But you, now, believe that you have seen a revelation, and the dawn of an epoch: well, you are right, too, in your own fashion.”

As he was thus droning we arrived before Goodford House, and the private secretary hurried out from a French window where he had been watching, to hail and greet the baron.

CHAPTER XII

THE QUESTION OF STYRIA



MY HALF-PROMISE TO Mrs Edwards that the miracle should not shorten the stay of the Langlers at Goodford was too soon given, for on the Tuesday both Langler and Miss Emily begged me to return at once to Swandale with them; in fact, quite a number of departures was already proving the spirit of dissolution at work in the house-party.

“I do pity Aubrey,” Miss Emily said aside to me on the Tuesday night: “there he stands smiling like a statue, but I know that he is tasting bitterness in the very valley. To any scholar of forty years it must be no fun to have to change his scheme of thought and life on a sudden; so what this miracle, or whatever you call it, must mean to Aubrey’s touchy intellect and tremulous piety is more than I care to think on. Anyway it is certain that he must be in agony in his present company, and longing to be alone.”

“Yes, that must be so,” I agreed. “Well, let us go away, for we all need time and solitude to find room in ourselves for this new thing.”

“Oh, as for me,” she said, “I am in no rage to adjust myself to it: my soul can wait till *his* has won back to rest. Being a woman, I am less sensitive to evidence, you see, and tougher in the nerve; but poor Aubrey’s elements are delicately mixed, and ah, he suffers.”

“I understand that,” I said; “perhaps it would be even well if I returned to London for the present.”

She looked at me, saying: “don’t say that; he needs you now, and wishes you to stay.”

“And you?” I asked.

“Not what I will,” she answered softly in Greek, “but what he.”

We accordingly returned to Swandale from Goodford on the Thursday morning. But something of the old Sabbath was soon known now to have departed from our habit of life in the cottage, for the roar of the age reached even into our cloister, hampering the mood of that old world which we wished to inhabit. The very servants had new looks of unrest. Langler smiled doggedly, but was as one who ruminates bitterish herbage. He was much alone, questioning the oracles in the dells or in his study; and Miss Emily and I were much with each other.

She at least knew little quietness in those days, I think: I would spy her hanging about the door behind which her brother paced, and her fever about his state of mind became chronic. “The visits of this man must be terrible to him,” she said of some sort of police-official from London who called about the happenings at Hallam Castle on the Sunday night of the miracle; Robinson had left no trace behind: so poor Langler was plied with questions, without having the least faith probably that the man with the note-book would see light where he himself saw none. And “it is so distressing,” Miss Emily said to me during the third of the visits; “he keeps Aubrey closeted an hour, and he is not pretty, his boots creak. I only wish that Aubrey could be coaxed into some change of scene; you ought to be able to get him to Paris, if you try. Have you noticed that for four days he has burned no incense at all in his rooms?”

“I wonder why?” I said.

“Perhaps he thinks it unbecoming now — I don’t know; and he hasn’t once played the usual chants since we have been back from Goodford. The

old attitude to everything has to be all changed, twisted, readjusted, now. Deus meus! in what foreign world have we suddenly waked up?"

"Patience!" I said: "in time the new way will be seen to be the best."

"But the old pleases Cato all the same," she muttered, with a nod of stubbornness which belonged to her; "it is to be desired at least that the new way was not complicated by officers of the law."

As to this officer, Langler himself spoke to me that same evening when I happened to be in his study, saying: "you saw, Arthur, the officer who called to-day?"

"Yes," I answered, "I am afraid he must have bored you to death."

"Well, he means well," he answered, "and we are none of us perfect in grace and wisdom. This man in particular must be very impressed just now with the limitations of our human intelligence, for he stands almost ludicrously dumfounded before the facts which we know about Robinson; dumfounded, above all, before the fact that Robinson should have been shown to me in an unconscious state at Hallam Castle at the hour of seven-fifteen, and in that state should have been conveyed away through a peopled countryside without being seen, though by eight p.m. the constabulary had been warned by me, and have been searching for him ever since. Before the failure to find *some* trace the mind stands as staggered as if in the presence of unearthly agents. To the questions Where is Robinson now? in a house? in the grave? conscious? still unconscious? why can he contrive to give no sign? our minds can begin to form no guess. Well, we are a small infantry, just wise enough to learn to be meek, and of few days, and full of trouble. But what I wanted to tell you as to this officer is that I took occasion to lay before him all we know about Father Max Dees in his Styrian dungeon, and to ask what I could do for this poor man."

I had forgotten Max Dees in the excitement of what had lately happened! “Well, what did the officer advise?” I asked.

“He seemed unreceptive of the whole matter,” was the answer: “to people of stolid minds the unique is apt to seem unreal; and the mere fact that our knowledge of Dees was brought us by a wren appeared to obstruct this man’s concern in the case. However, he remarked with truth that we had no evidence that, of the three Barons Gregor, the one whom we suspect is really the gaoler of Dees; that, in any case, the English police have nothing to do with the incident; but that, with regard to the Austrian authorities, my best course before approaching them is to ‘make sure of the facts.’ In truth, he doesn’t half believe in Dees — the wren being to blame. The man actually recommended me, with a smile, to go myself to Styria in order to ‘make sure of the facts.’”

“Well, that might be done,” I said: “by all means let us go, for I would go, too.”

Langler looked at me, and smiled, hardly taking me seriously, I fancy.

But this question of “going to Styria” was destined, alas, to arise again. The very next (Sunday) morning, in the breakfast-room, Miss Emily, to my surprise, said to me: “who, then, is Max Dees?”

As I knew that nothing had been told her of the wren’s message, I could only think that she had overheard Langer’s talk with me on the Saturday evening, and, anyway, had now to tell her all — of Dees’ imprisonment, of his prayer “*for God’s sake*,” of our almost certainty that Baron Kolár was his gaoler, of the paper found at the inn at Mins stating that “Dr Burton is another Max Dees,” of the disappearances, like Robinson’s, which Langer had found to have been going on over Europe, and so on. That morning Langer had not risen from bed — he had flutters of the heart — so I had

time to tell a long tale, to which Miss Emily listened without comment, and remained museful throughout the day.

In the evening we were all at Ritching church to hear Dr Burton's farewell before his departure for Lincoln, and I don't know who took care of Swandale during the office, for Langler was now most strict in having every soul about the place at each church-service. He had risen from bed, and we three walked somewhat ahead, with the knot of retainers following. I have an idea that in some recess of Miss Emily's mind these church-goings were not regarded with emotions quite utterly saintly; but whatever resentment rankled in her she breathed no word of it, but went meekly in the pilgrimages with her brother.

We had started out early, so as to secure seats, and far off, as we walked down the road to Ritching, out broke the shambling brogue of the chimes. I thought then how, when Langler and I last heard those bells together, he had said that we heard them for "about the last time," and thenceforth all the evening there were ringing in my head like a sing-song the words: "[Greek: kai pulai adou, kai pulai adou] — and gates of hell shall not prevail against it." When we reached the church it was already full; but in the end I fancy that seats were found for all the Swandale party, though we were all separated throughout the office.

Dr Burton was assisted in the duty by his diocesan and two others, but spoke the address in person. His manner, I judged, was most meek, his throat choked, as of a man who has been struck dumb and has not yet recovered himself: I, in a seat far back, could hardly hear his words, though once, twice, as it were, the lion's voice lifted and vaunted a little, threatening wraths. However, one had little need to hear, in order to feel, Dr Burton that night, for his holiness by itself was as a focus of fire, pouring forth its power into all.

When it was ended, and our set met once more beyond the crowd, Miss Emily said to me: “three-quarters of these folk have never seen Ritching before; half are from London: I saw Lady Agnew, the President of the Academy, and Dr Gootch, who has Aubrey’s heart in his keeping. What do you say brought all these good people here?”

Her manner of speaking, I must say, seemed to me rather dry, and I answered shortly: “a pious need, no doubt.”

“Not a hope to see in Dr Burton’s church a repetition of the ‘miracle’?” she asked: “not the lust of a new thrill?”

“How you can be cruel!” I whispered.

“But what went they out for to *see*?” she laughed. “Wherever Dr Burton preaches henceforth all England will be squeezing after him in the secret hope of a peep-show! and I prophesy — —” But at that moment Langler joined us, and she was mum.

It was a gloomy night, without any moonlight, and during our return to Swandale groups of wayfarers trudged before and behind us, a strange sight, quite changing the mood of the countryside. Night, however, in the country merges everything in an enchantment, and in Swandale itself was once more nothing but fays and black shades. But even there, just as we were crossing the bridge to enter the cottage, a messenger from the world intruded to trouble us. It was a boy who brought a telegram — for me — which on going in I opened, and read the words: “Two fresh visions reported — one in village-church, Windau, Baltic, one in Bayeux Cathedral.” It had been sent to me from London by a good friend of mine, the editor of a morning paper, and I handed it to Langler, who, having read it, handed it to Miss Emily.

It was at that moment that a thing new, I think, to Swandale took place — a spark of anger, a flush of the cheek: for Miss Emily, tossing the

telegram aside even as she read it, let the heated words escape her: “oh, I am like Baron Kolár: I don’t believe in miracles”; and then for the first time I saw Langler look with reproof at his sister.

“Emily,” said he pointedly, “your words seem to me irreverent.”

Miss Emily’s cheek blanched. There was silence for a little while.

“Emily,” said Langler again, “I ask you to take back those words.”

Miss Emily sat down sharply on a chair by the table, having on still her hat and gloves, the little bird perched on her shoulder, her lips set. She answered nothing, and another most painful silence followed. I, for my share, did not know what to say, or where to hide myself away from such a scene so suddenly sprung upon us. I wished that the unhappy telegram had never come.

But after a minute of this silence Miss Emily’s pallor rushed into pink, and the words broke from her in a heat not far from choking, and a strain of tears: “so, then, I am to abase my intellect before the incredible at your bidding, Aubrey! Then, I will say that I *do* believe in miracles, since such is your pleasure, Aubrey, but that I do *not* believe in this one.”

“But this is precisely the only one that was ever well attested,” said Langler, with a puzzled brow.

“Then, it is my whim to believe in the ill-attested, Aubrey, rather than in this,” said Miss Emily, “since we are in the Inquisition, Aubrey, and expected to believe in miracles.” She stopped a moment, and then went on, pouring out her words chokily, with stoppages: “I did not see the thing, I am not gainsaying my own senses, and to be charged with irreverence, Aubrey! Why was I not allowed to see it? Why were not you? To be charged with irreverence, Aubrey! The thing is not, so to say, ‘the work of God’; it is related to the disappearance of Charles Robinson and of Father Max Dees, and of all the others, and to these two new ‘miracles’ — and Baron Kolár

foreknew that it would happen in Dr Burton's church when he foretold Dr Burton's rise. And to be charged with irreverence, Aubrey! If you wish to find out the meaning of it all, go to a castle in Styria, for that is where the key lies—" and some more of this kind: guesses without proof, statements without form, but so sprung in a pile upon our minds that Langer and I stood dumb before them.

Thus, at any rate, for the second time in two days, those words: "go to Styria," were broached in the cottage: a seed of bitter reaping.

Miss Emily went to a casement, and stood there looking out, while upon me Langer turned a look which I took to imply surprise that I should have spoken to her of Max Dees. For some minutes nothing was said; but presently Langer moved to the window, and laid his hand upon his love; whereat she heaved up to him a smile which beamed with beatitude: and at this I slipped away.

CHAPTER XIII

MISS LANGLER OUTRAGED



SO PEACE WAS made. However, Langer did not sup with Miss Emily and me that night, nor was it till one p.m. of the next day that I saw him again, looking rather haggard, and it was then, for the first time (not the last!), that he made me the announcement that he would go to Styria.

“Yes,” he said, “I will go.”

“Well, and I also, Aubrey,” I said.

“That is like you, Arthur,” he answered. “Ah, yes, it is a high mountain, this, but I say that it shall be climbed.”

“A short journey,” I said. “When do we start?”

“At once,” he answered, “while the grimness of it is upon us.”

“To-morrow, then?”

“It shall be done!” said he; “but let us hasten slowly: Emily has first to be won over.”

“Oh, I think that that will be all right,” I answered, for I knew that Miss Emily desired a change for him.

“She *may* be alarmed,” he said; “in any case, the question must be broached to her by degrees.”

I answered nothing, but thought to myself: “then, it will be another week before we start.”

He did not mention to me the grounds of this impulse to “go to Styria,” but I assumed that the words of his sister, random as they were, had roused

and set him furiously thinking, as they had set me. Indeed, the miracle had been very numbing to the intellect, as it were bludgeoning one's head, so I was glad to notice that afternoon an almost playfulness in Langler during a visit of Miss Jane and Miss Lizzie (Chambers), for it seemed to show that nature in him was at last roused to cast off a gloom which it found unbearable.

Still, this new gaiety of his was certainly a little forced, a little distempered. I was rather puzzled. Once when Miss Emily left the room, Langler seemed only to have waited for this in order to say to the Misses Chambers: "I am on the very verge of a voyage to Styria."

"Styria!" they said together.

"What, is Styria so remote?" asked Langler, leaning forward with a quizzing look. "I didn't say China, I said Styria — a two days' journey by the new rail-trains, with 'every luxury' *en route*! Do you imagine, then, that you will never see me again?"

"But can he be serious?" asked one of the ladies over her tea-cup: "Emily said nothing of it."

"Emily does not happen to know!" cried Langler— "that is something in store for Emily!"

"Then it is hardly a serious intention, since Emily has not yet been told."

"Who lives will see if it is serious!" said Langler.

"But Styria," said one of the ladies— "Styria sounds so mythical! Why Styria?"

"To open the eyes of the blind," said Langler in a deep voice, "to set at liberty them that are bound!"

The ladies exchanged glances; but before any more could be said Miss Emily came in with a plate of seeds, and Langler sat up straight.

Now, before this, Miss Jane and Miss Lizzie had been giving the story of Baron Kolár's visits; one afternoon lately, they said, the baron had come down from London merely to eat their toast; and they expected him again soon. This being so, I was surprised that Langler should be so unbridled as to publish to them his going to Styria to set free the baron's prisoner! To this day I am at a loss to understand him, though I suppose that he was somewhat distempered by the late events, and in a state of unreal levity. And the very next afternoon, when one of the Benedictines of Up Hatherley, an old college friend, called at the cottage, to him, too, Langler told his intention of "starting at once for Styria." All this time he had said not a word of it to Miss Emily, so that I found myself doubting whether his intention could be serious. When at last Miss Emily heard that we should *perhaps* be going, it was I who told it her in confidence.

That was just a week after Langler had assured me that his mind was made up to go: and it was during the evening of that same day on which I told Miss Emily of it that a group of Spanish peasants, moving homeward in the gloaming through some fields between the villages of Guardo and Villalba, in Palencia, saw wrought in mid-air by a mountain side a vision of the crucifixion, and dropped to the ground. I was in my own rooms when a message of it was brought me. It was after dinner; Miss Emily had gone to Ritching to see some sick, and when I went to look for Langler I heard that he, too, was not in the house. However, I presently found him down in the south-west, in a grape-arbour near the abbey, and handed him the telegram without a word. He, as he read it, rose slowly from his seat, with a paleness under the skin; for the news of these events had always the same effect upon the mind — awe mixed with a very peculiar ecstasy — which did not diminish with repetition, for with each new alarm I was anew imbued with the same dream of the wind-up and term of the drama of time and the

trumps of the tribunes of eternity. I saw the telegram tremble in Langer's hand; I heard him murmur: "another."

"Yes," I said, "another — the fourth." And I cried out: "Oh, Aubrey! where do we stand?"

He made no answer; his head was bowed; till presently he said: "let us go! why do we delay? let us go to-morrow."

"But am I not ready?" I cried.

"That is settled, then," said he: "we go. Emily shall hear it this night, and to-morrow we turn our backs upon Swandale and all our life here. It shall be done now."

"I am sure that you will be none the worse for it," I said.

"On the contrary," said he, "for ease and sloth are the very bane of the soul, Arthur, believe me. It is putting out from port to rough it that braces the ship's timbers! Well, let us launch forth: I at least am ready. So there is another now — the fourth."

"The fourth."

"From *Heaven*, Arthur?"

"Or from hell."

"Ah, talking of hell," said he, "just come now with me, and I will show you something in that tone."

He left the harbour, and I went with him down a dell towards the south-east of Swandale, till, near the great gate, he stopped at a certain larch tree on a brook's bank, peered at its bark, and pointed to it. It was already rather dark, but I, looking close, saw carved in large letters in the trunk the two words: "Don't Go."

"You see it?" asked Langer: "it was pointed out to me yesterday by John. You see, now, you see...."

I kept on gazing at the carving, while Langler looked at me, smiling, with his arms akimbo; and I thought to myself: “what a pity that our intention of going was ever divulged!”

“Someone seeks a quarrel with me, Arthur,” said Langler: “you see now, you see. But perhaps I do not look dismayed.”

“Of course not,” I murmured.

“Let them threaten me,” he said, “let them do their worst! They may find me of grimmer make than their present delusions of me conceive me. Wait, you shall see me give them their fit answer now.”

“But why?” I cried: “no, Aubrey, pray, don’t think of carving anything there” — for I saw him opening a pen-knife.

But he would not listen to me: “Allow me,” he said, coming to the tree. I could do nothing to stop him, and stooping there during ten minutes, he carved under “Don’t Go” the words “I Will.” I was astonished at his conduct, and still cannot understand what end he imagined would be served by this ataxic defiance.

That same night he spoke to Miss Emily of our voyage, and from the next morning the business of making ready began. But this was not soon over! I had imagined that the packing of a trunk would be almost all: but Langler had many orders to give, and letters of farewell to write to his churchmen and wardens and fellows and professors; and by three in the afternoon it was seen that we could not go that day. Nor could we go the next, for Langler rose from bed with a pain in the heart and a pallor under his skin, and toward evening said to me in his study: “it seems callow, Arthur, for us to set out upon this enterprise without seeing our way before us: let us hasten more slowly, and at least provide ourselves with the proper introductions to people abroad.”

“But isn’t it rather a question of *time*, Aubrey?” I asked, for it began to seem to me that if we hastened any more slowly we should never get to Styria.

“Yes, most decidedly, it is a question of time,” said he, “and each day that passes is such a care and qualm to me, such a disease and harassment, that if I break down under it, you won’t wonder. Would that we were already gone — that we had gone long ago! Oh, Arthur, am I never to know sweet quiet and peace of heart again?”

I was taken aback! poor Langler said this with so much heart; nor did I quite understand ... since a voyage to Styria to make some inquiries did not seem to me such a task. Langler, of course, was an autochthon — had never been farther than Paris! — and I understood that he was loth to tear himself from his Armenian cushions, his roses, and the Greekish old routine of life in Swandale; but still, I could not see.... Each mind, however, knows the bitter tang of its own plight and entanglement.

“Well, well,” I said, “but we have only to set out and you will feel better.”

“I know it full well!” he answered, “but each day’s delay has only made our departure the more irksome to me. If we had set out at once, as I begged you to, all our difficulties would by now perhaps have solved themselves. But when I think of that poor man in his dungeon, and of how each of the days which we have wasted here may be an age of pain to him, and of how much hangs upon our action — how much! — my limbs seem bound, and my sense of my guilt becomes hard to bear.”

“Perhaps it is the heat of these last few days,” I said.

“Certainly it has been hot,” he answered: “one can hardly get one’s breath; and to venture at such a time into southern lands — —”

“Ah, but there is the sea-voyage,” I said; “let us not think of obstacles, let us just go: *solvitur faciendo*.”

“You are right,” he cried, “right! That is just the word that we needed — *solvitur faciendo*! thanks for that word. Oh, Arthur, we have lost time — time that never comes back — the angel with the parting look. And think of what world-business depends upon us — so much. For mercy’s sake, let us lose no more.”

“That is agreed, then,” I said: “we set out.”

“But to what?” he asked suddenly. “We take a voyage into mist! Where exactly are we going to? What shall we do when there? Nothing is clear to me. Suppose we go and effect nothing, and have to return like Quixotes? Suppose there is no Max Dees, no Styrian castle, save in our brains? Shall we leave Emily alone, and our solid good.... Really, Arthur, a certain terror of the absurd is mixed for me with the other obstructions to this adventure.”

“But that is what the police-officer thought of Dees,” I said, “that he is a myth, and you called him stolid. What you were sure of now seems mist to you when it becomes a question of venturing your weight upon it, as Peter lost faith when he stepped out on the waves. But even if it is a myth, let us go and see, fearing nothing, not even the absurd.”

“Well, that is bravely said, too,” he answered: “let us go, then, let us go.... But tell me whether you do not think it better to get letters to the foreign personages first, and not go crudely like birds migrating without due support.”

“As you please,” I said, and said no more, for I did not see that we needed any letters.

However, he wrote for letters, and it was some days — I forget how many — before he had all of the number which he asked for. By this time our date of departure, our very train, had been fixed by Miss Emily, it was

now three weeks since Langer had first mooted his idea of going, and by now scores of persons all about must have known that he was going, and when.

During the day before our departure Langer gave a last look to every part of Swandale, and re-entering the house near five p.m., had tea with Miss Emily and me. We were having tea when I heard a noise in a corridor, and on asking was told by Miss Emily that it was “Aubrey’s trunks being taken to the station.” I could not at first understand why they were being taken that night till, on glancing through the door, I saw almost a cartload of baggage (swelled by books!). Miss Emily and I, standing at a window, she with the wren on her shoulder, watched all this luggage being put upon a cart — Langer had now left the room — and driven away; but a minute after it had gone Miss Emily, crying out something, ran from my side, and out of the cottage. I saw her hurry across the bridge, heard her call after the driver, who had disappeared, and soon she too disappeared beyond the bridge.

I assumed that she had run to give the man some forgotten instruction, and expected her back soon; but when she did not come I was not at all anxious, since I had no reason to be so. I was reading Bellarmine, I remember, in a wicker chair that rocked me, and it became so dark that I could hardly see the print. I heard Langer playing Gregorian chants on the organ in the oratory, for he had the habit of playing chants about that hour of the evening, but had rather given it up since the miracles.

Well, I was thus reading in the half dark when, suddenly, a man stood before me — the driver of the cart, who, having left the luggage at the station, was now returned. He seemed unable to speak: if ever I saw awe it was in that man’s face; when I asked: “what is it?” his breath burst from his lips in his vain effort to answer me; his face rolled with sweat. At last when

he was able to say something, it was in the words: “Miss Langer — come with me — don’t say anything — —”

I sped with him past two astonished girls in the passage out of the cottage, he taking the way to the south-east, but having already run far he had now to make stoppages, and so hard he found it to speak that we had gone over a quarter of a mile, and were near the great gate, before I could gather from him aught of what was in his mind. He had led me down a path that ran between a brook and a rose-tree hedge, till we were within sight of the carriage-road, and there in a sort of glade, where a larch stood by the brook’s bank, he stopped, and pointed — the same larch on which had been carved “Don’t Go” and Langer’s “I Will.” At the foot of the tree, in a patch of reeds, I saw a female form lying like one asleep, or unconscious, or dead. It was my poor Miss Emily. When I peered nearer I perceived that her left hand had been pegged to the tree by a big nail. But she did not know it, nor reck, she lay in sleep, without any pain or care, her lips a little open, and two poor tears of her truce had trickled down her cheeks.

While I was still gloating over her I was aware, to my woe, that Langer was with us: one of the girls in the house, on seeing me run out, must have warned him of something wrong, and he had hasted at a rounder rate, though a sorry runner, than the exhausted man who had brought me could come; but the effort had been altogether too large for Aubrey’s gauge: he was awfully breathed and gaunt. I saw him stand off, peering gingerly at his dear, asking: “*what is it?*” with his cheeks peaked up, poor Aubrey: and I had to leave her pierced, in order to turn to him.

CHAPTER XIV

CANTERBURY



AFTER THIS WEEKS passed before we knew whether Miss Emily would live or die, and the existence of Max Dees and of Styria was forgotten in Swandale, for our poor friend took a delirious fever, and had three relapses, so we others dragged our lives through many a black day while hers hung in the balance: weeks of watching: leaving not much outstanding in the memory, save the fact of a certain new quarry — a puny affair perhaps, but for ever associated in my mind with the nightmare of that time, and somehow lending to it a strange awfulness; for it happened that someone had lately opened a quarry some miles north of Swandale, and was blasting the rock: so fifteen, twenty times a day we would hear it, not loud, but clear, a knock at the north door of heaven, and two seconds later an answer sounded in the south of heaven: and each time Langler would look at me with such a smile. So that this sound of blasting, all mingled as it was with Miss Langler's fight for life, has still for me whenever I hear it meanings the most momentous, as it were rumours of the guns and din of Armageddon, and the arbitrament of the doom of being. In the end, however, I managed to make terms with the owner, and the noises ceased.

About the same time — *i.e.* towards the end of the year — hope brightened for our wounded friend, and my mind found some breathing-space to think out what I could do for her brother, who had been very gravely shocked and cowed. After a time I would get him into his study at

night, and there read to him his accumulated correspondence, with a view to weaning his thoughts from a room three corridors away; for the letters, being mainly from men in the whirlpool, were full of history, and such as to reawaken his interest in things. Also I insisted upon answers to some of them being dictated to me; and also, at last, I read to him a little from books and newspapers.

At midnight of Christmas Day I was thus reading to him through the noise of the cascade, made noisier that night by stormy weather, when he said: "Europe and America, then, are again Christian in an ancient sense. How many visions in all have now been seen?"

I found among the newspapers on our half-round settle one containing a list of the miracles, with their dates, and saw that their number was twenty-three.

At this Langer seemed to wince, and we sat cowering over our wood fire in a bitter rumination, till after a while he said: "I have nothing to do with the defect in the world's fate, and don't wish to cause my voice to be any more heard: but still, Arthur, consider how the sins of nations do find them out."

I was pleased at his new tone of interest, but said that I did not know to what he referred.

"I refer," he answered, "to this proposed 'weeding out' of our refuse populations by the 'lethal chamber' method, and to the growth among men of a certain brute directness with which the nineteenth century was less tainted. Mind you, I interfere in nothing; but don't let us hide from each other the existence in our minds of certain ghastly suspicions with regard to these visions; and if such a thing can be, however large-minded the motive, think of it, Arthur! The growth of such a brute directness can only be the penalty, subtle yet terrible, of some sin in the body politic; nor is any seer

needed to see that that sin is the mere discussion of such a step as this wholesale 'weeding out' of men's lives."

"I, too," I said, "have felt that such a thing was brutalising."

"But it is beastly!" he hissed. "Man's evolution, certainly, is henceforth in his own hands; but to want to beget taller sons with a strain of the thug in their blood! It is an instance, and a chief cause, of that brute directness which is tainting society, which perhaps culminates in these miracles, which I myself have experienced — —"

"Never mind," I murmured.

"To strike me through *her* — —"

I said quickly: "but this purpose of 'weeding out' the submerged seems to have died since the miracles, for the people are now Christian, Aubrey, in deed as well as in creed."

"But before we rejoice, let us ask for how long!" said he. "If what we have dared to suspect of the miracles — that they may be none — be true, is it not probable that they involve some plot unfriendly to the Church? We have sure knowledge, for that matter, that someone who need not be named between us is no friend of churches. Since, therefore, the Church flourishes by the miracles, it can only be, *if* there is a plot against her, that the miracles will in time be shown to be none: in which case, think of the moral swing back, huge enough perhaps to wreck the frame of society."

I said nothing, and for some time we bent over the fire in a silence of wormwood.

"*Is* there a plot?" he began again: "if there is, I believe with her who lies hurt that the key to it may be found in a castle of — Austria. But anon, when I remember that we here are the only three in the world into whom such a doubt has entered, it strikes me as even impious — —"

“There is also Rivers who doubts,” I said. “Lidcott, by the way, has written you an account of Rivers’ secession and ‘new religion’ in Littlemore — a ‘religion’ with a following of six! Lidcott’s letter also contains one from Burton about Rivers’ secession: I’ll read it you now, if you like.”

“Well, then,” said he; so I got and read the letters.

Rivers was an Oriel man of very brilliant reputation, one of the younger group of leaders of the so-called “Liberal Movement” — a church-party which had been making some noise in the world just before the miracles; he was a contemporary of Langer and myself, so we were familiar with his personality and church-idea, which had been called “anti-romantic”; he was one of the warmest admirers of Langer’s criticism, and had set to sweet minor music some of Langer’s songs. Well, when the miracles began, Ambrose Rivers, alone of thinkers, for some reason or other broke off from the Church, and started a new “religion” in Littlemore — with a following of six; and Dr Lidcott’s letter to Langer was a description of this new flight of Rivers’, containing also the following from Dr Burton: “The Chancery, Lincoln, In Festo Sanct. F. Xav. My dear Lidcott, — The tragedy of Rivers has been as great a heaviness to me as to you and the rest; how mysterious, too, now, when our Light is come. Can nothing be done even now? It was a branch loaded with flowers and fruit, and though the very canker was in them, it is hard to see it lopped off at a stroke. Do reason with him, then, still a little; but, if he be obdurate and damned in error, you will leave him to the tormentors, warning him that the day is even at hand when Holy Church will no longer spare dissent and rebellion, but everywhere on the front of that chief of crimes will brand her effective anathema. Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis. Farewell. On the 13th inst. I leave this for St Paul’s. Miserere mei, Deus, asperge me, Domine, hyssopo, et mundabor; and you, pray for me. — In haste, yours faithfully in Xt., John Burton.”

“Well,” said Langler when I had read the two letters, “but Rivers’ doubt of the miracles is due to some trait of a wayward mind, if not to some wisdom of the man’s really divine genius; but in our case the doubt has grown out of facts which have come before us, and since those facts are very meagre I say that *our* doubt sometimes strikes me as impious. I think, however, that it will be justified if Dr Burton’s rise so continues as strikingly to fulfil the prophecy that he is ‘destined to be the greatest of churchmen.’”

“Oh, you think that,” I said.

“Yes,” said he; “for, *if* there is a plot, there is no difficulty about divining its purposes: we can say with assurance that those purposes are, firstly, to raise the Church to the height of power, in which case what she will surely do was foreseen: she will become harsh, will clash with the modern spirit. And to make this clash doubly certain a number of brisk churchmen would naturally be chosen out by the plotters to become generals of the Church — of whom Burton was chosen for England. It *is* so. For we read of Burton: ‘I am sure that he will do for England: he is another Max Dees, as arrogant as he is brilliant, a union of Becket and Savonarola.’ Now, it is clear that the ‘Savonarola’ and the ‘brilliance’ in Burton are one, and the ‘Becket’ and the ‘arrogance’ are one: for who was Becket? an arch-priest who flouted the civil power. Therefore, *if* there is a plot — for I state nothing, I interfere in nothing — *if* there is one, I say that the Church is to be pushed to clash with the civil power. And now suppose, secondly, that at the height of that clash the miracles be shown to be none; and suppose further, thirdly, that it be then made to appear that these false miracles were contrived not by the enemies of the Church for her ruin, but by churchmen themselves for their own rise and rule: well, then — what then?... And shall no man be found to

meddle in this, one with heart, head, hand, Arthur, though a sword pierce his own heart?"

"I mean to meddle in it somehow," I said suddenly.

"Beware, however, Arthur," he murmured. "I too feel the *muth* to venture — if it be not already too late.... In any case, let us hasten slowly, and wait till our doubt acquires some little certitude. I say that something of certitude will be ours, if Dr Burton's rise becomes so marked — —"

"But surely, Aubrey," I said, "we need not wait for that. Look at things in Germany and Russia, look at France: in France ever since the Separation Act, the Church was a dead thing; then came the miracles, and to-day France is on her knees. It is touching: there never was an age so hungry for faith. This week there have been eleven pilgrimages in France alone to the spots of the miracles — caravans counting their hundreds of thousands. Things have been moving, you know. Italy is more a theocracy now than under Alexander VI.; one quarter of the Austrian Abgeordneten House is already given over to churchmen; in our own election in October forty people of churchman type were tided into Parliament, and in the Lords the bishops awe, so how it would be there under Dr Burton one may imagine; when Burton was preaching at St Paul's crowds vaster than the cathedral could contain waited all the night through — nowhere, it seems, are there enough churches, and women hourly swoon in the crowds round certain churches; not a few rich men have stripped themselves to endow the Church; as for charity, here is the high day of Christ's sick and needy: everyone is giving apparently, everyone is muttering prayers — merchants over their cargoes, doctors over their charges; in November two New York negroes, by pretending to have seen the vision on a country-road, and asking for funds to open a church, became vastly rich, and now have disappeared; even the bourses have caught the rapture, gambling is going

out, all sorts of personal oddities of behaviour and costume abound, as in Puritan days, saints arise, newspapers no more print certain kinds of matter, in the Commons during prayers members are as if in pews; as for the Nonconformists, they are hardly any longer even the political clubs and caucuses which they had become, since most of them have gone over to the Church of the miracles. If you would bear to hear me read, you would see for yourself the millionfold modification of everything. A certain Father Mathieu, in whose church at Windau the second of the visions appeared, is followed by multitudes to be healed by his touch; while the once Vicar-Apostolic of Bayeux, a man of Burton's very temper, is now Metropolitan of Paris. It was about him, by the way, that I wanted to tell you, for since *his* rise is complete, we needn't wait for Dr Burton's to become so, in order to get that certitude as to a plot — —"

"Well, let that be so," said Langler; "but ah, Arthur, what touch shall be found, both gentle and strong, to heal all this fevered world? If the Master were indeed here, with the stars of night in his eyes! As for me, I confess, my longing is for escape. I have read a tale of a tiny world which struck our earth, tore up a field or two, and carried off someone into space —— think of *that*! — the dumb empyrean, the leisure to be a man, the starry dream, and in those grassy graves, too, of Ritching churchyard — —"

"But things are as they are," I murmured; "we can't escape them."

"True," he answered; "life is a sterner dreaming than dreams, but surely a diviner; and in His plan be our good."

"Well, then," said I, "this being so, what I, for myself, propose to do now is to write a letter to the Styrian authorities, stating what I know of Father Max Dees, and giving hints as to the place of his imprisonment, without breaking any law of libel. Dees may thus be liberated; whereupon, if he knows anything of a plot, he will divulge it."

“Well, we might think that over,” said Langler, “and see if we find it to be our duty.”

In the end this was determined upon between us, and from the next morning I set about it, writing first to consult my solicitors as to the proper authority to whom to address ourselves: this, they answered, was the Public Safety Bureau of Upper Styria; so Langler and I set to work to draw up the document, and on the 7th of January it was posted.

This work quite warmed us anew, and we were eager for a reply, sometimes discussing whether it would come in one week, in two, or in three: but a month passed, Miss Emily was being allowed to sit up, and no reply had come.

Those were the days when England was at the height of the excitement over the disappearance of the Bishop of Bristol. On the death, three weeks before, of Archbishop Kempe, the question who would succeed him had raised a simmering of interest, not in church-circles only, but in the nation: a very distinguished Cambridge man was a rumour, also Dr Todhunter, Bishop of Bristol, while Dr Burton, now Bishop of Winchester, was the popular choice. For us at Swandale, however, only two of these were really in the running, for we lived too near to Goodford not to know that Mr Edwards would never of his free will set such a spirit as Burton over the province of Canterbury. Edwards' majority in the House was now only twenty-three, and, apart from that, everything in him shied at Dr Burton's whole State-idea and order of mind; so when Dr Todhunter's appointment was made known Langler said to me, “you see, now, it is as we said.”

Three days after Edwards' letter of invitation to Dr Todhunter the doctor wrote to Langler, stating that he had accepted the primacy, and closing with a very tender reference to our wounded friend. We two had known and loved him since undergraduate days, and Langler in particular had a kind of

devotion for the classicism of his style and preaching. Who, in fact, that ever knew him could fail to revere him? When only fifty his mass of hair was quite wool-white, and no saintlier face, surely, ever lifted towards the skies. Well, his election by dean-and-chapter had taken place by the 17th of February; on the 19th the archbishop elect took a trip to London, meaning to be back in Bristol by the 21st; but from the hour of two p.m. on the 20th nothing appears ever to have been seen of him. At that hour of two — high daytime! — the old man parted from the Rev. William Vaux, Dean of the Arches, on the pavement in Whitehall, and — walked away into nothingness; nor, I think, has one ray of real light ever been thrown upon his disappearance.

I can almost feel again, as I write, the mood of those days. One sometimes lost control of oneself! one had seizures of excitement, could hardly utter one's words! Langer in particular was strongly moved: his cheek at one spot would go pale, and quiver. By the 24th or 25th we at Swandale began to understand that Dr Todhunter would never more be seen; and I said then: "No! he will never more be seen; and in two months from to-day — wait and see! — Dr Burton will be primate of England."

"But will he *consent*?" asked Langer, pale with excitement: "does he not already — *suspect*? Will he plug up both his ears against *a hundred whispers* that already throng in his consciousness?"

What grounds Langer had for assuming these "hundred whispers" in Dr Burton's consciousness I do not know; but, if it was a guess, it may have been a shrewd one, for I have seen a letter of Burton's written about then, in which *twice*, occurs a certainly very suggestive prayer against "the deceitful man": "ab homine iniquo et doloso erue me" — twice in one letter.

However this was, it was soon beyond doubt that Dr Burton would not only be invited, but would accept the primacy. The rumour grew and grew.

The Prime Minister, in fact, must have been under the strongest pressure to invite Burton, and after a struggle with fate, with his hair, and with the wire-pullers, had to give in. Mrs Edwards herself, who drove over one afternoon from Goodford, told us so much; and by the middle of March it began to be taken for granted that Dr Burton would be metropolitan of Canterbury. I remember the date very well, for just about that time Baron Kolár came down to Goodford for one afternoon to repose himself, to eat the Misses Chambers' toast, and sleep on their sofa, and have his hair brushed; and it was that same day — either the 14th or 15th of March — that the weak voice of our friend said to her brother: “you should go to Styria, since it is so.” It was a rough evening, before the candles were lit, and we two were sitting beside her cane chair by her fire; and Langler, with his brow bowed over her hand, answered: “yes, I will go, since I should. We have written a letter to the authorities in those parts, and are waiting for their answer, but if it does not come within a week — or two — I shall do as you bid me.”

CHAPTER XV

OUR START



TEN MORE DAYS passed without answer from Styria, and I was daily awaiting Miss Emily's word: "You should start now."

She had left her room on the 22nd, and I can see again in fancy our friend as she was that day, with her hair somewhat lax, and the little wren on her bosom; she was palish, but one would hardly have thought that she had come through a great illness, and more laughter than I could quite account for, than quite pleased me perhaps, was on her lips.

Those were warm days in which much more than the daffodil had blown in Swandale, and on the 25th of the month our friend went out of doors. Towards evening she and I were in the pavilion — for I find that I must tell something as to her and me, and since I must, will tell it more or less verbatim, with reporter's blankness, as well as I can remember. We, then, being in the pavilion (a circular temple at the end of an oblong of water), she said to me: "those groups of lily-leaves on the lake looking like ears must remember the music which Aubrey and I made here most nights last summer. They will never hear us more. We used to sit in that recess there, and this is the cupboard where we put up the violin and harp." (A series of cupboards and old chairs went round the wall, and there were chambers within the thickness of the marble, each with its big window and seat; in one of the cupboards I saw still a harp in a bag.)

"But the water-lilies will hear you and him again, Emily," I answered.

“Will they? What name shall we give him, Kitty-wren?” she asked of the bird, “let’s call him Mr Hopeful, Mr Butterlips; let’s screech him down with nicknames, Jenny” — whereat the bird from picking at the scab in her palm broke, as if in answer, into chattering, so that we had to smile: indeed, this tiny brown being that had come to us so strangely with its message from Styria, and would never leave us, was seldom silent even in the winter, and now in the spring would sometimes scatter one’s talk with its showers of music. Miss Emily touched its cocky, short tail, saying: “Jenny knows! and the water-lilies know, too: they are never to hear us more. Birds and herbs and women: they are in the original obiah-dodge, and know what they do know.”

“Women above all,” I remember saying, though my heart was sore for her and for me.

“Look at her now!” she cried— “perched right atop of the harp, screaming something: the devil’s in the bird, I think — pneuma akatharton echei!” This she said with a laugh, but when the bird now suddenly hopped upon her she stepped back from it with grave looks, brushing it off, murmuring, “get away, you, go”; and at this I found myself bowed over her drawn left palm, choked with her name; for she was no longer herself, and feelings surged within me which cannot be told; but as I held her hand, she first looked gravely at me, and then, to my wonder, began to hum the common song: “two in a bed,” whereat, with playful reproach, I murmured “Gregorian,” and let go her hand. Just then, the bird settling afresh upon her, she said to it: “well, come then, Kitty-wren: though you be the banshee, the very moth of death, I sha’n’t shun you — not though your mood be all of shrouds, and of thundery lone nights in the ground, and good-bye all. Still, you were sick, you know, and I nursed you, I have fed you, and

watered you, and cleaned you, and tamed you, and loved you, and you have a devil against me, Jenny.”

“Oh, but, Emily,” I said, “this little bird begins now to take up too much of your thoughts!”

She did not answer me, but remarked thoughtfully: “she has baseness in her nature; yes, she makes a show of affection, but how flightily she forsook me that evening! I was just by that whitethorn bush out there, looking down at the water-lilies, and she was on my left shoulder, when suddenly she flew away, and before you could say ‘Jenny!’ a wet cloth was over my face, my mouth was crammed, and the scream of my being made no sound in my ears. Yet I have a sort of memory of a man, a masked man, a lanky man with a stoop, so strong, so rude, dark as death, cruel as the grave — —”

“But, Emily, you speak of that?” I cried.

“Aubrey isn’t here to hear,” she said in a confidential way, “so it is nothing. Let me talk. There’s something in mere blackness without one ray, in ravines without bottom, in bitterness so bitter that it churns to cud in the chewing. You don’t know how strong he was: I struggled with him, but I was like a straw in his grasp; and when I felt myself going, and no succour nor ruth in the world, and the large darkness glooming, why then I sighed and was reconciled, and I chewed the brash of the grave like black bread, and it was boon and good to me.”

When I began now to reproach her for such melancholies she hummed a catch of Langer’s —

“In its dash Showers down the rill,”

then at once ran to a window, crying: “look, you can see the whitethorn from here; I must have been dragged at least forty yards from it — —” but I would no longer hear her, but drawing her down to the window-seat, said, “hear me, dear Emily: you are not well, you are still far from well, and for

some days I have determined to ask you whether you do not see that it would be well for you now to end my ordeal. If I have the right — —”

“Which right, Jenny?” she cried: “here is a young man who wishes to sleep two in a bed with me — two in a bed, bed, bed, bed, bed! but he will never sleep two in a bed with *me*, I think.”

At these words I was so alarmed for her and pierced with pain, that I could only bow my head over her knees, and I used the word “mercy.”

“Mercy?” said she, “is it she who lives in Cuckoo-town? But you have not waited long.”

“Five years.”

“Is that long? madly, dyingly long?... But it is only four.”

“The fifth has long since begun.”

“Has it? Truly? You might have reminded me!”

“On the morning when it began I begged of you a rose as symbol, and you would not give it.”

“Is that so? But perhaps I might have given some forget-me-nots, only there were none.... You see, there’s failure in you somewhere, Arthur, there’s a troubled light about your eyes, you were not born to make a mother of me: you should buy an urn, Arthur, to blubber in.”

“Well, I must, since you pronounce me so unfortunate,” I said; “but after four years and nearly a half of hope and promise — —”

“Not promise.”

“But of hope so warm — —”

“The conditions remain: I have a brother.” “But, Emily, you care — —”

“For him.”

“Alone?”

“They say the flowers grow fresher on maids’ graves, Arthur: have you ever heard say that?”

“Yes, but hear me: a day had to come when you must leave Aubrey — only for a time, only partially — and for over a week it has seemed sure to me that it is come now. You should be taken from Swandale, you should enter upon a new life — only for a time. Hear me, Emily: you have been fearfully ill, nigh to death; turn to me, say that you will come — —”

“*To Styria?*”

“Styria! Of course, I did not mean Styria.”

“Then, where does the man mean, Kitty-wren?” cried she: “he is talking in Nephelo-coccugia, he hears a toll and thinks it a marriage-bell, I am sure he is bewitched, he has blinkers on his eyes and morris bells on his fingers: let’s scream at him, and stop his dancing; he will take worms to his bed, and be hugging them for his warm darling: Heaven guard us from such a carle!”

“But pray, pray,” was all that I could say, for a hunger and pity of her possessed me.

“I am only telling you the truth,” she answered, “your luck has leprosy, your godmother must have been cross-eyed; and have I ever vowed to be one Mrs Templeton, with your ring round my finger, whispering: ‘*this is my body*’? I don’t remember! I knew you when you were a young boy, and I had a dream of you one night in which something said into my ear nothing but ‘Arthur, Arthur, Arthur’ — just ‘Arthur, Arthur, Arthur’ for years, and nothing else — a rum dream. But ‘*wife!*’ ‘*wife!*’ shrilled the thrush, and the cuckoo answered, ‘all gone,’ ‘all gone.’ ‘Wife’ is a bird-word, Jenny, it has no equivalent in my language. ‘*Wife!*’ sing ‘*wife!*’ My tongue is too thick to sweet it.”

“Mine isn’t,” I said, “if you will hear me say it. Emily, look at me, I am praying you — —”

“Idolatrously: I am wood and stone. Still, let me hear you say it.”

“Say what?”

“‘Wife’: to hear how you pronounce the fluty f-sound and the deep i and the wallowing w.”

“Well, since that pleases you, I say— ‘wife.’”

“Oh, but so sheepishly? without unction? Hear *me* say it— ‘wife.’”

“Well, so I too say it— ‘wife.’”

“Yes, that’s strong. But you still speak of this? You still hope for such a thing of me, really?”

“But may I not? Only to be allowed to take you — —”

“*To Styria?*” she repeated: “oh, Arthur, the colour of your eyes and mine don’t match, you were not fashioned to be the father of a houseful of sons, they would all squint. Deus meus! doesn’t the enthronisation of Archbishop Burton take place to-morrow, and will you not be going to Styria the day after, or the day after?”

“I do not know that,” I said: “we are waiting for a letter from the authorities there.”

“But if no letter comes? Will you not be going? Will you let Aubrey go alone?”

“I am far from certain that Aubrey is going! There are pits and perils — —”

“He shall go,” she said, “though they pierce my side, too, so that out of it gush blood mingled with tears; he will go of himself, because he should, and he shall go, because I will tell him to.”

“I know that he will if he should,” I answered; “but should he? What has Aubrey to do with the world’s trouble? As for me, I tell you, Emily, that I care for nothing in the wide earth — —”

“But care you must! Kitty-wren has come, the gripe’s on,” said she, “and if she hath a devil we must nourish a God in us, to match it. There is no escape, we are under orders, and care we must, go he shall, and you with

him, though they crucify him and you, and though they fix every muscle of me to a different tree.”

“But why did this bird come to *us*?” I thought then in my pity: “there was the world for her, and she came to Swandale”; and some despair in our friend’s face seemed to say to me, “yes, she came to us, to me, to you, not to others, but to us: it stands recorded, two Gods are in it.” Her face showed wannish in that twilight against her violet velvet and her furs, for the shades of night were gathering, and we looked aside through the window upon the darkling oblong of water in silence, since I could find nothing to answer her, nor any way out of the entanglement in which my feet seemed to be engaged; anon her large plush hat touched my face, anon she fingered the chords of the harp, while the bird on her shoulder twittered its song. At last I said to her: “let it be as you wish, Emily: but is a journey to Styria such a great matter? We will go, and we shall return. Nothing shall be strong enough to restrain me from returning, if you say that my ordeal shall then come to its conclusion.”

She looked with sorrowful eyes over the water, and after some minutes she murmured: “only return safe with him, and I may be fond to you, Arthur.”

We dallied there a goodly time after this, till some of the star-glints were lit all amid the lilies of the pool; the little bird became sullener or sleepy, and barely lisped anon; I saw a tear steal down the cheek of our friend, as she commenced to hum, and then to sing wistfully, and to twang out on the harp one of those artificial little hymns of her brother, whose austere, sad music had long been dear to our hearts: it was his Serenade, already at that time set to music by the many-minded Ambrose Rivers of “New Church” notoriety:

“In its dash Showers down the rill, Raving of the hill (Graves are on the hill), May its streams Mingle with thy dreams. Rove with Robin, love: Mumble in thy brain Murmurs of the main.

For the cock Drawleth as a-yawn, Dreaming of the dawn (Hoarily a-dawn), And a-mount Showereth the fount. Almond-drugged the garth, Showery besprayed, Hoarily arrayed.

And of God Worthy is the sight, Worlds are in the night (Walkers of the night), And He calls Westwardly His thralls; Gorgeous large they glide, Wardedly like sheep, Walkers in a sleep.

And a brawl Craveth in this breast, Craving thee and rest (God in thee and rest), And a roar Droneth to the shore. Dashing raves the rill, ‘Lazily they lie, God it is to die.’”

Her rendering of it was berippled all the while by the whispering tongue of the wren, and when she finished I said to her: “you see, the water-lilies have heard at least you once more, Emily, and there is hope, for Mercy is only in Cuckoo-town in so far as Cuckoo-town is in heaven. But we should go back to the cottage now, for the stars are looking out in crowds, and it is beginning to grow cold.”

She came with me, and we paced back by the margin of the pool, through the wood, and up a dell, to the cottage. All laughter had gone now from her lips, her steps were laggard, for she was easily wearied and emptied now; and I held her poor hand all the way.

As we entered upon the bridge, there stood Langler at a door of the cottage, a letter in his hand, which, when we had gone into the dining-room, he handed to me openly before Miss Emily. It was the letter from Upper Styria come at last, signed by a certain Oberpolizeirath Tiarks, whose face I was destined one day to see. I read it with a greed which I could not hide. But it consisted mostly of a gorgeous heading, the writing being in two lines

only, and these cold enough but for their salute of “high-born sir!” It merely acknowledged the receipt of our “honoured but somewhat insubstantial [ungegründet!] communication”; and there it ended.

It was for this that we had waited! The paper was actually perfumed.

It had upon me an effect of gloom, and I felt now that our departure was about to be, but nothing was said of the letter at dinner, nor was it till near ten in the night that we three met to talk of it in Langler’s study. Miss Emily closed the shutter, we felt like plotters, and laid our heads together with low voices. Our friend seemed now quite business-like and herself: she proposed that we should leave England in four days’ time, our purpose of going being kept quite secret meantime, and that I should start first, to await Langler in London. All this was arranged; also that Miss Emily should stay mainly with the Misses Chambers during our absence, and it was not till towards one in the morning that, at the third knocking of a nurse, we rose and parted to go to bed.

After all this I was naturally not a little surprised to hear Langler say the next morning to his old butler, Davenport: “Davenport, I am about to take a long voyage from home, as you will soon see for yourself!” It was *a propos* of nothing! The old fellow had brought in some sour milk, and was retiring, when Langler stretched back his neck and made the remark! No one, indeed, could be safer than old Davenport, but still, the confidence seemed so needless.... “But it is a secret, Davenport,” I said pointedly.

Well, I left Alresford for London that evening, and from the next morning, the 27th — the morning after Dr Burton was enthroned — set to work to gather all the information which would be useful to our undertaking: I engaged an agent, named Barker, to accompany us, I wrote letters, did business, relearned German and the map of Styria, kept clear of friends, and even bought a number of things, including some revolvers. On

my second morning in London I got a letter from Langer, and another the next morning, with a note from his sister: he said that he was ready, and would be with me at three p.m. of the 29th.

During the evening of the 28th, I being at home alone, reading, a letter was handed me, consisting only of the three words: "*All is known*," scribbled across half-a-sheet of note-paper, with a criss-cross for crest. After much reflection I made up my mind not to write of it to the Langers, but it robbed me of sleep that night.

At three p.m. the next day I was at the station to meet Langer, but he did not come, and from then I underwent the keenest anxiety till six, when I got a telegram: "About to start now"; and near nine Langer, thick in furs, stood smiling before me, with the words: "*eh bien, me voici*."

"The luggage below?" I asked.

"No, I took it direct to Victoria."

"Oh, but I thought, Aubrey, that you were to bring it here, as the safest way?"

"Well, to save a double nuisance...."

"All right: I hope it doesn't matter. And as to Emily?"

"Well, thank God, and strong in heart."

"And you, how do you feel after the voyage?"

He smiled in his wistful way.

"Well, let us dine," I said, pulling the bell. "I mean to have you in bed by eleven, after no more than two pipes, for our train starts as the clock strikes nine in the morning."

I had kept back dinner for him, and we were soon at table. We were eating fish when my man brought me in two telegrams, and the moment I saw them in his hand, before ever I opened or touched them, my heart sank: for I think that only the farther future is quite unknown, but we know a

moment hence, as when a heavy weight is to drop we feel it beforehand. Tearing open one of the telegrams, I glanced at the sender's name— "Lizzie Chambers"; she had written: "Emily ill, don't go away"; I tore open the other: it, too, was from Miss Chambers, and she wrote: "Emily's other hand has been nailed."

Into the gloom of my mind grew the understanding that the milder of the telegrams must be for Langler's eyes, the sterner for mine alone: but I showed him neither, I left him there at the table, and in another room called out upon Almighty God for help and strength. When I returned to the outer room I could speak.

But I showed him neither of the telegrams, for I had not the heart, and he slept in peace that night. The next morning I told him when he came to my bedside that I feared I should not be able to go to Styria, since I was ill; and indeed I was very ill.

CHAPTER XVI

“DISEASED PERSONS”



WHAT HAPPENED NOW I do not find it easy to tell, for my next weeks were passed in a state like to De Quincey's "tortures of opium": I cannot clearly remember telling Langer what had happened, or showing him the telegrams, and he had to return to Swandale alone, in what sort of state I do not know, for I was in a bad dream, flushed with fever, nor was I able to go out of doors till the 25th of April. It was a Sunday, towards evening, I was accompanied by a friend, and we happened to go into St Clement Dane's, where the preacher referred to Miss Langer, and expressed the wonder of the world at the outrage; but what makes that service stand out in my memory is a little thing that happened to myself, for I was sitting with my head bowed during the Kyrie when a priest who was pacing about came and pushed me rudely on the back, saying: "*kneel, kneel.*" I never was more astonished.

The next day I stood at last by the bedside of our friend. She knew me, I think, though not very clearly, but I understood that she had received such a shock this time that she would never more be strong, even if she did not die, for she had been still frail from the first woe when again she was torn. Langer stood with me and watched her, for his self-control was at all times fine, though I don't think born with him, but won by strict schooling of himself; but after a time when we saw her tossing her head from side to side, so acquainted with misfortune, we had to turn from her. She had been

especially unlucky, since she had *meant* to be on her guard, never to be out of doors alone, during her brother's absence; but in passing from her carriage at the park wall of Dale Manor to the house, it had come upon her. I remember spending that evening of my arrival on my back at a window, staring up at a poplar which looked like a fountain of leafage shot up to a point on high out of the ground; sometimes its top seemed to be sailing against the sky, as toppling to fall; and the breaths of the wind rocked its branches, roughing up the under-white of its foliage with a chaunting like the psalm of Time; and a starling flew up to her charming home on high in it: and this somehow calmed and consoled me.

I could stay only three days then, and for the next six weeks was to and fro between Swandale and London on dates of which I have no record, spending most of my time in a sort of political pool and uproar of things, which perhaps did me good. Those were Diseased Persons days, and well I recollect the thrill that ran through England on the night of its virtual throwing out by the Lords in Committee. Burton and Edwards were now at their death-grips, on the side of the archbishop being all the awe of the nation, on that of the minister all its reason, its secret sympathy, for it seemed that even God, howling from heaven, could not quite bring it about to clericalise the modern world. I had just telegraphed the throwing out to Langler, and was gossiping about it with some men in one of my clubs — it was late, after the theatres — when I was aware of Baron Kolár's presence: he had come in with three men, and his eyes, swimming round, found me out. He walked straight to me. "Miss Langler," were his first low words—"how is she?"

The *cheek*, and also the hearty concern, of the question confounded me. "Miss Langler is, of course, gravely ill," I answered.

He groaned, with a look of ruth, of care, on his face: nor did it occur to me to suppose it feigned, since I very well knew that the man was no hypocrite; yet I was sure too, in my heart, that here was the man who was the undoer of Miss Langler.

“But surely she will recover?” said he: “let me hear now that she will.”

“Well, no doubt she will recover,” I said.

He pipped a nothing with relief, his lips unwreathed, his teeth shone out happily, and he said: “Oh, well, everything works out nicely in the end, if only things be premeditated by men of grasp and vigour. I assure you, the longer I live the more I see it — the supremacy of mind in the world. When I was a wild chap of seventeen I said to myself one night: ‘go to, now, I will be a man: I will be grand, I will govern my passions, and have a hand in history.’ And so said, so done. I did it! here you see me now, I did it very well, very well, oh yes, here I am. Mind is everything. Look at Mr Edwards, now — nice fellow, powerful fellow, sharp as a falchion! You know, of course, that the Lords have just virtually thrown out Diseased Persons? Tell me now which of the two you think will come off the victor in this duel between Edwards and the archbishop.”

“Who can win against the grain of an archbishop under a *régime* of miracles, Baron Kolár?” I asked.

“What!” said he, eyeing me sternly from top to toe, “but is there to be no term to the insolence of the Church? Remember that this plan of sterilising diseased persons is no new thing: during twenty years it has been under discussion; in Austria, I assure you, if it had not been for the miracles, diseased persons would at present be consigned to the lethal chamber; but this most moderate bill only ensures their sterilisation. Everywhere such a measure is called for; it is in the very gist of our age; and now when Mr Edwards, by a travail of Hercules, has driven it through his House with a

grim majority of twelve — earnest fellow, grand fellow — are we to see his pearl trampled under foot by a herd of bishops? But you shall not see that. I forecast that the bill will be sent back to the Lords a second and a third time, and in the end Edwards will win — oh yes, he will win.”

“He may,” said I.

“He will,” said he: “England will rise to his support; wait, you will see.”

He turned off from me, but turned again to ask after the Misses Chambers, then left me to rejoin his friends.

When I mentioned his words the next day at Swandale, Langer said to me: “but since this man is so very sure beforehand of the Prime Minister’s victory, may we not at once look for some stroke of policy against the Church on his part — perhaps the showing of the miracles to be none?”

“In that case, Aubrey,” said I, for I was excited, “let us be beforehand with him! let both of us now write plainly to our friends that the miracles are probably none, but still are no contrivance of priests — —”

But Langer interrupted me, saying: “you would hardly have us, Arthur, appear to our friends in the light of crusaders and quixotes.”

“Why quixotes?” said I.

“Wouldn’t it be terribly like springing upon them the statement, ‘*the sky is brown*’? The miracles are now among established things, nor are our suspicions anything but suspicions. Certainly, we should seem pert, if not irrelevant. Letters are perused over the breakfast-cup, and are not expected to be epic.”

“However,” said I, “this is the one plan which you can carry out without fear of being interfered with and hindered, and by it you wash your hands at once of the whole business and burden.”

“Perhaps; but still, frankly, it would not be quite to my taste: I’d rather die than seem *outré*, or strutting, or oracular — —”

“But since so much is at stake — —”

“Sooner any other plan, Arthur.”

“But what other plan — except going to Styria?”

“Hardly again,” said he, with closed eyes, “hardly again,” and we were silent.

After a while he asked: “does the agent, Barker, still decline to go to Styria alone?”

“Yes,” said I; “he and others naturally scent danger in the adventure after what has twice befallen us. If anyone goes, it must be ourselves; so what shall be done?”

“But do you ask me that, Arthur?” cried he, much moved: “how shall I answer you? I have already paid a great price; my heart has wept. The men who are against us are of withering mood, though I do not say wicked men; in fact, they are not, since the mere success of their exploits implies, I think, an erectness of meaning which commands our esteem — —”

“Esteem, Aubrey,” I murmured: but such was the *finesse* of Langler’s criticism, whose scales no zephyr of passion could ever shake, and he derided as crass and green whoever did not give to the devil his dainty due.

“Yes, I say esteem,” said he, “for the misdoer is, and must be, a bungler, so where you have a series of lawlessnesses finely achieved you may look to find behind them a mood of moral erectness. But little the morality of these men concerns me — I was speaking of their power.”

“Now, however,” said I, “whatever their power, is the hour for us to strike in, if ever: Diseased Persons will soon be back in the Lords; Burton, of course, will not yield—”

“Talking of Burton,” said he, “I have two letters of his which I will show you now” — and he rose and got them: one was a letter of sympathy, very feelingly worded, written to Langler on the second wounding of our friend;

the other, written only five days before to Percival of Keble, was as follows: — “The Palace, Lambeth. P. + T. My dear Percival, — Forgive my silence, since you are continually in my heart. It is now confirmed that Diseased Persons will be thrown out; and as Israel prevailed over Amalek in Rephidim, so we shall ride over them that rise up against us. Hertford, Jersey, and Ellenborough have declared on our side, and the zeal of young Denman, who now has rooms in the Palace, is profitable to me: the Lord reward them according to their works.... There can be no looking back now, even if we would, being more strongly impelled against the Bill from the side of St Peter than many divine; and, in addition, there are forces, *in their nature subterranean*, which prompt and urge us, and make retreat impossible — even if we would! Bellini of the Maddallena writes that he does not consider the Bill contrary to Holy Writ! And is it? What say you? Give me of your wisdom. But however that be, on we must, the force behind is grim and deaf. I say that the whole truth is known to none: you will remember at some future day, if need be, that I have said it to you and to others; nor is what I now give you any whisper between ourselves. But is not the whole truth still good to speak? not the truth only, but the whole? We have Clement of Alexandria on ‘uttering a lie, as the Sophists say’; but to utter a lie is it not to tell one? and to tell one is it not to lie? and to lie is it not to be a rotting liar? And to trim, and economise, and keep dark, and be shifty, is it not to utter many lies? To all which I say: ‘Get thee behind me, Satan! I will wash my hands in innocency.’ Forgive me if I am curious and obscure to-night, good friend, since I write in some gloom of mind. One short year ago I was a village-priest, and had songs in the night; at present I am full of tossings to and fro till the morning. But my every loss, were it of life and soul, I will count as gain, if only Zion prosper, though I warn you, Percival, of rocks ahead, and fears and doubts not to be formulated; at some

hours I see the future dark as crape — I could not tell you. Our victory in Gloucester was ominously close, and here and there in the country one hears Old Adam growling. They must obey! they must submit themselves! stantes sunt pedes nostri in atriis tuis, Jerusalem: over all uprising we shall ride gloriously, God help us. Alas! sometimes when I am mightiest, then am I weakest: the solid Pisgah gives way under my feet, the wings of Icarus stream with melting; oh, for faith, and more faith, and still more: pray for me. Still, we shall ride, we shall triumph. As to the Lambeth degrees in medicine, and our right to grant them, this you shall see carried against all the rage of the heathen in the near future, so also as to the proposed new powers of Consistory Courts and of my Court of Audience, so also as to the restoring to Canterbury of her jurisdiction over wills and intestacies, so also as to the condign punishment of Ambrose Rivers: all these. Only, still the sleeplessness, no rest, no shutting of the eyelid, but tossings till the morning, and not poppy nor mandragoras shall medicine me now, I think. Oh, Percival, how happy is the obscure good man, the upright heart and pure, kept unspotted from the world! Down yonder in Ritching parish my garden grew wild, the vicarage was holey and ruined, but very pretty, very homely, and ever for me there was one sweetest, secret cruse of water from Siloa's brook, and my morsel of dry bread was like coriander seed, man, I tell you, and the taste of it like wafers made with honey. Percival, I warn you, fly from preferment: there is one sweeter sluice than all. Pray write as to the scripturalness of Diseased Persons. Farewell, dear friend. — In haste, yours faithfully in N.D.J.C., John Cantuar.”

“Here, I think,” said Langer when I had got through the two letters, “you have a soul in the toils,” and we went on talking about Burton and other things, without coming to the point as to what we personally were now to do; moreover, I had promised to be back in London at once, and left

Swandale that night, our friend being then definitely on the road to recovery.

I did not, I think, return to Swandale during some two weeks, and meanwhile twice saw Archbishop Burton, once in the Lords on the night when Diseased Persons was being debated for the second time; all the world was there: I saw Mr Edwards peeping behind the throne; I saw Baron Kolár ironing his thigh, while his eyes dwelt upon the primate, who, somehow, denounced the bill less loudly than I had expected to hear. I thought that Dr Burton's girth was less outgrown, his visage less brown than usual; indeed, I have grounds to know that about that time the archbishop was putting himself to cruel tortures with regimen, the thongs of discipline, and other articles of piety. Twice to my knowledge, while speaking, he glanced up at Baron Kolár in the gallery, and I witnessed the meeting of their eyes. Well, the bill, which had been sent up this second time with an ominous drop in Edwards' majority from twelve to nine, was anew mutilated; and at this thing the sort of ecstasy which marked the mood of the country can only be recalled, not described, for Diseased Persons and the Education Bill (setting up *lycees* on the French model) were the two main items in the King's Speech, the Church withstood both, and the deadlock was complete. Edwards would not yield, for if ever man knew England and Englishmen it was he, and a sort of world-wide mutter against churchmen, which did not dare express itself, yet could be felt, was abroad. It was at this juncture that I again saw the archbishop one night at a political crush at the Duchess of St Albans'. I was making my way through a throng when I caught a view of Baron Kolár's head above a press of men, and, the hall being full of a noise of tongues, I won near to the group around him to hear, for he was talking; in doing which I caught sight of the robed figure of the archbishop sitting on an ottoman, silent, solitary, but within earshot of the baron's talk; indeed,

I fancied that the baron's voice was purposely pitched so that Dr Burton might overhear. As I won near the first words of the baron which reached my ears were: "but Jesus did not believe in the immortality of the soul: no, he didn't believe in it; he never heard of such a thing: not in our sense of the term — —"

I stood astonished at this drowsy outrage upon the ears of a devout crowd, though a year previously his words would have been ordinary enough, and I saw Dr Burton's eyes fixed sideward upon the baron with I know not what musketry of meanings in them.

"Oh no," the baron went on, "he had no notion of our 'immortality.' Our notion of a ghost distinct from the body, of 'spirit' distinct from matter, is, of course, an Aryan-Greek one, quite foreign to the Hebrew mind: the very angels of the Hebrews ate mutton like Charles II., their very God was material, with hind parts and front parts; and you will burrow through the Old Testament in vain for a valid hint that men may live after their body is livid."

No one answered anything; only Dr Burton's eyes aimed a ray of keener and keener meaning at the speaker.

"However," the baron went on, "there arose at a late date a crowd among the Hebrews called Pharisees, who said: 'no, all is not over at death, for some day there will be a resurrection, and we shall then live again'; opposed to whom were the Conservatives — the Sadducees — who denied that there would be a resurrection: and Jesus was a Pharisee in this belief in a resurrection of the body. But as to our fantastic Greek ghost and its immortality, it was quite outlandish to all Hebrews, to Pharisee, Essene, and Sadducee alike: Jesus hardly heard of it."

I glanced toward Dr Burton's face: it had in it reproach, shame, and anger together: and still the baron droned on: "hence the frequency of this

word ‘resurrection’ in the Gospels, in spite of the fact that their writers were tinged with Greek ideas: for Jesus believed that we ceased to live at death, but afterwards should have a ‘resurrection’: he was a good Hebrew. On the other hand, in the writings of St Paul, who was both a Hebrew and a man learned in Greek ideas, we have a perfect confusion of the two ideas, Greek ‘immortality’ and Pharisee ‘resurrection.’ Sometimes Paul believes in one, sometimes in the other, sometimes somehow in both together. Where he says, ‘to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord,’ he is a Greek; where he says, ‘I have fought a good fight ... henceforth there is laid up for me a crown which the Lord will give me in the day of his appearing,’ he is a Hebrew: for he won’t get the crown at once, oh no, it is *laid up* for him till resurrection-day, when he will wake up out of the dust. And so all through that epistle — —”

But at that point the baron stopped, looking with a delicious fat chuckle after the flight of Dr Burton, who was off through the throng. Nobody made any reply to the baron’s words. I wish that one could describe the man’s tones, *his eyes!* — wandering, fishy, light grey, the whites fouled yellowish; but so strong somehow! They would light upon one a moment in a preoccupied way, and wander off again, as if one was not of worth enough to engage their attention. But I’m afraid that my pen was not made to paint. At any rate, his words were always most weighty, living, memorable, and overbearingly authoritative — not in themselves perhaps, but in some way because they came from him.

I happened to overhear a few private words between him and Dr Burton that same night which I should recount, but before then I was in a crowd with Mr Edwards, who was looking rather harassed, though quick-eyed as ever, and appeared from his talk to be less bitter against Dr Burton’s big attacks than against the “pin-pricks “; “the face of Europe was turned

towards the future,” one heard him say, “and now come the parsons twisting it about, and saying, ‘look back to the past.’ It can’t be done, you know: neck’ll break. And such pettifogging, penny-ha’penny, antediluvian antics! How is an archbishop to grant degrees in medicine at this time of day? As for Ambrose Rivers, all I can say is, if the church-party should succeed in laying a finger upon that harmless lunatic, then the Government will begin to ask itself whether the time is not come to throw up the cards. May the dickens fly away —— !” he stopped, but I understood him to mean “with the church-party, and all things, save the multiplication-table and the present Prime Minister of England.” He was a man of many sterling qualities of mind, and exercised a true influence over his countrymen, perhaps through his very actuality and directness; and though he ever refused to embellish himself with one touch of personal stateliness, he was listened to with attention.

Half-an-hour afterwards I was talking with a man over a balcony rail, where it was dark, when I heard behind me the words: “you should not slacken in your opposition to the bill: the Church must be pushed on and made quite triumphant”; they were spoken by Baron Kolár, and from Dr Burton I heard a murmured reply, but not the words; then I am almost certain that I heard the baron say: “there will be some more miracles”; and I distinctly heard the doctor’s reply, halting, wifely: “how do you — know?” and the answer too to this I heard: “I know by faith, doctor,” whereupon they turned in their pacing, and their voices were lost. I allowed myself to whisper to the man with me: “Mephisto and Faust!”

Well, what happened next with respect to Diseased Persons happened in a kind of whirlwind, and before I knew where I was I was off to Styria. Once more the bill was sent up, this time by Lower House majorities of in general seventeen. What Mr Edwards’ hope was, whether he was pushed

from behind by secret forces, one does not know; certainly by this time the grumble in his favour — on the platform, in the press, in the country — had grown; but still, no one much expected the Church to give way. However, at about two in the afternoon of the very night on which the bill was brought for the third time before the Lords, an old woman, one Madame Ronfaut, who housed close to the Cathedral of Bayeux, found in her cellar a grave, not a new grave, but one newly reopened, and in the grave a cross, and nailed to the cross the remains of a man's body that had been dead at least some months. The news of this thing flew that afternoon like loosened effluvia. What was the precise significance of the find I suppose that nobody gave himself the breathing-space to think; it was felt to be significant: and never was news more dynamic. That night Diseased Persons had a victory in spite of all the bishops. I, for my part, flew to Swandale, understanding that the finding of the body and cross was no chance thing, but purposely managed to give a first shock to the faith of men. "Have you heard all?" said I to Langer as I hurried into the cottage. He gazed at me strangely, without answer; I saw his cheek shake; and I cried out: "Aubrey, how is Emily?"

"She is gone, she is gone," said he, with as woeful a smile as ever I beheld.

"Gone, Aubrey," said I, "what do you mean?"

He handed me a note which she had written to him, and I saw that, on hearing of the finding of the body and cross, she had fled from Swandale, alone, weak, hardly yet able to walk. "Dearest Aubrey," she had written, "you will go now to Styria, because you should; and partly to make the leaving of me possible to you, and partly to save you from being stopped this time by any hurt done to me, I am running away to hide myself well somewhere. Have no fear for me, I undertake that no one shall track me, I

shall be safely hidden, and get quite well, and be back in Swandale to welcome you when you return. Go at once, will you, for me? with Arthur. ‘Quit you like men, be strong’; you are in for it now, poor dear: it has happened so. I take £40 from the casket. But, beloved, if it be only possible, come back to me; and bring him who goes with you. Your Emily.”

I found Langer in such a state of powerful, though governed, emotion, that I was unwilling to have him start that night, for his heart was not strong. But he would come, and we reached London at two a.m., went to bed for a time, and started in the morning by private car, so as to catch the first passage.

We were safe aboard at Dover, and the boat about to cast her moorings, when a car was seen making down the pier, and an outcry arose for the boat to wait awhile, the men in the car being Baron Kolár and two others. They were barely in time, and soon after the baron had manœuvred himself aboard I saw his earnest looks clear into a smile.

During the trip across he took not the least notice of our presence, nor we of his.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MOUNTAINS



LANGLER WAS A great preacher of France and French lucidity — when he was in England, but in France itself he changed his tune, for nothing now quite pleased him as we raced through the land — not the food, the people, the language, the country — but all came under his criticism, which, indeed, was mostly unuttered, but one felt when he was criticising by a certain fastidiousness and thickening at the cheek-bones, as if he tasted acid. At Charleville, where we found a streaming town, one of the pilgrimages having just got there, the tone of the *dévotés* was specially distasteful to him; we saw a throng kneeling in the twilight on some church-steps, everyone with a certain beggar-like languishing of the eye-whites — a very Latin thing — which Langer called “sick-saintly.” But he was ever out of joint with the age, had flinched from its paganism before the miracles, as now he flinched from its piety. “We are such hapless Midases,” he said: “whatever we happen to touch turns to iron.” Swandale itself he found wanting; he sighed for a rounder world. Now, piety was “*the rage*” in France, and one day in France was quite long enough to turn Langer qualmish against the words “male and female Christian,” ever chattered everywhere. At Charleville, when we returned to our hotel from our stroll, a lively little maid with flaxen curls would have us look at her first-communion veil, her paroissien, and suchlike pious gems, remarking meanwhile: “is it not soft and nice, sir, to be a female Christian — n’est-ce

pas, monsieur, que c'est doux et bon d'être crétienne?" To which Langler replied: "I only hope so: moi je suis crétien."

Being very weary that first night we slept till two a.m., when we set out afresh on the car road over the suspension-bridge through Mézières, under a dark sky most bright with stars. Our trim little chauffeur, whose name was Hanska, was a "rager,"; but this mode of flight was never to Langler's taste, and we had meant to travel on rails, till the sight of Baron Kolár on the Channel-boat had caused me to know that the rail-train would be much too slow. We had lost sight of the baron at Calais, but near noon of the second day, when we were shooting some miles well on past Sedan, a trumpet hooted behind, and there churned upon us a large chariot travelling urgently. It must have been very swift, for we were swift, but it rolled pressingly past us, showed its hind wheels, and travelled on out of our sight. Through the dust I saw in it Baron Kolár and his two friends.

"Baron Kolár means to be in Styria before us, Aubrey," I said.

"In which case, what is the good of our going on?" asked Langler.

"We are going to investigate some facts," said I: "no one can stop us in that, unless they kill us; in any case, we have it to do to the end: your sister's eyes are upon us."

"God's," said he. "On we must, I know; I only question whether we are on the road to accomplish any real good: I hope so, God grant it; but it is a world like those jointed marionettes which, however you tug them straight, stick out crudely somewhere; its piety and its impiety both curve the lips of the gods. But let us hope that we shall accomplish something, if only for our poor prisoner."

Well, on we went, hardly knowing toward what: but our object after much talk had turned out to be threefold — (1) to find out whether there was really a prisoner Father Max Dees in Baron Kolár's castle of

Schweinstein; (2) to present ourselves with this *fact* to the authorities, and so force the release of Dees; (3) to interview the released Dees, and then give to the world whatever he might have to divulge of a design against churchmen. And chance favoured us to a wonderful extent that day between Sedan and Metz, for not fifteen minutes after Baron Kolár's chariot had vanished ahead we came anew upon it standing still by the roadside, its occupants standing and prying round it. As we flew past them I cried to Langler: "they can't repair, and are miles from anywhere: are bound to lose a day!" nor from that moment, I think, did we waste ten minutes bootlessly, till we were climbing the country at the mountain-foot. One morning early I woke in a village-room, and peeping out from my window saw the village-street bounded by a wall and some trees; beyond the trees the froths and freshes of a shallow river lacerated with rocks; beyond the river a mountain-side with a crucifix on it, a world of mountains; and grouped about the crucifix the kind of grey goats whose wool had been used by Dees to tie his tidings round the wren's leg; and I said to myself: "we have arrived." What a charm was in that place that morning surpasses expression; it appeared to me the haven of the world; the morning-star was awane in the heavens; and I had the thought: "how well to have been born in here, and to have housed here always in peace!" It was a breathing-space to me, till the burden that was ours darkened down anew upon my mind with its weight of care and doubt. As to where Baron Kolár might be we had no idea, having seen nothing of him since his breakdown near Metz.

My own hostess — Langler had slept in another cottage — had a son named Piast whom she offered to me as guide, upon which this conversation took place between us: "does Piast know the alp well?" "Kiss the hand, sir, he is a Slovene." "But is he to be depended upon as a guide?" "He is a Slovene, sir." "Yes, but does he know the best way to

Schweinstein?” “Sir, he is a Slovene.” She herself was a heavy Slav woman, but as our Piast looked a brave wight we took him, and began to climb through higher valleys now and a wilder world. I knew Switzerland very well, but this was different somehow — a heavier eventide of wood and wonderland of solitude, for I think that Upper Styria must be about the loneliest of lands. We travelled up beside one river (with banks of slime, and forested cliff on either hand) which had a mood of millions of years gone, before man or brute was; yet the wild goat bounded on the crag, the boar slouched in the black of the bush. At noon we stopped at a sennhaus (cow-farm) on the banks of a mountain-tarn, and here, to my surprise, it got into Langler’s head to bathe. “But can we spare the *time*?” I asked him. “Too cold, too cold,” said our host the cow-keeper, with a shake of the head, for though the day was warm, we were now at an elevation where oak and ash were giving place to black fir and yew. But Langler would bathe, the water looked so nice, and as I knew that he could not swim, and was afraid that the bottom might be deceptive, I made up my mind to go in first, to try it. Our cow-keeper lent us two old knee-breeches, for the wagon with our luggage was down behind, and there we cowered by the shore, Langler with knives in the flesh because of the sennerin’s eyes on his back, for she and three children stood in a crowd up at the sennhaus door to watch us. Well, I chose a spot, and plunged in: and the instant I was under, as it were a thousand whispers were about me urging me to be out. It was too cold for man, with a certain great gloom of cold, and I was no sooner in than I was out again. Understanding now that it would hardly do for Langler with his panting heart, I prayed him not to try it; but his honour, I suppose, was now at stake — he had ever a large share of what one may call physical courage — and in he stepped. However, he did not plunge, but almost at once came

out gasping, and seeing his left foot dyed with blood, I knew that something had gashed it.

On the whole, we had no sort of right in that water, since time might be so dear to us: but so it happened; Langler's gash proved grave, for he could not put on his boot, so after our good sennnerin had bandaged it up there we sat for hours before the longish shed which was the sennhaus, drinking goat's milk, smoking porcelain pipes, and looking toward the summer snow on the top of high Hochgolling.

"Pity we ever went into the water," said Langler as we sat there disabled and the afternoon sun sank low: "we have lost a day, and through me, I'm afraid."

"Bad luck," said I, "not your fault."

"We are such tools of Nature!" said he. "Men rage of their 'power' over Her, but what of Her unperturbed reign over and in *them*? We should now be at Schweinstein, yet here we are, the truth being that new lands induce a vagueness and vagabondage in the mind, so hypnotising it that one's own concerns seem paltry in comparison with the mass and pageant of Nature, and irrelevant to her mood; whereupon 'I am here' grows so uppermost in the mind as to strangle 'why am I here?' However, I think that the foot is now fast healing."

"Then we may be able to get on to-night," said I. "But who is that man talking so earnestly to our Piast? He was here an hour ago, went away, and now is back again."

"I have observed it," said he; "they are at this moment discussing us."

"Are they?"

"Yes, they are talking near the cascade, and louder than they think, for I have twice heard 'die Herren,' and presently you will see them glance this way."

“But do you suspect Piast at all?”

“I doubt if he is quite trusty and good.”

“Then let us not go one step farther with him.”

“But we have the charts, he can’t lead us far astray; nor can we allow ourselves to judge him on a mere suspicion.”

I said no more, but felt uneasy. Soon afterwards I left Langler outside, went up the (external) steps into the middle room of the sennhaus, and sat by the wheel where the sennerin was spinning flax; she looked homely and good with her thick waist and calves and dress of opera-bouffe, so I entered into talk with her, asking her first what had been the effect of the miracles in the alp. “Kiss the hand, sir!” she said, and she smiled as she told me that “the good people of the alp must work hard to keep body and soul together, without troubling the head about such matters. That is not all gold what glances.”

I was astonished! The thought came into my mind, “here is Ambrose Rivers in the Noric Alps,” for, except Rivers and this woman, I had heard of no one who thus lightly threw off the miracles. “But surely,” said I, “such high events!” She sighed, saying: “ah, dear Heaven, those on the alp had their miracle six long years ago, and that was enough of miracles, it seems to me, with great cry and little wool.” “Six years ago? a miracle?” said I. “Yes, sir; but let each sweep before her own door” — another proverb, and a strong one apparently, for nothing further could I get from her as to this miracle of six years before.

I then, for the first time in Styria, spoke of Max Dees. “My friend and I,” I said, “are here to visit the Pater Max Dees: do you — know him?” Again she smiled, saying: “my man did frohn-arbeit on his buckwheat-field for three years” — (this “frohn-arbeit” being, as she explained it, a kind of church-due paid in day-labour). “So you know the Pater well?” I asked.

With the same half-a-smile, she answered: “I *knew* him.” “But isn’t he still in the alp, then?” “Not at the church, sir.” “Which church?” “St Photini’s in the castle-court.” “Oh, he is not still the priest at St Photini’s, so perhaps my friend and I have taken a voyage in vain. Who, then, is now the priest there?” “There is no priest,” said she; “even if there were, we of this church-parish should no longer plod to his church, since it is work enough to keep body and soul together; for burials a priest rides up from Badsögl; but St Photini’s has been shut up near five years — before the birth of the little sugar-corn Kätchen, in fact.”

“But that is strange!” said I. “To whom does St Photini’s belong?”

“All this alp, one might say, belongs to the baron, sir.”

“All? He must be enormously rich and powerful!”

“Gold makes old, sir; but the baron is not believed to be rich, not as some of the great landowners are, for glaciers and precipices make no man rich, and the most of his land is forest, with some flax, beet, and then the pastures; his lordship has also a share in the glass factory a mile up.”

“So he is not very rich, the baron? But is he powerful? much feared in the alp?”

“Ah, dear Heaven, he is very much feared, and very much loved, and very much pitied, by all.”

“Pitied? Baron Kolár?”

“Ah, dear Heaven, yes: for nothing less than a very great wrong was done to his lordship by one in whom he had trust. They say ‘one love is worth the other’; but unthankfulness is ever the world’s repayment.”

“But what was this great wrong done to his lordship?”

She sighed, and answered: “end good, all good; it is a long story, sir”; nor was there any overcoming her reserves when she chose to be silent.

“But that is strange,” said I, “that St Photini’s should be shut up — five years! To what church, then, do you — go?”

“We go to none, since the body is more real than the soul. There is a little Roman church down there in Speisendorf, but no one goes to it since the miracle of six years ago; those of the alp once went to St Photini’s, but St Photini’s is of the Oriental Greek Church, and the Pater Max Dees was an Oriental Greek priest.” “*Was?*” said I, “but is the good Pater no longer alive?” “Who knows?” said she. “You do; tell me,” said I. “But I do not know, sir, truly! perhaps the baron himself could impart to you that information.” “But where is the baron?” I asked, “in the duchy, do you know?” “The baron is at the burg, sir.” “Baron Kolár at Schweinstein! When did he arrive?” “Late last night, I believe,” she answered.

“Strange,” I thought, “that we have heard nothing of it, though we have questioned so many people”; and wondering if he had come in a clandestine manner, or by another route than ours, I hurried out to give Langler the news. In telling him, I saw the cow-man trotting toward the tarn under a load of wurzels, so I called him to us, and asked why he had told us that the baron was *not* at the castle. “Kiss the hand, sirs!” he said, and answered with a blank air, “but this is strange! is the baron at the castle? and is it the little woman who has told you this? she must have seen it in a dream” — and he peered sourly up into the room where the spinning-wheel sounded. Turning to Langler, I asked him how the foot was going, for I felt that it would be well to make a move; “you see I have on the boot,” was his reply, “I can walk quite well”; and within some minutes we had started, for eventide was falling, and we had to get to a sort of guest-court three miles higher. We had sent the horses back down to Speisendorf, our farther route being rough for night-travelling; and with our Piast stepping out ahead in his coloured home-spuns, we tramped toward the bourn where beds and the

trunks awaited us. It had turned bleak now, the fuffs of the mountain-winds began to tune-up and fife, the gloom deepened toward night. I confess that I felt afraid, I hardly knew of what, but the mood of the mountains was undoubtedly morose and dark. When I asked the lad if he had heard the news that his lordship had arrived he looked foolish, and said no, he had not heard. We passed by rude altars decked with gauds, by crucifixes on the crags, and a mile from the sennhaus reached a river all shut in by ravines, up the banks of which we wound, till, after about an hour and a half of continuous walking, we came to some lock-gates, and then, in an opening in the cliff-wall, to a factory, which Piast said was a glass-factory, and I remember wondering where the hands could come from to work it; a little higher was a mill-wheel and other lock-gates, and thenceforward unbroken lines of cliff, walling-in the river. I had known that we should have to journey up this or some such river, so had no fear that we were being jockeyed; yet I felt like one lost, for by this time we could hardly see our hand before our eyes, the winds waged their business in many a strange tongue, and my knowledge that Langler was limping made me the more anxious to come at shelter. As usual in such a case, we were stricken rather silent, plodding on in patience for the journey to be over and for a light to arise before us. And in front of us stepped our Piast.

But at one place when I called out “Piast!” to ask him something, I got no answer; whereupon we both stopped, we called and called, but Piast was gone.

“Well, we seem to be abandoned,” Langler said.

At the same moment I called out sharply: “but do you feel your feet wet?”

“Yes,” said he, “I do. The river seems to be rising.”

As he spoke I was already wet above the ankles, for not only was the river rising, but so very fast, that I understood that this was no tidal rising, but must be due to some other cause. Langler too understood, for he now said: "the lock-gates have apparently been closed."

"Purposely to drown us, Aubrey?" I cried.

"Well, the timely flight of Piast seems to indicate as much," he answered with astonishing composure, to judge from his voice, for he was merely a voice, since I could only just divine his presence with my eyes, and I heard the water welter directly upon the cliff-wall, and felt it at my knees.

"But what are we to do?" I cried.

"What can we do?" said he, "except bear our lot with fortitude."

"But we shall be drowned!"

"Well, so it seems," said he. "I personally never hoped to get through this adventure."

The water, working actively up, had won to my middle, striking very cold; and that cold, together with my forlornness in that wild, made my death the more awful to me. I tried once, and only once, to climb the cliff-wall; but I could not lift myself a foot, and thenceforth, as in a glass, I saw that there was no escape. A mile or so lower down was a water-mill, where the gorge opened somewhat, and thereabouts we might have got out of the trap (provided that we could climb the lock-gates); but, as Langler said, long before we could get to the gates the water would be over our heads; he could not swim; nor did I mean to leave him before he drowned in any hope of saving myself by swimming, since I knew that I should very soon perish of cold.

Only one thought, and with it a hope, if it can be called a hope, occurred within me, and I said to Langler: "but which way did Piast escape? it must have been forward: let us move forward...." and we did so, walking on a

bottom of grass and slime, I in front with a grip on Langler's sleeve, and the water at our breasts. But it was slow going, and still the wall of rock was with us, so we did not go far, but stood still again near together, and I heard Langler's breaths looser than the puffs of the wind, and more burdened: a rather horrid sound in my memory.

"Well, Aubrey," I panted, with my hand on his shoulder.

His jaws chattered: he could make no answer.

It was about then that a light from, say, forty feet above streamed down comet-wise upon us that must have come from an electric dark-lantern, for, on looking up, I could see nothing save the dazzlement, though I have now an impression, too, of the hoofs of a horse on the cliff-edge: and a voice was shouting to us.

"There is," it cried — *in English* — and stopped; or I may be mistaken, but I am privately convinced that I did hear those two English words, though Langler did not.

"There is," it cried in German, "a stair in the rock twenty metres below" — and at once the light vanished.

We had walked past "the stair"! nor was there any chance that we should ever have found it, though so near; a stair it was not, but a few jags notched out of a slanting slip of the cliff. However, we found them, we contrived to climb to the top: but no one was any longer there when we got to it.

What followed for us that night was almost as baleful as what we had evaded: we were abroad hour after hour in an alpine storm, miners in the colliery of the night, sometimes standing still, dreading to take a step; indeed, it is strange that we were not many times dashed to death, for one could not see the mountains, nor the ground, nor the sky on high, all on all hands was swallowed up in awe, the heart failed at the great rivers of grief which the deluges of wind poured through the forests. It must have been

long past midnight when, by a feat of luck, we hit upon a hut in which was one poor woman, living that hermit-life which they call almen-leben, with a few kine only for companions; she took us in, and succoured us; and with such greed did we eat out and still eat out this good Gretel's larder that our griefs ended in laughter.

When at last we were lying wrapped in blankets in a gloom beshone by a blush from the stove, I whispered to Langler: "did you hear the '*there is*' in English from the cliff?" "No," said he, "I think not." "But was not the voice at all familiar?" "I thought, Arthur, that it resembled Baron Kolár's." "So did I," I said.

Outside the winds worked, venting brokenly and gruff like breakers of oceans thundering on unearthly shores, while for some time I lay too fore-done to sleep, pondering the wonder of that voice in the night. If it was truly Baron Kolár's — I am still not sure of it! — what, I asked myself, could be his motive? Had he merely wished to prove to us his absolute power over our lives? Or had this terrible man meant to destroy us, but relented in the midst? I oftentimes think that he had a liking for Langler.... But I could not solve the riddle, and before long was asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT THE SCHLOSS



THE NEXT AFTERNOON we got down at last to the little guest-court where our luggage was, and now could see a tower of Schweinstein half-a-league away. Langer, however, had to take to his bed, and thus lost three days more.

I, for my part, more easily overcame the effects of my night on the alp, and during those days set myself to come at the truth as to whether or no Baron Kolár was really at home; I must have questioned twenty people; but the answer was always the same: his lordship was not in residence.

On our third morning (a Saturday) at the guest-court we received, to our joy, a long letter from our wounded friend. I had thought it likely that she would write us at the P.O. at Gratz, so I had written to the P.O., and they had now sent on this letter to us in the mountains. Langer's hand trembled, and he had such a ravished smile as touched one to the heart. She had fled to a village in Gloucestershire named Alvington, and was still safely buried there, but meant, she said, to go back to Swandale as soon as she should opine that we in Styria had had time to work out our purpose. The letter for the most part was in a tone of affected lightness; she described the inn where she lodged, its flower-beds, its cat, the landlady's mows, the gambols of the wren; she even gave the political news! Diseased Persons had become law, and now it was the Education Bill that was the row: "as Satan and Michael contended for the body of Moses," she wrote, "so Mr Edwards

and Dr Burton are striving for Ambrose Rivers” — Burton struggling to bring Rivers and his “New Church” under the power of the ecclesiastical courts, Edwards struggling tooth and nail against it; Dr Burton, however, she said, had had an apoplectic fit, and was laid aside for the time being. She begged to be remembered to “the good frock-coat” (*i.e.* to me), but, giving way in the end to her grief, cried out upon our pity to return to her. For us it was a heart-rending letter. I, at any rate, felt that if any mishap should befall her brother in this adventure, then dangers too sinister to be breathed to one’s own heart might overhang her spirit. We had meant to present ourselves that day at the castle, but Langler was too deeply moved by the letter, so we put it off till the next day.

All those days I had not been idle, but had roved a good deal, trying to get friends, and had explored, too, round about the castle by land and river. There were quite thirty to fifty dwellings within two miles, but I found all these people very reserved, given up to their swine and agrarian cares, and looking upon me as a needless phenomenon. Swine abounded! a pig was in every life. However, I won some of them into saying something, and gathered, on the whole, that probably no one *knew* what had become of Dees, but that all probably had a guess that he was, or had been, a prisoner in the castle, in which case they were pleased, with a feeling of “serve him right”; also that no one had, or wished to say that he had, any intuition whereabouts in the world his lordship then was. This, too, was strange, that on that Sunday when Langler and I at last walked down through the forest towards the river and burg no sound of bell called the people to worship; Europe was on its knees, but this one valley of Europe had washed its hands of the Christian Church.

And everyone had only one excuse to offer for this — namely, that “it was enough to do to keep body and soul together.”

How clear and new-made was the air in there that Sunday afternoon! “Up here,” wrote Langler to his sister, “it is never hot nor muggy, I think, for the breezes rest not day nor night, breathing eras of music through the timber.” He said that he had never felt better, though bitterly like Don Quixote before the windmill! Old Lossow (our host) and two boys came along with us, but they left us in a flurry at the outwork barbican; then we two stood before the gate, dressed to our gloves, and Langler said to me: “you know, Arthur, that Christ of Castagno in the gallery at Christ Church? it rises before me now as an expression of the languishment of mind which I feel in the presence of this stronghold.” So I, too, felt; nor was I at all sure that, once in, we should ever come out again; but there we were, and I summoned the castle — the knocker being a cannon-ball hanging on a chain, whereat a woman opened, we stepped into the bailey-court, and a somewhat loosely-dressed man, with a tasselled smoking-cap on his head hurried towards us, followed by a brown bear. “Kiss the hand, sirs,” said he, “you are without doubt the two English acquaintances of the baron from whom I have received a communication.” “Yes, sir,” said I. “I am the burgvogt, Jan Tschudi,” said he; “I take it that you still wish to inspect the burg?” “Still, yes,” said I, for I had a weapon on me. “Willingly from the heart will I show you over the fortress,” said he, “be so good as to come this way.”

We followed him inward, Langler fondling the bear, which had a string of rhododendrons round its neck, Herr Tschudi himself a burly German of middle age, fresh-faced, with a bold brow under his smoking-cap. He led us to some cannon, saying: “these two are fifteenth-century sakers, those there are what they call culverins; and everything with us is of this kind, sirs: here you will find all old, nothing splendid.” He next led us into the gaudy little church, which Langler examined lingeringly, especially two curious niches

in the south wall beside the altar, where the elements had been kept, over which he bent so long that Herr Tschudi and I became restless; “I see,” I said meanwhile to Tschudi, “that your front row of seats are really easy-chairs, as I once heard Baron Kolár say that they are.”

“Yes,” he answered, with a smile. And he added, with a certain flush and challenge: “we once had a particularly brilliant preacher here whom the baron used to take a pleasure in coming down to hear on Sunday mornings; hence the chairs, for his lordship is fond of his ease.”

I could see his lordship reclining, stroking back his scrap of hair, and enjoying the “real toil” of another!

“Who, then, was that brilliant preacher?” I asked.

“He was called the Pater Dees, sir.”

“And what has become of him now?”

“I could not tell you.”

“But can it be the same Pater Max Dees of whom I have heard that he has been a prisoner in the castle?”

“The very same.”

“May I ask — what was his offence?”

“The sin of ingratitude.”

“Indeed? What is the story?”

“Ah, I’m afraid it might be long: you would regret having asked to hear it.”

“I don’t often regret what I do. But ingratitude! Does one go into prison in the alp for that?”

“It may happen!”

“But in a private castle?”

“Sir, let me tell you what you are not perhaps aware of, that among the ancestors of his lordship on the distaff side have been several

Reichsunmittelbarer-Fürsts, and that till late times the lords of this castle have been rechts-fähig” (able to make private laws).

“Quite so, quite so,” said I, “but still, a prisoner in a private castle ... in our times....”

“It is a mere nothing; you should not let that trouble you.”

“But is Father Dees — still a prisoner, if one may ask?”

“Surely one may ask: there is no harm in asking, you know. But all that was five long years ago, of course. Here, however, is your friend, the connoisseur, at last.”

Langler now at last joined us. As we set out afresh a youth with ringlets and a velvet coif came up blushing, to be presented by Herr Tschudi as “Mr Court-painter (Hof-maler) Friedrich.” “But has the baron a court?” I asked, to which Herr Tschudi answered: “not in strict etiquette any longer perhaps; but it amuses the baron to keep up a pretence of the old sovereign rights, and, being a dear heart at bottom, he is ever fond of pets, of whom our friend, the court-painter here, is one.”

We now went on inward to the second court, a party thenceforth of five (including the bear), and were shown the granary, storehouses, electric set. “Do you keep a large staff of retainers?” I asked at the offices. “A mere handful now,” was the answer; and Herr Tschudi added with a laugh: “but they are all trusty to the backbone, in case you ever think of storming the castle!” This was the hard nut whom I had had the fantastic thought of bribing to tell the truth as to Dees! He was full of pride in his baron and castle, and such a hero-worshipper that I even fancied that he tried to ape the baron’s manner and speech. “Certainly, the baron keeps some excellent horses,” said I at the stables: “is he fond of riding?” “Ach, not now,” was the answer; “but he has been a dashing bear and boar huntsman in his time, for whatever he attempts he does with a more magnificent success than

others; the mother of the good Ami here (meaning the bear) was slain by him. As for the horses, the alp is noted for them.” “So, since the baron no longer rides,” said I, “how does he amuse himself now when in residence?” “Mainly in the laboratory, which I will show you presently in the keep,” he answered. “Indeed?” said I, “is the baron a chemist?” “What, you did not know that?” said he: “everyone knows that he is even a specially profound chemist, for chemistry has been his life-study.” “The baron is always found to be more than one had thought him,” said I; “I wonder if my friend and I will have the honour of seeing him before we leave the alp?” “His lordship’s comings and goings,” answered Herr Tschudi, “are always very uncertain.” “Strange to say,” said I, “there is a rumour in the alp that the baron is actually in residence; at least one woman told me that she knows it for a fact.” “Thundery weather!” cried the man with a flush, “what is the woman’s name?” “I don’t know her name,” I answered, not wishing to get my good sennerin into any trouble.

A move was now made towards the keep with its square tower at each corner. By an outside flight of steps we went up to the first floor — there was no ingress to the ground floor — and were shown the old hall (rittersaal). The quality of this place was most quaint somehow, with some feeling of ancient forests, damsels and nixen, and knights of Lyones, yet all was quite plain, even shabby, save some rather portentous portieres which shut off his lordship’s private quarters. I, for the most part, strolled with Herr Tschudi, while Langler, with Herr Court-painter, bent over everything in his connoisseur way: there were paintings by old abbots in tempera whose secret is lost, there were cressets, gobelins, tables of pierced bone, painted hoch-Deutsch MSS. Langler said hardly anything, and only once spoke to Herr Tschudi, when he called out: “Is this pieta ancient?” to which Herr Tschudi answered: “fifteenth-century, sir.” “But,” said Langler, “Herr

Court-painter says sixteenth-century,” at which Herr Court-painter blushed all over his broad face. “No, sir, fifteenth-century,” repeated Herr Tschudi. “I thought it modern,” said Langer; “but what is this inscription on its base?” We all now went to look at the pieta, a Virgin and dead Christ in wax; but Herr Tschudi could make nothing of the inscription, for he said, “it is some pious motto, but I do not know that language — do you, perhaps, Herr Court-painter?” Herr Court-painter of the star-gazing spectacles shook his ringlets, with the answer: “I do not know what it says.” “Does — the baron read Hebrew?” asked Langer suddenly. “Ach, not now any more, I think,” answered Herr Tschudi; “but he has been a master of several old languages in his time.” I noticed Langer’s brow twitch, but did not imagine that the matter was of any importance; I saw, indeed, that the letters on the pieta were Greek, but all in capitals, with the sigmas like C’s, and much effaced, so my mind shirked the bore of reading, and I turned away with the others from it.

After this we were shown the baron’s laboratory, the upper rooms, one of the four towers, and were now escorted by Herr Tschudi, Herr Court-painter, and the bear back to the gate, where Herr Tschudi parted from us with profound reverences.

“It is a fabulous place,” Aubrey wrote of it, “imbued with an old forlornness, and a waving of woods, and the pining of an alto wawl in the windpipe of its airs,” but certainly I felt rather foolish when I left it, for I had learned nothing, and what we were now to do I had no notion. At the entrance to the forest we met our old Lossow with his pipe, and he climbed with me back to the guest-court, Langer meanwhile striding well ahead of us, wrapped in silence.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FACE OF DEES



ON GOING INTO my sitting-room at the guest-court I beheld Langler already there, with a busy pen in his hand and his hat still on his head; he said nothing, nor could I guess what he was at, till, getting up sharply, he handed me to read a note to Herr Tschudi in something like the following words:— “Sir, you have, to my certain knowledge, one Father Max Dees unlawfully confined in Schweinstein Castle, of which you are the governor, his dungeon being the cell at the bottom of the north-west tower. For such an act of flagrant unrighteousness there can be no excuse whatever, and I have to address to you, in the pretended absence of the castle-lord, the warning that, if within the next twenty-four hours your prisoner is not released, then my friend, Mr Templeton, and I will know how to coerce and duly punish you....”

I was never more surprised! — every word of it was surprising! My first words were: “but by what means are we to coerce and duly punish him?”

“Oh, we shall find a way,” said Langler: “I intend to be no longer tentative and tolerant; Dees must now be set at liberty, or I shall act with a certain rigour.”

“But, Aubrey — —”

“No; Arthur, we have already been sluggish and patient, we have lost time — time. It is for us now to put our powers brusquely to the test.”

“I agree,” said I: “let us put our powers to the test, let us act with a certain rigour. But how? I confess that I don’t understand you. Tell me first how on earth you can know that Dees is not only still a prisoner, but in the north-west tower?”

“As to his being still a prisoner, that is on the surface of things,” he answered: “the slightest criticism applied to the words and manner of Herr Tschudi would unveil the man’s consciousness of that fact. He has even caught the contemptuous, frank trick of his master, and was hardly at the pains to be a hypocrite. When you said to him, ‘but is Father Dees still a prisoner, if one may ask?’ his answer was: ‘surely one may ask; but all that was five long years ago, of course.’ Very ‘*long*’ years— ‘of course.’ No, he wouldn’t have spoken at all like that if he had not had Dees’ present captivity in his consciousness; he wouldn’t have been stung to retort: ‘surely one may *ask*,’ but would have answered at once with a careless ‘Oh no.’ And all his manner and other words were in the same sense.”

“You are no doubt quite right,” said I.

“I am even sure of it,” said he: “when I asked him as to the *pieta*, whether it was ancient, how off-hand was his answer, ‘fifteenth-century, sir,’ though he had previously called me a connoisseur, and might have known, if he had troubled to think, that I should see his statement to be untrue. The *pieta* is not at all in any of the moods of old Northern work, and it bears the initials of Max Dees, who most likely made it. But Herr Tschudi did not wish Dees to be a topic, and shunned his name even at the cost of an untruth; nor would he have acted at all like that, Arthur, if Dees had gone out of his life and care five ‘long’ years ago — unless, indeed, there were unseen ears listening somewhere to which Dees’ name is ever a word forbidden in the castle.”

“Well,” said I, “let it be taken as settled that Dees is still there in prison; but how can you know that he is in the north-west tower?”

“You didn’t read the words in raised letters on the base of the pieta?” he asked.

“No, I didn’t read them.”

“In what language do you imagine that they are?”

“In Greek,” said I.

“No, in Hebrew,” said he, “Hebrew words in Greek letters, and so put there by a most knowing mind, I gather, the same mind and hand which captured the wren, and sent her out with her message; and if you add to these proofs of wit the craftsmanship in the pieta, and Herr Tschudi’s admission of Dees’ oratory, you get an intelligence of many gifts, as ‘brilliant’ perhaps as ‘Savonarola.’ Dees apparently made the pieta some time shortly before his imprisonment, when he was not without bodings of his doom; and the Hebrew words in Greek letters were meant to baffle a half-classic like the baron, in case it should ever occur to the baron to read what he would assume to be some pious motto in such a place.”

“But what are the words?” I asked.

“These, Arthur,” said he: “‘If I am killed, it will be the lord’s doing; if imprisoned, at the bottom of the north-west tower.’”

“But that is nearly everything!” I cried: “what luck! I wonder what was Dees’ hope.... But do you mean to say, Aubrey, that you would betray to Herr Tschudi that we are in possession of this wonderful piece of knowledge?”

“It has seemed to me that we have dallied and been mild more than enough, Arthur.”

At this, I must confess, there rose in my mind the old rhyme: “he never said a foolish thing, he never did a wise one.” “But, Aubrey,” said I, “is it

not clear that the last thing which we must do is to threaten and challenge these people? We should only provoke a smile; even our liberty, our lives, are in their hands. Pray listen to me in this for Emily's sake, for all our sakes. We can effect nothing by impulse and spasmodic high-handedness when our power is just nil. And if we betray our knowledge of Dees' dungeon in this fashion, what is to prevent them removing him to another?"

"Well, your judgment is always good," said he, with a smile: "there stands the letter, written, at any rate, but it need not be actually sent; all life is the same tangle, I suppose, in which not only the why but even the how of conduct remains enigmatic, and the maze is without clue, save at its end," and he threw himself on our old sofa, with his hands behind his head, while I at our window-garden of fuchsias and oleanders tore up the note, looking down an avenue of the wood, till presently I said: "I wonder if Dees' dungeon has a window?"

"Castles of that date," answered Langler, "have not usually dungeon-windows; but Dees' dungeon has one, of course."

"How do you know?"

"But didn't he send a bird from it?"

"Well, of course. Well, then, since there is an opening of some sort, the thing for us now to do is to get at Dees, and *he* will tell us how to work out his release. I believe that it can be done, if he is really in the north-west tower, for the north wall of the castle rises sheer from the river-cliffs, which are only some thirty feet high."

Langler sat up at my words, and for the rest of that evening we were discussing this thing on every side.

The next (Monday) morning I rode five miles towards Speisendorf, where I got a boy to buy for me forty metres of rope, and on coming home spent the remainder of the day in my room making a rope-ladder; on the

Tuesday I purloined two hooks from a shanty in the cow-yard to fasten to my ladder; and at midnight of that same day I was face to face with Max Dees.

I shall never forget that night, that experience, it was so tenebrous and windy, all was like a scene in Erebus — the castle, the cliffs, the forests, not a light anywhere on the earth or in the heaven, and my heart, like the midnight thief's, was in my mouth. We left the guest-court by stealth, hurried down the forest, and at the river launched the fishing-boat which I had previously fixed upon — a nasty piece of work, for that small river falls some five feet, and by ill luck the tide was at ebb, so we had to push down the boat through slush, and when we had got under the castle I had to climb through more slush to the cliff. Langler remained in the boat, for there was nothing to make her fast to. Above some ivy grew on the cliff, but none below.

At a cranny where the cliff-surface was more broken I now began to cast the ladder; but I had cruel luck at first, every cast making a racket of which all the jackdaws on the rock and the very soul of the night seemed to be conscious, and I regretted keenly that we had not tried our luck with the wooden ladder of the guest-court, much too short though it was. However, after a few throws, the grapples caught fifteen feet up, and in the end, by three stages, I stepped over a crucifix at the top at a point where a yew and an ash grew out of the bush at the cliff-edge; and now not two feet from the edge was the north wall of the north-west tower, and in it a window almost level with the ground.

At that window I lay on my right side, I called upon Max Dees: and at once, startling me, a hungry breath was with me; “yes,” it whispered, “I am here, you are come to deliver me — tell me!”

“Yes, Dees,” I whispered, “we are two — —”

“Gott!” he whispered, “speak low.”

I told him that his message sent out by the wren had come to us, and asked what we were to do for him.

“Yes, to deliver me,” he whispered, “a good file, bring it to-morrow night, in three nights I shall be ready to fly with you, go now, tread softly, one good file....”

“I shall bring the file,” I whispered, “but our object in coming was to be able to swear that you are actually a prisoner, and so move the authorities — —”

“*Speak low*,” he whispered horridly: “no, the file, the authorities would not act against him — not for months, years, and he means to crucify me.... Has the Church fallen?”

“No; why?”

“He vowed to keep me to see the downfall of the Church, which I loved, and then crucify me, bring the file....”

“He shall fail, I promise you, don’t be so frightened, take comfort, trust in God, trust in us, we mean to stick to you to our last breath — —”

“Thanks, the file, go, go, one good file.”

“We sha’n’t fail,” I said, and I was now about to rise when, to my dismay, I heard a noise in the bush, and, peering that way, my eyes made out the form of a man. I was very unnerved. It came toward me along the cliff-edge, and I had a thought of shooting, for a weapon was in my trousers pocket, when I became aware of Langer! — a surprising thing, seeing that he had arranged not to climb. He stooped to my ear, panting, “is he there?” “Yes,” I whispered, “but to what have you made fast the boat?” “Gott, speak low,” came in agony from the window-bars. “I made her fast to the ladder,” whispered Langer, “have you *seen* him?” “One can’t now, go back,” I whispered. “We should *see* him,” he whispered, “so as to be able — —” “It

is all right; go back,” I whispered, “no! no! don’t strike—” for I heard him about to strike a match; but the match was struck, and in its shine we had a vision of a face all eyes in a bush of black beard and hair; it seemed horrified at the striking of the light! which, however, was hardly burning before it was puffed out by the wind.

It was at that moment that I became aware of a grating sound ten yards along the cliff-edge where the ladder was, and immediately I heard a splash in the river; whereupon, picking myself up, I pelted to the spot, only to find the ladder gone. I understood at once that the boat, tied by Langler to the ladder-foot, had dragged upstream (the tide was rising), dragging the grapples aside from the arm of the crucifix at the cliff-edge, and taking the ladder with her; and I felt hopelessness, for how we were ever to get away it was hard to see, since I was aware that some parts of the bailey-wall went up sheer from the cliff-edge.

“Is the ladder gone?” whispered Langler.

“Yes,” I whispered, and I could not help adding: “pity you came up!”

“I thought that I had better *see* him, in order to be able to say that I had,” he whispered.

“You might have said it without actually seeing, you know, Aubrey.”

“Hardly, I think, Arthur,” said he.

I would not answer, for at the moment, I confess, I was a little impatient of Oxford and the academic stiff mind of the schoolmen. The ladder was gone! that was the point: and with it all seemed lost.

However, we presently started out eastward on hands and knees, until we entered some narrows beyond which there was no venturing; then, having turned, we once more went by Dees’ window, who sent out to us some momentous hist, which we were in too much misery of mind to heed; and in the end, after somehow managing two danger-spots, we came out into forest

at the castle-back. From that point we saw for the first time a light in the night, a light in a tiny window of the donjon — as to which Langler made the reckoning that it was burning either in or near the baron's laboratory.

We then walked up through the forest, got by stealth into the guest-court about two o'clock, and crept to our beds. I, however, could not sleep, but lay living over again all our night-bewitched adventure: the winds, the tremors and chances, seeing again the eyes and hearing the gasps of that poor, darksome prisoner, and thinking of the loss of the boat and of what that meant: for I knew that with the next ebb of the tide the boat would very likely be recovered by her owner, with our ladder tied to her, and with my jacket, waistcoat, and cap, and Langler's hat, in her! so that what we had been about would too probably soon be known in the castle and throughout the alp.

CHAPTER XX

THE UPSHOT



EARLY THE FOLLOWING morning Langler and I had pretty sharp difference of opinion at my bedside. I said to him: "Dees' own view of what is good for himself is naturally worth more than yours or mine: a file is what he says that he wants, and I believe that we can still get it to him if we act now before the boat is found."

"The boat may have already been found," said Langler.

"Possibly," said I; "but no doubt the rumour will take some time to get into the castle, so that if we act boldly at once, taking the ladder here, we may get the file to Dees."

"But we have no file," said he.

"That is the least of it, surely," I answered: "Lossow has a big box of tools; we can take a file."

"No, frankly, Arthur, it would not be quite to my taste," said he.

"What would not, Aubrey?"

"This of the file: does it seem quite pretty and correct to allow ourselves to become the abettors of any person in breaking open another man's house?"

I was silent: it was painful to me to believe that Langler could be serious. "But in this case," said I, "the other man's house happens to be a house in which the person is lawlessly imprisoned. Or is that not so?"

“True,” said he; “but still, isn’t it very well said that two wrongs do not make a right? If you look at it with a certain sidelong criticism and detachment, I fancy that you will just see that it would not be quite decorous and becoming. No, it would not be decorous, and, moreover, it is not in the scheme. We have now actually seen Dees in prison, so the proper authorities can no longer refuse to act, and upon them we must now cast the burden.”

“But the authorities *can* refuse to act,” said I, “for Baron Kolár, remember, is no mere nobleman, but a political somebody, and the authorities, if they do act, may take weeks, or ‘months or years,’ as Dees said. True, the authorities are what we originally proposed: but we did not then contemplate that *time* would be the question, that Baron Kolár might be here at home, or might have any purpose against the life of this poor man — ‘crucify,’ by the way, is the word which Dees used: open your mind to it, Aubrey.”

“Well, but to me there is something fantastic in the mere word,” said he: “Dees’ mind may be unhinged.”

“Not in the least, I believe,” I answered. “Are crucifixions so very unfamiliar to you? I say that if some circumstance or other once led Baron Kolár to vow that this thing shall be done, then it will be done, unless we act now out of the rut of ourselves, on a plane higher than our everyday height. It is hard to do, of course, but perhaps we can screw ourselves up to it. Let us think of Dees’ agony of waiting for the file to-night, to-morrow night, every night; and I promised him, I said, ‘we sha’n’t fail you, trust in us, we shall stick to you to our last breath.’ No, we can’t fail him.”

“But you speak as though I proposed to fail him, Arthur!” said Langer.

“No, you don’t, of course, propose that,” said I, “but still, we can’t let some qualm of primness or respectability in us cause the man to curse

Heaven: he should have the file; I know that Emily would agree with me —
—”

“Emily? No! Emily would hardly say, I think, that the principles of conduct should be modified by pressing circumstances.”

“But did not David eat of the shewbread in pressing circumstances?”
said I: “I am convinced that Emily would agree with me, if I know her.”

“No, nego, nego.”

“Well, we won’t dispute that,” said I; “but still, let us think of Dees waiting, despairing, conscious perhaps that Baron Kolár is in the castle, with God knows what ghastly meaning. And to move the authorities will take time, even if they be willing; and who can say what may happen meanwhile to Max Dees?”

“Then I shall know how to act this very day,” said he, “neither approaching the authorities nor giving Dees the file, but in another vigorous, yet law-abiding, fashion.”

“Which fashion, Aubrey?”

“I shall rouse the alp,” said he, “I shall implant into each mind the certainty of Dees’ imprisonment, I shall ignite their indignation, and lead them all to demand his release.”

For some time I made no answer to this; then I said: “well, do so; and, if the human swineherds on this alp were theories, you might just possibly succeed: remember, however, that, in the event of your failure, it will be too late then to take the file, for the news of the boat and ladder will certainly by that time have reached the castle, and Dees will thenceforth be strictly guarded, or removed to another dungeon.”

“Well, but I won’t fail,” said he— “at least let us hope that I won’t fail, Arthur; one can but try one’s purblind best, and it may perhaps be that time and tide will happen to him.”

“Yes, I see how you feel, I see,” said I; “but you know the awe, and even affection, which all these people here cherish for the baron: how, then, can you expect to ‘lead’ them against him? If you do manage it, the baron will send Herr Court-painter to stare them away with his spectacles — —”

“No, I think that you underestimate the good people,” he answered: “though indolent in the presence of a suspected wrong, they will not be slow to rise against a proved wrong. Do let us have some little trust in our kind.”

I felt myself, as it were, caught in the toils with this sudden scheme of Langler’s, seeing quite clearly, as I did, that no good would come of it, but the more I argued the more I seemed to fix him in it, till at last it almost looked as if a crick of contradiction to me had entered into his motive. I saw, indeed, his point of view: to approach the authorities might be fatally slow, to give Dees the file was “improper” — a touch of bigotry perhaps being added to this latter view by my unlucky claim that his sister would believe it proper, for he was touchy as to her judgments, and inflexible whenever the moral, or even the proper, was at all involved; but still, his way out of the fix appeared to me too wild. At one moment I even had the thought of taking the file to Dees without him, but I saw that I should probably fail single-handed; and, moreover, *he* was the head in this matter: to his house, not to mine, Max Dees’ wren had come, and I had merely accompanied his undertaking.

Well, what happened that day is tedious to me to tell, and shall be told shortly: first, I saw Langler in head-to-head talk with Lossow, our host, who, though very friendly with us, had never yet let one word of Dees’ history escape his lips; then after all the talk, the head-noddings, the finger-countings, I saw Langler giving money — a good mass of it, too — and I thought to myself: “what, has it become a question already of bribing the

‘good people’? the disillusionment will grow!” Lossow then wrote out a list of names, which Langler conned, and near eleven in the morning they two rode out together. I offered to be with them: but it was felt that my heart was hardly in the business, and I was left out of it behind.

At one o’clock Lossow came back alone, and hurried to me, mopping his bald head, where I sat at the foot of a tree. This old man always seemed by some movement of the mouth to be trying to keep back a smile, but without success; he was stout and chubby, his arms hung from his stooped shoulders with a certain paralysed look, and he stepped short like a woman. “Kiss the hand!” he said, beaming, “all goes well, we have ridden like blackriders, and canvassed the folk. Herr Somebody will not only come, but will bring his two sons and his three day-labourers, and by three o’clock you will see gathered here the bravest swarm of them.” “That should mean good trade in the beer for you, Lossow,” said I. “The beer? good trade? for me?” said he, taken aback, “well, no doubt, folks must drink after all, folks must drink, what would you have? There’s Karl and Jakub So-and-so have already struck work, and mean to make a day of it — it is the richest affair this day! You’ll see them come gaping here like fish presently, the blessed swarm of them!” “But why gaping?” said I, “hasn’t Herr Langler explained why they are to come?” “Ach, not to all,” he answered, “for I whispered to Herr Langlaire, ‘hasten with leisure,’ ‘many heads, many minds’; they of these parts are a curious lot, you know, oh, a curious lot, you wouldn’t understand them even after many years, for one must be born among them.” “On the contrary, Lossow,” said I, “I understand you through and through: you mean that, if Herr Langler had told them everything, they would have been afraid to show their noses, and the rich affair would have been spoiled.” “Ah, you are a rogue!” said he, “well, between us, it was something like that: what would you have? one is nearer to himself than to his neighbour. After all,

these bayers and landsasses here are a mean-spirited swarm, what can you expect? As for me, if I had been they, I should have demanded the release of the Pater Dees long ago, yes, I! — if I had been they. Still, some of them *have* been told all, and there's Herr Somebody coming with his two sons, Wolfgang and Ernst — —” “Who is this Herr Somebody?” I asked. “What,” said he, “not know Herr Somebody yet? the Mittel-frei? with fifty acres of beet on the yon side of the Schwannsee? Between us, he keeps a little grudge against the baron, and is all for a lark, with a carouse to follow” — in this way he kept on gossiping, trying not to smile, but smiling, and full of the heyday. Langer, it appeared, was still “canvassing the folk,” had five cottages more to visit, but would be back for dinner, which Lossow at last hurried off to see to.

Langer, returning near two, threw himself upon our sofa with a sad sigh, saying: “well, so far, so good; but the boat has been recovered, Arthur; all is known, and your things and my hat, with the ladder, have been taken to the castle. Perhaps some of them will shrink from coming to the rendezvous now.” He sighed again.

“As to the boat,” said I, “that I quite expected: it is calamitous, but I expected it. But as to the rendezvous, I doubted that you would still adhere, Aubrey, to this strange action upon which you have embarked.”

“But you speak of it, Arthur, as strange! Is it not as natural as the unfolding of a flower to appeal to one's human fellows in a case where humanity has been outraged? True, these people are not quite gilt with perfection — ah, no! one must admit that; but their rudeness is the plainness of honesty, they are robust and good, and, after all, I have had more success with them than I could have hoped.”

“But you have not told them for what purpose you want them to come.”

“No, not told it to all, not yet.”

“And when you do tell them, do you imagine that they will march to the castle?”

“Yes, they will rise, they will act: men are not sheep after all.”

“But suppose they rise, and act, and march, what then? Will they tear the castle down like the Bastille?”

“No, certainly, not that: but truth alone is huge, surely; justice by itself is the shout of a host. We shall see how it turns out. One after all can only steer by one’s best chart, Arthur, casting one’s cause upon the immortal gods, not without hope. But here is Lossow come to call us to dinner.”

In peeped a face trying not to smile, but smiling, and we went down to dinner in the old kitchen, soon after which I began to note the shy arrival of Hans and Klaus, one by one, two by two, who all slunk into the beer-room on the left of the porch, and I heard later on (though not from Langler) that drink was free that day. Meantime Langler was pacing our sitting-room with a strenuous brow, preparing, I think, a speech.

Down below grew a noise of tongues, and soon after three o’clock in looked Lossow busily, giving out the whisper: “they are all in the beer-garden waiting!” this beer-garden being a yard with tables, swings, etc., behind the house, which was L-shaped. Upon this Langler paced yet twice, took up hat and thorn-stick, and said quietly to me: “well, then, let us go.”

Below we stood under the verandah, and with us were Lossow, Frau Lossow, their four daughters, and two servants; before us in the garden a mob of some fifty, with a few women and infants, earth-born beings, one of whom bore a broomstick with a rag for flag: this was Herr Somebody! — I think the name was Voss or Huss — a sloven, red rascal like a satyr. Some few gaped silent, “like fishes,” but it was evident to me that the mind of the meeting was waggish; and Langler, standing against the verandah-rail, addressed them.

He was palish, but then his brow reddened, and, on the whole, I was surprised how well he spoke, since German was strange to his tongue; he kept putting his palms to the rail and catching them up again, and bowing forward and up again, and I felt how very foreign, very trying and hard, to him all this must be; but he became earnest, speaking feelingly, and I could have cried to see him spending his soul upon that herd, appealing to them as brothers where no brotherhood was, giving them news of justice and of compassion and of passionate intrepidity, where only pigs and mugs were understood. Several times he was stopped by the ribald Herr Voss or Huss waving the broomstick, and whooping some such cry as “on to the burg, you clowns! let’s souse old Tschudi in the river-water!”

“Well, now,” said Langler, “let us go: all of us together: with the fixed purpose not to leave the castle without bringing back our poor prisoner with us. We will carry no weapon in our hands, no, yet we shall be great in power. Let us go; and I shall go in front, and my friend here, too, will come, to strengthen us.”

I think that he was about to say more: but just now, on a sudden, behold Herr Castle-governor Tschudi in his smoking-cap standing with us. I first heard a guffaw behind me, then at once the man was beside Langler at the verandah-rail, and at once he was crying out jokes to this or the other of the crowd, cutting Langler short, asking one how his horrid old swell-foot was, assuring another that his old woman was at that very moment making a cuckold of him, egging on another to go at once to the castle to rescue the *saintly* and *grateful* Pater Dees; and the throng was roaring with laughter when, all at once, the man’s face took on a look of ire that strongly reminded one of his over-lord, and he ordered them all instantly to be gone to their abodes.

Langler made not one other effort, for he was not one to strive and cry, and the power over the mob of the coarse-grained man beside him was so obvious. As the crowd began to flow away my friend turned to me, and smiled.

The last I saw of our army was Voss or Huss marching loudly away, broomstick held aloft, against the burg, in the midst of a crew of some eight or ten.

As these disappeared, Herr Tschudi tapped me on the arm.

“Sirs,” said he, “kiss the hand: will you have the goodness to step this way with me?”

We followed him into a room opening upon the verandah.

“Those articles yours, sirs?” said he, pointing to a chair on which lay our rope-ladder together with my jacket, waistcoat, and cap, and Langler’s hat, left in the boat.

“Yes,” said I, “they are ours.”

“Well, I have brought them for you,” said he; “but I have now to suggest to you, sirs, that you leave the alp before noon to-morrow.”

“Is it a threat?” cried I, starting.

The man made me no answer, but laying his hand upon Langler’s arm, said to him: “don’t take it as a threat; I suggest it to you in a friendly way: listen to me. You have shot a buck (made a blunder) in coming here, and you will spin no silk by remaining longer. You have been strangely lucky so far, owing to the fact that your intentions are amiable; but you know nothing, you are groping in the dark on the brink of a precipice. You go away now.”

“Well, your advice seems to be kindly meant,” said Langler, “and we thank you. But there is no chance of its influencing us at all, Herr Tschudi.”

“Then I leave it to you,” said Tschudi, “God guard,” and he strode away.

We two then went up to our sitting-room, where we spent the evening and most of that night. Little was said between us. Langler was not well, and complained of a pain in the heart. He was, indeed, very deeply hurt, and said to me with a meekness that made my heart ache: "I shall never again act against your judgment, Arthur, in such a matter. Oh, I thought men nobler, and the gods less niggard." It was useless to go to bed, for I never heard such a racket, the wind was rough, and the crew of peasants, who had gone away only for a time, were below, since drink already reckoned for was to be had that night. Till quite into the morning their music, quarrelling, and roars of merriment rose up to us through the roaring of the tempest in the forest — hour after hour — so that I pitied Langler, who, I knew, must be feeling that the money which he had laid out with fond hopes of good was working harm. Between the noises he and I deliberated as to what was now to be done by us; but there was nearly nothing to be said, since nothing remained but to address ourselves to the law of the land. I wanted him to come, too, with me to Gratz, but he said, what was true, that it was useless for us both to go; he was weary and disillusioned, and perhaps Herr Tschudi's command to go had something to do with his will to stay, but I was unwilling to leave him, and begged him to go down at least to Speisendorf or Badsögl; but no, he would stay where he was. At last the noises died down, and some time after two we went to bed.

CHAPTER XXI

AT GRATZ



THE NEXT MORNING I came upon our Hanska in Speisendorf street, hands in pockets, whistling (as ever) at the crucifix on the mountain. This knit little chit of a man had a pride in his cylinders and some flea of flight in his brain; he and his car were well ready for me, and we reached Gratz in the early afternoon after a charming ride.

I had no hope that affairs would go flyingly with me in Gratz, and thought to myself, "this will be a matter of some days"; but it was three weeks before I left the town.

Whether those were trying weeks for me will be divined: I was afraid for Dees, afraid for Langler up there alone in the mountains, and afraid to open the letters from Swandale which he forwarded on to me. Miss Emily had, in truth, become awfully eager and anxious! all too eager and anxious, I thought. *Why* the delay, she wished to know! I had begged Langler to write her fully of everything as it happened, but no, he chose to be general and vague, and this only enlarged, instead of lulling, her fears. She was now back in Swandale, living partly with the Misses Chambers, and was quite well, she said. But something in me boded that she was not so well as she said.

Hence those weeks in Gratz were rather to me like three years. Among Langler's letters of introduction was one to a Herr Müller, a grain-merchant in the Holz Platz, upon whom I first called; he received me heartily, and

introduced me to a certain Herr von Dungern, a lawyer, who said to me in his office on the morning after my arrival: "I'm afraid that that letter of yours written from England to Public Safety — *foh! foh!* — unsupported by evidence as it was, will now be against you." He was a fine, soldierly man, but afflicted with something which caused him to mix in all his talk this *foh! foh!* flung sideways with venom. "But," said I, "that old letter of ours must be forgotten by now." "Oh no," he answered; "there it still lies in the Evidenz-bureau, and you know that interest in a question once dead is not easily revived." "That may be," said I, "but I can now take oath that I have seen the Pater Dees in his dungeon, and here is Mr Langler's written statement, which you will duly formalise for me." "True, true," said he, "very true. Well, it is a matter — *foh! foh!* — for the Blessed Virgin and Herr Oberpolizeirath."

I now know that this Herr von Dungern was a tenant of land under Baron Kolár, but still, I can't accuse him of untrustiness to me, only of slowness — of intentional slowness, I think. It was not till the following morning that I was brought to the bureaux with the affidavits, and then it was from bureau to bureau, each interview somehow filling up the better part of a day, and everyone as it were laying his hand over his mouth at the high scandal which I was so bold as to air. "But," said I to Herr von Dungern as we drove away on the fourth evening, "*someone* must be the final authority! I have now been referred up and up from a common Sicherheits-wache-serjeant to two Polizeiraths, and still no end to it." "Lands, manners," said he, with a shrug— "every country has its usages." "Just so," said I, "but I am still at a loss to know why I have spent my afternoon with Herr Polizeirath of Central Inquiry in a case where there is nothing to inquire into." "Well," said he, hardly very honestly, "one, of course, must see Herr Polizeirath before one can see Herr Oberpolizeirath." "Yes," said I, "Herr

Polizeirath of Safety, but why, after all, Herr Polizeirath of Inquiry? the interview seems to have been as needless as it was long!” “You do not — *foh! foh!* — understand,” said he. “No,” said I, “I do not, and it is very trying.” “I am grieved from the heart,” said he, “for I foresee that your patience is about to be tried; but you must amuse yourself, since everyone in our city is eager to entertain you, and the good Lord, thank God, does not grudge us any innocent gaieties; my wife and daughters in especial look forward with keenness to seeing you at our birthday-ball.” “But that is a week hence!” said I: “do you anticipate that I shall still be in Gratz?” “Ah, it may be!” said he, “we shall see: to-morrow at eleven we appear before Herr Oberpolizeirath of Safety himself....”

This Herr Oberpolizeirath, whose name was Tiarks, was a gross old man, all slashed and epauletted, with a nose like a bunch of blackberries in August. I was received by him in a chamber which brought back to my mind the scented answer which he had sent to our letter from Swandale, and from the first I had little hope in this old man. “But what, sir,” he asked me, “is your motive in this affair?” “A motive of humanity,” I answered: “a bird sent out by the captive with a note bound about its leg came to the house of my friend; we felt bound to investigate the matter; we have done so; and we now place it with confidence in your hands.” “But,” said he, “in order to see this captive, you must have entered upon Schweinstein Castle by stealth?” “Yes,” I answered cuttingly, “but that, I take it, is not a point which will distract your Honour’s attention from the proved fact of an outrage committed within the scope of your jurisdiction.” “But,” said he, his face flushing purpler, “perhaps you will find, sir, that the Austrian authorities are not inclined to allow themselves to be pleased with chords (pretensions) strung too high.” “I have already found it, Herr Oberpolizeirath,” said I.

“Ach, it is an affair, this!” sighed he faintly to himself, with a waved hand, and eyes cast upward.

In the greater part of the interview I had no share, but sat staring at the apple-green walls, while Tiarks and von Dungern laid their heads together apart. Such shrugs, such spreadings of both palms, and gazings over the rims of spectacles, one never saw! Then came the proposal that I should drop my plaint for a time, till the baron should be given a chance to set free his captive; to which I answered angrily: “But is Baron Kolár to be forewarned by those who should be his judges? He will never of himself set free this captive, and if he be given hints and nudges in the dark I shall consider that both justice and myself have been betrayed.” “Eh, eh, we know that the English hold no leaf before the mouth!” cried Herr Oberpolizeirath, with a waved hand: “but do you imagine, sir, that the baron does not already know what is being done? Poh, he knows; all Gratz knows. And would you not prefer to withdraw the plaint a little, rather than see it referred to the President at Vienna, and then perhaps up to the Provincial Diet itself after several months? Come, take your lawyer’s advice; and meantime, if you stay on in Gratz — why, we know that every young man craves for the society of the opposite sex — saving the claims of religion, mind you, saving the claims of religion; but between us three here, you can’t beat Gratz for female loveliness: what, von Dungern? Yes, sir, drop the plaint a little, and on the 7th of the month you have the Statthaltereirei Ball, on the 8th Count Attem’s, on the 9th the Prince-bishop of Seckau comes into residence, with street-processions, church-rites” — and more of this sort. In this way this old fogey thought to stroke my beard with honey, as the Germans say. Of course, I did not drop the plaint, and it was formally heard the next day before a lower commissary: but I might as well have dropped it! From the tenth day I began to despair, for I had by then been put

through even the formality of giving the date of my mother's birth, had interviewed at the rathhaus, land-hause, Schlossberg people whose relation with the affair seemed to be as remote and entangled as possible; and I said then to myself: "Max Dees was right: they don't mean to interfere."

Meantime I wrote daily to, and heard from, Langler, and enclosed in his letters came some from Swandale which made the delays of the authorities maddening to me, because of a panting for our return which those letters now appeared to reveal. Alas, at the bottom of her heart Miss Emily did not believe that we should ever return to her, I think; but mixed with this under-despair was that hope which is common to all the living, and I believe that it was this hope battling for breath against this despair which gave rise to this sort of fierce haste that now possessed and hissed in her to see our faces yet once again.

Gratz, meantime, was as lively a town, both in a social and religious way, as it is ever a charming one. I saw the fête of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, and that of the Precious Blood on the Sunday following, and each time I peeped into St Ægidius it was full of people praying, with a priest or two pacing among them, like well-satisfied shepherds, while in the lesser churches also was much the same sight. I had nothing to do at night, and to escape from myself went to two balls, at the first of which a little German monk, who reminded me of Luther, gave a homily on the lawfulness of innocent amusements. But I was sick of Gratz by the eleventh day, and was wrought to throw up everything, when something gave me a new thought.

On that eleventh day I was strolling in an alley of the Stadt Park when I saw coming towards me a girl whom I had long known — a particularly pretty little girl named Rosie, who for some years had been in the service of my sister, Lady Burney, but now was in the service of the Duchess of St

Albans. When I expressed my surprise at seeing her, her answer was: “the duchess is on the way to Vienna, but stopped at Gratz to have an interview with Baron Kolár; she understood in London that the baron is at Schweinstein, but he isn’t, as it turns out, and no one seems to know where he is somehow, so I don’t know what our next move will be.”

We sat under a tree within sound of the band, and had a long talk that afternoon, for this servant-girl seemed to know everybody of any importance in Europe and the secret history of all that was going on, so she not only kept me amused, but posted me anew as to things and men in an astonishing way. Her mistress was, of course, the great lady in English politics, and had a habit, Rosie said, of making her her messenger, and even of “consulting her opinion”! Speaking of Ambrose Rivers, she said that he had now won a following of over eight hundred, and had opened a church in Kensington, to which she had once gone: “it is a kind of a cross between a theatre and a gymnasium,” said she, “but the duchess regards him more as a crank than as a serious force in religious politics, and he only owes it to Dr Burton’s illness that he has not been already brought under the consistory court. Ah!” she added in her bright way, “I saw that fit of Dr Burton’s!” “What, you were present?” said I. “I alone,” said she: “I was even the cause of it.” “How do you mean — the cause of it?” I asked. “I’ll tell you,” said she, “but, of course, it is between us, sir. Never was so frightened in my life! It was about nine in the evening, at the palace, the duchess had sent me with a note, I was to wait for an answer, and was led into a room in that Blore part. The Archbishop, who was at a table covered with papers, laid the note by his side, said ‘take a chair’ to me, and went on writing. I noticed that he was not looking well: every two minutes he heaved a sigh, twice got up to look for something, but seemed to forget what, and sat down again without, and he would press his hand to his brow,

as if he had a headache. Presently he sprang up, and began to pace about: all this time, mind you, he hadn't opened the duchess's note, nor seemed to be aware that I was anywhere, and I, of course, sat quite mum, taking stock of my archbishop. But, all at once, he saw me, looked at me — didn't say anything, went on pacing, but I noticed that he turned pale, and several times after that he looked at me, growing paler and paler, till at last, making up his mind, he came to me: I never saw anyone so ghastly gaunt! he frightened me! And what do you think his Grace said, sir? 'Well, pretty, do you love me?'"

"Dr Burton? said *that*? 'well, pretty, do you love me?'"

"Yes, he said it — in such a secret voice; and he was pale, pale...."

"But — what did *you* say?"

"My answer was a scream, sir, for the words had hardly passed his lips when he was on the ground in a fit. The doctors say, by the way, that if ever he has another, he will slip his cable."

Some of Rosie's phrases were not utterly pretty, and her anecdotes so numerous that one doubted whether they could be all quite true; but, assuming this of Dr Burton to have at least some truth, I was very shocked, very deeply moved, and I got from her a promise not again to mention it during the doctor's lifetime.

When I asked her what was the big thing at the moment in England, "Oh, still Education," she answered in her off-hand manner: "it is nearly through the Commons now, but the Church isn't going to hear of it. This bill puts an Eton education within the reach of every boy, as in France and elsewhere, and it does seem hard that the Church should stand in the way when anyone can see that England is perishing for lack of just this thing: but that is the Church all over — the old enemy of light." "Why, Rosie, you are not a good Catholic!" I said. "Oh, well," said she, "one must submit one's reason to

God, of course; but still, one's private thoughts will peep through. However, the Church was defeated over Diseased Persons, and she may be over Education, too: Mr Edwards, I know, means fight, and so does the duchess." "But Diseased Persons was won through the discovery of that body and cross in Bayeux," said I: "do people, by the way, still discuss that discovery?" "Nothing has ever been made of it that I know of," she answered: "but some queer things were said, as some queer things were said of the disappearance of Dr Todhunter, and it gave a shock to the Church somehow, till two more of the visions were seen, and that turned people's minds away."

On the whole, the girl proved a mine of modernity: but what causes me to mention her here is a criticism of some of her words made by Langer, and a meditation which occurred in my mind in consequence of that criticism, not without definite result.

On the night of our meeting I mentioned her in my usual letter to Langer, and in his next to me were the following words:— "This Rosie, you tell me, says that Baron Kolár is not at Schweinstein: but you and I believe differently! That voice and those two English words which you heard on the night when we were saved from drowning, and that light in (?) the castle laboratory on the night when we saw Max Dees — these, indeed, are hardly proofs; yet we do *have a feeling* that he is there: and I have asked myself what can be his reason for hiding his presence there, if he is there, even from political people like the Duchess of St Albans. The reason suggested to my mind is that he may really mean to do Max Dees some harm, with the odium of which he does not wish to be afterwards pestered. Dees, it seems, has somehow wronged him, and vengeance is to be taken. But why, then, one might ask, does the man not take his vengeance and be done? It seems to be because Dees is being reserved till something else first

happens, till (according to Dees himself) ‘the downfall of the Church.’ But, in that case, why is the baron *at present* lurking in Schweinstein? Perhaps it is in order to hurt Dees *prematurely*, before ‘the downfall,’ in case you and I should make serious headway in the matter of effecting Dees’ release. But if this be so, it would seem to show that the baron must have some real fear of our power to release Dees. Indeed, he *has* such a fear: why else did he hurry hither the moment he saw that we could no longer be kept away from Styria? How sensitive he must be of the least chance of Dees’ escaping him! Yet he is not a nervous man; one would imagine that he might securely have left Dees to the care of the watch-dog Tschudi! But no, he flies to the spot in person. And those two outrages upon the innocent hands — how sensitive, how frightfully in earnest he must have been to keep us from meddling! But that earnestness certainly implies a fear of our power — of our power, which seems to be nil. It must be, then, that the baron perceives that we have some power of which we ourselves are not aware.”

There Langler’s discernment seems to have stopped short; but his words so struck me, that I could not forget them, and after a sleepless night, which I shall ever remember, towards morning this thought was born in my head: “but Max Dees is a *churchman*! this is the heyday of the Church, so it is through the Church perhaps that his release may be wrought; and the baron, more far-seeing than we, has long seen this, and has feared our power, because it seemed certain to him that we, too, must see it! Here have I been tossed from Herr to Herr and from pillar to post; but the Prince-bishop of Seckau is in Gratz, and it is to him perhaps that I should have gone.”

Thus oddly, one might say awfully, do things come off: if I had not met that girl in the Stadt Park I might never have come at this meditation, and everything, in the end, would have been otherwise than it was.

CHAPTER XXII

END OF DEES



IT WAS ON my seventeenth morning in Gratz that, having been fortified with a letter by Herr Oberbürgermeister, I saw the Prince-bishop: the morning of an audience: so that I had first to wait a long time among a mob of all sorts of men, who passed in one by one at the call of a Spanish abbé with sandals on his feet, a lad of such beauty that one's eyes clung to his face, till my turn at last came, and I was ushered into a chamber almost Pompadour in style, with statues, mirrors, flowers, through a door of which one could see, and smell, the palace-chapel. The Prince-bishop was pacing the floor, shut up within himself. I think that I never saw a more imposing figure, for he was big, and, having lately come from the chapel, had on a most gorgeous large cope, the apparel of his amice sticking up stiffly about his jaws under a dalmatic that might have bought a farm. Here was the Church in the awe of her gaudery. He looked a young man of not more than thirty-five, and stood like a king; but his lengthy chin was retreating, and he had some kind of lisp which made his speech rather common and silly.

He motioned me to a chair, and as I unfolded my tale quietly enough he listened, pacing, pacing; but the moment I had finished he reddened, and, suddenly placing his two palms far forth on the table, bringing his face down to mine, the good man glared at me, giving forth the roar: "*Impious scoundrel!*"

I, for my part, felt myself flush, and half rose to answer the insult, for I fancied that he meant me: but he meant Baron Kolár!

During the remainder of our half-hour's interview it became clear to me that there had been long-standing feud and war before this between the prince-bishop and the baron, an old trial of strengths never yet decided, but now to be decided; and when I deposited the affidavits with the great churchman I deposited them certain that I had at last discovered the key to the dungeon of Dees.

And so it proved: for, to cut short the story of intrigue, and runnings to and fro, and hurried breaths, during the next three days, on my twentieth day in Gratz a body of garrison-soldiers and sicherheitswachmänner, numbering twenty-seven, set out from Gratz for the mountains, I being in the rail-train with them, after having sent to Swandale the telegram: "All goes well; you will see us within four days."

These officers of the law were sent out in secret, under orders to break into any part of Schweinstein Castle if need were, and to set free the priest. I parted from them at Badsögl at four in the afternoon, hurrying on upward on horseback, while the troop followed, travelling afoot. Langler and I clasped hands under the corn-sheaf hung in the guest-court porch, where he stood expecting me, looking, I thought, remarkably well, with the good old smile stretching his lips. It was a most happy meeting: I had returned in triumph to find him safe, with a bundle of edelweiss as white as his soul in his hands and a fine brown in his skin. "Well done, Arthur," said he to me, and I to him: "all through you." "No, nego, nego," he answered. "Well, the point is," said I, "that our pains are all but over, and Swandale once more in sight." "Ah, Swandale," said he, "well, that, too, by God's mercy. Did you telegraph to Emily?" "Yes," I answered. "I, too," said he. "Do you think," I asked, "that anyone up here knows yet of the coming of the troop?" "I fancy

that Lossow knows,” said he. “I wonder how?” said I. “I don’t know,” said he, “but I fancy that it is anticipated; however, it can be of no importance, since the troop are under vigorous orders.” “Let us hope not,” said I; “well, but I am very hungry.” Just then Lossow’s face appeared, trying not to smile, but chubbily smiling, so we ordered a meal, and, passing inward, I was met at the foot of the stair by the “kiss the hand, sir!” of the frau, of her children, and of all the household. At that moment, at any rate, I may say that these people wore their wonted faces, and seemed to have no weight on their minds.

While I was feeding upon the old gansbrust and beet, Langler and I made up our minds that we had better be at the burg when Dees was set free, so as to seize upon him, hear whatever he might have to tell, and then speed down in the waggonette to Badsögl, whence we would wire Dees’ story to England, and so, having won our backs bare of the world’s business, make for home. All this was settled. My trunk was waiting below at Badsögl; Langler’s was ready packed.

In the midst of our talk a boy of the place named Fritz brought us a telegram: it was from Swandale, and in the words: “Yours received, praises to God, beloved, shall await you Friday night at 9.17 at latest; am quite well, but try, will you, for Thursday.” Langler read, and handed it to me. Now, every word from Swandale always powerfully moved him, so I was surprised now that his first words were: “but what is the matter with Fritz?” I answered that I hadn’t noticed. “Well, he seems much agitated,” said Langler.

I ended my meal, and we sat by our window, smoking and still talking about our plans. I was in the act of looking at my watch, and of saying “within fifteen minutes now the troop should be at the castle-gate,” when we were startled by the toll of a bell. It seemed to come from the burg.

Langler and I looked at each other, as the toll was anew borne to us, shivering up through the forest on the soughs of the evening-breeze. "Someone must be no more," murmured Langler in a low tone. I uttered no word in answer: I was all hushed and bemused into the mood of the tolls; all the mountain seemed hushed now on a sudden in submission to their meaning and the tremolo of their bleating treble. I murmured to Langler: "they seem to be tolling at the burg; someone must be dead."

The tolling of the bell went on. Presently I got up, and struck the triangle (our bell), in answer to which old Lossow rushed wildly in, no smiling now, in that old man's looks the very ghost and gauntness of awe. "Why, what is the matter, Lossow?" said I, "who, then, is dead?" "Oh, good gentleman!" he groaned, with an appealing underlook. "But who is dead?" said I again, at which repetition of my question the old man now seemed to fly into a flurry, and crying out, "I know nothing, nothing of it!" washing his hands of it, tripped with his petty steps from the room.

I looked at Langler, saying: "we shall learn nothing from him, so let us start for the castle at once; by the time we get there the troop should have come."

We took umbrellas, Langler taking his greatcoat, too, for since my arrival the weather had turned out rough. At the bottom of the stair we saw the Lossows all in a knot, all with the same blankness and eyes of awe, and without stopping to speak to them passed out and down through the forest, which every few moments was swamped with shivery tempests and volumes of commotion mixed with spray. It was well past six, but there was still some twilight, save in the thick of the timber. Some way beyond the forest we saw a group of men staring at the troop before the burg with faces that told more plainly than words that something tremendous must have awed all these people to the heart. The bell was still tolling, and again

tolling, even now telling out to the mountain as with the tongue of a woman its tidings of good-bye and bereavement, the castle flagstaff flying a flag at half-mast. We two hastened up the footpath to the gate, with the river at flood on our right, to find the men of the troop with their field-caps pushed back, their brows flushed from the tramp, for the most part soldiers of the third army-division, proud fellows, dressed in blue-grey *bluses*, with cockades and greatcoats. Their leader had just handed his warrant to Herr Tschudi, who lifted his eyes from it to fix upon us two, as we drew nigh, a look of venom. He, too, was white, like every denizen of the valley that untoward night; he strove to keep under his agitation, but the warrant shook in his hand, crackled in the wind; and close behind him the castle bell tolled, and again tolled.

“Well, Herr Feldwebel,” I heard him say, “there was certainly such a prisoner in the castle as is named here, but I may tell you that he left it over an hour ago.”

“So much the better, Herr Burgvogt,” answered the other; “still, I must make a search.”

“Willingly from the heart, since that is your pleasure,” answered Tschudi.

“Who, then, is dead?” asked Herr Feldwebel: “I hear your bell tolling.”

“Oh, one of the men of the alp,” was the answer.

“Forward!” said the sergeant-major to his men.

They stooped through the wicket, which closed after them, and Langler and I were left alone. We waited at first under a wood of yews near the outwork, but as there was lightning we drew away again into the open before the portal, dressing our umbrellas against the wind, which anon brewed drizzle. The twilight died out more and more bleakly; the bell continued to toll. We stood silent, waiting. As for me, a fear was in me. I

felt that some doom may have overtaken Dees, though, in that case, it seemed hardly to be believed that they would dare to toll the bell in the very presence of the officers of the law; still, I feared; I think that Langler did, too, but he said nothing of it; if we spoke, it was to remark on the strangeness of the lightning, which up there on the heights somehow strikes in different tints, now purplish, now greenish, or rosy. We must have waited forty minutes when seven of the troop came out, bearing pine-torches in their three-fingered gloves, and biting sandwiches. I ran and asked one of them for the news.

“He is not in there,” was his answer, “we have searched every nook, and are now going to look round.”

“Did you see Baron Kolár inside?”

“No, the baron is not in the castle,” he said.

They ran up into the barbican, ran down again in ten minutes, then ran down the path to the south castle-side, and vanished from our sight.

We abode between fear and hope. No sound was to be heard within or without the burg but the sounds of the winds. It was almost dark before we saw the torches of the troop of seven returning, these having discovered no trace of Dees. They went back into the castle. Some minutes later the whole troop of twenty-seven came out with lanterns and torches. I approached the sergeant-major, to whom I was known, and had some talk with him: all he could say was that the captive named in his commission was nowhere in or near the castle, so that nothing remained to him now but to march back down the mountain.

We saw their torch-lights pass away down the castle-mound, and up to the forest, and lost to sight, and still we loitered by the portal, not knowing what to think or what next to do.

“Perhaps we had better go back to the guest-court,” I said at last; “something may be learned there.”

Before Langler could answer the wicket opened, Herr Tschudi stepped out, and, peering at us, cried jauntily: “kiss the hand, sirs! What, still waiting to see the good Pater Dees come out?”

Neither of us answered him.

“You are only losing your time,” he went on: “Pater Max, is it? the blessed Max? But no saintly Max will come out here again, by Gott, no. Look you” — his voice sank secretly— “I’ll bite into the sour apple, and give you a hint, just to satisfy you two men. You have been eager to see the lovely saint — eager, eager: well, he is not a thousand metres off, up yonder by the right river-bank, waiting now for you; you go, you will find him, you were eager to see him” — and at once the man dashed inward from us, chuckling, and slamming the wicket after him.

“But what a fury!” said Langler.

“Let me go up the river as he says, and *see*,” said I, “and you wait here till I come back.”

“But if you can go I will, too,” he answered in a strained voice.

We went by a path which, after skirting the castle-back, followed the line of the cliffs a few feet from their edge. Occasionally, in a flash, the river appeared at flood thirty to forty feet below; but mostly it was so murky that we kept on missing the path; our minds, too, were crowded full of gloom, for all that night seemed to us haunted with ghosts and meanings of awe and fear. Some little distance from the burg the river and cliffs had a sudden bend from east to north, thenceforth the cliffs being clad to their foot in fir-forest, and we had gone past this bend, and were going on northward, I holding Langler’s arm, when, at a lighting up of the scene of river and forest, we both stood still in a fright. At one place at the base of the opposite

cliffs was a patch of sward some inches above the water, a very lonely little spot, and just there, in the cut of the lightning, our eyes seemed to catch sight of a crucifix. It was about twenty feet below us, perhaps fifty yards beyond us.

What stopped my breath was the fact that that was an uncommon place for one of the wooden crucifixes common in Styria, and that I had never chanced to notice a crucifix just there before, though I knew the cliffs well; but we were still standing uncertain as to what we had actually beheld, when somewhere someone was heard to say: “yes, it is my son Max that you see nailed to that wood.”

The tone was like a woman’s, and not remote, though our eyes could make out no form in the dark; I seemed to find myself with the world of the departed, and while I shrank there from the presence that was with us, I remember hearing in the silence a roaring of waters against the arches of the bridge and the banks of slime below; for the tide was turned, the flood had convened, had teemed, had lasted, and was over now, and the brimming river was streaming back down, as when hosts stream back homeward from some supremeness and ritual, when all’s over now and done, and the mourners stream about the streets.

CHAPTER XXIII

STORY OF DEES



WE HAD NEVER till now even heard of a mother of Dees! so stern a silence must have been imposed by the burg upon the mountain.

“Yes,” said the woman to us, “they watched me and the little Undine in my cottage, dreading that I should bespeak the two foreigners, for I fear neither them nor anything — the world knows it.” We stood now with her within a hütte, or cowshed, which let in the drizzle, and we had lightning glimpses of a Roman face, and black locks, and proud rags, and of a child whom she called Undine hugged in her powerful arms to her bosom.

“Tell us, if you can, about your son,” Langler said to her, “but not if that pains you, for our hearts bleed for you; we tried our best for him, and our best has turned to your utter sorrow, but you will forgive us, if you can, since we meant well.”

“But I do not sorrow!” she cried. “I am only glad and proud! There he hangs nailed up like a bat; dead, sirs; with the wind of where he was born blowing his hair. Is it Max? Is it the lad? It was for this, after all, that you were born that Rosenkranz Sunday night. I said to you, ‘take care, mind your steps, do not always fly on horses of wind,’ but you wouldn’t hear, you wouldn’t heed, and this is what it was to come to. But better this than rotting in the dungeon — a grand death for a grand lad! Yes, he defied them all, the lad! he thought himself the equal of the baron’s self, or of any prince of them. That lad! it is strange, too, where I had the stuff about me to make

the lad; his father had nothing in the lad; none knew that lad but me, for a mother knows. He came as a surprise, the lad: he set himself above them all! But now you hang there, Max, for the eagles — —” She was interrupted in this species of raving by someone who, after peering near at us, suddenly cried out: “now, Mother Dees, you know that you should be at home, get you gone from this!” “I defy you all, Hans Richter!” shouted the mother of Dees in answer. “You can do to me nothing worse than has been done to him, and it is that which would be sweet to me.” “Yes, yes, but you know that I have caught you blabbing to the foreigners,” said the man, “come, come—” And at this I, understanding that he had laid hands upon her, landed him a hit on the chest, whereat, without saying more, he took to his heels.

I suspected that he had run to report to the castle what he had seen, so I pressed the woman to talk, and within some minutes we had from her the tale of Dees’ life.

Max Dees was born of peasant parents thirty-two years before, within two miles of Schweinstein burg. From his tenderest years the boy began to notify a genius to whose nimbleness there appeared to be no end: he took to painting and to playing the zither; he would make figures of wood and stone and engines out of fragments of metal; he could cut out and make his mother’s clothes; at the age of eight he vested himself as a bishop, and went preaching at every doorway of Jonah in the whale’s belly and of Lazarus raised out of the grave: everything he managed with ease and mastery. However, he had tempests of passion, a craze for the other sex, and no government over himself.

The fame of his gifts came early to the baron’s ears, and Max was early established a pet in the castle. He was sent to the University of Gratz, where he highly distinguished himself. As in Austria most of the priests are of

peasant birth, the baron decided to make of the genius a churchman; and in due course Dees came to be the priest of St Photini's in the castle-court. At that time Baron Kolár was a widower, with one child, the joy of his eye, a little maid of sixteen named Undine.

"But Max strung his chords all too high for the folk," his mother told us; "I said to him: 'do not always fly on horses of wind,' but he would not hear, he would not heed." The head of Dees, in fact, seems to have gone half-mad with churchman's-pride; if anyone was lax in religion he raged, he warned, he launched fines and penances. But no man is a prophet in his own piggery; the alp men kicked against this rigour; and there came a time when St Photini's was left almost empty of worshippers. During all which Max Dees was the tutor of the little Undine.

It was in this state of things, when matters at the church had turned from bad to worse, that a wonder happened: one Sunday night the handful of worshippers in St Photini's beheld a vision hung in mid-air in the nave — a lamb nailed to a cross: a real lamb to a real cross; they marked the dripping blood, there could be no mistake. It chanced that the baron was just then in residence, and present in the church: he, too, saw, and was almost as awed as anyone. Wild was the effect: St Photini's was thereafter the holy of holies, and Max Dees more the lord of the alp than the lord himself.

But this success must have been too much for the arrogant, weak head of Dees. He now dared to let his eye rest on Undine. The baron was often away at the Court in Vienna or elsewhere; often he had his Undine with him; but once for five months he left her at home. He appears to have had a fond confidence in Dees, though all this while he well knew that Dees was an impostor; or perhaps his confidence was in his own coronet and height above Dees, upon whom, moreover, he had lavished so many bounties: for powerful men are but moderately precautions. At any rate, on a certain

Sunday morning when the baron returned to the burg after this term of absence, he returned to learn that his girl had been hurt by Dees. The people of the burg afterwards reported that he took it all very patiently; went down to the church that morning, and, seated in his easy-chair, enjoyed the oratory of Dees, sneering with his teeth at the corpse who preached. Only, before this, he had locked Undine into the chamber, from which she was never to come forth living.

During that same afternoon the baron had a talk with Dees in the burg: and it was rumoured about the mountain that he then made to Dees an offer of the chance of marrying Undine — a marvellous offer on the part of a German nobleman, if it be a fact; but the impudence of Dees was even more marvellous than the father's meekness: the priest demurred to disfrock himself by marriage: he trembled, and said no.

That Sunday night the folk flocked as usual to the church in the castle-court, and the bell ceased to ring, the people waited, but no Max Dees appeared. The hour for the beginning of the office was long past, and the congregation was murmuring, when all eyes were caught by a vision hung in mid-air: but a disgusting one this time — one worthy of Baron Kolár — a pig nailed to a cross, a real pig to a real cross. And while they gaped at it, the head of the baron came up through the trap-door of the vaults; he walked to the pulpit, went up into it. His hands were red with blood. The people declared that in that one day the man's hair had turned grey and his back had bent. And from the pulpit he spoke to them.

He told them that they would never see their friend, the Pater Dees, any more, since he had proved ungrateful to his patron, and had that afternoon been imprisoned in the burg, where he would probably be kept for some years, till the time should be ripe for a still worse thing to come upon him. He, the baron, had been sorry to shock them with the vision of the pig, but

he had ordained it so in order to clear their minds completely of the effect of the vision of the lamb which they had seen. That vision of the lamb had been contrived by the mechanical genius of their friend, the Pater Dees. On the Sunday night, a year before, when it had appeared the baron had locked Dees into a room with him for three hours, and had compelled Dees to tell by what means the vision had been produced. Dees had confessed that he had nailed a lamb to a cross in the vaults, and by means of a dark lantern, some limelight, and some plates of glass — a contrivance not new, yet new in its perfection — had thrown, as it were, the ghost of the lamb into the nave of the church. He, the baron, had successfully repeated the same thing with the pig that evening for them to see. He believed now that none of them would ever wish for any more church; if they should, he made them an offer: let any six of them come to him and say so, and he would supply them with a new priest. He would watch with interest to see how they would act. Meantime he hoped that they would continue to be good Christians in their homes; Christianity was the highest sign of man, and could never be destroyed or abolished, but it was an affair of aspiration and conduct, not of dogma: they might take it from him that there was no truth in any one of its dogmas, and for some years he had been casting about for an easy method of destroying the institution which persisted in embarrassing the world with those dogmas. Perhaps their friend, the Pater Dees, had now supplied him with such a method. He would watch and see. But, meantime, they must never repeat to a soul what had passed on the alp or what they heard him say that night; he set up a secret between them and himself, because they were his, and he loved them, and knew that they truly feared and loved him: but if ever anyone should recount or imply aught to outsiders that would incur his displeasure.

So much Langler and I were able to gather from the Mother Dees' gabble. As for the ill-starred Undine, she seems to have died in, or soon after, giving birth to the five-year-old Undine of whom I had lightning glimpses on the breast of the Mother Dees. This child, the granddaughter of a nobleman, was in rags, and had never been seen by Baron Kolár: a fact which chilled me with a sense of the changelessness of this man's resentments.

CHAPTER XXIV

OUR FLIGHT



ANYHOW, IN THIS unforeseen fashion we now had in full the history of the ill-fated Dees, to hear which we had started out for Styria. I now whispered to Langler, “we should be quick”; but he, not perhaps quite understanding my eagerness to be gone, lingered, trying to get the poor woman to come with us, it was such a night, and she within sight of what anon was lit up down on the strip of grass by the river’s brink. Langler offered to adopt the child straightway, but she would not part with it, nor would she come with us, so we had to leave her, leading the van, almost running, so that Langler, who was no runner, panted: “well, no doubt it is as well to make haste.” “Yes,” I answered, “for I sha’n’t be astonished if some attempt be now made to keep us from leaving the alp. That man who ran off has by now taken the news to the castle, where it will be taken for granted that from the Mother Dees we have heard all, and we may not be allowed to get away with so much knowledge in our heads. In my opinion we oughtn’t to go back to the guest-court for your trunk, but hurry straight down to the nearest sennhaus, get horses — —”

“But I have five or six manuscript poems in the trunk, and the Theocritus with all my notes,” panted Langler, trotting after my haste.

“Well, then, we must get the trunk,” said I, “but it is dangerous: I wish to Heaven that we were safe down at Badsögl....”

At that moment — we were now at the castle-back — I saw the light of a lantern, and a second later struck against Herr Tschudi. “Well met, sirs!” he cried at once: “it is just for you that I was going to look, for I have to talk with you; if not in a hurry, perhaps you would favour me by stepping into the castle a moment.” “I am afraid that we *are* rather in a hurry,” I answered, “for we are wet, and have had nothing to eat; but if to-morrow morning at eleven will do, we shall then be happy to call upon you in the castle.” “That will do just as well,” said he, “but mayn’t you as well step in now?” “Pray excuse us for to-night,” I answered. “Willingly from the heart,” said he, “since that is your wish; but — has not the Mother Dees been telling you about things?” I was about to say “which things?” when Langler said: “perhaps, sir!” “Oh, she has?” broke out Tschudi, “but, you see, you two men have gone a step too far now.” “Come, Aubrey!” I cried out, “we can’t wait!” — and I ran, dragging him by the sleeve, while Tschudi sent after us the shout: “yes, fly, you two! but don’t hope to see your birth-places again....”

On reaching the guest-court breathless, I asked Lossow if the horse had been harnessed for us: he answered that he supposed so, and would see. I then paced our sitting-room for, say, six minutes, expecting him to summon us down, Langler being in his bedroom, crowding some knick-knacks into the trunk. I went in to him, saying that the waggonette must be waiting. “One moment,” said he, and I waited till he locked the trunk. But when we went to go out the door had been fastened on the outside.

We stared at each other’s paleness, then I flew to the window, which was at the side of the house. The night was so deep that I could not see the ground, but I knew that it was no light leap. However, it was our only way out, so Langler slid down by the sheets, which I held for him, below heaped them for me to leap upon without making a hubbub, and I dropped upon my

feet: the trap laid for us had failed. We ran on tiptoe, meaning somehow to make our way down the mountain on foot; but when we got to the back the light of the waggonette appeared just coming from the stable, and when the boy spoke to us we perceived that he had not yet been made privy to the plot against us. "We came to meet you, Jan," said I as I leapt in, "for we are in a hurry." "But the trunk, sirs?" said he. "We leave the trunk for to-night," said I: "just turn round now, and drive straight down."

He did so! and we were off down the main road in a flush of escape. I pitied Langler for his lost papers, but there was no help. "Let us only hope," said I, "that we sha'n't reach Badsögl too late to send the telegrams to England to-night."

"Why so particularly to-night?" he asked.

"But is it not certain," I answered, "that the last phase of the plot against the Church must now be about to show itself in the greatest haste? Wasn't it because of the might of the Church that Baron Kolár so feared our meddling in the matter of Dees? And now that he has dared this massacre of a churchman, how shall he escape the Church's vengeance if the Church is to remain mighty one month more? He is about to strike sharply, be sure, for we have forced his hand, and our seconds are precious."

"But shall we do much good?" asked Langler.

"Well, certainly," said I, with a laugh, "it seems late in the day to ask that, Aubrey. Assuredly we shall do good. We, too, indeed, shall have to show that the miracles are none, but, then, we shall also show that they were no machinery of churchmen. In the case of the miracle up here six years ago, which made the little model for Kolár's great scheme, the death of the Church was due to the fact that the miracle *was* found out to be the doing of the priest; but if we show that on the great scale churchmen have been guiltless of guile no shock of tempest will be let loose, things will

decline into their old mood as before the miracles, and the Church will survive.”

“True,” said he; “but is that worth all our pains? an obsolete Church keeping up a look of life....”

“But is it not late in the day, Aubrey,” said I, “to trouble our heads with any such doubts? We decided months ago, before we came, that the Church was worth saving; hence we came. Let’s not disparage our own work. Personally, I assure you, I am not deeply concerned, for I don’t deem myself called upon to be the saviour of anything: but Emily despatched me upon this work, and so I do it with conviction. Moreover, the quicker done the quicker at Swandale.”

“Ah, Swandale,” sighed Langer. “But I confess, Arthur, that I depart from the mountain with some regret: that old burg up there is so cradled in gales, such a spirit-world wears out its winds with well-a-days, and the tarns, the vapours, the wild swans....”

“My own feeling is rather rapture than regret,” I answered; but such was the elegiac soul of Langer, which still discovered something over which to sigh and indulge its chaste melancholies. Meantime, our waggonette was moving at a walk down the benighted mountain-world, our Jan cowering so still over his nag that he might have been asleep; while we others chatted constantly — I at least being elated at our escape, at our task almost over, at home in sight, though I had no hat, the drizzles were trying, the bosom of the mountains gave out a steam of music, as it were thousands and ten thousands busy and breeding, and the organ’s sound-board breathing, and our talk was a forlorn droning in a state of being which was made all of winds and bewitchment; sometimes in a flash we might descry a crucifix hung on a crag, and our sighs would then hanker back to that night-whelmed thing on the river-bank away behind us. Keenly our hearts smote

us at this memory of Max Dees. How much harm had our meddling hurled upon that man! how he must have waited and hungered for that “one good file” which never found its way to him; and now he was all in the dark on the river-bank. When I expressed my surprise that it was Tschudi himself who had sent us to see him there, Langler said: “I wonder if Tschudi has been acting to-night on his own initiative? The baron now, at any rate, does not appear to be about the burg, or the troop should have seen him; still, Tschudi may be in wireless communication with him. But Tschudi’s own private motive in sending us to the crucifix seems to have been an impulse of mere spite or rage, and he may have had in his mind that we should never leave the region after seeing.”

“I doubt though that at that time he meant to stop us,” said I: “I think it was only after he knew of our talk with the Mother Dees. Yet it would be odd, too, that they shouldn’t mind our getting away with the knowledge of Dees’ doom, but should be so eager to stop us with the knowledge of Dees’ life-story.”

“But of the two the latter is the more important,” said Langler; “for, as to Dees’ doom, they perhaps calculated that by the time we could report it the Church would be impotent to avenge it; but, as to Dees’ life-story, our knowledge of it is knowledge of the Church-plot, and is of permanent value as proof that churchmen are innocent of fraud in the present miracles; therefore it was urgent to stop us when we had this knowledge, since even years hence our evidence may be of use in restoring churchmen to favour, and in ruining the plot.”

“Ah,” said I, “years hence little would be left of the Church, I think, if we had once been locked into that north-west dungeon. However, here we are, and now for the break-up of the fountains of the great deep. Poor Dr Burton! I wonder where *he* will be found in all that upheaval? I am afraid

for him: the spirit that could pitch from such a moral height to ‘well, pretty, do you love me?’ — —”

“*Beastly mess!*” hissed Langler to himself: “oh, pray, Arthur, I beg — —”

“As for me,” I said quickly, “the man upon whom I now rather bet is the archbishop’s red rag, Ambrose Rivers” — and we went on chatting about the latest news of Rivers which we had from Swandale. We were still, I remember, discussing Rivers when a jodeling call arose somewhere in our rear, at which our Jan, it seemed to me, sat up to prick his ears. In a minute the call was anew heard, lalling nearer now; and now Jan pulled up short. “Why do you stop?” I cried to him, “don’t stop! get on!” “It is my cousin Isai, sirs,” he answered, “who is running to me with a message, for it is his jodel.” “Still, you are to hurry on instantly,” I cried; “every moment is precious!” But he would not budge, and even as I urged him I heard the panting of a runner near upon us. Our Jan now jumped down; at the horse’s head there was a confab between the cousins, of which all that I could catch was the pantings of Isai; and I sat in a stew of the keenest anxiety. It came into my head to rush and seize the reins and lash the horse; but before I could act the whispering was over, Jan jumped up afresh, and we moved on — at least it never entered my mind to doubt that it was Jan who jumped up, though I now suspect that it was Isai. Anyway, we went on at the old walk, regained some calm of mind, again began to be talkative, and for perhaps twenty minutes now nothing happened, till all at once I was aware of the leap of our driver from the wagon, and a second afterwards the nag broke into galloping. It is my belief that a knife or something keen had been driven into its flesh — nothing less could account for its fury, and the clown had chosen for his deed a piece of the road which was little broader than the vehicle, with precipice on the right, with cliff on the left above us. There

was no hope for us but in leaping, and “leap, Aubrey!” I cried as I sprang into the air over the back, with my face to the pace, and fell on my length. Lying there, I seemed to hear a fearful silence; no sound of horse and cart; and, understanding that both had bounded down the steep, I feared to stir, lest I might find that Langler had gone with them. But presently, from some distance down, he called out upon me. I ran asking if he was hurt. “A few bruises perhaps,” he panted in answer, “but I seem to have lost my hat.” This solicitude about *his hat* I understood to be feigned, for I felt him trembling like a leaf. But such was Langler: he was for ever preoccupied about the soul, and, not calm by nature, wished always to appear to himself immovably calm.

Well, the hat could not be found, and on foot we went on down the pass. But it was not long before we were lost in a wilderness of stone and wood, where no way was. We fell into a state of fear that night both of us, and it imbued our souls for hours. I had never before in my life felt quite like that; I hope never to have to undergo such ghoulis again. But there are things which can hardly be put on paper. Perhaps our experiences of the evening, the nets set for our feet, the steepness of our leap from the cart, that sight on the river-bank behind us — all these may have helped to demoralise us. The word “jumpy” somewhat describes our panic. After a time we ceased to try to hide our chills from each other. What exactly was the matter I can’t quite tell; we had always endeavoured to be brave men, and no particular peril now menaced; but that night our spirits caught affrights one from the other; we both seem to have had the boding that we were about to taste of death; the grave, being, the mountains, grew too hugely gruesome for us, the womb of gloom brought forth awe — *somehow* we were unhinged. It was Langler perhaps who openly began it. We were resting together on a rock under the fragments of a Carthusian monastery when I heard him murmur in

a sort of awed contemplation: “God be merciful...” “Why, what now?” said I. “God be merciful,” he murmured again, “I have seen the wraith of Emily.” This was so unlike him! My blood ran cold. “Where?” I whispered. For a minute he made no answer, then with the same entranced awe he murmured: “there — to the left of the arch, between the two trees: do you see nothing?” The hairs of my head bristled as, peering that way, I murmured: “yes, it is she.” “Our breath is in His hand,” sighed Langler, with a held-up hand.

For me to say now, after so long, that I did, or could, see any such thing would be too much beyond reason; most likely I saw nothing: there was little light in the night; I think that there was no lightning at the time; but we were on that stretch of the spirit when spectres start up, and are catching: at the moment I could have sworn that I saw. It may have been the form of the boy Isai, who had perhaps followed us, it may have been Miss Emily’s wraith, or a phantom of our brains; in any case, we underwent such troubles and shyings of the soul that night as could not be told, lasting more or less upon us almost till we got to Badsögl about daybreak, so worn out that we at once dropped upon our beds, and slept.

CHAPTER XXV

END OF LANGLER



I OPENED MY eyes about mid-day quite quit of our night of griefs, with the word “*safe*” on my lips, for down there at Badsögl in bright daylight all looked rosy at last, and I was already inclined to doubt the bogies of the dark. Eager to start for England, I woke Langler, wired to Swandale, warned our Hanska to be ready. We breakfasted, and now nothing remained but to send the telegrams and set out.

We had determined to send two telegrams — one to Percival of Keble, the other to my friend, Mr Martin Bentley, of *The Chronicle*. In that morning’s paper was no word yet of any exposure, the only big news being that overnight in England Education had been again sent up to the Lords; so under the corn-sheaf in the porch I, at Langler’s request, wrote the two telegrams, telling of the little alp-miracle, of the world-plot, of the coming vials: and I handed it to Langler to read.

To my astonishment, Langler’s face showed fastidious, and he said: “Percival will think me sudden and epic, Arthur.”

“Perhaps,” I answered shortly, for he seemed not to mind that Mr Martin Bentley would think *me* sudden and epic.

“Couldn’t we arrange somehow,” said he, “to spread abroad our knowledge without having our names mixed up in it? I hate this glare —
—”

“But the sudden proposition, Aubrey, at this eleventh hour,” said I: “how can this possibly be done?”

“I have thought,” said he, “of a meeting of journalists in London, to whom we could tell everything *viva voce*, since that, I think, would be more in order.”

“For Heaven’s sake, Aubrey,” I exclaimed, “let us get this thing off our backs now, and be done with it!”

“But I have thought,” said he, “that if we retard the news even a day or two that might be a great thing for the Church as against the Education Bill.” (He disliked the bill for some reason — called it “*smart*.”)

“But what have we to do with the fate of the Education Bill?” said I, for what I wanted was to see his sister’s face: “surely we can’t gyve and entangle ourselves with such side-motives now! See, here is the boy waiting to take the telegrams; pray let us send them.”

“Is that your deliberate judgment?” he asked.

“It is, yes,” said I.

“Then,” said he, “I submit to it: send the telegrams.”

But he said it just too late, and the telegrams were never sent, for at that moment a letter-carrier came into the porch with a telegram for us which I saw shake in Langer’s hand as he read it; it came from Paris, bore no signature, and was in the words: “If you send any telegrams you sacrifice Miss Langer.”

We ought now to have decided upon our action in one minute, but were two hours in the dining-room, where we went to discuss it. “What we have to do,” I said from the first, “is to send instantly a telegram to Emily ordering her to fly and hide herself, as she did before, till we come; then send the two telegrams to Percival and Bentley, just as we intended.”

“Ah, it would shock her, such a telegram,” said Langer.

“We needn’t send it, really,” said I; “I only propose it so as to be quite on the safe side, for this message of Baron Kolár’s is just a threat, a last card to keep us from acting; if we defy it, and send the two telegrams, he will have no motive whatever to hurt Emily — except a wanton revenge, of which the man is incapable. I believe that Emily is quite safe, really. Let us boldly send the two telegrams, whether we send one to Emily or not.”

“Oh, I couldn’t,” he murmured, flinching, pacing the floor, sorely pestered now. Of Baron Kolár as regards his sister he had a blue awe and shiver, like a man who when a child has been frightened with bogies. It is obvious that my view of the matter was the rational one, but he flinched irrationally, he had a blue fear of what Kolár might just possibly be minded to do to Miss Emily. On the other hand, his pride rebelled against the baron, for when I said: “don’t send the telegrams, then, but let us start at once,” his answer was: “but who is this man that I should in all things obey him blindly? He may find me of grimmer make than he thinks!”

“But it must be one thing or the other, Aubrey,” said I. “Send the telegrams or not as you please, but, either way, do let us be gone at once. My telegram to Emily this morning assured her that she should see us on Friday morning; if we don’t start now we can’t reach London till Friday night, and she will thus be thrown into a fresh stew of misery. The one fatal thing for us is indecision.”

He stood at a window, looking out upon the garden, and after some time said: “well, I won’t send the telegrams: let us start, and in passing through London we can divulge all to the meeting of journalists, secretly called, then at once hurry on to Swandale.”

“Very good,” said I, “the car is ready; let us start this moment.”

“But what a mess!” he hissed, turning upon me: “I warn you, Arthur, that it is even mean, it is even craven. Am I, then, the bondman of this person?”

“Still, let us start, Aubrey! let us start!” cried I, with a pang of panic in me.

“We are about to start,” said he. “But consider whether this meeting of journalists in London will not mean delay: suppose the man gets wind of it, and, even while we are about it, perpetrates some horror at Swandale....”

“He will have no motive!” I cried.

“Ah, he may have, he *may*. Would it not be better to send the telegrams, only warning Percival and Mr Bentley not to make them public for some days? In that way we act as we originally intended, our purposes will not have been influenced by this man’s mandates, and at the same time he will not know that we have defied him.”

“Well, then, let us do so, and quickly,” said I.

“But that, after all, is mere self-cheating,” he sighed: “if the telegrams are not to be made public at once, why send telegrams? Why not wait and write letters, which, moreover, would be less sudden and assaulting? No, Arthur, if we are to obey the mandates of the man let us not do so in such a way as to persuade ourselves that we have not done so.”

“But all this subtlety, Aubrey, when we should be stirring!” said I: “come, shall we not decide one way or the other, and start now?”

“But are we to start without knowing what we are about?” he cried. “What a mess! Is it possible that you cannot help me a little to see my way?”

“What more can I say?” I asked: “I have begged you to send the telegrams, but, since you are timid about Emily, do not send them; there remains the meeting of journalists in London; or thirdly, we can write letters from Swandale. Only, let us start. I see clearly that all danger to Emily is past; the really terrible danger now is to ourselves up to the moment when we shall have communicated to someone else this knowledge that we carry

in our heads; and, indirectly, there is a danger to Emily if our return is delayed, for it will monstrously shock her, I warn you, Aubrey: let us start.”

“Yes, do, do let us start,” he muttered: “I shall send the telegrams; in which case, do you still advise me to send one to Emily bidding her fly from Swandale?”

I looked at the clock, saying, “no, not now, too late: for if Baron Kolár really meant her any harm, by this time he has made his arrangements to accomplish it; she wouldn’t escape him. But he means her no harm, and such a telegram would only throw her into needless alarms.”

“Well, but I couldn’t venture to send the telegrams to Percival and Mr Bentley without also sending one to her,” he answered.

“Ah, then, here is another deadlock,” said I.

“Oh, Arthur,” he cried out, “how we do need some faculty between scent and sight to live!”

“But if you would let me decide for you — if you could, if you would!” I wooed to him.

“Do so, do so, I beg for nothing better,” he answered with his bitter-sweet smile.

And again I decided for him, but again he raised new side-issues, and it went on until near three, when we at last departed, after wiring to Swandale that we should not arrive on Friday morning, as promised, but on Friday evening between nine and eleven. As for the two telegrams, they had not gone, for our world-message was to be shuffled off our shoulders at the meeting of journalists.

Away, then, we flew westward. A whine was now in the time of year even in the lowlands, and the worm of winter at its work in the woods. I saw bands of telegraph-wires like bars of written music, crowded with birds migrating, and thought how a messenger-wren, too, may be, had once halted

to rest on this band or on that; I saw cliffs of forest reflected red, yellow, and negro in rivers, like old tapestry, angular and faded; and that evening I saw such a sunset as I think that I have never seen, save on the three following evenings, perfectly astonishing, like portents. At dinner-time we arrived at Munich, where a telegram from Swandale awaited us, and as she could hardly have been certain at which hotel we should stay, we understood that she must have sent many telegrams on the chance of striking us somewhere. *Why* the delay from Friday morning to Friday night, she wished to know! Were we actually now on the way? Would we telegraph her at every town? She had been greatly upset, but was reconciled now to the delay, provided we were actually now at last on the way — a long message. We wired that we were straining homeward, and at Stuttgart that midnight met yet a message from her that seemed to laugh through tears, not without something of the rictus of hysteria, I am afraid, with its “joy!” and its “bless God!” and its “poor Kitty-wren is ill; she will sink more and more as you come nearer, and the moment you re-enter Swandale gate will drop dead.” We had to stop some time at Stuttgart, but sleep was far from me, such a pity bled in me, such a fear was mine; then under the stars we started out afresh behind our flying Hanska, who had gained from Langler the biblical name of “the terror, the arrow, and — the pestilence.”

On the Thursday evening we were at Metz, where fresh messages passed between us and Swandale; at Metz also we arranged for the meeting of journalists, first wiring to Langler’s friend, the Rev. Thomas Grimes, who in his reply placed at our disposal a room in the Church-house, Great Titchfield Street; we then sent messages to eight journalists whom I knew, begging them to be at the Church-house at eight on the Friday night, and to bring with them any other journalists whom they chose, to hear a matter of

high moment: we hoped that we might thus have a meeting of perhaps a hundred men, who would instantly flood the world with the news.

We then afresh set off, straining to catch the next day's 5.35 p.m. boat. I am fond of the memory of that ride, for with it ended most of my merriment in this life; the air was crisp and bright, the flight filled our breasts, and raised our spirits. That evening on leaving Metz we looked with something like awe and joy at the sunset, which was most flamboyant, and likened by Langler to God's war-lords mingled in battle. There burned in it a form that had an urn in her hand, which he pointed me out, and with much feeling said to me: "to me, too, this earth is dear, Arthur. It is easy to conceive a world with ruby mountains and coloured moons, where all the lads are forever blowing the oboe and ring-doves roll their soft rondeaus; but give me this hand-made old home of ours, with her quite Greek trimness of style; for it is something after all not to have been turned out by a God in a troubadour mood, and out of her strength comes forth sweetness, too, anon, — consolations and vouchsafements, winning twangs, and Memnon-vowels. Farther in the future this music of our Father will discourse perhaps, and mourn, Arthur, to a humanity that will have outlived this outer ear, and hoarded up an inward hearing and harmony."

Moved by some throe of love, I laid my hand on his arm then, as the sunset faded, murmuring to him "Aubrey, always full of grace and truth" — I cannot tell why; it was my last caress; I did it to his burying; and God knew, but not I. The same night we rushed through Charleville, and by 5.10 the next evening were in Calais.

CHAPTER XXVI

END OF LANGLER — *continued*



WE CROSSED OVER to Dover, where a man came on board the boat, calling abroad: “Langler! Langler!” with a wire for us from Swandale: she wished to know if we had actually reached England, and also why it was that, arriving at Dover at 6.15, we should not arrive at Swandale till ten! — for we had mentioned to her nothing of the meeting of journalists in Great Titchfield Street. She begged us to telegraph the instant we touched British soil, and again when we should reach Victoria.

Langler telegraphed that we were safe at Dover, that all was, and would be, well, praying her to be patient, promising to be with her at ten — but still not mentioning the meeting of journalists, though I entreated him to.

We then set off by rail-train for London, and still there was no mention of any exposure of the miracles, as I saw on looking through the evening paper in the train.

“I suspect,” said Langer to me, “that the delay in the exposure may be accounted for by this Education Bill turmoil, for as the Lords have now again mangled the bill, and the clash between Church and world has now waxed into acuteness, the plotters may be waiting a little till this reach its highest fever, when they will strike. Remember how it was with Diseased Persons. But this time we should be able to counteract at least half the force of their stroke.”

“In any case, I think that the Education Bill will triumph,” said I.

“Well,” said he, “let that be as it will: why do we so heave and rave in all the batrachomumachia, leaving our poor souls behind, as though life were a flight on motor-cars, with the nitrogen all drained out of the air? The earth does not march by petroleum with puffs, but by the charm of an old spell-word; and that sunset, Arthur — look at it: ah, for one bath of that large, warm calm.”

“Extraordinary thing,” said I, “there must be some atmospheric disturbance somewhere; it seems even more glorious than yesterday’s.”

“It may be the assembled good-bye of all the prophets and apostles to their old Church,” said he: “that shape afaint above yonder in white is Elijah translated far with robes aflaut, and that charmed to rose is St Paul caught up in trance to the third heaven.”

He was talkative, full of sparkle and fancy, even playful, that evening; but all our talk in the train was interrupted by a debate between two men about the eternity of hell-fire, which they maintained to the moment of our alighting at Victoria. It was then night, with only twenty minutes left us in which to get to Great Titchfield Street by eight o’clock, but we first made our way to the telegraph-office, where yet a message from Swandale awaited us, this time our friend writing in the words: “Yours from Dover to hand; you are in England, so all’s well, I await now with quietness. Poor Kitty-wren drooped visibly at moment when you must have touched Dover. I pity her a little. She can’t last. Am quite at rest now, waiting upon God’s good will. Carriage will await you at Alresford at 9.52 without fail. Wire me from Victoria.” We sent her a message, I left my chest at the station, and we hastened away.

It was drizzling slightly, the night dreary, the yard crowded with people and things darting to and fro, and I was struck with a feeling of how intensely even within the past few years, the pace of everything had

quicken. But only two cars came to bid for our fare. I fancy now that this seemed queer to me at the moment, but being rather late for the meeting of journalists, elated at our nearness to Swandale, I paid no heed to it, and we leapt into one of the cars, I calling to the man: "the Church-house, Great Titchfield Street."

We sped off, but had not proceeded far when we fell in with a procession with banners, at which our car had to pull up. All down Victoria Street it teemed, blocking the world's business, some regions of it chanting *ave, maris stella*. I was very teased, for by this means we must have lost five minutes, having just collided with the Friday in the octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. Our driver, a lank man with a stoop, deliberately turned, in crossing himself, as if for us to see — so it looked to me, then off afresh we started behind the last of the procession. London was in high animation, in spite of the wet, and I was admiring the flaming advertisements, the tempest of life, when Langer said: "London is still not a great city, no, it lacks the tone, it is a group of parishes. Look at that newspaper-placard occupied with 'Buggins Captured.' Who is Buggins? Some mean misdoer, I suppose. And that other: 'Buggins' Love-letters to Peggy Jinks.' You can't conceive that in Paris: it is not world-news; my Athenians of Paris would slightly shrug at such parish pragmatism; no, London is not a great city...." and as he spoke, I saw "Great Titchfield Street" at a street corner, and into it we dashed.

But we had not gone far down it when our man careered into a by-street to the right; whereat I started up to him, calling out: "but where are you going? you have left Great Titchfield Street." "Yes, sir," was his answer, "they have just taken up the street down yonder, so we have to go round." I, for my part, had no idea whereabouts in Great Titchfield Street the Church-house was, nor any grounds to fancy that the man's words might be false,

and after he had raced with us through a maze of Soho back-streets, through so many that I lost track of where we were, when he halted at the door of a house, unhandsome and dark though it was, I did not doubt that I was in Titchfield Street, and at the Church-house.

When we went to the door a man inside said “this way, gentlemen,” to us, whereat we stepped into a passage, and not a thought of wrong crossed my mind until I found myself on the ground, while a crowd of men searched my pockets — to see if I had any pistol, I imagine. Langler was in a like way. I struggled, of course, but quickly gave in; and presently we were permitted to get up, and were taken up through darkness to a room on the second floor.

This room was quite small, not more than fifteen feet long and fifteen broad, in a corner of the house, without any window, and like a room within a room, for two of its sides were made of boarding, which may have been run up for the special purpose of imprisoning us — I cannot tell. The floor was bare, the furniture was one chair and a bedstead placed under one of the two boardings — a cheap little bedstead without a bed, but with a pillow without a pillow-slip. On one of the walls burned an antique electric jet very palely.

All was silent. For it might be ten minutes Langler and I fronted each other’s gaze, the notion or dream, meantime, in my own heart being that our door did not seem over strong, that a dart downward might well deliver us. All, I say, was silent. I drove my shoulder at the door, and my heart hailed Heaven with thanks when I found it frail, so heaving now my all into the strain, I heard the steel give out sounds, felt the beams bound. But the staple would not quite start, though again I dashed myself into it, and again and again and again, with passion. Then I panted out upon Langler, “help, Aubrey, help....”

“Oh, Arthur,” was his answer, “are we to strive and cry?”

“Never mind ... help ... help....” I panted.

“I implore you to be calm,” said Langler.

Sure that his help would force the door, I now flew from it in a passion to my knees before him, with my arms spread out beseechingly to him, crying out to him, “for Christ’s sake, help me, help me....”

“Well, since you so insist,” said he, “but it seems useless, too, and is it not better....”

“Never mind, help,” I panted.

I think that he would now have helped, but as he was now about to say something else the key turned outside, and Baron Kolár came in, equal to three men. As he locked the door again, I sprang up from my knees, and we both faced him. He had on the old shabby satin jacket, his hat hung over his eyes, looking earnest and abstracted, like a man carrying on his back matters of large mass and amplitude, in his hand a bit of paper.

CHAPTER XXVII

END OF LANGLER — *continued*



“WELL, NOW, YOU see,” said the man.

We made no answer, and Baron Kolár began to pace the room.

“You have been most insolent and foolish, you two men,” said he: “I have lavished warnings upon you in vain, and I shall have you shot within five minutes like two dogs, without compunction, I assure you, unless you do now as I direct you.”

“But don’t be angry,” said I, “since we have meant well, and are quite likely to do as you direct us.”

“You have been most insolent and foolish,” he repeated with invective; “you have hampered me, badgered me, invaded my estate, forced my hand, placed me in the greatest personal danger, threatened the success of my life-work. You are a nuisance and a danger, and should be removed.... Tell me now how you came to know that there was a prisoner in Schweinstein Castle.”

“The prisoner sent out a messenger-bird,” said I, “which came to Mr Langer’s estate.”

“Oh, that was it, yes, that was it.... Well, that was no fault of yours. You have no doubt acted like honourable men. But I hate you for having molested me. You made a great mistake to listen to the woman who gave you the story of the Styrian priest’s life — for I take it that you did hear it of her?”

“Some of it,” said I.

“Or rather — all of it,” suggested Langler.

“Well, you made a mistake,” said Baron Kolár. “However, I have a confirmed confidence in your honour: sign me, therefore, this paper, promising not to divulge to a soul during ten years, or till my death, anything that you have learned on the alp, and you shall be free men. To-night several of the bodies that were crucified are to be disinterred, including that of your groom, Charles Robinson; to-morrow morning the world will learn that the miracles were the work of priests; and, as I do not wish you to be out in the crisis of the excitement, I shall have you here till to-morrow afternoon; after that you may go, yes, you may go. I understand that I risk something in trusting you; it is a disloyalty to my comrades; but I am a reader of men — though I have sometimes been wrong, too, I have not always been right: you, however, are not men who would wound the hand that has given you life. Sign me that paper, as a formality between us.”

“Willingly,” said I, for what I wished to look on was the face of Miss Langler, and gave little heed to aught else, so, without even reading the thing, I knelt flurriedly by the chair, and had it signed and finished with.

It was now for Langler to sign.

“Now, Mr Langler,” said Baron Kolár, when Langler made no movement to sign.

“No, Baron Kolár,” answered Langler, “no,” with his eyes cast down.

“What! You do not sign?”

“No, Baron Kolár, no,” he repeated.

“Then woe to you, sir,” said the Baron, measuring him from head to foot.

“Well, then, woe to me,” said Langler.

Ah, he was pallid now, with a mulishness of mien which I knew with panic; whereat I at his secret ear breathed in my anguish: “but Emily,

Aubrey, fair's fair, loyalty to Emily first, this is too much, you know, Aubrey, Emily first — —”

“No, second,” he said, with a stiff neck.

“As if duty and God had anything to do with it!” I groaned panic-stricken: “martyrs are martyrs, and die for what they cherish, but to die for a Church which you always call obsolete, for which you care nothing really, except by some trick of culture, it would be too monstrously pitiful, for God's sake, only this once — —”

“But what is the matter with Mr Langer?” said Baron Kolár: “my time is short.”

“But by what right do you even dream of daring to shed anyone's blood?” asked Langer, turning upon the baron.

“Know that I *have* this right, Mr Langer,” answered the baron sternly: “men like me, whose heads are clear, and whose motives are righteous, have such divine rights.”

“One readily admits the righteousness of your motives,” said Langer, “but the clearness of your head is less certain, if I may say so. We all intend to do good, Baron Kolár, but to do it is an intricate trick, only given to critics. You seem in your scheming to have quite forgotten the moral reaction which must follow upon the sudden death of faith, and upon the disclosure that the men who try to remind the world of God are a gang of misdoers. Is it nothing to you that to-morrow every wanton impulse of men's hearts will lift its head, the restraints of ages once swept away? Your motives are good: why should you not give up this scheme even now, and I, on my side, should be able to vow myself to silence?”

At this Baron Kolár, looking down upon him, answered: “you speak, sir, very like a child; you are a man with a mind made up chiefly of theories acquired in your study, or acquired from other prigs and theorists who are

foreigners to the agoras of men. Is not this scheme of mine modelled on the incident of the alp? But in that case no ‘wanton impulses’ lifted their head — —”

“Ah, I think so,” said Langler.

“But you annoy me, Mr Langler,” said the baron. “Understand that on the final death of ‘faith’ to-morrow the people will remain precisely where they stood before the miracles, when ‘faith’ was already dead, and this because they are moral by habit and heredity. Wasn’t this just the work in evolution which God designed ‘faith’ to do — to make men moral by heredity? for they would hardly, I think, have become so without the goad of ‘hell,’ and so on. Descartes, a theorist like you, was assured that God cannot be a deceiver; but God does nothing but deceive for His creatures’ good, and, housed in His motley, the zebra-herd browses hidden and grey in the grey of the morning. At first two hells were needed; but by the date of the Reformation purgatory could be dispensed with in the highest nations; by the date of the abolition of hanging for sheep-stealing men could do without any hell at all. The Church was thus an excellent crutch, which humanity is now able to hurl away and burn; for men, thanks to her, are now as hardened in good conduct as they were once naturally heinous, and crime would now be quite irksome to the host of them, as swimming is to a frog that was lately a swimming tadpole. But do not trouble your head about any such questions at all: just sign me that paper now.”

“I regret that I do not quite see with you, Baron Kolár,” answered Langler stiffly, with downcast eyes, while I, wooing at his ear, whispered, “ah, but Emily, Aubrey, you forget!”

“But will he not sign?” asked the baron.

“No, sir,” said Langler.

Baron Kolár groaned.

“It seems a pity, Mr Langer,” he said, “that you are quite so gallant a man. Nature, after all, is a cannibal tigress that devours her fairest offspring....” saying which, he now reached aside, and pressed an electric button.

It was now that I cast myself down at the man’s feet, grasping him so that he could not escape me, gasping to him: “but you cannot hurt him, cannot touch him, she will go crazy, is not strong, it is your fault, you should not have done to her what you twice did; she is expecting him tonight, never hoped in her heart to see him again, but we made her hope against hope, and now that he is almost at home — see, these are her telegrams, read them, mad with haste, and it is useless to plead with him, he is infected with some moral crotchet, but *you* will find a way for us, I cast myself upon your mighty heart like a child, not for myself, nor for him, but for her, whom you have so horribly wronged ...” and, as I so pleaded, the man’s hand lifted, and was about to come upon me: was it a half-blow? a half-caress? I am not even now sure; but when, just then, someone rapped at the door in answer to his summons, he called out in Italian, “never mind, I will ring again when I want you”; and to me he said: “give me the telegrams.”

His demand for them surprised me. I handed them to him in a mass as I had snapped them out of my pocket, whereupon he took out his spectacles, wiped them, adjusted them upon his nose, and holding the telegrams away from his eyes close to the grimy light, perused them patiently, while I waited with legs that could hardly any more uphold my weight. One by one he let the leaves of paper fall down, having read them, and read the next; but the last two he tossed away without reading, and turned off to pace the floor.

I waited shivering while four or five times he paced, poring upon him, and once I saw his brow lift largely, his eyes wander round the roof, and heard him breathe to himself the words: “death death.” Of what he was thinking I was not then aware, and I waited, shaking, my eyes nailed to his face. When he next spoke it was with sudden vexation, saying: “ridiculous beings! I foresaw that you would come to grief, I lavished warnings upon you, I ought to see you shot like two dogs. How do you dare to say now that Miss Langler’s frailty is any fault of mine, when it is wholly your own? I was devoting myself to the welfare of men, seeing clearly, knowing clearly, what I did, for as the heavens are high above the earth, just so, I suppose, are my thoughts larger than your thoughts, and you dared to meddle with me. I ought to see you shot now like two dogs, I assure you. Why should I take my useful life down into the darkness of death in order to save pedants like you, or to spare a woman’s feelings?”

“Your life?” I breathed; “the darkness of death? There is no such question!”

“But you speak very like a child,” said he: “is it not clear to you that either Mr Langler or I must throw up the cards now, since he will not give his word to be silent? The crucifixion of the priest which you witnessed by the riverside in the mountain would be called a murder by the world, so undoubtedly will the miracle-crucifixions. It is true that I am rather above being punished by the law for them, but my name would be quite blighted, and my life nothing worth to me. I have neither wife nor child.... I must only sacrifice it, since you insist that I have already enough wounded Miss Langler — unless Mr Langler will sign me that paper this instant.”

“Oh, sign,” I whispered, edging nearer to Langler, but he stood white, inflexible. “There is no occasion for anyone to die,” he said, with lowered lids: “let Baron Kolár be silent as to the miracles being none, and I, too, will

be silent; but if they be bruited abroad as the work of churchmen, then, I shall not fail, if I have life and liberty, to declare that, on the contrary, they are the work of Baron Kolár.”

“But how am I to be silent?” asked the baron: “does Mr Langler imagine that I am alone in this scheme? This night three thousand gentlemen, earnest fellows, large fellows, are in the act of carrying their task to its end, nor should I dream of spoiling their work by sparing your life if I thought that one man’s voice could seriously spoil it; but your voice will effect little, Mr Templeton will not support it, it will be lost in the vast uproar, and will only be of avail to cast a blight upon my own private name: to save my life, then, which I have a thought of laying down for your wounded sister’s sake, vouchsafe to sign me that paper this instant.”

“Such a thought is most admirable, Baron Kolár, and would be quite surprising, if it were not you who had it,” said Langler; “but, after all, the claims upon us of gratitude and affection are not the greatest. I pray you, then, not again to ask me to sign the paper.”

To this Baron Kolár said nothing in reply, but picked up the paper signed by me, put it into his pocket, and paced about, frowning; till on a sudden his brow cleared, he said: “oh, well,” and he sat himself down on the bedstead laths. There he took out of his pocket a bag of grapes, and, stooping forward, began to feed upon them, with quite a working of the mouth and a sputtering of seeds. While thus busy, and given up to this guttling, he kept looking up with wandering eyes, and he mumbled mainly to himself, saying: “they are grapes of Egripos; very sweet they are, too, very nice, not bad, and whenever I die, if I be opened, some of them will be found in me. These few here may be my last feast, hence I do not offer you any. But I do not fancy so, oh no, you will see. It is astonishing what influences personality has upon events: from my boyhood, if by chance I bet on a race-

horse, it always won, strange thing, it always won. Once, when a youth, I fought a duel with the famous swordsman, Paulus, and, though no hand at the rapier myself, I somehow came out grandly, I got in such a slash, yes, such a slash, right in his cheek — very nice. I have always come nicely through everything. Archbishop Burton, now: two hours ago he called me a scoundrel, and lifted a chair to strike me; but the moment he lifted it he dropped in a fit, and has since died. I seem to be immune from such maniacs, I assure you. On the sixth of June five years ago a fellow named Vesgolecza threw a bomb at me in Vienna; but it killed my political enemy, Count Attem, and I procured the fellow's pardon. No, I was not born for the martyr's crown, I own the badge and trick of escape. It is a question of organisation and secret league with the soul of the world. Look at me, I am sound throughout, a little trouble with the stomach after food sometimes, a little flatulence, nothing much, a little trouble. But Mr Langler, now: you are one of those men who are tricked out with every jewel, except just the pearl of great price, effectualness, favouritism with high God; such men are the scapegoats of progress; history is based on their pains and groans; to the bane in their fate there grows no bezoar. If you perish to-night, do not imagine that I shall grieve for you; you are a man whom I might have loved, but I lavished warnings upon you in vain, and I am such that even in death my gall cannot quite forgive a personal insolence; but I shall realise that your fate is over-sad, and I shall grieve for your graceful sister, who has not offended me, but to whom I was forced to be ungallant. Therefore I am about to give you one last great chance of life, though you will not rise to the luck of it, you will be failing, I think.... But let me not brag too soon. As you see, it must be either you or I to whom this bedstead within one hour will turn out to be the death-bed. Death is dark and monstrous, yes, death is dark. The artful old brain all at once ceases to discern, the old heart no

longer brawls, all becomes nothing. But some humour of the soul has brought me to risk it, and, even if I should not manage to get through, what, after all, is the death of a man? Nothing more to God than the jaundice and death of a leaf. I notice that Fitzroy Square out there is covered just now with dead leaves: no one heeds them, no, no one heeds them.... Well, now, we shall see.”

He sprang up, sputtering his last seeds, wiping his hands, saying: “I shall be back in three minutes,” and went out. Some seconds later I was standing with my forehead on my arm against the wall when I heard behind me some heavy pantings, and, glancing round, beheld Langler staggering, with his hand held over his heart. I was only just in time to catch him. “One moment,” he sighed, “my heart....” He looked ghastly. But when I had got him to the chair and fanned him with my handkerchief he presently opened his eyes. “My heart, God knows,” he began to say, when the key was again heard in the lock, whereat he got up hastily, buttoning his dress again, as Baron Kolár came in.

The baron first placed the key of the door and a piece of paper on the chair, saying: “here is the key and a permit for you to go out of the house, in case of my death, gentlemen”; then, pouring two pills from a big blue pill-box into his palm, he held them out to Langler, saying: “now, sir, if you take one of these I will take the other.”

“But why so?” I heard Langler ask; and I heard Baron Kolár answer: “one is a poison, the other is harmless; choose one, sir, and I will have the other.”

“But if I chance to choose the harmless one,” Langler next said, “I become the cause of the death of a most magnanimous man, Baron Kolár.”

“Of a most rash and foolhardy man, sir,” was Baron Kolár’s answer; “but choose quickly, I charge you, sir.”

“But, baron — —” I heard Langler say.

“Do not delay! or I dash the cursed pills to the ground!” I now heard Baron Kolár cry out: “your chance to serve your sister and madman Church vanishes in two ticks of my watch!”

“Well, then, since you put it in that way, baron ... well, then, baron....” I heard Langler say, but what next went on I did not witness, for my face all this while was pressed against the wall. Indeed, I was sick, with a most mortal taste in my mouth, and there at the wall I waited in what seemed to me a month of stillness, until there reached me a sound of moaning which I understood to come from Baron Kolár. I dared then, for the first time, to turn and look at them. Langler was standing with his back against the wall, white, but smiling; Baron Kolár was sitting on the bedstead, holding his head with both his hands, his eye wandering wildly. When he caught my eye he said to me: “it is I who have swallowed the poison-pill, yes, it is I.” And when I now moved to stand at his side he turned up at me a most haggard jowl, an all-gone gaze, his eyes hanging languishingly upon mine. On a sudden he started, saying with new alarm: “It is I who have taken the poison!” Then afresh he rocked himself from side to side, moving his palm to and fro along the length of his thigh, full of sighs and retchings and moans. I was crouched on my knees before his anguish, I sobbed aloud to him: “great, fatherly heart!” “Stay!” he said, with a new brusqueness, “I feel the stiffness coming on in the neck, I had better get up: it is brucine,” and he now raised himself by my help, and stepped about, upheld on my shoulder, during which, “yes,” he said to me in confidence, “I have gone a step too far, I have tempted God, and He has abandoned me”; and again he moaned, “it is brucine,” pressing his reins ruefully, with groans. “But can I do nothing?” I cried to him, “let me do something for you!” To this he made no answer, but said to me: “I never thought to fail; I have always managed to

come out prettily through everything, but now I perish miserably for a mere whim of my bile, a moment's noble wind, it is all your own doing, Gregor, you reap what you have sown. Recount to Miss Langler how a man like me died for her, tell the Misses Chambers and all your friends how I perished, let all their hearts pity me and bleed...." It was while he was saying this that I first noticed Langler, who now stepped out from the wall toward us, trying to smile, saying to Kolár, "no, baron, do not dismay yourself with such fancies, you have already over-much worked out ..." but his speech was broken short by a jerk of the neck, his mouth was drawn, he had an aspect of terror: death was in the face of my friend. Baron Kolár, staring at him, seemed to start from a dream, and like a man dropped aghast but glad from the gallows-rope the man's lips unwreathed in a kind of rictus, as he said with an opening of the arms: "well, I told you how it would be," whereupon at once he now turned in flight from the sight of Langler's face, but turned again to whisper to me, "you can go into another room or be here, just as you wish," and after waiting an instant for my answer, when I only gaped at him, he fled away.

I sat by the bedstead, upon which Langler had fallen, and must have remained there on the floor, I imagine, till five or six p.m. the next evening. Baron Kolár's prophecy that the bedstead would become a death-bed within one hour did not come true, for it must have been two, perhaps three, hours before Langler was freed from his anguish, though I am not sure, for after half-an-hour or so the light for some cause died out, and the darkness may have stifled out my consciousness of time. I think, however, that he lived three hours. The poison given him may have been over-little, or over-much, or poor in poignancy, so that at some times it was difficult to believe that he could be really dying; there were such intervals as that in which he repeated most of the Homeric hymn to Apollo, then there were spasms on spasms,

and presently again his mind gave signs of wandering. All was in rayless darkness — it was well so. Thrice he cried to me: “Oh, that we knew where once more we might find Him, Arthur!” “We are like babes that are being weaned,” he said, “but nothing is offered us in place of the Breast that has been withdrawn, we bawl in the dark....” After this he lay without saying anything for some time, until he said again: “yes, now in the hour of my voyage it is Jesus who to me is the most eminent, the best-beloved. Blessed name, blessed name. How abounding in beguilement are all his words, like lovers’ sidelong glances, and honey of Hybla to the tongue! ‘Consider the lilies of the field, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these’ — surely, Arthur, the most literary words ever used — except in a quite literal sense — if you accept my definition of literature as ‘chastity a-burn.’ I know of nothing quite to match them for that demure rich indirectness which is the essence of literature, except perhaps ‘[Greek: *asteras eisathreis*],’ and the ‘path which no fowl knoweth.’ How staid the statement, how rosy the aroma; how little is said, how much is felt and meant and suggested: for the puny men dissect and depict, the huge men sum up and suggest. And that big-mouthed ‘swear not by Heaven’ — you can’t match me that God for downright bulk, the earth His footstool, His buttocks throned broad over the stars, His head up in the room beyond, huge Egyptian shadow — Oh, I *must*....” Upon this my friend was held up by one of the fits, in which he stretched like an arch on his head and feet; but there was no bed, his legs slipped between the laths, causing them to vibrate and jangle; I could not see, it was very well so. But in the interims he was easy enough, without much suffering, I think, and now he was unconscious of me, and maundered with a wandering mind, showing still his ruling passion, criticising still, arguing still of literature, till his passing. “Surely the light is good,” says he, “and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to

behold the sun,” being all gone by that time, I believe, and all gone, too, when he breathed to himself: “oh, a rough God! In what velocities does He mix and revel! The encounter of dark suns — how He slackens bridle and urges them like chargers, faster, faster, with laughter in His beard, and afterwards muses upon the silence of their tragedy when a new star psalms in the sky at night, and the star-masters watch it with awe.” This was among his final utterances, and afterwards I had for some time a sense of being alone in the dark there without him; but then I heard my friend say in a thin and dying whine: “why art thou cast down, oh, my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?” and at the last he panted out at me, “tell her, Arthur, tell her, in His will is our peace.” Long I sat then, incased in night, with nothing but the darkness and his death in my mind, but in the end God gave me tears, and a deep sleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII

END OF MISS LANGLER



WHEN I OPENED my eyes I found myself lying alone half under the bedstead. The body of my friend, no longer there, must have been very quietly taken away. It was found in the river, high up about Wargrave.

I gathered up my hat and some telegrams scattered over the floor, and passed out, for the door of the room I found to be now open, so also was the door below. I think that I met no one on the stairs.

I next found myself in a train, and noticed now that it was evening at the sight of one of those sunsets that for three evenings had surprised everyone. Some men in the train were wildly talking, and though I heard little more of it than “Church” and “miracles,” and “downfall,” I can vividly remember their vowels of wonder and agitated jabbering.

On arriving at Alresford I got into a car to go to Swandale, but half-way to Swandale got out again, for I was now in no haste to be there, so it came into my head to walk, and at one moment I walked, at another I was standing still, at another I rabidly ran. In Swandale, when I was crossing the bridge toward the cottage, I beheld an old man named Davenport at the cottage-door whispering to two maid-servants, one of whom darted away, and when I had come to the cottage, “quite well, I hope, sir?” this old man mumbled to me, “fine evening, sir.” “None o’ that,” I said to him, “where is Miss Langler?” “This way, sir,” he answered, and ushered me into the morning-room. But I was no sooner in than the doorway was blocked with

retainers, men and women, and it appeared to me that these people were there to impede and tease me. No doubt my dress and appearance were in some disarray, since they seemed to gape in alarm at me, so now, growing angry, I said to old Davenport: "what is the meaning of this? is Miss Langler alive?" "Surely, sir," was his answer. "Then what is the meaning of this?" said I, "where is she?" "Miss Langler is no longer in the house, sir," he answered. "That now is a wilful falsehood, Davenport, and you know it full well," said I. "You say so, sir," he answered, "though I was never charged quite in that way till now, sir." "Well, you are charged now, Davenport," said I, "and I require to be taken instantly to Miss Langler." "The Almighty God look down upon this house!" he now bawled out, "you cannot, Mr Arthur, you cannot!" "But we shall see, then, whether I am a captive or not, Davenport!" I cried, whereat the old man shouted out: "John! stop him! he is out of his wits!" They failed, however, to hold me, for I tore clear out of the thick of them, and pelted down the length of two long, dark corridors, nor did any of them dare to come after me.

Through all that region of the house I now flew in a heat of search for Miss Langler: I glanced into her chamber, and she was not there; I looked into room after room, and did not see her; I peered into nooks, for nothing was lit anywhere, and everything brooded in a deep dusk. But on getting nearer to Langler's study I seemed to detect some sound.... I went to it. Both the doors were locked on the outside, and the sound, louder now, was going on within; so, crouching there at one of the two doors in the hush of the dark, I hearkened a long, long while to it. Something within seemed to me to be running about the study at a trot, round and round, with trot, trot, trot, in a steady way; but whether it was a living human soul I did not know, for it was strange that the lungs of a man should last so long, and not fail, and I wondered whether it was she — or he; when it drew nigh to the door I heard

pantings awhile, till it went on its way, and presently panted nigh once more, and was away, round and round, in a steady way; twice or thrice, too, I seemed to be aware of a flutter somewhere, the thin utterance of a bird; and ever I spurred myself to venture in, to look and see for myself, but each time that I brisked up to try it my hairs bristled, and I shied at it.

There did, however, come a moment when I very gingerly turned the key and found myself in. It was Miss Langer whom I saw; but she, for her part, did not see, or at least heed, me at all, nor make any attempt to escape, but continued to trot round, panting towards some bourn in a heavy haste, made heavier by the large hat that she wore, and by the velvet of a violet hue that voluminously clothed her, some of which she carried over her arm that she might the handier hurry. That print of Gainsborough's "Duchess" in her large gown over the pyx, if it had stepped down from its frame to run and run, could hardly have more resembled her. The mastiff Bruno was following at her heels, and on her shoulder rode the little wren in unstable balance, this latter all mauled now and bemuddled in its own blood, while many of its feathers lay moulted about the floor-tiles: for when she had seen that her brother did not come to her, she seems to have given way to a craving to crush out the creature's life, but it had contrived to escape her hand, she had run after to catch it, and had kept on running. But why, I wondered, did she so press, with her eye musing inwardly upon herself, the enamel eye of mosaics, fixed and dull? If I dared to stand in her way to bar her, for I was far from dreaming of daring to touch her, she meekly swerved as from some rock or block, and continued to run her course. Rarely did she halt for sheer breathlessness, and lean her shoulder a little, and pant, and start afresh, followed by the machine that whined at her heels with a long lolling tongue and eyes of abashment. I, seated in the casement, hearkened and hearkened to her every step, and to the rushing of the cascade, and my

eye-corners were ever aware of her as she came and went in that twilight stillness, of the flutterings, too, of the bird, and of the fading out of the sunset, for all that heaven of hues in the west I saw die down to bloodshed and dabbling, and wished that I, too, was dead.

It was not till two in the morning that I saw her removed, she protesting with a meek dignity, begging to be permitted to catch.... But of this I could hardly write more; it was with her as the hard heart of the world would have it; and God is on His throne, thinking on His glory....

APPENDIX

Having finished the tale of my tragedy, what I may still further have to utter will contain naught that is new, no exclusive knowledge of my own, but may still be of interest as a sketch of my introduction to the so-called Church-of-the-overman.

The nine months following the death of Langler are somehow almost wholly blotted out of my life, I remember next to nothing of them, living somehow *in vacuo*, with curiously little of pain or pleasure or volition, and almost my first new memories are of the visits of my friend, Mr Martin Magee, who put himself to infinite pains with me, read to me, insisted upon interesting me. Again and again he would recount to me the thousand-fold drama of “the downfall” in all its ramifications and phases. “Dead?” he would say of the Church, with his Irish energy and a thump of the fist, “dead with a thud that has been felt by the priesthood in China: there has been a little recrudescence of old-fashioned Nonconformity in England, Scotland, and America, but that isn’t going to last ten years, you’ll see.”

“So the people imagine that the miracles were the work of churchmen?” I asked.

“Pooh, not now,” he answered; “they did at first, and it was the rage arising out of this fancy that wiped out the Church as a political power; but, of course, the real death of the Church is not due to rage, but to unconcern and oblivion.”

“Was it for this, then, that Aubrey Langler died?” I thought, “in order that the Church as a political power might be wiped out?” “But was there no moral reaction, Magee?” I asked: “Langler said that there would be, and another friend of mine that there would not.”

“Which friend was that?” asked Magee.

“I may tell you and the world some day,” I answered, “if he dies before me, but not at present.”

“Well, whoever he is, he knows his modern Europe,” said Magee. “I don’t remember hearing of any moral reaction.”

“But, then,” said I, “is the Western world left now without any religion?”

“Never a bit,” said he; “it is now just beginning to be gushingly religious. Haven’t we, first of all, our store of hereditary religion, unconscious in us? And remember that ‘the unconscious is the alone complete.’ Religion, I suppose, is whatever binds us back from living to please our primary natural selves? Therefore religion of old said, ‘live to please those about you’; and man has roughly reached to that, of old making society possible, now making it solid. But the evolution of ‘live to please those about you,’ is it not this: ‘live to please those whom you cannot even see, the unborn’? All which you may hear Rivers say if you will come with me forthwith to church.”

“Which church?” I asked.

“Why, Rivers’ — or any of the others.”

“But what is it all about?” I asked.

“Haven’t I told you about it again and again?” said he: “but with this wilful numbness of yours you won’t remember anything. It is a Church of transcendent ambitions, Templeton, aspiring at no less than the planting under heaven before long of a tribe higher than man, though its methods of setting about it are of a naiveté bound at first to leave you alien to their mystery of meaning; its theory is that the fowl precedes the egg: it grapples with the parent, beginning at the base of the ladder, its eyes fixed on the flying galaxies; but you wouldn’t catch a glimpse of all at your first visit, and, if you find anything *queerish*, remember sacring-bells and praying-mills, and remember that the first British person who happened to broach an

umbrella in a public road cast twelve million fools into a brabble of laughter. Anyhow, I challenge you to go twice to the new Church without hungering to go thrice.”

“You seem sincere,” I said, “but you only wish to win me out of doors, I suppose. Where did Rivers get money from? He didn’t use to be rich.”

“But the whole hubbuboo is more or less early-Christian-communistic,” answered Magee: “people pay, because it is costly, and earns its pay. Socialism just needed a religious nerve, didn’t it? and here you have it. The base-wall of all is equality— ‘if one’s neck-muscles alone are brawny,’ Rivers always has it, ‘he will call no man your lordship.’ The idea is to preach and drill the nation into one army, the train-band of the times to come, for Rivers is the arch-foe of heterogeneity, he would have all men as twin as two perfect peas. But the Church is built on pity as well as on aspiration; equality is swallowed up in fraternity; charity is her riches, love is her festival. Run chiefly by women, she is an enthusiasm of the poor for the poor, and for the poorest of the poor, the child to be born; and to the poor a Gospel is again preached. You will find them all inflamed with the finest faith in the future, full of self-culture, ideality, good fellowship, and good food. The soul, too, is fed with a true emotion and communion of saints, as distinct from a fictitious: worship takes place.”

“You seem quite enamoured,” I said. “But worship of what?”

“Of God,” said he.

“But which God?” said I, “the old God?”

“No,” said he, “the new God.”

“Ah, the new God,” said I, “He is a most vague person: like Langer, I almost prefer the old God.”

“But is it a question of *preference*?” asked Magee: “prefer as you please, you can’t have the old God: He is as dead as His Church. But His death is,

of course, phoenix-death, and the new God is only vague because the age is new, and men's brains only just enough evolved to see Him darkly; soon, I dare say. He will take the darlingest bright ship-shape. The old God too at first was pitched too high for men's eyes, hence lapses into idolatry and golden-calfishness, for idolatry is ever a soul-sloth, an idle backsliding to some lower, more facile ideal of one's forefathers; and for us now sluggishly to worship the old God would be equally idolatrous; we must stretch up now to the new, so making the stretch facile for our children: all which are not my own ungiven words, but Rivers'; let's go now to him."

"But is this the right day and hour?" I asked.

"There's a service every day at noon," he answered, "we should be just in time."

Well, I let myself be led. As I was getting ready Magee called to me: "by the way, you must put on a belt; one doesn't go in braces and corsets." So I put on a belt, and we went.

It was a sultry day in May, like summer almost, and most strange, I remember, was the look and mood of everything to me that day as we drove to Kensington. Arrived there, under the porch of the church I was struck by a prodigious fresco of Jesus, which was rather a revelation to me, for then first I seemed to see Jesus, a brown peasant in a turban — not going about blessing little children with long hair and nothing on his head in a blazing climate, according to the too churchy fancy of the painters, in defiance of St Paul's "It is a shame for a man to have long hair." Here, anyway, as it struck me, was the Man, the dusky Lily, and though much too garishly painted, it powerfully engaged our gaze. However, the crowd pressed; we went in.

But never yet had I bowed the head under half so vast a house of man! most vast, though cheap and unhandsome. Magee and I were so fortunate as to be led far forward toward the stage, and there we sat, each in a pew four

feet long — only one person sitting in each pew — while hosts of nuns haunted the aisles and seven galleries, nutmegging the air with incense swung from censers; and I noticed that the roofs were in some way detached, and the air as pure and fresh as in the open.

A young man, parting the curtain, stood and howled out with all his heart a number out of a hymn-book; upon which the host of people started up, and shouted it — Tennyson's "Brook"— "for men may come and men may go, but I go on for ever." But that burden of sound was almost too over-ponderous for the bethundered eardrum! trumpets pealed, organs braved, while the earthquake and brotherhood of it brushed in ague-chills down my back, and was still humming about my head half-a-minute after it was hushed.

The next twenty minutes were taken up with the Blessed Sacrament, partaken of in early-Christian manner, only that there was no table. It was served by a hive of nuns, who bore baskets of sandwiches, fruit, cakes, etc., and water dashed with wine. The sandwiches were rather palpable for my palate! but, as with early-Christians, those who were not hungry no longer partook of the Lord's body, though all drank of his blood, those who were not thirsty drinking from liqueur-glasses and the thirsty from tumblers. Meantime, a man at the edge of the stage was howling: "though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee...." And again he howled with passion: "he was oppressed, yet he humbled himself, and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb: yea! he opened not his mouth...."

When this was over the curtains rushed away, the stage was opened, and for some twenty minutes I was the witness of a set of shows. There was no dialogue, and never should I have supposed that means so guileless would persuade to so high a sense of art: each heart, I think, was touched. The

shows were little pictures of man in his various doings and modes of being, and we had all to become human, and brothers of one another; in one case it was a dog that caused the music, and we had all to become brothers of the dog and of one another. First, there sprang upon the stage a Japanese athlete, naked but for a loin-cloth, who did nothing but parade himself as our pattern, with a few wanton movements about the waist to give assurance of his grace and perfected joy. Then followed a boy and girl who kissed on the sly behind a horrid aunt. Then a Jewish rag-picker, who did nothing but pick up rags, but still moved the springs of one's breast with love of him. Then a woman in a loose garment who lay down on a couch, and we marked the pangs that wrung her; she ran off slimmer than she came on! laughing! with an infant in her arms, while the people pursued her with the acclaims proper to victors. Then a child was stolen, but its mother was joyfully guided to it by a dog. Then came a ship-boy, a musician who forgot his own name, a grey astronomer, and three or four more.

While our hearts were still fond at these shows an acolyth who took his stand at the front and left of the stage vociferated the shout: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit!*" and at once there appeared on the stage a shoeblack, and also a young man rather shabbily dressed, with a bag in his hand; the young man begged the shoeblack to shine his boots, for he had stepped into bog: but he made the request with such polite shynesses and diffidences that the shoeblack at once put him down as a nobody, and cut some faces at him. When, however, the boots were shined the shabbily-dressed young man handed the shoeblack a handful of shillings for his pains. The shoeblack, seeing now that here must be a millionaire, gaped so open-mouthed at his riches, that only after some time did he observe that the young man had gone and forgotten his bag behind. The shoeblack then opened the bag, and drew out what was crowded within — an old lady's portrait, a lock of hair, a

violin, an etching, and a copy of Ronsard: and the instant he drew out the Ronsard the acolyth who before had shouted out “blessed are the poor in spirit” rang now to the high dome his shout of triumph: “for theirs is the kingdom of the soul!”

The acolyth next shouted out: “*Blessed are the pure in heart!*” and at once there appeared an Egyptian man and woman — Joseph and Potiphar’s wife; Joseph had bone tablets in his hand, adding up figures; Potiphar’s wife tickled his neck and drew him: Joseph smiled, pinched her cheek, puzzling ever over his figures. Still the woman would have him, she coaxed, she intrigued: Joseph patted her shoulder, shook her ear, without ever budging or looking up out of his tablets. At last the woman drew him over to left-centre, Joseph going unconsciously with her; but at the door itself he woke up, laughed, escaped, as who should say “not for Joseph,” leaving his garment in her hands, and instantly was puzzling over his figures again. But now all at once Joseph began to wave out gestures of glad new discovery! The man had detected some mistake in his arithmetic! and the instant he detected his mistake, the acolyth gave out the high shout of triumph: “for they shall see God!”

Then again the acolyth shouted out: “*Blessed are the merciful!*” and at once there came on a man in brown who cowed a hound, and another man in bright who was kind to it. Years passed: and Brown and Bright were both chased in a lane by a madman with a hatchet; but Brown’s morose habit of mind had been the seed in him of biliousness and other ills; he hopped on crutches, could not escape; but Bright escaped: and the instant he escaped the acolyth shouted out in triumph: “for they shall obtain mercy!”

And so they tripped on through the Beatitudes, teaching the people biology in parables. Here was a whole new art: the old prejudice of “Christianity” in respect to the stage had ranged to the other pole, and

Church had changed into stage. How fruitful within the last few years has been the evolution of these germs we know. At that time no use was made of the bioscope. The shows were changed each day.

All at once, when this was over, one was aware of the presence of Ambrose Rivers, whereat my eyes ran through the hall to its seventh heaven, and saw it all like leafage of the aspen-forest, while Rivers advanced from the stage-back bent beneath the storm of cheers. And poised just over the orchestra-pews, with a pure voice that pealed through the vast, he vociferated: "Let us reverence That Which made us!"

Thereupon he fell to his knees, with his arms stretched up straight and parallel; all the people did the same, while the orchestra rendered Vogel's "Eternal Tool"; and Rivers, gazing straight upward, shouted: "Father! hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Give us our bread to-day. And forgive us our debt as we forgive everyone who is in our debt. Amen."

This said, after a minute his arms shot horizontal, his neck bowed, and, still kneeling, he shouted to us: "Let us reverence one another in our human ancestors!"

And while the choir gave "Mild son of man, thy front sublime," all our arms shot horizontal, each worshipper straining to touch the finger-tips of his neighbour to left and right, for the shoulder-joint is capable of no little stretching, with practice.

This done, Rivers rose to his feet with the shout: "Let us reverence the ape, without bending the knee or the neck!"

And thereupon, while the orchestra rendered Brewers' "Ye humble wombs with homage fraught," he put his finger-tips to the ground. Through the building everyone put his or her finger-tips to the ground.

When this was over Rivers shouted: "Let us reverence the half-apes!"

Whereupon, without bending the knees or the neck, he put the first finger-joint to the ground; and while the choir gave Thibaut's "Crooked shapes, the alphabet of life," everyone did the same — or tried to. As it were a wind of breaths began to whiff through the building.

Rivers next shouted: "Let us reverence the dog!"

And with this he put his fists to the ground. We all tried our best to do the same, while the choir gave Sauer-Motti's "Dark Backward and Abyss of Time."

Rivers next shouted: "Let those of us who can reverence all That Which is below the dog!" And with this, without bending the knees or the neck, while the orchestra gave the overture to "The Creation," he put his palms on the ground.

But it was no easy matter to reverence all That Which is below the dog! I can now do it with nonchalance, but it tried me then. It was not a mere question of putting the palms on the ground, but of keeping them there during three straining minutes, with the eyes of ladies criticising your performance! However, I rose from the effort a straighter man: it is this touching what is beneath without bending the knees which makes soldiers, and also saints. Meantime, I was charmed with the movements of the hosts of nuns and other ladies, who, it was clear, vied with one another in ease and achievement: I thought that some of them must certainly have a selection of lovers.

When this was over Rivers called to us: "Let us sum up and reverence all!" whereat everyone held up a bamboo rod behind the back with the stretched arms, and, sitting tight, swung the shoulders smartly, this way and that alternately, thus hardening the muscles of the back. And so it was during twenty minutes: when we reviewed the Past we stood fronting the stage, but with our necks strained back, looking at the opposite wall; when

we aspired to the Future we struck our chests with our knees, an exaggerated going-upstairs; when we were meek we dropped our body upon our heels with force enough to bounce us up again, an exaggerated curtsy, thus oiling the hinges of the knee-joints; when we were merciful we bent far sideward to left and right, trying to touch the ground; when we were pure in heart we bent backward at the waist to touch the ground behind, and so on.

All this was, of course, highly exhilarating, both in itself, and because done in fellowship with a host of people all making the same gestures at the same moment; but it did not yet edify, did not move me religiously; and, because it did not, I thought to my self: “it is not a fitting function for *a Church*.” Within a few weeks, however, I was to find how very far at fault I was in this, for the gestures only failed to edify me at first for the reason that in my consciousness there was no correlation between each gesture and its husband idea: *habit* was essential for that. Thus to nations that do not kneel to pray, nor raise the hand to say “hiss!” these gestures are destitute of pertinence: there is no correlation. But when habit had once set up in my mind a wedlock between gesture and idea, then the gestures became as touching to the soul as they were teaching of a wonder of buoyancy and joy to the body.

When the exercises were over Rivers spoke to the people. By birth or learning he had the lungs of a bull, and to the giddiness of the seventh gallery, I believe, his bellows must have blown. On the whole, he impressed me as a real prophet or outspeaker, speaking his truth like the wayfaring of a force of nature, without humour, ire, respect, or prospect. I can’t recall much that he said, but he called the people to joy, telling them that a bad tree could not bring forth good fruit, neither could unhappy men beget happy generations. Joy of heart was their obligation, for they were the ancestors of God, the future hung on their joys. “Behold!” he howled, “I

bring you word! your life is worth living if you live it a little well.” Of course, no one yet half knew how to live it well; but, thanks to the pryers and the tryers, one knew a little. Already a howling gaiety might be theirs. One rather good thing was to live a moment at a time, ruminating the moment’s relish deliciously, as when that morning on opening his eyes he had said to himself: “Alive! and still young! not a twinge nor a grief throughout! refugee of a thousand hungry hells! this, then, is my turn in the turning of Eternity: for the men of Misgab and of Bagdad are dead, but I am alaugh for a little while.” Then he had run round Hyde Park, and half-way round could not help howling all hey and conversant with wind and the Holy Ghost, to the disgusting of everyone. If there was one thing in this marsh of Divinity more divine than all the rest, it was wind, and ever in March and big November God was with men; but only those dreamed how divine who ran far into it, and breathed it deeply, and drowned in it, and browsed bedrowsedly upon all the sound and sounds of it. Then he had returned home, and had eaten a ton. If they wished to have boisterously high and holy joy of their breakfast, they must work for it, should run at least a mile or two. Joy, then, gushing health, and they knew what went all in fusion with gushing health — chastity, fortnights of titanic continence. Who was the happiest and best of men? He happened to know, and would tell them: not essentially the saint, the philosopher, the plutocrat, but essentially the acrobat — the man with his fibres mobile, his breast like pent Pentecost. The saint, the philosopher, the artist, were happy also, but only because they were acrobats in their fashion. This was just the news of Christianity, that along the path of self-torture lay in ambush a marvel of awaking, a scarlet dawn: to evolve they must twist themselves. And let them know that the soul was a trick of the body. The result of a beauish body was a religious saltarello. Were they covetous to stride out into the infinite? —

let them scout in the finite on every side. *Mens sancta in corpore sancto*. No more, then, of the old necks, teeth, effete souls. With respect to teeth, there was a misconception abroad which he wished to correct: they all knew that in a few ages man was fated to become a toothless gumption: well, but there were two paths to that gate, not only through decay, but, secondly, through the decrease of the teeth in size, till at last they disappeared. Let them choose the latter by chary mating. Devotion to evolution was for the future their only possible piety; so their own bodies must be their care all day long, till their every movement of muscle or brain was a pattern of grace. Perfection! it had to be: why not now? greyhounds were perfect. The men of late generations had really been rather grotesque, crowds of them strutting their personalities about in some rag or gaud of spiritual skill, yet glaring with the lues of a low evolution. One of the most highly-famed poets of the nineteenth century had had — what did they think? — a paunch. “Ho! Ho!” he howled, “think of the pure grotesqueness of it! a poet with a pouch! no wonder he was obscure! it is like a poet with spectacles on his nose! or a poet with bo-peep in his teeth, whom no pious miss would kiss!” No, that wouldn’t do. The chimpanzee vaunted a paunch, and we were devoutly getting done with paunches now, thank God. From men of this age God did not so much need glorious books, of which He was choke-full, but was greedy for glorious children, darting eyes, laughing caverns. The men of the past had learned from St Paul that “bodily exercise profiteth little”; for us it was the main means of grace and the sole hope of glory, of grace for the Roman, of glory for the race. By it they would attain to harmony with God. It had been said by men of old: “God is Love.” “How could they possibly know it?” he shouted: “how profound an insight! for this that to us is old science and certainty to them was only surmise. But what, then, does God love? Not apes, not men, His taste being a bit touchy:

God, we know, did once love, or press toward, apes when only dogs and half-apes were; and He did once love men when only ape-people were; but the moment men appeared He left off loving them, and was for loving their children: always it is evolution that He loves, change, the future, with urge and urge and urge.” So in loving the future they would be all in harmony with Him, loving what He loved. That future was full of shapes and plays. Happily, they could shape themselves to pledge and usher it in: for that was the right of man — to change himself; that was the definition of man— “a self-changing midget”; and an age was in the eye of the Highest when, by the heightening of this right of self-change, earthly lives would writhe in a trice into any shape of wyvern, or moose, or shivering seraph, or moon-eyed octopus, or quadruped with its belly to the sky and its back to the earth. Meantime, by pitifuler pantings, they, if they were fat, could make themselves fit; if they were short, they should, by taking thought, add one quarter-cubit to their stature; if they were bow-legged like the orang, self-bearding would get themselves knock-kneed like the cock; if they were starting and rapturous like the gorilla, they could get themselves impreguably calm like the overman; in an age or two they could change or redress their quite unnecessary length of arm, of spine, their over-plump shortness of leg, their base remoteness of sex-organ from brain, their too shameful “*ears*,” sham thumbs. They must tackle themselves humbly and in detail. Christianity had been far too heady and star-drunken, had made a leap three feet high to pluck Venus from the sky. We of this age must be more grave and grown-up, more self-conscious and disabused, must use a ladder, come back to the classic. The romantic would return some day in some new dress, for classic and romantic were alternate moods of the mind, neither could ever die. But for us of this age it was the classic, the austere, bare comeliness of reason. If our life and worship was barer and harder than

that of the past, it was also far higher. But let them not view our worship as yet worthy to be so called. The idol of the worship of the time to come would be the nightly sky. Man, so far, though with a much larger subconsciousness, looked forth at the stars with a consciousness little larger than that of gorillas, even with some fatigue; was still a villager of the earth, not yet a civilian of the universe; a few of the most elfin ears, they were told did, it was true, by an effort, and dullishly, catch some actual tollings of the chiming and dulcimers; but he believed that brains larger than ours, when they came, would pass pretty nearly all of life in brooding upon the runes of that writing. Let them wait, meekly grooming themselves to greet that “come to the marriage” which they would hear, and soon, lo, the scales would fall from man’s eyes, his tongue should be loosed and enchanted, and the earth should arise at last as the mourning-dove to hie to her room in the chancel of the heavens.

When Rivers had finished speaking we sang another hymn; again the trumpets pealed, organs braved, while the road-march and high brotherhood of it brushed in shiverings over one’s back, and troubled the vast building to its base:

“Time like an ever-rolling stream Bears all his sons away, They fly forgotten. :::”

The White Wedding (1908)



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I. SHAN'S THE MAN



ARTHUR GORDRIDGE, THE young master of Glanncourt, just getting better of a sickness that had brought him home from his regimental district, lay on a sofa during the forenoon of that 18th of September 1899 whose *Times* on the floor at his feet was furious with the news that President Kruger had refused to accept any of our propositions made to him on the eighth of the month; but even these growlings of the outbreak now near could not too greatly jingoize Gordridge's mind that morning, and his pile of papers having slipped off the sofa, his looks hankered towards the door.

Presently when the door opened his eye brightened: but the young lady who came in was not the one whom he longed to see.

"How are you this morning, Arthur?" she asked.

"Well, I think I begin now to feel some life in me again, thanks, Anne," he answered.

"Aunt Margaret asks you how you are, and whether there will be war."

"Well, I suppose there will be war; it will be intolerable if there is not after the insolence of these little farmer-people."

"I wonder if *you* will have to go to fight?"

"Not very likely."

"But if your company goes...."

"Even in that case.... I am on the sick-list, Anne."

"But you'll soon be better, and having no special temptation to stay..."

"Don't worry, Anne, just mention to mother what I say... Why, by the way, doesn't somebody remove this tray from my side?"

“You might have rung...I’ll take it.”

“As you like.”

“Or would you prefer that Rosie — ? By the way, talking of Rosie, have you heard about her? You have been so much abroad, and so chippy since you came, that I dare say you know precious little about us others here, really. But perhaps you are not much interested in your mother’s *pantins*, Arthur.”

“I’m sure I don’t know why you choose to call Rosie a *pantin*,” answered Arthur, “she is mother’s adopted daughter, precisely as you are, and one of the family.”

Anne Hine smiled at this: the slightest minx of not yet twenty-three years, anaemic, neat as an ear-ring; plain but quaint; with lines about the mouth which meant biting, meant impish; and some glint in the gold of those golden eyes which meant — genius? some shriek in that region.

“Well,” said she, “I must now set about to adjust myself to this new point-of-view about my Rosie, not a toy, but ‘one of the family.’ Her father was a twenty-acre farmer on one of the estate-farms.... But have you been told, Arthur, that Rosie is to be married?”

“Rosie?”

“Yes.”

“To be married?”

“Yes, Arthur.”

“Ah, I hadn’t been told. Well, she seems a sweet little body, so I don’t wonder; I only hope it is to some possible sort of man.”

“You remember Shan O’Shannon, don’t you? It is to him. He has lately been made head-keeper, though an unmarried man, and, yes, he’s a ‘tidy’ man, as they say here, though wedded to Socialistic notions; Aunt Margaret,

in fact, has lately had the thought of getting him off the estate for airing his arguments round about, but she didn't after, he is such a popular chap."

"O'Shannon: I don't remember," said Arthur.

"What, not that man with his thumb shot off? He turns up like clock-work twice a day to ask after you..."

"Oh, you mean 'Bull's head'!" exclaimed Arthur, "that for some reason was the only name he was known by when I was a boy; of course I remember! why, the fellow used to follow me about like a spaniel, our whole youth almost was spent with one another. You mean 'Bull's-head'? That's all right! *He*, of course, could never do for Rosie."

"But, then, it must be all wrong, Arthur, seeing that they are affianced," was Anne Hine's answer.

"But that is too absurd for words! Mother would never entertain such a suggestion.... First place, the fellow is short of a thumb—"

"Oh, Arthur, it isn't the thumb that makes the patriarch. And if it has been a bargain for years, Arthur, between Aunt Margaret and the man....? For that matter, O'Shannon is a sober chap, grand at 'kippuring', with some cash in the bank, and—"

She was interrupted by a shy rap, and agush with blushes Rosie Jones entered, a girl of not much more than seventeen: upon which Anne said keenly to Arthur: "Here is Rosie come, you see, of her own accord... I will tell Aunt what you say," and out she hurried, though outside in the corridor she stood hearkening, while Rosie asked Arthur how he was that morning.

"Much better thanks, Rosie," mumbled Arthur, holding a newspaper anew before his face, afresh interested in President Kruger.

She, for her part, raised the tray, but replaced it on the table, in order with a bent head to rearrange the cups, etc., on it, while Arthur looked at the

paper, till, as she again raised the tray, he said to her: "So you are engaged, Rosie?"

"Who is, Arthur?" asked Rosie, again getting rid of the tray.

"Isn't that so?"

"Why, no, Arthur."

"You give me your assurance as to that?"

"I'm not engaged to anyone, Arthur, I'm sure. What could have made you think such a thing?"

"Isn't there something about a man named O'Shannon, a gamekeeper?"

"About Shan O'Shannon? Oh, I am not, Arthur! The man has intrigued in that direction, but I have never agreed to such a thing."

"That's all right, then! I was misinformed, and I am awfully — relieved."

"Oh, it is dreadful of them to say such things of me!" said Rosie in distress: "I am not engaged to Shan O'Shannon, I have never uttered one word to make him think—"

"Well?"

"Well, to be frank, *one* Thursday evening during the week before you came, he encountered me in the south shrubbery as I was coming home from some sick villagers, and urged me so earnestly, that I — don't quite remember what I said. I told him that Mama Gordridge would hardly entertain the thought of my getting married at my age, but that—"

"Tell me?"

"But that — I would think of it, I said."

"Well, but that was no promise at all," said Arthur; "you, of course, are not to blame if the man chooses to take all sorts of delusions into his ridiculous brain. Does he fondly imagine, then, that that was a promise?"

"I hardly know," replied Rosie, "for I have tried not to be alone with him again, but he has been so light-hearted since then, that everybody imagines

that we are engaged. Butah we are not.”

“Of course you are not. *You* are not made for such as Shan O’Shannon, Rosie. Has he — had this craze in his nut a long time?”

“Yes, he and I happen to be cousins, and they say that since I was six he got it into his brain that I belong to him, and he wouldn’t marry anybody, waiting till I grew up. But Nurse Curtis says that you, Arthur, will never let him take me away from the Hall.”

“Nurse Curtis was never so right in her life, Rosie... Do you see that portrait there?”

“That one?”

“Yes, that with the rapier by the armour. His name was the same as mine — Arthur Fraser, he fought at Blenheim, and was the very best of us all, not only a soldier, but a poet, a politician, a gallant, and, above all, a jolly good fellow: I defy anyone to say less of him. Well, he married a farmer’s daughter because it appeared proper to him, because he was pleased to; and it turned out quite bravely, and blood of hers now runs in my veins.”

“Yes, Arthur,” she murmured, her brow turned downwards, but the thought rushed athwart her gorgeous head: “That one’s mother was not *this* Mrs Gordridge though.”

“Well, what *he* did,” said Arthur, sitting impulsively up, “*I* can do, too, for I am nothing like such a swell as he was, and I’m certain that his girl was never half so delicious as mine, nor he ever half so much gone on her... Rosie, come to me!”

Rosie stood shaking, looking at the roses incased in her nails.

“Come, will you?”

Rosie would not budge.

“What a dear you are!” breathed Arthur, as it were secretly, leaning towards her in a craze and heat: “do you realise that you are the very nicest

thing that was ever created? Those eyes, so large and arch, the throat in cream... cruel of you to be so sweet! If you won't come to me, I shall jump up to you..."

Rosie tried to speak, but failed.

"What did you say?" asked Arthur.

She tried again, but all that Arthur could catch were the two words: "Mama Gordridge."

"Yes, 'Mama Gordridge,'" said he: "but don't trouble about her now, this is really our own little business only, for all the world are outsiders, and we two Chinese to everybody. Only be sure that I really do love you—"

"Oh, it's too much!" wailed Rosie, suddenly covering her face, whereat he leapt up impulsively and strained her to him, murmuring: "no, don't be afraid of anything, only let me once know that you love me for my own self."

"Can one help it?" spoke Rosie to his neck, crying, "I always did..."

"What, before I came this time?"

"Yes, always, I used to cry..."

"Well, I must have been pretty stupid: I used to see without noticing you, I suppose, a little person with Cinderella dresses round spider's pins, eh? never dreaming into what a dear darling you would suddenly dart up..."

"No, *you* didn't, but this Shan O'Shannon did, notice me, Anne has been so inspired as to observe, and fixed upon me when I was little like that, and waited for me, and therefore, she declares — Oh, they will take me from you, I know, and then I shouldn't know what to do! Mama Gordridge—"

"No Mama Gordridge: I shan't hear..."

"If you keep kissing me, I shall get a sore on my lip, and then everybody will know what we have been up to."

"A sore! why a sore?"

“It’s a strange thing,” said Rosie, half laughing, half crying, “when I was a child, as sure as I played kiss-in-the-ring, so sure I got a sore on my lip.”

“You arch darling! but—”

But they were scared by a cry of feigned surprise in the room made by Anne who had strolled in, whereat Rosie, all inflamed, made her escape, while Anne Hine with her smile remarked: “Why, you are up, Arthur, isn’t it rather soon?”

“I — it is of no importance — what is it, Anne?” asked Arthur.

“A man who is eager to see you is out there, so I came to know—”

“Which man?”

“Shan O’Shannon, Arthur.”

“*Eager?* O’Shannon? to see me? whatever for?” asked Arthur.

“He has brought you — a fish, Arthur, and a brace of partridges.”

“Very charming of Mr O’Shannon... Well, you may let him in.”

Arthur returned to his sofa, drew his rug again over his legs, and a moment afterwards Shan O’Shannon entered: a fellow slight, tall, lithe and light-footed, his eyes light-blue, bright with batteries of fun under a broad brow, one of them somehow looking narrower than the other, adding to their twinkle some wink of knowingness, and to their humour ‘cuteness. He came bowing himself down, bright of eye, holding in one hand his cap with a brace of wild-fowl, in the other a four-foot salmon inside a putrod crate... “Pleased am I, Mr Arthur, to see you down at last!... I don’t believe you have wholly ceased to remember me, sir.”

“I remember you quite well, O’Shannon,” said Arthur.

“Well, you have had a longish bout of it in bed, and understanding that you came down yesterday, I’ve taken this liberty—”

“That’s all right, O’Shannon: you are very obliging. Those for me, I suppose?”

“Well, it seems a cheeky thing, too, to make a gentleman a present of two of the best of his own ground-game, but they came so tempting to the gun just now, I said I’d dare; as for the salmon, that I’m prouder of, for it’s pretty difficult to light upon a quite clean one about this season of the year, but this one is just fresh-run.”

“Yes, he seems fine. You are — very good. And how are the river and the birds?”

“Birds could hardly be finer, but Severn’s rather late and dry this year, fish haven’t come up plentiful, and the main of the spawning should be far on in November... Ah, it’s many a good salmon you and I have landed as lads together, sir...”

“I suppose so; yes, that is certainly so; I don’t forget, O’Shannon.”

“It used to be ‘Bull’s-head’ in those first days, sir, not ‘O’Shannon,’ till you got home for your first holidays from Rugby, then ‘Bull’s-head’ turned into ‘Bucephalus,’ for you had learned that ‘Bucephalus’ and ‘Bull’s-head’ are the same words, and it was ‘Bucephalus’ this, and ‘Bucephalus’ that, all over the place.”

“Ah, that was some time ago, I’m afraid.”

“True enough, sir, more’s the grief, for there are no trees so green any more now, nor one can’t ever feel over again for fresh people and scenes the same as for those we originally came across, sir.”

“I suppose not, O’Shannon.”

“You now, Mr. Arthur, no doubt there’s many a gentleman just as fine a fellow, take them all round, as you are, if the truth were only known; but to me they’d never be so, because to my young imagination you were a being to be looked after and worshipped above all others. It’s a foolhardy thing, too, but let that be my plea for forcing myself upon you, sir.”

Arthur, peering under his eyes at Shan, beheld anew the joyous boy whom, because of his priesthood of sky, storm, soil, his naiveté joined with depth, he had once called “patriarchal,” cunning to trap, course, climb, the bane of badger, hare, otter, who had been the humble husband of his boyhood. “Bucephalus” had very clearly been doing some reading since then, and now there was a crowded moustache ending in corkscrew undulations; but here was the same brow broad and low, rather treble voice, pale face, dance of eye, flight of foot; and Arthur’s inwards warmed with friendship, in spite of his ominous consciousness of Rosie and of crude fruit to accrue.

“How long since you last saw me?” he asked.

“Just six years now,” said Shan: “that was at Lydney station on September the 18th, 1893, the night you passed through on your way to India; and I caught a glimpse of you again the night you came home ill on the 2nd, a fortnight ago, but you didn’t notice me.”

“You have quite a memory for dates!”

“I could give you a statement with dates subjoined for every voyage you’ve taken, and for every page of your life. We have not been so far apart as you may fancy, for here’s your photograph in the Eton jacket which you gave me when you were fourteen and three months: I’ve always kept it in my pocket.”

“Yes, that undoubtedly seems to be I, O’Shannon — quite so. And — how have you been doing all these years?”

“Jolly, sir, thank you. Mrs. Gordridge has been marvellously good to me when other folks have had to groan under her pretty cruel rule; I have two married kippurs under me, and I live a free life in the bit of country that I love.”

“That’s all right, then; and before I go away again I intend to add to your prosperity more than you perhaps expect, O’Shannon, so that you will do quite well on the whole.”

“It’s the same generous Mr. Arthur as ever, you see!” cried Shan, while a light started to his eyes. “Not that I have much to crave for, nor would change places now with any man alive, for the streak of luck which I scarcely allowed myself to dream of came to me just the week preceding your coming—”

“Oh?”

“I mean the young girl that during thirteen years and more — No doubt you have seen my cousin, Miss Jones, since you have come down, sir?”

“I have seen her, of course.”

“*She* is what Shan-Bucephalus has been the fisher-lad to win for himself, then, though Heaven only knows how such a thing has come about, for it’s a long sight beyond what such as I ever had the title to look out for, any way.” Arthur was silent, till with rather reserved eyelids he murmured: “Has the girl given her word to marry you?”

“No, not exactly that, may be, but going on in that neighbourhood, thank God,” said Shan: “she’s young yet, and there’s a year or two’s waiting to endure, but it will be well in the end.”

“Provided you contrive to get Mrs. Gordridge’s consent, O’Shannon,” said Arthur; “it is well to be ambitious, but Miss Jones is almost as good as Mrs. Gordridge’s adopted daughter, remember.”

“But, sir, I have every reason to believe that Mrs. Gordridge won’t be saying no to this—”

“Still, Mrs. Gordridge is queer, O’Shannon, Mrs Gordridge is queerish: I should not build any wild hopes—”

“Yes, but—”

“Well, I am obliged for your presents,” muttered Arthur now, impulsively throwing himself round, turning his back to Shan, and ending the interview, whereat Shan looked at him rather dumbfounded, rather hurt, then placing the presents on a table, bowed, and passed out.

He had already reached the outer hall-region when, to have speech with him, pelted Anne Hine, who after a few moments sent him flying with this whisper pealing in his ear: “Give up hope of Miss Jones, O’Shannon — *there is Another* and that same afternoon Mrs. Gordridge, too, was able to gather from Anne that Rosie had been undergoing her son’s embraces in the book-room.

II. SHAN ADANCE



AS FOR THE sturdy and sterling President Kruger, God, thirsting to precipitate his presidency, had first spurred him dog-mad. On the 21st the Raad of the Orange Free State, having assembled, in a startling manner manifested jaundice against England, and the night after a Cabinet Council was called in Whitehall in order now to send out another and more wrathful note to the Transvaal. During all which, news of a movement of British troops was being bruited from Natal, troops were en route to Africa from Britain, and clamorous was the rumour of it, for everybody was declaring: “there will be trouble.”

“Wouldn’t they be put down sharply, those Boers, if *I* had the handling of them!” remarked Mrs. Gordridge to her son during the gloaming of the 23rd, before the dinner-gong had sounded: “how long, Arthur, will the war last when it comes off?”

“Certainly not more than a month, mother,” answered Arthur, “they are only a mob.”

“Arthur, give me to know definitely now whether you will be going, if your company is ordered out.”

“Not unless I am quite well, mother. We have spoken of that before. I feel no overpowering impulse, really, to help in the mowing down of a crowd of peasants.”

“But it is precisely a peasant for whom you are staying behind!”

“This is hardly pleasant, mother,” laughed Arthur, walking about; “even if it be on that account, isn’t it rather a shame to call Rosie a peasant now?”

her speech, her throat — it is merely a prejudice: we are all made of the same flesh and blood, after all.”

“We are, and yet we aren’t, are we, Gross?” said Mrs. Gordridge, chuckling, stroking one of her three Japanese dogs: “I am a peer’s daughter, aren’t I? and Mr. Arthur has noble blood, and should be good. He will go and butcher Boers or anybody else when his mother begs him to.”

“Yes, mother,” said Arthur, laughing, “but your habit of governing has become so confirmed at present that it is apt to be grotesque. Do remember one’s age. You shouldn’t, really. What, for example, has become of poor Rosie these last two days?”

“Hasn’t the child been in her own room? I fancy so...

“What, a prisoner?”

“I recommended her to stay there for the present, and I take it that she has. There’s nothing to be shocked at in that.”

“But don’t be rough on her, mother, I entreat you, or you force me to interfere.... It is so useless, too, for I have really decided to marry her, and you should not try—”

“But who is trying to stop him?” cried Mrs. Gordridge, pointing at Arthur her ebony stick, “I an old dowager with the gout? try to stop a goring bull? Boys will be boys, won’t they, Gross? And where the race is pig-headed, the sons will have their way — unless an even pigger head intervenes.” These last words were muttered, as a servant entered to announce “Dr. Blood and the Rev. Mr. Orrock,” visitors who, unloved by Arthur, drove him out to the lawn, where in the twilight he had a talk with the head-gardener, while in Mrs. Gordridge’s cosy corner she and her two cronies laid their heads together on the matter of Arthur.

“He doesn’t mean to go to any war, I can see,” Mrs. Gordridge said to them: “if I could once get him well off, the moment his back was turned I

should marry Rosie to Shan O'Shannon, and so throw off the whole burden of it. But he very sensibly prefers kissing to camping, so something else will have to be done."

"Moreover, there will be no war," remarked Dr. Blood, a ruddy mass of a man; "Providence will never permit such a scourge."

"He *will* drag in his 'Providence,' you see, Margaret," murmured the clergyman, who was a fair-faced patrician with the fine smile of a prince of the church.

"Let me assure you, Richard," said Dr. Blood heatedly, "that Margaret believes in a God above us, if you do not."

"Margaret," answered the clergyman, "happens to be a woman-of-the-world, and her very proper belief in a God above us is tinctured with all the recent culture and criticism—"

"You are not to squabble, you two," said Mrs. Gordridge: "it is becoming too unbearable, this head-breaking brangle about God and drugs: I wish you wouldn't when I'm about."

"I am done," said Dr. Blood: "though I'd let any fair-minded man decide whether the two positions which I have always taken up are not in accordance with the latest views, namely, that drugs are a hoary superstition, and that there's a just God overhead."

"Then, why does he daily administer drugs!" cried Mr. Orrock.

"Tell him because one must administer something, John," said Mrs. Gordridge, chuckling: "he administers the sacrament, you administer drugs, I administer the Gordridge family: anything for an honest living."

"It is just a question of the popular prejudice with physicians," said Dr. Blood: "folks insist upon being dosed, and the physician doses them; also there are two or three good drugs, digitalis, quinine; but catch Margaret or me gulping drugs! because I am an enlightened, modern person—"

“Aye, with a belief in ghosts,” fleered Mr. Orrock. “The fact, of course, is, that no man really disbelieves in drugs; at this moment I have the advantage to bear within me two tablespoonfuls of blood mixture, four drams of codliver oil, and three little liver pills, whose kindly action—”

“Well, it is a cheap way of dining, Richard,” said Mrs. Gordridge: “cheap and nasty.”

“You see, Richard, Margaret merely laughs,” said Dr. Blood: “talk of superstition! he can’t believe in it! it is merely done to displease others!”

“Superstition should not be considered a crime by a believer in *miracles*” observed the clergyman.

“But doesn’t the man preach miracles every Sunday of his life, Margaret?” cried the doctor.

“And you, John,” said Mrs. Gordridge, “lead your children to hear him, knowing that he doesn’t mean it. There’s nothing sound in our society, I say, the whole head’s sick. Otherwise, wouldn’t I allow Arthur to marry Rosie Jones? But having lost the power to do anything true and genuine through being impregnated in our cradles with humbug and cowardice, we are mainly doctors who scorn drugs, and preachers who jeer at believers, and aristocrats who secretly know that the creed of Keir Hardie is true: so stop your wrangling, and let’s go on plotting together against this natural son of mine — I don’t mean that he’s not born in wedlock, because he was.” Mrs. Gordridge chuckled in her jocular dry way, and her two councillors, sagacious enough provided the talk did not touch upon the questions of God and drugs, now laid their heads together anew with her on the war and Arthur. A cloud overhung that house; and this council of the 23rd was the second, the first having taken place five days before, convened by the old lady in a hurry on hearing from Anne Hine the horrible story of her son and Rosie.

“If Rosie could be sent away to, say, the King-Crollys,” Dr. Blood now said, “without his knowing?”

“Rosie would only write to him,” remarked Mr. Orrock, “and he would fly after her. He must not be given to imagine that we even dream of balking him, or — you know the Gordridges. There must be one master-stroke, effective and final on this side, or we only make matters twenty times worse by meddling.”

“Good,” said Mrs. Gordridge, “but can you suggest the ‘master-stroke’? Let’s *do* masterstrokes, Richard, not dream them all day long.’ “It’s a fearful thing!” remarked Dr. Blood.

“I never was confronted with such a crux,” observed Mr. Orrock. “The wonder is that he purposes — wedlock. Wedlock is not the usual solution in such accidents to the affections.”

“Just listen to the gay Herr Faustus,” said Mrs. Gordridge: “he wants Arthur to trifle with that poor child’s life. I shall tell your wife, Richard.”

“No, oh no,” protested the clergyman, “you misunderstand me, I only observe—”

“But supposing he does marry her—” began Dr. Blood.

“Supposing he doesn’t, John!” said Mrs. Gordridge sharply, “it simply will not happen, since I couldn’t endure it, and it is quite useless to suppose what can’t be.”

“But even if Arthur persists in his will to stay at home,” suggested Mr. Orrock, “could not Rosie be secretly married to O’Shannon?”

“It could hardly be done,” replied Mrs. Gordridge. “I have been giving it some thought — not with Arthur anywhere in England; but I’ll tell you what: I believe I could succeed in whipping the lady quietly off to my sister Sheila in Quang Chow, and Sheila could then be counted upon to keep her

dark, even if Arthur were to scent her out and fly after her out there — there's *my* master-stroke: it is bold, but — how does it strike you?"

"Good, good," said Mr. Orrock.

"Good, good," added Dr. Blood, "couldn't be bettered—" this being, indeed, the finish of nearly all the boards-of-three at Glanncourt, Blood and Orrock following with cheers her whom they were called to lead: for, more masterful and fertile than they, Mrs. Gordridge always first determined her path, and only afterwards, from old wont since her girl-days, invited their guidance.

"If Arthur can be got to go to the war," she said, "it will be better to marry Rosie to Shan O'Shannon than to banish the poor child out to Quang Chow; but if he doesn't go away, there's nothing else than the banishment, and it shall be done."

The gong was now sounding for dinner, Arthur walked in, and the group of five moved toward the dining-room, encountering in a passage Anne Hine, at whom Mrs. Gordridge threw the whisper: "See yourself about Rosie's dinner before you sit," so Anne ran off, arranged this, and then ran upstairs. Rosie's door was slightly open, the electric-light, supplied by a power-station in the house, had been switched on within, and Anne, approaching warily, was able to spy Rosie with her nicest hat on stepping like a peahen to and fro before a mirror, and now Rosie made a curtsy backward before her own beauty, like dames stooping into profound humiliations before the throne, and now hung up her fingers in the air, and up there exchanged a hand-shake with some perfect personage of her fancy; all which the prisoner performed with lids rosy from weeping, and Anne, peeping eagerly in, grinned with a grim roguery.

Anne went spryly in, whereat Rosie let slip a cry, and in a moment, the hat flung off, was sitting in her casement.

“What, were you going out, Rosie?” Anne wished to know.

“No, Anne, I had on my hat,” said Rosie, now all gorgeous with blushing.

“I saw that; but whom were you shaking hands with?”

“I? with no one.”

“You are a foolish chick, really, to encourage in yourself such dreams. What can it lead to? I shall inform Arthur of what I caught you doing.”

“Anne, you wouldn’t, would you? you never *would!*”

“I think I shall. What can it matter to you if he laughs at you? He has laughed at *me*, and I haven’t minded, since I do not allow myself any girlish visions, you see, for a girl should learn how to see without tasting, or burning to, miss, women being made to grin and bear, my Rosie, and men to get and grin. Do you know whom Aunt Margaret means him to marry? the Honourable Peggy Greening who was here in the Spring.”

Rosie sat grum in her window-seat, gazing out at the cedar with its branches bound in chains.

“Peggy herself confessed to me that she is gone on his eyes,” continued Anne, “because they are of such a fabulous blue, she said, and make such a fascinating colour-picture with his sunburnt face. What do you think?”

Rosie made no reply.

“But I think his teeth are too long, Rosie,” proceeded Anne: “they are nice and white, but one of the front ones is irregularly grown, and over-laps; and they are rather too long, don’t you think?”

Rosie said nothing.

“And, really, his brow lacks breadth,” said Anne.... “What I like best about him is that bit of bottom-lip shewing between the two wings of his moustache. He has a firm mouth. Yes, that’s beguiling to a girl’s fancy, I think, don’t you?”

“I know nothing about it,” muttered Rosie in a tone almost too low to be heard.

“But it must be confessed that Arthur hasn’t acted quite well toward O’Shannon,” observed Anne: “I heard this afternoon — have you heard?”

“What about Shan O’Shannon now, Anne?” asked Rosie.

“Arthur for some cause or other has turned him off the estate, as I have heard to-day from Mr. Cochrane, has sent him a cheque for £200, and at the same time O’Shannon has received from a gentleman in Somersetshire the offer of a keeper’s place down there, so Arthur must have asked this gentleman to make this offer, for how otherwise could the existence of O’Shannon be known in Somersetshire? I am sorry for poor O’Shannon, aren’t you?”

“Why should I be sorry, Anne? The man is nothing to me.”

“Your cousin, Rosie.”

“Oh, cousins aren’t made in heaven; he will have £200, and a new place. But — has he said anything?”

“The poor fellow is hardly any more in his senses, Rosie, if what old Pruie tells me is true: he has returned Arthur’s money, has written to Somerset to refuse the new place, has lately been seen taking aim with his fowling-piece at trees in the deeps of the brakes, whatever that may mean, and Wallas even doubts whether he is ‘quite right’ in the head this last week. I divine that he may be rather a terrible sort of carle to drive to extremities, don’t you? — and I confess I don’t like this firing of his fowling-piece at trees when he believes that no one is about, particularly as Pruie says now that he doesn’t eat or go home at night, but roams over the fields like a bogy possessed by fiends. I don’t know if this is in any way due to you, Rosie; a girl’s play may end in the grimmest earnest, you know—”

But now Rosie broke into tears and anger, crying out: “Oh, go and eat your hat! why should you take a delight in teasing me?” whereupon Anne, hearing Rosie’s meal approaching, and seeing Rosie teased to tears, now stole out pleased, and tripped down to her dinner.

III. SHAN IN ACTION



SEPTEMBER MOVED ON towards its end, and darker every hour brooded the war-cloud; from Britain, from India, troopships were crowding the sea-routes toward Africa; President Kruger had dismissed his Raad with the words: "war is certain"; by the 20th the commandos had been mobilized, the railways taken over, the rush from Johannesburg begun; a gold-train was raided and grabbed by the fury of the God-goaded Kruger; and we others were calling out our reserves. Among the army-regiments under marching orders was Arthur's.

Arthur's heart was now divided within him; he could remain behind if he cared to, and had made up his mind to remain: but *after* he had made it up, an outcry had arisen: "We shall lose South Africa!" for the Cape Dutch were shaky, which side the negro might choose was on the knees of the gods, it began to be feared that that flock of cultivators might prove thicker skulls to crack than people had believed, and a wave of warm-heartedness was sweeping out our little lords and landlords, to war. Arthur therefore was eager to go and endure hardness with the rest, and he was eager to stay just where he was, in that Rosie Jones was over-sweet. He was pulled both ways many times every day.

But his waverings were solved for him by the way things went at Glanncourt between the 2nd and the 10th of October.

On the 2nd, when a few visitors remained late into the afternoon in the so-called "small" drawing-room at the Hall, Arthur, after talking with them awhile, suddenly on some excuse went away and left them to Anne Hine:

the moment therefore that Anne was free, she sped upstairs to see if Rosie was in her room, for she scented a rendezvous, knowing that once before this Rosie had broken prison, and was not surprised to find that Rosie, though there, was evidently preparing for a flight. Anne at once went away with a view to wait upon events, and Rosie, the moment she was once more alone, shot one eye at a little ivory clock, and was up for action, though there were still some minutes to spare, in which she put on three different hats, so placed her mirrors as to be able to inspect her back, and when the spare minutes which beforehand had seemed an age to wait through were fled like one moment in these cares, she now suddenly found herself late, and was flying to and fro in a flurry of haste, filling the room with her fury to be off.

Now she was outside, and now this keenness all at once yielding to caution, she went on tip-toe, all ears, all leers, a thief in the night, fleet yet shy, till she was down stealing through the drawing-room, then through the conservatory on the western house-wall, whence, taking the plunge into the open, she made one dart northward toward the Old Garden, a seraglio of box-twigg arches, in which she wheeled westward, raced down to the very bottom, and down there, between a fernery and a summer-house, found harbour in Arthur's arms.

It was past half-past six of a hazy gloaming, growing dark, and "I daren't stay — only to see you—" Rosie panted on broken breaths.

"There's nearly twenty minutes, don't be afraid—"

"But, dear, Anne—"

"Don't care, sweet, let's think of nothing — for me there's no room for any thought — Do you know, I have been in rather a stew, I was afraid you mightn't come, that some ill-wind might arise somehow — but here you are quite all right — how good and gallant of you—"

“Oh, I don’t feel that this is a good place,” Rosie said, “if anyone were to pass just there at the top of the garden—”

“Let’s go, then, into the shrubbery.”

But at that moment, as they turned, Rosie uttered a sound, for there, gazing at them over the south wall of the shrubbery, some few yards north of them, she saw a face, and she saw a gun-barrel.

A face wrung with many pangs, many passions, that face of Shan....

“God, Arthur, go,” gasped the girl, in one instant ghastly to her lips.

Arthur, too, his eyes tied to that sight on the wall, stood paralysed at it; and even when the gamekeeper with a swing and a spring was over the coping, and in the garden was darting at the pair of gallants, still Arthur with a pale smile remained paralysed, with one hand holding Rosie away. As to Shan, he seemed not to see Arthur at all, but rushing to Rosie, said in a tone of astonishment, “Hello, what’st doing, Rosie?”

A moment afterwards his fingers closed on her right arm in so agonizing a grasp that she could hardly suppress the cry which started to her lips; and as her mouth parted to cry, or ever she had vented a sound, down upon Shan’s knuckles came the cane of her lover.

“What is it, O’Shannon?” said Arthur, “have you taken leave of your senses?”

To this Shan made no reply, drew back a little from the garden-path into a flower-border whose flowers his boots crushed, and, his face hung quite down, dashed his gun to the ground, as if aiming to knock down something with it; and there he remained a little while, swinging his face from side to side, as if not knowing what in the world to do next, while Arthur, palely smiling, looked at him, and Rosie covered her face with both her hands, as if to banish from her sight that which she felt to be coming.

It lasted perhaps half a minute, till Shan, looking sharply up, stepped forward toward Arthur, aying vehemently: “So *this* is how it was.”

“O’Shannon,” said Arthur, smiling ever at him, “you are to get away at once.”

“So *this* is how it was,” said Shan again, still more vehemently.

“I have spoken, you know, O’Shannon,” said Arthur: words at which suddenly now all Shan’s blood swarmed up into his face, till he was almost brown with passion, and out he broke into a cruel laugh, crying: “Yes, the rogues: the Almighty has spoken! and everybody must go and do as they say, because they are sons of fathers who were murderers and robbers of the earth, and they themselves are so confirmed in robbery, they think it nothing to rob a man’s heart out of his bosom—”

“Now, O’Shannon!” said Arthur, cutting this short, his cane smacking his calf: “you must not make yourself a public pest; nothing resembling a wrong has been done you, and you have to take yourself off this instant.”

This again appeared to have the effect of making the gamekeeper fly into yet greater anger, and he cried: “Yes! do as the king says!” and he cast up his arms and stamped, crying: “No wrong! Lord, no wrong!” Then he called Arthur a coward, showing how Arthur had dealt double that morning when he brought Arthur the present of the salmon and partridges: “for,” said he, “it wasn’t any Mrs. Gordridge that’s ‘queer,’ it wasn’t because she’s ‘as good as Mrs. Gordridge’s daughter,’ and I wasn’t to be ‘too ambitious,’ no, it was you yourself that was wambling after her, to her humbling, but you lacked the pluck to splutter what was sick in you, man to man. O, that’s bad,” he said, “when a man’s not straight, O, that’s ratsbane, that’s a grim drug,” he said again and again, groaning radically, “O, that’s drastic, that’s damned.”

Arthur so far had said hardly anything, but at last, flushing, he said to Shan: "O'Shannon, you have been told to go away, don't let me have to tell you again, or I shall have to thrash you."

"Will you that?" cried Shan, starting; "don't suppose because we were both born in one night, and you've been sick, I'd keep my hands off you!"

Upon this Arthur, cutting the air once with his cane, said in a final tone: "Now, O'Shannon."

"Thrash away!" cried Shan, "don't be afraid! thee couldn't cut so deep as thee's cut already, shame on thee," and as that "shame on thee" passed his lips, the Rubicon was crossed, two steps darted Arthur to bruise him over the head, while from Rosie's startled heart broke half a cry, half a sob.

"That's good!" shouted Shan as the cane came down, "give'n to me," and as Arthur gave him another athwart the neck, again Shan O'Shannon called, "that's the way! give the dog a lesson!" and once again was the cane raised, though not this third time to strike, Arthur turning toward Rosie, calling: "Come."

She went after him all with a whitish visage, passing behind Shan, who stood with his brow on the summer-house trellis, and at the north side of the garden they passed under the shrubbery wall, and through a gate into the shrubbery itself, where Arthur said to Rosie: "Don't be afraid any longer, darling, it is all over, and shan't ever happen again—" he being rather short of breath, which she perhaps perceiving, lifted her hand, which he held, so as to kiss his, but in that very act was conscious through every nerve that she was observed, and Shan at her anew....

Shan had come dancing mad, and as tactical as a cat, so that at the instant of that contact between lips and hand, before they could even look, he was between the two, saying: "No, you can't have it all your own way: if thee'st

anything of a wight, let's fight it out for her" — and now they could hear his teeth squeak together with eagerness.

"O'Shannon," said Arthur, calmly enough, though he was blanched, "don't you dare molest me, or I'll break every bone in your body."

"That's a cock!" cried Shan, "let's fight for it, and let the finest lad of the pair take her." Arthur looked at him under the eyes, and, "Well," he said after ten seconds, "I'll admit now that you have some grounds to feel aggrieved, and if you believe that a thorough drubbing will bang it all clean out of you, I am not disinclined to do that much for you."

"But it is *I* who is going to drub *you*, look," said Shan, "if only you hadn't been ailing, if only I was good egg enough to lay the weight of this little finger upon you."

"For shame, Shan O'Shannon, to talk to Mr. Arthur," Rosie with a clearing of the throat now adventured to suggest in a fragile tone of voice, "I shall be sorry for you if you do."

To her Shan gave no answer, but said in an agony to Arthur: "You hear her? that girl? You have turned her all dead against me now! She means to say that you may do whatever you like to her and to me, but if I just dare to touch you, it will be a case of gaol for me."

"No," answered Arthur with a stern face, caning his calf: "no gaol; Rosie will not speak of it, it shall be a secret between us three."

But now she, seeing what was about to come, turned coward, catching at Arthur's arm, saying "Ah, Arthur, do not think of having anything to do with such a brute—" at which word "brute" Shan laughed, and striking on Arthur's shirt-front with his fingers, chuckling, he asked: "I say, is it the best man of the two who shall have her?"

Arthur's face went all wrathful at this, and dashing away Shan's fingers from his chest, he answered: "Yes, I give you my word, the better of the

two” — he being a boxer, and it being the essence of his creed that an aristocrat can ever beat and do as he pleases to a plebeian, though Rosie, for her part, knowing something of Shan O’Shannon, understood in her heart that Arthur ought never to have so far pledged himself; however, she had not the chance to say a word, for now Arthur, turning to her, whispered her: “You run away, Rosie, and await me over there behind the bend; I will soon have this brute drubbed humble and tame—” in saying which his moustache brushed Rosie’s cheek in a sort of kiss, and in the moment of that touch, Shan shoved his shoulder.

No hard shove — hardly a shove: but in that very moment war broke out; at the sound and view of which thing Rosie fled away from them, having never dreamed that two human beings could be so brutish rude to each other, but soon ran back to the fracas, then fled away anew, a little way to and fro, distracted, with slight little cries of “O!” and “Help!” and “Don’t!” and through all the age that it lasted she was unable to look straight at them, but anon caught glances as through scarlet glasses, seeing blood-guilt, seeing Arthur grounded... he appeared not to be able to keep on his feet at all, each time she gave her eyes a peep, there he was, down again, and as down he went, out leapt her thin howl for him. Shan O’Shannon seemed never to miss, to be able to measure his distance as a machine without fail, his two feet moving about as one, never changing their space between, his two fists rolling like wheels in eccentric rotation, his neck twisted somewhat to the right, his eyes fixed to the left upon his enemy with a malign aspect; and thrice the very same thing took place over again, each time with the same grief to Arthur, when Arthur, striking far forth with the left arm and the whole weight of his body a blow, which, if it had caught Shan’s face, must have smashed it, Shan dodged it by a duck to the right, and pressing on Arthur’s extended left arm with his own left, span Arthur

quite round, exposing his left ribs, into which Shan now drove with his own right a pounding cross-counter which stretched the other low; thrice: and that last time there followed an omen of disaster that Rosie, though at that moment some distance off, was distinctly aware of — a crackling, like the brittle breaking-in of a box, a little uproar of broken ribs; after which it was a full minute before she was able to look at all that way again, and then, looking, she saw Arthur lying quite quiet on the ground, and she saw Shan O'Shannon crouched by the side of Arthur, with his throat strained right back, poring straight up at the clouds, howling out "Oh-h, Oh-h, Oh-h," like a hound howling over the drowned. In some moments, however, he sprang up and went running past Rosie like a wild thing without his hat, holding his brow between both his hands, and immediately after him she, too, scared out of her wits to be all alone with what lay there quite quiet on the ground, rushed with her wild white face round into the garden-path out of the shrubbery, gibbering something where there was no one near to hear her.

Now, Anne Hine, meantime, was out, had passed through the top (east) part of the Old Garden at about the very time when, unseen by her, Arthur and Rosie before the fight were leaving the bottom part of it in order to enter the shrubbery, and shun the presence of Shan; in ignorance of which, with eager ears and prospect, Anne ran on across the road which separates the Old Garden and the New, and passed into the New through a gate in its great wall. Her eyes ran through the enclosure, which was not thickly wooded, and catching no sight of Rosie and Arthur, she thought to herself, "they are in the rockery" — a grotto all adrip round a pond of gold-fish at one end of the row of hot-houses under the north garden-wall — and thither Anne made, strolling now, lingering to gaze over a flower or plum-espalier, lest any eyes in her hot-houses, chancing to see her, might divine her spying mind.

She passed into the hot-houses by the east entrance, walked through the peaches, orchids, bananas, the vinery, and, stepping over the rocks in the fish-pond, emerged at the western extremity of the houses without having encountered a soul, so back, southward she now returned with brisker feet and an even keener appetite to find out what was what, and in which deep nook sweetmeats were being eaten that evening.

She was soon to know, since, as she once more got out into the road between the two gardens, she met an old body known as “Pruie,” Shan’s housekeeper, and noticing rather a ghastliness in Pruie’s skin, Anne asked her what was wrong.

This old Pruie replied: “It’s Mr. O’Shannon! I have just come on him — lying—”

“Catch your breath!”

“Under that beech-tree on the rise aboove we; when I did speak to’n, him didn’t make no reply, and when I did shake’n, er did only moan—”

Anne’s quick instincts working urgently two seconds, in the third she said: “Is he hurt?”

“Him do have some cuts....”

“I’ll go to him,” and at once she passed into a gate in the north shrubbery-wall, in order to race through the shrubbery as the nearest way to the “rise,” but in speeding down a path in the shrubbery, the sound of a rush of footfalls crushing through crisp leaves of Autumn caused her to look round to her right, and down in an alley she saw Rosie arise out of haze, flying with a wild face. A moment more, and Rosie was moaning on her shoulder.

“What, not in your room, Rosie?” said Anne; “whatever is the matter?”

“He is half killed — !”

“Not Arthur?”

“I left him on the ground — I couldn’t stand it—”

“But don’t be hysterical! just tell one what has happened. You see now, Rosie—”

“He is on the ground, he didn’t reply when I spoke to him—”

“Come shew me—”

“Down there in the round place—”

Both now bolted down an alley until Rosie? pointing at a spot on the road, panted: “there!” but nobody was to be seen when they came to the spot, only someone’s cap lying on the ride; and by the twilight still reigning between the trees Anne was able to perceive blood-smears on some leaves.

“There is no one,” said Anne with surprise, and now the other, without making any reply, failed and fainted quite away, whereat Anne gripped and lowered her down, and, crouching to hold her up, murmured over the unconscious girl: “Yes, it’s a darling penny-farthing face, and the lips are just made for playing Box and Cox with Arthur’s; but they mustn’t, the gods and I be jealous. This serves you right, and him, too, for forbidden fruit isn’t all honey of Hybla, you see, and I’m rather glad in my heart, whatever it is that has happened.... There’s blood on the ground... if a little could be drawn in a sound trouncing from miss, too, that should prove cooling to the passions. It’s blood that makes romance, and I have none, scarcely enough to make me yuck and sicken for more —

Come, you’ve got to get up, I can’t stay here all night admiring you. She is quite wannish now, looking as divine as whitish violets; if I could love, I’d devour her mouth....”

Rosie, being shaken, now unfolded her large orbs, and stared about.

“Where is Arthur?” asked Anne.

“There!” cried Rosie, indicating the place where she had left him lying.

“But he isn’t, you see. Come, pull yourself together, Rosie.”

“Has he got up?”

“Evidently.”

“I must have fainted....”

“Come, try to get up. Let us go that way and look.”

Anne grasped Rosie’s arm while again they ran, this time into the Old Garden, where, though no Arthur was visible there, more marks of blood showed that he had gone that way, and when they had rushed across the garden, they beheld the back of someone resembling him through the evening murks just entering the conservatory, apparently with very staggering feet, for the figure seemed to reel from side to side.

By the time they got to the house, the figure was again out of sight, had gone in, and Arthur had been taken up to his apartments by some flunkeys, one of whom Anne met pelting down the stairs to send for Dr. Blood.

A few moments afterwards both Anne and Mrs. Gordridge were at Arthur’s bed, the rumour of it had gone out, and the Hall was all in a hush of awe, no one having any notion how it had happened, for Arthur, in a half-unconscious way, could not, or would not, answer any questions.

Having tasted of a late and lonely dinner, Anne then made her way to Rosie’s room, saying on her entrance, “There’s no necessity for so much distress, Rosie,” — for Rosie was stretched on her sofa, still inconsolable — “besides his broken ribs, he has two black eyes, it is true, with quite a kaleidoscope of bruises, and has been well peppered on the whole, but Dr. Blood declares that he will be up in some days... Come, tell me about it....”

Rosie now tried to dry her eyes, and slowly told the whole story.

“Well,” said Anne, having heard, “thank Heaven, there has been no murder, as there might easily have been; anyhow, the fight clears the air, for you now definitely revert to Shan O’Shannon, Rosie, it would seem, by right of conquest.”

“Do I?” answered Rosie, drying her eyes: “I’ll shew him reverting.”

“But since Arthur gave his word,” remarked Anne, “that, of course, is final for him.... I must go back to him....”

“But, Anne, you won’t tell that it was Shan O’Shannon, will you? Arthur said that I wouldn’t—”

“No, I don’t intend to tell—” and now Anne sped away down to play her part in all the pother of the house.

IV. SHAN MAKES A VOW



IT WAS ON that same day that Shan and Arthur fought that President Stein forwarded to Sir Alfred Milner a note giving him to know that he was mobilising his burghers; whereat, some days afterwards, on this side, reserves for our first army-corps were called out; Parliament was summoned: and from that to the war was an affair on only some three or four days.

All those eight days before the outbreak of war, Arthur had lain abed, for the paws of Shan had proved bruising; and still Shan was as large, for Arthur would not tell out how he had got his flogging.

“I wonder why he won’t tell,” Mrs. Gordridge said to Anne Hine, on the 6th (October), three days before the Boer ultimatum: “but it could have been nobody except Shan O’Shannon; and O’Shannon must be sent to Gloucester for it.”

“I fancy, Aunt,” said Anne, “that Arthur may have promised O’Shannon before the fight not to take any steps—”

“Nonsense, the man must be properly punished,” said the old lady; “he has my admiration, of course, for, if I had been he, I should have acted just as he has; but, then, I am not he, and, being myself, I want my paltry revenge.”

“You are *quite* right, Aunt, as you always are,” remarked Anne.

“Who ever heard of such an impertinence?” asked the old lady: “I am a Socialist myself, but I’ll permit nobody on the estate to presume to share

my views. O'Shannon shan't be at large another day, so send presently to the village, and tell Morgan I want him."

"Yes, Aunt. But suppose Arthur goes to the war, after all? it might be convenient to have O'Shannon here to marry Rosie..."

"But what puts it into your head that Arthur may go to South Africa now?" asked Mrs. Gordridge.

"I have a fancy that he may," answered Anne: "he has been keen on the newspapers the last day or two—"

"Oh, everybody lying abed is keen on newspapers. He isn't rushing out to any war; and I have made up my mind to pack Rosie off to Sheila in Quang Chow."

"Quite so, Aunt — unless Arthur were to scent her out there... The safest of all, it strikes me, would be her marriage with O'Shannon, for nothing can get over the fait accompli of marriage; and it is quite on the cards that Arthur will go in the excitement, if war does break out: you wait and see: he is disgusted with everything for permitting himself to be drubbed, and seems to have really given up Rosie for the moment."

"Hasn't he made any effort at all to see her since the struggle?" asked Mrs. Gordridge.

"No, Aunt; he has sent her one note by Price, I know, but it couldn't have been a very hopeful one, for she has been specially crabappish ever since; I haven't seen it, she keeps it somewhere about in the region between blouse and chemise."

"You are not to spy upon that poor child, Anne," said Mrs. Gordridge with a cross mouth, "I can't bear a snake-in-the-grass.... But it's odd that he hasn't wanted her to go to him, he must be waiting till he gets well again. It would be interesting to know what was in that note of his; just try to find out; girls should be able to worm out things without exactly being snakes-

in-the-grass.... No, he isn't going out to any South Africa, no such freak of luck, so do what I tell you as to O'Shannon, and have Morgan here."

"Aunt," said Anne, "you are *sure* to be right," and to herself she added: "Darling old blinkard, you are always too bunged up with selfwill to have the least insight into other people's minds."

Anne herself walked down to Albington that afternoon to see Morgan, the bobby, and though Morgan was not then to be found, the morning after, the 7th, he walked up to the Hall, and had a talk with Mrs. Gordridge; and now those clouds which lowered over Shan's brow gathered angrily to burst upon it, not without wide whispers and murmurings, in spite of the furtiveness with which the first measures were entered upon. By noon of the 9th the policeman was at Shan's place with his piece of blue paper.

But it was one thing to go to arrest Shan, and another thing to arrest him. During the gloaming of the 10th, Anne broke into the room of Rosie, who had morosely got sick, brimming with the story of the struggle which had been going on at Shan's cottage, going on in the shrubberies, going on actually among the rocks in the brook, during two long days: on the first of which Shan had fled, and there had been no catching him, than on a sudden he had offered himself, and had said, "take me, if you can."

"They, haven't got him even now," said Anne Hine all in a glee, "I have been looking on among the crowd from the tump of the Morplepiece, and he has been giving the whole four of them beans."

"But the man must be mad, shame ought to cover his face," remarked Rosie.

"He isn't bad," observed Anne Hine with her tart smile: "he peppers them all well: if I was a girl of the people, that's the gallant the turn of my fancy might find pleasing."

“But what can he mean by carrying on like a mad thing, upsetting the whole place like this, and Mama Gordridge been always so good to him? shame ought to cover his face: he is only making it hotter for himself.”

“I know the poor fellow’s motive,” answered Anne: “he fancies that it is Arthur who is prosecuting him after promising not to, and this has embittered and turned him turbulent.”

“But does Arthur know of it?”

“Not a syllable: Aunt Margaret won’t have him told; but that is what O’Shannon believes, I am convinced, and his rebellion against the queen is really a raging against Arthur; I can quite divine the man. Old Pruie says that he has groaned ‘false’ to himself in the night-time: so that’s it. He doesn’t suspect that Arthur starts to-morrow — I suppose you know, Rosie, that war has been declared to-day?”

“War has? I hadn’t been informed.”

“And Arthur is off out to fight, Rosie.”

“Arthur is?”

“Yes, Rosie.”

“To fight, is he?”

“Yes, no more Arthur now. I have only this moment been told, and pelted to tell you.... He is still in bed, but means to get up in the morning, and will start in the evening.”

“But not *to-morrow* he won’t start?”

“Yes, to-morrow; but you still have a whole night in the same house with him — there she goes, all ghastly: don’t be a goosie, now, Rosie; it is only like wanting chocolat Ménier for breakfast, and not being able to get it.”

Rosie stole all on ache to her casement, nothing more remaining to her now, her day suddenly dark and done, and such a sound of distress gushed out of her, that Anne ran and hugged her a little, saying, “goosie, you must

take it standing up, it isn't so much, the trouble won't last a month, and nobody is to be butchered, then he will return nice and sunburnt, and there'll be more bon-bons, maybe—”

“Anne, don't,” replied Rosie in pain, “I'm only a poor orphan all out in the cold without father or mother, I have nothing to do with anything, nothing is any affair of mine...”

“Silly,” said Anne, pinching her chin: “I didn't think you'd cut up so badly: don't I assure you that you'll soon see him....”

But in this Anne proved not so shrewd a prophet as she usually was, for the “troop of boors” meant to approve themselves brave men and a famous foe, so that, save when Rosie caught a back-view of Arthur for a moment from her casement on his departure for the station, she saw him no more for many a month. He left for his love one little last letter, in which, however, were no vows, nor one hope held out of happiness in store: and he went away.

It was five of a wild gloaming, the 10th of the month, that gloaming momentous with war in the memory of many, the heavens all amove on a voyage of heaviness, like caravans with convoys, and armies on the march with baggage, all gloomily bugled by north-winds. Arthur started off on foot for the station together with Anne Hine and his man, Price, one piece of sticking plaster still adhering there on his right cheek, while Mrs. Gordridge, with Dr. Blood and the Rev. Mr. Orrock, eyed him till he disappeared behind the stables. A little beyond the stables he passed through a little iron gate betwixt the north-west covert and the home-farm, whence one path went south into the turnpike road, and so to the village, and a second plunged west down a broken bit of ground, at the bottom of which wound the brook; this latter was much the nearer way to the station, but just here Anne suggested the village-way.

“No, I want to have some time to see to the trunks and things,” replied Arthur: “we’ll go over the Morplepiece — unless you have some reason?”

“I am not sure of it now,” was Anne’s answer, “but I *fancy* that Aunt Margaret might prefer you to go by the village-way.”

“Mysterious chit you are, Anne,” remarked Arthur: “ever with some secret streak in your mind’s eye to smile to yourself over: you have the genius of the Russian court.... Why ever should mother have any preference?”

“It doesn’t matter,” muttered Anne: “let us take the Morplepiece way, since you like....” The country thereabouts is extremely broken, all mountains, and this Morplepiece a meadow climbing like a bowl on the farther bank of the brook, some way up the brook-valley on a spur of the Morplepiece being Shan’s cottage, with the pheasant-pens and the woodard’s cottage: so that Arthur had not gone far down the broken ground in the direction of the brook before he began to come upon tokens of the brigade still going on between Shan and the queen. First, under an oak he observed lying in a pile the five bikes that had brought over one of the Lydney and four of the Ebbstow police, then he came upon a cart waiting ready to receive the rebel, then, where the wood cleared a little down by the brook, could see the crowd on the tump of the Morplepiece, and lastly, some yards from Shan’s cottage, could see the very press of battle — the six bobbies and something tumbling in their midst. They had won Shan into the open at last, and the end was near now.

“What is it all about?” asked Arthur, stopping to look at the little scene far off.

“It is O’Shannon being arrested, Arthur,” answered Anne: “this is the third day that they have been trying to take him, and can’t. First there was

Morgan from Albington alone, then another one came, then two more, and now there are six of them. I am glad to see you look so pleased, I'm sure...."

"Pleased about what?" asked Arthur quickly. "How should I know? I dare say you are feeling that it is no disgrace for one man to be thrashed by a gallant who can thrash six."

"Who has been thrashed by whom? What has this O'Shannon done to be grabbed by these police people?"

"Grievous bodily harm, it is said, Arthur."

"To whom?"

"To you, it is said, Arthur."

"But — why have I been told nothing of this before?"

"Aunt Margaret—" began Anne, but now a noise of voices among the mob of loiterers on the Morplepiece maundered down the valley on the breezes, for Shan had just been floored, whereat Arthur, without waiting to hear more, hastened over the slab-bridge of the brook, and northward up a foot-path to the scene of the fracas. He found Shan down on his back with his chest gasping beneath two of the policemen's knees, the other men trampling about him like a group of people scrambling for pennies, everyone with drabbled garments and bloody sweats, particularly the poor prisoner, who, all red and ragged, was very grimly mauled; but at the sight of Arthur there was a slight pause and suspending of effort, for the men all knew him well, and he said to them, caning his calf, "well, but what is all this, men?"

"Taking Shan O'Shannon for the assault on you, sir," panted Morgan, a fatty mass of matter, not fit for too much fisticuffs.

"This is odd," said Arthur: "on whose charge is the man to be tried?"

"On Mrs. Gordridge's, sir."

“I see.... But on what evidence? I never told anyone that the man had assaulted me; in fact, you are to let him alone, he hasn’t assaulted me.”

“But then, sir—” began Morgan.

“Just come here,” said Arthur, who had stopped some yards short of the struggle, and, having drawn Morgan apart, he impressed it upon him that O’Shannon was on no account to be imprisoned, put into Morgan’s hand some gold, and ran back down the path with a glance at his watch, muttering as he met Anne Hine, “great nuisance, I have lost eight minutes now, we shall have to hurry; perhaps you had better go back, Anne....” Anne, however, went still some way with him up to the tump of the Morplepiece and beyond, till the pace became too great for her, when she was hurriedly kissed by Arthur, who said to her, “good-bye, take care of yourself and of mother, and — just look after poor Rosie for me, won’t you?”

“All right,” said Anne Hine, “take care of yourself, meliorque revertere.”

“Within four months, I hope,” answered Arthur, and he and his man went away in haste.

By this time the policemen, having laid their heads together, had agreed among themselves as to how the land lay, Shan was provisionally at large, most of the crowd gone away, and Anne was almost down at the brook once more on her way home when she noticed Shan in some bush on the other shore, with his nose to a beech-bole which he was holding with both his arms; he seemed to be beating his already bruised brow upon the bark of the beech, for his delivery from the law by Arthur had very powerfully moved Shan; and the sly Anne, with her insight into the mind of her neighbour understanding that this must be the case, and impelled by her passion for pinching and playing the Puck to pain, passed close to Shan, and remarked: “it is you, Mr. O’Shannon.”

Shan glared round at Anne with a gaze of sorrow, the sour grumness of gaze of the ox struck down in the ring, without making any answer.

“I am so glad, Mr. O’Shannon,” she said, “at the lucky way things have gone: I only trust it will be a lesson to you never more to encourage morose and rebellious emotions. You see, Lieutenant Gordridge, for his part, was wholly ignorant of the charge made against you, and the moment he knew he most magnanimously gave himself the pains to save you, though he might quite well have felt inclined to stand aloof in such a case.”

Still Shan stood dumb.

“Well, all’s well that ends well,” Anne went on: “I take it that the whole misery has arisen through a mistaken notion on your side of Lieutenant Gordridge’s motives, for you grossly misjudge him if you imagine that he meant to trifle at all with Rosie Jones. There is no better fellow, no more gracious and noble spirit than Lieutenant Gordridge, and it must grieve him, I think, that *you*, of all people, should have misjudged him.”

“What are you saying, Miss Hine?” Shan at last asked.

“What I know,” replied Anne with her smile: “poor Lieutenant Gordridge had a really very serious regard for Rosie Jones, and has frequently expressed to Mrs. Gordridge his will to marry her immediately.”

“Marry?”

“Why, yes, though that’s all over and done with now — through *you*. Since your mauling of him, he has not even once seen her, owing to some undertaking made to you, I believe, and you can conceive, can’t you, what they both have borne. Did you notice Lieutenant Gordridge just now, how very gaunt he is looking? As you are aware, he was always a spoiled child, he gets quite sick if his whims are foiled, and this time a heart of iron might have felt for him, night after night, all night, he has paced his chamber with bare feet, peevishly pining after Rosie Jones, so Price says, and it is *you*,

Mr. O'Shannon, who has driven him desperate now, and sent poor Lieutenant Gordridge out to the war."

"War?"

"Surely you know that Lieutenant Gordridge is just off to join his regiment, in order — Why, what is it?"

Shan looked electrified, started away from his tree, asking, "is it the 5.25?"

"Yes, but—"

But Shan was gone.

Pelting, he glanced at his watch — it had been smashed; he pulled up half a second, cast up his arms, distracted; then, catching sight of three bicycles lying under a tree, ran and whipped one of them to his shoulder, ran with it over the brook, ran with it up to the tump, and bestriding it at the top, with wild winds behind his back was swept away down in a cloud of dust.

He was just in time, on dashing into the tiny station, to find the train there ready to be off, and ran by the side of it, a wild-looking sight with his batteries and rags, till he came to the compartment wherein Arthur sat snug in wraps and rugs; and now Shan wrenched at the doorhandle — it was bolted; he beat at the window; and Arthur, letting it down, leaning out from his seat, said, "well, now, O'Shannon...."

Shan was so fearfully moved that he could hardly speak, precious as his moments were.

"I'm only a poor chap," were the first pants which Arthur could catch, and he murmured, "yes, yes, be quick."

"I didn't know," said Shan with catches of the breath, "I took it that you were not quite downright square with her, and you look pretty pale now, but I didn't know—"

“Don’t bother now, O’Shannon,” said the other.

“But hear a poor chap out, I’m only a poor chap—”

“Well, what is it?”

“You don’t realize all, look,” Shan contrived to say; “from my childhood, a fetich in my heart, you’d hardly imagine, if you don’t know, you and her, the two of you, no one knows, and what have I dared do now, and how you have paid me for it, it’s painful....”

“I see how it is. Well, then, here’s my hand: now there’s no bad blood left....”

“But you stay here,” Shan breathed at his fetich’s ear, “stay and—”

“Well?”

“Take her.”

“Rosie! You say that?”

“Yes, that’s serious, take her: I have said it.”

“Well, that’s wonderfully decently said!”

“Aye, that’s quite serious, you take her: when a thing’s once said, it’s said, and when a thing’s once done, it’s done.”

“But still — no,” muttered Arthur, “after all, I have given my word, she is yours now, I suppose, and altogether I wish you joy.”

“Always a brick! But you want her, don’t you? Who can escape it? it’s pitiful.... And — I hand her back to you.”

“I say, O’Shannon, you are, really — wonderfully decent.”

“Yes, that’s serious, I’ve said it now.”

“But still, I’m bound now, it seems, to go to the war—”

“Are you? Well, no doubt you are; of course, you are. Go, then, and I tell you what, I’ll — look after her for you till the day you get back.”

“Thank you, you are wonderfully good, thank you, thanks. But, I say, O’Shannon, come now, is that a promise upon which one may rely?”

“Yes, I’ve said it.”

“I’ll be back anyway in four months....”

“As soon as ever you like, I don’t mind, the sooner the sooner over for me, after all: she shall be yours when you come — say in four months’ time.”

“That’s a compact, then; I only hope that I’m not taking advantage of a moment’s generous impulse — no, I think not, that’s all right, for you would hardly send one away inflated with expectations which you did not fully intend to sustain for one. Listen, O’Shannon: it seems beastly to say now, but may be I’d better say it out: she’s hardly — eager to have you in that way, you could never get her quite easy and satisfied; facts are hard things, not always as we would ordain them, so there is nothing like reconciling oneself to them with a good grace, eh? So for *her* sake — Well, good-bye, thanks, thanks, don’t forget — !”

For the station-master, who would no longer wait, had waved his flag, and Shan ran forward with the running train, grasping Arthur’s hand, till the rate gathered and still gathered greatness, and left him there, and swept his friend away; but still he lingered on, gazing long over the rails, and at last turned to move homeward in so hopeless a mood of bereavement, so robbed and hollow of spirit, that when a policeman, meeting him at the cross-roads, morosely demanded his “machine,” Shan let the machine crash down at the man’s feet without speech, and moved on with a drooped brow.

In passing down the Morplepiece to his house, he was seen an instant by Mrs. Gordridge, who said of him to Anne Hine: “But what about Shan O’Shannon’s arrest? I declare I had forgotten all about the man in the excitement...”

She with her small court was at the far end of the stretch of land called The Meadows — a park really, though almost bare of trees in the middle —

from which far end a piece of the railway was to be seen, and, watching the place where she had seen the train bear Arthur away, she was still waiting for nothing underneath the trees there, when for an instant she saw Shan.

Anne now told the story of how Arthur had gone to the rescue of Shan on his way to the train, to which Mrs. Gordridge made answer: "That is all right, then, for since Arthur declares that the man is innocent, of course he is, and I'll forgive him, if he is properly repentant. After all, Shan O'Shannon is part of the place, a most worthy person in his way, and, moreover, a man can't be cast out anyhow who is about to be a husband."

"Right," said the Rev. Mr. Orrock.

"And the quicker a husband the better," said Dr. Blood: "for this war won't last four weeks, I foresee."

"O'Shannon shall be married before the war has well begun," said Mrs. Gordridge, "for I don't believe in running risks, and leaving loopholes to chance."

"Right!" repeated the clergyman: "though personally I believe that the war will last six months."

"Four weeks, sir," repeated Dr. Blood.

"Here is a man," remarked Mr. Orrock, "who once said that it would never happen at all; I think he mentioned, if my memory is not at fault, that Providence would never permit it."

"Pardon me," replied Dr. Blood, "what I did say was, that, if Providence did permit it, it would never permit it to last, and what I have said I stick to."

"Yes, *your* Providence is a benevolent old soul up in the sky, who swoons at the sight of blood," replied Mr. Orrock.

"Well, Arthur is gone to the war," sighed Mrs. Gordridge to herself, gazing at the stretch of railway far off, "God go with him."

“Listen, Richard, listen,” whispered Dr. Blood: “*she* believes, if you don’t.”

“Don’t pretend not to comprehend,” answered the clergyman, with a rosy flush: “she believes, yes, but in a modern tone — which is all the difference. I also have every hope that God will go with him, for he goes, to begin with, with a box of bile beans which I myself placed in his waistcoat pocket —”

“Ach Gott!” chuckled Dr. Blood bitterly, “bile beans above every other abomination: catch Margaret or me gulping—”

“You are not to brangle, you two!” Mrs. Gordridge sharply said: “it’s a marvel that you don’t begin to grow weary of it.... Come on, he’s gone, it’s no use waiting here staring at two rails” — and with her court and dogs after her, the old lady hobbled off on her ebony stick for the Hall.

V. SHAN IN A NET



THE MORNING FOLLOWING Arthur's departure for the war was so warm, though in mid-Autumn, that Mrs. Gordridge that morning "administered the Gordridge family" from an arm-chair in a summer-house — that same Old Garden summerhouse close by which one evening Shan had swept down like a wheeling wind upon the meeting between the sweethearts. Thither Anne Hine had led the old lady's gouty toes, and stayed by her side while out of her island of shade she gazed at the blaze of light in which basked the arches flowers and bowers of the garden, and while one after the other she gave interviews to her land-steward, head-gardener, lady-housekeeper, to Morgan, the policeman, and sipped out of her glass of egg-nog, and was good and cruel capriciously to her Jap dogs. It was half-past eleven when, sighing free of all this, she said to Anne Hine: "Well, where is Rosie Jones? did you tell the child that I want her?"

"There she is just passing through the gate, Aunt," replied Anne.

"All right, you go away a little."

"Yes, Aunt," and Anne went, those two pencil-lines like brackets round her mouth expanding in a mincing little smile as she passed by Rosie on a path: for she knew what pill was in store now for poor Rosie's throat.

Rosie ran hatless, a halo of glare entangled in that golden snare of her hair, her sorrow in her gaze, and now at the summer-house door was asking, "Yes, Mama Gordridge?"

"Kiss me," said Mrs. Gordridge.

Rosie went in and did this.

“Sit there,” said Mrs. Gordridge, and Rosie being seated at her feet, wondering what now, with apprehensive eyebrows, as she shot flying glances up, Mrs. Gordridge added, “tell me: what are all the red eyes about?”

Rosie made no reply, tears springing to her eyes, her lip shaking, so the old lady pinched her cheek, saying: “This comes of locking you up like a prisoner, poor girl, and now the roses are gone all withered, though richly watered no doubt with showers out of the sky in the eyes — what? Well, but all’s well that ends well! So long as you are perfectly certain that it was no doing of *mine*...! since I only work for everybody’s happiness, and have to carry everybody’s burdens, so as to keep people from blundering and miscarrying; and what everybody will do when I am dead Heaven only knows. I *had* to lock you away from that hurricane, you know — not that I blame him one bit, for you’re undoubtedly a sweet little piece of pig-meat, good to eat between the teeth, and if I was a boy, I’d be after you myself, no doubt; but that gave me all the greater grounds for acting grimly, and may be you haven’t been so weeping a captive, after all, for haven’t you been out of the house to meet him once — or oftener?”

From Rosie’s bent face rose no breath in answer.

“I am not angry; let me hear.”

“Yes, then, Mama Gordridge.”

“Ah, you see, you can’t hide much from me: I know what you are thinking about in your bed at night when the lights are out.... So — how often did you meet him?”

“Twice.”

“You see: I knew. And — whereabouts did you meet him?”

“There, by the summer-house.”

“Exactly.... I have done the same thing myself before I was even sixteen, so don’t be so simple as to think that I am cross at anything, except at your supposing that I didn’t know all. Why ought I to be cross? Don’t you cry, it is all over now, and in three weeks and a half from now you will have forgotten all about it in your new home with your own husband.”

“Who will, Mama Gordridge?” asked Rosie, staring up with eyes of scare.

“Why, what’s the immoderate surprise about?” asked Mrs. Gordridge with a show of surprise: “aren’t you about to marry your cousin Shan?”

“I am, Mama Gordridge?”

“But isn’t that so, Rosie — dear? That’s what I took for granted! Is there any other solution which you can suggest?”

Rosie, as if she heard in some dream, sat twisted, staring up, unable to breathe a word, her face bleeding inwardly away, till she stared mere lily-flesh. Here was the last end of all her lingering dream of Arthur, and good-bye to everything, and such was her greatness of dismay, that over those glaucous eye-balls of Mrs. Gordridge the lids closed down a moment to shut out the sight of it, and she bent aside to sip, muttering with some impatience: “I hope you are not going to behave like a martyr, girl, for you must see that, though this war has come as a merciful thing to pick us all out of a tight place, since it will not be lasting long, Arthur will soon be back upon us, and if you are not then well married off, there may be no end of a rumpus: so you see why — you see why... Now, however, Rosie was suddenly down on her knees, pleading, “Oh, please, Mama Gordridge, don’t allow me to go through this, please!”

On this, Mrs. Gordridge, her eyes averted from that perfect heart-cry, scratched the neck of a dog, then drew Rosie to a stool, drew Rosie’s head to her shoulder, and smoothed and soothed it, cooing: “Foolish old thing!

What, wouldn't you like to be a sweet little wife? Or is it that you don't like this Shan O'Shannon?"

"Oh, I don't wish to be married!" went Rosie.

"What, not to be a mistress of your own home? and have a pink pickaninny to spank and pamper? and a hulking husband to bully and stamp at? and to be always near your mama? for I shan't ever let you be far from my side."

"But oh, not to Shan O'Shannon, I couldn't stand Shan O'Shannon!" cried Rosie.

"Why, since when?" asked Mrs. Gordridge: "you liked him well enough before you got bitten by Arthur, you were aware that I had given you to him, and you gave your assent to it. You see, it is only a whim....We women are such fowl to imagine that our craze for trousers in general is a craze for one particular pair! Why, I didn't like my husband when I married him! I was mad after a dancing little barrister man! but I soon understood that Julius Gordridge was as good for me as anybody, for it is the duty of a woman to use her head, too, a little, and you will soon be quite fond—"

"Ah, never!"

"But, Rosie? you contradict me, Rosie? I tell you that you will: do you imagine, then, that I don't know? But since you disdain O'Shannon for the moment, I should gladly get you some other mate, only where's the time? We should have to find the man, he would have to court you a little — before all which was over Arthur would be back upon us, and all the fat in the fire; so it can only be O'Shannon, you see. And isn't O'Shannon a lad that any girl should be glad of? sober, but no gawk, quick on the legs, larky with his knuckles and with the girls, they say — look what mince-meat he turned poor Arthur into, and how he tackled those six louts of policemen—"

“Oh, Mama Gordridge, you have forgotten how a girl feels,” pouted Rosie, her brow on Mrs. Gordridge’s shoulder.

“I?” breathed Mrs. Gordridge, shrinking: “what, am I so old? It is only like last week that I was flirting! I feel like thirty! And have I got to that now to ‘forget how a girl—’? Well, how the young do look down upon the old, just as the rich do upon the poor, or as English people upon negroes....”

“No, Mama Gordridge, I didn’t mean—”

“But the thing is this, child, that the wellbeing of Arthur, and mine, depends upon this business: well, when I say that, what answer can you find to make to me?”

Rosie could find no answer to make to her, but a sob broke from her bosom.

“Well, then, let us take that as settled; and now — Well, what is it, James?”

She spoke now to a man, who, coming to present a note on a tray, remarked that Underkippur Price had asked him to give it, a note which, as Mrs. Gordridge’s eyes moved over it, caused her mouth to go cross, and produce a sound of worry: — A note from Shan: referring to the corn-account, the pens, with a word as to poulters and wild-bred cocks, and the dividing of the work between the under-keepers, he, Shan, being off that very day with his belongings, seeing that he had previously received warning from Lieutenant Gordridge to quit, and was going accordingly....

“Kiss me,” said Mrs. Gordridge to Rosie the moment she had read it...”now run away, we’ll go more into it this evening,” and, Rosie gone, she whispered with a certain eagerness to the serving-man: “Run down to the headkeeper’s house, and say I want to see him here.”

Anne Hine, meantime, who had been pacing among the flower-beds, on noticing that pale thing that Rosie now was, pelting for the house to find

some hole to cry in, came back to the summer-house, but was anew sent away by Mrs. Gordridge, just as the flunkey got back short of breath with the message that O'Shannon was hardly fit to be seen by a lady that day, being so gashed up (by the police), so would Mrs. Gordridge say in a message —

“Go away,” said the old lady, “tell Miss Hine there to come,” and to Anne herself she said: “Fly down to O'Shannon's cottage, and tell him to be here immediately: don't come back without him so Anne went, and within ten minutes was back with Shan.

At the summer-house door, then, stands Shan, tall, a bandage, aslant beneath, his deer-stalker cap, covering his right eye; and, “yes, mum,” he said, wondering what now was up.

“Sit down, O'Shannon,” said Mrs. Gordridge. “So you are going, are you?”

“Yes, mum, I've been dismissed.”

“Where are you going to?”

“I'll be lodging with my uncle on the Chase a bit, mum.”

“And then?”

“I'm throwing up kippuring, mum, for it isn't likely that any squire about here would take me now after all this row that's been, and as I don't mean to desert this neighbourhood, I must only turn my hand to some other work.”

“You see, O'Shannon, all this trouble through setting up yourself in antagonism to your betters.”

“Betters, Mrs. Gordridge? Isn't that rather an old-fashioned sort of word? By the purpose of the Maker and Urger of this world, there aren't any betters any more, mum, I give you my word.”

“So true: I forgot that... You shouldn’t be cheeky, O’Shannon! but I suppose you perceive that I am in your power now.”

“How in my power, mum? I only wish you were, I’d soon show you how fond I am of everything that owns the name of Gordridge” — of which saying Mrs. Gordridge, her eyes resting on his face, made a note in her mind.

“Well,” she said, “but isn’t all this business of leaving the estate merely a bit of bounce, since you must know that I want you now?”

“I didn’t know that, mum, thank you; anyway, I couldn’t stay, you know.”

“And why not?”

“What, in the same place with that girl that has turned her back on me? getting glimpses of her? hearing her speak, may be.... One is not a stock, mum. Here I couldn’t stay, nor wouldn’t.”

“Yet you just said that you meant to stay in the neighbourhood.”

“Not by my choosing though: I’d be away like a long-dog to Canada tomorrow, never again to see England so long as oak and ash do grow, if there wasn’t a young calf that I’d promised someone to keep half an eye on—”

“So you really meant to go away?”

“I did, Mrs. Gordridge, and do.”

“Well, you are not to.”

“Thank you very much, mum, I’m sure; you have always been the same to me somehow, marvellously kind and bounteous, and I wish now I could stay, since you ask me to.”

“You are to remain where you are, O’Shannon.”

“But, mum, haven’t I told you? It’s hard enough to me to go from Glanncourt, and I wish to heaven it was only half possible—”

“Be quiet, O’Shannon: I have both my hands full of joy and happiness for you.”

“For me, mum?”

“Yes, for you.”

Shan, his eyes now cast upon the ground, chuckled a little grimly at this, and he said: “Why, Mrs. Gordridge, they say that there’s no happiness save in the grave, since all this creation’s a false show, where we take gudgeons when we fish for grilse.”

“Let the creation alone,” said the old lady, “the creation is a place with plenty of fun in it, at least for young people. O’Shannon, I am going to give you Rosie.”

Silence....

Shan, as the message of that gospel passed out of her mouth, had half started at her, as if to catch a ring falling, then had gradually sat again, while his jaws went quite white, and shook.

“You didn’t look for quite so much luck, I see,” said the old lady, her eyes on his face....

“Well, men seem to be cheap machines to be agitated over the possession of a peach; it is only what was promised you, O’Shannon—”

“Rosie?” breathed Shan, leaning secretly toward her.

“Yes, Rosie, the Princess Royal.”

“But she won’t have me!”

“She will.”

“Have you asked her? Has er said er would?”

“Yes, that’s all quite settled.”

At this Shan laughed within himself, a rather mad laugh, and he said: “What, to have her at last down there between the brook and the pens?”

“Quite so — between the brook and the pens, or wherever else you please to have her.”

He thought it over, and eyeing the carpet askance, he remarked: “For five years I’ve been hearing her feet about the empty house, seen her asleep, may be, with her hair untidy when I came in from night-watching, or winking at me, or making a face at things with her nose suddenlike, as she does: it’s a lonely little hole, too, the cottage, when one’s alone.”

“Well, that’ll soon be remedied, as I mean you to be married Tuesday next three weeks.”

“That’s not long,” said Shan, eyeing a spot on the carpet: “by then it can be all finished and done, and when she is once my wife, where’s the man that could say no to it?”

“Just so: marriage is like lock-jaw, fixed and final.”

“And the other one, now,” said Shan, leaning still more keenly out to speak secretly: “*he’ll* be none the wiser.”

“Precisely: that’s why I am hurrying things on, since he may be quicker back than—”

“Why, he may never be back! Many as fine a fellow has licked the dust in battle before today!”

“Oh, come, you wouldn’t wish him to be shot!”

“But suppose he is shot, he would never be the wiser, and suppose he isn’t shot, when he comes home and finds me safely wived, what can he say? His arms will be tied! I’ll laugh at him!”

“Be quiet, O’Shannon — But whatever is the matter with the man?” — for now Shan had covered his face, and the outburst of a sob convulsed his frame.

“Tell me — what is it?” asked Mrs. Gordridge, and when she got no answer, she added: “Better go home and get a nap, and then when you are

more presentable, come and have a talk with Rosie.”

Now, however, Shan had sprung straight, and the vociferation of his “No!” made the old lady flinch, his face, of a rich red, shaking with passion as he stared at her.

“No what?” she asked: “you are not to startle me, O’Shannon.”

“I say No,” cried Shan anew.

“Well, say No as often as you feel disposed, but please don’t startle me.”

Shan stared at her, but now, his flare-up dying down, while the rich red bled out of his countenance, leaving it blanched, he now said meekly: “Forgive me, mum.”

“So what is the big No about?” asked Mrs. Gordridge.

“I don’t mean to marry Rosie Jones, mum, thank you,” replied Shan, with a short-breath’d bosom.

“What?”

“No, mum.”

“Oh, that’s lunacy: you go and get some sleep.”

“No, mum, that’s the truth: I don’t mean.”

“Then, what in God’s name am I to do with all these distraught people?” exclaimed Mrs.

Gordridge, spreading her palms, appealing to the ceiling; and Shan stood swinging his cap round and round on his forefinger.

“Come, O’Shannon,” said Mrs. Gordridge, “give one some sort of notion what gadfly has stung you now.”

“I say that I don’t mean to, Mrs. Gordridge: I don’t know that there is any reason which I could make quite clear to you.”

“But you know that Rosie Jones is almost like my daughter, that you will be a made man for life — I may mention that the dowry—”

“Oh, I know all that, Mrs. Gordridge, but the moor-game and grouse mate together without any dowry, nor I don’t think I was ever what could be called grasping—”

“No, no, I didn’t think that.... But what, then, has bitten you? Is it that Rosie is not for the moment furiously enamoured of you? I’ll admit that much, seeing that there has lately been a certain flirtation — but, come, I’ll let you into something: — she has only just confessed to me — just before you came, I declare it was — that she will soon come to like you, she said, after the marriage, because she admires your manly manners and independence of spirit, she said, your pretty way of using your pounders upon those louts of police-officers, your larky way of knocking around with all the girls, she said, of which she has heard, and you are a husband that any girl would be glad of, she said. So you see, O’Shannon. The darling child’s heart is, so to say, a fire waiting all laid for you; you have only to put a lucifer into it.”

Shan stood with his surprised forehead lifted and alight at this enlivening tidings!

“Rosie said that, mum...?”

“Rosie,” replied the old lady with an inclination of the closed eyes.

“What, this forenoon you mean? Just before I came here er said it?” he asked, curious for details.

“Just before. She’s all for you.”

“Bless her heart!” he cried half-laugh.

“Quite so. So now, O’Shannon, that much is settled, and I want you now to see Mr. Orrock as to the banns—”

But now Shan groaned aloud.

“Well, what now, O’Shannon?” Mrs. Gordridge asked.

“I couldn’t, Mrs. Gordridge!”

The old lady’s mouth now went cross, making a sound of vexation at the man, saying: “O’Shannon, you try my patience... Won’t you marry Rosie, really?”

“No, mum, really.”

“What on earth, then, is one to do? This is so perfectly exasperating! Do you not realise the situation, my man? If you do not marry her, my son may, and surely you comprehend that I could not stomach such a misery: so for my sake, O’Shannon — don’t show yourself selfish; did you not say just now that you had a great regard for the name of Gordridge? I shall know just how much to think of that profession, if you continue to refuse me this little thing”; upon which Shan, seeing that it was for a Gordridge that he refused, exclaimed: “Ah, Mrs. Gordridge, you make it hard for me.”

Those heavy eyes of the House of Hanover now rested in judgment upon him some silent moments, and she asked: “Do you still, even after this personal appeal of mine on behalf of a family, after you yourself have averred that I have been benevolent to you, do you still say no?”

“Aye, still, mum....”

“Go, go,” said she, brushing him out with her hand, and as Shan went bowing, she drank out of her glass of egg-nog, beckoned to Anne Hine out amid the flowers, and as Anne ran, said to her: “Take me back now.... This O’Shannon, for some reason or other, refuses to marry Rosie, so there seems to be nothing left: we shall be obliged to pack the poor child out to Kwang Chow....”

“Quite so, Aunt,” answered Anne, and turned to hand the stick, to hold her shoulder as a prop, while up with a sigh of Atlas rose the old strategist.

VI. SHAN ALL ENMESHED



THAT SAME NIGHT about nine Anne Hine was droning aloud to Mrs. Gordridge in Mrs. Gordridge's cosy-corner out of Mrs. Gordridge's pet book, Gibbon, when she was interrupted by the arrival of two telegrams, one of them a last word of good-bye of Arthur's, who, just embarked with his battalion, was away, the other being in two words only— "Yes, Sheila" — an answer this to the telegram sent out to Quang Chow from Glanncourt that forenoon: Can you receive Rosie Jones for me?"

"So Arthur is off, poor fellow," sighed Mrs. Gordridge over an apple-wood fire; "if it hadn't been for this ignominy with Rosie, I shouldn't have let him go, such a rough time of the year, too... hear how the wind is howling round the house, and he out on the sea in it. How long before he'll be in South Africa, Anne?"

"Between fourteen and eighteen days, I think—"

"Well, God go with Arthur.... They always say that the Gordridges are fortunate in their youth, and unfortunate after fifty: that's why Julius Gordridge just contrived to snap me up by a fluke, but lost me through his death at fifty-three.... Anyhow, that's all right about dear Sheila and Rosie — that's all right. Have you found out about the P & O boats?"

"I have written to the Company, Aunt, and also to ask Lord Claude Goring to find out if anyone is going whom we could trust Rosie to. The through boats seem to leave the docks on alternate Thursdays, so since next Thursday will be too soon—"

"Why too soon?"

“Poor Rosie will be gone before she realises that she is going!”

“But isn’t that the best way to do things that are grim and disagreeable? Always ‘bite into the sharp apple,’ as the Germans say, and have the whole misery over at the earliest moment. Tell me now how Rosie Jones takes it.”

Anne Hine smiled. As dying cows take Eternity,” she answered, seeing that Quang Chow is a world as vague to her as the further fringes of the grave. When she gathered what was about to befall her, she gaped at me, Aunt, and whispered, ‘*how do you spell it, Anne?*’ I *am* sorry for poor Rosie, Aunt!”

“You are a most depressing young woman,” mourned Mrs. Gordridge, almost groaning: “I wish, you wouldn’t.”

“Wouldn’t what, Aunt?”

“*You* know — play conscience to everybody, stick sly pins into people. I dare say you are blithe enough in your heart at the banishment of the poor child, but you pretend to be pierced with pain, in order to make me feel my cruelty—”

“Aunt, how *very* — !” went Anne, outraged.

“Oh, we are none of us such inscrutable Rahunas as we fancy, so don’t suppose yourself unknown.... But what else did the poor child say?”

“I — hardly like to tell, Aunt, lest I should happen to ‘play conscience’ to anyone: I had better say that she danced at the mere thought of leaving all her old life here, and diving into something cold and unknown at the other end of existence, and I’d better not tell how the poor girl gaped, and staggered, and gave way, how her poor face—”

Mrs. Gordridge groaned, even as with sudden peevishness she said: “All this through the fatuity of that O’Shannon! Can you not divine any motive why the man has acted in this mad fashion?”

“I don’t know, but I have a notion, Aunt, that there may be a treaty between O’Shannon and Arthur that Arthur is to marry her.”

“Now, how far-fetched! Why, the two fellows are sworn foes!”

“You are *always* right, Aunt,” sighed Anne Hine faintly at the fire, over which she pored from the hearth-rug by the side of Mrs. Gordridge’s great chair.

“But is it not actually so?” asked Mrs. Gordridge: “did they not do battle for her like two savages? and O’Shannon came off the winner; so why has the wight acted in this wild way?”

“People’s hearts are more or less subtle machines, Aunt,” remarked Anne, “and frequently ‘sworn foes’ are even more in love each with each than most sworn friends are in enmity.”

“Facts are facts,” said Mrs. Gordridge, “and the fact is that O’Shannon and Arthur are at war. Why, O’Shannon almost as good as said to me to-day that he wished Arthur might get shot.”

“I dare say he does,” said Anne—” with one half of his heart, but, if it were to happen, probably the other half would break—”

“More pretty rainbows and mirages—”

“No, O’Shannon, I am sure, cherishes some sort of passion for Arthur, implanted into his nature from their youth, and last evening when Arthur released him from the police, O’Shannon was furiously moved by it, flew off on a bicycle somewhere — I think to the station to catch Arthur, and it is quite possible that they came then to some sort of an understanding which may explain O’Shannon’s sudden passion for bachelorhood. It is beautifully noble of the fellow, if it be so, for his enthusiasm for Rosie more resembles a lunacy—”

“Mirages,” said Mrs. Gordridge: “gamekeepers are not great heroes and self-immolators, so the man is either mad, or has some motive that I know

nothing of.”

“You are *certain* to be right, Aunt,” murmured Anne.

“Well, go on with the big trouble,” and Anne, taking up Gibbon from the rug, read of the Romans to the chorus of the gale, till now the brain of the old lady gave way to the droning, her brow dropping slumbrously, upon which Anne drowsed over her sketch-book leaves, her head leaning to the left for her palm to stroke down and down the left half of her dark hair, till late in the sounding night she retired last of the household; but, always the first to behold the daylight, very early the following morning she was at her delight, painting in The Meadows, when a man named Price, happening to pass close by her, rifle on shoulder, drawing after him a rabble of terriers, she becked and called him:

“Price! So the head-keeper has left, has he?”

“Aye, handed over the keys to Mr. Cochrane last evening, miss.”

“So where is he at present?”

“Him did say as er was moving to his uncle aboove the Chase, miss, and his sticks he has put under the shanty in Sharp the blacksmith’s back-yard.”

Anne drew her mink cloak closer round her shoulders, sketching with rather stiff fingers, it being still cold, the morning’s glow yet young, and the early birds, the cows, the ground, all rich with jewels of dew.

“I dare say you will be seeing him?” she said.

“Aye sure, miss.... Is there any message?”

“No, I only wished — By the way, have you all been told that Mrs. Gordridge is going away?”

“Well, now! I hadn’t heard that. For long, miss?”

“A few days, no doubt: only to take Miss Jones to London, who is taking a trip to — Persia.”

“Well, now!” went Price, “I hadn’t heard that,” and Anne Hine thought to herself: “he will inform O’Shannon, and O’Shannon, seeing that she is about to be lost both to Arthur and to himself, may now be tempted into having her. I wonder? He appears to be a gallant piece of spirit, and that should be grand to watch the moral tug and struggle.... I hope he’ll yield now to the flesh and the devil, for it is the only sure scheme for keeping our small Arthur from Rosie, and then for my own repose, for if he’s great enough still to decline her, really this gamekeeper may become girt in colours all too beguiling to the organs of a girl’s fancy.”

And in truth, just as Anne had foreseen, it was only four days later than Shan was hearing the news, not indeed from Price himself, but from a hawker to whom it had already spread through Price, for among those people, supposed to be the most “news-hunting” in England, rumour scoots wide-legged, like a goose pursued by a wolf. The hawker stood with his barrow on the road, and when Shan, who was sawing larch-wood by a well-side in a bower down below, had said that he needed neither bloater nor haddock that day, the hawker remarked: “May be you do know already that the folk at Glanncourt be going off.”

Shan stopped his humming and sawing a moment to say no, he didn’t know, and hummed and sawed anew, whereat the chapman, touching his herrings and things into a witchinger arrangement, remarked: “Aye, they be going, Mrs. Gordridge, Miss Hine, and Miss Jones, all the three.”

“Hardly very probable at this time o’ year,” replied Shan: “but then, you St. Briavel’s bugs, you always know a great deal more than your prayers.”

“Well, I do have it from—”

“Aye, you do have it from Mrs. Gordridge’s self, I dare say.... Where do they say they are going to?”

“Miss Jones, they do have it to say, be bound for Persia.”

“It’s a wonder, now, they didn’t say Japan! for that goes on further still down under the world.”

“Well, I only give you what I have got myself.”

“Gossiping, news-hunting lot,” pshawed Shan, and sawed away, in a moment thinking no more of the thing.

But later in the day, as a seed that, once sown, secretly grows, the fish-man’s words again occurred to Shan, and more and more frequently kept recurring during the next three days, but merely as a curiosity of thought for the brain to amuse itself with, without any doubt at all in him as to the unfoundedness of the rumour; during which days, his uncle’s cottage where he was staying being in a most lonely place, nothing more of the story had reached his ears, and it was only on the fourth evening about six o’clock, when he sat cleaning a fowling-piece beneath a beech-tree’s shade, that something seemed to breathe into some deepest region of his brain: “but if it is true?” for now the seed, secretly growing, had peeped above ground, and within two seconds after the feeling “it *may* be true” was born in him, all his consciousness was rent with the shriek: “it *is* true!”

Up at once he sprang, a pallid lad, and at once he ran — toward Glanncourt, with what purpose he could have given no account, only he did not doubt that, if she was really being banished to foreign parts, it was in order to bury her for ever from Arthur, and he had given his promise to Arthur to guard her for him. Well so far had he guarded her for Arthur, his heart knew it, singing a new song and marching-tune within him, so that, sawing his larch-woods during these days, he had hummed to himself for all the lark-music that yarned in his bosom, merry in his bereavement. But how now to guard her in England — but by marrying her? And since she was now to be lost to himself and to the other, too — what then? why not? And

that sly fiend of self which is in each one leered inside his chest, tongue in cheek, echoing: “what then?”... “why not?”

It was an ill wind that blew no one any good....

But Rosie might be already away, he was wholly in the dark, might not get to Glanncourt in time: and he ran rabidly, his hound, Snout, half mastiff, half bull-dog, bounding joyously about his toil like a flourish coiled about a sign-manual, and always his heart was raised in a sort of prayer for good lungs and the grace of running, even as it kept repeating in a mechanical kind of way within him its “what then?” and its “why not...?”

But now, as night deepened down, over the lonely road there dashed upon him a calèche whose dobbin was being furiously lashed by its driver, and Shan, casting a glance round as it galloped near upon him, panted aloud, now hard breathing: “Dr. Blood! Stop! I want you to — !”

He got no farther, for the physician with a face as gorgeous as his name, lashing at his nag, shouted out at him: “Out of the road! am late to say good-bye to Mrs. Gordridge — !” and was gone away.

“Now may God help a chap,” whispered Shan inwardly, knowing now that she must be going by “the seven-forty-five,” and there were five miles still to run, a distance hardly great to him ordinarily, but the bigness of his present winded him: and with all his entrails raised in a sort of prayer he raced.

VII. SHAN BOTH HOT AND COLD



IT WAS NIGHT when he hied up the tump of the Morplepiece, halted there half-a-minute breathless, and now in straight career to the Hall hied down across the brook, and up the steep on the other side; but at the swing-gate which leads to the path between the north cover and shrubbery he came upon the puny Chuckabutty musing over the gate in his fez-cap, smoking a cheroot to the moon, to whom Shan gasped: “Mrs. Gordridge at home?”

“She’s gone away,” said the Hindoo *chef*.

“How long?”

“Chuckabutty now began to chuckle, saying: “Why, you are in a sweat — !”

“How long?” cried Shan.

“Hardly just gone, I think, since—”

Shan span and ran, away past the home-farm, casting vain glances to see the stable-clock through the foliage, down away southward through a small gate into the turnpike road, no time to be out of breath now, only a pair of legs that prayed and rained their steps. Through the village he hied, and when it was well behind him, and still he could see no sign of any carriage, hope perished in him, but on climbing the height of the next hill he could spy in the moonshine on a farther hillside a carriage which one horse was hauling at a walk up the steep with petty precipitate steps: and he was quickly trotting with it.

He could not answer when Anne bobbed forth her head to ask what was the matter, but after some minutes, when he was understood to say that he

wished to talk with Mrs. Gordridge, the carriage now stood still, and Mrs. Gordridge looked out.

“I could hardly talk to you here,” he said at her ear — for there sat Rosie and a lady’s-maid within the brougham: so now Mrs. Gordridge groaned and got herself down to him on the road, saying: “Be quick, O’Shannon, or I shall miss my train.”

“Between us, mum,” panted Shan secretly, “is that correct about Rosie Jones being off to a foreign land?”

“Well, what then?”

“But, mum, that was only my fun about not wanting to marry Rosie.”

“*Fun!*”

“That was all, mum!”

“So are you willing to marry her now?”

“Rather, mum. Everybody about knows very well—”

“But who is it that is mad, the man or I? for it must be one or the other. Fun?”

“That was all, mum! I declare, it’s enough to make one laugh!”

“What is enough to make one laugh?”

“The whole thing, mum!”

“Which whole thing? O’Shannon, I hope you are quite compos mentis. Do you mean that you were not serious that forenoon when you refused Rosie, when you shouted out ‘No!’ and shocked me?”

“What, Rosie, mum? my little cousin who was always a heart’s idol to me?”

Mrs. Gordridge gave vent to a laugh, very relieved and pleased at heart, though, shy of appearing so, she said: “I’m sure some fly has stung the fellow! So, then, it was ‘*fun*’? and since this *fun* has cost me £75 for

booking a ticket, no doubt you'll be prepared to pay it me back, supposing I agree now to give Rosie to you?"

"Anything you choose, mum," said Shan.

"But what has been your object — ? for it can't well be a fact that you were actuated by some consideration for Mr. Arthur—"

"Oh, mum, don't bring in your son, for Heaven's sake: I have nothing to do with your son, mum."

"At any rate, O'Shannon, you do undertake positively at present, if I should prove so weak as to yield to your entreaty?"

"You may be certain, mum."

"Well, certainly, you do not deserve it, but I'll see what can be done for you," and she fluttered back elated to the carriage, which, presently turning back toward the village, left Shan there, his handkerchief at his face.

He did not return to his uncle's, but took a bed in Albington, where, at the Bunch of Grapes, he gathered a crowd round him that night, and, loud with devilry, astonished everyone by his lavish treating, making the cash fly, himself deeply drinking, though known as "an abstainer so that one winked at another: "Him be gone a bit mad at quitting Glanncourt — that's it."

A late riser the next day, Shan walked up the half-mile of shady road to Glanncourt with the gladsomeness of his health, of the sunshiny morning, of his approaching marriage, showing in his jauntiness of step, though it was strange, too, with what fury he slashed with the switch in his hand at hemlock or honeysuckle flowering in the hedges, and curious how he cut his poor Snout when the hound darted after a motor-car that posted past; and meeting near The Meadows gate a loose-bosomed woman wayfaring with a freight of vegetables, to her he sang cheerily out, "Hello, Mother Higgins, how goes it this morning?"

“Lar, Shan,” she answered with a certain Welt-schmerz, or world-smart, “I gat a bile an me tit this marning, and Bella her’s gat one an hers; but here! a word wi’ thee — Pruie just asked me if I did know where thee’s to be found, for Mrs. Gordridge, er said, has sent out a boy in buttons asking everywhere after thee,” upon which Shan quickened his steps till he got before the low front of Glanncourt, and before long was being led to a room, when out of it stepped Rosie, her eyes on the ground, till suddenly sighting Shan, she stood whitish, Shan, too, standing as whitish on a sudden as she.

“Morning,” he could hardly be heard to say, and the girl’s lips barely stirred, and her regard struck him dead with disdain; and all at once that ghost of Rosie made a dart past him, like one escaping blindly, and was away.

Shan was now brought before Mrs. Gordridge, but so confounded by his encounter with the ghost outside, that for some time he could lend no attention to what she said to him. There with easel and palette at the window opposite the great cedar on the lawn sat Anne Hine, smiling her fine smile at mankind, while Mrs. Gordridge, cowering by the fire, informed Shan of all that had now to be brought about by him and her.

“To-morrow at three,” she said, “I shall have Mr. Spender here, and you can come and see what I propose as to a settlement, but as to seeing Rosie herself, you mustn’t yet, for with all this chopping and changing between O’Shannon and China, the poor child is now naturally half out of her wits; but if you come — what’s to-day? Thursday, the twentieth — come on Saturday to see and may be take her for a walk; only you shouldn’t start pawing the child about yet, O’Shannon, that is, if you are not desirous of having your eyes scratched out.”

“Why, mum, don’t you suppose I know how to keep my hands in their place?” Shan wished to know; “anyhow, till she becomes a bit fonder of me, as she quickly will, for she’s said it herself.”

“Rosie has? I am very pleased! To whom did she say that?”

“Why, to you, mum, didn’t she?”

“To *me*?”

“Didn’t you tell me so in the summer-house, mum, how she asserted that she admires my — ?”

“Why, so true, I forgot that... quite so. Only, don’t be too crude and brutal with her, woo her by inches, she will soon — By the way, what about your ‘goods’?”

“My sticks I’ve left down at Sharpe’s, the blacksmith’s, mum, for the time.”

“Well, you had better part with the lot, inasmuch as all that bachelor stuff is no use for a young wife, and I will undertake to have the cottage furnished throughout by one of the London firms.”

“Truth to tell, mum, I’d sooner furnish it myself,” observed Shan, eyeing the floor.

“But how much money have you on the whole?”

“Over two hundred pounds, Mrs Gordridge.”

“But what good is that? You are not to be independent, O’Shannon, and you are to remember that Rosie is a well-nurtured girl, grown used to elegance. If you are so eager to spend your £200, you had better pay me back the £75 of passage-money which I have spent through your ‘*fun*’—”

“I’ll pay it back this day, mum.”

“You are not to be independent, O’Shannon, I say! What you ought to do is to creep on your two knees to worship me and President Kruger, and not be independent.”

“I worshipped you years before, mum, so to speak,” answered Shan, a smile in the eyes: “I don’t know so much about this Kruger.”

“Kruger, too: for suppose Mr. Arthur had not gone to the war—”

“Oh, do, do, Mrs. Gordridge, don’t bring in your son!” cried Shan with sudden fretfulness now, “that’s a man that I want to have nothing to say about.”

“If you like me, O’Shannon, you must like my son!”

Shan groaned.

“Is that all you have got to say to me, Mrs. Gordridge?” he asked.

“I think so. Be sure to see Mr. Orrock at once.... And, O’Shannon, I am to depend this time upon your running straight? There is to be no more mysterious ‘*fun*’...? I declare there’s something in me now that doesn’t feel quite easy about the man since his queer conduct, as if I were building houses on quick-sands! And yet I always thought that no one was so reliable...!”

“Why, what do you think of me, mum?” asked Shan, rising; “I intend to marry Rosie, and when I once have her, no doubt I shall know how to hold her.”

“Oh, you go away,” pshawed Mrs. Gordridge to the grate, little guessing at his troubled mind, while Anne Hine, who much better divined, smiled over her brush.

But this feeling of uneasiness in the old lady was not baseless, for that ship of fate that was freighted with Rosie’s and Shan’s marriage was to have no roseate trip. For one fact, it became known that Rosie was very indisposed, and then it almost looked as if Shan himself by his own behaviour was trying all he could to make the marriage impossible. On the very day of the settlement, old Pruie, getting into talk with Anne in a walk of the New Garden, in the gloaming, in telling her how Shan had brought up

a bed and some things, and was now in the cottage “just like in the old time,” added, “but oh, him be queer, miss, er bent like the old lad at all.”

“In what way?” asked Anne.

“Him be queer, miss — it be hard to tell — but after being in the cover all night wi’ the dogs, er hasn’t slept a wink, only sits wi’s legs afore him, and they do have it to say er made every one of the fellows in the place tight the night before last wi’s money, nor some of them haven’t been right since.”

“That seems naughty,” said Anne.

“Oh, they are a loutish lost lot down in that village, miss, believe me, for as I always do say to myself, it bent the drink that’s bad, it’s the people; people do blame the drink, and think it’s the drink that’s bad, but that’s all a mistake, because er bent the drink that’s bad, it’s them as do *take* the drink.”

“You are too subtle, Pruie,” remarked Anne; “but it is to be hoped that your master himself wasn’t—”

“Oh, him never was tight in his life, I don’t suppose, though they do have it to say er weren’t fur off it. Aye, him be queer someways — between us him be just terrible bitter against Mr. Gordridge, him will say to me, or to himself rather, as er did this morning, ‘what have I got to thank’n for?’ er said, sitting on the step: ‘if him rescued me from the police,’ er said, ‘it was only keeping of his promise, as any man ‘ood have done, and I do owe nothing to he’—”

“All that means very little,” said Anne, “for O’Shannon does not really dislike Lieutenant Gordridge, but he probably feels that he is breaking some promise, and yielding to a temptation, so he is bitter against Lieutenant Gordridge, for people are always bitter against those whom they feel that they are wronging, Pruie.”

“You wouldn’t say,” went Pruie. “But that was only this morning him was like that, miss, this afternoon er be as spry as you like, er be off to St. Arvens to try on a new coat, having to see Miss Rosie to-morrow in the Hall” — in which new coat Anne was sufficiently interested to watch from a window the following gloaming till Shan turned up with a Homburg hat and glorious cravat, to be led into a book-room where Rosie, new-risen from bed that afternoon, volumed in a shawl of Spanish lace waited for him.

Shan, for his share, followed the flunkey who led him with the reluctance of one being taken to the stake, and when he was announced, and the door closed behind him, and he found himself alone with Rosie in a room in which the growing gloom was beshone only by a glow from the grate, his tongue was tied, Rosie, too, remaining dumb, ghostly vague in her lace, a Whistler vision, standing with her hand on a chair; and during some moments those two, whom the cynic Mr. Orrock was soon to unite for life, stood as stupefying as lions let loose one upon the other.

“I was sorry to hear that you have been bad,” Shan managed to stammer at last.

“It is all right,” she said.

“I have brought you these,” he next said, putting a bunch of George Bruants roses on a pedestal.

“You are very obliging,” replied Rosie.

“Four of them are from the garden, and the rest James Downie gave me,” observed Shan, but it was a blunder to expound the origin of the roses, Rosie returned no answer, and now he stood struck.

“You may take a seat, if that pleases you,” she said presently.

And at once he felt that she was “sticking-on side,” meant to show him the fine lady, and this, increasing his feeling of inferiority, completed Shan’s sheepishness. He sat on the very edge of an arm-chair over against where

she stood gray and tail-looking in that gloaming, and all that he could discover to say was: “Well, Rosie, here we are.”

She made no answer.

“Won’t you talk to me?” he asked.

“I am prepared to reply to any observation which you may be pleased to make,” she answered.

“It is like this, look,” said he: “you were going to be shipped away like a clutch of eggs, and when I gathered that it must be either that or going to the altar with you, I came forward and offered to take you.”

“Ah! I am the victim of a philanthropy...”

“The victim — ha, ha! — yes, that’s your way of putting it; ‘the victim of a philanthropy’ — yes, very well put. But you will be just to me, Rosie, I hope: no doubt you have been told that a fortnight ago almost, just after the war broke out, I was given the chance of marrying you, and what did I say to it? I said no. Couldn’t quite tell you just by what muscle I managed it, but done it was. Aye, I did it that day: I said no.”

“Why did you, when you knew that Mrs. Gordridge would be giving more or less money with me?”

“That’s of no importance why, but I did it — in spite of the more or less money that Mrs. Gordridge would be giving with you, Rosie. So you see that it isn’t that I’m grasping after you, for I said no, and it was only when you were being shipped off—”

“That was no business of yours, if I was being shipped off.”

“But which would you rather, be shipped off to Providence knows what far port of the sea, or be married to me?”

“Frankly, I think I’d rather be shipped off, since you ask me,” replied Rosie to that rash query: “but, of course, I am quite in Mrs. Gordridge’s

hands, and into whatever sty my guardian likes to cast me, I have to submit to be cast.”

“Why, Rosie,” cried Shan, “can a girl be more cruel to a man who worships her than a terrier to a rat?”

“I do not intend to be cruel, but I don’t mind if I am,” Rosie confessed.

“But, Rosie,” said Shan through a choky throat in a hoarse tone, “you don’t know, I am not a happy man, have some pity on me.”

“No one has any pity on *me*.”

“Well *I* have pity on you, since you say that you need pity,” murmured Shan yearningly.

“You are very obliging, but to be frank, your pity and all your other feelings are matters of complete indifference to me.”

“But is that quite right, now? We are about to be husband and wife—”

“We shall be finely matched.”

“No, never that, since I am never half fit to fall and kiss your little finger, but if you don’t egg on yourself against me, you’ll soon be caring more for me, I trust, as you’ve admitted yourself—”

“I admitted?”

“Yes, dear, to your Mama — don’t say that it is not true, even if it isn’t — not as a mate, may be, you won’t be caring for me, but as your poor spaniel you will, for you know, Rosie, I never considered you as quite the same flesh and blood as myself or anybody, but as an angel to be worshipped, as a white image in a shrine, and these five years I have only dreamed of marrying you, dear, so as to show you how a man can be a hound at your sweet feet, dear, with a humble heart before God, to kiss the hem of your garment, as when the people kissed the hem of the Lord’s robe, and that healed them of all their broken hearts, Rosie now Shan’s utterance choked, but he came bowed down, and laid his mouth on the hem of Rosie’s robe.

“This is nonsense,” murmured Rosie with an averted face in a tone of patient boredom which was mainly real, but more or less stagey, too: “if you know what is to your advantage, you will inflict upon me such exhibitions as seldom as possible, since they only bore me,” upon which Shan sprang straight, answering: “No, I mean to inflict them upon you as frequently as my soul speaks, Rosie, till you commence to understand, and to answer to it.”

“That will be never, then, so don’t flatter yourself, you will only be the more disillusioned,” she said.

“But I don’t despair, not a bit! you wait, you don’t know yet what’s coming for you, you see,” now cried Shan, who, standing now close to her, though he could barely see her face in that arrased room, was inhaling fugitive fumes of perfume from her being, “you can’t even conceive yet! I shall be having you so warm in my arms — you don’t know Shan O’Shannon, I am as wild inside as ninety-nine climbing mow-fires! — I shall be leading you such a dance of love, that even if you be a snow-flake, I shall be making you flush.”

“Indeed?” breathed Rosie, eyeing the floor, and she added in a low tone: “you will only be doing bad for yourself....”

“So you say at present,” replied Shan: “but you wait for three or four months of me, and by then you will be able truly to sign yourself ‘ Mrs. O’Shannon,’ with a flourish to it.”

“But just now I was an image in a shrine, now it is another tune, I am to be wildly whirled in some kind of climbing fires: I don’t think that you quite know your own mind.”

“Who could, do you think, when he is by you?” he asked: “but don’t folks kiss the idols that they adore? The Creator did not knead up that piece of flesh all out of cream and peach-pulp, Rosie, only to be knelt down

before, but to be kissed, too. Why, bless me, I've seen old men of eighty, and old women, too, Rosie, stop on the road to gape after you with greed, and to mumble to themselves what a bliss you are; for myself, I believe if I was a stock or a stone, I'd stir when you stepped close to me, yes, I fancy I'd scent your step, and stir: and now it is my fate to have you — down there by ourselves in the old house — I don't believe it one bit, for it sounds beerified enough, but it is true, I am to own you, it has happened so, and where's the man who dares say no to it? So I intend to grasp and use what the good God in His goodness grants me, you see, and to fuse you like wax in a wildish fire's furnace, as well as worship you, and I want you to let me put on this ring—”

Rosie drew back. “Ring? No, I have only undertaken to wear one ring of yours.”

“Oh, you have to,” and having now her hand, he drew her to put on the ring, but, on a sudden, forgetting the ring, had her bound to his bosom, devouring her mouth, nor did Rosie struggle in the least, giving herself as a rag to that greed which had whiffed her off her feet, though the moment that he released her she stamped at him, and they remained some feet apart in the dark, dumbly hearing each other's laboured breathing.

“Don't be cross,” said Shan meekly, “though you should be, for I promised your Mama not to... Not the only promise in my life that I have broken, may be. Anyhow, it's done, I've kissed a girl, and that girl's Rosie” — Shan spoke now in a kind of reverie, with the naïveté of a child—” I kissed Frances Price and Julia Howley one Sunday afternoon under the hedge of Perkin's Clause a few weeks after I was thirteen, and they were my last kisses — till now this one.”

“I am not interested,” said Rosie; “though they say—”

“Well, what?”

“That you have not the reputation of being quite such a St. Anthony as you say — so I have been told... not, of course, that I care a fig...”

“Who is this St. Anthony?”

“A person who disapproved of girls, they say.”

“Why, can’t one know how to knock around with the young women for a lark without going any farther? I have spun them all round the waist—”

“I am not interested, really.”

“Well, may I put on the ring now?”

“I’d prefer that than to be subjected afresh to what you just did to me.”

“You’ll soon be liking it better.”

“Shall I?”

“So hold out your hand....”

Rosie now leant aside and switched on the light, and now those eyes of Shan, that mostly had a ray of merriment in them, saw her in her shawl, with a Rubens rose that rode on the movement of her bosom, as she held her already glittering finger for his ring with a little disgust hung on her lower lip; sudden Shan dropped before this revelation of a fair lady that was to be his, and, having pressed on the ring, once more put his lips to her robe.

“There, that’s done,” he said, rising, “and I am grateful to you, Rosie, from my heart; Mrs. Gordridge suggested that you might go for a stroll, I don’t know—”

“As you see, I am not well.”

“I see that. Well, I won’t keep you. May I come again on Monday?”

“Not Monday.”

“When?”

“There is no need — You will soon be having a very great deal of me, it seems.... You will be told when.”

“Well, I must live on that; good-bye, and don’t be downhearted, now: I’d be killing myself for you, if that would save you any heartache, but killing myself would only mean foreign parts for you. Dear, good-bye.” He pressed her hand tight, and went; and Rosie, after putting out the light, sat over the grate in the dark, gazing into the fire.

Yet a new experience awaited her the next morning when, after pacing down the half-mile to the village with Anne, preceded by a little crowd of eight maid-servants, she sat in the church: for, immediately after reading out that Nicene Creed in which he little believed, Mr. Orrock was all of a sudden calling out her name, publishing her banns. There in the family-pew Anne Hine sat smiling, but Rosie’s face flew into crimson, and then was white, this having come like a bolt upon her: for Mrs. Gordridge, always a grim, if a wise, surgeon, desiring to accustom her mind in all ways to the idea of the marriage, had urged her to be at church that day, but had uttered no word as to any banns. At this news there was “movement” enough throughout St. Jude’s that forenoon, half of the throng of eyes turning toward Rosie’s distress, and half toward Shan, who, ever a regular church-goer, heard it with a low head in his seat near the door.

But the effect upon Shan of this hearing of his banns, of feeling himself as it were half-married already, was anything but happy, for that same night the lad broke out in an extraordinary fashion, making such a scandal as was never known, and it was with pallid flesh and shaky hands that his housekeeper, meagre old Pruie, sought out her friend, Anne, on the Monday evening, to ask her if she thought that it would all be getting to Mrs. Gordridge’s ears.

“Mrs. Gordridge already knows something,” breathed Anne Hine close over her sketch-book, sketching beneath a calm arch of sky in which one

only star psalmed a solo before the chorus-roar, “she can hardly help knowing.... But what exactly happened?”

“Him got real tight, miss,” answered Pruie secretly, “and everybody else in the village wi’n seemingly — Sunday night, too, why, shame ought to have covered their face, and him that all the world do regard as such a tidy, God-fearing young fellow, what a pity it be. Him was more like a wild lion than a man, miss, they do say er had the strength of ten, for after making them all tight, er turned on them wi’s fists, and er was a free fight, till they all runned away frightened from him, and four of them be in their beds to-day wi’ broken bones and noses. Then when nobody was left to fight wi’, him turned round and fair wrecked the bar of The Grapes, and er caught up Griffiths’ nag in his arms, which they do say three men couldn’t lift, miss, and er runned burdened wi’n down the street, and er hurled’n down the well —”

“How splendid!” breathed Anne Hine.

“That’s cider, you see, that’s what the cider do do.... But O, miss, if you had seen his eyes when er got home! I was there waiting up, wondering where he’d got to, and the minute him come, and his eyes fell on me, er laughed aloud, and er sang out, ‘well, you old messer! look out for yourself!’ — and, miss, er makes one dart after me! If it wasn’t for the table, he’d have had me sure, but I skipped round like a sparrow and skipped upstairs, and by the time er come up, I was under the bed; him searched and him searched for me, muttering to himself, oh, er searched earnest, miss, and my heart was in my throat the same as if er was a ghost searching for me, but er searched every crack except just under the bed — it was only God’s mercy. Then him went down again, and I listened to him breaking up of everything, the table, the crockery — nothing be left whole in the place.”

“Which only shows that the man’s gallant skull is virgin to alcohol,” murmured Anne; “but how has he got on to-day?”

“To-day him hasn’t uttered one word to me, miss, nor er wouldn’t touch his breakfast, but er sat under that beech-tree aboove the brook for hours wi’s brow down on his knees, feeling seedy no doubt. I did keep an eye on him from the cottage, and what do you suppose I see’n do? Him do always keep in his brown jacket the photograph of a boy in an Eton jacket, miss, which I do delieve to be Lieutenant Gordridge’s photograph, so him takes this out of his breastpocket, and er looks at it a bit, then er chucks it from him toward the brook; but it wouldn’t go into the brook for him, er went all sky-larking edgeways through the air, so him sprang up and caught’n, all red in the face er was, and rent’n to bits, and tossed the bits into the brook; then er crouched down again under the beech wi’s brow on his knees for hours.”

“Well, this looks troublous for the wedding,” remarked Anne, putting up her sketch-book; and walking to the Hall, she asked herself: “Shall I be quite sorry if the wedding does not come off? Isn’t this old Shan-lad as much too good in his way for my Rosie as Arthur Gordridge is in his? And it can hardly come off, if he is to continue in this frantic mood of remorse” — for she was aware that Mrs. Gordridge had declared that if Shan only once more broke loose in this fashion, she would refuse to let him be Rosie’s husband. But this mood of Shan’s was soon enough to reel into wholly another mood, one even more dangerous to that cranky ship of fate that carried his marriage: for near eleven of the Wednesday morning following that stormy Sunday night, Shan being then again seated beneath his beech-tree, a telegram was handed him whose influence upon his mind was to prove no less than mighty. It came from the Cape, and thus ran: “Arrived safe. Inform my mother. Thanks. Arthur.”

Quick was its effect: for the moment Shan had read it, he raised himself, and went with roaming feet here and there over the bit of broken ground on which he stood, like some vague wight who seeks some object on the ground, but forgets quite what, and he rubbed the telegram over his cheeks and over his mouth with a sound of bubbling and of sobbing, and a sort of daft laugh of a mother.

Later in the day he got himself piloted to Mrs. Gordridge's presence, to inform her that Mr. Arthur had safely arrived, for he had got a telegram; and when Mrs. Gordridge in a state of amazement exclaimed: "But this is grotesque that Arthur should have telegraphed to someone else than me!" Shan stood and laughed at her.

During the ensuing four days, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, on which last day his banns were again published, Shan O'Shannon hardly ate, hardly slumbered, hardly did any work, shirked a meeting with his sweetheart: what was going on in the game-keeper's nut no one knew, no one could guess; and on the Monday he disappeared.

VIII. SHAN VANISHED



“WHERE, THEN, IS the man gone to?” asked Mrs. Gordridge on the Tuesday evening, seated on a heap of quilts in the head-keeper’s cottage: “he has no earthly right to take himself off the estate in this way: I declare this man is becoming the greatest anxiety of my life!”

“I conjecture,” said Mr. Orrock, “that he is only gone to Gloucester or somewhere, to see may be after his wedding garments, because—” but he was interrupted by a louder row of the hammering, rasping, sawing, steaming, which was being made upstairs by the London furnishers still at their work in the last of the twilight.

“But why should he slink off in this singular fashion to get clothes?” Mrs. Gordridge wished to know.

“Why should he do any of the odd things which he has lately done?” asked Dr. Blood, sitting on a dado all among shavings: “I’m afraid that here is a case in which Socialism and Free-thought have brought about a state of the spiritual part of the man—”

“A state of the digestion, may be,” said Mr. Orrock: “O’Shannon is not a free-thinker, nor have I any closer listener to my sermons, or rather my lectures—”

“That may account for the poor man’s going wrong,” grumbled Dr. Blood.

Now, this grumble Mr. Orrock, pacing about, could scarcely hear in that row, but he guessed what had been said, and answered: “Precisely what I

said last week when I heard of Perkins' little girl's decease: I said: 'I need hardly ask if Dr. Blood attended her.'"

"Never even saw the child," said Dr. Blood; "I was on my way to her when she died."

"Ah, you see.... The poor little girl clung on to life for days, but on learning that the doctor was coming, gave way to despair, and sighed her last."

"How trying!" now pouted Mrs. Gordridge: "can't you two ever be conscious of the presence of third persons when you get together? You are so preoccupied with each other, like piston and cylinder, that you are absent to all else beneath the sun, till it becomes really unmannerly! I was asking, Richard, why you should suppose that O'Shannon would go off to get clothes—"

"Oh, Aunt," remarked Anne Hine, now turning inward from regarding the sunset's death-drama, "do you suppose that O'Shannon has gone to get any clothes? I doubt if any of us will see Shan O'Shannon again...."

"Now for the augur of evil," groaned Mrs. Gordridge.

"It seems to me so clear now," said Anne, "that O'Shannon must have promised not to marry Rosie: what else can be the meaning of that word '*Thanks*' in Arthur's cable to him from the Cape? or why else should Arthur wire his arrival to O'Shannon at all, sign the wire '*Arthur*,' and be so wise as to send it almost a full day before sending one to Aunt herself? For O'Shannon received his at eleven in the morning, and Aunt did not receive one until seven in the evening. The whole business was deliberately contrived by Arthur in order to tickle and please O'Shannon to the man's simple heart, to drench him in flattery with the '*inform my mother*,' and so to keep him to his word: and I believe that O'Shannon means to keep his word."

“Oh, don’t be sibylline,” said the old lady: “if there was any such understanding, would O’Shannon ever for one thing have let the banns be published? would he ever—”

“Oh, but O’Shannon quite broke down when Rosie was going out to China,” replied Anne; “he must have said to himself, ‘she’s going to be lost to us both, so I’ll have her,’ and he did evidently mean to have her, for those outrageous bouts of his were only due to a muggy state of his conscience, to his secret feeling that he was breaking his vow, however good the excuse; but when Arthur’s artful cable came, the fellow fell fervently in love with him anew, and resolving once more to keep his vow, he once more renounced Rosie, and ran away: that’s my reading of him, and I doubt if we shall see him again.”

“But it was not until days after getting the cablegram from Arthur that he went away,” remarked Mr. Orrock: “it would hardly be the cablegram that caused him to go.”

“Only five days: — it took him that time to make up his mind,” said Anne.

“You make the man out to be mad,” now said the old lady coldly, “for he must be aware that if he is not here on the wedding-day, Rosie will at once be banished from someone’s reach, just as she was being banished when he intervened to stop her from going before: so, if he has run away, his motive can’t well be Arthur’s good, and it is quixotic to think of such a thing, inasmuch as Glanncourt is not Laputa, nor is the world a town of gold up in the clouds, and game-kippurs do not act out of the normal for their master’s good. There is undoubtedly some sort of amity now existing between Arthur and O’Shannon, as that cable seems to show, but — what is it all about? Oh, it is not fair of Arthur to puzzle me! But O’Shannon will be back tomorrow,

I know, for the man is keen to marry Rosie, and therefore *will* marry her, and must; only I wish he wouldn't cause me all these headaches."

"Neither this uproar nor this odour of paint and paste can be good, since you have a headache—" began Mr. Orrock.

"She doesn't mean physical headaches!" screamed Dr. Blood, "she means a spiritual—"

"She means *a — physical — headache*," insisted Mr. Orrock.

"That she doesn't, then."

"Ah! She does."

"How tiresome," mourned Mrs. Gordridge, now rising, "come, let us go..." and she made her way back to the mansion with the painfully slow progress of grub.

That night at ten she sent down to the cottage to find out if there was any sign of Shan; but Shan had not come back, and during the next day, the Wednesday, there was no coming nor news of him.

Meantime, the bridal preparations went bravely on, as if no Shan had vanished, the old lady believing what she hoped, that he must reappear: Rosie beheld herself in mirrors in hats which rolled with ostrich-feathers furnished from the Rue de la Paix, and in a new robe of sable as heavy as a bear; the wedding-day was nigh, the wedding-cake already waited white on the morning-room table, and Chuckabutty, the chef, who already was affording foretastes of tipsy-cake, rout-cakes, and meringues, had now mayonnaise of salmon in the mind's eye; the cottage, too, was almost ready, the electric light, the piano, Satsuma jars were installed, and Dresden figurines costumed like milkmaids *en fête* and like gallants Louis XVI: Shan alone was wanting, and several days rolled by, but bore no tidings of Shan.

Each morning, each evening, a horseman was despatched to his uncle away up on the Chase to enquire for tidings: the uncle had nothing to tell.

“Never mind,” said Anne to Rosie, lacing Rosie in a fairy pair of stays in front of a mirror, “don’t fret, he will come....”

“I should like to catch myself,” replied Rosie: “may be never come.”

“Be quiet, you know that you will be awfully annoyed if you are disappointed,” said Anne, now tickling her with fixed teeth.

“Oh!” shrieked Rosie, darting off, shrieking with laughter, “don’t tickle me when you know how ticklish I am! *Oh! don’t!*” but Anne Hine with her long finger hunted her to the bed, on which Rosie gave up shrieking, and Anne tickled her there, till, kissing her, she said: “You see, you have altogether forgotten poor Arthur for O’Shannon, or you could never be so crazy with gaiety.”

“A girl has got to giggle sometimes,” answered Rosie, “according to the moon; if I laugh it is because this other one is gone to Kingdom-come.”

“Never mind, he’ll be here for the wedding-bells.... Poor me, I have no wedding-bells, you see.”

“I should willingly change places with you, if you would with me,” said the other, and Anne turning her face away, answered nothing.

But Shan did not show his nose, and Rosie, half-drowsing in her bed, had him now in the thoughts of her head, marvelling... for he was to be her husband, after all. She thought of death by accident over the quarry-cliffs, of suicide, of an arrest by the police for his recent riots: but all these seemed far-fetched: he could hardly be dead, inasmuch as his dog, which had gone with him, had not come back. With regard to Anne’s guess that some sort of a league existed between Shan and Arthur, this was so very far beyond the scope of Rosie’s comprehension of the heart of man, that it had no part in her thoughts at all.

But Shan did not come! “If he doesn’t come,” remarked Mrs. Gordridge angrily on the Sunday, at about the hour when the banns were being published for the third time, “I’ll make him pay back every penny both of that first £75 passage-money, and of the second £75 that I shall have to spend: that is, if I can catch him.”

“I doubt if Shan O’Shannon would prove quite a drowsy fish to catch!” replied Mr. Cochrane, her land-steward, with whom she was taking counsel.

The old lady had a face of care.

“Was there ever anything so unsearchable as this fellow’s behaviour?” she asked. “What do *you* think? — you are a man of the world — will he turn up or not?”

Mr. Cochrane, gazing down upon a ground made up of Persian Yellows just outside the conservatory-door, shrugged without answering.

“I have got three anonymous letters,” observed Mrs. Gordridge, “two giving me to know that we are never again to behold O’Shannon, and the third that we shall — illiterate scribbles: I take it that they have no weight?”

“Oh, no,” was the reply; “of course, the country-side, being in a fever, will write, but the notes mean nothing.”

“I dreamed of fires last night,” muttered Mrs. Gordridge, “and first thing this morning, on glancing out, I watched a crowd of crows going... Oh, well, we must only wait and see what the morrow brings forth.”

But the morrow did not bring forth Shan, and still the morrow after, the wedding-morning, wrought and dawned, but brought not Shan forth — a heavy November day, the third of the month, burdened with drizzles and breezes yearning in music through the yews and the dreary old cedar, with the sun low in Cancer at Hallowmas; and Mrs. Gordridge, learning the morning’s ugly news as she was getting her fingers manicured in her

chamber's recess, made the observation, "Well, I am quite done now... if he comes now, he shan't have her, for he was never half good enough for her."

But this was only what the fox remarked of the grapes! and, on going downstairs an hour later on Rosie's arm, a telegram which was handed her changed the old lady's temper to the opposite pole; the telegram being in the words: O'Shannon says will arrive in time for wedding; earnestly begs you go to church. Davis." So what was now to be done? That was hard for the wit of woman to argue out! for though Mrs. Gordridge gladly rushed from despair into elation — who was this Davis"? No one knew at all! All that one could say of him was that his wire derived from Winchester. And why, if O'Shannon actually meant to come, could he not wire himself? What could bind him? Anne Hine was certain that the whole business of the wire was a hoax, akin to the anonymous letters; of a like view were Dr. Blood, Mr. Orrock, Mr. Cochrane; and in the council which lasted for hours into the afternoon they all argued roundly against Mrs. Gordridge's faith in the telegram; in vain, however: for when the clock struck two, she, too, struck her stick on the floor, and said:

"Come, let us go, as he begs us to: it will be lucky to be actually in the church, waiting, and then he will come."

"Ah, he is *sure* to, Aunt, since you say so," murmured Anne Hine: "but to go and wait in vain will be very distressing."

"Oh, timorous people always believe there's a lion in the way," pshawed Mrs. Gordridge: "let us venture to go, and one's very boldness will bring him. He knew that the wedding was fixed for two o'clock, and he is conscious that one can't be married after three, so that's his motive for enjoining us to be at the altar, so as to avoid delay when he comes. He will come, if we go."

“There is, however, no train for him to get here by between now and three,” observed the clergyman.

“Ah, Mr. Orrock, do not argue with Aunt Margaret,” sighed Anne Hine, “since she is *sure* to be right.”

“I am only sorry to be the occasion of all this care, I’m sure,” now remarked Rosie with a saucy pout, seated near her mama all in silvery grey with a great white hat, waiting to be a wife.

“Never mind,” said Mrs. Gordridge, kissing her cheek, “don’t be angry with your mama: he’ll come.”

“But even if he is coming,” said Dr. Blood, “why not postpone the wedding for one day — ?”

“No, thank you,” replied the old lady: “there never was a postponed wedding that didn’t end in misery: either he has her to-day, or he never has her. So, come: he’ll come. The man is keen to be married, and therefore will be: come.”

She stood up, and within two minutes the carriages were off through the drizzle, to meet round St. Jude’s a great crowd from far and near, whom Morgan could hardly induce to keep off the bright carpet spread for the bride’s steps, many of whom, even when they had invaded the nave behind the bridal train, still found themselves crowded out in the rain.

And now in the chancel itself that stout heart of Mrs. Gordridge began to falter within her, and had in it the thought “be bold, be bold, be not too bold nor, when it became half-past two, and no news yet of Shan, could she any longer endure to sit tamely there regarding the gaunt laughs and shrugs and giggling shoulder of Rosie and her bridesmaids, but stole away into the sacristy, where, as in hiding, she sat shamefacedly facing Mrs. Orrock’s shame.

However, she had not been ten minutes seated there, when with a beaming countenance she was bounding out of her chair, breathing: “Thank heaven! just as I said...!” for old Pruie, a flurry of palish flesh, was there before her with the news: “Mr. O’Shannon, mum! at the cottage dressing — !” and Pruie had barely spoken, when in broke Anne Hine, saying very excitedly (for her): “Aunt, O’Shannon is now running down the village-street!...You are *always* right, dear Aunt, and I must always henceforth measure men by your standards.”

IX. SHAN AND SONGS IN THE NIGHT



THERE, THEN, ALL among the palms of the altar, before ever the old church-clock groaned three, was Rosie united to her perspiring bridegroom by Mr. Orrock, who afterwards at the lunch asserted, to Dr. Blood's annoyance, that "the main functions of a clergyman were, after all, to be a joiner and an engraver": and before God they were joined.

As for Rosie, in what way she passed that day, in what world she roamed, she could never afterwards remember, for it is no fun to carle or girl (with only one life) to be married for the first time, and the Burgundy with the pheasants made all whirl in her girl's-brain; but all went off bravely enough without her consciousness, for throughout the afternoon into night the marriage-bells were breaking out into brabblings; when it was dark a bonfire blazed on the tump of the Morplepiece; and left alone with Anne Hine, Mrs. Gordridge said then, gratified: "Well, it went off very well: Rosie Jones is married: and O'Shannon is just the man that I should have chosen as the ideal husband for her."

"Ah! but Arthur when he hears!" sighed Anne Hine: "for I am still convinced of a compact between O'Shannon and Arthur, only poor O'Shannon's back broke under it."

"All gammon," replied Mrs. Gordridge; "I have told you that Utopia is a curio for cranks, not usual in Europe; anyway, Arthur won't be getting to hear of the marriage for — months, it begins to seem, with these Boers fighting like fiends."

“But if there was a compact,” said Anne, “poor Arthur will be fighting on the strength of it, and then he will come home with the D.S.O. to claim his reward, only to find his bride shaking up fat baby O’Shannon in her arms.”

“Poor Arthur, it is rather rough on him,” admitted Mrs. Gordridge: “but, after all, he lost her in fair duello, and the Gordridges always did beg for a stronger head than theirs to check and rescue them.”

Anne nibbled a taste of cake-ice in silence, living on air, but delighting in tiny clandestine tit-bits that she nibbled like a cat; and presently she sighed: “So Shan O’Shannon broke down...

Human nature is a poor old pork-pie; but ah, Aunt, I don’t mind admitting now that if this fellow had only proved true to Arthur, I might have lost what I call my heart to a man.”

“Oh, you call it your heart,” muttered the old lady; “never mind, my poor Donna Quixote, some other mirage painted on haze will arise some day to entice your admiration.”

“You call it quixotic because the man earns wages,” answered Anne, “but the heart is a red republican, pale as the red may be. We are all alike diseased with the need to ‘desire and admire,’ and those of us formed with robust digestions desire bullock’s flesh and rosy-rich squires, and those formed with sicklier gorges have their greeds tickled by mirages and sunset gauds, and the kindred glories of the souls of heroes. We are things who crave and hate as we are made to: there’s nothing quixotic in Nature.”

“What about the Gordridge males?” asked Mrs. Gordridge; and she added: “knowing them as I do, it is a marvel that I didn’t foresee when I adopted Rosie that Arthur would be going gushing some day after such a sugar as the child was — but then people never do foresee anything, except crops.”

“We foresee, but are not too deeply concerned about our future self,” answered the analytic Anne, “and so leave it to fish for itself.”

“Anyhow, it is all over now,” said Mrs. Gordridge, “and Rosie Jones has turned out a good dutiful girl, doing without a murmur whatever I told her in all this marriage and China how-de-do, for she has some *nous* and sense in the pretty nut, ça se voit.... I should imagine that she has arrived now....”

Rosie, however, at that hour was still travelling, though now close to Clovelly; and remote, each in a corner of her compartment, sat she and Shan without speech, till Rosie remarked: “Well, you have got what you wanted now, yet I don’t know that you look irrepressibly gay over it”; upon which Shan, rising from depths of reverie, looked at his bride, and he sighed, saying: “You little know, Rosie: they are not far out those who say that ‘there is a peace which the world cannot give.’”

“But — isn’t it precisely ‘the world’ that has given me to you?”

“Yes, but it isn’t quite you that I am thinking of now,” observed Shan.

Now the bride’s brows prettily puckered, and she answered with “side”: “I fear it requires some sublimer mind than mine to pursue you in your higher flights.”

“You will some day, dear,” he said softly. “What I see and say at present is that there’s one certain star in the sky that’s sparklinger than all the rest, though all are sparkling, aye, and one certain lark in the Spring prattling prettier than all the rest — thank God for that.”

At this the bride’s left eyebrow cynically waved in despair of comprehending her spouse, for from the moment when they had found themselves alone in the train till now, he had proved foreign to her understanding; and she cast off her stole, for it was close in the compartment, and she flung open her mink coat with a jangling of things of gold hung at her wrist, and turned the leaves of her *Graphic*; and his eye-

corners saw her lips split and reveal her pearls when what was comic in the paper tickled her, saw her face framed in her hair that was frivolous and buffo in front, though behind on her neck there was a gross club to it that was tidy, and her face framed in it looked so suave, like a dove in a grove, and the eyes so large and arch, she looked like winking at one almost, and her bit of a chin had a knob to it like the tump of the Morplepiece, and it broadened and stretched, everything stretched easily, firmly, like guttapercha, when she grinned at what was droll, and her bit of a nose turned up a bit: she was more like a picture-postcard, with an actress in colours on it, than like the ordinary bits of girl-flesh going about, she that was sprung out of peasant stock, too: it was wonderful.

With such thoughts Shan eyed her with his eye-corners furtively, till presently, glancing up, she asked him: “Did my Mama Gordridge question you to-day as to your queer disappearance last week?”

“Yes, she wanted to know,” said Shan. “Well, you haven’t volunteered the information to me, but naturally, being related to Eve, I am dying. Where were you?”

“Oh, a fairish way off.”

“A secret?”

“Not so very much of a secret.”

“Then, I am all ears.”

“No, you are partly eyes as well, and you know it, too, don’t you, by gad.”

“Don’t swear over it.”

“No, I said ‘gad.’”

“Better say Asher in order to be above suspicion.... But I am all ears — and eyes.”

“Not omitting the bit of a nose.”

“Nor even the two bits of a mouth.” But as she said this, Shan, from leaning keenly toward her, sat up sharply and rubbed a round of vapour from his pane to look out at Devon darting darkly past him.

“Is the task of forming your manners, too, among those reserved for me?” asked Rosie.

Shan span sharply round anew toward her, asking: “What can I do to please you now?”

“I was asking where you were for over a week?”

“Are you sure it is ‘over’?”

“Quite.”

“Shows how you notice my goings and comings, doesn’t it? I couldn’t go a step without your hungering after me, could I?”

“Do I look pale and gaunt to you? Do I not seem to have taken all my meals?”

“No, you look pretty plump.”

“Ah, you see.... So where have you been?”

“Oh, a bit beyond Oxford.”

“Oxford? whatever for?”

“I said ‘a bit beyond’: open your ears and you will hear.”

“They are buried in my hair, that’s why a lady can always be a little deaf when she wishes.

Well, it was ‘a bit beyond’: was it a big bit or a little bit?”

“Whom are you getting at? A bit about the size of you.”

“That all? Why, you could carry it all in your arms” — at which on a sudden Shan muttered something, turning away with shy eyelids.

“Well, why a bit beyond Oxford?” Rosie wished to know.

“Oh, a bit of business,” said Shan.

“What, another bit? and what was the business? I’ll have it bit by bit, if I can’t in one bite.”

“You won’t have it any way, for you are a bit too curious.”

“Is it a secret, then? Did you tell Mama Gordridge?”

“No, I didn’t tell Mrs. Gordridge.”

“Did she ask?”

“Yes, she asked.”

“Tell *me*.”

“Oh, everybody going to be married has a bit of business to get through: I won’t trouble your head with it whereat Rosie remained stiffly silent for some moments, till she said again: “But by what means did you get to Glanncourt between two and three, since there’s no train?”

“I bicycled the twenty-five miles from Gloucester,” replied Shan; “yes, and I should have been at the church-door a quarter of an hour earlier, only my front tyre broke.”

“Gloucester?” said she, “I imagined you were at Winchester, whence the wire was sent.”

“No, I wasn’t at Winchester.”

“Who, then, is this ‘Davis’ who sent a wire from Winchester to say that you would be in time?”

“Don’t you remember James Davis who used to live up on the Chase? That’s the same.”

“So you must have telegraphed to this Davis, telling him to telegraph to Glanncourt—”

“That’s it.”

“Whyever didn’t you wire direct yourself?”

“Curious, aren’t you?”

“Don’t you like them like that?”

“I like *you*! — rather well, that is.”

“Do you?”

“Ah, Rosie.”

“Well, what?”

“I know that you will be the death of me yet.”

“Why so?”

“I can see that you will be killing me dead before we’re through: but I perceive and see that though you were as sweet as wild honey, there is what is sweeter yet than you.”

“Why, what’s that?”

“Rosie, I’ll give it into your ear: it is what people call ‘the peace of God’ in the heart, Rosie.”

“Don’t swear, say ‘Asher.’ You are hardly very understandable, Mr. O’Shannon, and I had no idea you were religious before, since you have a reputation among the natives for gallantry... Be good, be good, be not *too* good... But may be the religion is only a reaction from that roaring Sunday evening two weeks ago, the edifying story of which duly reached my ears.... Is it true that you threw Griffiths’ necessary nag into the village-well?”

Shan sat with shy eyelids silent.

“You must be really terribly *strong!*” she said.

“Aye, in the back and limbs, I dare say; but it’s the pheasant’s head that the guns go for.”

“You can’t be very weak, even in the head, if that be true what you said in the book-room that evening that you haven’t kissed a girl since you kissed two one Sunday evening when you were thirteen.”

“What, you remember my saying that?”

“But is it quite true?”

“True enough: for very soon after that I started to fix my heart upon you, you see, where it has been fixed ever since; and that, and the wild-fowl, and the night-winds somehow, have kept me wilding and sound betwixt them.”

“Well,” said Rosie, and now, her pretty grin going out, her face was grave, “I am glad of that, for I’ll tell you now, Shan, that I am not such a goose to be altogether indifferent to what you are, or are not, in yourself, since I have to wear your ring on my finger, after all. Of course, some girls in my place would be crass enough to hate and spurn the sight of you, as I was nearly doing, for I have been having my little interior whirled in such a dream — ah, dear Lord, you can’t fancy it! — it was pretty stiff; and it was you that shattered it. But it wasn’t your fault, for it was not to be, it could never have been, the thing was a great deal too thundering grand to happen. So, though you are not likely to be under any delusions with regard to my sentiments toward you, for a girl’s soul can love only once in a lifetime, you know, still I don’t dislike you. My mama, but for whom I might have been a peasant, quite like yourself, I suppose, has seen fit to heap me upon you, and I mean to try to take you with a curtsy, though with a certain mental reservation, and to make you as piercingly sweet a little wife as may be, if you on your side will always show a sense that an honour has been done you. There — isn’t that a sensible little speech? Aren’t I a good little thing?” But almost before the lips of Shan could open to reply to all this, the brake of the train began to grate, and he was up, shifting rugs and hat-boxes and the belongings of a lady.

They then drove to a hotel, and, as it was now late, by the time the bride, who was tired of her day’s experience, had eaten a taste of supper, it was the bed-hour, the waitress looked drowsy, the town was drowned in the silence of night; so Shan led Rosie to the door of the chamber engaged for her, and, as he glued his lips to her hand in bidding her good-night, she felt the ague

of his frame, and within, when he was gone, lingered a long time standing, gazing down with raised eyebrows upon the brush of eye-water which he had left on her palm.

“Now, there’s no good our staying in one place,” he said to her the next day when they were out seeing the town and “Nature,” “for there’s nothing like going the whole hog when you’re once in for a thing, and, as we are out to see England, let’s see it. What a glorious day it is, too! — one of your grand scenting days for going out with a boy and a brace of setters that know how to retrieve, so as to beat broken ground and outside copses for old cocks, as I’ve done many and many an early November day when a boy with — Lieutenant Gordridge, we two alone together all the day long, and then the dogs. Glorious! I feel this day as if I could shout for joy, God knows...”

“No, don’t shout,” murmured Rosie, “keep it down till it bursts out of itself.... I never noticed you in a Trilby hat before, you look rather natty. Just tilt it a little on one side.”

“Like that?” asked Shan.

“Yes, that will do... Oh, well, as to moving about, let that be as you will, for this place is silly, I don’t like it a bit.”

For weeks now therefore they strayed about, roamed in those streets of Bideford down whose steeps Queen Elizabeth had stepped, and licked cream from their fingers in Westward Ho roadstead, having forgotten their spoons. Rosie was very restless, and Shan, ever boyishly blithe, eager to please the bride, galloped her here and there, noting the character of each bit of country with his knowing eye, spending days in secluded picnic with her, for the weather continued good, and amusing her more museful moments with cargoes of yarns — no end to Shan’s yarns, though all were in the same vein of poacher and pothunter, of this white China, and that

black cock. At Newton Abbot, where they passed all an afternoon in the hay of a Dutch barn, he gave her the tale of the affray in the beat named "Deechley's," where when a boy he had got his thumb shot off, and cringing together from the rain under a rick in a coomb near Ottery St. Mary, she said to him, "you really know much more than people who have only read books," when, under the umbrella which sheltered them, he had told her of a hen that he had caught nesting one Christmas on an old wall in a spinney, of hens that assumed the plumes of the cock, and yet continued to lay, of a grouse-cock that he had found sitting on pheasant-eggs, a thing in a hundred thousand. Before many days were over Rosie began to gain glimpses new to her into the very hue and tone of his soul, into the lode of poetry that innately veined the ore of his nature, his old mateship with the winds that storm in March, and with stars of the dawn, and the seasons of the year, she was ever anew amused at his enthusiasm for his youth, that adoration of the romance of his boyhood which made him yet a boy, at his disdain of the "gun" who struck a bird astern of the wing-covers, his stern brow and rancour against the brown rat. When, the honeymoon over, the train drew up at Albington, and Shan, pressing into his pocket the paper in which he had been conning the war-news, asked her if she was glad to get home, Rosie replied with a shrug and a sigh, "I don't know, I liked the going about: it might have been worse on the whole."

It was nine o'clock, the moon bright in the sky, and when the brougham that awaited them at the station had put them down at the Meadows-gate — for no carriage could get down to the cottage in its dale — they walked down to the pheasantry, to find before the cottage-door a small crowd of gardeners, watchers, woodmen, beaters, servants, waiting to cheer the ever-popular Shan and his still better half, and within, with arms half-opened for the smiling bride, smiled Mrs. Gordridge, and behind her — Anne Hine

being absent at a neighbouring seat — peeped old Pruie and the new maid, the cottage now looking fairily strange to Shan, with electric jets showering down shimmerings of azure over a table laid with snow and silver.

Nor, in the days and weeks that followed, was Rosie left without honour and satisfaction of soul, since some quite nice people came to call at the keeper's cottage, aware no doubt that this would please Mrs. Gordridge — Mrs. Blood, Mrs. Orrock, the Cochranes, the bridesmaids' families, and other good friends, to whom ice-cake and wine were given, and Rosie was gay, though all remarked that she had a cast of thoughtfulness and pale roses, strange to her.

It was not till mid-December that Anne Hine, who had been “spending time” in Monmouthshire, returned, and within ten minutes was hurrying with her smile down to the keeper's house, to cut a curtsey to Madam O'Shannon. It was evening, and the table down there stood laid for dinner, for Rosie could not yet bear those mid-day repasts of her spouse's past; but Anne found there only old Pruie, who, smart in cap and apron, broke into gaiety, crying: “Well, now! glad I be, miss, to see you again, and looking so hearty: why, I declare there's a touch of colour come in your cheeks.... Well, now! Be you just come?”

“Yes, but where are they?”

“Him be wire-fencing that new bit o' broom aboove the top side of that nook-shotten bit they do name Newnes Covert, and her's gone to meet'n, for er's late.”

“Good little wifie!” smiled Anne.

“Aye, to-night her's good, but wait, I got a lot to tell you, only it must be for nobody's ears but your own — a lot.”

“What, isn't she always good?” asked Anne. “Her do have her bad days and her tantrums, the same as anybody, look, but that bent what I do mean:

there be something remarkably funny here, miss, oh, remarkably funny, and I've been itching for you to be back, just to hear what remark you'd be making when I did tell you."

At this those perfect nostrils of Anne that could discern from afar stirred and quivered, as she murmured: "Tell me now."

"Oh, not now," said Pruie, "they'll be here — Why, miss, it 'ood take me hours to tell you all, as only to-day Mary her said to me, 'I wouldn't do it,' er said, 'for it be double the work,' er said, 'doing the two bedrooms where I did only expect to have to do one, and I couldn't do it,' er said, 'no, nor wouldn't' — Here they come, I do believe."

Anne stood staring at Pruie, hearkening, too, to a sound of feet, a murmur of talk, coming down the Morplepiece, and for a brief space, during which her brow flushed a pink as faint as vision, she could scarce fetch her breath, nor stir, for the pale pearl-colours of fantasy which now strangely circled in that workshop of her brain; then, moving to the door, under a growing moon she beheld Shan and Rosie approaching, he with gun and bag and dog, looking big to her, like a lithe god stepping down in the greyish light, Rosy gipsy-like in red and black with a wrap rolled about her head, and seeing them thus, without contact, though moving arm to arm, Anne Hine with her eyes fixed on the moon sighed: "Ah, that's a lad," and commenced to throw off kisses to them, which Rosie imagined were meant for *her*.

X. SHAN AND NO SONGS



SNOW LAY GHOSTLY over the arches of the Old Garden, and whitened its paths, the night was dark, and the stable-clock tolled one on the ears of Rosie and Shan going home from a servants'- ball at the Hall, to which Shan, ever popular when fun was going, had been asked to act as M.C., and Anne Hine had opened it for Mrs. Gordridge (who had fled from it all), by dancing with Dover the butler, and then with the M.C., and Rosie also had waltzed with her lord.

Now, Rosie knew how to make herself look now a maid of sixteen, and now a lady of twenty-four, and that night in her evening-dress and white roses, with her waist cut out and rounded as by a sculptor's taste, was no day more than sixteen; so Shan, in adjusting her wrap, as they passed across the Old Garden, gave her a kiss, and was startled in it when the stable-clock tolled one.

"No, don't," murmured Rosie, when he kissed her, turning her mouth from him, but still he worked about and kissed her, till the clock tolled one.

Not a syllable was spoken between them now till they were down at the cottage, which was all in darkness, though Pruie had left them a wood-fire which lighted up their faces when they sat on each side of it, and there at last the silence was broken when in a low tone Rosie asked: "Why did you?"

"It's nothing," answered Shan.

"I'd rather you didn't," she murmured.

"Why so? It's nothing."

“Well, we have been married for months now, and as it has never once before occurred to you to do it, let us go on now in the delightful old way.”

“Can’t I be a good husband to you without all that foolhardy bullsquitter?” asked Shan.

“Precisely what I said.... Isn’t that the very thing that I said? So why did you to-night more than any other night?”

Shan in his easy-chair stretched his frame and writhed ill as ease, answering: “I don’t know —

It’s time to make a move to bed; I’d better turn on the light.”

“No, I like this light.... If you want to kiss anybody, why don’t you kiss Anne?”

“Why, Rosie!”

“She’ll let you.”

“Rosie, you had better mind what you are saying, hadn’t you?”

“She haunts you enough, and I feel certain that she suspects that you and I keep pretty clear of each other — I don’t know how she knows, or what right any human being has to pry into my private life, and if I only find that that old Pruie has breathed one word to any other woman about me, ah, won’t the old beast skip quick out of my house! As for you, Shan, listen, Shan, there was no need for Anne to dance with you to-night, and if ever you do again, or touch her hand, or glance at her, it’ll be all U.P. between you and me, away I go, and you never see my face again.”

“Why, Rosie!” cried Shan: “well, I can’t help laughing! Rosie jealous of Miss Hine....!”

“There can’t be any jealousy where there’s no love, can there?” asked Rosie.

“No, I — suppose not. But don’t get into such a fury over nothing! What, Miss Hine? A lady like her?”

“Is she more a lady than I am? If you are good enough for me, aren’t you too good for her, with her face like a corpse, and her figure like a chair-leg? Did she never kiss you?”

“Miss Hine, Rosie? Oh, this is laughable!”

“Well, I believe you; but she wants to madly, and there’s some sort of mischief going to come of it, so I warn you in time.”

“There’s not even the shadow of a shadow—”

“I know better, you see, for a man can’t see things as a woman can.... Well, I suppose I’d better be getting up to my bed now.”

“It’s pretty late, too,” said Shan: “I’ve got to lime and sand that upper aviary-run again in the morning....”

“Have you?... So, then, that’s understood between us: I’d rather you didn’t.”

“Would you? Didn’t what?”

“You know.”

“Oh, well,” went Shan, stretching, “such is life.... Very well, since you’re so stuck up, my lady, that settles it.”

“You see, I have been congratulating myself so greatly on my immunities — all the more because I was so ferociously threatened.”

“Did I threaten you?”

Rosie breathed through the nose two streams of smoke. “If I remember rightly. I think you said one night before the wedding that, though a snowflake, I was to be made to flush, and you chucked up your chin and clucked your tongue, and said Lord! I didn’t yet know Shan O’Shannon, and I was to be fused like wax in a wildish fire, some rot like that.... You frightened me. But providentially your bark has proved far worse than your bite, for you are not really very terrible, Mr. O’Shannon.”

As she spoke, a little clock by Boule just above their stooped heads hooted Two at them.

“Ah, well, there goes Two,” said Shan, stretching, “I suppose I must be making a move now; I mean to have a hard day of it, sowing those open spaces in that east-covert bit of gorse with buck-wheat, and wiring them in from rabbits, and then liming that upper run... Well, I don’t know, you might have a worse husband. Husbands are funny things, you see: you know nothing about husbands. Some husbands don’t look at their wives after leaving the church-door — didn’t you know that? Don’t look at them. Not that I myself am such a very cold husband, if the truth were known, but — didn’t I beg and implore you not to smother yourself in perfumes as you do? God only knows what it is you put on yourself, but it’s something that gets to a man’s brains, I tell you, aye, I can scent it from here now, strong. I’d be a better husband to you — but for that. It isn’t as if you were some other girl, but — you’re over and above; with that fire-light jiggling about your face you look like a gay she-fiend leaped up out of—”

“Hell,” said Rosie in a gross tone. “But I’m sure I don’t understand you one bit, for sometimes you talk like someone come from the moon.... At first it was all religion, and the peace of God in the heart, and going to church on week-days, and now that these raptures seem to have all gone cool, I am treated to a series of equally queerish moods, now fierce and storming, and now weepy and maudlin. You don’t really wish me to give up perfumes, I don’t understand why I am a ‘she-fiend’... Do you mean that in some way I tempt you? But you are married to me, after all, and though I do value my immunities, I have a pitying heart, Shan — Or do you mean something else? I never know how to take you! Aren’t you happy, Shan? Is anything wrong? Aren’t you well?”

“Well?” cried Shan, starting: “well, aye. *I!* One of the strongest men in England? Well, aye.”

“Don’t get excited over it,” muttered Rosie. “Something must be wrong, or you would never talk such a lot of rot, my husband, calling your wife a devil because she smells divine.... Do you know, I have always thought that you have a rather high sort of voice, anyone listening to us would take you for the woman, for my voice is deep, and yours—”

Shan started afresh, saying: “Well! Did you never hear me howl down a fox that sprang a beat of birds just as we were nicely pushing them into a clump, to shew to the guns? Womanish voice? This is adding insult to injury...!”

“Where’s the injury, or the insult? I don’t mean that it isn’t strong, but it *is* high-pitched, and your eyes twinkle like a girl’s reading a love-letter.”

“Well, what does that prove?”

“Heaven knows.”

“Ha! this is laughable! Ha! ha! ha! Rosie, don’t make a man out to be a fool.”

Rosie shrugged a shoulder, gazing over the failing flame, her naked arms on her legs, and presently their little clock told Three, and a storm arose in the dark morning.

“Well, I suppose we must be making a move,” said Shan.

“Yes, I suppose,” said Rosie; “though I don’t feel sleepy, my toes are cold, and feel my hand.”

“Better take off your shoes and toast your toes, if they are so very cold.”

“I think I will... and just fetch me a glass of chartreuse — or stay, I’ll get it myself,” and Rosie rose to go to a cabinet close by, soon to reappear in the fire-glow holding forth to Shan a glass of spirit that leered as greenish as bile.

“For me?” he asked.

“It’s nice and warming,” said she.

“None for me, thanks,” said he.

“You don’t know what it is like,” said she, her mouth now full of pound-cake: “you try, it’s nice.”

“I think I’d rather not,” said he.

“What, refuse a lady?” said she: “I have had some, so *you* have some.”

“Well, if I must,” said he, taking the thing, and raised it to his mouth, but before ever he had tasted, had the whole shot out upon the blaze, where it shouted and flamed. Rosie looked up from over the shoe which she was stooping to remove, asking: “Why, what is it?”

“It’s nothing,” said Shan.

“Well, I am cross!”

“No, don’t be that,” said Shan, “seeing that my head said yes to it, but it was my arm that” said no, knowing may be that two drops of that draff would have me all in a flame.... That’s tricky, too, mind you! for it is just touch and go with everything, but things are made just to scrape through on the whole. That’s canny, after all! that’s fly. Perhaps each organ of us has a life of its own, and, given a good habit of action, they just muddle through by one another’s help, like those chaps at Waggon Hill on January the 6th.... Ah, now, talking of fighting, there, now, was a fight for you — At first there were only the Manchesters on Cæsar’s Camp, and some Imperial Light Horse and Sappers on Waggon Hill, then, one after the other, up came the Gordons, the Devons, the 2nd Rifle Brigade, and at point-blank range it lasted all the day long in a storm, those grand Boers fighting like devils, and our little beggars like gods, and just behind the hill the 53rd Field Battery and Blewitt’s 21st—”

Rosie, chewing cake, was holding up her toes to the flame. “How you keep it all stored up in your head I can’t even conceive, it becomes grotesque this minute memory of dates and names! Pity you didn’t go out yourself with those Yeomanry, as anyone could see that you were wild to do.”

“What, I, a man just married?”

“I think your wife could have spared you without sighing in her sleep,” said Rosie.

“But suppose I had got killed — I say, would you have cried for me?”

Rosie rolled her eyes gravely round at him a moment, and then with a shrug said that she dared say that she should, since he was not bad on the whole; upon which Shan, leaning keenly forward, called her a blessed sweet, and Rosie muttered: “It is coming on again.... If I am so blessed sweet, why did you chuck my chartreuse on the fire? Let me give you another glass now....”

“No, dear,” moaned Shan tenderly, “some other night, not to-night... What was I telling you? Oh, about that Waggon Hill affair! Now, you must know, Rosie, that, some time before this, on December the 8th, the Natal Carabineers, the Border Mounted Rifles, and the—”

“Oh, I am so sick of the war,” sighed Rosie; “When is it all coming to an end?”

“Not yet awhile, it seems!... Ah, they are masters those Boers, I love them like brothers, even though they are bitterly hard on me.”

“How do you mean, on *you*?” asked Rosie, anew rolling her eyes round at him.

“Because — it is so, dear,” he replied. “We all believed that the war would soon be over, didn’t we? not keep on for months, and months, and months, and months, like this. May God help us all! When will it ever be

done, so that one may say ‘it’s over and done now, and here’s a day come in which a man can breathe free of the job of it’?”

“But why should *you* trouble particularly?” Rosie wished to know: “You are not even an Englishman yourself—”

“But who is doing this fighting mostly but the Irish?” asked Shan: “and if ever you hear of a deed more giddy gallant than all the rest, be sure there’s a dash of Irish somewhere about, as on that February the 22nd on Pieter’s Hill with those Inniskillings, and that Talana Hill affair on October the 20th, with the Dublin Fusiliers in the first line, and the—”

“Was the lieutenant in that battle?” asked Rosie at random, to stop the war-story.

Shan looked scandalized. “What, on the 20th, Rosie, when he only left England on the nth? Wasn’t Lieutenant Gordridge at Magersfontein at the other end of Africa almost?”

“Oh, well, one can’t remember dates and things,” said Rosie, “I only know that he is somewhere, Mama Gordridge herself couldn’t tell you quite where on the map, only you and Anne, so that’s why she is in love with you, because in some ways you are birds of a feather, and it is a pity you did not marry her instead of me, she would have enjoyed your style. How she manages to be in love I don’t know, for she has no vitals; but she is, wildly; it is like a corpse going whiter with passion. Perhaps it is only to imitate you that she is so well up in the dates and things, while Mama Gordridge takes it easy, though getting pretty disgusted, too, that the lieutenant hasn’t distinguished himself—”

At this Shan started, crying out: “She be — hanged! Is there any sense in that, now? What do women know about campaigning? Let her wait, let the whole world wait! he will soon enough shew them the stuff a Gordridge is made of.”

“But she has waited, and he hasn’t done anything,” murmured Rosie: “it strikes me, he is more for wounding girls than for shooting off guns, if you ask me.”

“He is good at both, I dare say, as a gallant lad should be,” said Shan, “but *he!* you don’t know him as I do — well, you couldn’t: he is the king of the lot of them, he is—”

“Well, I like you for saying it, Shan, after all the fury there was between you two, but I suppose as the victor you can afford to be generous, though you’ll change your tune, if, when he comes back, he—”

“Well, what?”

“Carries off poor innocent me by force of arms!”

“What, you, a married woman?”

“It isn’t pious, but such things have occurred on this little earth: there was one Helen of Troy, not to mention the late—”

“But Helen, she consented, she helped the lover, didn’t she?” asked Shan, eyeing her askance; “but you, now, you would say no, you wouldn’t go, would you?”

“Perish the thought,” said Rosie in a gross tone, and she siffled to herself through her teeth-edges the tune of “Over the Garden Wall.”

“But suppose he does take you” — Shan snatched his chair a foot closer to her—” I say, suppose — Well, when you are with him, and I am far away somewhere where no wave of the sea was ever swelled with Severn-waters, will you be remembering poor me, too, at times, Rosie? saying to him some night may be over the fire: ‘there was once one that loved us both well’?” Rosie answered nothing, for, gazing now at a vision which she saw in the grate of the gallant lieutenant’s return, she had scarcely heard, till now she found his brow bowed to her knee, when she pouted: “O my, what now?” and then more gently, “Are you sad about something, dear?” upon which

Shan sprang up, walked through the room, and sat anew, saying “hark at the wind.”

“What was it?” she asked.

“It’s nothing.”

“Funny chap you are,” said she, “I seem to have married a mystery. Who would have supposed that you are like this? as full of changes as April days, so that you become one’s occupation, and one hasn’t the time to think of anything else when you’re there.... Something’s wrong somehow, and, as it is my right to ferret it out, I will: I’ll tease, and tweak, and flog, and plague you, till I get it, for there’s some secret — Why, for instance, wouldn’t you tell where it was you went to for three days a fortnight ago? That’s one thing I’m going to have explained, and also why it is I have to wait for the birthday pearls when, by your own shewing, you should have lots of oof to fling away? Are we hard up? and if not, why the waiting, and the eyes too shy to look me in the face? There *is* something.... And, by the way, who was that old woman — ?”

“Old woman?”

“What a start! yes, old woman, Shan. What, is she another one of the mysteries, too?”

“I am afraid I am not aware what old woman—”

“Oh, there’s a fib now! so why did you start, as if I had stuck you with a red-hot poker? And you have gone quite white — Why, what’s up?”

“It’s nothing,” said Shan, cowering now closer over the dying fire, whereat Rosie cast a calf over her chair-arm, twisting round to stare at him, saying: “So who was she?”

“I have told you, Rosie—”

“But Pruie actually saw you with her!”

“Pruie? Where?”

“Under one of those clumps of spruce-firs in the middle of the west home-covert.”

“Pruie did? saw me with whom?”

“Why, with this old woman!”

“Oh, you keep on. Pruie must be raving mad!”

“No, Pruie isn’t, then: there is something in it, and I mean to have it. She says that last week some very old woman appeared from somewhere, took a room at The Grapes for three days, got awfully tipsy on the second day, collecting everybody round her by jigging the cake-walk in the village-street, and on the third day was seen talking to you in the covert.... Why on earth do you deny it? I meant to ask you, but forgot, not dreaming that there was any secret.... Pruie assured me that the old thing jigged and snapped her fingers into your face, and you grew red, and raised your arm at her, but afterwards gave her a brown-paper parcel out of your pocket—”

As she spoke the clock struck four, and “there goes Four,” groaned Shan; “Oh, God knows, I shiver with cold.”

“Tell me first about this old girl, and I’ll go so far as to warm you with a —”

“With what? What will you warm me with?” said Shan with an intense intolerance, starting straight: “not one instant more do I stew in this sty!”

Rosie stared up at him, asking: “Why, what now?”

“Rosie, it is four o’clock in the morning....”

“Well, you could have gone to bed! Why didn’t you? You must like dissipation, or you would have gone.”

“Why didn’t *you*? Do *you* like dissipation?”

“I love it.”

“Ah, you, you’re a one inside, if the truth were only known,” said Shan with an accusing eye askance; “ah, you’re of a deep dye, the brose of

Satan's own baneberry, if one was but in you to taste you, I dare say."

"Don't you like them like that?"

Shan sighed helplessly to himself. "But it is four o'clock, what is one to do?"

"All right, let's be good and go now," said Rosie, "the fire's almost out.... As my shoes are off, I'll allow you to carry me up."

Her words were hardly uttered when Shan had her in his arms, and though he made quite a dash with her to escape kissing her, he had not the time, for midway on the stairs his mouth found out and was confounded with her mouth to the moment when at her door he dropped, or rather cast her from him, with such repugnance, that she went staggering, and he was gone, not to his chamber, but down and out into the air, where he ran some way into a belt of timber.

Out there with many eyes the heavens kept wake and saw a storm of wind whooping within a vault of sky all dizen'd with stars," for the halfmoon had passed away, leaving the west as inflamed as a womb with after-heat where for long her warmth had bloomed, and born in the east so far was no daub of dawn; so here he breathed easier than in that atmosphere of fog that he had been undergoing for three hours in the house, an inferno of vapours working foully without vent, like confined fire-damps, and smokes which smoulder hotly within the holds of cotton-ships. With Shan of late it had fared but too shabbily, since that Comforter of the renouncer, who at first had regaled him with carouses and secretly feasted him with gods, was gone now from him, as is Her wont, to test his soul, so that alone now he found himself dull on the mountains of endeavour. But out there where the wind blew through the cover, that was better, where, seated on the roots of a beech, he could watch the gale shiver greyly here or there over the grass, as it were thousands of mouse-ghosts arush with outstretched

throats, and the grove roared to it in rondeaus, for now it was that yew-group yonder that took up the fugue, griped with the music-fury, and now it was this group nigher by that furiously took it up, as obeying the *bâton*'s pointing, voice calling to voice, and now with a joyful noise all roistering joined to beshout the wind-shower's outrage — a hurricane so high, its flaws seemed, sweeping athwart the twinkling bowl of the sky, to blow the stars all aflickering, Albireo and Aldebaran and the Great Bear, street-lamps in the Babylon of God; and Shan, seated with a drooped head on his beech-root, thus communed within himself: "It is late enough for such a gale, and for this snow, too, for I've seen three full clutches of eggs already, celandines are all out, flowering Sunday's gone, and the first broods of woodcock will soon be flying: but, then, this year is like no other year. May God have compassion upon a poor chap! I never thought it would be such a torment, no peace day nor night, like living in nettles till you are weak and shriek with hysteria, like trying to jump from your own shadow every minute, for months, and months, and months, like this. God knows, I'd fight a tiger, I shouldn't shrink, I am no coward, I'd fight five tigers, and worm out of it somehow, but by what droil is a man to wriggle out of the gripe of his own groin, get outside of himself, and flog his own soul? No doubt there have been chaps canny enough for suchlike kinds of job, like that Julius Cæsar who overran France, and then he seized upon Britain, not to speak of him that went sweating up the steep o' woe that day underneath his weary cross; but I! Am I one like that? Not likely. Do I look like it? Have I the walk of it, and the stalk of it? Do the chaps in the village see it about me when they shout out 'hello, Shan'? Not likely. So what am I, to be able to bear this bale on my back? Sprung from a dung-hill! My mother Martha O'Shannon was no angel, my father was just an average labourer-chap, born up there above the Chase, and though the pair of them did make me pretty

quick on the pins, with a fair pair of optics, and a long lung, did they put just a pinch of sage, too, into the stew? I'm not sure: that will be curious to watch: but however that may be, I'm bound to it now, and though the blaze of a thousand devils devour my bowels, I'm bound to it now, I'm bound to it now.... Twice in this one night of sin and misery I've kissed her: twice: never again! that's death: death for her, death for me: never again! if ever once again, I glut my gullet with her, and end everything with the gun... but, God, spare us; spare us, good God! give a poor loon grace! and bring me not into temptation," upon which Shan's brow dropped down upon his arms, where it remained a long time bowed, till, staring up amazed, he saw that the night had transformed itself, and was broad morning.

XI. SHAN AND ANNE



THAT SAME FORENOON, before Rosie had risen from bed, Anne Hine sat by her side, as was sometimes her way, bantering the bride, being indeed now far more frequently down at the cottage than Rosie liked in her heart; and when she said to Rosie: “Is it the dance that makes you so late in bed, or did you sit up after?” Rosie, with her own motives, replied, “Oh, we both sat up over the fire — such a jolly time we had! didn’t come up till after four, and even then the gander kept on teasing, and wouldn’t let his poor girlie sleep” — words which brought the interview sharply to an end, because Anne, irritated to the heart by them, now lost her temper, which she rarely lost, and making a lip-sound of impatience, muttering to herself, “futile little fool,” got up, and was gone.

“Did she notice that I was enraged, I wonder?” she wrote in her diary that night — and let us picture this poor maid, her poor feet now erring fast toward tragic regions, writing there at a table late into the night in a soundless house, her head, as she wrote, bent aside for her left hand to smooth down and down the left lobe of her hair — the emblem itself of musing. “Did she notice that I was enraged? Absurd of me to be angry at anything that that girl chooses to say, and still more so to shew it, if I shewed it. That’s hardly likely though, for it is my little way, I take it, to see the heart lie clear in the bosom like a pebble in a brook, but to remain unseen myself. I wonder if Shakespeare or Homer ever had such lucid interviews as I with the obscurer movements of human souls? Homer possibly, but scarcely Shakespeare, I fancy, for Shakespeare had sex, and

sex, I feel certain, must infect the clearness of the perception, while I, without sex, am just like a being instinct with purged eyes of ice, sent down to the earth to observe the loom of the human bosom at work. And I seem to be as unseen as I am seeing, for how little do any of them know me! Miss-Mrs. Rosie, for instance, how far from any shadow of suspicion that all this time I am enamoured of the lad, and how far, if she did suspect, from being able to comprehend the springs of this craving, those nuptials of the grave which alone can console my hunger, that dark Dourga of death into whose arms I yearn to throw my girlhood grossly, the lad and I together, he and I. Even if I were to explain myself, I should probably remain abstruse, since even to myself I am abstruse. Which, for instance, is it that I love — the hero or the heroism, the man or the huge manhood? If the man, why did I not love him before I knew of the manhood? Always, indeed, I have had a sort of desire in my eye-corner toward him, a leering, a leaning, something: but nothing of this craving. So it is the heroism, *not* the hero? or the heroism in *this* hero, because it is *this* hero's? Heaven knows! We can wash other people's backs, and watch other people's interiors, but not one's own well. And with what do I love him? There's only mind and body, and since I assume that I love only with the mind, then, should not my love be of a cherubic purity? Galba! The thin throes of the ghost of Galba returned to earth to gloat over the bones of his old gluttonies! I am a saint who prefers death to saintliness, I struggle in vain against my better nature, and the evil that I would that I do not. What an imprisonment! Fires of ice!—" the parching air burns froze well, but there's a way out, and an hour of espousals certain for me also.

"This morning on coming back up from the cottage, I had such a fright, for like a goose I had left the hat-box with the books drawn out from under the bed, *unlocked*, and when I got into my room, there was Nancy, sent by

Aunt to see if I was there, staring at the books! I was awfully scared, but when she made some remark about “a lot of paper books,”

“paper books” made me laugh in a reaction of relief, and I mentioned that they were foreign tracts. I am now seriously thinking of burning them all, for really they do me no good, and are only a danger there. When I went down to Aunt, she wished to know with what motive I am for ever down at the O’Shannon cottage now! I answered something nonchalant, upon which she said: ‘You are not so very fond of Rosie, so I don’t understand, and on the whole there’s something quite odd and unworldly about you lately, like a girl stung with the gad-fly: I hope you don’t mean to go crazy, for I am responsible for you.’

‘I thought I was too lucid to go crazy, Aunt,’ I said. ‘Well,’ she said, ‘your grandfather, Professor Morgan, was a great mathematician and lucid enough, I dare say, but he ended his days in a lunatic asylum.’ I had forgotten about that, and somehow a cold something ached within me.... A mad mathematician! like sunlight changed into the lunacy of moonlight! like ice rushing ravingly into avalanches! Then Aunt began to ask about the O’Shannons, if I thought O’Shannon a good husband, and Rosie happy, because when Rosie dined at the Hall on Monday, she had asked if Rosie was happy, and Rosie had too eagerly answered: ‘Oh, quite!’ though pale, and admittedly sleepless. Poor Aunt! she isn’t a bad old sort of matriarch, and I’m sorry for her now — growing quite grey about the temples lately, had rather a shock about that scratch on Arthur’s arm at that Abraam’s Kraal engagement on the 10th, and will suffer no doubt to lose her Anne and her Shan in one swoop, and to see Arthur marry Rosie, after all — if he ever comes home. Ah, it was a canny, outwitting lad that you had to do with, my Auntie, wise as serpents, patient as God, good as a child, the bird-beguiler: and I like him well.

“But *why* do I? Can’t the hound in the head scent out the fox in the heart, and Anne effect the analysis of Anne? Is it because he is wholly unlike me? his soul so male in form, mine so female? I a sneak, intellectual, non-moral, sensuous, pigmy as a mouse, he a hero, hearty, all-moral, big as a mountain? There’s at least this one certainty about it: that the saint, the self-garrotter, *is* ever magnetic: ‘great multitudes followed him,’ and ‘I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men after me.’ It *is* so; and I can see why, inasmuch as a man, having said ‘no’ to the legion in himself, being now a chieftain and king, the kingless mob flock to his standard, for it is as if a mainspring had been wound up somewhere, a force all taut, rebounding, and this draws, as the pebbles rave after the withdrawing wave; or it is as if his inward friction breaks into flame, round which the moths crowd to burn their wings; so that perhaps, to compare the things of the spirit with material things, I am merely a shallop racing in the wake of a great ship, beguiled by the nose after all the throb and groanings of those gigantic engines. And not I alone: Aunt, not in the least knowing why, no longer regards the lad as a menial; Rosie, starting with her prejudice against him, and engaged all the time in dreaming of Arthur’s return, still owns the big ship’s suction, and dreams not of Arthur only, but of King Arthur. Of course, when Arthur comes, since to be mistress of Glanncourt is more glorious than the moon, the little goose will swoon into his arms, but for the present, anyway, my white wife is pretty hot after the elusive vessel’s draught; and the same with us all: Shan O’Shannon walks taller, there’s some aura, some astral body, exhaled out of that travail of his soul, a halo about his head, which one feels without seeing; and the truth about *me*, I suppose, is, that with all that gorgeousness and its sunset my meanness is eager to associate itself, the shallop eager to go down in the foundering of the great ship, to degrade his death-bed with my body on it, to marry him in the grave, somehow to have

him grandly, to drag him down at the last to my level, or mount to his, to die with him; for, dear, I do love you a lot, or at least strain to love you, longing ever so to fling my soul upon your strength; and you will indulge me, and be good to me, dear, letting my head be on your breast on the bed, admitting me once to be your bride, and I shall have one throe at last, sublimely guilty, and we shall go aslumbering.

“Yes, there’s a principle of explosion universal in the process of Nature, the earth having its volcanoes, the animal its rages, and whatever cannot explode at one vent will explode at some other, the philosopher exploding in tomes of philosophy, the poet in an epic, Hodge in a progeny of children, I in dying licentiously: for, though a philosopher in your fashion, you can’t garner your thoughts into an organon, Anne, you are a poet, but can’t express your poetry, you draw and draw, but never really well, you would be breeding like Leah, but can never yean a breese, you are all null and neuter, and can only explode deathward. Let it be so. I have seen the sky at night, and by at least this one mind of mine in the deep of Time, if by no others, that sight has been highly admired: but why keep on seeing and admiring? Through that south casement there I can see it now again, now while it is still to-night, and my life has not yet glided into to-morrow, a sky as thick as a cornfield with stars, though the sickle of the moon is in it, and has reaped a rood amid-field: anew now, while it is now and to-night, I view it, soon to view it no more, and it with all its orbs will look for its orphaned child, but no more shall find me: for I be aweary, my hearties, foredone with spurring and spurring o’ myself, being neither good ghost nor good girl, but an uneasy half-and-half; and I’ll end my trouble when the lad ends his.

“But when? It seems clear that he does not mean to kill himself until after Arthur comes home, fearing, may be, that, if he should, Aunt would

banish, the widow away beyond Arthur's reach. But, since Arthur may not come for months yet, it will be monstrous, both for me and for Shan, to wait till then, for I can remotely guess at the agonies that he must be hourly undergoing, and suppose at any moment he breaks down in this strain? If I could somehow spur him more quickly to the act, or separate him from Rosie, I would — in mercy to himself; and just possibly, by keeping my eyes open, I shall find the means, for he appears to be involved in difficulties outside the white wife trouble, since, if what Pruie says be true there's some mysterious old woman with whom he seems to be in some way ensnared, and, what is more, is he not at present *stealing* from the estate? Really, it looks so to me from what I can make out of the pheasantry-account! I wonder if he would do such a thing really, for any reason? That would be amusing! For though his reason for doing it is sure to be grand, still, stealing is stealing, my Shan, and that's grotesque to discover the angel Gabriel turned burglar. Certainly, the pinch of scarcity *is* in the cottage, I can see it — a rather astounding thing considering Aunt's bounty to the bride! So what has been done with all the money? I'll look into it and see."

XII. SHAN AND AN OLD WOMAN



AT A LATER date Anne adds: “Why is it nice to do naughty things? What a nick of perversity in the world which urges one to hearken and peep, to stick pins into people, to please oneself with tattlings and slanders, and the working of small mischiefs! for, if one can’t be perverse in one way, one will in others. It is that same centrifugal vigour in man that causes the orbs to vault on their orbits: for there’s a centripetal, or good, and a centrifugal, or perverse, and to the perfect working of the two the universe is due, since when one or the other rules ruin ensues, as I through being super-perverse will die, as Shan, Socrates, Jesus through being super-moral. At any rate, on the morning of the 29th I was listening at Shan’s chamber-door with a pleasure all the sharper because of the danger I was in, for after being early out, and sketching Barclay’s waterfall, I went down to the cottage just as the servants’ call-bell commenced to sound up at the Hall, and there found Pruie and Mary up and about, with Bates who had just brought over the milk from the home-farm. Pruie told me that Rosie was’awake, though not up,’ so I was going up to the white wife’s levée when I caught sight of the tail of a scarlet dressing-gown aflaunt up there — she rushing out of her room down the passage, and I suppose I must possess a pussy-cat’s step, or she would have noticed me — unless her mind was very preoccupied; anyway I heard her tap at Shan’s door, heard him drone from his bed: ‘Who is there?’ heard her make answer: ‘It is Rosie,’ heard him cry: ‘What, you? Come in!’ and this made me mad, for I knew that she had never dared do

this before, so I stole up to the door, just in time to hear her grumble to him something about coming to get her brown gown out of the wardrobe, upon which, hearing her open the wardrobe, I fled back a little, waiting patiently now for my maiden to step out; but she didn't come, and understanding presently that she had planted herself upon his bed, I stole right up to the door, which she had left slightly ajar, and hearkened.

“I was there over an hour, and so profoundly agitated I never was, I felt so wickedly, and moreover I was being pulled each moment between fear of being found lingering there, and eagerness to hear. Once Snout paced out to me, his tail pounding against the door as he adored my hand; and from within everything came out clearly, the talk being all about the war first, then all about cocks and hens, pairs and breeds, Rosie sitting on the bed with her face turned to the window-roses, Shan always stretching his body, yawning, ‘ah, well, such is life.’ Lately she has been quite making the aviary her hobby, learning to treat the birds’ diseases, to give them their green-feed, to seek ants’ eggs, so that the pen-birds have got to know her well by now, and now this was all the talk, she first wishing to know, ‘by the way,’ how a certain cock came there, since there were no others like him about, to which Shan answered: ‘Such things do happen, seeing that in the pheasant-farmers’ pens birds of different species pair — unknown to the farmer sometimes — then those eggs going all over England hatch out hybrids, which hybrids are always changing their haunts: and three Autumns since a pure-white cock lived in that Newnes clump, that disappeared, and I’ve never seen’n since.’

“‘That’s funny,’ remarks the white wife, ‘perhaps he failed to acquire any lady-friends in this country-side owing to colour-prejudice, for some ladies do shrink from albinos.’

“‘Do they?’ says Shan, ‘are you one of them?’

“Her whiteship shuddered, going: ‘Gur-r-r! I could not stand a very fair man within a mile of me.’

“‘That’s why you will have none of *me*, I suppose,’ says he, stretching, ‘because *I* am fair.’

“‘Oh, you,’ says she: ‘well, your eyes are a very light blue, certainly, three shades lighter than mine at least: but, then, you have quite a dash of dark in your hair and moustache, which rather brings you into the running.’

“‘What, will I pass?’ he asks.

“‘You might, at a push,’ says she.

“‘That’s one for me then, and I’ll storm the fortress yet, if I only keep on trying hard’ — and he stretched: it is strange he didn’t drag his frame to fragments with stretching—’ but, as to that white cock, that wasn’t it why he went away, you may bet, for he left his mark pretty well behind him among the wild-bred fowl in the belts and brakes about, not to mention — you know Jim Price’s lot of domestic fowls?’

“‘Well?’

“‘This albino fellow came and drove away a Cochin China cock of Price’s, and also a black bantam — fought like a fiend — and then paired with the hens’; upon which Mrs. Rosie reached out to the window to pluck some honeysuckle, saying: ‘But did the domestic hens meekly bow down to the conqueror?’

“‘They were all right.’

“‘Oh, women are too treacherous!’ says she with a shudder and a pout: ‘treachery’s in the very grain of the wretches. Myself, I hold with sticking always to one, don’t you?’

“‘I do,’ says he; ‘but this was a case of a white man marrying a black woman, and the hens’ heads were turned by it, no doubt, as even yours

might be if the Prince of Wales, say, or a certain person, were to say to you, 'leave this miserable gamekeeper man and come and be mine.'

"At this she ogled him archly, asking: 'Think I'd go?'

"'No,' he answered, 'I don't think that, I only see and say that the offer would be dazzling, though I would bet any day on you against it, seeing that men and women are made in the image of God, after all.'

"'Men are, may be,' says she, 'but women, I'm afraid, are made in the image of Mrs. God, who has an ancient flirtation with Satan, so that's why Satan was chased—'

"'You do say things, Rosie,' says the lad.

"'I quote Mama Gordridge, who by "Mrs. God" meant Nature, I suppose,' says Rosie; and fingering up her *négligé* knob of hair behind, which drooped half-loose under the violet tassel of her scarlet tarboosh, she asked: "But how did they get on, the hens? Those must have been outlandish looking objects that came from the resultant eggs.'

"'Aye, things with a fowl's legs, and a pheasant's tail,' says Shan.

"'Puts me in mind,' says she, 'of that blackcock you have, how he has disported himself with those three pheasant-hens — O, really, that was too much, one couldn't help laughing.'

"'When was that?'

"'Yesterday afternoon. You should have seen them.'

"'Should I? So what took place?'

"'Mrs. Rosie pores over one of her morocco sole-slippers in her hand, smiling to herself, as I could see, though a mist was before my eyes, and my knees weak beneath me; and she says: 'Darts and daggers took place, for first of all the blackcock dug his beak well into the pheasant-cock, and chased him clean away, and then he came stalking back to the ladies like a lord.'

“‘Did he?’ says the lad, and, peeping, I could see him lying with his head raised on his arm, not looking at her at all with his dead eyes that gazed straight into vagueness, his face grey but for one daub of scarlet like a brand over one cheekbone, his bosom moving beneath his woollen night-jacket; ‘did he?’ says he confidentially: ‘so what took place then?’

“‘You should have seen them,’ says she in a little voice, grinning: ‘the blackcock began to court the pheasant-hens, as if they were birds of his own feather — oh, great Golgotha! he *did* carry on.’

“‘Did he? How did he?’

“‘Well, you know how blackcocks do throw themselves about when they want to be irresistible — he tossed his tail on high, and went stalking about with it arched in the air like a turkey-cock, turning out all his charms for admiration, calling the love-call, and those scraps of crimson skin over the eyes, they poked right up, growing more gross, till his head got quite a crested look with it.’

“‘Fancy,’ says he.

“‘You should have seen him,’ says she.

“‘Oh, well, such is life,’ says the lad, tearing his frame in a stretch like a wretch on the rack, and I could almost feel with him how easy just to reach out his arm and reap her, and, ah, how hard to love an hour hence more than now.

“Now she, leaning round to him, her elbow on his knees, says: ‘What’s the matter? You don’t look well.’

“‘It’s nothing,’ he answered: ‘I don’t sleep at night.’

“‘Neither do I: and, Shan, I can’t bear it much longer, I must see Dr. Blood, for—’ but at that moment the breakfast-gong began to clang out below, and now she pouted: ‘Oh, silly! why, we haven’t even had our baths —’

“‘Go, dress, sweet,’ he panted at her, smothered.

“‘The breakfast will go all cold,’ she almost whispered, ‘I had better order it up, and we will have it here on the bed, and make a holiday of it — shall we? shall us? Say yes, and, Shan—’

“They were pretty breathless, both of them, though I couldn’t see the look in their eyes, she was leaning so over him, her fingers combing the tangle of his hair; and there, though I knew that she might be rushing out at any moment, I stood rooted, unable to swallow, waiting for the outcome, till, to my amazement, without one shade of the agitations of two moments before, he was uttering the words: ‘Rosie, you smell badly of onions—’

“Poor white wife, she had not a syllable to say, was so taken aback, that she at once raised herself up, and though I was at once away, came out so quickly that she saw me at the stair-head, and said a ‘you?’ that would have made milk sour. I called her ‘lazy’ and ‘luxurious,’ said I would stay for breakfast, then went down and spent a few minutes in gossiping with Pruie, and in glancing at the white wife’s diary, which she leaves about — such a diary! nothing in it, pages taken up with attempts at housekeeping accounts, others full of nothing but her name, ‘Rosie O’Shannon’ repeated a hundred times, and thrice there appears ‘Rosie Gordridge’; then, looking out of window upon the garden for a while, I stood thinking of ‘Rosie, you smell of onions,’ and couldn’t then, and can’t now, help marvelling at this man’s craft! his wit, his nerve, his squirrel versatility, the virtue and vigour of the working of his divine sagacity! The highborn! For as though it was some god, his Father, who breathed the words into his ear to say, they seem to me now when I turn them over, perhaps the only words in the whole of speech which could have really rescued him, and wrenched sudden victory out of the very mouth of rout. Well, down Rosie rushes presently in her old roan-velvet robe, looking flushed and morose, but just as ravishing as a rose, one

must admit, the tarboosh still stuck a jaunt on her head, and soon after her, in his Norfolk-jacket, in strolls my saint all haloed and smiling; so we sat to the warmed-up eggs, but had hardly begun, when there was a knock at the door, and Mary came in to say that an old woman who gave the name of Mrs. Graves wished to see Mr. O'Shannon. Oh, Shan! whatever is the matter there? I never saw anyone go so ghastly all in a moment! 'Graves?' says he, 'all right, tell her—' and his whiteness suddenly rushing into red, out he dashed, while the white wife and I stared after him with wonder, she getting up to go half-way to the room-door, where during fully eight minutes she stood hearkening to the altercation outside the house-door: and, whoever Mrs. Graves may be, she is evidently a very gay old body, for I could hear her giggling, and Shan frequently going 'sh-h-h,' in an anguish to her, but I couldn't catch anything else, save an exclamation of 'Gawd bless us' from the old thing.

"Presently Shan returns to us looking gauntly stern like one come through an ordeal, and Rosie begins the questions in a 'may-I-ask' sort of tone: Who was this Mrs. Graves? the same old woman who had previously been seen with Shan in one of the coverts? 'It's nothing,' was the sum of Shan's answers, and though she got him to admit that this *was* the same old woman, he soon grew angry, put his foot down, and shut up the questions.

"Well, we had hardly breakfasted when Cuthbert ran down to call me for Aunt, and I spent most of the day over accounts and letters, seeing or hearing nothing of the O'Shannons till after eight in the evening, when Pruie, in a state of excitement craved 'to have a word wi' me,' and at the conservatory-door I saw her, bursting with the news that Mr. O'Shannon had had another meeting with the old woman at the same spot in the covert, a stormy meeting at eleven in the morning, which Pruie herself had witnessed—' since it bent much that can go past me, miss, and I be as sharp

as a needle with two points,’ — after which interview Mr. O’Shannon had come home, only to go out again about noon taking with him — a parcel. What was in that parcel? Pruie had found out — a good half of the household silver — part of Rosie’s dowry — kept in the bottom drawer of the small wardrobe; and as Mr. O’Shannon had taken the 2.16 train to somewhere — everyone in the village knew it — and as he had not come back — without the parcel! — till seven, Pruie could only conclude that he had gone to some town to pawn the silver, in order to give the money to this unknown old woman.

“What a thing! What a mystery! Pruie’s ancient flesh shook palely at it; and then the tale of what had taken place when Mr. O’Shannon came back weary and grumpy at seven o’clock... Pruie had never seen him at all like that, except that once when he went wolf-mad with the drink before his marriage. The white wife was at the piano playing when he came in, so she got up to him, and began to ask him where he’d been to, but he, without answering her questions, began to *thee* her and to *thy* her in the broadest Gloucester, smiling down bitter upon her, telling her, ‘yes, thee thinkst that I do love thee, but thee dussn’t know how I do hate thee, thee dussn’t know all’; so she looks up at him in astonishment, going paler about the nose, and er says to her, she being nicely dressed for dinner in her green with the hanging sleeves, ‘yes, thee thinkst thyself a queen because thee’s clothed in these gaudy bits of togs and gold, but dress thee in rags, and thee’d be nothing to look at, for it be fine feathers that make fine birds’; then he throws himself down on the sofa with his legs stretched out afore him, and after a time er says to her: ‘My feet are sore, get me my slippers,’ upon which she couldn’t speak, she was so taken aback, then she calls out: ‘Pruie! get Mr. O’Shannon’s slippers,’ but he now flushed up, crying out: ‘Get them yourself!’ his cry tripping out tremulously high like a trumpet,

‘am I your husband, yes or no?’ and again she stood silent, eyeing him in an ugly way, with her lips glued malignantly together; but his command could not be disobeyed, so she went, got his slippers, threw them at his feet, and ran and locked herself into her room. Pruie heard him later on implore her outside her door to come down to dinner, but she would not, nor would he have any dinner, and before eight o’clock went out in his rough clothes; soon after which, she, too, started out somewhither from the cottage in a flurried way with her lips fixed, and had not come back since.

“Such was Pruie’s account of things. I sent her away, read Gibbon aloud all the evening to Aunt, and at about two in the morning, the house all soundless, just as I was getting drowsy myself, nibbling a bit of biscuit over my sketchbook, there greeted my ears, like guns going off, an agony of knockings at the front, giving me quite a fright. Divining at once something of the truth, and running out of the morning-room to the hall-door, I found Shan there, and, the moment I saw his face, thought to myself ‘Rosie has run away,’ my heart bounding with joy, though I had a twinge of sorrow for my boy, too, he looked so bad. ‘Is Rosie sleeping in the Hall, Miss Hine?’

‘No.’

‘But are you sure?’

‘Quite sure.’ Down dropped his head, his gun dropped to the ground, and Snout, gazing up into his face, growled thinly.

‘Never mind, Shan,’ I murmured, ‘no doubt she will be found’ — first time I have called him Shan. He told the story: had left her locked in her room, for there had been a tiff, and soon after he had gone out, she, too, as Pruie recounted, had gone out — he now knew why, evidently in order to induce someone or other to remove one of her trunks, which, after Pruie and Mary had gone to bed, had been very quietly taken away; and he, on getting home near two, having reason to suspect that she was not in the house, had

peeped into her room, and found the bird flown. Poor white widower! he tried to be brave, but the words wavered in his throat, and I passed my palm over his hand. ‘So what next?’ I asked. ‘I’ll knock up the village!’ he suddenly trills, with that gallant high tremolo of his cavalry-commander’s voice, and he turned, and was gone, taking my heart with him, I gazing after him all the way across The Meadows, seeing him quite clearly to the very gate, for a moon as full of moon as a drop of fluid is full of fluid bloomed bellying through a welkin without one cloud in it, where stars were faint and few, suffused with her glory, she looming some huge ghost-Argo cruising bemused through countries far remote from home all among gold-rock and opal archipelagoes of Esmeraldas and Eldorado. I was kissing my hand after him, when there came Mrs. Macfadden soft-footed and belated behind me, in answer to his knock — must have seen me kiss my hand! concluding, of course, that I was kissing it at the moon....

“Well, by the first post next morning, Aunt had a note from Rosie asserting that, having been grossly brow-beaten by her husband, she had fled to the Waggon-and-Horse, at Greames: at which my Auntie makes a great show of indignation, though I told her that it wasn’t true, and says, ‘O’Shannon must be given a lesson.’ So, soon after breakfast, groom Bassett was called, warned that what he had to do was as secret as the grave, and I wrote a note to Rosie, giving her to know that the brougham would be sent for her at midnight, and gave it to Bassett to take to Greames, Aunt entering with zest into the game, not caring that what was game to her was woe to the poor widower; so, with as many secrecies as screened the flight of Marie Antoinette, half-an-hour after midnight alights my white wife to our arms, taking herself pretty seriously, declaring that she’d ‘*never* go back,’ giving at Aunt’s bedside the cargo of her injuries, though ne’er a hint as to her whiteness, that, I suppose, being a sore too secret even for

‘Mama’s’ treatment, though when Aunt said: ‘Forgive him this time, you will like him better when he buys you a nice big baby up in London,’ I heard her murmur to herself: ‘Yes, when he does.’

“Meanwhile, the widower was away on some wild-goose chase after her, and did not get back to Glanncourt before noon the next day, when, comforting himself no doubt with the half-hope that she might have come home, he flew to the Hall for an interview with Aunt, who accorded him an audience in her cosy-corner, listening with those cold glances of hers to the story of his tracing of Rosie as far as ‘The Waggon,’ where he had lost her, while the white wife and I took turns in eyeing them through the key-hole. Oh, he looked careworn and browsick! and I thought to myself that his great heart had enough to bear without that girl’s absurdities. ‘Dear me, where can she be?’ wondered Aunt, and ‘what can be her motive? I hope that your behaviour to her has at no time been overbearing, O’Shannon, for in that case it is no wonder—’ Poor lad! you, too, had to undergo King Arthur’s greatest indignity, to be lectured by an old woman; and you took it as greatly. ‘The marvel is,’ says he with a brow all one crowd of troubles and crosses, ‘that she hasn’t written you a line, since she must have very little money with her—’

‘Ah! there’s the marvel,’ says my Auntie, and so they kept on, till finally he gets up grimly with: ‘Well! she has got to be found, if she is anywhere above ground,’ and the silly game came to an end.

“This thing was kept up for three days till the evening of the nth, when I would bear to see him in his agony no longer, for near three in the afternoon of the 11th I saw him on the lawn from a window, and he looked so castaway, that though in my heart I revelled at his separation from Rosie, I made up my mind, since I knew that the separation could not be maintained this time, not to be selfish, but to finish it that day: for such a silence had

been imposed upon the household, that I knew it might be some time before the secret leaked out to him; so, passing with Aunt in the motor-car that afternoon through St. Arven's, I suddenly remembered an important postcard to be written to Mr. Cochrane, entered the post-office, and sent the lad a telegram from 'Guess Whom': 'Your wife is at Glanncourt.' I felt pretty treacherous, but, then, 'treachery is in the very grain of the wretches,' as my very elementary white wife has declared, for the snake must have stung Eve in Eden, leaving its virus in the vein of her, so that her girls remain snakes-in-the-grass ever since, for certainly we do find it nice to act 'on our own,' and outdo folks on the sly. Anyway, we hadn't long got back to Glanncourt, when a most agitated lad was before Aunt, panting:

'Mrs. Gordridge, Rosie is in the Hall and you've got to give her up to me.'

"Aunt, for her part, was tired of the game now, no doubt, so Rosie was called down, and oh, the mountain of cloud that rolled from that lad's brow, and the light that arose on it, when his eyes beheld her at last! and while my white wife stands stiff by Aunt's side, glowering gravely at him, he gazing mainly upon the ground, fingering his cap round and round with a chronic smile on his mouth and little glances upward at her, Aunt gives a discourse, and, pronouncing them happy ever after, blesses them both.... Ah, my Auntie, there's a grand old mass of humbug agrin somewhere in the grain o' thee.

"So away they went, Adam and Eve, he as humble as a babe, I peering after them till they disappeared behind the stables, and during all the seven hours between then and now, it being now half-past two in the morning, my heart has been heavy for him, thinking of those oceans of temptation which must have broken over that brain this night above every other night: for the joy of finding her fell so suddenly upon him, that it must be enough to upset

the poise of a giant's mind, and then he must feel that she expects him to shew his pleasure at finding her in at least kissings and pettings — as a mere matter of politeness. How awkward and hard for him! Has he refrained from even one kiss? Even one kiss is treachery to Arthur. Yet how is flesh to attain to so much as this? And if he has allowed himself kisses, what then — ? Ah! unless he is built through and through of the very swartest sort of basalt, if there's one smallest flaw anywhere in the water of that diamond this night, then, it's all up with the applecart by this time — and through my own doing, too.

“But I think I know in whom I have believed, and bet that to-morrow I shall see him lean, but smiling. Only, how long? Is Arthur *never* coming? It is three months now since Lord Roberts entered Pretoria, and still our little war roars prettily on to everybody's surprise, Arthur, by the latest account, refitting at or near Zeerust in the far Western Transvaal, after taking part in Methuen's futile pursuit of De Wet; so I shan't wait for his coming, if I can rush Shan faster forward to that death-marriage of him and me, as I think that I can: for, let me only once get him really separated from Rosie, and he will be only too eager to hasten a little sooner to that grave to which he has appointed his youth, just at which point Anne will come forward to join him as consort and convoy toward that goal to which he thought to voyage alone, and will go far with his ghost.

“Or am I a little ninny, dancing mad in a castle in the air? There was once a little girl of thirteen at Carlington named Louisa Hastings, who, seeing Dr. Blood go by grandly dressed every day in his trap, conceived the idea that he was the king of somewhere who only went by daily so as to exhibit himself to her, meaning some day to make her his lady-queen; and in this sweet disease the little dear's wits revelled in secret for weeks and weeks, till one evening her father revealed to her that it was all a dream: so

the next morning early, walking in her nightdress down to Severn, she sat herself down on the shore, and patiently waited till the tide rose and drowned her. Though I was only a nipper at the time, it made such an impression upon me... O, waning moon, wasting like a cloud at your upper edge, quite spoiled now, like a Madonna's countenance anguished with a goitre of gumboil and swell-jaw on one side, you are unwell of too much light in your monthly way, like that mad, mad mathematician, my worthy ancestor: for a germ of turgidness and dissolution lurked in the most lucid moment of your fulness, aye, and there's a taint of lunacy, ma'am, in all your family "But, if I am a dreamer, I cannot quite see at what spot the dream commences, for it doesn't seem unreasonable to believe that an elementary body like Rosie will abandon a too white husband the moment she sees him in disgrace; and his disgrace I can easily bring about by simply revealing about the stealing: for that he is stealing, both eggs and fowl in a big way, I no more have the least doubt, and though I couldn't quite clearly prove it at this moment may be, I'll soon be able, if his lack of money keeps on. What excuse the fellow can possibly make to himself for doing this laughable thing, Heaven only knows! it is far enough beyond my wits to divine, I only know that his motive must somehow be as white as snow. But the lot of money that he must have run through within the last months! How? How? It seems to be really to this old Mrs. Graves that he gives it...! Who is she? How gross of me not to guess! It is as though he had committed ten assassinations, and this old jade, knowing of them, were able to wring blackmail out of his very brain. Anyhow, the old thing is doing good for me, for, though I do grieve for my dear, the more money she drags out of him the nearer grows the hour of my throe, and I am so keen now on speeding the wheel even more quickly downhill, that I seriously mean, if I can find out where he keeps his money, to sneak it from him: for the poorer

he's made, the more he'll steal, and the more he steals, the nearer his disgrace, and in the hour of his disgrace Rosie will leave him, and he, once left alone, without any reason to keep on living, will gad gladly down with me, down, down, in that hour of our outing... unless by chance I be reeling dream-drenched in some region of dreams..?"

XIII. SHAN BANKRUPT



“THE RESULT OF Rosie’s flight,” Anne adds at a later date, “was a day of extravagance at Gloucester, whither she and Shan took a journey the morning after her return to him, and there made their money fly like a pair of children, she buying two new brooches, breloques, a wrap, a pèlerine, a kimono, two gowns, he lavishing upon her whatsoever her heart desired, the fact, no doubt, being that his delight at seeing her about him once more had half-turned his brains, and, unable to express himself in caresses, he exploded in this spree, hearing no doubt all the time with one ear a whisper from to-morrow that he couldn’t afford one penny of all these orgies, and with the other ear hearing that street-organ of to-day to which he was jigging.

“She, for her part, I suppose, remains ignorant of the pawnings, and can’t have any notion of the pass he is in with regard to money, or, not being a bad-hearted one at bottom, she would hardly let him rush into these sprees to please her. But neither of them is much good at money-matters, though he is said to be a rather sharp bargainer in the market, while as for that girl, if she was a millionaire, she would soon be poor. If Aunt hadn’t taken her up, I can trace exactly what would have been her fate and story: she would have been blown in some storm to Bloomsbury, bloomed into a music-hall star, and ruined a man per annum.

“But what must have been *his* remorse and bitter after-taste when, just as he was going out of doors on the second morning after this Gloucester bout, little thinking of his ghoul, may be, there she was again before him, the gay

old thing. I was running round to the farm at about ten a.m. when, at the bottom of the north home-cover, I saw Pruie standing with a cocked ear, and, stealing near, I startled her so, that she had to clap her palm over her old heart! ‘Him be wi’ the old woman this minute in there,’ she told me, and instantly, though I was in a hurry to get back to the guests, a greed took me to see and hear, so I chided Pruie for playing the spy, and the moment she was well away, was on tiptoe in the covert, nor had gone thirty yards up the grass-ride when I heard the old girl cry: ‘ Good reason why!’ and a moment afterwards Snout’s nose poked out of a thicket at me. I got sideward through a lot of gorse, and, stealing forward by degrees, spied them together under one of that group of roosting-evergreens, she at that very moment cutting a jig, arms akimbo, he smiling down upon her, snarling bitterly, ‘pity you’re such an old boozier, after all; why, you are half-seas over now.’

‘*Am* I an old boozier? *Am* I? What price that?’ and she snatched and dashed straight into his face one of those pieces of meat that they hang up for the poults to peck maggots out of. He took it smiling, though with such a flush and lightning eye! ‘Oh, I’m not afraid of you,’ says she, ‘so don’t think it,’ — talks Cockney, and, I conjecture, belongs to the lowest of the lower orders, wearing still a shawl like a law of Nature, though otherwise quite dressed—’ but what about that money? I don’t see why you couldn’t let me have it now.’

‘I have told you,’ says he with passion, ‘that I shall have it here at half-past eight to-night: just ask yourself how in the name of God a man can give it you now, when he hasn’t got it to give’ — and I saw his mouth go weak, and work. ‘All right,’ says she, ‘I won’t be hard: half-past eight it is.’ ‘On the condition, mind you,’ says he, ‘that you keep sober all to-day, leave by the 9.3 to-night, and let me hear no more of you for the next three months.’

‘Garn,’ says she, ‘not so much of it: you have it here at half-past eight, or over goes the apple-cart.... Ta-ta,’ — and with airs of the absurdest levity she turned and went, he glowering after her down the grass-ride till she vanished, then, as if shot, dropped to the ground under the fir where he had stood, and fast though my heart was thumping, and all in me urging me to fly, I could hardly turn my gaze from the sight of his grief, till I heard him sob with such an outburst of distress, distractedly shaking a brow bowed low beneath his burden of adversity, when, able to bear it no more, I stole away.

“How great must be the power of that little old thing over him when at that very hour all the guns and beaters were awaiting him half-a-league away! and a poor day’s sport, too, they had of it, as I gathered in the evening, for the very good reason that so many of the year’s birds have been privately turned into money by the head-keeper! O, Shan, your feet be pretty deep in the meshes....

“But not for long now, I think: for after what I did to him last evening some sort of crisis seems certain, since he can’t have much that’s portable left to pawn now, and what I have done to him now must reduce him to penury. I knew that his rendezvous with Mrs. Graves at eight-thirty must mean more pawning, so near dinnertime I smuggled myself from the house-party, hurried down to the cottage to see his return from his pawning trip, and was chaffing Rosie about her huff at not being asked to join the party, when in he walked. She wished to know where he had been, and as he shuffled and was sullen, I was sure now what he had been at; but though long ago I had made up my mind that, if ever I got the chance, I’d take money from him, that day such a thought hadn’t entered my brain, till I observed him rather furtively push a pocket-book behind the clock, and at once I felt myself turn white at the whisper of something wild within me

that I was going to pilfer it. Oh, never again, Anne! the effort of soul is far too great, the derangement and shock to the whole organism, like going under chloroform; and yet it was nice, too, perhaps because of the very storm, the business, the sin and pity, of it. I got straightway into a harsh sort of mood against him, short-breath'd, like a schoolmistress going to flog a girl, thinking, 'it is for your good, and you have to be well peppered,' and when, on their dinner-gong sounding, we went out of the room, I ran back to get my handkerchief, which I had left behind, and laid hand on the pocket-book.

"When I sped away up to the house with it in my blouse, it was now night, a wind was sounding, and there in the south-east swam the moon actively moving in and out among masses of cloud-vapour with the genius of some scene-painter brandishing a cherub's brush; and I felt myself more a creature of those countries which she sketched than of this earth, for it is one thing to dream and purpose, and another thing to act and to have acted, and I felt like anybody but myself. Oh, I was off my little chump! and all last night, and all this day, I have been far out of myself, a thousand miles from the scene in which I have been smiling and chatting and reading heartlets, nor have I dared go down to the cottage to witness that anguish which is undoubtedly there. The pocket-book is stuffed with forty pounds in notes, with them being a sort of receipt from a Bath pawnbroker for a number of articles, including Rosie's two just-bought brooches! How urgent must be the spur, how throttling this rope that's around his throat! And when he went back to the clock to take this money, obtained at the cost of so much shame and care, to take it to the old trapes at half-past eight, and could not see it there, and could not trace it anywhere, so pale must have been his despair! Really, I have half a mind even now to let him have it back! but then, no, for your sake, dearie, and my own, I being aweary now

of waiting and living, for a spring in me has run all down, never having been tautly wound, the very mainspring of me and spring of my being, and my arms hang dead, my spine gives way, I begin to yawn at God. For the last three weeks I have been keeping in my pocket a sheep's shoulder bone at which every now and again I give a peep, having gained now such a consciousness of Nature as to view living things as nothing more than clocks, and man I regard through a glass on Mars.... 'Thou hast made me of skin and flesh, and fenced me with bones and sinews': beautifully done, of course: but there may be more enjoyment to the watchmaker in watching his toy tick, than to the toy in toiling on and on, and, as for me, I have a desire for the society of the host of the dead, and for the manners and customs of that other coast.... There goes dressing-bell, I suppose I must drag myself and go: it is after six o'clock, the dark-grey hour of Moghreb on the very brink of night, and outside the casement there I can see drizzle-rack drifting south like a funeral-train before the Autumn blasts in a mood as drab as bablah, moving like a crowd of ghosts all cowled, all towering tall as ghosts of the old gods, bearing to the grave one of their barons who has drained to the dregs the grail of the second death. Of that very grapewort and wormwood is my mind and purpose..."

XIV. SHAN DEEP IN IT



ALL GLANNCOURT, ALL Gloucestershire, was asleep, except perhaps a watcher on his beat, some fox, or poaching hound, or prowling house-cat in a cover, a screech-owl in the cedar, and Anne Hine, with a sheep's bone by her side, musing over her sketch-book in a book-room; far in the south-west the half-moon like an eye half shut was drowsing droopingly down in a couch of clouds, no more heeding that her beauty was all unmarked than when during eras of years, before men began to breathe and kiss out their fingers at her, she had made her couch in beauty: and the night sighed: or rather the morning, for it was three o'clock.

All at once, Anne, seated on her hearth-rug, seemed to hear a ghost, a life in the night, for her ears like all her senses were as sharp as light, and she started and rose to her feet, going very white.

There was a creak somewhere in the scheme of things, something sneaking uneasily through the kingdom of sleep, and as she now stood hearkening with both her ears near the door, she was aware of the bump of a foot, soft-sounding in the carpet of the stair, and at once decided within herself that it was made by a foot without any boot on.

She quickly took off her slippers, crept quite quietly to the electric light and turned it off, then, opening the room-door, out like a mouse she moved.

When she had made her way to the bottom of the stairs, she could see nothing: it was dark about there: but as, with her heart in her mouth, she waited, there was a sound like the vibration of something shaken, and gathering that the sneak had butted against the Shakespeare statue up there

above, up she moved, stooped low down on hands and knees, as privily prowling as the cheetah's paw, more secretly creeping than the sneak.

On the left side of the corridor above was a room which was called "the Boudoir," but was rather an office, for there Mrs. Gordridge did much of her governing, and kept many papers; and as just there a beam of moonlight that had passed through the cedar dappled the carpet with a pattern of leaves, Anne was able to see a foot in a sock lifted to pass into "the Boudoir"... "I knew at once in my heart who it was," she wrote of it: "and I had known before." Now for three minutes she half-lay, half knelt, at the stair-head, staring, hearkening at her heart which stormed within her chest, thinking it out. Then she moved: crept past the boudoir, up another stair, her speed increasing every moment till in the remoter regions of the mansion her heels were fleeting fast, and passing into a small room, she stooped at a bedside to breathe into an ear: "Nancy, wake up, but don't say a syllable...."

"There's a man in the house," she added, "and you are to come with me, but are not to meddle with him at all, nor utter one word...." Nancy, a still-room maid, got up. Anne did not give her the time to slip on a petticoat, and the pair of girls spurted out together, going hand-in-hand, till they were on the stairs, when they stole in detail down to the boudoir-door. Just here stood a pedestal and a large divan among some palms, and by kneeling on the divan the two, peeping, could see between the pedestal and the door-post into the boudoir, which was dark, but not all dark, because of a diffusion of moonlight through the blinds into the room: and with bated breath they knelt there, staring.

Anne put her lips nearly into the ear of Nancy, instigating into the organs of her brain, rather than breathing, the thought: "Can you see?"

Nancy put her lips into Anne's ear, answering: "No."

Anne put her lips into Nancy's ear, dealing to her the meaning: "Can you hear?"

Nancy put her lips into Anne's ear, answering:

It was a scratching of which they were aware, going on as patiently low as a rat's gnawing, though again and again there was a moment of impatience, a raising of the rate of the fumbling, or filing, or prising, that was being done, and suddenly something snapped and popped with a sound so outrageously rousing, that the house seemed conscious of it throughout the realm of its sleep, and the two peepers shivered at it; after which there was a silence which lasted and waited not less than five minutes, in which the night itself seemed to wait and stare, till a match was struck within the boudoir, and Anne made room for Nancy to see.

"Did you see?"

"His back."

"Come."

The two moved off.

"Oh, Miss Hine, it is too *awful*!" chattered Nancy's jaws at her door.

"You try and fall asleep," panted Anne in answer, "and don't breathe a syllable to a soul, until you are asked."

And not one word was heard of the matter till after eleven the next morning, when there occurred an outcry from Mrs. Gordridge, who, four days before this, had drawn two hundred pounds out of the bank, of which she now found forty pounds vanished, and both a drawer of her cabinet and her cash-box broken open.

Anne, on being summoned, stood by the boudoir-window, smiling with an under-look at a death-mask of the late master of Glanncourt, and made the remark: "He's an honest old thief, since he has left a great deal more than half."

“You take it coolly!” said Mrs. Gordridge: “this is the first time that I have ever been subjected to such a barefaced outrage... telegraph instantly —”

“Ah, Aunt, better let the matter drop,” murmured Anne.

Mrs. Gordridge let her two arms fall, contemplating Anne with reproach, saying: “Well, if this isn’t a fantastic young woman!”

“I happen to have a meaning,” answered Anne: “I happen to know all about the theft, I was awake, I saw it done—”

“And you said not one—”

“Aunt, it would only have grieved you.”

“Who was it?”

“Aunt, it will only grieve you—”

“Tell me this very moment.”

“Well, if you insist upon knowing, ask Nancy, who saw it all with me: I’d really rather not tell it myself, Aunt” — whereat Anne ran out, leaving Mrs. Gordridge agape after her, and in a few minutes Nancy stood in the boudoir, rendering up the secret that the night had carried in it.

“So who was the man?” asked Mrs. Gordridge.

Nancy hesitated, looking down at her nails, and said in a low tone: “Mr. O’Shannon, mum.”

“Shan O’Shannon?”

“Yes’m.”

Mrs. Gordridge’s eyes dwelt on the girl, her fingers touching her brow, and she gazed out of window at boughs bare now of all their foliage.

“But are you sure?” she asked.

“Yes’m, I think so,” said Nancy.

“Saw his face, did you?”

“No, mum, I didn’t see his face, but I saw his back.”

“And you are quite sure?”

“Yes’m, I think so.”

“Don’t mention it to anyone: — mind you, see that you don’t. Tell Miss Hine to come” — and Anne, having come, heard by the window the winds yearning through the yewen and oaken thickness of the west shrubbery close by, and discussed the tragedy a long while.

“So what in God’s name am I to do with this young man?” Mrs. Gordridge wished to know.

“I wish I could suggest something, Aunt,” was Anne’s answer.

“But are you quite absolutely sure that it was the young man?” Mrs. Gordridge asked pettishly.

“I can only say that I saw him, Aunt.”

“But I should as soon have thought Arthur capable — it is merely incredible!”

“It is, really, Aunt — though true.”

“Then, it is *your* fault—”

“Oh, it is *sure* to be, Aunt.”

“Yes, it is, for why didn’t you give me to know long ago that the man was probably turning the birds into money? — not spring everything upon me in this fashion? *I* had no notion that he was in money straits! but you, by your own shewing, had, and kept it dark in your dark way.... How is it possible that he should be in straits? And if he was, why did he not come to me and say so, since he knows that I give freely?”

Anne looked out of window without answer, and the old lady added: “But don’t you see any way out of this sudden bad dream? My duty, of course, is in the direction of the police—”

“Ah!” sighed Anne, with irony.

“So what is the ‘Ah’ about?”

“He will be taken to prison and to judgment, Aunt,” answered Anne, with a certain fervour of closed eyes.

“But why the quotation?... I’ll take my oath that sometimes lately your observations give one the impression of a girl quite off her nut and gallivanting in Cocagne! I say that my clear duty is to hand the young man over to the police — Where does the quotation come in? And I’m sure that I should do it ruthlessly, too, only I am so truly sorry for him, so truly, and the young man once declared to me that he loves the name of Gordridge—”

“He does, Aunt, I am convinced.”

“So what is one to do in such a case?” asked Mrs. Gordridge.

“I suppose you will have to turn him away,” murmured Anne, gazing out at the bare boughs.

“That without saying. If the young man is a felon how is one to have him about the place?”

“And as to Rosie?”

“What can Rosie do, except remain with me? I am responsible for her bit of a life, I can’t have her exposed—”

“No, of course,” muttered Anne.

And this was the sense of what was said to Shan that same gloaming when he sat by the boudoir-window before Mrs. Gordridge, looking most gaunt, while Anne Hine all white, hearkened outside the door, Mrs. Gordridge first asking him if he had heard that some money had been stolen, and when Shan said no, he hadn’t heard, she shewed him the wrenched cash-box and cabinet-drawer, at both of which Shan looked with no little interest, asking: “And what steps do you intend to take about it, mum?”

Then, with dwelling glances at his face where he sat, Mrs. Gordridge told him that she was not wholly in the dark as to who the culprit was, and,

having a great regard for the culprit, she did not, though it was her duty, mean to prosecute, believing as she did that this step into which the culprit had been betrayed by some money-strait would never be repeated. But what she had to say to Shan was this: that she had lately determined that she had no further need for his services, so he must straightway make preparations to leave the estate.

“I see, mum,” said Shan, and Mrs. Gordridge groaned for him, for he was groping all about the ground for his cap, but could not find it, though it was quite near his feet.

“I need not say,” remarked Mrs. Gordridge, “that Rosie remains with me — for some time at any rate.”

“I see, mum.”

“That is all, I think, that I had to say to you for the present, O’Shannon.”

“I see, mum.... Strange to say, I, too, have lost some money — forty pounds, too, the same as you — that’s funny.”

Mrs. Gordridge, hardly believing this, made no answer, waiting for him to go; but he sat there where he was.

Suddenly he started, asking: “What is your reason for treating me in this way? Have you any reason to imagine that it was *I* — ?”

“Ah, I don’t want to answer any questions, O’Shannon.”

“Then, that *is* it,” he said in a groan: “I’ve got no luck at all.”

Still Mrs. Gordridge waited for him to go, but there he sat bowed down over his cap, which he had now found, gazing at the maker’s name in it: he looked very sad: and after a time he remarked again, moaning so very low to himself that not half his words were heard: “I seem to have no luck... to be looked upon as a leper... to be cast out as one... without having one heart to guess at one, and be friends with one, a stranger in life, like a ghost going about in the crowd at a fair, lonely and out of it. There’s Rosie who regards

me as a fool, so I suppose I must be one, and there are those who regard me as a rogue, so I suppose I must be one... I wish I never had been born, and I wish I was one of those dead men who were buried ages ago, and nothing of them but their bones any longer remain in their graves, then I should be dead and at rest, and my grave would know me well. To lose all my life, and upon that my good name, too... to be looked upon as a thief... I appeal to God, if there's a God. Some of them are spreading it about now that there's no God, but that's all my eye, I know, because there's an eye in the breast that knows Him, and upbraids Him, aye, and He can hear when I speak, though I can't catch what answer He is giving, and I only wish er was a man, a King in London, so that I could go by rail in a train to Him, and spread out my case before Him face to face, and — but now, may be, I'm talking—” whereupon Mrs. Gordridge, who had caught some few of his words, stooped forward, wooing to him: “Never mind, O'Shannon, be brave, and you will outlive it all yet—”

“Mrs. Gordridge,” answered Shan, with eyes peering pig-tiny and red toward tears where tears were desert-dry, “you can't feel with the grief of a man who's like a man doomed to work at some burden in a world all by himself, but you are good to me, and I forgive you from my heart.”

“Well, it is *he* who forgives *me* now,” thought Mrs. Gordridge, stooped sideways to pull a dog's hair, and without looking up she added with some shyness: “I do feel with you.... Why are you like a man working in a world — ?”

“It doesn't matter, mum,” said he in a mood as drooping as Gethsemane, “since life is soon over, and then the grass grows green over every grief.... All I beg you, for God's sake, Mrs. Gordridge, is not to take her from me —”

“Rosie? But I'm afraid—”

“But, Mrs. Gordridge—”

“No, not that, O’Shannon—”

“Oh, but not now, it would kill me dead now, when I am losing everything else, driven out, to lose her, too — I know I am selfish, but, Mrs. Gordridge for God’s sake now — husband and wife—” He had stood up to plead, but those lips of Mrs. Gordridge, going harder with opposition, said: “I have already decided, O’Shannon; I have said that I grieve for you, but I do not feel at all like making any money-provision for you at present, and you are going out to hardships to which that young girl is not inured, so it is useless—” at which word “useless” Shan suddenly threw up hands and eyes, making his escape from the room, whereupon Anne Hine, who had been listening outside, hid on the divan behind the pedestal, till he was half down the stairs, when she hastened out after him to ask if it was true that he was going away, and when was he going.

“At the first moment that I can, Miss Hine,” he answered: “within the week—”

“So soon?” Her gaze hung languishing on his face. “But you won’t be too, too forlorn, will you? for it will all be well — And don’t forget that before you go you will be giving me the sitting for your head that I begged you for—” He stared, her prayer at the moment seemed so frivolously unrelated to that reel of his sorrows, and a memory arose, too, somewhere in his brain that he was forbidden by Rosie to have any friendship with Anne; but, as there was no saying no to such a wish, he gave her an absent-minded “very good, then,” and was gone.

Down at the cottage, Rosie in more than half undress, her head all little horns in curling-pins, was lounging before a fire when he entered and without saying anything threw himself down on a couch, where he lay with

his brow on his arms; she, too, without saying aught, continuing to look at her book.

Presently he smiled, and remarked: "Rosie, you smoke too much lately."

"Don't let that interest you," she retorted, "you know I always decline to be dictated to."

"Surely you are not cross because I say that?"

"Not a bit. Why does it occur to you that I am cross?"

"It seemed so a bit."

"But, then, you never understand me, as you know."

"Don't I? So deep, and dark, and hard to understand, aren't you?"

This tender sarcasm had no less power to cause Rosie to sit up than a pin-prick, and she remarked to her spouse: "So do you imagine that you know me? There isn't a soul that does! I am such an actress — I love to pose as a pretty, shallow, little pet, but how about my real, deep, complex self? I'm so *fearfully* complex, that, if you could know me so thoroughly as I know you—"

"Do you know me thoroughly?"

"Thoroughly!"

"Sure, now? Positive? Sometimes you say just the opposite. But if you do know me, throw an eye on me now, and tell me — am I happy, Rosie? or is my soul sad?"

"You look a little curious — is anything wrong?"

"Rosie, you won't be able to be smoking so much soon."

"What do you mean?"

"You won't be having your own way in everything as in your own home: you are going to live up at the Hall."

"Hip! But what is it all about?"

"Well, I have just been turned out of Glanncourt."

“Turned — How do you mean?”

“Turned away, just as any other servant of the estate might be.”

“You are joking.”

“No, I’m not joking.... I will put it before you, Rosie: Last night forty pounds were burgled out of Mrs. Gordridge’s house-service cash-box, and she has some reason — I don’t know what — I can’t dream what — for believing that it was I—”

“Who — ?”

“Yes, stole it.”

Rosie gaped at him, going pale round the nose.

“You?”

“So she thinks.”

“She said so?”

“As good as.”

Rosie looked as if she saw a ghost, and presently bending over her book again, she read without understanding what she was reading, and the cigarette went out between her fingers.

Then when the stillness had long lasted, Shan said: “Rosie, don’t you ever believe such a thing of me.”

“Oh, indeed!” said Rosie, throwing an eye round at him.

“Rosie, I say that because I know that you know that I am hard up, and because Mrs. Gordridge would hardly have charged me without having some sort of grounds—”

“She wouldn’t have said it to *me*, though,” thought Rosie with a hard lip over her book.

“Well, that is how it stands,” murmured Shan: “I am turned out of Glanncourt, and you will be going to the Hall, so that’s why I say that you

won't be smoking quite so much, and being your own mistress, as when you are with me in your own home, Rosie."

Keenly he expected her reply now, but Rosie only shrugged her shoulder, and went on reading, without grasping any of the sense of her book; and presently got up to go to dress for a dance.

And she had just got through a waltz about midnight when Mrs. Gordridge came up to her to take her out into the book-room, for though Rosie had dined at the Hall, no chance till now had been found for a talk, and there, sitting by her mama's chair, the situation of things was detailed to her.

But, owing to Rosie's attitude, the interview was soon over, for "It's all a lie, Mama Gordridge," she said.

"No, my poor dear, listen—" began Mrs. Gordridge.

"No, it's all a lie," said Rosie with a blind shake of the head.

"Rosie! But haven't I told you — ?"

"Who are these two people who say that they saw him?"

"I have told you, Rosie, that I do not desire to say, for—"

"Then, don't believe them, they had some motive—"

"But, Rosie, do you want to displease me? If I am convinced, isn't that enough for *you*? There is no doubt, my poor dear, it is perfectly certain, so there is no way out, he will have to leave, and you must come back to your mama."

Rosie, gracefully bent over the grate, with the mounds and curves of an hour-glass now, no longer of a girl, had a pouted mouth, thinking within herself: "She forgets that I'm not a child any more, but a married woman," and when Mrs. Gordridge added: "You had better leave him to make his own arrangements, and come up at once," Rosie said: "No, Mama Gordridge, I can't do that."

“Can’t do what?” Mrs. Gordridge wished to know.

“He is my husband, after all,” muttered the white wife in a stubborn way.

“Dear me. So what then? Who made him your husband?”

“You did.”

“Well, and I take you from him when he no longer deserves you.”

“It is all a lie, Mama Gordridge.”

“Nonsense! Don’t say that again. Just do as I tell you.”

“I couldn’t, Mama Gordridge, nor wouldn’t.”

“But explain yourself! wouldn’t *what?*”

“If he goes, I go with him.”

“Oh, you go with him....”

“I should have to.”

Mrs. Gordridge’s eyes mused upon the mutineer, so long securely her own, due to her by so many years of pettings, and a pang of jealousy and that tooth with which ingratitude grubs so bruised the old woman’s bosom, that after half a minute she deigned to say to Rosie:

“Which seems to mean that you choose him rather than me....”

“Isn’t he my husband?” muttered Rosie.

And now the talk ended.

“Go,” said Mrs. Gordridge, calmly, though her stick lifted, “get out of my sight... make haste.. and, all inflamed of face went the white wife, venting with venom the breath “*selfish!*” and as she threw on her wrap in the vestibule, she vented with venom the breath “*selfish!*” and as she went away down the vale she vented the breath “*selfish!*” vexed with her mama, and so till she came down to the cottage, where Shan, letting her in, heard her vent some word under her breath.

“What’s the matter?” he asked in their parlour where he had kept a nice fire for her, “you are home sooner—”

“Selfish!” went Rosie.

“Who is?”

“She is only tired of Anne, and it is only for herself that she wants me back—”

“Who? Has she said — ?”

“Selfish!” If she thinks that I’m still a child — I’d sooner live with you in a sty—”

“With me?” — a brightness of surprise sprouting like day-spring on his brow—” do you say that you will be coming with me?”

“Aren’t you my husband?”

His eyes sprang water.

“Oh, you, you,” he cried to her, “so cross, so cruel at times, but when one is in bitter trouble—” his throat choked, but on his knees he washed her hands with his tears, while she slapped him on the side of the head, smiling down upon him, expecting him now to stand up and kiss her....

XV. SHAN NIGHT-WALKS



THE NEXT AFTERNOON at the hour fixed Shan marched down from the hills to the Hall to have his head drawn, sighting, as he drew nigh the house, the last trunk of the guests going off, and at the front door stood some moments, giving ear to the organ bleating bleak concords from the inner hall — Anne Hine rendering Mozart's "Requiem." She came quickly to meet and lead him into the billiard-room, which was an out-room at the side of the house-front where the light was fair, and where a square of paper, pinned on a piece of deal, waited on her easel.

There Anne, taking crayon in hand, sat and began; but it was not well: she got up to him again, her two palms suggesting his head to a juster angle, a touch at which to his heart he shuddered, it had such a churchyard chill; and she sat anew to draw his head, but still it was not well, it was very far beyond her, her hand was pallid, her voice was pallid, her eyelids pallid, her lips, her gums, her heart, that like a pallid horse galloped.

Shan wondered within himself why she wore white clothes on so cold a day, all pure white and not too warm-looking — with flurries of early snow fluttering every few minutes in the air; and why on earth he wondered was there that old grey bone of some beast lying in a grave of white orchids on a corner of the billiard-table, all as neat as might be....

They were talking about his going from Glanncourt, and she said to him: "You suffer, and you seem to yourself a man doomed to work at some burden in a world where there burns neither sun nor moon, where there breathes no other being but yourself; but that is not wholly true, for there is

one who knows you — how you start at it! but it is true, and don't be afraid that I shall betray you, since I have known so long—”

“What have you known?” he asked sharply.

“This,” she said, “that you are one of the best of men.”

“Well, now!” he went, astounded.

“Greater than most of the greatest heroes of history.”

“Well, now!” he went again, his gaze suddenly affronted with a prickle of tears.

“All that you have undertaken and have undergone,” said she, and she flushed from the ghost of lily to the ghost of rose, “the weight of it, and the twelve labours of it, your inane days, and your days of storm, doubts in your heart's heart about the being of God, and about the meaning of things, and the grave, sudden rebellions of your rabble against the no from the throne, your great passion, and your great patience, all your loneliness and famine for sympathy, all this and a lot more I have divined and known of you—”

“O!” — he covered his eyes, moaning, some nerve in his breast wrung with strong passion by this balm after all his journeying and sore feet, feeling that here at least was one, that of a host who ignored yet one at least, did recognise and prize his soul, and with molten eyes he moaned, thinking that twice now within two days had tears of ease been twisted out of the iron of those eyes of his, last night by Rosie's faithfulness, and now by Anne, and the wilderness was not without its rare oasis after all, here or there a coolness of greenery and sluice of water, that a man may thank God, and take heart.

Anne moved her chair to his to say with an agitation that was painful: “And I have loved all that, and loved you for it, as I love the moon, and sunsets, and storms—”

“Miss Hine, you are good—” he began to say, and then he had a start!
“but — but I trust you, Miss Hine, you won’t breathe one syllable—”

“Oh, but haven’t I known from the first — ?”

“What have you?”

“That you are keeping her for Arthur—”

Again he started, glancing in alarm at the door!

“There’s no one about,” she said, “everything henceforth is quite safe for you: Rosie will be here, for, of course, a girl like her will not follow you into poverty and exile — I am not judging by my wishes — she won’t — and she will be here till Arthur comes, for Aunt, believing that she is your wife as other wives are, will have no fear that Arthur would marry a keeper’s widow, so will keep her here, then Rosie will tell Arthur of her whiteness, and he will marry her: so that you can die now quite assured that all is safe—” she spoke gallopingly, panting now faster and faster—” You have no motive to live a day longer, and I am going with you — do you know? — giving my heart on the same altar — if you will have me—”

Once again Shan shuddered at her, struck by the impression that he was seized by some dream-creature more sprite than girl, more of Hades and the grave than of this earth, and with shy eyelids he muttered: “Really, Miss Hine...” She did not hear, and clutching his sleeve, speaking in a whisper that eagerly galloped, she said: “Shall it be so? I propose that we leave for London — when you will — to-night — be married by special licence — you will indulge me in this, for though I see the mummery of it, for months my mind has been given to it — then, once married, we go back to the bed, and do it—”

“Miss — ! do what?”

“Take the poison....”

Shan stood sharply up, and she, remarking now the look of alarm that widened his eyes, asked: “Why are you horrified? Do you think me too young, and too happy, to die? I am not happy — oh no. Listen, I will tell *you*: my life has been one long hunger, for I am not a girl like others who love and are beloved, since I can love nothing, except love, nor has anyone loved me. Even my love of beauty and of you, though it is something intense, is not really love, I think, but a thing all light and no heat, a love in my eyes, which are like eyes washed with eye-bright to see and love; but the love gets no further than my eyes, for as if the telegraphic nerves between my eyes and my heart had broken down, though my heart is dimly conscious when love is going on up in my eyes, and lifts and spurs and urges itself to love, too, it can’t, the connections being all cut, and falls back sick. And this is bitter, for I am Tantalus standing by the water of life that all slips through my fingers when they go to bring it to my lips.... May be on the other brink of the rivulet there is a ewer....”

He could only gaze at her with the gravest eyes of sorrow, the young lady all in her white garb looking to him quite “*fey*” abandoned to all the death-dances and fantasticalities of the land of banshees and bode-bats and kobolds in which she was bewitched, and when she said to him: “Do not censure yourself for my death, for you cannot help, you are just a ship plunging into a maelstrom, and taking a wherry in her wake,” he replied with some resentment: “Really, Miss Hine, all this does not seem very serious talk on your part” — at which word “*serious*,” Anne turned up to him a yet pastier face, whispering: “Do you mean that you won’t have me with you? Or do you mean that you won’t do it at once?”

“It what, Miss Hine? Kill myself? Fantastic idea to have in your mind!”

“Why— ‘fantastic’?” — with an effort to swallow—” since you *do* mean, some time, to do it.”

“I never in my life had such a thought,” declared Shan, “I have always looked upon it as a wicked and mad thing for a man to go and do.”

“Mad” — her eyes fixed on his face — her castle all collapsed— “*mad!*” — after which she walked two steps to the billiard-table, and laid her face down sideways on the little mound of flowers there and the brown rib in it, while he with eyes that swam in a passion of pity stepped to her, saying: “Dear Miss Hine,” and touched her hand an instant: but at the same time from the dining-room near there reached his ear the coming of a stick which meant Mrs. Gordridge, and he felt an instinct to be away which was quickened when Anne, glancing round at him, murmured: “Yes, go,” upon which he passed away out through the outer door.

All that evening his mind was full of fear for her, all that night he could not sleep; nor, somehow, could Rosie; and they sat into the morning hours in a state of awe for which they could little account over a fire in a room without any carpet now, their things all strewn into confusion round them, for their moving; and once when the white wife about one o’clock went out to find some wine, she flew back with wild eyes, all blanched, and, clinging to Shan’s arm, declared that she was aware of something walking in the kitchen....

“It must be the wind,” said he — for quite a hurricane was raging—” make an effort not to be too frightened, now.”

“I can’t help it,” Rosie replied, “I feel cold all over — O, it is ominous, Shan, that strick-owl screeching out there hour after hour in the beech-tree, for as sure as ever you hear it, so sure there’s a burial.”

“Lieutenant Gordridge may be killed....”

“God knows.... Yes, that *is* it, you may be sure.”

“No, that isn’t it, for the strick’s never a certainty, and you were nervous before.”

“That’s true, I was feeling queer all the evening.... I wonder if it was what I saw Anne do that upset me.”

“What was that?”

“It gave me quite a queer feel — I am certain that that girl can’t be all there. This evening — I was waiting for you in the shed near the farm-hedge, when I saw her all in white on the other side though she didn’t see me. She had seen Cook Basset and Martha bearing between them a tray with a great forty-pounds piece of beef to bury — Lucille always says that what’s wasted at Glanncourt would keep two French families going — and she had followed and watched the burying of it; then, when the other two were gone, what do you think she did? Set to shaping and arranging the grave with her hands, then put grass and sprigs on it, smiling to herself...

At this Shan, who was already rather wannish, went wanner, leaning over the fire; even the dog, with its weird sympathies, whined; while the white wife, seated on the rug against Shan’s leg gazed with grave eyes into the grate.

“So finish telling me,” she said presently.

“It will only upset you more, Rosie.”

“No, let’s have it.”

“I didn’t see it myself,” he said, “it was my father — when I was nine and a half years old it was, and I’m never likely to forget that night. You know, Rosie, the story of Miss Grover, how she got on a vicious horse one day against the advice of her father, saying that she would ride it to hell, how it threw her against that stake-gate up there on the Chase, and how they say that her ghost walks there, though I know of no one that ever saw it — only my father that night. He and a man named Joe Higgins had gone to Tintern to get paid for some work, and walked back together on just such a moonlight morning as this with a storm of wind blowing. Well, mother had

made me sit up for father in the kitchen, and soon after two in he walks to me.... I'd almost rather have seen the ghost itself! for though it was two miles from the stake-gate where it had stared at him to our house, I could still see his hairs sticking out stiff about his head — actually *see* them—”

“Oh, good God....”

“Aye, I shall ever remember that night.”

“Shan,” whispered Rosie, “have you ever seen anything yourself?”

“No, nothing: I can't honestly say that I have ever seen anything. But my father, he was pretty eerie, he'd see things. One Sunday midnight, going home from courting my mother, he saw a tall man in a frock-coat with snow-white gloves behind him, so, as it was a very lonely road, he thought he would stop for the man, but every time he stopped, so the man stopped, too, and at last when father's cocoa-nut began to grow, he scattered and ran, but, as he madly ran, so the man ran after—”

“Good Lord, Shan....”

“Such things are.... Did you ever know a man called Pendix Ball?”

“No.”

“They call him Pendix because he had appendicitis.... Never heard his name?”

“Yes, I have heard his name.”

“Well, when you were a child of — let me see — seven and three months, this Pendix Ball saw something one night — nobody knows what — nobody could ever discover what: but the next day he left Woodston — cleared clean away — and swears that to be King of England he would not range within fifteen leagues of this place again so long as oak and ash do grow.”

“What could he — ? Oh, God, Shan, what's that?” Now with a milk-white face twisted round in affright the white wife sprang straight to clasp

her spouse, for at a casement of the room there had sounded a rapping.

“Wait here, and I will go,” he whispered: “Don’t you fear — you wait, and I will go.”

All his nerves thought it a ghost, but it turned out to be only a ghost-countenanced man, named Price, a keeper, who came to give into Shan’s ear the tidings that he had just seen a ghost, or something extremely like a ghost, something in a night-dress with long-flowing hair, that left footprints of naked feet in the snow, something fleet, seeing that Price had chased it a good mile up toward the Chase, but could not catch it... something which the dogs would not bite....

“Stop, I’ll come,” said Shan, and within ten minutes, having got Rosie to go to bed with old Pruie, throwing on an ulster and flap-cap, he set off with Price, the wind slamming the door behind him, for it was, in truth a wild and white night, snow on the ground, the moon full somewhere in the sky, though for clouds no trace of her could be anywhere seen, and all in between ground and clouds storm-winds wheeling, all the night showing quite lethal whitish, like the visage of a negro grey in death; and on for four miles, up mountain-paths, then down along a road, the two men tracked the footprints, till, by a bit of wall on the edge of a quarry-cliff, from Shan’s heart leapt the breath: “There she is...!”

Ninety feet below flowed the Wye, winding between cliffs of forest and mud-banks: all cliff and forest on that farther side, but on this quarry-side where they stood a droop of the cliffs higher up revealed a wide scene of valley, and five hundred yards away up yonder on the river-slime and its dark seaweed-twine was seen a white speck in the white night....

“That wouldn’t be she,” breathed Price peering, “that’s one of the swans —”

Shan peered deeply afresh, and suddenly crying, “*It’s a woman!*” flew.

For the tide was fast rising, had already half-filled the river, and they had a détour to make — up the road anew, then to the left along a park-wall, a spray of snow spraying their faces, then through a gate, down a lot of broken ground, through an enclosure of brown bracken surrounding the ruins of a church, and now a run through rushes to the river's brink: and there, in truth, they found brooding high up on the bank — a swan: hissing serpent forward, bird astern: musing there in solitude by the Wye upon the moonlight and upon all the wild mood of the night, warbling swan-music in her heart: but beside her — nothing.

The two men stood and watched her: and still Shan maintained his belief that what he had seen from the reef-edge was no swan, but a woman seated there....

They now by a two hours' trudge got back to Glanncourt, and Shan, as day broke, crept up to his bed: but only within four hours to be roused out of slumber by Rosie, the white wife with eyes of wildness recounting with sobs on his breast how that Anne Hine had been found drowned down by the Wye-mouth with the out-fallen tide, and had now been brought mortal to the Hall.

Shan uttered not a word, but all in a shiver and flurry from head to foot threw on his things, and sallied headlong out of the house, he hardly knew why, with a casting up to heaven of his eyes accusingly.... As to his interview with Anne the previous afternoon he had so far told Rosie nothing.

XVI. SHAN DECAMPS



DURING THE AFTERNOON after the inquest Mr. Orrock, with crape on his arm, walked down to the gamekeeper's house with a grave face, meeting there men who were bearing away furniture on their backs, to have in the drawing-room an interview with the white wife, white by nature, quite black that day by costume.

"I can still offer you a chair, Mr. Orrock," she said with a smile, as she shook hands, and he with a sad smile answered: "Ah, this is not well, my dear... London this breezy day is all one gala of flags to greet Lord Roberts' return, but for us here the poms of death, and hearts that are as smart with partings. Has Dr. Blood called? No? Then, I am before him, for that he purposes coming I am confirmed."

"About anything special, Mr. Orrock?"

"Yes: Rosie, my child, you must go straightway up to your Mama Gordridge."

"Has she sent you — ?"

"No, I can't say that: but she expects you to go up and make your submission."

Rosie, who stood leaning on both her arms over a chair-back, answered deliberately: "Mr. Orrock, I am a married woman, I am no longer a child, and I shall go to the Hall when I am sent for, not before, nor have I any submission to make to anyone, for, as I dare say you have been told, my husband has been accused of a shameful act, so it is I who expect an apology from other people."

“I see your point of view,” said Mr. Orrock; “but, then, consider: you are young and she — older.”

“I am a married woman,” muttered the white wife wilfully.

“Quite so — a young, a charmingly young, married woman; but remember, Rosie, that your Mama Gordridge is at present plunged into such a gloom of mind that it is only her strength of character, I am confirmed, which keeps her from a nervous crisis: she needs your companionship, she needs your care — you seem to forget that.”

Rosie prettily shook a low-bowed head, answering: “No, I don’t forget, and I am truly, truly sorry for her, but she must not make statements and then stubbornly stick to them, for that is her manner, to think herself infallible, and to treat everybody like children, so she must be taught now: if she really wants me, let her send for me, and *not* be stubborn.”

“Rosie, I could never have believed that you you would prove so recusant.”

“Oh, I have a most complex character, Mr. Orrock,” said the white wife; “no one quite knows me.”

Mr. Orrock, smiling fondly at her, said: “What you *have*, beyond question, my dear, is a marvellous store of health — such a garden of roses grows in those cheeks, Rosie!” at which Rosie’s nose secretly twitched disdain at him, compliments of her roses being so stale to her, whereas if he had but complimented her “complexity of character,” as to which she was less certain, she would have worshipped her clergyman.... “I don’t know,” he added, “if it is your habit to take camomile at this season of the year? Ah, you don’t, no, well.... But to return — Rosie, this is most grave: can it be that you know so little of your Mama Gordridge as to be waiting for her to take the first step?”

Rosie shrugged without answering, inwardly angered now with him for ignoring her complexity.

“But you don’t mean to go away without first going to her?” he asked: “Ah, no, you could never be so blind to your own interests, my dear.”

“She can speak to me at the funeral,” answered Rosie: “otherwise I shall go.”

“But, Rosie, she never forgives — I tell you so — she *never* forgives! you had better be careful.... The wonder is that your husband himself does not insist—”

“He *has* told me to go, Mr. Orrock, but one doesn’t do everything that one’s husband tells one: besides, he is too cut up now to think of me or anything else, it seems — one would imagine that it was his lover who was dead, his lover and his wife, and his mother, and his father all in one — hasn’t tasted even a cup of tea ever since.”

“Indeed? Well, that may be somewhat excessive, but, then, over all the country-side this too awful thing has cast its pall; for us all the very atmosphere seems vibrative with a remembrance and echo of the bell that has tolled, and the ear at every moment expects a knell. Oh, Rosie, this is sad... in four days’ time she would have been twenty-five. She was not popular in her life, since there was something too aberrant, too unique and solitary in her being, and she knew very much too much of the minuter movemerits of her neighbours’ bosoms to be bearable in society: but her sarcasm was hardly ever cruel, only tart, frequently kindly, as light is, and now I hear that many of the poor people here are saying that she was generosity and sympathy itself in her sly way: and now she lies drowned.... Well, good-bye, and if Dr. Blood comes, just tell him that he is an age too late, that the whole ground has been gone over, and he needn’t waste his precious breath,” upon which the clergyman took his departure for the Hall,

where Mrs. Gordridge, having that day for the first time gazed upon the features of the dead, had indeed need of her friends.

Dr. Blood, for his share, bent upon the same end as Mr. Orrock, came not to Rosie, but made for Shan, and gleaning in those back regions of Glanncourt that Shan had taken train that day, he placed at the station to await Shan's appearance a lad who, as the shades of evening deepened, led Shan to the doctor's place, where the doctor impressed upon Shan that it was his duty to induce the mutineer to speed immediately to her mama; to which Shan made answer: "It shall be done, Dr. Blood."

"What is the matter?" the doctor then said; "you look downright bad."

"It is nothing, Dr. Blood," answered Shan, the muscles of his countenance all sternly drawn, "but I have to ask you, sir, since I do not wish to apply to Mrs. Gordridge, if you will procure me a sight of the body."

"Certainly," answered the doctor, "I am now going up to Glanncourt, if you like to come."

Soon, therefore, Shan was standing in the state-bedroom of Glanncourt, that one over against the cedar, whose near branches darkened its largeness. The evening was dreary in there, the sun having set, and desolate, for the flunkey who had led him up had not come in, nor did the two candles that towered by the bedside throw out their radiance much farther than the aureole round their own flame, or than the coffin covered by a sheet-drapery on the bed between them, and the chamber's air reeked of eternity. But full of awe as was that place, no fear was there for Shan, since perfect pity casts out fear, and he uncovered her, putting the wedding-ring which he had purchased with two of his precious pounds that day inside her shroud by her hand — for she had wished to espouse herself to him, and here was all he could do now to please her — and he pushed, too, a bunch of snow-of-the-

mountain beneath her shroud, and in the space between the two curves of her hair brushed downward he kissed her large brow with a sound of heart-break and of a hound's yowling, and after gazing upon her face, upon her poor lids glued down a little in a mood of musing, and upon the pouted mouth of her drowning, his countenance worked, and dropping down there by the bedside, he prayed without any words.

And the following gloaming, holding his umbrella over Rosie, he followed the procession of broughams to the grave, heard the tolls prating of eternity, heard Mr. Orrock's funeral-words falter in his throat, for all was as usual in the burying, since the jury, though conscious somewhere within them that Britons never shall be slaves, had not dared to bring any other verdict upon a lady than that of "found drowned"; and now when the earth had covered her, and the last words of parting were uttered, and they all turned away from her, Shan, going up the lane to Glanncourt, handed Rosie her parasol, for the mist was frizzy with drizzle-spray, saying to her: "Now, Rosie, you are to go to Mrs. Gordridge, and if she wants you to stay with her, you stay, and I'll go my way alone."

Rosie muttered something stubborn to herself, but went, and before long was kissing her mama's cheek, though in the very act she felt that it was a kiss through a wall between, hard now to break down. Mrs. Gordridge, seated by the French window of her cosy corner, gazed forth in silence at the gadding haze, lonely of soul, sore at the way of life and the moan of death, but still cold of eye, and after a time remarked to Rosie: "So you have come."

"Yes, Mama Gordridge," replied Rosie, sitting listlessly, with a giving way of the spine, her eyes on the floor, "I thought I'd come."

"Oh, you thought so: so what made you think so?" asked the old lady.

"I knew you are by yourself, and I thought—"

“Oh, you knew that I am by myself. But in coming to me you have left your husband.”

“He doesn’t mind.”

“So *I* mind? I was sitting here longing for you to come, of course.”

“If you were, you would have sent for me long ago.”

“What, to lug me about? and give me my gruel? And drag the old thing out of the fire?”

“You are too proud, Mama Gordridge.”

“And you have allowed yourself to become very far too out-spoken!”

Rosie with down-turned eyes twirled her parasol without reply, until Mrs. Gordridge asked her why she came now rather than before, to which she made answer that she had come to say good-bye.

“So, then, are you really going from Glanncourt?”

“With my husband, Mama Gordridge.”

“You had better not, you know.”

“Why so?”

“Because, firstly, of the reason for which your husband is going—”

“Oh, Mama Gordridge, don’t repeat that thing!” — Rosie laughed a little. “I don’t say it because he is my husband, for you know I am not one of the *femmes amoureuses*, but, of course, we women do know our husbands out and out, so you can accept my account of the matter; and if now you could get yourself to admit to him that you made a mistake, no doubt he would forgive and the difficulty would solve itself.”

The old lady’s gaze rested on those droves of ghosts in the haze that roved over The Meadows before the blows of the gale, and they implored her to forgive, for “life,” they said, “is short, and, like us, its crises and chances roll eternally past, no more to return,” but at Rosie’s word

“mistake” she hardened her heart, and only muttered: “Oh, *he* will do the forgiving, will he?”

“It is he who has been aspersed, you know,” answered Rosie.

“But you appear to be very certain! Yet what has been asserted of your husband is not an impossibility.”

“No, an untruth.”

And now this assurance of Rosie’s, so solid as to cast upon Mrs. Gordridge’s mind a shadow of doubt, gave rise to the question within her: “Could the two witnesses of the theft have been at fault?” And she said to Rosie: “Why are you so sure? Has he sworn to you — ?”

“No, Mama Gordridge,” Rosie replied, “I haven’t given myself the pains to make any inquisition—”

“So, then,” answered the old woman, with a new hardening of the heart, “you spurned my discernment, you may say my word, in favour of a person who hadn’t even asserted to you — ?”

“He had no need!”

“Didn’t he? Still, he is going. And you are going also?”

“I suppose so.”

“But, I tell you, better not: for the relation between you and me which has never been broken since you were a child of five, may, if once broken, not be capable of being resumed.”

“Wasn’t it rather broken when you made me marry, Mama Gordridge?”

“May be; still, you have been about me, and if you sever yourself now —”

“I shall be quite glad to stay with you for a time, Mama Gordridge, since I know that you are lonely—”

“I!” Mrs. Gordridge stopped her with a chuckle: “so it will be for pity of me that you stay, not for your own good? Because I am lonely! Am I so very, very lonely, my God? And afraid of ghosts, I suppose! And eager for you to sleep with me, to keep them off me! *Who* gave you to know that I am afraid of ghosts? You have forgotten yourself, you have forgotten me, you have turned out a proud and an ungrateful girl!”

Rosie stood up with a pout.

“I am going,” she said.

“Good old dog,” said the old lady, tugging a Jap dog’s hair.

“Don’t part with me in anger, Mama Gordridge,” said Rosie over her parasol: “I am quite willing to stay with you, for a time — if you ask me.”

“For whose good?” asked Mrs. Gordridge, gazing up now not without a gleam of pleading in her gaze.

Rosie hesitated, and then she said: “For yours.”

“Go — go from me” — And Rosie, hastily putting a kiss on the old lady’s face, went out with a doubt and ache in her heart, nor did Mrs. Gordridge look after her, till after she had gone beyond the door, when she started up a moment — but sat again.

There she remained in her chair a long time after this, watching the funeral-train of mist moving and passing away whither it would in its strange mood, brooding on her life from its birth, and the folly-fire that it was, with its turns and pangs and works, asking herself if it had been worth living, and if life was not all a scurvy thing, and death not better; and she thought of Shan, whether there had been any chance of a mistake, whether, in any case, she could not have found means to forgive, and not for ever act as some goddess under instructions to mete out strict justice to men; in the midst of which meditations, seeing Shan and Rosie making away under the same umbrella over a remote bit of The Meadows grounds, her soul

groaned, recognising herself as alone in a crowded house of slaves, Anne Hine pouting in her grave, Rosie gone; and she was on the point of allowing her eye to moisten when a flunkey handed her a telegram which, on opening, she found to convey the message: “Profoundly regret to announce death of Arthur just posted in Whitehall, his column convoying returned empties engaged with Delarey midway between Zeerust and Krugersdorp. My profound regrets. Derby” — whereat the old lady threw up both her hands in a tremble above her head, and, oblivious of her stick, hobbled briskly from the room.

XVII. SHAN RELATES



THE EVENING FOLLOWING this Rosie, chin on palm, sat ruminating at a window so low and small, that one had need to stoop to look out of it — diamond-paned, half of it fixed, half a sideways slide, and the roof a smaller square than the room, and the room so small! not space enough in it for the display of even half of all those liquids, pots, little sponges, polishers, mysterious creams and lotions, feminine delicacies, with which Rosie kept that flesh of hers as dainty as a daisy, the chamber being a cabin enclosed in oblique planes, and like a real ship's-cabin in this, that, perched high there in the heart of its girdle of mountains, it ever heard round it voices and sounds of gales joined in many an organ-harmony of alto, and grave diapason raving, and vox humana calling, centuries of years of euphony so embalming its old beams in music, that now like old violin-woods they every moment resounded to those vowel-sounds, and of themselves were vocal.

It was the house of Shan's uncle, and Rosie's pout and wrinkling-up of the nose on entering it had been playful, for it was bohemian, and a spree, but already now after twenty-four hours of it the white wife was beginning to recognise that white love in one's uncle-in-law's cottage is not all fun: and Glanncourt had its merits.

And as she sat there ruminating on it at her bedroom window, a little maid looked in to say that tea was ready.

"But Mr. O'Shannon hasn't come back," Rosie said.

"Yes, mum, he has, for I saw him," replied the child.

Rosie stood up, went down and out of the house, and looked down the road — below the level of which the cottage crouches in a bower — and up the road toward the Chase two hundred yards away, but could not see Shan; and she walked down the steep of the yard, which sheerly overlooks a ravine clothed all in firs, and beyond the ravine a world of vale with Severn in it trailing itself away through haze: but still could not anywhere see him. However, in coming back up, on peeping into the dark of an outhouse that was half-full of hay, she could see a form in there lying face downward on an old door, so she climbed in, and it was he.

Sitting by him on the hay, she pulled his hair, saying: “What, asleep?”

“No, I’m not asleep....”

She could scarcely see his face, though he had sat up, but by his tone understood that he was in pain, such pain that she had to inquire several times what was wrong before he told her that he had received evil tidings, and was feeling bad.

“Come and tea,” she said, “and then tell me.”

“Rosie,” was his answer, “you have to go back to Glanncourt.”

“I? Why?”

“You must, you must, ah, you must,” he wailed, shaking his bowed brow in his two palms.

“But why?”

“Let me tell you this,” he answered with a great dreariness and drooping: “that you are an unmarried girl living with a man.”

Rosie thought this over, and after some moments replied: “Am I? Who unmarried me? You aren’t well — !”

“No, that’s true, I am not well, for I have enough to make me crazy.... Aye, there’s the gunner in God, and He will set up the lad that He chooses as a target, and shoot darts at him, patiently, dart after dart, on this face and

on that, till He has him dead and done. But don't suppose that I'm doting, Rosie, for what I've told you is true."

"Whatever do you mean, dear?" said Rosie, peering, her hand on his shoulder, into his face.

Several minutes of silence reigned before from Shan's bent head came any reply, till he moaned: "Stop, I will tell you, Rosie; wait, you shall have it; listen, and you will know. You know already, don't you, that I have a fondness for Lieutenant Gordridge? But you don't know, may be, how far it goes, for it began when I was barely thirteen, seeing that in that plantation of firs above Burton's there was a white wood-pigeon which a pheasant-hen had turned out of its nest, and she herself had laid six eggs in it, so I, knowing of this, went to clutch the eggs — three days after my thirteenth birthday it was, on April the 17th, 1885 — and I was nicely in the tree getting the eggs when underneath I saw Mr. Grace, the head-keeper, gaping up at me: I'll ever remember it: without saying a word he grabbed me by the collar when I got down, and dragged me off to give it to me, no doubt; but when we got to the spot where the New Garden now is we found Mr. Gordridge strolling about there with Mr. Arthur, so old Grace, lugging me before them, told how I'd been copped in the act. Mr. Arthur laughed and slung his finger at me, as much as to say 'aren't you going to catch it hot,' but he begged his father to let me off, and his father went one better, for after talking aside with old Grace, who told him that I was a good one at most things, he asked me if I'd care to come on the estate, and from the next day till yesterday my life, you may say, has been given up to the pheasantry at Glanncourt."

"Yes," said Rosie, "and after all those years of faithful service, to be turned off on a charge of taking money—"

"Well, but I did take it," said Shan.

“Shan!”

“No, don’t be shocked—”

“Oh, but *don’t* say to me that it was you who stole—”

“No, Rosie, I didn’t say stole, I said took. Wait and you will be told, listen and you will know, how our lives can be like rocketers caught broadside-on by a wind, and hurled, with a curl on, a thousand yards awry out of our course: and does the bird know what causes the blow that’s caught her? or can anyone tell me the tale how the earth was made out of air, and where the dirt was delved that made it? Ah, there’s an answer to it all in the air, and you can watch the cat’s ear twitch to catch it, may be, but men’s ears are not artful enough for it. Anyway, from that April the 17th when Lieutenant Gordridge and I came together through my trying to get a clutch of eggs we were like hand and glove for years. Is there a belt, or heath, or turnip-field, a brake, upland, or gorse, a river or stream, anywhere for miles round that our feet haven’t haunted together? I don’t think so. He had a tutor who didn’t too much care, Mrs. and Mr. Gordridge gave him rein, and it was kill, kill, with us, like two young tigers on the prowl together, a regular carouse of prey. One day it came into his head to take out the South Gates fox-hounds — Oh, he was a crazy one! — so he contrived to get Squire Sinclair, the master’s, consent, and, starting a fox, he and I alone, mind you, after a grand run, you can hardly credit it, yes, we killed’n. Guess, now, whether we were pleased with ourselves that evening! So, going home, he says to me, ‘Bull’s-head,’ he says, for that was his name for me, seeing that I wore my hair long, and my head was more than my body, so to say, I being lank for my age, ‘Bull’s-head,’ he said, ‘what’s your age?’ So I told him, on which he called out: ‘By Jove, we were born on the same day!’ aye, and within two hours of the same night, too, as I now know, he in a mansion, I in a cottage, yet out of the same darkness, under the same

night-stars, into this same stew. Rosie, I remember going tingly all over me! and from that evening we were still dearer friends. One afternoon going home with our kills — his father was dead then, he himself had gone to Rugby, and this was in the holidays — I asked him if he liked me, so after looking me frankly in the face, he said, ‘Bucephalus’ — for ‘Bucephalus’ is the same as ‘Bull’s-head’ — ‘there’s no one anywhere that I like better’; then he told me that I was ‘archaic,’ and when I asked him what that meant, he told me that I frequently reminded him of Abraham and Moses and that crew — I have never been able quite to fathom what his meaning was. Well, the very next day he gave me that palish photograph—”

“But, Shan,” murmured Rosie, “I have heard most of these details before, dear, and it is raining, and spray spattering in through this roof, so make haste and tell me what you were thinking of in saying that I am ‘unmarried,’ and that you — took the money.”

“Sit on this side where it is dry,” replied Shan... Well, then, I won’t worry you about all that, and I’ll skip over the years in which I began to fix my heart upon you, and in which I got Mrs. Gordridge to say that she would see if she could give you to me. During those years Lieutenant Gordridge and I were parted, and how much he remembered of all that had been between us two I don’t know, but as to me, Rosie, it has all been hoarded in my heart, as a Jew treasures his jewels, and as a grouse remembers the number of her brood where they wait on the ground in the broom, aye, it has all been hoarded in my heart. Then he came, ill — a year and three months and three days ago, on September the 24th. I was at the station waiting, but — he was too ill to notice me. He must have been still ill when, seeing you anew, he fell in love with you. On the Friday before he arrived you had as good as promised to marry me... he must have known it all, yet he courted you... Lord God Almighty forgive me! I broke in his ribs for it....”

“Dear, it was a fair fight,” breathed Rosie.

“Yes, dear, a fair fight, but you don’t know — my holy one — my heart’s brother — born both under one moon — and I bruised him like a mark, and most damnably broke his bones.... Well, never mind — what was I saying? Oh, but I had some excuse, mind you, for I wasn’t too sure then that he meant quite well by you, and it was only after my three-days’ knock-about with the police, and after he had come and rescued me out of their claws, that she who is in her tomb this night came to me where I stood underneath the cottage beech, assured me that he had meant to marry you, and showed me that I had been most cruel to him; upon which I just snatched up one of the bobbies’ bykes, and was away to the station, where I came just in time to make friends with him: and, Rosie, I vowed to him then that I’d renounce all hope of marrying you—”

Now the white wife’s heart began to beat more wildly as a sort of dawn-twilight broke in upon her brain, and she breathed: “Strange thing! Anne once told me that it was so...

“Aye, *she* knew, for she knew what was in each one’s mind, you see, though she wasn’t always right either, poor sweet, she ran riot here or there. So that was settled, Rosie: he was to go to the war, and I to guard you—”

“But he accepted such a promise?” Rosie asked.

“It was freely made! he didn’t force — !”

“Well, go on.”

“The very next day Mrs. Gordridge had me brought to her with the bandages still round my bruises, to offer to give you to me. I refused you, threw up my job, not wishing to be too near to you, and moved up here, not meaning to be too far from you. Well, six days afterwards I was sawing up wood on the well up there under the road when Yotty Perkins, the fish-pedlar, told me that you were off to — Persia, he said, not China; but it was

five days before the possibility that it might be true suddenly struck me one night, and you know how you were actually going when I flurried up, halted the carriage, and vowed to Mrs. Gordridge that I would marry you—”

“And you *did*” she put in.

“Yes, but wait. You may think now that I was happy, having you without quite violating my vow to the lieutenant: but, if I was happy down my right side, so to say, my heart was far enough from it, for this world is made, not of one dirt, look, but of two, and the grass, now, that the cow eats, though you may think that it is green, it isn’t, for it is scarlet, too, and the cow casts out all that’s green of it, and keeps the red, and how could a rose-tree throw out roses as scarlet as the cow’s gore, if the leaves are green alone? No, the ground’s scarlet, and the sun is, and mortal men are. So I was pretty sad and mad, in spite of my heaven, and you know how on the Sunday of our banns I broke loose in the night, doing sixty pounds of damage, which sixty pounds I should be glad of now, God knows, and on the Monday forenoon I tore his photograph to shreds.... But on the Wednesday I got a cablegram from him, asking me to give his mother the news of his arrival at the Cape, signed ‘Arthur,’ signifying that he hadn’t forgotten one hour of our youth, and was still in a closer union with me than with his own mother.... He thanked me for my faithfulness to him.... Rosie, could I marry you after this? and yet I couldn’t let you be shipped abroad, so, after thinking it over for five days, I determined in my head to break the law of the land, and without saying a word to anyone, I took the train for London, purposing to marry some girl up there first, and then, returning, go through the pretence of marrying you....” With wide eyes the white wife clung to his arm at this, frightened at the audacity of this manhood, trying to see his face in the dark, hardly yet finding room in her brain for all that this meant to her life, or for the deluge of radiance that now drenched her consciousness, while outside

the hay-shed the rain rushed down now with a grave sound, and touched their faces with sprays to which they gave no attention.

“Shan! and you did it?”

“Yes, I did it. At first I meant to marry a girl.... but, then, the injustice to the girl.... I married the first old bag of rags that I met in a pub in Bethnal Green, that same Mrs. Graves—”

“Shan!”

“Aye, *she’s* my wife.”

“Dear one! Never mind, dear!”

“No, it is nothing: I was only—”

Suddenly Rosie clapped palms once together.

“I am to be mistress of Glanncourt, after all!” “No, Rosie, stop—”

“Ah, wouldn’t Mama Gordridge eat out her heart at it.... O! that would be sweet.... The only pity is that Anne’s dead, she’ll never know now—”

“Oh, Rosie, stop, I have not told you, my tongue shies—”

“But why didn’t you let me into it all along?” asked the white wife, her mind all too flighty with excitement to collect itself to hearken: “you might have told me — !”

“No, Rosie, I might have, but I could not breathe it even to you,” said he, “I felt so creepy of the least fear of a hint of the secret leaking through to the mistress’ ears. I am not one for airing my cares, as you know, and then again I was weak, dear, I couldn’t resist the greed I had of seeing you regard me as your master and owner — oh, it was my reign, my fling, you don’t know, my usurpation of you and term of office, fast-fleeting, as when a head-boy is appointed to look after his school, and he stalks like a cock, his heart sinking each time he thinks of the teacher coming back, and the collapse of his kingship; but in spite of this, I think I should have told you, only I was shy of it, oh, I shrank, Rosie—”

“But the old woman knew—”

“Aye, to my woe, I had to tell her: for when I asked her to pass through the form of marriage with me, she wants to know *why*, the Cockney fox, and, as I had only four days, I had to let out to her that I wished to marry-without-marrying someone else, whereupon with that cunning twitching of her eyes, she said aye, she would, on condition that I signed a paper; so I signed to pay her nine shillings a week, without, however, letting her know from what part of the country I had sprung, meaning always to forward her the cash through James Davis in Winchester: and how the old hound’s nose eventually contrived to track me out down here I even now don’t know. Well, that was on the Thursday night, and on the Friday, going, as I was directed, to a place which they call the Vicar General’s Office, in Ludgate Hill, I got a licence with a stamp on it, and the same evening, after rigging her in new clothes, carted her to the superintendent registrar in Bethnal Green, to give notice of it. No marrying the following day, for one day must pass; no marrying on the Sunday: on the Monday at noon we were married: on the Tuesday at two I had to marry you. But I couldn’t get away! My wife clung to me, insisting on seeing me off, which was just what I didn’t mean her to do, nor would I wire to Glanncourt, I was so chary of letting a soul dream that I had been anywhere near London. But stealing clear of her on the Tuesday morning, I first of all wired James Davis, beseeching him to wire my coming to Glanncourt, and, on getting to Gloucester, hired a bicycle—”

“I see it all now,” said Rosie: “this old being, when she found you out down here, threatened to inform against you for bigamy unless you kept her pocket always full, is that it? and that’s why we were often poor, and why you took the money: for if she had only opened her mouth, I might possibly have been shipped away out of Arthur’s way, and it was Arthur’s money

which you took to disburse for Arthur's behoof, is that it? But, dear, mightn't you have applied to Mama Gordridge for money, or to Arthur, rather than suffer all the tortures you must have gone through?"

"Apply to Mrs. Gordridge I couldn't," Shan answered: "I was too shy of having her even dreaming that I was in trouble for money, for she would immediately have been set questioning how that could have come about; and to Lieutenant Gordridge I did write — three letters in all, the first two to let him know that you were going all right—"

"I wondered why you would never let me see his letters to you! So what kind of words did Arthur discover to unburden his heart in about all your bounty toward him and me?"

"Rosie, he never knew what I have done, he was never to know."

"But why haven't you told him from the first?"

"What? When I myself at one hour wasn't sure of myself for the next hour, just think in what a stew *he*, if he had known, would have lived at the thought of his future wife living as a wife with a man, ever doubtful in his heart at what moment I might go dog-mad and damn all our lives. Besides, Mrs. Gordridge, shrinking from letting him know yet that you were married, had got me to promise to be mum: so I locked it all up in my heart, and wrote to him with a hard rein on my pen, waiting for him to appear that I might relate it to him face to face, and hear what he would say. But finally, when I felt myself being strangled by Mrs. Graves, and when, though I kept turning both the eggs and birds of the estate into money, I couldn't appease the woman's greed, I just wrote the whole story to Lieutenant Gordridge, asking for funds—"

"Ah, he does know now, then!" said Rosie gladly.

"I wonder?" he went, and groaned.... "Not from that letter anyway, Rosie, for that letter, as it happened, was with those same mails in that same

train which De Wet burned after making a shambles of the 4th Derbies on that Rhenoster kopje, and after gunning Rhoodeval station, and looting those great-coats—”

“So even now Arthur doesn’t know?”

“He *may* now.”

“Oh, *you* wrote again?”

“Not that I wrote again.... Oh, God, I suppose I must tell you—” and now, Shan, catching out of his pocket a copy of the *Star* and a box of matches, in the glare of a match showed Rosie the name of Gordridge in the paper.

“Missing!”

Shan hastily caught from his pocket another paper, a later edition, struck another match, and in its glare showed Rosie the name of Gordridge.

“Killed!”

“Yes, killed,” said he, and now he dropped down again upon the old door on the hay.

“Oh, but poor Mama Gordridge!” Rosie breathed, shrinking.

From the breast of Shan there escaped an outcry of distress: “my brother....!” while ever down with a showery grave sound brushed the rain outside, drowning the shrubbery, the ground, struggling through spouts, with gulps.... goblins sobbing in the night....

XVIII. SHAN AWAITING



THE NEXT DAY it still rained, so when the pony-cart came to the gate to take Rosie's trunks, which were already packed to go back to Glanncourt, Rosie, sitting on one of them, said: "No! I will wait till to-morrow."

On the morrow Rosie, instead of going down to Glanncourt, pouted at her pretty nails, wrote to her Mama Gordridge on the death of Arthur, and now awaited an answer which, slow in coming, came cold; Shan, for his part, being most hard-worked in those days, having taken over the thirteen acres of farm from his uncle, who had flitted, would be with her hardly twice a day at meals, and, waiting now to see what she would do, breathed not another syllable about her going back to Glanncourt, for she was eye-bright to his eyes in the cottage. But one day in late January, coming in and finding her with her skirt turned up and her hair frowsy at housework — for though half of their old luxury of furniture had been sold, half had been brought up hither, and she was keeping it neat — he got angry, saying to her: "Rosie, if ever I see you doing such work again, you must only go to Glanncourt."

Rosie puffed out smoke into his face, replying: "You pronounce it like a threat, as though Glanncourt wasn't a more pleasant place to live in than this hole in the ground. And if I don't do things, who is to? Who does most of the cooking — ?"

"Do you?"

"Fond male! so do you imagine that Jane does all the work?"

"Then, I shall have to get a second girl."

“What, want a whole zenana?... No, Shan, you are nothing to me, you are sheltering and nourishing me, so I earn my living. Besides, I am going home in a few days, for I am only injuring the last rags of my demireputation by lingering in this den.”

He made no answer to this, gazed out of window, till in some minutes he said: “Whether you go to stay or no, you really should go now to see Mrs. Gordridge, Rosie.”

“Has Mrs. Gordridge written to ask me?” asked Rosie.

“As good as!... Rosie, do take care, now, that you don’t give folks grounds to accuse you of ingratitude — she is good, she is very good, and her soul is very sad. And now there is this new thing to make her wretched.... Haven’t you heard yet? Look—” he showed her a newspaper huge-lettered with the words: “The Queen Dead.”

“Oh, she’s dead.... But for what reason should Mama Gordridge be wretched at that, since she was not at all a gossip of the queen.”

“But isn’t everybody more or less sad at it, especially those, I suppose — ?”

“I am not, then, I am sure,” said the white wife: “she wouldn’t have been wretched if I had died.”

“Oh, Rosie, you have a hard heart,” said Shan. “Sure, now, it hasn’t got one little soft spot in it about the bigness of a pea?”

“Has it? For whom is that?”

“For people that I like, then, and for people that like me, not for my queenie. Women possess more sense than men, you see.”

“And less sympathy with the earth’s thirst and throbbings, probably; still, Mrs Gordridge will grieve, I am sure, if there is any room at all in her for greater grief.... So, Rosie, you are going to her in a few days?”

“I be.”

“The very best thing that you could do... To stay, or only for the day?”

“To stay.”

“Best thing — ! But, then, will you be telling her everything?”

“At any rate,” said Rosie heatedly, “I’ll be telling her enough to make her eat her nails for accusing people of stealing money!”

“As if she could help doing what she did! Why tell her anything at all? Her bad opinion of me I can still bear, for you can’t explain why I took the money without explaining that you aren’t my wife, and, that once out, good-bye to your ever being allowed to be with me again.”

“Ah! won’t that be hard to bear!” sighed the white wife with eyes cast up white: “I can just see myself weeping in my widow’s-weeds.... No more Shan, girls, the sugar’s all done.”

“Well, it is well to be young, Rosie, and to have a laughing heart that throws off things.”

“Hark! Methuselah declaims. But I am not so young as my teeth, Mr. O’Shannon, if you but knew it: you see, I’m pretty complex inside, a regular enigma underneath my what-do-you-call-it; and, if I wasn’t gay, a gloomy little pair we two should make together, shouldn’t In fact, the white wife, in showing more jollity than she quite felt, *was* in those weeks a little “complex,” feeling underneath, as she did, how complete must be Shan’s grief at that death of Arthur, from whom he was never now to receive that grasp of the hand and glance of gratitude that he must have looked forward to as the reward of all his work. And the boomerang of that bigamy of his! He had broken his life for Arthur — the Boers had doubly broken it in breaking his obligation to Arthur; he had kept the white wife white because of a living man — though the man was dead, she had still to be kept white because of a living woman; and though the woman was old, being seventy, she might still for a score of years live a vampire at his blood, not only with

a claim upon his pocket, for maintenance, but with a threat of imprisonment held over his head, for waste. As for Rosie herself, that death of Arthur was the death of a lover who wanted to make her the lady of Glanncourt, so that, on the whole, her gaieties whenever Shan came in were gaieties with a purpose, and in divers other ways she had turned very good, going on Sundays to the white chapel a mile down the road, whose score or so of devouts congregated to it from great distances, giving, too, to tramps, showing her face in cottages where sickness or want was, and in those long evenings singing and playing "Lead, Kindly Light," may be, or reading to Shan from the books which he liked, from "Progress and Poverty," from "Paradise Lost," and "The Pilgrim's Progress," and the Old Testament, till her big empty head nodded toward slumber. Meantime, she watched with much quiet interest in what fashion Shan bore his grief, with what groans, with what glooms, with what broodings of the brow, how far his manhood failed, how far it succeeded, in concealing his heart-break, how now a nimble Achilles he rebounded to his feet from the knock-down, till now afresh the surges of his adversity redrowned him, and now he harnessed himself as a horse to his fate and drew hardily in the traces, till now he found the way waste, and wailed. In her heart Rosie called him the carle of sorrows. But time ivies every abruptness, and then, moreover, those old pains of struggle against the gripe and virus of Rosie's graces were over now for him — or not wholly over may be, but now he knew and trusted himself, as he never would have discovered and recognized himself, had not those words of Anne Hine's: "great as the greatest heroes of history," once greeted his ears, words which were as a revelation to him of a dream once somewhere dreamed and nearly forgotten, giving him to be never thenceforth quite the same kind of simple Simon, but ever thenceforth a firmer stepper on the earth. And when that last year of the century which

had yielded him so much tribulation had passed away, and the new era's first Spring was blooming, he threw off that mood of brooding, turning anew to the love of a universe whose face just there has a fay's fascination. The death of Arthur — or rather the report of Arthur's death, for in this as in some other known cases a death was reported where no death had taken place — was both made more baleful by the Spring, and tended to increase Shan's feeling of luck at being alive and present at such a show. "I saw a dead starling on the shed this morning," he told Rosie, strolling with her over the Chase one night, "and felt so sorry for it, that it had just missed this day!"

"That squadron of clouds sailing up there behind the mountain," he informed her one lowering afternoon of March, "are just newly arrived in Britain from the Brazils, and are now eastward bound for Siberia: they have a high time." The Comforters returned, his heart was enlarged. He saw the fields grow suddenly hairier-rough than Esau under grasses; over the meadows he watched dandelions like stars cast their hosts in constellations, and daisies in milky-ways, making of two acres a universe; those groves hung above the Wye, almost visible from his windows, wildly wantoning, grew to resemble some seraglio all gracious with rugs, draperies, waving Valenciennes, given up to toying, a life of joyance, languished orgies, in which morning or midnight the voice of the organ darkling walks; nor of all this was he a spectator only, knowing well that *he* was *it*, it he, vein of his vein, and when, lifting up his heart, he hailed, calling out to it "well-beloved!" the mountains all with dumb mouths calling babbled back to him: "well-beloved!" In the midst of which new zest there was always still, nevertheless, his thorn in the flesh, the old woman sending for more money than he had to send her.

“I don’t intend to bear it much longer,” he said to Rosie all within a little bower of gorse on the Chase whither they often strolled together hatless of a gloaming, “for now that Lieutenant Gordridge is dead I am no longer so shy of her tongue as I have been, seeing that all that she can do to me now is to get me into prison for a month or two, and, since I have broken the law, I often feel disposed to undergo it of my own accord.”

“The law be jiggered,” said the gay girl, “if you did such a *bêtise*, you would not only force your judge to commit a crime, but you would force me away from you, since I could not, of course, stay with a gentleman generally known to be the husband of the prophetess Anna. I only stay with you through bad habit, and, if I once go away, I am bound to fall in love with someone or other, I know, forget all about you, and never see you ‘more.’ So I vote that you even keep on paying — it won’t be for long, for a lady of seventy who dances the cake-walk can’t last.”

“Well, I shall do as you advise me, dear,” said Shan, “and God keep me from hungering for the death of a fellow-creature. I only wish I had that forty pounds now — Wasn’t that, now, a mysterious business how I lost that money! I can’t even dream—”

“I believe that it was Anne who took it,” remarked Rosie suddenly; and Shan started.

“I don’t, of course, mean,” Rosie added, “that she stole it in an ordinary sense: but we now know that she was brain-sick about that time, crazy after you, and so may have had some motive — that is, if you really did leave it on the mantelpiece.”

Shan was silent; then he said: “Yes, it may have been she, and, if so, I can see her dear motive: she wished, by making me poor may be, to push me sooner to end my troubles, for she judged that you would never come with me if I was driven away, and there her fine scent ran riot, as she ran

riot in conjecturing that I meant to commit suicide. Yet what else was she to conjecture, since she knew that I was guarding you for Lieutenant Gordridge, saw me marry you, and was just not fly enough to strike the idea that my marriage might be null.... The dear!... She died because of me, but don't talk, Rosie, about her being 'crazy after' *me*; she wasn't made of the common clay; she believed that I had done a noble deed, and her love was as pure and beautiful as that moon that you see moving up yonder — purer, for the moon's rolled up in a struggle with those pitchy vapours which she throws her glare on — look at her, like the combustion of a bonfire — on earth it is May, but in heaven it's the Fifth of November.”

“Look at the Chase,” said Rosie, “one would imagine a conflagration with the fog rolling like smoke... funny....”

“Yes, and it is getting pretty cold, too, we had better be going back” — and along a footpath they passed in single file through a waste of bracken, where a scraggy nag or two browsed in God's eye throughout the reign of the night; and hence down a road they roamed to their home.

XIX. SHAN IN LUCK



IT WAS ONLY three days later that Shan received a letter even more pressing than usual from his old woman, praying for twenty pounds without delay; it had, however, two strangenesses: that it made no threats, and when Shan showed it to Rosie, she said at once: "This isn't her writing."

"Perhaps she is ill," replied Shan gravely.

"Hip!" said Rosie; "over-much jigging—"

"No, Rosie, don't be hard-hearted; she hasn't a bad old heart on the whole."

"But *I* have? The first wife better loved than the second, girls, as usual! You don't know me, Mr. O'Shannon."

"Rosie, have you a good heart?"

"I can pity; yes, I can pity."

"Is that so?"

"Oh, I can *pity*. You little know *me*: pity is the grand thing in me; with a white anguish and shut eyes, from the pit of my soul to the tip of my tingling lips I can pity."

"Well, now!"

"That's Rosie."

"Rosie, do you pity me?"

"A little bit like *that*."

"Well, that's a lot. So what shall I do now about this thing? There is something muggy about this."

“I should send her the base gold,” said the white wife, “for the more you send her the more she will jig, and the more she jigs—”

“No,” said Shan, “I know what I shall do: I won’t send: I will wait” — a decision which turned lucky, for, as when one by starving worms causes them to squirm forth, some days afterwards Shan, in walking on his business down the mountain, encountered a man who asked him whereabouts Mr. O’Shannon hung out, and when Shan gave him to know that he was O’Shannon, the man said: “I am from Mrs. Graves.”

He was a thing young, lank, pink of trunk, and his being stank of drink.

“Who are you?” asked Shan.

“I am Mrs. Graves’ nephew.”

“How is Mrs. Graves?”

“She is all right.”

“So what do you want?”

“I come about the money.”

“Which money?”

“Why, the twenty quid, mister.”

“Why didn’t she write for it herself?”

“A nasty touch of the influenza she had; got a pal to write it for her, poor old girl.”

“But why hasn’t she come for it herself?”

“She’s got the influenza very bad.”

“What, still?”

“Aye, still, poor old soul.”

“You said that she is ‘all right.’”

“Well, *you* understand my meaning, don’t you? I meant that she’s still in the land of the living — that sort of thing — poor old soul.”

“Well, I would never have thought that you are her nephew.”

“How’s that, then?”

“You aren’t half so knowing, now, as your aunt.”

“What’s your meaning, mister?”

“It’s nothing. But twenty pounds isn’t the right amount.”

“Well, I’m well aware of that, but she told me, if you won’t tip her the twenty, then make it fifteen. It’s worth something, too, working up these here hills. Lord! talking of hills, you’ve some hills about here — mountains I call ’em.”

“But fifteen isn’t the right amount either.”

“I know that.... I forget what is; she *did* tell me, too — poor old girl.”

“But if I don’t choose to send it — what then?”

“Oh, but you’ll do her twelve, anyway — she lying ill, too, poor old soul.”

“Twelve isn’t the amount. I won’t send more than eight.”

“There you are! Eight will do — I’m not hard.”

“Seven is the right amount really.”

“Seven? But by the time I have paid my fare—”

“I doubt if I could let her have more than seven to-day.”

“Seven let it be! There! I can’t say fairer. I’ll *have* the seven, provided it’s down.”

“Ah, but you are not your aunt’s nephew—”

“What can be your meaning?”

“Tell me this: why ought I to give anything at all? What claim has this Mrs. Graves upon me?”

“You have often given her oof before, that’s a sure thing.”

“I admit that. But what *claim* has she?”

“That’s neither here nor there, mister. I only—”

“Don’t you know?”

“I do know, yes—”

“Mention it and you shall have the twenty pounds down.”

The fellow hesitated.

“There’s a pound to pay your fare,” said Shan, patting his shoulder, “you go home and get some work” — and he walked on down the mountain-steep, leaving the Cockney gaping after him.

Coming home sooner than usual that evening, he found Rosie reading in a lounge-chair underneath the cherry-tree, and was met with the exclamation: “But tea isn’t ready!”

“Rosie,” said he, “I am obliged to leave you.”

“For aye?” says she.

“Two days. Think you won’t be too lonely, now, — with Jane?”

“Oh, I am inured now to manlessness, you know, and so, I don’t doubt, is Jane. But what’s up?”

“It’s nothing....”

“Wild retort! and your eyes sparkling and crackling like a whirl of circus-girls all in spangles. One would imagine that someone was dead—”

“No — don’t say that of me: no one is dead to my knowledge.”

“So where are you going?”

“You will know when I get back,” and no more could Rosie win from him. Having hastily packed a hand-bag, he made off down the mountain.

The white wife was left now with a mind at work upon a crowd of surmises, and lived in a vacuum for two days, during which not a line came from Shan. On the evening after, she keenly expected him; but it was not till the following morning that she got a telegram — from London — and at ten that night was in the garden hearkening to a nest of nightingales warbling, when the gate swung back, and, bag in hand, in he hastened.

“Oh, I am glad,” she said to him, as she shook hands. “Why didn’t you send a line?”

“Vision that she is,” Shan’s lips muttered, for the white wife like the cherry-tree shimmered all in garments of white that night, with wide sleeves, and gauzes, and white shoes in the moonshine, and she reeked with aromas more rich than the cherry-tree’s. Shan kissed her hand.

“Supper’s ready,” she said, and they went into a small room, rudely built, but refinely furnished, where while he ate in a kind of haste, Rosie, with her elbows on the table, sat waiting with a pale nose that showed up the four old-gold freckles, giving brief replies to his questions, and in the midst of a silence said: “Don’t keep me, dear.”

“She’s dead,” said Shan.

“Mrs. Graves?”

“She’s dead.”

Rosie went quite white, then threw up roses, which soon perished once more, then confounded the rouge and white, like a flower-show of roses reflected in a freshet. She had fattened and bloomed out in the bosom of these mountains, and feasted deep. Shan looked at her changes of colour with a shy eye; and presently in strained accents she uttered the words: “Dust to dust, jigger to digger, Graves to grave.”

“Really, Rosie,” said Shan, laying down his knife and fork to underlook her with reproach, “that seems rather heartless of you.”

“My dear,” said Rosie, “your anger at my gladness is due to the fact that you are secretly glad yourself. She was an expense, and the enemy. And since I did not know her, why should I be sad? Someone dies with every tick of the clock, and one is not too sad.”

“But to this woman I owe something,” said Shan. “She was crafty, she looked after Number One, but she wasn’t bad: for though she squeezed me

all she could for her own good, she refused to give my secret away to her friends, though they entreated her to, and she remembered that I was her husband, and was true to her word.”

He then told how he had found out everything, how the old lady in mounting into a train to come down to him, being in a drunken state, had tumbled and dislocated something....

They sat in lounge-chairs on the footway between the flowers and the front-door, Rosie's chair two feet further removed from Shan's than usual, heard without hearing the night-birds' burden, and conversed of one Tom Price, a wight of that part, as to whom Shan in walking up the road had just heard that, having been invalided home from the war, he had a week before returned to Woodston: and Shan meant in a day or two to look Tom up, to hear what Tom had to say for himself; after which, conversation, usually fluent where they two talked together, grew grudging, and when Shan went to hold a match to Rosie's cigarette, she took the match in her own fingers, and when he jumped up to replace her fallen lace-wrap round her shoulders, she murmured “it is all right,” and wrapped it round herself.

He did not that night, as always, put his lips to her palm in saying good-night, for she gave to his shy organism the impression that he had somehow gravely offended her, and “If she thinks,” he thought within himself, “that now that I am free I mean to take advantage of her finding herself here with me, which is due to her kindness, to force myself upon her, she is very much mistaken, for a man has some pride.”

The morning after, the white wife, on bounding down to breakfast, though she was generally later, said to him: “Do excuse my lateness”; at meals their politeness to each other became ideal, and their conversations, feats of invention, were on botany and the state of politics. Shan, meanwhile, that whole week, was extremely miserable, he who, on hearing

of the death of the old woman, had dreamed of being so blithe. Infected with melancholy, inert, all restless, he could hardly work, would not give himself the trouble to go for a chat with Tom Price, the new-corner from the war, and shirked the gossip of the passers by his turnip-plot. His being was thronged with one thing only — Rosie: what Rosie had said last night, and what flower Rosie had chosen to pluck an hour since, and what could have been her real meaning in saying or doing this or that; leaning over the thole of his snathe, on a sudden he started, and found that he had lost half-an-hour of profound reverie in going over in his head the ins and outs of the brigue between him and Rosie the previous evening. What was wrong? he asked himself: the old woman was well dead, the stone-wall down that had kept them apart; and lo now, a new wall, made without hands out of the stuff of their own frames, fantastic, rarer than air, tougher than stone. Was it some adder that had addled Adam's blood with its dart? For each day the gulf broadened, she holding her head more haughtily aloof from him, he making believe to be thinking of anything but of her, and it was all a bitter pity, he thought, a thing to wring a tear out of the drought of scorching brass, since it just happened so without reason, and mortal power could not stop it.

After five or six days of it his face had become quite drawn, for he could hardly eat, though the thirst that burned his inwards caused him to drink enormously. To be away from her was to be a castaway on a raft, and to be near her was to be sick of a fever. He thought that, if he could tell her all, she would shew him some pity, for she had said that she was most pitiful, but tell her he could not, seeing that there was some kink or other in him, he being made like that, no doubt, too shy and proud to bring himself to it, for it was she who had begun it, and he would die sulking of his hunger, like the vulture cribbed in a cage, whose heart knew its own heart-break. If with thoughts of this sort he maundered on Tuesday, all inert and maudlin, on

Wednesday he would rend up handfuls of grass in an agony, and it lasted till Rosie one evening broke a silence between them by coming out with the announcement that she was just about to go back to Glanncourt.

“So you will be leaving me?” replied Shan in a tone of polite regret at the going of a guest.

“Yes, I am so awfully sorry,” said Rosie, “since I have liked being up here so much.”

“Why not stay on, since you like it?” Shan asked: “I need hardly say that I should be delighted, if you did.”

“Yes, I only wish it was not wholly impossible; but, of course, after the death that has lately happened, it is hardly any more quite — *comme il faut*, is it?”

“Well, no, I suppose that that is so.”

“I wrote to Mama Gordridge to-day, duly making my submission, and saying that I am going” — and now Shan became as blanched as a ghost.

“There’s the letter in the rack,” remarked Rosie, and she rose and shewed him the envelope with the address on it writ large.

“Oh, it isn’t posted,” he remarked.

“No, I haven’t been out.”

“Shall I run down the road, and post it for you — now?”

“If you will be so obliging.... But, after all, no, I have something to add, I will post it tomorrow.”

On the following evening he noticed that the letter was no longer there, and when she gave him the information that she had been arranging her trunks during the twilight, this caused him anew to whiten and wince. Then followed a discussion as to the pony-chaise, and as to who was to take it down the mountains with the trunks, he promising to look to it, and when Rosie complained of the carman who had brought her up, Shan said that

someone else should be procured, and in the end it was mutually agreed that each difficulty would disappear, and the trunks duly reach Glanncourt.

And during the ensuing evening but one the trunks, by the ingenuity and thews of Shan and a driver, were duly squeezed down through the stairs, taken out to the gate, and placed upon the chaise; and now Rosie with her gloves and hat on, parasol in hand, stood alone within the house-door with Shan, Jane standing out at the gate, waiting there to see her go.

“I think that there is nothing more to be said,” Rosie said: “I have given all instructions to Jane, who will look after you.”

“That will be all right,” said he.

“So good-bye.”

“Good-bye.”

They shook hands.

“You can come and see me sometimes at Glanncourt,” said she.

“I shall be glad to do that,” said he.

“Besides, as I shall be informing Mama Gordridge of everything now, she will henceforth no doubt be on her knees to you to come back, in which case we shall see each other occasionally.”

“Let us hope so,” said Shan.

“So good-bye.”

“Good-bye.”

They shook hands.

“I — regret to have to go away from you just at present,” said Rosie, “for you don’t look over-well.”

“It’s nothing,” said he.

Bent over her parasol, eyeing the ground, her mouth trembled, as she whispered: “I enjoyed being up here.”

“Yes, the air’s so fresh,” he muttered.

“Oh, Shan, don’t be so proud,” said Rosie, fixing him with a look of reproach.

“What can I *do*?”

“Implore me to stay....”

“Have pity!” he now shouted at her in a passion, upon which the white wife turned in haste, and fled away up to her chamber, in the middle of which she stood all laughters and sobbings like a dying light that flickers wildly up alternately and burns low with sobs, while lying on a sofa below Shan also was piping his eye, with whinings; and thus by one bold blow the bowls of bewitchment which had imprisoned them were broken, and the boxes, by dint of brains and of brawn, were brought back up the stairs.

That evening they made a gay pair, and Shan kneeling in grass at her feet beneath the cherry-tree, asked her what could have been “wrong between us these last ten days?”

“I don’t know,” Rosie replied: “some fly must have stung you.”

“Oh, yes, stung *me*!” he laughed. “But now that we are engaged, it is I who ought to be going away—”

“How long will it take?”

“Five days anyway, I gather.”

“Don’t you trouble to go,” she whispered: “I’ll trust you!”

“And are we to live up here? You know, Rosie, that we are pretty poor....”

“We shall live up here all the summer,” said she, “for I like being here now, and then we shall go down, and you will start kippuring again in our old cottage.”

“God’s good, after all... his brow bowed down; then, looking up sharply —” I say, do you remember that old threat of mine to make you flush, if you were a snow-flake? It isn’t Tom, Dick or Harry that you are having for a

husband, mind: I seem to be somebody, an ancestor of Ansons and Nelsons...

She bit his chin.

“My difficulty is,” he added, “to marry quite on the quiet about here, for, if old Fitchett, the registrar at Ebbstow, knows me, that will be awkward; but I don’t think that he does, and as to the licence, that I shall be getting from Mr. Beth, the surrogate, beyond the Forest, who, I’m sure, never heard of my having been married to you before. It will be all right!”

“Five days, is it?” asked Rosie.

“So Mr. Carter told me to-day. I’ll see if by wit or work one can’t turn it into four!”

The next morning, hurrying down from the mountain to go to the surrogate, he saw a wooden leg stumping through Netherend village, and grasped the hand of Tom Price, with whom, as he was rather late for the train, he did not stop to talk, but, calling backward that they should shortly meet each other, hurried onward. The same day he made the affidavit as to “no impediment,” and on the third day, returning to the same surrogate, got the licence, with which he went straight to the Ebbstow registrar, and, elated that the registrar, whom he knew well, had not known him, came home to find the white wife almost as occupied with lady’s-work, repairing this, changing that, Jane aiding, as if this was her first marriage. The next day he was in possession of the registrar’s certificate and licence to marry.

That evening, the marriage-eve, he brought her home the tidings that Mrs. Gordridge had hurriedly left Glanncourt for London that day; brought her also a card-board box crowded with bridal flowers, lilies with stiff bright pistils couched in maiden-hair, anemones japonicæ as odorous as the Orient — stolen goods out of Glanncourt hot-houses — thinking to surprise her who rather surprised him by the fête of garden-flowers with which he

found the house all garnished, and by the white cake which waited, so that in nothing the second wedding might hang behind the first, or leave a feeling of incompleteness on the nerves.

Before supper he had again to go out, for in the activities of that day he had nearly forgotten, what was his business every Friday evening, to visit Anne Hine's grave with flowers: so, taking some of the bride's flowers, for she had stripped the garden, he started out — a two-mile jog down the mountains under a moon which, newly-risen, was illuminating above her a beach of cloud brindled in streaks and crinkles, like ribbed sea-sand, where moon-babies bathed; and in Woodston churchyard he was placing his pious garland when he heard a stump, stump, and there legging among the graves came Tom Price, searching for the grave of one Gertrude, dugged during his journeyings at the front. "Come on, Tom, I'll shew you," said Shan, and led the way.

There Shan excused himself for not having looked up Tom before, and demanded of Tom why he had not been up to him, to which Tom answered: "You don't know how bad I be, for er bent only the leg wi' me, now, but worse still be the effects of that breath of lead I did get in the Megalienbergs in this left breast."

"This is the first I have heard of it," answered Shan.

"But you know, no doubt, that I was with those details with Little about Zeerust before I got my billet in the leg?"

"No, I didn't know."

"But you know that I was officially reported as missing in January — come."

"I didn't know. The fact is, I have not been following the war closely since December, or hearing any news up there."

“Well, that’s so, Shan,” said Tom Price, and he proceeded to give the story of a column three hundred strong, the guard of some empties returning eastward toward Pretoria, which, after undergoing an ordeal of snipings for two days, was attacked in force from the ambush of a donga on the 19th of January, by a commando of Delarey’s gang. After being shot in the shoulder Price had climbed up a kloof to escape capture by a Boer who chased him, and there in bush had fainted.

“Well, now!” went Shan, “and what next?”

“After coming to myself about ten hours later,” answered Price, “I wandered about in a bit of a daze, till I fell in wi’ a laager of waggons by a drift, where they dressed my wound, kept me for two days, and then, breaking camp, stripped me of my bandolier and rifle, and turned me adrift like a cur. Well, I was away on the trek to get back, and didn’t do so dustily on the whole — richest bit of the whole karoo that bit up there, mostly orange-groves and brooks; the women-folk, too, were fairly good to me; and it was on the fourth afternoon, at a farm called De Geijerstam’s that I come across Lieutenant Gordridge struggling on the stoep—”

“What, was there another Lieutenant Gordridge?” Shan wished to know.

“*Our* Lieutenant Gordridge, I do mean,” said Price.

“He was killed on December the—”

“Him wasn’t that, now, if you’ll excuse me.... So you haven’t heard what’s been all the talk since I come back?”

The other returned no answer.

“Er wasn’t killed, look,” said Price, “for I saw’n a living man a month afterwards — not much of him left, that’s true, and that little as mad as half a bagful of march-hares with fever — it took two Boer women, big as London bobbies, to hold’n! I have been giving it all to Mrs. Gordridge to-day, for it didn’t come to her ears what I had to say till three days ago, and

then er wouldn't believe that there was any truth in it, forgetting that, if the lieutenant hasn't written to her all this time, that may be because er's too bad to write, for er got an explosive bullet in the groin, and that's how it come about, no doubt, that, as er was known to be wounded, and was missing, er was first reported as missing, and then it was taken for certain er was dead. Anyway, this morning I was sent for to Glanncourt, and now Mrs. Gordridge is off to London—" Now Shan, without speaking, went away, gazing on the ground, leaving Price in a state of surprise and gaping, till he disappeared in a timber-belt beyond the graves.

He did not go home, for he wished to hide his head, as the ostrich does, and the white wife and Jane, making a hundred guesses, sat in a state of terror, waiting to see him come till after one of the morning. When at last he entered the little fête of flowers and tapers that the house now was, it was with precipitate steps pressing through to the stair, and with no syllable but the three: "I am ill"; whereat the white wife, far too paralysed with affright to fly after him, to cry after him, stood rooted, heard him lock his room-door above, heard his tumble upon his bed set the room atremble, then heard that rumour of the universe and eternity that hums dumbly upon the ear-drum in the silence of every midnight.

XX. SHAN SULKS



ALL THAT NIGHT, all the next day, Shan, it must be admitted, played the poltroon within his locked room. It was his will not to marry, but he lacked the grit to go and say to Rosie “I can’t marry,” or “I won’t marry on this our second wedding-day.” He did not wish to see her, or to speak to her at all, or to anyone, and, finding solitude a roof to refuge in, and hunger good, he hid himself, lingering in the warmth and ease of the bed, getting brief sleeps sweet with forgetfulness, closing his eyes to Rosie’s trouble, to to-morrow, to everything, except to the fact that he, for the moment, was cosy in bed: for it cannot be true that misery is valuable for character, but, if only miserable enough, will overthrow Cæsar himself into a ne’er-do-well; and when at nine of the wedding-day the white wife for the fourth time besieged the key-hole with beseechings, from Shan within came no reply.

“Shan, I have brought you a cup of tea.”

No reply.

“Shan, won’t you speak to me?”

No reply.

“This is our wedding-day, Shan!”

Then from quite near on the other side a voice said: “I have told you that I don’t want any tea: can’t you leave me in peace?”

“Aren’t you any better, dear?”

“No.”

“Aren’t we going to be married?”

“Not to-day.”

“Won’t you let me go in to you?”

“I will later on.”

“Won’t you give me some notion what’s the matter?”

“I will later, on condition that you go away now.”

“Jane asks you what about the cow?”

“Good God! can’t you let me be?”

She moved away pale, and, waiting chin on palm during most of the remainder of that day for something to happen, left him alone into the gloaming, when, on going again to him, she was again sent away. About midnight, however, when he believed her asleep, he sneaked out of the house, meaning to clear quite away and never more see her, but at nine the next morning while she was eating, he walked in, said “Hallo,” and sat.

A smile curved his lips, a furnace of malice burned in his eyes.

“Don’t you come nigh me!” he cried with a laugh, when Rosie half-rose to approach him.

“Why, Shan?” she asked with reproach.

“Free country! I simply want to have nothing more to do with you, somehow. I seem to have turned right dead against you now.”

“What have I done?”

“Nothing! Couldn’t tell you! Only I don’t approve of you — that’s frank! I don’t believe you’re a good girl.”

“Dear,” said she, “those are words that could never be forgiven, if I did not know that you are not yourself.”

He smiled bitterly upon her, saying: “Faith, I believe you are tainted.”

“You won’t after you have had something to eat” — and she sprang up to get him something, but he, too, springing up, forced her by the wrist into her chair again; upon which she, covering her face, began to cry, while he, sitting over against her, begrimed her with irony, smiling, telling her that he

could not think that she was much good, must be pretty light-minded, her love not having the value of thruppence, since she was as eager to marry him at present as she had been eager to marry the lieutenant not yet two years gone, and it was “first come” with her, for she had soon forgotten the lieutenant, as she would soon forget him, Shan, if only the lieutenant could possibly come back from the grave arrayed in his grave-clothes, and she was one of those pheasant-hens which followed a fresh mate every May; and though the whole day long this brutality continued, for absolutely he could not move a moment from her, refused to see to his affairs, would not taste food, and though from time to time he handled her with no little roughness, the white wife after her first few tears endured it all with a perfect quietude, looking at him under her eyes, patiently waiting till his throat should be choked, and the kind of hydrophobia which drove him should wear out nature; and down at last at her feet near evening he dropped, his face buried in her lap, begging her with sobs to forgive him, seeing that he was not a happy man, and things were ill with him.

“Don’t you think that I *do*?” she asked over him; “so will you have something to eat at last?”

“Ah, yes, do, for God’s sake, give me a glass of water,” he wailed.

After giving him food, during the taking of which she refrained from asking any questions, she persuaded him to go to bed, and, having led him up like a child, sat by his side till he slept. The next day he came down mum but better, and without waiting to eat anything, went out to his fields, leaving the white wife still without any shadow of a notion why she was not even now a wedded woman. However, when during the afternoon a brougham drew up at the gate, and Dr. Blood and Mr. Orrock, going home together from a death-bed, came in to her, she was soon able to conjecture

the truth. "You have heard the news, of course," said Dr. Blood the moment he entered.

"Yes," she answered, "by chance: for not much of earthly news is heard up here in heaven. You mean as to Mama Gordridge having gone to London?"

"Ah, she knows," sighed the doctor, with a glance at Mr. Orrock.

"No, she doesn't know," said Mr. Orrock: "I can see by her eyes that she doesn't."

"That she does, then," replied Dr. Blood: "you can tell by the look of her that she does." And Rosie stood glancing from one to the other.

"Very good," said Mr. Orrock, "I am open to bet—"

"I don't bet: not used to betting," replied Dr. Blood.

"He is too religious and good to bet, Rosie," mourned the clergyman with a girding eye at the doctor.

"But why bet about it?" asked the white wife: "just ask me, can't you?"

"Stay," said Dr. Blood: "do you or do you not know that Arthur is alive and coming?"

Their eyes fixed upon her face, awaiting a word which did not come, saw her turn quite sheet-white, saw a light leap to her eyes, the meaning of which they could little divine. In two tickings of the clock she knew that she was being anew reserved for Arthur, and furiously her eyes burned, and her heart beat.

Going to the window, she forgot her visitors who forgot her in a new wrangle over drugs and God, and the moment they were gone wrangling, hatless she ran, blanched of face, with a blazing eye and lips as fixed as iron, down the road, till she reached a field where a labourer was grubbing up swedes out of the ground, and, "Rhodes," she said to him, "I want you at once to take me and my things down to Glanncourt — can you?"

He scratched his head, and “Not to-day, I don’t think—” he began to say.

“Oh, don’t say that, you have to, really,” pleaded Rosie, and when he said at last that he would see, with this she had to be content, ran back up to the cottage, at once tumbled all her belongings into her trunks, and with Jane’s aid attempted to bring them below, there to await the trap. But as the trunks mulishly refused to budge a foot below the stair-head for her, she had now to sit waiting for male aid, watching for hours those faded flowers with which four days before she had filled the house, nor for one moment did that fire in her eyes die down to the time when, at two o’clock, Shan walked in, looking wannish and worn out, asking: “Why have you told Rhodes to come — ?”

“Because I chose to,” was Rosie’s answer—” because I desire to be at home.”

“How is that, then?”

“Because I do.”

He sat by the table, Rosie being bent over the grate, a blaze of anger in her gaze.

“Have you heard anything?” he suddenly asked.

“Yes!” she answered with spite, “I have: and I don’t wish Arthur to come home and find me here with you: he mightn’t like it.”

“He won’t mind, if it is I, you see.”

“You know nothing about him!”

“Don’t I?”

“Not one little bit! Oh, I am sorry for you — how deluded you are! This fellow, whose friendship you prefer to my love, to amuse whom you have used me like a pawn or a draughtsman, he values you not one sou—”

“Doesn’t he?”

“Not one little sou! All that balderdash about your youth, and about being born the same night, and the shootings, and the long days together, he has forgotten it all years and years ago, he has only used you as his tool—”

“Has he?” asked Shan smiling, though now his brow had collapsed upon the table.

“It is only the truth that I am telling!” cried Rosie. “Your fatuity is surprising! Why, when he and I are married we shall both laugh at you as a poor quixote — often we shall! Don’t you understand, really, that anything like friendship is quite impossible between such as you and such as he? Look at how Mama Gordridge regarded the thought of his marrying me, who have been brought up with them — ! and though he, under the influence of passion, is mad to marry me, *you* are far out of it: he looks down upon you as something amiable made of mud....”

Shan stood sharply up with a visage all wrenched, all blanched, but very calmly he said: “No, that can’t be true; but even so — give it as true — still there is God in Heaven, who sees.”

“At any rate, here’s off for little Rosie!” she cries.

“No, I’ll keep you till he comes,” said Shan.

“You wouldn’t dare!” — springing up.

“I am a daring one, you know.”

“So I’m a prisoner?”

“That’s it.”

Covering her face, she dropped back sobbing upon her chair.

XXI. SHAN HAS A VISITOR



TWO WEEKS BEFORE this scene the watchmen at Table Mountain signal-station, Cape Town, gazing out in the direction of Rodden Island, saw there going down into the sunset a Castle liner homeward-bound, in whose smoke-room reclined Arthur Gordridge, talking to three eager listeners to the story of sorrows that he told, an Arthur in khaki, meagre more than half-way up the legs, then stout with sudden puff-out, and over the khaki a steamer coat in frieze, for it was cold, and a cap darkening his pallid dark nose — coming home quite alone, for months before this his company, its term of service expired, had returned to Britain.

Though the story that he told was told in phrases that ever fainted and sighed with weariness, fever seemed to glare out of those eyes of his which loomed even owlshly big, as it were two moons of bluebell blue; fever! for when in the middle of his story his servant bore him a glass of wine, he first, on sipping it, groaned, for it was not the wine that he required, then with an eye alight with excitement, crying “this is the third time!” he hurled the wine at the man; and on the man turning in flight, Arthur was after him. But he had hardly run twelve steps when he faltered, turned white, and had to be supported by his friends, who with smooth words induced him to return to his sofa.

All the while the voyage lasted he was the tyrant and the spoiled child of the ship, the tyrant by his peevishness, the spoiled child by his feebleness. The farther North he came, the warmer it became, and then it was his habit, when the coolness of night, soothing his humours, induced a lassitude in

him, to muse on the poop, eyeing the spuming pool of milk and moonlight commixed which was the ship's wake and he would then take out Rosie Jones' photograph to glance at, and would say to himself: "I deserve to be nursed now, and to have a decent time"; and he would say: "As to that O'Shannon, I mean to be rather decent to him."

He reached his Brook Street home during the evening of the fourth of June after an absence of almost two years.

His mother was descending a stairway in Buckingham Palace, where she had been munching muffins with a friend, when a messenger handed her a card: Arthur come! She had had an African cable — not from himself, but from a friend — to say that he was "coming," but had not understood from it that he was at sea.... Home in a flurry she hurried, and "Ah, Arthur, thank the good God!" she said, her two hands on his shoulders, though her heart smote her at that pallor under his tan, at that lamp alight in those eyes, and when among his first words she heard those dreaded ones:

"Why have you not brought Rosie up with you?" instantly her heart boded within her that she had done wrong, and now she would have given everything that she owned to have Rosie now to give to her son.

"I am not in Town for the season," she said:

"in fact, this is a year without a season (the queen's decease): but on hearing from a private named Price that he had seen you alive at some farm, I came up to hear what the Whitehall people could do as to seeking for you.... I had no need to bring anyone with me."

"That's all right.... She's all right, I suppose?"

"Rosie? Oh, yes: quite all right."

"I have just sent her a telegram...."

"Have you? she will be glad.... Oh, Arthur, dear, sit down — come, sit with me, will you?" for Arthur, his two hands in the jacket-pockets of a

dinner-suit, was restlessly throwing his legs from end to end of a narrow long drawing-room with that straddle of the gait which cavalrymen get; and he threw his face from side to side, whining: “Don’t worry, mother, I’m not very well.... How vilely hot it is in this place!”

“But if you would but sit down, if you could, I should feel easier, dear,” wooed his mother.

“Well, here I am: now tell me everything: what about the man — what’s his name? — O’Shannon.”

“O’Shannon is no more on the estate, dear.”

“Ah? For what reason?”

“Arthur, he stole some money from me.”

“Oh, I say! that’s bad.”

“And about Anne — you haven’t heard?”

“I haven’t heard any earthly thing.”

“Well, never mind now, you will know in time.”

“No, tell me.”

“Well, then, she is dead.”

“Little Anne? Oh, I say! What of?”

“Angina pectoris....”

“Poor chit! She was a genius, that chit... Oh, mother, I can’t stand this, really: don’t you feel it insufferably hot?” — and up anew started Arthur to stalk from hearthplace to hearth-place through the room.

“It *is* rather hot — so unfortunate!” groaned Mrs. Gordridge with a face of distress: “what is one to do? Arthur, let me take you to a quiet dinner at Lady—”

“Dinner!” cried Arthur in the treble of querulousness: “do I look like dinner at Lady Anybody’s?”

“Arthur, it would be new to you, it would rehumanize and distract you —”

“From what? I don’t want to be distracted; I am already distracted. In fact, I don’t see why I should stand London at all, I shall go straight down to Glanncourt, that’s what I shall do.”

At this Mrs. Gordridge, her eyes hanging abashed on the trouble of that brow, went pale, then, looking down at her hand, smiling, she asked: “When you say ‘straight,’ you don’t mean — ?”

“Yes, I do — to-night, I mean — by the something-or-other-train. I can’t stand this.”

“But, Arthur, you will at any rate wait to take me home, and as I have engagements for four days—”

“And why the smile that conceals some meaning, mother?” he asked, stopping with a sharp eye in his walking.

“I, Arthur! I am far enough from smiling!”

“Mother,” Arthur now said solemnly, “I only hope that everything is all right about Rosie, for you can see that I am hardly in a fit way to be badgered and baulked — ah, I warn you, mother! I am capable of shooting myself or somebody dead....”

Now Mrs. Gordridge’s eyelids closed pale, and out of her heart there rose the prayer: “God give me to be wise now!” — this being, indeed, one of the worst things about war, that, *after* the war, the sinews of the shooters, used to shooting, are apt to keep on shooting, and we remember how, when the Boers were finally brow-beaten, the sound of the rifle in homicide and suicide was rife in our land.

However, Mrs. Gordridge got Arthur to consent to wait in London for her till the next afternoon, soon whereupon, making an excuse to go from him, she flew to her room, and “Quick, Lucille,” she panted, “we have to go

to Glanncourt at once, and forty minutes to get to Paddington in.” She then stole out of the house, and before long was journeying westward, her purpose being, by humbling herself at last to Rosie, to get Rosie back, by prayers, by tears, to Glanncourt, and by elaborate precautions keeping Arthur in the dark as to Rosie’s marriage, so put off the evil day of revelation until he should be better able to bear it. It was not very wise, not very proper: but the case was so desperate as to make her a coward, and, her cunning roused, but roused in a flurry, she flew womanlike, as to a refuge, to the first ruse that was offered to her mind. She did not reach home till after two in the morning, for, on getting to Ebbstow, five miles from Glanncourt, she had to telephone home for a brougham, and then to wait for it, so she then abandoned her thought of calling Rosie to her before daybreak, and, whispering to herself that she had anyway a clear day, fell weary to sleep.

She little thought that Arthur might find out her flight that very night!

Anyhow, in the first hours of the morning a note was sent off up the mountain to Rosie. Rosie was not at home. The horseman brought back the account that Rosie had started out upon the walk to Ebbstow to watch the yeomanry march, and though he rode some considerable distance round the Chase upon the Ebbstow road, he had failed to overtake Rosie. Now, it was already after ten when this messenger returned, and as Rosie’s journey to Ebbstow meant a delay of hours more, a brougham was urgently turned out toward the town, in the hope that it would be hitting upon and bringing her. It did not, however: and when two hours, fevered with a thousand fears, doubts, hopes had gone by, and noon was sounding from the stable-clock, and no sign yet of the brougham’s coming, Mrs. Gordridge, in order now to send another messenger up the mountain, turned inward from the drawing-room window whence she had been watching over The Meadows for the

brougham. Now, a moment before she turned about, she had heard a step behind her, and had supposed it to be a servant's; but, as she turned about, her heart bounded into her mouth at the sight of Arthur standing there, staring with a bright eye at her. She dropped upon a chair, panting something at him, her palm on her heart.

“Where is she?” he sharply asked.

“Rosie is out...

“How long has she been out?”

“How long? Not long.”

“Why, then, hasn't she received the wire which I sent her last night? — here it is.”

He spoke with some show of calm, though the wrath with which he flogged his leg was ominous of eruption, while Mrs. Gordridge, for her part, her fingers folded before her, sat quiet with a rocking of the body backward and forward, a motion of one mourning over a burn. She had forgotten that the telegram would still, probably, be lying there in the hall; nor was there any reply to his query: the game was played.

“I will let you know,” she said on broken breaths, “on condition—”

“No conditions!”

“Yes, you are hardly quite well: on condition — that you sit down — and let me lock—”

“Well, here I am sitting down — waiting patiently — sitting down. Now tell me.”

“Arthur, dear—”

“No, tell me. Here I am — sitting down — waiting patiently.”

“Arthur, listen—”

“By Heaven! the very thing I feared that's the very thing I find. She isn't here: for some reason or other she isn't here.... God! the very thing I

feared.”

“Dear, you will soon see her” — seated on a stool at his feet, soothing his hands, wetting them.

“Where is she?”

“Not far — Arthur, you have my assurance — believe your mother—”

“But she isn’t *here*, that’s the misery; she may be in Russia for what I care, if she isn’t here.... *Where* is she?”

“Arthur, dear—”

“No, tell me: here I am — sitting down.”

“Arthur, dear, have I not said that Rosie isn’t far? really, that should be enough for you: I have sent for her, she is on the road now — coming — near—”

“Where was she?”

“Dear, in Somersetshire.”

“What doing in Somersetshire?”

“Arthur, she was spending a few days with the Marstons.”

“The Marstons? Did she ever before — ? I hope it’s true, mother!”

This he said with a threatening nod, and up now he sprang and ran, she with a pang of panic calling “*Arthur!*” after him, for not having expected him down for hours yet, she had not as yet admonished the servants to be mute, and, in fact, out of the mouth of the first footman whom he encountered in a vestibule, in a few seconds Arthur knew all.

And there during what was to her an age sat Mrs. Gordridge, all paralysed, waiting upon the silence to utter a sound, gaping at the door-way through which he had gone out; till on a sudden he was once more with her, no longer red, but now most grimly exsanguined, dead but for the life that rioted in his eye, in his right hand a gun, in his left his stick; and “Heartless!” he hissed: a word that withered the heart that heard it.

Ghostly as he, mute, her gaze gloated upon his face, her soul musing upon the fact of the gun —

But not for long: for, as if he had come back only in order to hiss at her that one word “*heartless*,” almost at once he turned again to go, and she heard him say: “I’ll have her from him....”

Now she found a mouth to shout to him: “Arthur! take care! that man will kill you....!”

“No, I’ll do the killing,” he cried out: “the hound vowed to me....”

“But, Arthur — here! listen! one word!”

“*Heartless!* A burglar, too! He shan’t have her!” and he was gone, she struggling to her feet to rush after, bawling “Arthur!” but, her feet getting entangled in her gown, down, staggering, she dropped, and now shipwrecked lay on the ground, calling still “Arthur!” and again “Arthur!” after him, though by that time Arthur, bolted out of the house, was on the way to speed down the steep that leads to the Morplepiece.

Thence it was a two-mile climb to the heights, and twice he enquired his way of girls who wondered what he was going to kill, and once, feeling faint, he had to lean against a kiln a little.

It was one of those June noon-days that are like the face of Jove, fatherly, blue-eyed, and broad-boned — more jovial than beautiful, since no breath blew its foliage to make it “strange,” and its cloud-masses, reflected in Fowle’s Lake, floated without motion in an arch of so large an architecture, that Shan, surveying them over his hoe, marvelled in his heart how without pillars it was all upheld. He had been “hacking” (i.e.. hoeing) an acre of potatoes in his field, but, feeling the heat fierce, was now taking it easier, his eye domiciled in cloud-town, and in his mind that hymn —

These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty, Thine this universal frame... when he heard the gate-catch jerk, and now down

dropped his hoe, and a “Ho!” of happiness hopped out of his heart, spying Arthur: of happiness and surprise! for though it had been everywhere said of Arthur that he “was coming,” Shan had no knowledge that Arthur had left South Africa: but there now was Arthur, flushed and fresh: and “it is finished” was the thought in Shan’s heart, as he ran....

Till suddenly, midway, his eagerness reeled dying, like the eagle pierced in mid-career: there was that severe air, the rifle, that unfriendly eye; and, as he paused, Arthur pelted ten paces to him, and they stood face to face.

Shan’s eyes light-blue, narrow, long, quickly twinkling with kindness and humour, though now with doubt, too, and apprehension, under a broad low brow; Arthur’s darker, large, and now ardent with wrath under an arch of brow: eye to eye they looked.

“You cur!”

“Who? I? *Wait* — !”

There was no waiting: Arthur raised the rifle, whether to kill, or only to fell, he himself most likely could not have told, and though in two ticks the rifle was lying on the ground, wrung out of his grasp, there remained the stick, a stoutish stick of ebony, which Arthur brought down with so barbarous a brand across Shan’s brows, that at once Shan stumbled backward, and on one bended knee half-lay, half-knelt, upheld by his left arm; the second stroke, delivered with lips venomously fixed and with all the virtue of a man’s arm, felled the poor victim flat; the third stroke splintered the stick into two; and with the stump the others were administered. Arthur seemed never to have enough of it, feebly beating and still beating the bloody head, himself all bloodless. From Shan’s mouth broke and grew a sound, a most lugubrious groaning, and from Arthur, repeatedly, as he feebly beat, a gasp of “shan’t have her”; till now Shan won his weight to one knee, then raised it to the other knee, as laboriously slow

as though ground down under a burden, and, still hammered, having manoeuvred himself to his legs, ran staggering, Arthur hatless after. Near the high side of the field, the side remote from the road, stood a shed toward which Shan turned his flight for refuge, and even as they reached this, the beating ceased, Shan pitching sheer beneath a steer's belly in the shed, while Arthur, reeling in a sort of blindness just before he reached it, leaned his shoulder on the doorframe, and there with shut lids remained.

Minute after minute now passed, and never a sound was there, save those of sparrows twittering round, and now and again a groan from the frame on the ground.

Then with the same slowness as before Shan got himself up, took his jacket from a peg, contrived to draw it blindly on. He patted the steer's head, smearing it with red, leaving a tooth on it; and drooping upon it, he smiled foolishly with it, and shook his head at it, and slapped its face with a dead hand, while it mildly eyed him. Arthur, meantime, was leaning on the door-post, silent, till, hearing Shan pass out, he opened his eyes to say: "You shan't have her," upon which Shan stopped with his back to Arthur, a bowed back, a bowed head, and after a minute, without looking round, through blood and rheum he bubbled: "You can have her. She is in that cottage up yonder in the grove under the road. But me you don't see again. I see that you have hardly loved me, nor your heart ever guessed.... But be bringing me to her remembrance a bit, and you, too, may be...

Now he moved away down, stanching his wounds with his handkerchief, and the other saw him stoop amidfield to pick up his hat, and thereupon saw him go through the gate, and down the mountain to the right, and out of sight.

After which Arthur sat for fully half-an-hour at the shed-door, and then, all at once in a heat, was hurrying down the steep to the road, and up the

road, and down three board-steps into the bower which surrounded Shan's house.

The door lay open: and there at a table sat Rosie, who, having only a few moments before come back from Ebbstow, hat and gloves still on, had in her hand the mandate from Mrs. Gordridge, which she had found awaiting her, and now was considering it, when, lifting up her eyes, she saw Arthur regarding her; and up she sprang to him, crying: "Oh, I am glad! I was told in Ebbstow that you had come, and you have come *au galop* to see Shan, that's quite grand of you.... When did you arrive in England?"

"Only yesterday.... I say, Rosie, you are looking awfully well...."

"Married life and balmy airs! You, I see, are looking a bit pale and Boered — not a pun! though I would undertake soon to make you well, if you would deign to come and spend just two weeks up here with Shan.... Think you could manage to squeeze your immensity into a cottage? It is better than tents and battlefields, anyway! and this girl, personally, would not give it in exchange for a score of Glanncourts — the air's so fresh and rich. Sit on this chair before the door, and let me offer you a hospitable tumbler of — shall we say milk? Milk is a beverage in these heavens, nor be they wholly bereaved of honey. No milk? Well, I've *got* some wine, a kind of wine, half wine, half vinegar, call it garwine or winegar.... None of that even? Glorious idea — a cigarette! No? So what shall I do to please you? Only mention it—"

"You are awfully bright and well, really," said Arthur. "I expected to find you—"

"Peaking and lean? Dreary and drooping? I fain would be! but between this brisk air, the native bacon, married life—"

"But, dear" — he seized one of her hands —

“we have to be quick, if we mean to escape beastly scenes: I have been brutally robbed of you, and I mean now to break through everything—”

“Oh, that’s naughty,” she murmured, her eyes cast down, smiling to herself.

“It isn’t even naughty! it’s a case in which it is even perfectly right!... he shan’t have you.”

“I fear, though, that you will hardly find it easy to take things away from him,” remarked Rosie: “he has rather a grim sort of grip. But it is queer that you didn’t see him in coming up the road! then he would have told you... he ought to be in his field....”

“I did see him,” Arthur said, “and this, as you see, is all that is left of my stick....”

At this she, snatching her hand free, started from him.

“Oh, you struck him?” she asked, and Arthur was far too amazed at the sudden redness of fury that inflamed her, to her very eye-whites, to reply.

“Oh, you dared? You struck him, Arthur?” Rosie asked: “and he, what did *he* do? Did he fell you to the earth, as he did once before? Oh, *don’t* tell me that he took it quietly, I shall be so ashamed of him!”

Nearly crying with rage, she trembled throughout, from crown to feet, like the little tongue of a morrisco-bell which is shaken. From the very first, indeed, even when she offered the milk, etc., some nerve of Arthur’s had been aware of a hardness, a sarcasm in her towards him, due to her will of self-retention, and to her jealousy, angry as the malignancy of a gangrene, lest Arthur should come to lord it, or should continue to regard himself as the superior, or the equal, of the man whose flag she flew; and her keenness to make him feel his inferiority, and her despair of wholly destroying, all in a hurry, a point-of-view centuries old in him, added fuel to his fire and fury to her ire. Arthur half stood up, upholding himself with one arm on the arm

of his chair, staring, stammering: “I am sorry.... The fact is I am hardly very well....”

“Oh, I am sorry if you are unwell,” retorted Rosie without one sprig of pity, “though that seems to be no reason why you should go about rendering other people unwell. But didn’t he mention anything at all to you before you hit him?”

“No, your husband—”

“He isn’t my husband! Listen to it! You two fellows — most insolently, I must say — after making a bargain as to which of you I was to belong to, as though I was a brandgoose or a brach, have led me a nice dance for nearly two years, and are still at it, it seems; but he, though he has slighted me whom he loves more than his own life, has been true to *you*, and you have broken your stick on his head. It was your purse-proud mother’s intention to ship me out to the wilds of China out of your way, and I was going, when he, in order to keep me for you, went through a form of marriage with me, after marrying someone else — a grey-head, a greedy, drunken hag, who has sucked the very blood from his being, and you have beaten him with your stick for it. Since then, for nearly two years, I have lived with him, under the same roof, his room and mine on different sides of the same corridor, and all the time he loved me, and more than half of the time I have adored him like the lord of all the Heavens, but I still remain to-day as I was born, and you have drawn his blood, Arthur. Do you imagine that your mother loves you so much as this, or could? Would any father do one half of all this for you? Then when we understood that you were dead, we waited for his wife, the old woman, to die, and she did, and we were just going to be married, when he got to know that you were still alive, and he wouldn’t have me, no, not though it almost made him crazy, and you have cracked his skull with that thick stick.

.. Oh, this would be a bit funny, if it were not so bitter! Just because you possess a few thousand roods of land which people are saying now that you have no real right to.... But why doesn't he come? Where is he, please?"

Tears of passion and pity shone in her eyes, unseen by Arthur, who, leaning now against the door-post looking outward, answered: "I heard him say that he was going away permanently: I hope that he did not mean it...."

"Permanently?" she muttered; then with a shriek of passion: "But men do mean it when they say things! You have no idea what a man is like! He is gone for good!"

One moment afterwards she was torturing her shape on her knees before him, wringing her palms together, beseeching him with a face pierced with an anguish like neuralgia, "Tell me how to find him... life's no good to me without.... I shall just go and throw myself—" and suddenly, before he could reply, was up and gone flying toward the gate, but half-way toward it doubled back to supplicate him with a crying face: "For God's sake, lend me some money, I have got none...."

Arthur's eyes slowly opened; and slowly turning them upon her, he said: "Stay, I'll come—"

And together out to the gate they hastened, down the mountain road, Rosie, however stoutly he strode, still to be found a foot before him...

Some way down some labourers answered to them that Shan had taken the way to the station, and to the station they two hastened — a great way, there to gather that he had taken the 1.8 train to Ebbstow; so, hiring a fly from a farmer, to Ebbstow Arthur drove, five miles, arriving before two; but only to find that Shan had left by the 1.25 for London.

"Just as I thought," Rosie wailed: "he is gone for good!"

"Wait," said Arthur, "we shall find him."

“He is gone to Africa or Australia!” cried Rosie: “I have heard him say that he would.”

“Then, I will find him in Africa or Australia,” declared Arthur.

There was no difficulty as to tracing in Ebbstow the movements of the fugitive Shan: he had first entered Burke’s the chemist to have his wounds dressed, had then drawn to the amount of forty pounds out of the bank, and then had taken the train; after tracing which, there was naught for the two investigators to do, save to luncheon, to send a telegram to Glanncourt, and to wait for the six o’clock train; and gazing down together over the bridge into those brownish Wye-waves, where the white wife beheld only Styx mixed with staring vacancies and abysms of widowhood, he proposed to her to go home, undertaking to find Shan alone, if she would confide in him; but she made answer: “Even if you found him, I doubt if he would come back, unless I was by to beseech him to”; so at six she and he set off for London.

After breakfast the next morning in Brook Street, as he was speaking to her of his plan of action for the day, she suddenly kissed his hands, saying: “You are good; forgive all that I said to you yesterday in the heat of passion, will you? He and I are two poor people of the working-class, who have nothing in the world except each other.”

“You are not poor,” he said: “half of all that I have is this man’s, and the other half, if you will say so, is yours.”

“Well, he knew you more accurately than I,” replied Rosie, “and it was not without grounds that he regarded the Gordridges as grander than kings.”

Arthur now started out for the City, and early in the afternoon returned to her out of the whirlpool’s noise and turmoil with the heartiest presage, like the bird with a branch to the Ark:

Shan had taken a second-saloon berth on the *China*, to sail at noon on the Thursday! whereon there was nothing to do but to wait two days, during which Arthur went to his bed with an ague, and Mrs. Gordridge, hastening to London to nurse him, heard the whole story of Rosie. "Well, you are an unmarried girl, as it turns out," the old lady observed to Rosie after dinner on the Wednesday night, "and I personally should be glad now, Arthur being in the way he is, if you would be good to him."

"There are no less than two impossibilities against it, Mama Gordridge," replied Rosie: "Arthur undoubtedly possesses too noble a mind to have me now that he knows all; and, secondly, I'd defy any female creature to cohabit two years with Shan O'Shannon as I have, and not find him irresistible. He's as imperious as a rope. One can't swim up Severn, after all, when the river is falling."

"Well, I think that you choose wisely," said Mrs. Gordridge; "I told you before the marriage, that you would be growing fond of O'Shannon, and, you see, I was right: for I always foresee everything."

The next forenoon, though his skin burned with fever, his teeth stuttered with cold, and it was very rough weather, Arthur would take the white wife to the Albert Dock: and after they had waited about half-an-hour on the quay, pigmies pacing beneath that busy burgh which the ship made, there, burdened askew on the queerish side by a bag of brand-new leather, with petty steps came Shan in haste, patches of sticking-plaster fixed on his face, until on a sudden he saw, and started, and stood stock still, and with an underlook contemplated them two: upon which, she, for her part, darted at him, and laughed, and pinched his arm; and as he looked at her, full of her, all his manhood thrilled, hearing near his ear from a full heart breathed, "Bucephalus"; and Arthur added, "Cœur de Lion."

One at one arm of Shan, one at the other, the white wife and Arthur then pulled — away from the ship, and had him in the brougham moving West through Holborn, when on the top of an omnibus the white wife's eye remarked two men talking in a sort of fury: excited, glad, she waved, she hailed at them: it was no good; Shan tried to attract their eyes, Arthur tried: all in vain; Dr. Blood and Mr. Orrock, preoccupied with their quarrel like two wights blind to the precipice's brink, dead to thunder and lightning, took no notice; but just then a rougher rush of wind, snatching off the clergyman's shovel-hat, whirled it quite away upward, turned it to scoff, made light of it, worried it, dropped it; and Dr. Blood, seeing in this the finger of God, following its flight with his eye, while with a bowed back Mr. Orrock in rickety career was critically creeping down to the street to recapture it, saw, as the shovel-hat reached the street, the three in the brougham: so the doctor and the parson, squeezing themselves in, went with them to Brook Street, to take part in all that passed during the ensuing days. They were the days of that gale which raged from the eighth into the twelfth of June, on whose third midnight Shan and Rosie heard it from an old tavern-room, like a garret, close to Grange Court, heard its surgings grow to augustness and roar with a great prolongation of argument, intriguing as though struggling through impeding gross media, like a period of Cicero and the career of Cæsar, then, those struggles lulled, lagrimoso roll low its roar, and go, solving and dissolving itself into mere pleadings, appealings, weariness of bereavement, streams of grieving too drear to dream, and brief last brigues, fatigued intrigues, and musings, last broodings, and musics too weary-sweet to breathe; then again heard it surge and grow to grandeur, and roar through a long contention, like a sentence of Cicero, and roll its roar low, and go, oratory of God. Such was Shan's *íó, íó*, go it, go it, high Hymen-hymn, and marriage-oration. But when on the fourth midnight they

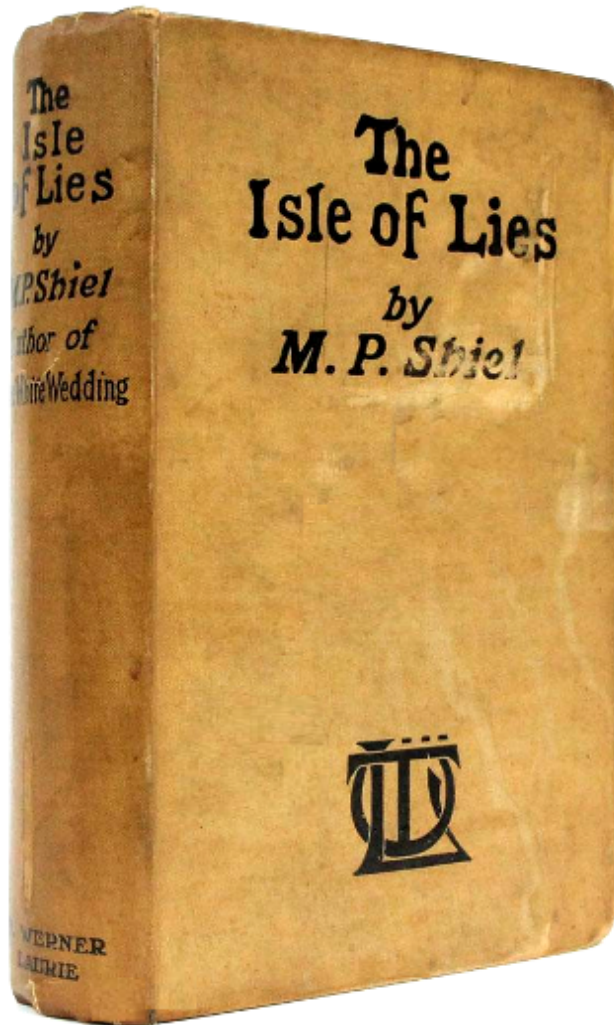
were walking in sight of home, the storm on a sudden was wholly over, all was quite calm, and, casting up their eyes to the sky, they beheld it like some begum-bride brightly arrayed for her bridegroom, all gaudy in veils of gauze with brilliants glistering through from beneath, without any moon or a single cloud around God's throne, only clouds of glory; and pacing up their mountain-side, it was so still, they beheld the poplar and pine-tops about their house standing outlined without a motion against the darkness of the sky, like towering ships that after great groanings far out in the ocean's roarings find their griefs riding finally at surcease, asleep in the port and peace of God; nor in all that calm and darkness was any ray anywhere to be marked, save the star-rays and that ray which rayed out of Shan's house, where Jane, and Pruie, too, who had been warned by a wire to be there, kept wake, awaiting the wedded pair.

The Isle of Lies (1909)



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The first edition

CHAPTER I.

THE STELE.



PERHAPS ONE'S HAPPIEST manner to begin the history of the remarkable boy whose moral we have to point is to give, as we can, that part of Professor S. S. Reid's diary which has to do with the matter. The professor writes:

I have this morning the tidings that a son is born to Dr. Lepsius, and as the fact may possibly come to prove momentous in the history of experiment, I am about now to jot down just what I was in the way to know of the story.

In the dog-days of '68, close on two years gone now, our bout-at-arms with Theodore III. of Abyssinia came to a close with the capture of Magdala by Napier: and the victory was still in everyone's mouth, when Lepsius one afternoon strolls into my study to notify me that the British Government was about to send out a mission to that country, and that he, Lepsius, was to accompany it in some rôle or other. I was quite surprised, in spite of my familiarity with the manifold activities of this man.

"*You* going to Abyssinia?" I exclaimed.

"I am," says he.

"But what for?" I asked.

"There are the Jurassic limestones for one thing," he answered, "and you surely know that some more or less valuable MSS., especially Bible MSS., already derive from Abyssinia."

He then proceeded to tell me that in the rage of the Mohammedan invasion of that region in the sixteenth century, the Abyssinians heaped most of their Ethiopian and other manuscripts into a certain museum on Debra-Seena (an island of Lake Sana), where they remain guarded by clerics, who regard them as idol relics. “Abyssinia, then,” said he, “might not be a bad four-months’ abode for a bloke like me; at all events, I am off.”

And off, in some weeks, Lepsius was.... Never let it be said that the doctor was any shade of a scatter-brains! for in my lifetime never did I meet so essential a sage; all the same, I do admit that to some of the heats of Lepsius the word “flighty” has been applied with some meaning, he was ever so fevered, seeming always to keep vastly too many irons in the fire — “Jack of all trades!” I don’t say master of none. The man was tinged with both physics and biology like a Janus-head, was an educationist and an Egyptologist, all in the ardour of the same day. Modern learning — he made that his domain. Of course, his thumping fortune had much to do with such a mental posture and manner of life, for, like the free-lance that he ever was, his relation with the mill of science was mainly honorary. I never met him steaming along the streets, mopping his pink brow, but he was eager to drag me to the meeting-of-council of some society, or to drop at my ear some spanking scientific tidings. Old Lepsius! I fancy that I behold him anew, not a beauty assuredly, with his shortish form, bold nose, and thin lips, his burning straight hair brushed back flat from the forehead, and curled up a bit at the nape! At the time when he started for Abyssinia he was a man of perhaps forty-five, of established fame in the western world, and a hardened old bachelor — I almost said old maid!

What surprises me is that a man like Lepsius, a tender wight at bottom surely, should have let himself become the excuse for bloodshed during this exuberance of his, and should have been led into committing an act which

the common man might well consider wonderfully like pilfering — at the spur of a whim! Learning, may be, has a claim to make its own code of morals, but I am convinced that in, say, Madrid, Lepsius would have shrunk with dismay from doing what in that savage country he did with the coolest self-assurance.

The mission reached the town of Gondar at the end of August — a world of mountains now, after a camel-journey of some weeks across the lowlands from Somaliland. By September, Dr. Lepsius had won sufficient favour for his purposes with the viceroy, or ras, and, with his usual rashness, ventured out with only one Choan servant on an ass for Lake Sana, twenty miles south, to examine the MSS., etc.

It appears that in these regions the rainy season is from June to the tail-end of September, so that now it was pouring without pity. However, one forenoon Lepsius comes to the lake, and is rowed, as he related it to me, in a buffalo-hide boat to one of the islets.

On this island was a kind of double monastery, half occupied by sisters, and half by brothers, to which latter Lepsius had a letter of introduction given him by the *abuna* (or father) of Gondar, the head of the Christian-Coptic Church of Abyssinia; but the scientist's welcome at the monastery was hardly hearty, since, having landed on the island, he had to hang about a whole hour without beholding his hosts. This, however, as it turned out, was owing to no cursedness of the monks, since it appears that, the prior of the monastery having recently died, the monks were even then intent upon the rite of electing his successor. This once over, Lepsius was fairly well received, and soon thereupon was rowed through the rain to the library by two of the monks: those monks, he told me, being dark-skinned carles with crinkled hair all in plaits, and the library being a kind of mosque on another island half a mile from the monastery-island.

Here, then, on this second island, Lepsius abode most of the day, fereting and feasting his curiosity. Onwards from the sixth century of our era Abyssinia, he has told me, was a bold and expansive power, having dealings with India, with Ceylon, with the Greek Empire, and overflowing by far the greater part of Arabia: so that this mosque place was crammed with all the gimcrackery and dust of the ages — scriptures, urns, relics, cartouches, taliput-books, mostly modern and of small importance, but still of interest; and the only thing which badgered Lepsius' peace of mind at being turned loose into these pastures was the continual presence of the two monks who had rowed him over, seeing that they did not leave his side a moment. One of them, he says, was a particularly swagger chap who carried over his cotton garment two falchions in scarlet-morocco scabbards, and his aspect appears to have smacked nastily of the fact that in Abyssinia the Church is burningly militant. Ever and anon he would grumble something to his mate in Amharic — a kind of Arabic lingo with which Lepsius was pretty well acquainted, though his ear lacked ease in striking quite what was said.

Toward sunset he went down some steps to an underground corridor into which a series of grilles and doors opened, having in his brisk fashion already made a survey of the treasures above, and wishing to run over those below while there was still some twilight. Midway in the corridor, at a moment when, as it happened, the two monks were whispering together, he noticed a half-open grille, and passed in, whereat the grimmer of the two fellows stepped sharply up and tapped him on the shoulder, saying, "Not in there!" But Lepsius was already in, and making out that he didn't understand, took another step, and looked about him.

Three sides of this apartment were piled with papyri and many book-like objects dark with dust, together with pictures of saints all painted full-face, whatever the posture of the body, and with idols, weapons, beads, and other

suchlike gems and curios. One wall of it, however, was almost bare, and there, in the centre of that wall, hung a little basalt stele, about as thick as one's wrist, and about six inches long; it had a copper cap with an old hole in it, through which passed the banyan string with which it was hung up. Lepsius could see that it was covered with a singular enough mixture of hieroglyphic, hieratic, and demotic figures; and his curiosity seems to have been at once fired to a high degree by this sight, especially when he saw marked on the wall over the stele in the Geez jargon the curious runes, "Riches of Jerusalem."

Meantime, while peering at the little stele, Lepsius with half an eye had observed on the floor, immediately under the stele, a coffin only half covered by its lid, so that he could spy the body of a very old man who looked lost within it — the coffin was so large, and the corpse so small — and at the coffin's foot sat on the floor a gigantic Galla, armed to the teeth, his shield garnished with human hair, these Gallas being, in fact, the blackest and most malignant of the Abyssinian clans.

"Well," Lepsius said, "may I look about?" addressing himself to the milder of the two monks. The answer was, "No, it is the prior's room."

"And who is the dead man?" Lepsius asked.

"The prior," was the answer.

"Who died yesterday?"

"Yes."

"He died here, then?"

"Yes, in this chamber, where he mainly passed his time."

"Why did he pass his time here?" Lepsius wished to know.

"Because," was the answer, "he wanted to contemplate the sacred stele. For fifty years he was poring upon it, and dropped dead before it."

"Oho," says Lepsius, "and what is the history of the stele, my friend?"

“It fell from heaven,” replied the monk; “the prior found it here when he was a very young monk, and hung it there under that picture of the Virgin, who was looking when he found it.”

“Oho,” says Lepsius, “but can’t I approach a little and examine it?” The answer was, “No, the irreligious could not approach it.”

But the irreligious *had* approached it. Lepsius could already make out two or three of the phrases, could tell that it was mainly an imitation of the hieratic of the nineteenth dynasty, mixed with some intentionally secret writing; and, as he stared at it, he mumbled on absently, saying, “Oho, one can see, one can see, its date; and what is the meaning of those marks on it, then?”

“No one knows,” was the answer.

“And yet you write over it, ‘Riches of Jerusalem’?”

“Yes, for the prior discovered this much, that it tells of the riches of the City of God.”

“He was a learned man, I see.”

“We shall not have another like him! a learned and a saintly man. He made the stele the study of his life, and mined out much of its meaning, for which reason it is to be buried with him.”

“Buried with him?” cries Lepsius.

“Yes, by his own instructions.”

“And when?”

“To-night.”

“Ah! At what hour?”

“At eleven.”

“And where?”

“In the monastery.”

But at this the more truculent of the two monks stepped offensively before Lepsius, blocking his view. The Galla warrior, too, who kept guard over the corpse was eyeing him disagreeably, so Lepsius moved off, and after sauntering through another room or two, started off for the monastery-island, to be at once afresh drenched through by the rain. Darkness had suddenly come.

As he now passed up the steps towards the monastery, he made minute note of everything: a number of boats lay close about the landing-place, with some monks baling them out; from a chapel some way off he was aware of the chaunted vesper-psalm of the nuns.

After a repast with the new prior, a portly man of middle age, he was conducted for the night to his chamber, where for a while he waited, sitting on a bed made of rushes mixed with raw cotton; but at ten o'clock he got up and stole through his door. Lepsius by this time had fully informed himself of the minutiae of the dead prior's funeral, and had resolved to pilfer the little stele.

I think that I never knew quite so insolently plucky a nut as this of Lepsius. His impetuosity is extreme, and his tenacity is extreme; so that whatever happens at any time to fascinate his mind fascinates it in a quite unbalanced manner, to the banning of every other concern in the world. When this blessed stele had once seized upon his fancy as a thing likely to prove a scientific find, his subsequent action was so very in character, that I shouldn't wonder if he went stealing the thing, about to be buried and lost as it was, with an overweening sense of propriety, and perhaps, in setting about it, whispered to himself the word "Science," or perhaps only the word "Lepsius": I don't know.

But no man surely ever rushed into a job bristling with dangers more horrid, for he was alone among all those martial fanatics, and, save for a

razor and a penknife, if I am right, quite unarmed.

He crept out of his room into a corridor and down some steps, there being no light apparently in that part of the building, though the place was full of the sounds of busy footfalls and people passing about with lime-torches; and when one of these approached him at a rapid walk, Lepsius had to snatch himself into a kind of carrel, only to find a monk praying in it in the dark, who, at the sound of his entrance, looked round and addressed him: Lepsius droned some mutter in Amharic, and slipped out into an alcove opposite.

He knew very well that he had only to be noticed prowling about in this way to set the whole place in a hullabaloo, and no doubt bring on his instant death; but the floors, covered with cocoanut-fibre, facilitated his flights and escapes, and he contrived to run the blockade to the landing-place. There his ears were aware of a priest baling rain-water from the boat meant to bring over the body of the prior, but so deep was the darkness of the night, that nothing could be seen a yard beyond one's eyes. With elaborate stealths Lepsius stepped down into a boat almost swamped with rain-water, put out the oar, and paddled off for the library-island.

His hope, derived from certain answers already given to his inquiries, was that the corpse might by this time be less closely guarded, that he might thus perchance be able to stretch a clandestine arm to the stele, and then, hastening back with it, steal into his chamber. But when with bare feet he had got down into the underground corridor of the stele and corpse, and had peeped into the prior's room, there still lingered, brooding, the armed Galla. Lepsius was the last man alive to be baffled! He simply said to himself, "Well, the other way, then," went up afresh, towed his boat away from the landing-stage, sat down on a rock, and waited, his ear cocked to hear a sound through the showering of the rain.

Presently over the surface of the lake appeared three throngs of lights approaching — torches made of lime-wood saturated in spirits, borne by the priests; and amid the splash of their oars there floated forth the burden of a Coptic dirge. One by one, however, these torches were seen to cower out, quenched by the shower, and by the time the boats had reached the library-island where Lepsius lurked, not one remained burning. Upon this Lepsius had counted.

The monks landed and entered the mosque.

After some twenty minutes they returned to the quay with rekindled torches, carrying the coffin: and though the largest of the boats was a craft as big as a Red Sea lugger, so overgrown was the size of the coffin, that they were obliged to lay it crosswise over the gunwales aft. Lepsius, himself unseen, could, by means of the flickering torch-lights, see all. He stole along the shore closer to the landing-stage. The placing of the coffin was a longish task; and out into darkness, one by one, cowered the lights, so that no more than two remained burning when the first of the boats pushed off, and the dirge was afresh lifted; and when at last all the boats were abroad on the water, the priests intoned in a complete darkness. Lepsius was then hanging to the transom of the boat which bore the coffin, she towing his length in her track.

He knew that in the monastery a rite had yet to be performed over the prior; he had been told that the corpse would then be exposed for the last time to the looks of the assembled fathers; he was certain, then, that the lid was not so far fastened to the coffin. All he had to do was to lift his weight up on the transom, raise the lid, whip the little stele from the dead bosom, where he had been told that it would be, and bolt with it into the building, to his bed. They couldn't see him; the chaunting should drown any chance sound which he might make: and he felt secure, save for one vital fact — he

could not swim; he would have to hang on to the boat till it came to the monastery landing-place before he could attempt to make his escape.

Midway across, judging the moment come, he raised himself cautiously up; one stiff arm held up his weight on the transom, while with the other hand he groped, grasped the lid, tried to lift it. Lid wouldn't stir: it was fastened.

Another man might now, perhaps, have renounced the attempt, not knowing what string next to pull; it was in just such a plight that Lepsius was likely to show fight.

The man's a born theorist: would never dream of abandoning a conclusion based upon reasoning, because, perhaps, appearances should happen to combat it; and he had already reasoned that the lid was unnailed. He raised himself still further, felt with his hand over the surface of the lid, and was soon reassured, seeing that the priests, in order to keep the two pieces together during the passage, had tied two cords of banyan-twine bodily about lid and coffin; finding which, Lepsius dived into his pocket, took out a penknife, and cut the cords, deeming that the monks, when they saw the cords cut, the stele gone, would set it all down to a miracle of God. By this time the boats had floated the funeral-hymn pretty close up to the monks' home.

Lepsius could now easily insert his fingers between lid and coffin, and, on doing so, found what he had opined, that the stele had been slung round the dead neck by its string; so, manoeuvring with the fingers of his left hand, he managed to urge and win this string upward from under the dead head: and he had begun to draw forth string and stele, his fingers being still within the coffin, when the poor man's stiff right arm, weary of his weight, gave way under him with a shock, whereat he, in an involuntary movement to check his fall, caught the coffin-rim. It was a disastrous business: the

blessed coffin tilted, and slid with a sideward dive into the water, while Lepsius, having clean lost his hold, found himself adrown in the deep, as an outcry arose among the crowd of monks.

Lepsius splashed about, catching at the vacant air; but even in the very plight and fix of his death his reasoning mind was not drowned. He judged that he must now be very near the monastery, so that if he could find even a minute's support in the water, he might by such means manage some way to come at safety; but the boats had forged on well away beyond him, and there was no making out anything in that thickness of blackness. There was, however, one hope — the coffin: for, though he could not see, he knew perfectly the course of its sideward dive, and it was assuredly only the coffin, or the coffin-lid, which, if he was to find salvation, could save him. He quite well knew the science of swimming, though no master of the art: so, taking care to keep his lips closed, he made a few strokes, sinking and rising indeed, but moving, and his strokes proved in the duly right course, for very soon now he found himself on the coffin-lid, the little basalt stele hanging still to his forefinger by its string.

Still awash and struggling, he began to urge the board toward the shore. The hubbub of monkish tongues had now come to land, while a number of them had rushed out of the monastery, all carrying torches, with outcries, so that the landing-stage was now in a nice state of commotion. Lepsius, in the gloomy deep, steered his struggles in a changed direction, making for another spot of the shore, though he does not seem to have known what he was to do when he got there; but his feet touched bottom in a minute, and at the same time he entered the region of the off-shine of the lights, which showed up his white visage, whereat at once a perfect hullabaloo of howls broke out from the priests, and they all dashed forward to catch him,

foremost among them being the fierce monk of the daytime, with his sword flashing, and the new prior, and the huge black fellow.

Lepsius scrambled up some rocks, and started slantways away from the throng of lights toward a wing of the building; and as the priests appear to have had no firearms, it became an affair of darting, Lepsius being a fairly nimble fellow, though, I fancy, without any wind to speak of, and already very weary. However, he reached the monastery-wall, and hastening along it, happened upon a small doorway, into which he darted, slammed the door, and was away anew through darkness; whereat the monks ran round to the front, and scattering there, rushed with rekindled torches in all directions through the monastery, scouring it for the fugitive.

Well, a scene of sufficient wildness seems to have ensued. Lepsius, divining that the monks would leave the door which he had slammed in their faces to fly to the front, ran back to the door; but his slam had locked, he could not open, it. So back afresh he turned, ran to the bottom of the corridor in which he found himself, and now heard the sound of the onrush of many runners. Happily, it was no longer a question of legs and lungs alone, but of eager, quick wit as well, and here Lepsius was in his element. He saw that he could only rescue himself by hiding, and that he could only hide by continual wise movement. On hieing thievishly up some steps he heard more pelting feet behind him, but he had the advantage of being in shadow, while his hunters were well lit up, and away he went again, choosing his way with good instinct; only, the priests had split up into such an intricacy of pickets, that he should have possessed six sets of wits to elude them. Still, he did for no little while elude them, guided not only by their lights, but by the sounds of the groups, their faint footsteps and outcries: till on a sudden one of those aids was cut off — that of sound — when out roared the abbey-bells, drowning everything else. Just afterwards,

he was running down a corridor when behind him he saw coming a bunch of torches; there was no harking back this time; so, hoping to hit upon some door or side-passage somewhere ahead, forward he sped, his wind about done for now, and his wits all bewildered and badgered by the loud bedlam and brabblement of the bells throughout the building. At the corridor's end his course was stopped by a wall with what he took to be a door in it, and a cocoanut tapestry hung before it; there was no side-passage anywhere; the door was fixed, and his hand, feeling behind the tapestry, could find no handle; the throng of torches, too, were now trooping down the corridor towards him, and he thought himself dished and taken. However, he found by touch that the door, too, as well as the tapestry, was of cocoanut-fibre, not a door at all, but a mass of matting fastened over an opening; and inasmuch as the corridor was long, he had time to snatch his shaving-razor and slash a rent in the tough stuff, so that when the monks arrived at the spot they must have been astonished (if they had spied him) to find their man vanished. Lepsius says that he next hastened over a species of bridge or hanging gallery, at the end of which he hacked a hole in another door, got himself through that as well, and was away ardently again, no more caring whither, through darkness, when all at once he was in the very midst of a lot of people, of a flood of light, for he had pitched through the doorway of a chamber before ever he could check his flight. This chamber was full of beds, for which the people in it must have been making ready when the pealing of the bells had flurried them; they were all women, as Lepsius saw at once, all half-undressed, with their hair floating loose; the two door-mattings through which he had slashed his way were manifestly the doors which separated the monastery from the nunnery; and at the apparition of this white man among them, that multitude of women whooped out one unanimous yowl, which Lepsius tells me he is not going to forget. Out they

rushed pell-mell, clutching their garments about them, he after them — with the grave consciousness meantime in his eye-corner of a big floor-bed on fire, for one of the calabash-lamps had been dashed to the floor in the out-rush, and how the whole show, built mostly of touch-wood, was not burnt to the deuce was, he asserts, a wonder. After a little Lepsius pulled up and listened: all was still — for the simple reason that the priests would not at once enter upon the part of the place sacred to the nuns, and presently coming to a staircase, he sped down, and soon found himself out in the open, unpursued. Running now round the rim of the islet in search of a boat, he heard all round about the shores a buzzing sound on the lake, the cause of which he was unable to imagine, and when, having found a boat, he paddled away, this sound swelled upon him, until he was all in the thick of it — a host of tongues hubbubooing, not in Amharic, but in Ethiopic; not monks, then, but chiefs, or *dejamatshs*, with their troops, who, at the call of the bells, had come to beset the islet with a cordon of boats; and Lepsius declares that he passed through the thick of them, thanks to the darkness and the rain, by something of a miracle. After this the banks of the lake were not far off; and there, having made rapid paces for the deeps of a forest, and presently feeling himself safer, he dropped to the ground, giving out.

Toward morning, it being still pitch dark, the Englishmen at Gondar who composed the mission were startled by the bombardment of the place set apart for their abode: for the priests and natives, failing to find Lepsius, had posted northward to seek vengeance upon the mission; whereat the British, in danger of their lives, were obliged to barricade their doors and defend themselves; and before the intervention of the *ras* was able to reach the residence, three Abyssinians were shot, so that this matter of the basalt stele had something of a grim beginning.

Not till six days later did Lepsius succeed in coming up secretly with his comrades, after seeing the lion and the hyrax, and a score of escapades; and on the sixteenth morning they all started eastward and coastward under an escort of the *ras*. The terror of the anger of England was, of course, extreme at the moment in the mind of the Negus and his Court, or it might have gone ill with Lepsius and his companions. However, all's well that ends well; nothing graver than threats came about, and Lepsius, having his basalt stele, could afford, I suppose, to grin his grin.

CHAPTER II

MOLLY O'HARA.



PROFESSOR S. S. REID'S history thus continues:

Well, I saw old Lepsius very shortly after his return, when he showed me the little cylinder of basalt, and related to me for the first time, not the last, the details of his adventures. He was blithe and fit, if a bit bothered in mind about the three shot Abyssinians, and about the drowning of the aged prior's body, due to his rage of research.

"And how about the stele," said I to him; "have you made out the meaning?"

"I am going to," was his answer.

"I suppose it is worth the pains?" said I.

"Reid," says he, "it would be worth the pains, if all the Orientalists in the world applied their wits to nothing else than that one thing."

"What makes you think that?" I asked.

"Well, but haven't I already read part of the thing?" says he. "True, it is no cartouche of Darius, nor Rosetta-stone; its date can't be earlier than the thirteenth century, and not only is it the oddest mix of Memphitic with hieroglyphs, but, what is really remarkable, this Coptic stone is the record of an Indian incident. Its comparative-philological value will hardly be high, perhaps, but I am convinced that, once deciphered, it will prove a priceless document from the historian's point of view."

Well, I wished him joy of his new toy, and we said adieu for that time.

Then for some few months I did not see much of Lepsius, nor, I imagine, did anyone else of his world, till his seclusion began to be remarked upon by one and another of the gossips. “Where was Lepsius, what was he pottering at at present, why the father of lies...?” and so on. On three or four of the occasions when I called upon him at his Hanover Square house, I found him looking far from so well and sprightly as usual, nor did the good fellow give himself the pains to hide from me that I was somewhat heavy upon him. I understood that he was in the grip of a fit of study — a certain grimness of his looks and gauntness of his face informed one of so much — and that in that same little stele lay the secret of this too great zeal. By this time the blessed stele had been reproduced and distributed among the savants everywhere, and it may be that a race was being run in its deciphering, I don’t know; but one thing was obvious, it made Lepsius lean many days, so that says Matthews to me, “serves him right for picking and *steling*, there’s some black spook in the basalt thing that’s paying him back, and making him its victim”; and, in truth, I never saw such a thing, for one by one Lepsius threw every social, every scientific obligation to the winds to give himself day and night to this one object. Such, however, was the man: whatsoever his hands found to do, he did it with a fraction more than all his might or right. Then all at once I learned that he had fallen ill and had gone off to his castle in Galway, from which region, after some weeks, he once only wrote me a few words.

On a sudden one morning, say ten months after his coming back from Abyssinia, Lepsius presents his old phiz before me, looking as brisk and light as you like, with a smile on the thin lips. He had got back from Ireland only the day before, and, after some gossip, said I to him, “Come now, one can really see that we have laid bare at last the secret of our basalt stele.”

“Do I look like it?” he asked rather sorrowfully.

“So I thought,” said I.

“Just failed, sir! just failed!” sighs he, tossing up his hand.

“Tell me about it,” said I.

“That’s all I’ve got to say,” says he; “I’ve only just failed. The epigraph, as you know, consists of signs of very diverse dates, with a quite hierogrammatic vowelling, but Memphitic aspirations, and a jumble of true idiographs and true rebuses. Well, within five months I had deciphered it all — every syllable — save fifteen signs, making, I think, three words at the very finish, which are purposely ‘secret’; but, as it chances, those three are the important ones.”

“That’s hard luck, certainly,” said I; “but why, then, are these three of such particular importance?”

“You know,” said he, “that the stele is the record of an accumulation of riches heaped up somewhere by a host of Hindu princes during the period of the Mohammedan deluge — this where and when is exactly what remains dark. Fix place and date, and you have sextupled the value of your stele as a piece of history, quite apart from the pile of lucre in question, supposing it still to exist.”

“Well, that’s tantalising,” I said. “Of course, Thibaut has seen it?”

“You may bet,” was his answer. “Who hasn’t seen it? They have all seen it. But the fellows *can’t make it out!* I question if any one of them has read as much of it as I have. Reid, there’s not one single living man who can do it!”

“So much for stolen goods, then,” said I. “Still, you seemed to me a good deal more like your old self just as you came in, quite a youthful step and jaunty air, I thought! so I made sure...”

He laughed, saying, “Well, perhaps you are right, for I *am* relieved, and I have reason.”

“How do you mean?” I asked.

“Look you,” says he, “I am going to read every syllable of the writing on that stele.”

“You said just now that you couldn’t,” said I.

“I am going to, though,” says he, “for it can be done, if not by me, if not by any living man, still it can be done; and if I look relieved it is because I know the means of doing it, and because, two nights since, lying in my bed, I suddenly decided to use them.”

“Very good,” said I, swallowing my puzzlement; “and what *are* the means?”

“I am going, Reid,” says Lepsius, “to make a man who will read the secret.”

Quite at a loss to make out what the deuce he would be at, no doubt I smiled, for he added quickly, “No, don’t smile in that fashion, as if you hadn’t known me until to-day, since I assure you quite seriously that I can and will successfully accomplish this job.”

“The making of a man?” said I: “those are your words.”

“The making of a man,” says he, “who will not merely read the rebus, but do it without difficulty — without effort.”

“Quite so, Lepsius,” said I, “for though you choose to express yourself in terms of x, I am quite sure that in due course some explanation will be offered by you of the matter which you meditate, and of your meaning when you speak of ‘making a man’ to read this stele.”

“Lord,” exclaims Lepsius, “what a speech! How sweet the smile, but how icy the meaning! as if I were some rash, fantastic talker. No! at present I haven’t the time to go into prolonged explanations, moreover doubting Thomas ought to be tortured; but in about four days I shall probably lay my plan fully before you, when I shall have seen the initial stages of it well

under way: and meanwhile, I invite you to take part with me in watching the accomplishment of these stages.”

“Where?” said I.

“You come,” said he.

“To the end of the world,” said I, “if you are serious and scientific.”

“I am quite serious and strictly scientific,” says he.

Well, I went with him. First we drove to his club in Piccadilly, where we took two seats at a window to look down upon the passers on the pavement beneath, as to whom Lepsius remarked that we might have to keep an eye on them for two, three, four hours, and — did I mind? “No, didn’t mind,” I replied, feebly chewing my foolish feeling. However, after half an hour of this watch, he changed his mind, said that that was hardly the proper place for his object, and suggested that we should drive to Westminster Bridge, if I would. I should, I said: so thither we drove, and there by the parapet of the bridge we stood, under the July blaze of the sun, two hours. I was at first simply amused by this open-air sentry of two venerable persons like ourselves, then I became a little vexed. However, I stuck to my task, while of the river of people that passed by every one stared at us two standing stupidly there, Lepsius speaking of everything except of what had brought us into this exhibition, mainly, I remember, of the necessity, by a law of probability, that every variety of human type should move past us within a number of time-units equal to the number of type-varieties which exist in the city. At last, when it was close on two o’clock, he stopped suddenly in his talk, and pointed.

“There, I think,” he says, “comes the right age, the right race, the right trade, the right body and being — the very lady.”

It was a passing woman at whom he pointed, a woman of the lower orders, with black hair, black eyes, high cheek-bones, very cheaply dressed,

but not unclean, long in the leg, lean and fit, some twenty-five years old. Her nose was not red, her teeth were regular. She was going, under a heap of soiled clothes, toward the Surrey side, and one could make quite sure that she was an Irish washerwoman.

Well, Lepsius stepped out and addressed the woman. She was startled! I heard her say, "Sure, then, it isn't me that has the time to be showing your worship around the town this day."

I remained waiting at the parapet, absolutely astonished, much amused, while Lepsius walked on with the woman, talking pressingly, quite a confab, one could see, taking place between them, he all suave insistence, the woman curtseying, till, presently turning, he beckons me to come. So I ran and overtook them, to find them already fast friends; and Lepsius effusively introduced me to "Miss Molly O'Hara."

This woman turned out to be the heartiest, best soul in the world, and in some half-hour we had won from her the whole simple history of one who was orphaned and friendless, save for a sister, a fruit-seller, who lived at Ballihooly. In the course of our discourse it was discovered that she had never visited the Tower, the Crown Jewels, nor the whispering-gallery at St. Paul's, so we soon got from her an engagement to meet us on the Bridge the next day, in order to go with us to inspect these glories. She showed us the slum and the house in Southwark in which she occupied a room, and we parted.

Well then, the next day, at one o'clock, behold Molly standing in holiday garb with her landlady for guardian, and the pair of professors before them with doffed hats, like characters in an opera! We had lunch in a restaurant, and I spent a pestilent day in the "chamber of horrors" and other suchlike places, winding up with a play in the evening; after which, at about midnight, we sent our ladies home in a cab, and Lepsius, coming back to

my house with me, disclosed to me that night the design that underlay his conduct during the last two days, so that we were still talking in my study when the dawn stole in. When I said to him that I had well earned his secret, and asked what in the world he meant to do with this Molly O'Hara, his answer was, "I mean to make her read my stele for me."

"Quite so," said I, "but then, Lepsius, you persist in speaking to me in riddles."

"I mean to marry her," says Lepsius.

I was so startled, I couldn't help crying out a "No!"

"And why not?" says the doctor coldly.

"Oh, Lepsius," I couldn't help saying, half laughing, and half shrinking with reproach, "this is ridiculous, this is absurd."

"Ridiculous enough, certainly," says he, "but very far from absurd. We differ there."

"But, Lepsius," said I.

"Pooh, man," says he, "don't be excessive; there's no law to prevent me taking a female to the altar, if I like, and, as to the particular lass in question, if it isn't the right of men like you and me to look at facts in their true light, where's the use of us? Molly O'Hara is a better human being than I, you may bet, with all my learning, sound from her topknot to her toes; I don't doubt she will make a pretty fairish wife — and a most splendid mother."

"Well, I never was so astonished," I said.

"That," he answered, "is due to the fact that you have not yet acquired a scientific interest in my motive, for as soon as ever you have, your interest will quite quash your astonishment."

"Well, I am all ears," says I: "what *is* your motive?"

“You know, Reid,” was his answer, “that whatever else I may or may not be, I am by nature an educationist; the world calls me educationist, and with justice, if a lifetime’s work and warmth are worth ought; and you know, too, my notion that no son of Adam so far has ever been educated, or been half educated — that education is an affair of the future. Well, my thought, cherished for many years, and now brought to a head by this stele, is to turn out by certain quite sure modes of education, a man, or why not a woman? who shall be not so much a man as a kind of — god. The methods, however, have to be such, that I should not venture to employ them upon another man’s boy, nor, unless the child were in my absolute power from a very early age, would they be of any use. You now observe where my Molly comes nicely in: the first needful work for a man who would build a mansion or a fane is to make sure that his marble and beams are at least good.”

“I see,” said I: “given fair materials to start with, you undertake what you say.”

“Aye,” says he, “and without so much as the shadow of a doubt as to the result.”

“What an enterprise!” I cried. “But as to the means.”

“The means,” says he, “will be simple enough, being based purely upon the known fact that human beings are what their environment makes of them. We know that an English child, abandoned by its guardians in China, will grow up, hardly a mental Englishman, but a mental Chinaman: never by any effort will he be able to row like a Cambridge-man, or do business like a jobber; but he will, without effort, make finer porcelain than could be turned out by the life’s devotion of ten thousand Cambridge-men or jobbers; it is a question of environment, of the mental hue and house about you. Be sure that every brat born into ancient Athens was straightway an artist, and

if children to-day were born into a world in which everybody as a matter of course played violins with perfect skill, then *every* average child would without conscious effort be a pretty perfect fiddle-player — and, indeed, *is* so in some regions of the Bas-Pyrennees. It is a question of environment.”

“Quite so,” said I, “and, if you add heredity—”

“No,” says he, “let one get on; what I am trying to tell you is that the faculties of a human child’s mind and body can be made to stretch *a hundred miles* — almost indefinitely — I half said infinitely — according to the ideal, the standard and life-idea, that he finds about him; and I should doubt almost any limit which you chose to lay down to the possible activity, exactness, and acumen of the human mind and senses; we here are limited merely by habit, by the iron rod of mean ideals. Primitive man in his atmosphere of reindeer could run very like a deer; he had his hound’s scent, could speed his spear with the sureness of a machine — and without toil, that’s the point, without dreaming that he did anything astounding. A modern British child, abandoned in Africa to that same atmosphere and life-ideal, would also run like the devil, shoot like a machine, track like a dog; born into a world of gods or godlike beings, he, too, would in general be stretched into a god or godlike being; if he believed that everybody about him could read rebuses without effort, then he, too, would read them without effort. It is an affair of environment.”

“Quite so,” said I; “one has no difficulty in following you so far, for even monkeys that have lived long in an environment of men become manlike, and get to do many things; so, given your ‘environment of gods,’ your undertaking looks all in bloom. But where, then, do you mean to find this environment of gods? On the moon? In Venus?”

“Oh, as to that,” says Lepsius, “surely that much is simplicity itself. The environment may be real or it may be merely imagined. A child placed in

isolation may be made to believe in an environment, a world, which does not exist, and so long as he never comes into actual contact with the imperfect world, and has no suspicion that it is not a perfect one, you will have all the elements of success: his life-ideal and standard, his idea and atmosphere, will remain quite unaffected by the actual world round about him; and having been made to conceive man as a god, he will not himself be vastly inferior to his conception.”

“By George,” I cried, “I see what you are at!... But, my friend, aren’t you preparing a nice little shock for some poor devil of a child, supposing he ever does come into contact with his actual, as distinct from his fancied, environment?”

“May be,” says Lepsius, with a shrug; “or may be the shock will be to the environment, not to the child— ‘so much the worse for the coo,’ as old Stephenson said; but really, Reid, that’s looking too far forward for me; the practical point for us is to make out the meaning of our stele.... Lord! it is broad day, I’m away.”

Such is something of the gist of my talk with this radical mind that morning. I can’t recall a hundredth part of his ratiocinations, but when he had finished I was convinced. I made him stay till with our own hands we had found and cooked some coffee on my tripod, whereupon the doctor went home.

As to the end of this business, I have already, under September 13th, 1869, recorded the doctor’s marriage with Molly O’Hara in the church at Lambeth. As usual with him, Lepsius has given himself up heart and soul to the grip of his caprice, the married pair going off at once to his Galway castle, where, for the past twelvemonth, they have lived. Some months since I received tidings that Lepsius was in a fair way to be a parent, and that he had then leased the island of Shunter (one of the uninhabited islands

of the Hebrides), which he was busily preparing at a crazy cost for the habitation of the child shortly to be born. Now this morning comes the joyful news that a boy was actually born about two weeks ago, and with it the gloomy news that our poor good Molly is no more. She died of milk-fever five days ago, and it had been better for the good woman not to have passed over Westminster Bridge just at that particular hour of that day twelve months ago. However, so it was to be. The fellow who is to read the famous stele is to be named Hannibal... etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.

THE ISLE OF LIES.



IF WHAT HAS so far been given by Professor Reid be read as a sort of prologue, nearly nineteen years may well be passed over in silence, till, patching artfully into one a number of letters of Dr. Lepsius to the professor, we watch what then befell. The doctor writes:

The bubble's burst then. We two, Shan Healy and I, have passed over to the island of Barra in the boat, this being the first time for over seven years that I have left the shores of Shunter; and at Barra we now are, my head bound in a handkerchief, aching, and this same fond Shan Healy looking as sad-hearted as a man handed over to be hanged. We really lack the grit for the moment to go to the mainland, or to take any course to get the matter looked into. But you, Reid, will do what you can at once. I am sure the police should be disposed to take an interest in it, if you can make them know the peril implied both to the public and to the poor fellow himself. And there can be no mistaking him! Middle-sized, swarthy, kind of dusky sallow, blackened over cheek, chin and lip by a bluish shade of hair which he would oftentimes shave twice a day — he's so mighty hairy; and by the smile you should know the beggar — that cruel smile which hardly departs from his lips, and those dark eyes, with a glance, Reid, just so wild and sharp, I assure you, as the glance of the rupicapra gazelle. For the rest, no jacket, rough shirt of bauge-like stuff — but where's the good? No police could ever get nigh him, I suppose. He's gone, perhaps he's drowned — he

may be, I doubt it; but God knows. On the sands of the little bay at the north *a lady's handkerchief* has been found; can't tell how it or she came there.

My friend, it was just on his nineteenth birthday, the 21st of July, that, strange to say, it was to happen; the day which I had long determined in my own mind as that on which I should present him the little stele to read.

All was as usual the evening before; we ran the usual race. For the past two years, you know, his highest ambition in life has been to be able to beat me at running — I, a poor old wreck of sixty-four years! I believe that this was his great dream and hope of glory. For four years an almost daily race has taken place, and Mr. Hannibal has once or twice come gallantly nigh victory, but has never won. Well, at 7.30 p.m. this eve of his birthday, down he bounds from his study, and stands in the castle courtyard, waiting for me to come, with the impulse, I dare say, to dart away pricking in his high health. The climate of these Outer Hebrides is a great deal too humid to be ideal; the ground is mostly of gneiss, too shallow for much culture, so drammach, with some barley, potatoes, and buckies, have formed the main part of our maintenance, apart from what provisions Shan Healy has brought over in the boat from Barra once every four months. But on this thin gruel my man has greatly thrived; is fully grown now, having the shoulders of a man, but a shape as limber as a Grace, sir, and about as supple as any greyhound pup.

Well then, aware that he is below waiting, I pull myself together now, put a bit of go into my gait and glance, and down I go to him; together we stand at the gate of our little home — alas, for the last time — my grey head reaching little higher than his shoulder, Reid, for the old spine bows a bit now, you know; and from the kitchen Shan Healy looks up to watch the race for the thousandth time, while away in the west the sun is going down all in a wild of clouds and glories, as often in this wet place. The sea is

dead, just lapping the beach in a weary way; the sky grey, with a curlew or two skirling under it. It gives a little relief to live it over again....

There then, we stand, ready to renew the old, old trial of thews. You know that it has ever been my policy to speak as few words as possible to this creature, so now I only say to him, “Well, ready?”

“Ready, sir,” answers my man.

“Then one, two — *Three!*”

We are away, he to the left, I to the right, the goal of the race being a little flag-staff standing on the sands to the north of the island, two miles off, and so placed that the boy going over the east shore, and I over the west, we should run about equally far, the castle, our starting-point, being right at the rim of a bluff of rock at the south of the island. A very few instants after we start, we are quite hidden from each other behind the saddle of the hill, which, being all hard rock just by there, makes hardly any record of the foot-prints of this part of the race. So now, no sooner has my man lost sight of me than I pull up, and pant, and wipe my old brow, and turn back, just in time to catch a glimpse of the flying heels of Asahel going thirteen to the dozen round a corner — a sight, Reid, fit to make soft the eyes of an artist at so much charm of form, and such a pelting puissance of swiftness. Well, I imagine that you have already heard the rest of the business, how I climb back at my leisure to the ridge of the hill, where Shan Healy makes me the wink which means that the mare is ready, and how I descend to the bush in which she is trained to await me without budging, and take her quietly in my hand to the entrance of the tunnel, where I mount and am away. You may be aware that what we call the tunnel is a sort of gut or gorge, which, half natural, and half due to my re-organisation of the features of the island during the fellow’s first youth, was specially arranged for the purposes of this race. It runs pretty straight across the island, from

south-west to north-east; is thick with peat-moss, so that hardly a sound of the mare's hoofs is to be made out in it, and is fairly shut in by bushes at both ends. So, having galloped straight across to the north-east end, I get off, give the mare her hint to go back to Shan Healy, dive sharply and quietly through the growth of leaves, and am off like the devil afoot for the goal, only some seventy feet distant, but still hidden from me behind a bluff of rock: and as my right hand claps the flag-staff, with the wild eyes of a hart Hannibal darts into view, to fling his flying impetus at the post — a good half-minute or so too late.

No change in the smile, but a shadow now in the eyes, and I know just how my man is meditating in his head, thinking in himself, "It is so, then, that 'Man' can run, and how far beneath Him must *I* be, when this old being, who is one of 'Man' can beat me, a youth, can beat me always and completely at running and at all else": for it was never so much with *me*, I'm sure, that the fellow fought for victory as with "Man," those angels and giants inhabiting the sun-set of whose existence he knew, whom eye of his had never viewed, at the idea of whom in their lurid rule over nature his soul swooned with selfdisdain.

Darkness was beginning to fall rapidly, the winds to pipe up a bit, as he and I together strolled back homeward in silence all over the western shores, upon which the waters were just moving themselves to moan and spume. I willed it so always, for along the eastern shores, where I was believed to have passed, there was ever a certain absence of foot-prints! And Mr. Hannibal often seemed to have the knack of seeing in the dark.

Have I done well? Have I done right? Never did a question of that sort arise in my mind till within the twelve months gone, when I have had to ask myself, "Have I, who forgot nothing, forgotten one thing — one thing needful?" God Almighty forgive His faulty ones. I am an old man now, with

the back bowing down, and a head of white hairs, meekly aware of my own weaknesses and aches....

You know, my friend, something of the kind of life that during eighteen years nearly has whiled itself away on that island of delusion: like the shadow of a vapour it is vanished now. Not without the sacrifice of my career did I tackle it, Reid: but because of the thousand eyes and the acrobat activities of mind by which alone it could be accomplished, the years have been so packed with interest, and have passed so far from unhappily, that though the task has too soon done for me, yet when I look back over them they look to me more like two years than like eighteen; and, if after all one's travail, one could only be certain that the work has been truly good, that one has not somewhere mishandled and bungled, then one could go to bed. Indeed, in some points, there need be no fear as to the meeds of my toils, for in his intellectual and physical features at least there breathes on the earth to-day (if he still breathes!) the highest human feat, a peerless being, at whose feet all the peoples of this planet may very well kneel, and wail because of him, crying, "Here is what we might have been."

But oh, the web of imposture to which this being owes his soul! He is the child of lies — and I am his father. At *every* moment of his life, from the age of four and before, the fellow has known my mould. Nothing was left undone, nothing for me was a bore, or more than I could afford. You know that his books alone cost me a sum of more than £14,000: for, owing to my purpose that his notions of the soul of "Man" should grow from his study of only the most glorious of human works, and owing to the fact that even those works as they stood would never do for those pure eyes, his whole library was formed solely of purged volumes, specially prepared for him, almost before he opened his eyes upon this world; and when he was old enough to study them, it was sown into his skull that only men made of very

poor stuff ever wrote books. And so in everything; everywhere the same whip of deceit: the mass of principles, for instance, which we call mathematics, due to the shrewdness of fifty thinkers, adding and adding, each of them, to the achievements of the past, was for Hannibal, his books were so doctored, the discovery of a single ordinary wit, a certain “Peter Pitt,” who, as I had to give the lad to believe, lived in the ancient ages. His study of history, above all, was minutely nursed: wide, yet much pruned. The story of the ingenuity, zeal, and success of masterly adventurers like Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, he knew by heart: but he had no suspicion of their chutes; doesn’t even now know that Cæsar was assassinated, nor that Napoleon was plucked down at last, so that their victoriousness and force remain measureless in his imagination. He knew well the proportions of the pyramids of Shufu and Shafra, but he was not allowed to know how many multitudes, nor how many moons, were used to build them. And so on. It was dropped into his ear at a very early age that among men some few may be born with feeble bodies and wits, that these are called “idiots,” and that poor Shan Healy, who in reality is a rather sharp chap, is one of the feeblest of these: so Shan has always passed with us under the name of “The Idiot.” As to myself, Hannibal now at the age of nineteen cherishes, if he lives, a belief, ploughed into his brain by ten thousand stratagems, that I can shoot like doom, can swim like a fish, can run like a roe, can watch like a dog, can see like an eagle; and that this skull is the dome of all skill and of all wisdom.

Frauds. But the outcome, I say, is (or was I) without doubt a success, something of a success. What the father feigned to be, that the lad was led to be. I fancy that an average acrobat, after regarding some of the pranks of this young man, would be asking from what moon the beggar had gadded; he has a damnable habit of chucking about little dynamite or other bombs,

which he turns out himself, and carries in his pocket — five, ten times a day for years have the curlews heard the burstings of this turbulent being's play — and I am pretty sure that any other runner than he would long since have been shattered to the deuce by it. As to his mere knowledge, it is of a vastness which you would certainly call marvellous, though to me, who know the cause of it, it is hardly so: for if, for instance, he knows a good deal of most languages from Japanese and the Dravidic dialects to Portuguese, it is because he never, I think, forgets a word or thing which has once come within his consciousness, and so has learned a language within some weeks. I remember to have heard it said that Lord Macaulay could repeat word for word a book once read, a statement the truth of which I beg leave to disbelieve: but, even if true, his lordship differed from Hannibal here, that Hannibal, I imagine, is not quite clear with regard to the meaning of “forgetting”; I never heard him utter such a word; certainly, he never heard such a word escape *my* lips. *Forgetting* is, in fact, mainly a loose habit into which humanity has lapsed, for to observe vividly is to retain rigidly; and Hannibal, with his over-manly mental habit, observes each fact presented to him with a vividness which seems to be pretty absolute.

You will say, then, to yourself, my friend, that it was a strange pair of men that paced by the seashore in silence that evening, the eve of the young man's nineteenth birthday — old Jack and his young giant; the giant in the meekest subjection to his Jack because of delusion, as all a world will sometimes meekly lie in shackles under the will of the weakest lie. My thoughts as I walked were of the morrow, of that dawn toward which for long years I had looked forward, when I should hand over to Hannibal my old problem of the stele to conquer for me, and I wondered in what manner the young man would manage it. Little doubt, however, had I as to the outcome, seeing that I am even now about to compile into a book quite a

crowd of new scientific principles dropped from the mouth of my man in the course of his Studies, with a thousand little observations about things in general, most of them bound, I should imagine, to astound you. So, then, that my man would read the stele I could readily believe; but indeed, Reid, I was no longer deeply interested in this miserable bit of a stele; I'm afraid it is too true that my interest had all shifted from the lifeless thing to the living fellow, all too much so, all too much for my peace....

Sometimes lately, Reid, I may avow to you, I have stolen out of my room in the dead of night and stood before his door, stood for hours, hearkening for a sound; couldn't at all tell you why — bound there somehow — and I have shaken my poor head, saying to myself, “No, surely, I have to cure myself of this folly: a purely scientific interest in this savage, nothing more”; but still I have stuck at his door.

Do you understand that this boy is in some points an idiot? It is only lately that the amazingness of it all has struck and made me a wrecked man! To a thousand throes and heartburns, learned in a thousand social niceties by men who dwell with men, he remains a stranger. The different ways in which one should bend the mind toward one's brother, toward one's mother, one's friend, and so on, seem to be unknown to him; I don't know who is to blame. Never a little tenderness, never a sign. I *couldn't*, of course, bring his mind into contact with the Christian faith from the very nature of the case, the Man of Christianity being a sorrowful type, while the Man of his fancy was bound to be a type of power; so that the name of Christ he has never heard; but his mind was presented with such naive nature-worship as that of the Rig-Vedas, Genesis and Job: I thought that it was well....

But to return to this birthday-eve of his. We two had made our way back together in silence, nearly to the castle-gate, when out darts Shan Healy, wringing hands and crying, “Oh, Master Hannibal, do forgive me, sir, the

glass pot has boiled all over, while I was attending to the dinner”; whereat Master Hannibal, without waiting to hear another word, threw Shan out of his way, and rushed into the house, no doubt to see for himself how the matter stood, for he seems to have left some mess simmering in his laboratory, had bid Shan look to it, and the thing had had some mischance.

“Now, here’s a go for a poor chap, doctor,” says Shan to me, in great distress; “believe me, I couldn’t avoid it, the thing boiled over so quick, and what’ll Master Hannibal say now?”

“Say?” said I, for I was angry, “what can he dare say? Let him go to the devil, you couldn’t help it, and I order you not to distress yourself in the slightest.”

“Ah, doctor, it’s all very well for you to talk,” says he.

Well, we went into the house, and Shan went down to his kitchen; but I still hung about the bottom of the stair, being a bit anxious as to what this being might take it into his nut to do now about his blessed chemical. All was still during some time, so presently I called sharply up to him, “What are you at, Hannibal?” No answer, no sound; only the faint sounds of Shan’s preparations for dinner downstairs. So now I ran very thievishly up the stairs, and peeped into the laboratory, but he wasn’t there, and I can only think now that at the sounds of my steps oh the stair, faint as they were, the monkey must have passed out of the laboratory window, and slipped down the turret by the ivy; anyway, the next thing that I heard were Shan’s howls coming up out of the kitchen, upon which I ran down, to find myself locked out, and to hear within the kitchen the sounds of a head being beaten against the ground, mingled with Shan Healy’s exclaimings.

Beside myself with anger, I pounded upon the door, and now at once the row stopped, and in a moment Shan opened, saying despondently to me,

poor chap, "Oh, doctor, he do use me cruel, sir, cruel, cruel, cruel. Oh, my poor head — what does he think anybody is made of?"

My own head was hung with shame; I could do nothing but silently pat my old companion on his shoulder.

"Where is he now?" said I.

"Gone like a shadow through the window, doctor, and down to the shore, the minute he heard you pounding," says Shan. "He held me down on the floor with one hand, and with the other he banged my poor head... cruel, cruel. I shouldn't mind if it was done in a rage, but smiling as cool as a cucumber, as if anybody's head was a block of wood he was playing with."

"Well," I said bitterly, "all your own fault, Shan Healy; you're too faithful and good." And I left him there and went up.

Well, I dined by myself, my fellow keeping culpably aloof perhaps; and during the rest of the evening I saw or heard nothing of him till, near ten in the night, I heard some long way off the bursting of one of his bombs. A gale was then raging, and it had grown coldish, with that wet chill which marks this part. So I went to seek a little sleep, but at about three in the morning rose and went softly to stand outside the observatory door, to see if I could detect a sound of his through the row of the storm; and as I so stood, to my surprise, he called to me, praying me to enter. I did so, to find him sitting at a window, looking out at all the dark strife of the winds and waters, and at the bethundered bluff down there below: whereat, without the least mention of Shan Healy, my man began to blab about the moon, which just then struggled through into a channel between two cloud-bogs, saying that our globe, as it seemed to him, might have been made a more suitable place for living beings, if provided with two moons instead of one. Being grum and out of sorts at the moment, I told him not to trouble his small head about that, that things were well as they were, and I quoted

dogmatically to him that “God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.” At this my chap turns up at me a gaze of the greatest astonishment, asking if I did really think that some purpose of providing a lamp to the night had anything to do with the birth and being of the moon. I said yes, I did think so; on which he anew turns at me a certain searching look of astonishment, and murmurs something about not daring to question the truth of my words, but that as a lamp the moon undoubtedly appeared to be a failure, since she did not shine most nights; sometimes shone for a short hour only; sometimes shone uselessly during the day, but left the night orbless — a rather mad sort of lamp — whereas *two* moons with such and such parallaxes, of such and such masses... “Well, never you mind that,” said I shortly to him, for I thought that I’d better be mum as to the moon. But he was moonstruck that night, and after saying that just as she then was, near her full, but not quite, she reminded him of “The Idiot’s” face when he had gum-boil and swollen-jaw some years ago — for he’s as simple as a baby in some respects, mind you, and many things said by the boy that you might think said in fun, are, in fact, quite grave statements, devoid of any grain of humour on his part; for though he smiles ever, he hardly ever laughs, so that one’s cheeks are apt to puff out on a sudden with laughter at his words, as at the artless freaks of a child’s remarks. Anyhow, after likening the moon to Shan’s gum-boil face, my boy goes on now to wonder for the thousandth time how it is that his “Man” never managed to range so high into space as the moon, for I had soon found myself compelled to confess to him that man had never yet landed on the satellite, nor did all the reasons which I could adduce for this fact, such as the absence of an atmosphere on the moon, and so on, ever suffice to abate his wonder that the moon should remain unvisited: for little did the man dream that even the north and south poles of our own planet

remain even now all unknown, let alone the moon! Well, sir, he was thus droning to himself as to the moon, and specifying the modes by which her surface appeared to him attainable, when in a foolish heat of tenderness I, standing behind him, let my hand fall on the flesh of his neck, inside the broad flap of his shirt-collar, and I allowed myself to murmur the word “Boy,” about to say, “Boy, I am fond of you,” or some such futility, when my fellow gave me such a gaze of Arctic-cold astonishment — for sheet-lightning and the strangled moonshine both beshone the darkness of the room, so that one could see anon — such a gaze, that I was glad to slip away to conceal the wet in my poor eyes, and I went to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHIP.



THE MORNING AFTER, his birthday, on meeting him at the breakfast-table as the clock struck eight, I observed to him that he couldn't have had much sleep: to which, glancing up from his book, he answered, "Enough for the needs of my nature, sir, I think, though I was at work at four minutes before five. The old have greater need of repose, it appears, while, as to the young, the demagogue Cataline, it is written, could dispense with sleep almost altogether."

"Oho," said I; "well, let us be eating," and we sat to the old jug of porridge and oaten loaf.

Presently, as we ate, I said to him, "By the way, I want you now to understand that you are not to knock my servant's head about any more."

His answer was that he had discovered that such occasional visitations had the effect of slightly heightening the functioning of the idiot's wit.

"Never mind your discoveries," said I: "you are not to do it, sir."

"I will not, sir," says he with his formal bow, and buries his brow anew in his volume.

I for my part could hardly eat, for I was uneasy and excited, and my fingers kept on going to feel the old stele, which I had in my pocket; so, fidgeted by his cool reading and feeding, said I to him, "Didn't"

I beg you some time since not to be for ever eating and reading together, since it is injurious to the digestion, and there's a time for everything, as the

mightiest minds among men well know.”

“True, sir,” says my man, “you did speak to me on this subject on the third of June two years ago, but your words did not give me an impression of great urgency, so I have dared to disregard them, since, after all, the digestion of the young is hearty and strong, and the days are hardly born but they are fled, and it is hard to the foot to race after the fastness of the horses of time; hence the greater masters, the minds of white-hot ardour, like Cæsar, always delighted themselves in the most entangled exercises, like the dictating of a vast host of letters at once, so as to harbour in their mood a habit of keeping pace with the fleetness of the passing days.”

“So true,” said I, “so true; still, it is as well not to eat and read together; nor are you any longer so ‘young’ as you have been; you know, of course, that to-day is your birthday.”

“So I calculate, sir,” says he: “I have now existed apart from the womb nineteen times as many as three hundred and sixty-five days, less four; that is to say, six thousand nine hundred and thirty-one days, without counting some odd hours.”

“Oho,” said I; “and how are you going to spend the day?”

“I am engaged in a chemical investigation, sir,” says he, leaning back now, and balancing a plate on the edge of his fore-finger nail, for he always speedily devoured his food, though with complete mastication, I believe, and was generally done before I was nearly through.

“Ah, and what is the investigation?” I asked.

“You must have noticed, sir,” says he, “the agitation I call it, with which bismuth acts—”

“I know exactly what you are going to say,” said I — God forgive us—” quite so; but look here, before you go I want to show you something, something that will amuse you; just read me that.”

On a sudden now, Reid, the moment long waited for had come, for I now caught the old basalt stele out of my pocket, and laid it before him; whereat immediately the fellow seemed to feel an interest in the mere sight of this object, took it up, looked it up and down and round about, smiling his smile, his brow twitching into momentary frowns.

“Why, sir,” says he suddenly, “where did you come upon this stone?”

“That’s not the point,” said I; “I got it in Abyssinia, but that’s not the point; just read it.”

“It is mainly enchorial and alphabetic,” he breathes aloud, peering into the thing, “but with a great number of syllabary signs, and vowel matres lectionis—”

“Yes, I know; read it,” said I, painfully conscious within myself of being pale in the face.

“Strange,” says he to himself: “both Sahidic and Memphitic, but mainly Memphitic—”

“Yes, I tell you, I know,” said I; “read it, read it, boy.”

He hesitated, sir, and I felt growing within me an agitation almost too great to be any more restrained.

“Have *you* read it, sir?” he suddenly asks, raising his eyes to my face; and I was foolishly conscious that my eyes drooped before his, even as in a tone of protest I answered, “Why, naturally! I only give it to you as a little exercise to amuse you; just read the whole thing right off.”

Now, sir, he puts the bit of a stele on the table, and he bends his brow studiously over it, supporting his head between his hands.

“Seven of the words are purposely secret,” says he to himself; “it is not an easy cypher....”

“Well, I know, I know that,” said I, deadly anxious now,” that’s why I give it to you — for a little fun on your birthday; just read it off, boy, to

please me.”

“Ah, I see,” says he all at once: “this whole halfline is a long rebus or pun; the sound of each ideograph combines with the third following to form a word: that is clearly the idea of the inventor; I can trace his thought; I see. Oh, it is not difficult, sir!”

“Good — very good,” said I; “then just read it right off, and go up to your science, boy,” for I felt my face growing white with excitement, seeing that, in spite of his brave words, the man’s manner showed some hesitation, and lower and lower bent his head over the thing.

“A moment, sir,” he murmurs, “one moment; your servant is slow and dull, but” — something; and another minute went by in a silence that was most bitter to me to bear, till, all in a scare, I called to him, “Well, but haven’t you done it *yet*?”

“Yes, sir, I think—” he falters.

“Then read it!”

“In Coptic?”

“In English.”

Now, very deliberately, my man begins to utter syllables, his brow between his hands bent low down over the symbols, and, syllable by syllable, says he, “It is graved on a golden brick within the grave of Arunzebe, that when the white strangers from over the Great Hill came with fire and warfare, then did eighty princes bear together their braveries for safety, and they heaped them into the grave of Arunzebe. Even a spirit (*nat*) could scarce penetrate to their secret place, nor could a rain of men, straining through many days, attain to them. There is the Silence that annihilates. Let no man strive to visit them at—”

There my man stopped short. “At,” he repeated, but couldn’t go on, and there in the shameful silence he sat now frowning into the thing with a sort

of haughty, excruciated self-surprise, but without progress.

“Well?” said I, and my looks, I know, were ghastly, for all that he had read of the thing I, too, long ago had read, though I admit that it had cost me some few months of effort.

“At, sir,” says he, more to himself than to me, “at — something; fifteen other ideographs remain, making three words, I am certain. But they are without determinatives, and their outlines are so blurred, they bring no meaning, no meaning — to my mind; they seem to belong...”

“Better say at once, Hannibal, that you can’t read the epigraph!” I cried out.

“*You* have read it, sir, no doubt?” says he for the second time with, I fancied now, just a touch of scepticism somewhere.

“Why, naturally, boy!” I cried, with such a noise that, at the moment, I almost believed it myself. “Can’t *you*, then?”

“It is strange, sir,” says he, “it seems to contain *htar*, and the old verb *secha*, to write.... Pray, bear with your servant a little, sir, I shall read the words, I see clearly that I can, if you will only vouchsafe me a little time — down by the seashore.”

“Time,” said I, with some disdain; “why *time*?”

The human mind should strike and divide like the very scythe of the lightning!... And how much time?”

“If I may have half an hour on the shore, sir,” says he, rather downheartedly, and as I knew that his mind usually rose to the height of any problem which bothered him with a lighter spring down there amid the droning of the waves, I said nothing when he took up the little stone, and passed out through the door. And so, Reid, we parted without one last clasp of the hand after nineteen years, for that was four days ago, and neither Shan nor I have since seen him. He is gone, he is no longer on Shunter, that

is our one certainty: he may be drowned, or he may be living, but on Shunter he no longer is, I'll vow. After waiting in suspense an hour, nearly two hours, for him to return with the basalt stele, I despatched Shan Healy from the castle to seek him over the shore, and to command him to come back to me. When Shan was gone on this errand, I took my stand at a window, looking anxiously out over the eastern shores and over the rolling ground of the sea: and while there I chanced to catch sight of a schooner, about the size of a dove, some two leagues to eastward, breasting southward through that gaudy kind of haze that shrowds with a gauze of azure the bridal and gala glances of the brighter days on these islands. But little did I heed her then, nor to this moment do I know that she had anything to do with the vanishing of the young man. Meantime, Shan did not come back, Hannibal did not come back, and at last, angry and anxious, I ran out of the castle, and had got some half a mile over the western shore before I encountered Shan Healy dashing back to the castle in a white heat, with a wild countenance, hardly able to gasp out the words, "Found this, doctor," as he paraded before my marvelling gaze a paltry square of cloth and lace, a lady's handkerchief, marked with the initials "R. V.," and tainted with some effluvium of stale perfume. That thing on Shunter shore! My heart failed me, Reid: for the young man's notions of female man had so far been gathered only from certain Greek and Egyptian urn-traceries, meagre things; and I thought that if eye of his had indeed fallen that morning upon the carnal fact of womanhood, then it would be small wonder if all were lost, and his parting from me an everlasting parting. For fourteen years, so far as we know, no human foot but those of us three has passed over those peats and marshes of Shunter; no spar nor oar has approached within even half a league of its shores; but when Shan and I had run together to the little harbour at the north, where the bit of a flag-staff stands, we found the boat

empty of the two pairs of half-tame *motacillae lugubres* which had made nests in her, and half-way down to the edge of the low tide I found the sands much trampled. Unknown to us, some craft had put in there, had anchored, and had departed, perhaps taking with her what far surpassed the understanding of those on her. Shan and I, having separated, searched each of us one of the promontories which enclose the harbour like claws, since, being dark with growths of bush, they seemed worth the searching: and on the east side I found, far out toward the last rocks, a track of footsteps going down to the sea, going, alas, without return: and they seemed to me, though I could hardly be certain, rather like the track of sandals than of boots, in which case he may have chosen that place to swim off to the craft in the harbour, so as to stow himself away below — I don't know. If so, it is remarkable that he should have acted in that fashion.

At first we fancied that, maddened by the sight of man and woman, the boy might have started to swim to Barra, and have been destroyed by a shark or a narwhal *en route*. But we are still quite in the dark as to the actual truth. Shan afterwards discovered half a bon-bon — a bitten bit of chocolate — amid the kelp on the shore, and no more know we of it....

Such, then, is the close of our eighteen years of the cloister on Shunter. Without a message of good-bye to his father the boy is gone. But, after all, I should have known beforehand, I should have guessed: for latterly he has been most museful, given to porings over the ocean through half a night, with more, perhaps, going on in the soul of him than I had any notion of, for we least of all see and know those that are nearest us, Reid; we see their faces and only fancy that we see themselves. Anyhow, it is all passed and over now; the little castle that was our home, that I had grown to love, and hoped that he, too, had grown to love, stands now lone through grey days, and darkling through nightlongs of thunderous weather without us: for, as I

have told you, we have passed over to Barra in the boat, we two and the dog, and the poor mare and cows and goats will go hungry now, no doubt, or will soon grow to the humour of the guillemots and herring-gulls on the crags, and become sea-things, goblin of eye, like the tangles of kelp on the shore, or the stench of the ocean's throat, or the pools remote from the foot of men with little bleaks brooding in their green glooms, or the inclemency of gales that gather over this sea. I tell you truth, man, I am sad, for nineteen years of life is not nothing, Reid. The young man's gone, and how he is going to adjust himself to the world, and how the world is going to manage to adjust itself to him — God only knows. His books will become covered with particles of peat now; our little garth, with its darg of peat heaped in one corner for our fire next winter, will hearken now no more, alas, to the echoes of our passing; our little garden will grow wild; and Shunter will forget the unlasting foot of man and boy, to go back anew with joy to the largeness and boisterous ocean-mood of her past, and the charm of her harsh old solitude. To-morrow, I hope, we shall be able to take boat to Uist, and so to the mainland, but I'm not sure, this poor Shan Healy is so beastly seedy and down in the mouth... etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

“MISS EVE.”



AT THIS POINT the statement of Dr. Lepsius becoming devoid of interest for us, we may next take up that of one Jeanne Auvache, where she writes (in French, with no eye to *us*, but quite for her own behoof):

... The next (Tuesday) morning, near nine, the yacht anew dropped her anchor within the claws of a creek in an island called Shunter: for the weather was fine and the sea smooth, so Miss Ruth and Miss Eve, each wishing to seek for more dolomites, weeds, and other suchlike things of the sea, and to place their feet on still a new shore, were pleased to land. I had already massaged, bathed, and coiffured Miss Eve, brought the two ladies their chocolate, and now had sat to costume yet another doll for Miss Ruth, when Miss Ruth comes to give me to know that she is about to go to land, and suggests that that should amuse me to come too with her: for she is ever good, as befits one who has the reputation of a saint, and who feels bound, no doubt, to keep it up. As for me, I little believe in saints, since all beings are as alike as two drops of water, the one to the other, at bottom — all save one, perhaps; and though it is a thing hardly to be questioned that, if a true saint does live, then it is this Ruth Vickery, still, I little believe in saints, I. Nor is it such a great matter that Miss Ruth should do me these little graces and goodnesses, inasmuch as I am not really her maid — I am the maid of Miss Eve — and not bound to be for ever sitting down dressing dolls for the brats in the hospitals of London; and if it were merely Miss Eve, I should

have very little to do through some hours of the day: but Miss Ruth finds ever some charitable work to which to bind me down, and if thou wert now so young as thou once wast, it is not thou, Jeanne, my cherished one, I think, that would long endure this demure quietude and existence of a recluse. But patience, do not yet despair; thou hast been beautiful, thou hast been loved! Yes, and now, it appears, thou art anew beloved. It was not, then, all in vain that I have lived, and the world may not be altogether so dirty a bog of egotism and rotted dogs as I have lately grown to regard it. Heavens! that is droll — I feel myself anew young! The sky looks bluer, my feet would be almost dancing, and I am no more morose within myself at everything: for with a few touches of art there is nought which may not yet be hidden, and it is as if all the mirrors had of late years conspired to make me appear to myself plainer than I really am, since, as a matter of fact, I find the flesh under my jaws yet firmly plump, my eyes glow as gaudily as a girl's, their creases have existed chiefly in my fears, and each day I appear to myself to grow more fit to please.

But how little does one know what is before oneself! The boat had been already lowered down into the water when, having put aside the dressing of the dolls, I went up on deck and saw Miss Ruth, Miss Eve, Lord Astor, Miss Savage, and Monsieur le Comte de Courcy ready to descend to go to the shore, though Mr. Vickery did not go to the shore, but abided on the ship's poop perusing his big Bible through his glasses. When we had come to the shore, the ladies were taken out of the boat both by the sailors and by the gentlemen, and Monsieur le Comte de Courcy, one may be sure, took care to be he who lifted out Miss Eve, while, as for me, I was left to be taken out by a mariner who, in doing it, embraced me, I think, with intention. In the boat it had been said that the island was uninhabited, but, to our surprise, we found a “coble” or sail-boat, with a brown sail, with the rags of a

philibeg, and with a pair of the sort of shoes which they call “brogues” in it, lying in some bushes; also a little inland, on some waste land over which many peewees and moorfowl were chattering their screeches, we found the ruin of a long shed, built of loose stones, with a roof of turf; also on the sands a sort of post or flag-staff: all showing that there were, or had once been, people on this place. On the shore the party split into two parts, Miss Ruth and Miss Savage marching off one way, and Monsieur de Courcy and Lord Astor following after Miss Eve as insects infest a feast of sweetmeat, while I was left to wander as I would. I therefore walked alone over that claw of the coast which was to the left as one looked toward the sea, where I paced in shade over a species of peat between bush and briar, which was deep on either hand, though little higher than my head, with thousands of gulls and whaups whistling and crying together in the air around me; and meantime, whatever seemed rare or strange, such as a weed or a piece of flint, I picked it up to keep for the ladies’ pleasure. In this manner I was engaged, waging war on the fog of midges that sang and stung my face, when, at a place where the “ glow of the morning’s sun was quite extinguished under the shade of the bush, I all at once felt within myself the instinct that two great eyes were regarding me from the darkness of an ambush. I sprang up from my stooping with affright! And it proved no fancy, for there, a yard before and to the right of me, I beheld, yes, two ardent eyes, glowing huge and close to the ground, it might be those of a tiger crouching, only that they were as dark as night. No second glance I gave, but with my heart in my mouth ran my hardest back toward the sands, awaiting at every instant the devouring teeth of a beast in my rear. Nothing, however, pursued me, and at length, seeing this, I halted, even ventured back a few feet, peering forward: for I have never lacked bravery, I, and am not to be terrified by a mere pair of eyes like that; but I could now see

nothing, though, as I stood peering, my ear seemed to catch through the leafage not far from me a sharp rush which afresh had the effect of putting me to flight. However, I was about once more to stop to pry round, when the whistle of our boatswain sounded to summon me, and I ran down to the boat, where I found all our party already come back to embark.

When the ladies had been again placed in the boat, and we were all again on the water making toward the yacht, Miss Ruth, noticing my looks, remarked to me, “Why are you so pale?” and I then related to them my adventure in the dark of the bush, how two eyes had glared strangely at me from the ground, and had scared me. At this all the talk stopped short, and no small astonishment was shown at my hap: for all had thought that the island bore on it no form of life except those of the smaller sea-fauna, as seabirds and suchlike, so that, in short, I was the centre of the interest of all the world for a while, and every eye looked toward me. Miss Savage took the view that it must have been my “fancy,” but I at once quashed such a notion by a gush of assurances, whereat Monsieur le Comte de Courcy gave his opinion that it was the eyes of “the genius of the place” which I had seen, Lord Astor thought that they were “the eyes of Hermes searching the island for the nymph Lamia,” and Miss Eve believed that “more of inhabitants crowd in the village than count in the census; each grove harbours its ghost, heart-sighs and eyes are about — —” in the midst of which argument the boat reached the yacht, and at once our anchor was tackled, our canvas thrown to the breeze, and we started out upon the last part of the voyage, no more to tarry till our craft should be at her buoy on the coast of Scotland.

Well, now, I come to the event: I am about to write it! During the hours of the forenoon I had been mainly bound down to the dressing of Miss Ruth’s dolls; during those of the afternoon I had found my hands full

enough with the making ready of the trunks, and with the thousand other little last cares that crowd upon one before a disembarking: and it was now evening, about half-past eight o'clock, when, passing out of Miss Eve's apartment, I went in a hurry round into my own to get and bring out her older brown gown. My wee apartment was quite in darkness; I was able merely to see the circle of my window, near under which, it being on the lee-side of the leaning ship, one was able to hear like a dirging the seething of the sea's surge sweep by toward the rear. So now I reached out my hand to switch on the light, and at that moment it was that it came upon me, while I, in a blue affright, gave up everything, recommending my soul to the good God, for it was as if thirty-six tigers flung their weight against me, and in the very same breath, as it seemed to me, I found myself lying on the ground, my feet bound together, and my mouth gagged with my apron; and so instantly were all these different performances done to me, that I understood, I remember, that I must be under the power of at least three ruffians. Heavens, that moment! I lay as it were given over and drowned far down in the gloom of the tomb, and I said within myself, "Jeanne, thou art finished now," for one could not catch one's breath, nor cry out, nor see anything! However, by a cunning move — for I was ever astute and deep in an extremity, I, and not to be done for so easily like that — I managed to jerk myself sharply upward a little, remembering that the switch was just above, and by a feat of luck my free arm, reaching wildly up, chanced to touch this switch, upon which the apartment was flooded with light, and I saw, to my bewilderment, that my tormentor was not many, but one. At once I had a sigh of escape and of regained hope, for though his right hand still held the gag, I could understand at the flash of the light that it was not a butcher, but a suppliant, who knelt at my side; and at once with that flash of light his lips were passionately at my ear, panting words so warm and queer,

that I half questioned whether I heard him well when the young fellow whispered wildly to me that he knew that I am a woman and wanted me for his wife. Heavens! of the two surprises of my situation here was the greater! For I could scarce believe that he was jeering at me, seeing that he gave utterance to his words with so earnest a *naïveté*, so that I wondered whether I had to do with a lunatic! And even in the thick of my fears, I was so pierced with a feeling of the queerness of the young man's remark, "I know that you are a woman," that I had to laugh within myself! for I was suddenly light-hearted and relieved in that he wanted me to be his wife rather than to be his victim. Again he made me hear his demand in a pant at my ear, this time with a glance in his gallant eyes which made me afresh apprehensive, and gave me to guess that the penalty of hesitation might be grave; so with my finger I now indicated the stuffing in my mouth, whereat he told me to nod my yes or no, so, to humour him, I nodded yes, I would wed him! He now demanded of me a vow that I would not betray him "to Man" (as he said), till the ship should come to land, and this, too, I vowed with movements of my head and with my uplifted hand. But little did he trust me! for, on releasing me, he flew to the door, and had it secured before I was yet even on my feet. We then stood staring the one at the other, both bosoms labouring, and during some moments my tongue seemed to be unable to dare to address this being, till on a sudden I said to him, "But you are deranged! Who, then, are you?" to which his answer in the lowest whisper was that he was "Hannibal Lepsius."

"Little that imports to me, your name," said I: "I wish to know, since you are not one of the ship's company, how came you here?"

His answer was a whisper at my ear that I already broke my vow, since I spoke loudly enough, he said, to be heard by everyone throughout the vessel; but that since he was now certain that he was more powerful than I,

therefore he would throw me down, and bind me anew, if I betrayed him “to Man.”

At this I stood scared, half-laughing within myself, for I seemed to have to do with a quixote or one crazed! but because of the beauty of his young face and form, and of some *naïveté*, and of some power, that was all about the young man, I could not be cross with him, for I declare that in some way he at the same time touched my soul with compassion, with mockery, and with awe of him, so that I craved at the same moment to become his mother and his love, his protectress and his slave. Something odder than anything in the world — in his looks, his words, his being — widened my eyes with the wondering of a babe, and made life a new thing to me... he had sandals on his feet, a belt, no jacket, no hat... he seemed to me fleet enough to leap up and fly with pinions. At this menace of his to bind me anew I said to him, “But you must have taken leave of your senses, as it seems to me I for I spoke scarcely above à whisper, which no one could possibly hear.”

As I said this, my young man, without saying more, drops on a sudden down, with his hands outstretched to me: and when I said to him, “Well, what now?” his answer was a prayer not to be untrue to him, but to hide him “from Man” and be his wife!

I laughed anew at this within myself! for he seemed to be blind to my forty-one foundered summers, and the flowers that withered in them, he a youth of hardly twenty years. So I said to him, “Get away with you, for you are crazy; how do you know that I am not already a married woman with a husband?” on which he told me very secretly that in any case he believed it to be possible that he should be able to make me one of “the most sovereign of ladies,” and with that he presents me with a piece of stone, resembling an ink-bottle, saying to me, “Read that.”

“What is this now?” said I, turning the thing round in my hands, since I could see nothing to read, only some holes cut in the stone; upon which he repeated his demand that I should “read” it, telling me that it was partly in Coptic and partly in — some long expressions which I did not comprehend.

“I know nothing of this,” said I to him, handing him back the piece of stone, whereat he peered piercingly at me a moment, and then all at once a light seemed to dawn upon his mind, and he rose up from his knees saying to himself, “I thought so.”

“Thought what?” said I to him, but to this he made no reply, only smiled upon me.

He gave me an impression of some young god gone mad! “You are hardly very polite,” I said to him, “and another woman might think you a little crazed, since at one moment you crave to be my husband, and at another moment you smile upon me as upon some ninny,” to which he replied something about being bound to adore me, ninny or no, inasmuch as I am so adorable!

“Why, get you gone,” I said to him, “you have hardly had time to see me yeti.”

He asked me how much time was necessary, and if he had not gazed at me through the bushes?

“Those, then, were your eyes that gazed there at Shunter through the bushes at me?” said I; “and you found me beautiful? What, then, could you have found so very beautiful about me, my face, or my figure — or both?” to which he replied, “Both.”

“And do you mean,” said I to him, “that it was merely through love of me that you concealed yourself in the yacht? What a sudden flame of passion! But I am at a loss to know how you could come here!” on which he explained that he had swum under water from the shore.

“But how could you possibly steal down here without being seen?” I asked him, to which he replied that “that question of itself charged me with a drowsy consciousness.”

His little smile of a superior man (*petit sourire d’homme supérieur*)!—“Well,” said I fondly to him, “you, for your part, are of a wakeful consciousness, and I, for mine, am beautiful both in face and form, is it not so? and it is a pair of us, is it not? But since we are now about to come to land, tell me this—” but before I could utter another word I heard the call of “Jeanne,” and was recalled by it to this world. It was the voice of Miss Eve who called me, and ere I could find my tongue to reply she called again, “Jeanne, where are you?” but I could not answer her, my eyes were fixed upon the boy, who now appeared lost in a joyous attention to the call, and with his finger held up gave deep into my ear a whisper of “Sweet voice.” Whereat I, being a little perturbed, turned from him, switched off the light, whispered him to await my return there, and went out in haste to Miss Eve, wondering within myself how in Heaven’s name I was now to restrain him from making the acquaintance of other ladies.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TOWERS.



JEANNE AUVACHE THUS continues: It all went beautifully, the landing. He had the wit, on appearing suddenly, to take upon his back the trunk of Miss Eve, which he bore over the pier to the little station, and in the dimness must have seemed to the sailors a porter, and to the porters a sailor. He did not see anyone in the light of the station, save a stationmaster in his uniform, and I praised Heaven that the train was a special one which carried none save our party. As she moved, he ran from the outer dark to the door of the compartment in which I stood beckoning him, and skipped in beautifully, so that we two went quite alone. Ah, but he trembled — all the way, so that one could see his jaws chattering anon. When I kept on saying to him, “But why do you so shiver?” he confessed to me that he felt fear. “But fear of what specially?” I asked, and when I pressed him he replied, “of Man and of my father.” I compassionated, but could scarce comprehend him, and I felt myself abashed and banished from contact with his soul, for though we were side by side, yet he was alone, and I was alone. I could only console myself with the thought that I had to do with an *ingénu* — a beautiful fault soon enough to be cured. But such an *ingénu* I one dropped down from the moon, as it looked to me. His curiosity about the train! for, to begin with, it was his terrors and tremblings that were uppermost, and then it was his curiosity struggling with them. His eyes were wide with an amazement which at first I took to be the natural amazement of a rustic

suddenly plunged into the thick of the wonders of civilisation, until I learned that his amazement was not at the speed, but at the slowness, with which the train was creeping! This caused me to laugh within myself! “Why, we must be flying at fifty miles an hour,” I said to him: “how much more do you wish?” But he did not appear to pay much heed to my statements, and continued to rush about the compartment, touching this and that, now springing up to peer into the lamp, now darting down to lie and pry under the seats, gazing into the make of the window, tapping the woodwork with his fingers, all with so eager a zeal, my God! with the omnipresence of a monkey imprisoned in a crib, and trembling all the time with excitement, as I could see. What most of all amazed him was the size of the train! Why, he wished to know, was this particular train so miserable a thing, seeing that its largeness could be vastly increased with only a paltry increase of the motive force. “But are not all trains of the same size?” I said to him: “they are of a certain size, that is all; one does not know why they are so, and this is no smaller than the others.” But after starting and staring at me, in a moment, as if he regarded me as an ignoramus that did not know what I was saying, he told me with disdain that most trains were raging palaces, though this one, for some sage motive that he did not understand, was not so.

I began then to recognise that he must have lived wholly buried away from actualities amid those islands of the sea, for his ignorance of life could scarce be greater, since he harbours the most laughably large notions of the glory and achievements of beings: and I was glad within myself at this, and resolved that he should be kept like that up to the day following my marriage with him. But even as I was thinking this within myself, what was my astonishment when he informed me that I am a Frenchwoman, and

spoke thenceforth to me in very passable French of Bordeaux! So that here is a rustic with a difference.

When we had arrived at Thring we found that, though the sun had not yet risen up, the night had now been replaced by daylight, and the birds were loud at their works in the silence of the world. I had by that time told him by what way to make to the brink of the river, and where to await my coming to him there under the ruin: so some moments before the train stopped he leapt from the door on the off side, and hied off over the metals. A moment more and laughter was sounding on the platform, and I looked out to see Miss Eve alighted, calling out to her father, while she fingered her now withered violets of Parma, that getting home in the dawn was like dying to earth and a getting to heaven, and immediately her father was to be seen stepping down out of his compartment, on his arm Miss Ruth, and the rest of the party trooping out after. Anne and I, having then assisted to carry the rugs to the carriages outside, set out together in the mail-phaeton for The Towers some minutes later than the others: and we found a gaiety in returning once again after so much of London and the sea, for everything is good in its turn, but a curse upon too much of any one condition of being. So down the mountain through the townlet to the river we drove in a procession, and up the mountain beyond, no one yet to be met on the roads, but one constable, and the day slowly working about us toward its birth.

After our arrival at The Towers, having first perfumed Miss Eve's bath with the infusion of frangipane and ambergris, and then got her hair prepared while she perused an accumulation of her correspondence, I put her to bed, she impressing it upon me that I, too, must take a nap. I had other thoughts than napping, tired as I was! all my nerves tingling at the whispered word within me that love was now again by God's goodness about to be mine in this dog's world. The moment, therefore, that I was free,

I was down and away, tapping my face with powder, taking from the larder and housemaid's pantry a parcel of bread, meat, and preserves, and down by the river found him seated in a cavern of the cliffs, searching into the interior of wild plants which he had slit with a knife. He was still visibly atremble with excitement, but did not rise when I came to him, continuing to gaze into the make of the plants, having recognised my coming step, as I think. But on a sudden he started upright with something of a laugh, and made *the* remark, gazing upward at the sky and around at the girdle of mountains, that it was a world worthy of "Man" to circulate in. "It is more imposing than those islands of the sea, is it not?" said I to him, and he replied, "Yes," for that those are mostly of bog and boulders, with hags in between, but that these parts are made of stones with strange names, so many millions of ages old; only he wished to know what creatures could live in those sheds over the river, and looked dumfounded when I informed him that they are the ordinary houses of a country townlet! But he scarce seems to believe my statements. The windows, he remarked, can only be opened half-way at the most to take in the fresh air, and when I gave him to know that all English windows are of this sort, though French windows fully open, this caused him to fall into so extraordinary a marvelling, that one had to laugh! For one kind must be ideally the better, he said, so why do we find the British tied to one kind, and the French married to another? But this I was unable to make plain to him, and he remained in his surprise.

I now went into the question of our wedding, telling him how everything could be fixed up in some days, how I found myself possessed of two hundred pounds funded out of my earnings, which amount would serve nicely for our small *ménage*, till he should have found his niche in the world; and I engaged myself to see to everything as to getting the licence from the surrogate, as I desired him meanwhile to hide in the church-steeple

near St. Peter, whither twice a day I would fetch him a meal: for I did not wish him to see the world at all as yet, and so, working on his awe as to his father, I warned him that he would certainly be caught, if he but once looked forth of his hiding; though, *after* our marriage, I said, he could safely range out anywhere, since the laws would not allow his father to take him out of his spouse's arms.

As to this he bent his head; but as to bringing him meals, he made the observation that that was not worth the trouble, inasmuch as he frequently exercised himself in abstaining from eating for a week at a time, and he asked if he might not remain in the cave where he was, in order that he might peep at the people passing over the opposite river-shore: to which, as I could see no reason against it, I gave my consent, and even agreed that he should come to meet me in the east shrubbery of The Towers that evening about nine. So, having given him to observe the zig-zag running down round the mountain's brow from The Towers, I ran from him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TERRACES.



ARRIVED AT THE Towers, I first slumbered a couple of hours, and then, the day still early, returned to my mistress' bedside. She had bidden me wake her, but I just massaged her with a gentle touch, contemplating with a smile of pleasure that face whose charms I am soon no more to behold: and never did she show to me in so angel-like a light as then, for everything is suddenly changed in me, I find myself inclined to be kindly-minded to everybody, and then Miss Eve is ever beguiling, from her very breathing being given forth a breeze fraught with that fainting fragrance of frangipane, which is as essentially a part of her self as are her eyes or her smile. When her lids unclosed of their own action she once more bathed, and it was when I was doing her hands in making her toilette for the forenoon that she begged me to bear tea with my own hands to her, if she should happen to be in the small drawing-room after four that afternoon.

I at once suspected an interview with Monsieur le Comte de Courcy, and this proved true: for on looking into the small drawing-room in the afternoon, I saw the two alone at a window, and when I presently stole in bearing the tray, there they still were, Miss Eve considering something that had been entreated of her with her head bent, while Monsieur le Comte, in his grey frock-coat, spoke pressingly at her, eagerly fingering his imperial. Now, the sight of lovemaking always profoundly agitates me, causing me a shivering round my right knee; so, having announced the tea in a mutter, I

could not, on stealing out, tear my ears away, but stood there by the stair-top, hung upon what was said; and presently could hear the Minister of the Interior say, “You have permitted me to hope these four months,” then mumble, mumble, and then the lips of Miss Eve were speaking, saying, “Days have their weirs and their weathers, if Thursday its drought, perchance Friday its showers: somehow to-day I am dull, empty of every reply.”

“Only whisper to me the word ‘hope,’” I then heard Monsieur the Minister implore with much agitation, though what answer was made to this I could not catch; and he then said, “Soon?” to which she replied, “Soon necessarily, since you are going.” So he asked her, “Tomorrow?” and the answer given was, “Well, tomorrow, if God will,” at which point I saw the boy-in-buttons rushing up, so went away.

For the evening Miss Eve had arranged for the party a ball, to which came a troop of neighbour visitors, though Miss Ruth and Mr. Vickery, of course, kept themselves from the levity of it. So, after preparing Miss Eve’s third bath — Miss Ruth, I have heard, considers it to be “worldly” to bathe her body as frequently as once in a week, as nuns believe! — after bathing Miss Eve anew, I advised her to put on for the evening the Chantilly overskirt and the pearls, for I knew that Miss Savage in her crimson robe would be making Miss Eve’s pink appear pale; and having aided nature one wee bit by a touch on her cheeks, her lashes, and her eye-brows, I turned her out an object *chic* to kiss the hand at, proudly certain in myself that she must prove the finest-costumed of the company; and still I had uttered no word to her as to my leaving her service immediately, it was so immense a step, like a ravine from which I shrank.

After dinner, till nearly nine, I was down in the housekeeper’s place, making a pretence at playing cards, and some moments after nine rose to

rush off to meet him in the east shrubbery, as arranged; but just then my bell summoned me, and when I went to the shrubbery ten minutes late, with a rush of terrors I became aware that he was not there. I ran my hardest now, my heart raised to Heaven in a prayer that nothing had happened — down the mountain to the cliffs, down their face to his cave. He was not there, and I wrung my hands together in an anguish of apprehension, begging the good God not once again to bring me all the gall of the draught of frustration to drain to the dregs, and the bitterish bread of drabness to chew for ever: for there he was not, and where he could have gone to I could not guess. Thinking at last that I might have missed him in coming, I made my way back up, with runs and stoppages to take my breath, came back to the shrubbery, but failed to find him there. However, on looking out across the lake, I saw in the moonlight that laved the lawn-terraces two forms: one of them Miss Ruth, pacing there with her gaze poring upon the zodiac, and her rubric of devotion hung between her fingers; the other, whom I could just perceive, was lying flat, peeping into the drawing-room through a window, and I knew that it was he, for a rumour of the music and dancing came faintly to me there, and I knew that this must have seduced him to it. I could not but feel pleased to find him, but to my feet my being was pierced with fear to see him lying there, peeping carefully in. In a minute, however, he bounded to his feet, hearing, I presume, the step of Miss Ruth, and he ran some paces, looking back at her; but when she beckoned to him he waited, and in a minute I perceived them standing together engaged in speech.

I crept then through the bushes of the lake's edge, till I came to the lawn; and there, observing their backs turned toward me, I stalked still further forward on my hands and knees, till I was in concealment beneath the stonework of a terrace — little dreaming that I had been overheard; and thence I heard the voice of Miss Ruth saying to the boy, "But you must have

lived in a strange isolation never to have heard speak of Jesus Christ?" upon which he, gazing down upon the ground, said in a low tone that he was altogether ignorant, till two days ago having never met with anyone save his father and an idiot.

"Poor dear boy!" coos the voice of Miss Ruth, who, being but twenty-five years of age, has scarcely the right, I think, thus to soothe a youth of twenty. "And where," says she, "was this?"

In a tone in his throat he replied, "On an island of the Outer Hebrides."

"Why, I am even now from there!" she told him. "But your father, has he also never known the blessed name of Jesus?"

He answered her that his father possesses the sum of worldly wisdom, but that he had never at all heard from his father any mention of this personage.

"Why, this is strange!" she cries in a maze, with her azure eyes of a child widely agape at him: "to think of such pagans living in Christian England!

Do you not, then, know the words 'Christian,' 'Christianity,' 'Christendom'?"

To this he answered that he had never heard these words.

"Tell me this, then," said she: "in what year is it that we are now living?" to which he made her the amazing answer that we are now in the year six hundred thousand three hundred and sixty-three.

At this reply Miss Ruth smiled, and during some time appeared wrapped in silent prayer, until she suddenly asked him, "From what event, then, do you date this vast sum of years?"

"From the presumed date of the evolution of human life from the ape-state," was his reply.

For a few moments Miss Ruth mused upon the young man, then threw up her hands with drollery in her little human way which just rescues her

from being angelic; and she asked him, “ But are not all dates reckoned among us from the Lord Christ?”

At these words of hers he seemed extremely perplexed, and, after frowning upon the ground, asked her if the Lord Jesus Christ was a Greek or a Roman. “He was a Hebrew!” cries Miss Ruth.

“With an Arianised name,” said he:” lived, then, under the later Romans.”

“Just so,” said she: “how much you know for one of your station, and how little!”

“How little,” he said, and on a sudden knelt to her, begging her to bear with his ignorance, for that she was much more gracious and merciful to discourse with him than he deserved, as he was not only strange to the world, but his brain, moreover, was all in a whirl, inasmuch as he had only just made away from his father’s control, nor had ever before been intoxicated with strains of harmony such as those escaping from out of the house, nor beheld such blessed beings as she and those fabulous beldams moving beautifully to music over the floor of the drawingroom.... Upon this Miss Ruth raised him up, bid him wait, and, moving to a window of the drawingroom, peeped in to Miss Eve, becking her to come, too, to inspect the curiosity. I disliked her for it, since there was little need for him ever to have seen Miss Eve near at hand, save for this. At all events, out stepped Miss Eve now, very tall in the sheen of the moon, Miss Ruth seeming a midget near her, and even when the three stood face to face, still Miss Eve appeared the tallest of all. So Miss Ruth recounted now in how odd a solitude the young man had spent his existence, and then fell anew to talking of the Lord Christ, he eyeing Miss Eve steadily with the corner of his wild eye, speaking with a drooped head to Miss Ruth, eyeing steadily Miss Eve; till now Miss Ruth cried out, “He was man and God, too!” and

only then did the ogler, peering in surprise at her, cease to eye Miss Eve. Immediately now, too, his meekness appeared to cease, for looking straight now at Miss Eve, he asked her if she also shared this belief.

Miss Eve had as yet uttered not a word, but now with her eyes turned downward, her lips muttered, "Why, yes."

He smiled, and at the same time looked perfectly perplexed, turning his stare from one to the other lady, until Miss Ruth remarked to him, "Do not doubt it, though it is marvellous in all our eyes, so that even the cherubic natures of the skies deeply brood with admiration upon it," and he then very impolitely replied to her that her consciousness of the size of this earth could not be alert.

To this answered Miss Ruth, "The earth? she is huge in momentousness, you know: with each tick of the clock a human being ceases to breathe—"

"A human being?" he replied with a cry of surprise: "with each tick of the clock a million worlds are burned, and are born!"

"Oh, La!" says she, startled a little at him.

Then she said, with that veiling of the eyes with the eye-lids that lends her her air of Madonna saintliness, "That cannot be, I think."

But the other sister murmured, "Ruth, it must truly be so, if the universe truly is termless: prove me one world that's been burned, millions a minute must burn."

"Let it be so, then," said Miss Ruth, "since you say so, and glory be to God, for the remotest of them, I think, His hand holds, and His right hand guides it."

"He is it," the young man said.

"He is with it, I think," Miss Ruth replied.

"And *you* also say this?" he asked of Miss Eve.

"Yes," she answered curtly, with a touch of pique, as it appeared to me.

Silent he stood now a while, with that smile of his that hides all the windings of his mind behind his brow, but still giving an impression of one plunged in bewilderment at the creatures he was speaking with. Then, glancing upward, he swept his fingers athwart the vault of the stars, with the remark that all that was a darksome mathematic, a perfection which was deaf.

But now Miss Eve, going rosy, frowned upon the ground, and in tones that trembled a little, she observed, “ Perfect it *is*, though a Heart, not a Head, was its Father and Harper; tolling melodious notes, wrung with emotion it rolls;” and it was now that the young man suddenly caused my heart to bound into my mouth by coming out with the statement that, inasmuch as *the fourth* sharer in the conversation would undoubtedly be found to contemplate the universe in the same sort of mood, he could only suppose that all ladies were prone to criticisms of the same quality.

The two ladies looked round, and “which ‘fourth sharer ‘can he mean?” Miss Ruth wished to know of Miss Eve, while I crouched there beneath the terrace, trembling lest he should betray my whereabouts; but when they pressed him to say where I was, to my great gladness, he gave an evasive reply.

He next requested Miss Ruth to instruct him further in her views of the universe, upon which she begged him to come the next night that she might give him a Bible and teach him of the Lord Jesus; and as to his father, after some hesitation on her part, he gained from her a promise that, if his father, or his father’s agents, should get upon his scent, the sisters would not let out to them where he lurked down there in the river-cave. And next he began to beg Miss Eve for one of the begonias at her girdle, but at that moment, before he could be answered, Monsieur le Comte de Courcy stepped out of the house, and, really as if by magic, the instant he appeared the young man

had vanished. By this time I had somewhat recovered of my fit of affright, my eyes were anew at the parapet-top, and I could spy the surprise of the ladies, who seemed unable to believe what their two eyes had seen: for though the nearest leafage was quite nineteen or twenty metres away, in the twinkling of an eye, as it seemed, he was within it, and gone like a ghost at cock-crow.

L for my part, having crawled back to the lake, rushed through the shrubbery obliquely, meaning to meet him somewhere in his career downward: but he was nowhere to be found, until I was on the footpath above the cliffs, when down there in the moonlight I beheld him walking furiously to and fro before his cave's mouth. Down, then, I scrambled, calling out to him, asking why he had not awaited me; but he is not very well-bred, went on silently walking, and on marking one of the swans glide past on the water, he suddenly darted to lie on his face and gaze at it.

“But why did you fly like that?” I asked him when he returned to me, “since the gentleman could not have hurt you?” but still he made me no reply.

“And what did you think of the two ladies?” I next asked him.

Then he: “Who are those ladies?”

I: “They are Miss Ruth and Miss Eve Vickery, the daughters of Mr. Richard Vickery, who is what is called ‘An Iron King,’ a very rich and an extremely religious man, who sometimes preaches in a chapel on Sundays.”

He: “Preaches?” — and I had now to try to explain that “preaching” means teaching the people how to be devout and grave; but I failed to get him to comprehend how Mr. Vickery could have attained to greater gravity than the rest, and he struck his brow in the misery of his failure to grasp the signification of a single word that I uttered as to this. “Well, it is so, and that

is all,” I said at last; “but as to the ladies, you have still not told me which of the two you most admire.”

Then he: “Which is the first-born?”

So I: “That auburn-haired one is the elder by three years, being already twenty-five, and it is she who has the reputation of a saint in society, though it is Miss Eve who is so much the more queenly; so which of the sisters do you like, the auburn or the light?”

He: “A saint?” — and I had anew to make an explanation which he little comprehended, and then anew I wished to know of him which of the two sisters he the most admired.

And now he, making that stone like an ink-bottle which he keeps inside his shirt whirl about his forefinger without attachment in a quite wonderful way, his waist swaying to keep the thing whirling wildly quick, answered with whistling lips, “I like Miss Ruth.”

Then I: “Oh, you do? You like her better, I see, than you do Miss Eve?” upon which he, putting his hand behind his back for the stone to whirl behind there, answered, “Yes.”

Then I: “But leaving Miss Ruth out of the question, since she will never marry, which of the two do you most admire — Miss Eve or me?”

He: “You.”

I: “Oh, you do?”

He whistled quietly awhile, whirling the thing wildly with a swaying waist, as it were a wheel wheeling on his hand, and he answered, “Yes” to me; but I thought that my heart would be breaking with its rankling.

So I to him: “Well, since this is so, that you like me so very vastly better than Miss Eve and than all, why go to-morrow evening to get the Bible, since there is no need, really; it is all nonsense and make-believe, and will merely mean that you will be caught by your father,” upon which he,

suddenly ceasing to wheel the thing, sharply asked if she had not promised not to betray him.

So I: "She has promised, yes, but she little means it, wait, you will see, you little know women, they are deceivers all; she will betray you surely enough, if she but has the chance."

He glanced sharply at me, then said, "No."

I: "But I say yes."

He: "The lapwing says pee-wit."

What he meant I was not sure, but I was so brokenhearted that night, that with sobs I threw myself now in a passion to his breast, and on my knees, kissing my own tears on his hands, implored him like a dear boy not to leave and despoil me, but to love me for ever, for if he left me, that would be my death, I said, and his death as well.

He smiled with his fixed little smile upon me, and I could believe that he meant well by me; so, getting up now, I told him how I had that day gained all information as to English marriages, and meant on the morrow to take the first measures; but as I was speaking of this, he, leaning aside, bent his ear to the ground, hearing God only knows what sound under the grass, and when I had bidden him goodnight, and was going up the cliff's brow again, on glancing back I beheld him bent down aside, eagerly listening with his ear near the ground.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE GARDEN.



THE NEXT DAY the first thing that happened was the coming of a person whom Miss Ruth interviewed for her father in the morning-room. I was even then seeking Miss Ruth for Miss Eve, and on coming near the room could hear the man say that he was one Shan Healy, a servant of Dr. Lepsius, who, having traced to The Towers the owners of the yacht which had touched at Shunter, was now come to find out what he could as to his master's son.

He seemed a person of some thirty years, slimly tall, with a scar that twists his upper lip, clad in rough new clothes: a man of an alert and amiable personality, so that Miss Ruth laid her hand on his sleeve to soothe him, for indeed he was in deep dreariness, and frequently sniffled. When I went in with the message, Miss Ruth sent me to call Miss Eve to her, so I ran back, and having brought Miss Eve, hung near to hear.

It was a long talk, the stranger having been given a seat near the grate, the sisters seated on each side of him, hearing his tale. I, for my share, was kept fidgety by the sounds of footsteps going about the house, and could gather only in fragments what was said — enough, however, to inform me of the marvel of the opportunity which has brought me this gorgeous bridegroom of mine, for here, it would appear, is Aladdin, and it is the wonderful lamps that are alight in his eyes. Only sparkle crisply, do, do, my little star, and come to me some spirit of perfect luck and alertness to spur

me now with whispers how only four days more to hold him, till I have safely erected myself on my thrones, and bound my brows with crowns. Oh, I am silly with thoughts. But thrones, may be; may be, many crowns, as Josephine, who was but a *bourgeoise*, wore: for when Miss Eve asked this man, Healy, for what reason the father is in this fever as to the son being abroad in the world, the man answered that “the doctor regards it, lady, as a peril greater than a charge of gun-cotton piled under the globe, with a child holding a glowing coal by it: for, says he, the day that Master Hannibal gets to recognise the real grade of mankind’s mind he’ll be dragging the frame of society to fragments, like a child tearing a fly, leg by leg, for mischief.” The ladies had the eyes of a child who has listened late in the night to tales of the ancient time! “Well,” Miss Ruth murmured, having heard the wonders that the man had to tell, “I am in for it now, for though I do know, I promised him not to tell his whereabouts, being cross with his parent for not having instructed him in the Christian faith.” Then to Miss Eve, who, leaning forward with her chin on her palm, sat staring at some vision which she saw in the hearthplace, she remarked, “What do you say, Eve; what should I do?”

Now Miss Eve knit her brows, and presently replied, “Promises can’t be repealed, dear.”

“But since it may do much harm?” Miss Ruth suggested.

“Still,” muttered the lips of Miss Eve, “a promise.”

“Oh, lady, do, for God’s sake,” Healy now entreated of Miss Ruth, “not that I expect him to go back with me, but he’s so green to everything, badly needs somebody, lady, like a whale run ashore, has got no razors to shave, no jacket—”

At this of “razors,” Miss Ruth placed her hand upon the man’s in a movement of friendliness: for in truth he appears to be rather like his young

master's nurse than servant, and Miss Ruth's heart, like waters haunted with squalls, is anew every minute smitten with all the world's smart, as fluid and easy as Miss Eve is aloof. So she smiles with the man, saying, "Wait, I'll question my God," and gets up to go away to a window, from which she presently returns to Miss Eve with the words, "Eve, I'll peach."

To this Miss Eve at first answered nothing, but after a little asked, "What will he think of the worth of the promises made by us Christians? Knowing a first that has failed, never a second he'll trust"; but Miss Ruth continued to believe that it would be better on the whole to betray; did not, however, outright do so, only revealing to Healy that the boy would be coming that evening to receive a Bible, and instructing Healy to be then on the terraces to meet him.

But there was one who had no wish that the boy should be taken unawares, and who, not meaning him any more to meet Miss Eve, immediately made up her mind to make known to him that he had been deceived by the ladies. So, after placing Miss Eve's halfhourly hot water, down at once I started to him, and in passing near the morning-room, again had a peep of Miss Eve in solitude now, pacing there regularly to and fro with something of a frown, as it were a sentinel in a gown. But when I had got down to the cave, again my heart went aching, for again he was not there, and I thought then within myself, "It is going to be more troublesome to hold him in my prison than to keep quicksilver in a sieve, or to bind a wind with twine, and this is a wild kind of horse with wings that I have vaulted on, I think, which may chance in its raging to break every rib of my body." Louder and louder I called out after him now, and there was no sound nor sign of him: only, on the cave's floor now was a thing resembling a telescope, made of oak bored through the core; also I saw there a thing like a trap made of twigs, with the guts and gore of some animal close to it;

also a hollowed stone containing water that was violently on the boil, though by what means the boy could cause this water to be bubbling and boiling there was more than one could conceive. There remained also most of the food which I had brought him, and having left what I had now brought, I had to hurry back up to The Towers.

There I spied Miss Eve still pacing in that same machine-like fashion as before, as queenly slow of step as when a lady, conning poetry by rote, paces with closed eyes. However, within twenty minutes now she called me, to ask me to take tea to her with my own hands, as on the day before; nor did I get any time to go down the mountain again, for after lunch I had to take the walk over to St. Arvens, where, at the vicarage, before a Mr. Rae, an aged curé, I made an affidavit as to there being “no impediment” to my marriage, and he promised to procure me by the 27th, from” the Bishop’s Registry,” the licence to marry, with a stamp on it for £2 3s. 6d. So far, then, all goes well, thank God; and in passing back through St. Arvens, having got my finger measured at Martin’s shop, I there gave orders for the wedding-ring, since I do not regard it as a good thing to bring my former wedding-ring into use for this new bridegroom. By the time I came home, elated with hopes, it was already late, and before long I was bearing tea, as bidden, to Miss Eve. There was an afternoon picnic at the Devil’s Pulpit, where many of the party were; a few were at tennis; Miss Ruth was in the book-room in the thick of scribbling off a basketful of her correspondence with Christendom; and Miss Eve was with Monsieur the Minister of the Interior. But this time when I bore in their tea they were less close together: Monsieur de Courcy sitting in a mood of gloom on the sofa, gazing at the floor between his legs, Miss Eve standing nearer the fire-place, fingering white violets, with a bent face. And I, listening in the corridor, heard her murmur to him that “pain like a curse or some venomous perfume infects

all Eve's poor daughters: curst that they needs must endure, worse when they needs must inflict," from which I gathered that the poor Monsieur de Courcy, having been given to hope for twenty-four hours, was now definitely turned away, though, as I left the corridor, I heard him cry out crazily, "There is some reason! I know that you like me, Eve!" but what answer was given to this I did not gather.

Then, after spending some time at the wardrobe, preparing the bath, arranging four costumes for her choosing, and the perfumery and lotions for her *toilette de soir*, I thought I might have just time to run down to the boy, but was now anew disappointed by being summoned to yet new toils by Miss Ruth, who, having received a bale of toys from the Dean of somewhere, presents me five dolls to dress! So that is the way it is? It was always to be dressing dolls that I was born, was it not, ladies? Wait only four days more! and perhaps you will then not know your lady's-maid for the smile that will writhe her lips, and for the royalty of that rage of joy which will shine in her eyes.

For the evening Miss Eve, for some reason, would put on her poudre blue with the Borzoi ornaments, and orchids, and now I had a small hour to myself, for, as to dinner, eating was far enough beneath that sphere of fairies where my brain was in a reel; so, having merely tasted a spoonful of soup, off I hastened to him....

He was not there at the cave, still he was not there! And I could only guess that, his awe of his "Man" having already grown less great, he had roamed far, and ah, I asked my heart if he had not done it four days too soon for my fate.... I had no paper to write him that he would be betrayed by the ladies if he came up, and after half an hour's waiting returned to The Towers.

Nothing was then left me to do but to watch, and at first I lurked under the conservatory's shadow, and then, conscious that I might be observed, moved up to pry from behind the curtains of that front bedroom on the right.

Thence I soon saw Healy appear on the terraces, and soon from the drawing-room out to him moves Miss Ruth. Miss Eve did not appear, though invited by Miss Ruth, I know, to assist at the rendezvous. So Miss Ruth and Healy conversed a while, and I heard the stable-clock strike nine as Miss Ruth introduced Healy into the conservatory to wait there concealed, and then returned to pace the terrace in the moonlight. Three minutes afterwards, half a mile off on the meadow below the lawn, I beheld a runner coming with a wide stride, his elbows at his side, his head thrown back, his lips opened, pressing prone home like a beast with its ribs breathing deeply from long travelling. At once I was certain that it was no one but him by his black skull, his shaggy shirt, and by observing how with a bouncing somehow and a buoyancy in his gait the boy came gaily — beautiful! like a fabulous youth booted with something pneumatic; and soon, scaling the terraces, he stood panting before Miss Ruth, I kneeling at the window's sill with my ear low to hear him excusing his lateness: for, said he, he had had a high-day of adventures, and then had been again delayed by watching a conflagration eight miles away, and the deaths of a man and a child.

“Really?” says Miss Ruth to him, “and what, sir, is the name of this poor man who was burnt?” to which he gave the answer that he had heard the man called “George Perkins, the grocer.”

“What, Mr. Perkins, the grocer, of Up Brooming?” cries Miss Ruth shrinkingly, with eyes of alarm, “burnt to death?” and “Oh!” she murmured with ruth.

To this he replied — and I disliked him for it — that there was no need for any feeling of grief or loss, since this grocer's life, he felt certain, was a life of no value, one greatly below the human grade, his figure having the grossness of the gorilla's, and his soul on a similar level, since in the attempt that he had made to steal he had failed even to death....

“To steal?” breathed Miss Ruth; “Mr. Perkins, the grocer? A prayer-leader? There must be some mistake!”

“No,” he said — at least he took it, he said, for granted that the grocer had meant to steal, since there appeared to be no other motive for his demented rush into the conflagration.

“He rushed to rescue the child!” cries Miss Ruth.

“So,” he replies, with his smile, “the people of the region seemed to imagine,” but as the child, he observed, was not even the grocer's own offspring, and as even an ape's eye might have recognised the fatal state of the conflagration, therefore he could only suppose that the motive of the grocer was to grasp some hoard.... Whereupon the saint suddenly throws up her hands with drollery, and once more, as on the evening before, could not resist running to bring Miss Eve to hear the story of the good grocer, who, having perished as a hero, was still impeached of stealing! But Miss Eve would not immediately come, so that the other sister had need to entreat her thrice with, “Yes, come, yes, come,” ere Miss Eve, deciding, appeared on the terrace in her poudre blue, the moonlight's hue, Hannibal Lepsius making the abject obeisances of a Jew before her face. Then the three spoke during some moments, or Miss Ruth and the young man spoke, Miss Eve, with an air of musing, waiting mutely near. I heard only in fragments what was said, but gathered that Miss Ruth, having ridiculed the grotesqueness of the good grocer being accused of stealing, the young man now began to glorify and laud stealing, asking if the Spartans did not rightly regard it as

an excellent art of life; and what was dishonourable about it, he wished to know, save to be of so drowsy a consciousness, he said, as to fail or to be found out in it? In the midst of which speech of his, Miss Eve, without saying a word, turned away, and went pacing westward behind the conservatory toward the garden, the young man all agape after her, and Miss Ruth saying to him, “Now, I’m afraid you have quite blundered into my sister’s bad books, though I, too, say with you that there’s no wrong in stealing, save that it does seem rather selfish, does it not? and selfishness, I think, is the sole falsity, the only fault. But never mind, it will be quite well, let us wait and pray, for I prophesy in the Spirit that one day light will spring from on high in you. I am only sorry that we have to separate, but here’s the promised Bible, which for love of me you will read frequently, while I for love of you will wrestle — Listen!” for he, half turned toward the conservatory, hardly heard her, his eyeballs all beguiled away with a hungry glaring in them the way that Miss Eve had disappeared. “Listen!” she says, “I have considered it best to betray you—”

“Ah!” now he span about to frown a second at her, into her, one may say, and some other seconds stood dumb, considering it; looked up, too (why, I do not know), at the window where I knelt hidden. At any rate, he saw now the truth of my prophecy that Miss Ruth would betray him, and that I was no lapwing that says “pee-wit.” In a moment more by some reasoning of his own he seems to have surmised that Healy was concealed in the conservatory, for toward it with his usual ill-breeding, leaving Miss Ruth, he immediately rushed. Just then the footman John ran out with some message for Miss Ruth, who went in with him, and soon out from the conservatory hurried Hannibal Lepsius, holding Healy by the sleeve, leading him to the terrace’s brink, where he caused him to sit with a warning finger. The next instant he himself was off with the fleetest feet the

way that Miss Eve had disappeared, tossing aside in his flight the Bible brought him by the other sister into the basin of water where the sun-dial stands, and as he vanished I, too, though with a shivering in my right knee which shook me throughout, rushed toward the house-back, and out into the top part of the garden, all my heart in a conflagration and tremble of haste to break into some outrageous row, and shout my wrongs.

I thought I heard talking down there at the bottom of the garden, and, bottling up my rage, shivering, I crawled like a snail down the three steps into a garden-walk which lay between bowers and arches made of box-twigs. There the voice of the boy again reached me, clearly now; so down another path on my right I prowled to its end, and now could see them down there at the bottom by the seat, he on his knees to Miss Eve like a very slave, she standing still, looking not at him, but at the north shrubbery-wall with a frown on her brow, while round in cruises above head a white owl, I remember, was moving smoothly about in the moonlight, like a musing spirit cruising: for I somehow observed each little object, just as a person in going to the guillotine does, I have heard; and I observed that, though the previous day there had been bristles on his cheeks, he was at present clean-shaven, and I observed that Miss Eve's handkerchief, which she had dropped, hung from the young man's right ear; and I observed that he offered her earnestly the one half of a halfpenny, or of a penny, at which she would not look. Then I saw her lips speak, and she pointed southward, enjoining him, it seemed, to leave her, upon which up the boy sprang, and was now about, I believe, to seize her body, but all at once now was in flight — along the alley down which I was peeping! *Why* in flight I could not conjecture, till suddenly I saw Monsieur le Comte de Courcy appear from the north walk, with his cane uplifted in the air. He, it seems, pacing with two ladies in the north shrubbery, and seeing through the gate, may be,

a male without a jacket molesting Miss Eve, had run to protect her, at which the young man, ever fearful of his “Man,” had taken to his heels; and before ever I could raise my self up to run, he, raining his steps, had pelted by me, looking back over his shoulder at Monsieur de Courcy. He seemed, when his eyes fell upon me, to see me there without surprise; and on some way he still ran, more and more slowly now, however, looking back always at Monsieur de Courcy who, cane in air, was pursuing him. But all at once the boy, making only loitering steps that halted, almost stopped, amazement painted on his face — that he was so inefficiently chased, I take it; amazement, and also, though he always smiled, a terror which stretched his nostrils as the cane of Monsieur the Minister came. I stood awe-struck at it! and Miss Eve, too, appeared to be apprehensive of something fearful, for she tripped some distance in Monsieur the Minister’s rear, and once called out after him. He, however, seemed not to hear her: still on came his great bulk of body, the cane, the eye-glass and glassy shirt-front, till he was quite near the turning in which I lurked, his teeth grinning white to bite his cigarette between them. But he never advanced as far forward as my turning: all at once Hannibal Lepsius was at him; and in that instant of bewilderment, ere one’s wits could decide what had been done, or in what way done, one was aware of the cane of Monsieur the Minister wheeling high away up in the air, up where the owl wound its flight, while the Minister himself was now on the ground, and his cigarette, no longer in his mouth, now stuck out of one nostril, the glowing end upward.... Oh, I was smitten with compunction for Monsieur de Courcy, he a man of so much culture — and with a feeling of affright! he being one whose anger it must be a truly grievous thing to bring upon oneself.... As Miss Eve hurried to him, I ran off.... The young man also had vanished, appalled, as I imagine, at the enormity of his defiance of his “Man and when I ran out to the

terraces, neither of him nor of Healy was any trace to be seen, nor when I ran down to his river-cave.... I came back up lagging and agued, yes, trembling throughout in a kind of ague-fit....

Then, till my bell summoned me at midnight, I lay sullen, and, as it were, dead, though uttering a sob anon. But soon after midnight I had my mistress in my hands before the mirror, had already made ready her hair, and now after massage with the preparation, was getting on her night-gloves, when she remarks to me, “What is the matter? Your fingers quiver,” and I then replied to her, “Miss Vickery, this is because I have it on my mind to inform you that I am about to leave your service in a hurry, since I am about to be married.” I expected to feel her start a little, but even in that electric blaze of the two candelabra I could detect no surprise in her, and oh, these English with their cold spleens, how one dislikes them! She muttered to me, “Don’t be agitated; when do you go?” did not even inquire who was that future-one of mine. But as it was mainly in order to proclaim this to her that I had spoken, I made the remark, “I believe, Miss Vickery, that you have even seen my future-one, who is that young Individual named Hannibal Lepsius” — whereat as when a nerve leaps a little, it appeared certain to me that her hand stirred in mine: and I was pleased within myself at this.

She asked not one question, but I now informed her frankly of everything, how, in his passion for me, after seeing me in the bushes, the young man had swum aboard the yacht, how I had hidden him, brought him hither, and now was about to receive the bishop’s licence to marry him — keeping meantime a sharp eye of observation upon her face in the mirror: but beyond a little raising up of her palms once as in amazement, she listened calmly, making no remark; only, the moment I stopped, up she stood, went to the large wardrobe, and now began prodigally to shower out her gowns, gown after gown, upon the arm-chair for my wedding-gift, so

that I stood agape at the largesse of her busy arm, and this sharp shower of her bounty — quite a thousand pounds, as I now count — for out, too, with the others flew that pearl grey, the ermine stole, that orchid-mauve silk with the spotted poplin, and now the China silk tea-gown with the Valenciennes insertions, and that great creation for the Coaching Club Meet last year, only that once worn. “And are all these really for me, Miss Vickery?” I said to her in the midst of it; “you are truly good and gracious, Miss Vickery,” I said, to which she made no answer, but continued to rain her largesse with a scornful arm. I had to make three journeys out of the chamber, submerged beneath these riches, and comforted inwardly of the pangs that rankled in me. Even when I supposed that I had taken out everything, the stole was still left, and when I now stepped in softly for this from behind the portière, I came upon the lady standing there as naked now as a lily, her outlines all slenderly long-drawn as by the pencil of a stripling painter who has never yet ventured, save in his dreamings, to be voluptuous, and she appeared to stand tip-toe stretched to spurn and desert this earth, and return to her heavens. Suddenly, chancing to catch sight of me behind her, all that marble was washed in one blush, as though I was he upon whom perhaps her heart was musing.

CHAPTER IX.

“VITRIOLISERAI.”



THE NEXT MORNING he was gone, he was not there in the cave, and as for the man, Healy, he was not there, and where to seek I knew not at all: only the thing like a telescope was there in the cave, the thing like a trap, the dead creature's remains, the stone which he has hollowed into a vase, and under some rubbish and leaves in a corner the thing like an ink-bottle that he has called a “stele”: but all the bread, etc., that I had brought him he had either eaten or taken away.

Eaten, may be; but, if not eaten, whither, I asked myself — with this food — was he off to? Ah, many questions I asked myself; and then, hurrying across the bridge, went to the cottage of Mrs. Bream, with whom Healy was lodging, to ask if the man did not sleep there the previous night; but she said no, he had merely come in, together with a stripling who wore sandals, to take away his bag, saying, however, that he would be back to her in some days; and he had taken the 10.20 up-train with this stripling, who had wished to know of her, poor sinner, if she did not know even so much as the names of the mountains in the moon.

Upon this, seeing me near to fainting, she made me sip a little of a white wine made, she said, out of cowslips. I was not, however, wholly without hope, since Healy, who is clearly a captive, and probably but repeated his master's words, had promised to return; nor did I believe that the man could mean to deceive, since he seems an honest-minded person. To this, then, I

clung; though that the boy should fly off thus wildly to London without breathing anything of it to me who am his sweetheart seemed hard — to London, I assumed! for that 10.20 train stops only at Gloucester and Swindon before London, and I thought that he may have wished to behold the capital. Indeed, this is probable: for the conviction has clearly been growing upon him that his “Man,” hereabouts, at all events, is hardly all that he has thought him; and I guess that the feebleness of such a magnate as Monsieur the Minister of the Interior in that encounter in the garden may have sent him flying off to the capital to find out once and for all how things actually are. What, then, I asked myself, would be his opinion of it all? Would what he there saw fascinate or in any other way keep him from returning to me? Would not Healy find the means to communicate with Dr. Lepsius, or in some way to kidnap and immure the young man? Ah, many, many questions I asked myself....

The 26th. It was vindictive of Monsieur de Courcy to give information to the police as to his grievance against the young man, which, after all, was hardly very grave; but his no doubt is one of those hard brows that hardly ever forgive. At any rate, this morning an “inspector” demanded to interview me with regard to the whereabouts of the young man, my relation with whom, owing to my haste to crow my marriage, is already known throughout the household, just as the fact that Miss Eve is in negotiation with a lady for a new maid is well known to everyone....

My God! what is to become of me now, my good God? Have I not conducted myself like a light-headed young girl who has not yet learned to govern her nerves or her tongue, who skips into enthusiasm at the first music, and boasts beforehand of shadows as though they were substances? At any rate, I had to confess to this constable my complete ignorance of my bridegroom’s movements, whereupon he, getting up to go, said to me,

“Well, we shall make it hot for him if he dares show his nose about here again.”

The 27th. But is he such a blackguard, or is his scorn of me so great, that he cannot even write me a line to say that I am never again to see him? Still not even a line, and Miss Eve this morning would not let me do her hands, but ordered me to bed, I looked so bad. I went, but had to get up to go to St. Arven's to receive the marriage-licence, after which I took the train, as directed, to Wynton, to give notice of it to the registrar there; and now any day after to-morrow, this gentleman told me, I may be married: a statement that made me in coming down the stairs break bitterly out into tears.... In passing through Wynton I procured myself at the chemist's a vial of vitriol....

The 28th. Again to-day I was several hours in bed with my headache, Miss Ruth coming at noon to read aloud to me a fairy-tale named *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and after luncheon comes Miss Eve also to sit five minutes at my bedside. It was in going away, when she had reached the door, that she stopped and said, “And as to your marriage?” whereupon I too rashly indulged my shame with the falsehood that I had that very morning received a communication from my future-one, assuring me that he would immediately be here to be mine.... The house is now empty of guests, the two Gordons having departed this morning....

The 29th. Well, dear Lord, he is here, and I thank you. I now write at six in the morning, after having spent a nearly sleepless night with him and Healy, and still with no desire to close my eyes. By tomorrow evening we shall have been secretly and safely married, and within a week I shall have taken farewell of this my life here....

I was in the housekeeper's room alone, for Mrs. Bowden had gone up, it being long past midnight, and I was lying on the sofa, the vial of vitriol

beside me on the table, for I had been foolishly fingering it, when there came a tapping at that back door which opens upon the passage. I get up, I go to it, I open it.... And it was *he!* Oh, my wild one with wings, with the light of life flying wildly in his eyes, it was he! and while one might reckon three I stood breathless, then with a cry was on his breast.

His nature is not yet coaxed over into tolerating the luxury of kissing, and even in the ecstasy of our meeting his chastity shrank from the touch of my lips; but, my faith, that will soon be “al-right”! and he patted my shoulder fondly, even while hurriedly saying, “I need light for an hour or two.”

I was too much flurried to attend to what he said! I cooed to him,” And is it actually true that you have come back to me?”

“Yes, yes, let me get in,” he mutters hurriedly, and now, seizing Healy by the sleeve, hurries in into the housekeeper’s room. He had climbed outside, and spied me alone in there through the window, Healy told me afterwards.

But his air was much changed! all bustle now, business, and aloofness from one! When I now said to him, “But where, then, have you been?” he mutters to Healy, “Just answer her questions, and see that she speaks in whispers,” and instantly sits to the table, places on it that ink-bottle “stele” of his that he had left in the cave, takes a magnifying-glass out of his shirt, and begins to gaze through it at the marks that are cut in the stone.

“But tell me—” I began to say to him, when “Sh-h-h!” breathes Healy into my ear, “I’ll tell you,” and draws me away to a corner, where he whispers me, “Mum, can you offer a body such a thing as a bite of something? He” — indicating Hannibal Lepsius with his thumb—” can do without food and sleep, but that’s a bit more than *I* can bring off, anyway.”

I made him sit, stole out, and in five minutes was back with bread, meat, cheese, and a bottle of beer. Hannibal Lepsius at this time could no more be

said to be sitting, but was half over the table, one knee on the chair, poring with greed over that “stele,” as if he would eat it with his gaze. I was about to say something to him, when my ear was afresh reached by the sh-h-h of Healy, like a whispering of leafage fretted by a zephyr; so I placed the victuals on Healy’s knees, sat before him, and commenced to question him; but it was many minutes before his stuffed mouth could bring out a syllable.

“Why were you so famished?” I asked him, “since you had money to pay railway-fare?”

With his lips at my ear, he answered: “It was a question of time, mum — no time to eat, no time to sleep; but that’s good meat, that is, and that’s good beer, too.”

“Was he, then, in such a hurry to return to his marriage?” I asked.

The man looked at me under his eyes — strangely, I thought — and replied, “I know nothing of that, mum; but we went to see London, and we saw it in a tear, I tell you, and we left it in a tear, for by the end of the third day London had got a bit too hot for us.”

“Why, how was that?” I asked him.

“Truth is,” he whispered, “some of us have been putting into our pockets more than what belongs to us!”

“What!” I said.

“Sh-h-h,” he went.

Mrs. Bowden’s clock just then struck one, and glancing round at it, I beheld Hannibal Lepsius bent yet further over the table, poring upon that stone, and heard him whimper over it as if in pain.

“What is he doing?” I whispered to Healy.

“Lord knows, mum,” he whispered back.

“So the London police were after him?”

“That’s so.”

“What a thing!” I said in awe.

“Thrice in three days!” he whispered; “aye, and that second time it was a close go with us, too, seeing that he wouldn’t let go hold of me — a thousand people after us through London streets, if there was one, and he dragging me, thinking that I am against him, too, and want to betray him. That’s hard, too, that’s hard. Here am I, mum, Dr. Lepsius’ servant — I’d give this hand for the doctor — yet keeping the lad dark from the doctor, going against the doctor, mind, knowing that I am doing wrong, but no more able to help it than a man addicted to liquor, I am that given up to the lad; yet he keeps me as his prisoner, I who’d race after him to hell; thinks I want to run away and betray him to everybody, can’t believe in a motive that’s not selfish, it’s hard.”

“You haven’t, then, written to tell his father that you have found him?” I asked.

“God forgive me, no,” he answered with a bent head; “though I have had chances to do it, too, mum, and the doctor must be in as much of a wonder what’s come to me as what’s come to Master Hanni. God forgive me! for never I’ll forgive myself on this side Jordan. And all to pleasure the lad — but he can’t see it, keeps me as a prisoner, it’s hard.”

“But what did he do in London? what did he think of the ladies there? was he really chased by the London people?” I asked, for I could not whisper my questions fast enough to satisfy my inquisitiveness.

Healy answered yes, that the sandals and bauge shirt of Shunter Island had been chased with hue and cry all up Tottenham Court Road at midday, and twice by night in other places; and that not the London police only were after him, for that he had no sooner stepped from the train down here than a constable laid hands on him; but he had filliped the constable in the face,

and run away, making to the cave to get the “stele,” which he seemed to be extremely eager to get, and then had run up here, dragging Healy with him.

“And he actually filliped the constable?” I said to Healy: “he is no longer, then, at all in awe of his ‘Man’?”

Healy grinned a grimace to himself, and throwing up his hands a little, whispered to me, “All idiots! that was the verdict on the second night — about eight o’clock, mum, drizzling, hazy night, he and I sitting in one of those recesses of Waterloo Bridge, and over the river a sight, mum, greatly like a fairyland going on in a haze, with that host of lights.... So he sits awhile there, weary from the two days’ tear, looking at the traffic rolling over the bridge; then getting up on the seat, he leans over the parapet; and presently, as he was there looking down upon the river, I hear him say to himself ‘idiots,’ and then I hear him say ‘all, all,’ with a sort of wail, shaking his head a bit, and then I see him bury his face in his hands, and a sound came out of him that at first was more like crying, but afterwards was more like laughing; and from that minute he was eager to get back down here to his cave.”

I looked round at Hannibal Lepsius, and now saw his body all across the table, with one knee also on it, for, in the keenness of his strain as to that “stele,” he had been pushing it inch by inch from him and following it; and now his brow was all brown and engorged, his eyes were glaring at the object like a maniac’s, and now also a sort of groan broke out of his breast.

When I turned back to Healy to continue our conversation, I found that during those few moments that I had been looking away his brow had dropped in sleep; and I was just disengaging from his fingers the glass that he had been drinking from lest he should drop it, when I became aware of a tapping at the little door at the back. I stole out to it, I opened it, and now, heavens! my soul faints within me when I behold standing there the big

Inspector Gibbon, together with that graceful young constable of Thring with the moustache, whose name is Shooter.

“We have found him at last,” remarks Inspector Gibbon, for they had seen the light, climbed a little by the spout outside, and seen the young man poring over the stele.

“But what has he done?” I asked them, with a trembling about my right knee, hearing, as I asked it, Mrs. Bowden’s clock strike twice.

“There are no less than five counts against him,” answered Inspector Gibbon, “three from London, two down here; let’s have the beauty out” — and he steps within the doorway.

At once now with a wild heart I darted back into Mrs. Bowden’s room, to whisper to the young man, “I am afraid that two officers are come to arrest you!”

He groaned, without glancing up from his poring over that stone. I waited several seconds, hearing the clock tick, and my own heart as loudly pounding. Healy also, who had started awake, now sat staring with an open mouth.

“What shall I say to the two officers?” I asked the young man.

Again he groaned grievously, but did not glance up at me, and again I stood in suspense some seconds; till now he in an absent way, still without glancing up, mumbled at me, “Bring them here.”

I ran out, and found the officers already at the door: in another moment they were standing within the housekeeper’s room. Hanni Lepsius was now on his feet awaiting them, and the instant they appeared he stepped up to them, saying, “Now, I wish you to take me; take me — only be swift.”

“You are a beauty—” Inspector Gibbon began to say, taking the young man by one arm, while Shooter took him by the other; but Hannibal Lepsius cut short his words, saying to him, “Yes, I know: you all delight in the

waste of time, the waste of words. But come, take me, and I shall know now with certainty whether you are of the smallest worth.” The boy now pointed out of the back door at the old oak tree that stands there in the courtyard about twelve yards from the door. “You see that oak tree,” he said to them: “only get me past that, and not only will I go with you the rest of the way to prison, but four hundred pounds which I stole in London shall be for your private use” — and how earnestly he spoke to them; turning from one to the other, instilling his meaning into their ears as into the ears of people hard of hearing, while they calmly smiled upon him with a contempt for him equal to his concern for them. “You are poor,” he told them, “ah, poor even to meanness, even to shame; and here in this pocket is the money. Rouse yourselves now, then! *Ask* yourselves, ‘How can he escape us?’ Not by strength! — each of you is as strong as I. By craft, then? Surely, only by craft!” — turning from one to the other, pleading earnestly at the ear of each in turn. “But there are at most only six possible ways,” he said, “in which, by craft, even a lord of Mars or Venus, I think, could escape you. Think in lightning — *now* of those ways! Rouse, rouse yourselves!

Oh, rouse, rouse, now, all those dark powers that profoundly drowse in your soul! Look round the room: for the means by which I choose to escape lie here before your face; nor are you idiots born, your brain has the same bulk, your reason is equal to mine, only it deeply sleeps — oh, dull, dull, dull — and wakefulness is bliss, wakefulness is life—”

“Oh, come, no more of it,” now said Inspector Gibbon, interrupting him with a good-natured disdain, drawing the young man away; and Hannibal Lepsius uttered no other word.

They took him to the back door, Healy and I following mutely behind, and down the two steps they went, and across the yard toward the oak tree and the swing-gate that is close by the south garden-wall. The moon was

about at her full in a sky without one cloud in it, so that I could see that the boy's right foot, as he walked, was drawing part of the coil of rope from the stables which generally lies just there by the back door; and I whispered to Healy, "He has got his leg entangled in the rope!"

They were by this time not three feet from the old oak tree, Inspector Gibbon at the young man's right arm, Shooter at the left, keeping a strong grip, I could see, and a cautious guard, since they had been so warned; nor had I, for my part, the least expectation of seeing him escape them ere they reached the tree, or indeed at any time; but all at once, just as they reached the tree, without even the least effort I now beheld him easily free; and the next instant one saw a sight! — the two constables all entangled, and Hannibal Lepsius running furiously round and round the tree, ever with every revolution at a shorter distance from it, the rope in his hand, roping with many whorles the two men to the tree. I never was so curiously affected, I think, by any sight — with a feeling of religion and hallelujah, I may say, the two men's bulk of flesh looking so abject and helpless in the hands of that wit, like hippopotami with their insignificant skulls: though how he had contrived to escape out of their grasp without a struggle I still had no idea. To tie their hands, their arms being already bound, was to him not the work of a minute, and suddenly he was rushing back to the house, dashed inward past Healy and me without a word, and by the time we two had returned to Mrs. Bowden's room, he was already whining and whimpering anew over his stone, as if nothing had happened.

"But in what way — ?" I began to say to him, when Healy's "sh-h-h" again checked my tongue; so in the corner Healy and I discussed in agitated whispers what had taken place. When I asked Healy if he knew in what manner the young man had escaped the police, he answered by asking me, "What's in that little bottle on the table?"

At this I felt myself fly red to the roots of my hair! for he meant the vial of vitriol which, procured at Wynton on the 27th, I have been foolishly fingering ever since.

“How should I know what is in the vial?” I said to Healy.

“Well, whatever it is,” he said, “it is something that makes cloth rotten in a tick, for when you went out to tell the officers to come in, he dipped a match into the vial, drew with the match a circle on each of his shirt sleeves, and now, you see, the two pieces of shirt have disappeared” — and in truth the young man’s arm nearest me was showing through a hole in his shirt, so I understood that by the working of the vitriol the two pieces of shirt had come away in the policemen’s hands. I had begun to say, “Well, it was not so wonderful, after all, now that one knows how—” when one of the bound men began to shout out for succour; upon which Hanni Lepsius groaned within himself over his stone, and, without glancing up, told Healy to go and give them to know that if they made but one other outcry before the daybreak he would gag and agonise them; so Healy hastened out to say this, and thenceforth the two men remained mum.

After this Healy and I talked in our corner till the clocks tolled three, by which time both our heads were ready to nod, our words dried up, and still on in the soundless night worked Hanni Lepsius over that stone. I did not hear four strike, for I was in a little sleep; but immediately after half-past four I heard, or dreamed that I heard, a laugh somewhere, and I started awake, aware that his study of the stone was over, and that he was standing at my side.

At once, as I opened my eyes, he handed me the vial of vitriol, bowing a little, and smiling.

“What is this?” I asked him.

“It is oil of vitriol,” replies the boy.

I ought, if I had had my wits, to have asked him why he handed it to me, but, being only half-awake and confused, I foolishly took the thing and put it down without finding a word to say; and I saw his gaze linger strangely upon me. Then he said, "I am very hungry."

I ran and fetched him bread, cheese, and water, for he will eat no meat; and it was while eating that he asked me whether I had with me those two hundred pounds which I had told him that I had hoarded. I replied that I had with me ninety pounds only; he then demanded of me if I had this in metal or in notes, and on my replying "in notes," he said that he desired to see at once what a banknote is like, and would I run and bring him the money that he might see. Proud to do him a pleasure, though it was a journey through the house at that hour, I light my candle, I set off, and soon return with my roll of notes. He sat with them, fingering, holding them up to the gas, while I, with my hand on his shoulder, remarked that all that was to begin our little *ménage*, informed him that everything had been arranged for our marriage, and asked him when that little affair was to be. His answer was that it should be that very day at two o'clock, and I felt my heart start once and cease to beat, my right knee trembling like a string. While I stood thus agitated behind him, he examining the banknotes, requests me to give him an envelope; so I go to Mrs. Bowden's desk, I get an envelope, and, as I give this to him, he hands me back my roll of notes, takes the envelope, puts into it a piece of tissue-paper, on which he had written some words with a stump of blue pencil, fastens the envelope, and with the pencil writes on it the words, "To Eve Vickery."

I started! and I started anew when he said to me, "Hand this to that lady when she awakes."

"But what do you mean?" I said, shrinking from him; "do you, then, wish to outrage me? and do you suppose that I would do such a thing,

really?”

“You will,” he said; and to Healy, “Come.”

“But stay!” I cried; “at what hour of the day do I see you?...

He was already at the door of the room, but came back a little, saying, “At noon; and the marriage at two” — whereupon he anew picks up the vial of vitriol from the table, hands it to me, and goes through the doorway — the good God only knows why he did this.

I darted after, caught him at the back door, and, casting my arms about him, wet his cheek with my kisses and tears. He made no remark, save to say, “Do not release those police until twenty minutes past five”; and he went.

The moon had set, and the new day hardly yet dawning, but I could see him go past the oak tree without a glance at the two prisoners, and go away like ghosts, he and his Healy, through the swing-gate close by the south garden-wall.

I had then to sit up till twenty past five, as he had said, to release the police, when I brought them in, gave them some breakfast, and impressed it upon them that it was useless for them to seek him, since he was “gone away,” I said; and even if he was not, they could never get him, I said: a statement which they seemed to believe, for they were very dejected and shivering.

It is now near seven, and here I still sit, even now not sleepy, for this is the day of my life. What is in my heart? Is it peace? Is it dancing? I think I have a fear....

It will soon be time to be at Miss Eve’s bedside. Of course, I shall not give her the envelope, though he said with assurance that I will; but I have not as yet opened it to see what is in it, for I fear his consciousness of

things.... There is something solid in it, like the half of a halfpenny, and a chain....

The 29th, at nine in the night. He has robbed me of my savings, he has abandoned me, he is gone for ever!... No, my God, I cannot write, my head cannot hold itself up.

The 30th. I will vitriolise him. God knows, that will not be easy, he has many eyes, it will be almost impossible: but those great men who make discoveries which amaze the creation — in what manner do they accomplish this? I think it is not because their wits are so vastly more than those of ordinary folk, but because their lives are wholly devoted to one thing only, as my life henceforth will be wholly devoted to this alone. God help me in this; it will be only after years of effort that I can even hope to do it, but one day, if God be my Helper, it will be done “al-right.”

When at two yesterday he could not be anywhere found, I opened with steam the envelope addressed to Miss Eve, and found that he had written on the piece of tissue-paper in it the words, “Beldam Eve, farewell for two years, from your slave for ever, Hannibal Lepsius. Please tell Jeanne Auvache where I have laid her money.” The meaning of this last phrase I could not for fully an hour make any sense of, since my brain was reeling round and round; then it occurred to me to look anew at the roll of notes that he had handed me back, and when I now flew to them, I found that only the two outer ones were now notes, all within being mere stuffing of tissue-paper. For a long time I lay on the floor by the trunk, feeling myself ruined, for the loss of even a franc has always appeared irreparable to me, and here were two thousand francs departed by fraud, for ever, out of my life. But after a time I thought of the words in the note to Miss Eve, “Please tell Jeanne Auvache where I have laid her money,” and without stopping to ask myself how Miss Eve could know this, I picked myself up to run straight to

her with the note, no more caring whether she noticed that I had opened it, for I cared for nothing. First, however, I tried to detach the half-coin from the note — it was the half of a sovereign which had been split in two, and through a hole in it passed one of those little chains such as medallions are hung from round infants' necks; but he had artfully gummed the half-coin to the tissue-paper just by the words "please tell Jeanne Auvache," and, as I could not get away the coin without tearing the paper, I ran with the whole to Miss Eve in the eagerness of my hope to get back my money — forgetting at the moment that this was even what that fiend had foretold that I would do. Miss Eve was in her boudoir alone, reading in her rocking-chair, and suddenly, without rapping, I was there before her, holding out the note and chain. She lifts her eyes, and instantly a faint flush flew to suffuse her face. "What is it?" says she, taking the thing, and in one moment her eyes had run over the words, she had thrown the note aside with a little motion of the wrist in a little hurry, like one brushing off a fly, and was anew perusing her book.

"Miss Vickery," I said, "can you tell me where my money is laid?"

Anew she lifts her eyes, looks at me silently, and from that look I knew at once that that phrase in the note had only been put into it so as to ensure that Miss Eve should receive the note; for he knew that I would open the envelope, and that Miss Eve knew nothing as to where my money is, for how could she? My money is in his pocket, that is where my money is, my two thousand francs.

The 31st. I was not allowed to get out of bed today, and ah, these English, they are frigid, they are hard on the surface, but beneath they are tenderer and better than all the world. I expected that Miss Ruth would lavish the compassion of her ever-wounded bosom upon my grief, but I have been even deeper touched by the goodness of Miss Eve. When, in one

of the paroxysms, I cried, "Miss Vickery, I will vitriolise, I will vitriolise him, if it is in fifteen years to come!" she, with a look that flashed anger at me, began to say, "You shameful woman!" but then rushed to the bed and warmly embraced me in her arms, murmuring many times in words of wooing, "Poor bruised heart, poor wounded woman," with water swimming in her eyes, while I wept on her. A French lady would not have kissed me on the lips.... In the afternoon when I knew that she was below, I stole from bed, and, creeping to her boudoir, peeped in to see if the tissue-paper note with the half of a sovereign was yet on the card-table, whither she had brushed it from her; but it had vanished.

The 2nd. I must go away, and in haste, since this holy house is no place for me to linger one hour in, with my heart all a nest of hissing asps. I recognise it to be an incongruity, as a devil in disguise in high heaven might be. Miss Eve would have me revoke the notice to leave that I have given her: but I will go. In truth, thy youth is over, Jeanne, thy last hope of happiness has perished, thy very last rose is ashes. Is it not certainly a dog's world? and I will get back into it black and bitter, a hag at heart, bidding goodbye to the time of bloom, to all beauties of youth, abandoning my being recklessly to rancour and wrinkles, decay and tragedy and destruction. I do not care, I will vitriolise him, if he live as high from me as the sky, and within a week, I swear it, will have left this place and these people....

CHAPTER X.

“THE MOON.”



THE NARRATIVE OF Jeanne Auvache, which continues yet through three volumes, may here be dropped, and what else took place may be gleaned from the “Memoirs” of Monsieur Goncourt Leflô (Prefect of the Seine), and from the “Notes” of Said Pasha (Chargé d’Affaires), together with jottings and gossips of other witnesses.

In that place which used, I think, to be called “La Plage,” but is now the Club des Décavés, a crowd one afternoon sat surveying the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne. (The Décavés is far up at the top of the Avenue by the Arc de Triomphe, from which point the throngs of bicyclists who have toiled up the incline of the Champs Elysées put their legs up, give themselves to God, and by Him are taken gaily down the long-drawn-out incline to the Bois, like boats in the river of carriages which rolls droning down.) It was an afternoon in June, and everyone who knows his “capital of the universe” at all knows that sight, whose mood, in its large-minded worldliness, is rather to be recalled than to be described.

The Décavés itself, with people coming, going, sitting, sipping, gossiping, was a scene of no little vivacity; and to a new-corner, as he stepped up, one of a group of three said eagerly, “You have heard, Leflô?”

“Well, naturally, one has heard,” answered Monsieur Leflô, the Prefect, as he sat, “inasmuch as one cannot dodge the omnipresent, and all Paris is talking of it.”

“But what an indiscretion!” cried Monsieur Isabeau Thiéry.

“A public embrace at the Foreign Office, my friends! “ added the Abbé Sauriau, his plump palms spread a little.

“But, then, everything is possible at the Foreign Office,” remarked the Prefect of the Seine: “above all, dizziness of the head.”

“This, however, my friends,” now said the old Due de Rey-Drouilhet, “is an incident, not of the Third Republic, but of the Second Empire! Transfer the scene to the Bal Morel, and the lady might have been Païva, as the male Plon-Plon,” whereat Isabeau Thiéry shook backward his lion’s mane of hair with, “It may be an incident of the Third Empire, which we see beginning — unless by chance a patriot or two still exists in France.” (“He was” — to quote from the “ Notes” of Saïd Pasha— “one of the tribe of poet-politicians — the Hugos, Lamartines, Châteaubriands — and though neither his poetry, nor even his politics, was at all equal to theirs, Thiéry, as we know, took himself awfully seriously, excelling them all, since not in head, at any rate in hair, in his spread of hat-rim and La Vallière cravat, whose crimson hue proved him “ of the Left.”)

“But was it Lepsius who did this? “ now said the Abbé Sauriau, his tumbler of byrrh brought half-way up to his broad mouth: “ Lepsius, the Nazarene, reeling beneath the mead of Venus! This Puritan, whose existence is presumed to be made up of a race with the sun, to whom a speck of dust appears a heap of leprosy, and the loss of a minute the loss of a province?... This Lepsius, indeed, is a myth. he has contrived by chance to create in men’s minds a Lepsius-Phantasm, as there is a ‘Napoleonic Legend’; but oh, if he had but a real existence! Who in that case, my friends, could fail to revere this furious reaper of the tickings of the clock, who lives with one eye on a second-hand, and with the other, I am told, on a pyramid of thrones? Do you know the story that is told of what he replied to

Proudhon *ainé*, who at that time was one of the quaestors of the Chamber, when Proudhon said to him, ‘ Tomorrow, monsieur, it shall be done’? The answer of Lepsius — as they say — was, ‘Monsieur, believe me, to-day is each man’s last, last chance, for it will be doubly impossible for him to effect to-morrow just that which he may effect to-day, since to-morrow it will be all an altered world, he an altered man in it.’... Is it *he*, my friends, whom we find engaging in an amour so touched with giddiness that it may not wait for privacy?”

“A propos of ‘the clock,’” remarked the old Due de Rey-Drouilhet, his little hand all aflash with diamonds in the sunshine, “Freycinet *fi*ls is said to have remarked this afternoon at Tortoni’s that then at least, during the kiss, Monsieur Lepsius lost reckoning of the clock, seeing that his eyes were tight closed! And it is now being said round about the Palais-Bourbon of Cardinal Pontmartin, who has declared that the kiss lasted a minute and eight seconds by the clock, ‘How could the Prelate have seen the clock, when those holy eyes of his must have been poring upon Paradise revealed before them!’ — a *mot* at which the titter and grin of the beau set his (!) teeth atremble with a rather ghastly glitter on his gums.

“But as to the lady—” Isabeau Thiéry began to say at the same moment that the old gossip exclaimed, “Here comes Saïd Pasha, one of the keenest listeners and best observers in Paris” — and a brown man with a firm lip, perfectly turned out, came up to the table, the duke observing to him, “Monsieur, one is conscious from the very blush of your boots that you bring with you much that is new.”

“But, Monsieur le Duc, they were not polished by myself,” replied Saïd Pasha innocently — a reply which raised a smile I since everybody knew that the duke, in the course of a very varied career, had had need to be his own menial.

“In any case, you can enlighten us as to the identity of the lady who is on the tapis in connection with a certain individual,” said Isabeau Thiéry to Saïd Pasha, who at that time was generally supposed to be in quite the inner *coterie* of the Palais-Lepsius; but in the same instant that the staid and cautious *chargé d’affaires* was asking what lady was meant, the due was saying, “Here, too, comes Monsieur the Englishman,” and one Mr. E. Reader Meade, an attaché at the Faubourg St. Honoré, walked up — a man who, because of his bulk, and of that mass of face on which was written “phlegm” and “judgment,” was often in the Paris of that day nicknamed “the Englishman.” As he approached, the aged gossip, holding up his eye-glass before a dilapidated eye, made the observation, “But do I read aright in Monsieur Meade’s air that he is unaware of anything having happened?”

“Very possibly, Monsieur le Duc,” replied the Englishman, sitting down, “since I only arrived from London an hour ago” — at which confession of benightedness, in a moment the old Due de Rey-Drouilhet was at Meade’s ear, leaning over, tittering forth the story with no little vivacity — Soirée last night *H* the Quai d’Orsay — all the Faubourg St. Honoré there, much of the Faubourg St. Germain itself, not to mention a Chaussée d’Antin mob — in the grand *salon* the *quadrille d’honneur* had already begun, the Prince of Wales the partner of Madame la Ministre — out in the vestibule, moving in, a crowd — in its midst the young Lepsius and his usual retinue — also a lady, supposed to be English, who at any rate was under the chaperonage of the English Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard; this lady and a certain individual gradually work together through the throng, by accident, say some, by design or blind desire, say others — do not, however, seem to see each other — move on with the crowd, shoulder to shoulder, without speech or look — till for some reason two of the electric jets chance to go dark, leaving the vestibule in partial gloom, whereupon that pale dark face of a

certain individual turns toward the lady's pale fair face — the lady's pale face turns somewhat toward his — and, according to Cardinal Pontmartin, who was quite near the pair, their wide and wild eyes stare awhile at each other with a stare of scare, of even the extreme of terror, as in apprehension of some impending crash and catastrophe — until now the lips of Lepsius pounce upon the lady's — nor does the good girl turn hers away, gives herself gallantly up to the vertigo and whirl of it, smiling though white, her eyes closed, his eyes closed — the crowd looking on in an amazement so profound, that Cardinal Pontmartin had since declared that his hair could not but have stood on end, if he had had any, as beyond all question would the hair of the good Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, if it had been real.”

“And we who imagined that Society under the Third Empire was destined to be as earnest and *bourgeoise* as was that under the Citizen Monarchy,” remarked Isabeau Thiéry with sarcasm when the old duke had concluded the story, to which Mr. E. Reader Meade replied with a smile, “But what can be more ‘*bourgeois*’ than kissing, monsieur, or more ‘earnest ‘ than such a kiss?”

“Such a kiss,” the Abbé Sauriau said, “is a proof, my friends, of nothing save of Lepsius’ disdain of mankind, since he certainly weighed the thirty or so pairs of eyes which observed that kiss as lightly as lovers on a stile weigh the eyes of kine which watch them. Do you know the story that is told of his answer to Marshal Macintosh, à propos of the Marshal’s remark that a foreigner, even after a hundred years, is never regarded and behugged by the French as a Frenchman? Lepsius replied, ‘It may be nice to be loved, monsieur, but what is nicer far is to be disliked, to behold yourself surrounded by people thirsting like Tantalus to hurt you, and to behold them powerless, because of your towering superiority.’ So you see, my friends: Napoleon regarded men mainly as pawns in his game; Monsieur Lepsius, in

his more *savant* mood, regards them as gorillas in his garden of zoology” — and now the abbé’s eyes shot out beneath his bush of eyebrow a beam of bile, bush that burned, yet was not consumed, while Isabeau Thiéry’s eyes, quick as tinder, caught fire also, for company.

Saïd Pasha, however, with a frown, was saying, “Oh, pardon, Monsieur l’Abbé!... This anecdote of the reply of Monsieur Lepsius to Marshal Macintosh is, indeed, known; but I need hardly remark that to repeat is not quite to prove, and, in fact, the words are so unlike the individual to whom they are attributed, that I have even ventured to assert that they were never uttered by Monsieur Lepsius, the mood of whose converse is usually much more taciturn. As to Monsieur l’Abbé’s mention of gorillas, I think I have the honour to know that Monsieur Lepsius is far too exact an intellect to regard mankind precisely in that light, but rather, let us say, as sons of Hannaman, the ape-god of the Brahmins; and as to the alleged kiss at the Quai d’Orsay, of which, by the way, everyone in Paris is spreading about a different account, I am able to state that its occurrence, if it occurred, was the result of no world-disdain, but simply of one of those magnetic gales that deflect even the needle of the compass. After all, as was said in a certain Orléaniste *salon* not thirty minutes since, ‘it takes two to make a kiss,’ and since the lady is not accused of world-disdain, I do not see why the male.”

At this Monsieur Leflô — a little quick personality, whose hairs grew like a wig of bristles — ogled Isabeau Thiéry with, “We are all aware that the utiliser of the moon has a champion wherever Saïd Pasha is present!”

“But, Monsieur le Prefect,” said Saïd Pasha, sudden and quick in quarrel, “am I charged with partisanship for aught but the simple truth?”

“No, monsieur,” replied the Prefect dryly, “even though it is a matter of common talk that Saïd Pasha once shed tears of admiration at the sight of a

certain individual racing with camels from a sand-storm near Khartoum, and from that moment became a hero-worshipper. So it is said — I was not there. In any case, I beg leave to question the ‘magnetic gale ‘by which you explain this embrace, since I believe that the reason of it is quite a different one than people conceive.”

At this Saïd Pasha’s brow bowed low, with the reply, “We know that Monsieur Leflô is a prefect who is a Fouché and a Réal in one.”

“Oh, as for that,” Leflô answered in his off-hand way,” it requires no spy of the Rue de Jerusalem to recognise the truth that this kiss was no result of vertigo, but of a political purpose.”

“That is only the truth,” added the old Due de Rey-Drouilhet,” since it is certain that a certain individual ‘knows his Paris’ — more perfectly knows it than Napoleon the First, as perfectly perhaps as Napoleon the Third; and knowing that your Parisian, as Victor Hugo has observed, must for ever be grinning the teeth, either in a laugh or in a snarl, the arch-gamester never permits himself to forget that there must be no flagging in the game, since in Paris to be out of sight is to be out of mind, and so seeks continually to *épater les gens*, keeping himself alive in the public eye by breaking ever anew upon it in a new attitude and costume, and invariably with an *éclat* whose radiance blinds. No, this gentleman is hardly one of those who like to shine in the dark! If for once in his life he tears his lips from the telephone to apply them to those of a lady, he takes care that there shall be as many eye-witnesses to the event as when some months ago he used to assume the rôle of Haroun al Raschid by appearing in an incognito of rags in the thieves’ kitchens of the Quartier Mouffetard, where he engaged in a knife-fight with a Spaniard, and in a cangiar-fight with two Moors who had attacked him. For here, my friends, we meet with the scenic skill of a

Bonaparte in combination with the ambitious mania of a Thiers, Bismarck's steel, that art-genius for *Welt-politik* of a Cæsar Borgia, and—”

“All possibly true,” interrupted the Abbé Sauriau, “but the thing that this very young man lacks is a certain humanity and nativeness to the world: for a man above the world he may be, since they say so, but one discerns that, with all his worldliness, he is hardly a man of the world. How perfect, how Parisian even, his manners when he likes; but one gleans that they have been but recently acquired, and girt on externally for a purpose, as Cato learned Greek at eighty. He lacks a *ne sais quoi* which no one lacks. If he laughs, one feels that he has said to himself, ‘Just here I will do a laugh, in order to produce such or such an impression upon this brute-mind.’ All men, indeed, are actors: but Lepsius is an actor who acts acting, like the players in and I am not certain whether he is to be considered the best of the world's actors, or the worst: for ‘the brute-mind’ is frequently not so brute as not to perceive that his art lacks the art to conceal its art, owing to the fact that he shares in the mistake made by each superior mind in deeming the difference between himself and other beings deeper than it really is. Hence, for all his brains, a certain *gaucherie* in his being, a grimace, a guffaw, in relation to the world, to which he is innately a stranger. How very alien to our humanity, for example, the commercial use which he has proposed of the bodies of the dead, a use which he pretends would solve the world-problem of poverty. On that afternoon, too, when the Moon Company Bill was being introduced, and he in the Centre began to scratch his head with one finger in the manner of Cæsar — a signal to his creature Huguenin on the extreme left to scream, ‘Cæsar! Cæsar! ‘in a bogus tone of indignation — the intention, as everybody knows, was that the whole Chamber should take up the roar and reverberate it through France; but not one soul took it up! The trick was immediately seen through by each French child...!’”

“Yes, last August,” said Mr. E. Reader Meade, gazing away at all the throng and flutter of the scene, “last August, when the individual in question had not yet been two months a factor in politics; but nine biggish months of world-knowledge, of archivesearching, of worming in the Big Book [National Debt Ledger], have since gone by—”

“My friends,” answered the Abbé Sauriau, still with his Jesuit blandness, though his bush burned, “I have quite recently been in personal contact with the individual in question, and still I say that I receive from him, as previously, the impression of a being destitute of humour.... He does not please; he cannot speak to you: for though his memory which, I admit, is no bad one, should render him the best of *causeurs*, his uneasy feeling that idle speaking is a crime renders him the worst.... Oh, I am not demolishing any idol! Why, my friends, should I? You have lately listened to that charge brought against me in the Chamber by Maître Tombarel, the charge of intellectual egoism and envy. I cannot, it appears, be envious of a Rockefeller or a Mogul, but I go green with envy, it appears, on hearing a great epigram that I did not myself think of making. Well, I deny it.... If to my little books my contemporaries have too amiably granted the name of ‘great,’ does that impede my conceiving the possibility of some brain brighter, greater, being made by Nature? Or, can *no* mind really conceive, and frankly admit to itself, a mind of better fibre than itself? I — don’t know; or rather! *my* mind could and would, I am most sure, if — the occasion arose. Thus I can speak, I hope, of the individual in question without spleen; indeed, I have even been touched with a feeling of compassion for this poor boy, so joylessly toiling, all lone and lorn, fatherless, a stone thrown from Utopia — for who could picture him in the rôle of a son? And did he not once say to Freycinet *père*, ‘Monsieur the Président of the Senate,’ said he, ‘I never had a parent.’ Never, at any rate, a

brother being, a friend probably, climbing his mountain-way without quite knowing why or whither, but willy-nilly climbing.... Oh, my friends, it is not through jealousy, but for pity, that men should be busying themselves in bottling up the buzzing of this bee.”

To words so bold no one answered anything, till Isabeau Thiéry observed, “From the bee honey, though, as aroma from the rose, though the former its sting, as the latter its thorn.”

“Ah, monsieur,” answered the Abbé Sauriau, knowing on which nerve to work upon Thiéry, “Brutuses, I fear, are even rarer than Caesars!” whereat, instantly, Isabeau Thiéry, with a new enthusiasm, was crying, “Still, Monsieur l’Abbé, Brutuses — exist!”

“Quite so,” said Mr. Reader Meade, with a twinkling eye on Thiéry, “but could a patriot be the Brutus of a Caesar, whose first work would be a frontier reconstructed ‘as in 1814’?” — words which had the effect of making Thiéry glance gladly at the Englishman with the exclamation, “That, too, is a truth, monsieur!” (“His, Thiéry’s, soul,” says Said Pasha, in his *Paris Notes*, “was like meadows over which sweep shadows that fleetly succeed each other. He had no self, this man, but only a set of stock concepts, borrowed emotions — provided only that they were pure, enthusiastic, and high-souled.

Hence he was *the very serf* of certain catchwords! If one breathed ‘Brutus’ nothing could keep the poet-politician from leaping to his feet to butcher Lepsius, if one but breathed ‘as in 1814,’ Thiéry was secretly ready to press Lepsius to his breast.”)

“But,” demands the old Due de Rey-Drouilhet now, smuggling a cachou into his mouth, “where is the guarantee of the promise ‘as in 1814’? Certainly, fancy pictures to us in that workshop of the Palais-Lepsius the models of many a mechanism which will whiff into wind the barricades of

the next 18th Brumaire or 2nd of December, to say nothing of the *corps d'armée* of the Fatherland and the navies of Albion. And, indeed, 'they exist, these legions of ingenious steels! For it was but yesterday that Colonel Doumic, whom Barras, of Public Works, and I met at Bignon's, was dropping hints of another wonderful thing, a 'steerable bullet,' he said, which, it appears, is to be both a bullet and a boat, being made with a hole somewhere in its steel to hold a man, who will steer it.... It appears, my friends, that the keel of this contrivance will merely skim along the sea's surface, being upheld by the rebound of a gun or something exploding downward, I forget how many times a minute; and the boat so upheld will be swept forward rocketwise by another succession of explosions, like a motor-car; so that this thing will safely visit vessel after vessel at bullet's rate, with fatal results to all a navy within some minutes. Doumic should know, being one of the elect with the individual in question: for is it not Doumic who already is choosing the regiments to be quartered upon Paris, in order to send them back to the provinces imbued, one after the other, with this new-imperial dream? But as for me, who am hardly still a youth, I little believe in dreams that are unrealised; I have witnessed many, many things, and heard many words: I have heard Cora Pearl hum the *Kyrie*, and I have beheld Alfred de Musset sober. Hence to me the individual in question is mainly a *directeur de spectacle forain* — a famous one, it is true. His palaces that are like the blasphemous gardens built to reproduce Paradise by that king of Irim whom the gods struck blind for arrogance — then the revels — his Moon-proposal — then his riding of his *Chérie* to victory at Longchamp — his Exhibition-proposal — then this kiss — each seems to belong to a series of scenic—"

"Was the kiss scenic?" asked Mr. E. Reader Meade semi-privately of Saïd Pasha, upon which Saïd Pasha undid his cross-looking lip to answer,"

No, monsieur. I state only a fact when I declare that for over four months I have foreknown some such collapse of the intellectual tension of the individual in question — a collapse owing, I say again, to a magnetic gale and to nothing else. Nor was this thing at all sought by Monsieur Lepsius. He is not, we are aware, by nature a Petrarch or Ortis; he is by nature an athlete, an engineer, a financier, a juggler, a sage — what you will, save a gallant; and as others flee the pest, so he has fled this infirmity of his. All which, by the way, I can state on the authority of a man already known, I think, to Monsieur Meade, to Monsieur l'Abbé Sauriau, and to Monsieur le Duc de Rey-Drouilhet, one Shan Healy, who is known to have followed Monsieur Lepsius from England to Ceylon, to Japan, and other regions, some couple of years ago: and from this man's statement one is afraid that the blame for what has taken place must be laid upon the lady. In fact, although Monsieur Lepsius certainly knew the young girl before his departure from Europe, and knew on his return that she was then in France with her aunt, the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, he appears to have given himself no sort of pains to greet her again; nor was it until some four months after his star had well risen over the horizon, that the eyes of the two individuals in question encountered one another on the Palais-Lepsius roof, during the morning hours of that ball that followed upon the passing of the Moon Bill. We remember the sight, messieurs: a morning all stars, the Champs Elysées all one swarm of carriage-lights from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde, the Palais-Lepsius looking like one of the buildings of Chilminar or Balbec which the genii are believed to have wished into being, and everyone to be met there, save Monsieur Lepsius himself. Monsieur Lepsius, it appears, had gone to sleep during the rout at his usual hour, but at the hour of three had roused himself to go up to his observatory, no one but his servant being with him; and up there he was, his

gaze glued to his tube, a busy-body in the concerns of other worlds, when the lady, as ladies seem to conceive it their duty to do, smartly recalled him to this one. ‘Oh! pardon,’ says she, and with what object, or by what right, she had got herself up thither is not known, though she was not the only one of the guests who, beguiled by the desire of the eye, were roaming ad lib. through the rooms of the building that night. At all events, as her lips part to pronounce her ‘pardon,’ the other individual in question darts his glance round from the glass to her, crouches there aghast some eight seconds, gazing, dumb-struck, and — vanishes. Monsieur Healy declares that his heart all but ceased to beat, believing as he did that his master, who had darted out of a casement, had cast his body headlong down! Well, three several times since then have the two individuals—”

But now, before the anecdotist could further go, a sound arose and grew, not loud, but universal over the grounds of the Club, the Avenue, l’Etoile — a rumour in whose droning the word “Lepsius” was to be heard, as a troop of Zouaves and Turcos, riding all in their bright robes, broke into the ocean-current of carriages that rolled through the Avenue. Up from the Elysées they came, making down for the Bois de Boulogne; and up soon after them trotted another crowd of troopers — Moors, Hindoos — voluminous in their vestments of various hues, carrying javelins (jereeds), with streamers, on large chargers which caracoled; and, close behind these, three carriages with gentlemen-ushers, household gentlemen; and up behind these outriders; grooms costumed in green and gold; pigmies in jockey-caps, from which hung fringes of gold; and up behind all a phaeton hauled by Orloff horses that haughtily pawed the air, to fling far their front-hoofs, trotting. In this sat Lepsius. He was in mufti, but clearly no “mere *pékin*,” the insignia of the Grand Cordon of the Legion showing his connection with the Army; and by his side sat a girl who looked American, on her lap a

scribbling-book, and flying in her fingers a pencil. He, as he drove up, bowed repeatedly a little to the buzz that droned about his ear, but without ever once glancing upward, his lips never ceasing to move and murmur to the girl whose fingers flew. And away to the wood swept the wind of it.

Everyone then turned anew to sip his *apéritif*, and the old Due de Rey-Drouilhet was anew observing that turn-outs so perfect had not conquered the eye since “the early sixties,” when a man with white hair that curled upward at his nape came up to the table of our anecdotists to inquire whether the Comte de Courcy had been with them, or had been noticed about the club. “I had to meet the count here,” he explained; and something humble, bowed down and sad in his air touched their compunction. During the moving-by of the cavalry troop he had been semisecretly eyeing the sight through trees some distance from the street; then had come out to seek the count, and now was about to fare farther, when all at once the count himself was there with a raised hat, and at once, grasping the old man’s hand, he began to present “Dr. Lepsius” to the rest.

“‘Lepsius’?” Isabeau Thiéry breathed the word.

“*Need* I explain,” said Monsieur le Comte, taking a chair, all business, all smiles, with dimples in the chart of his large face, “that there may be many men of that name? — *not* necessarily related by ties of family? which ties, in any case, can never possess much weight in the matter of politics. So that if by chance we here are all a harmony, politically speaking—”

The count’s eye ran prying with an undertook about the table from face to face, whereat Mr. E. Reader Meade glanced at Said Pasha, Said Pasha glanced at Mr. Meade, and they two got up to bow themselves out of the business, while the others, with glances at one another, silently smiled.

Then Monsieur le Comte de Courcy, fingering a crucifix of gold that from of old lay smooth from his fingering under his shirt-frills, said to the

others, “Gentlemen, it is not without a purpose that I present to you now (rather than more formally at our meeting this evening in Monseigneur Piscari’s house) our *confrère*, Dr. Lepstus, whom you will find to be actuated by precisely the same motives as ourselves, nay, if possible, by motives still nobler, concerned not with France alone, but of world-wide anxiety. He brings with him something which, as I believe that it will prove of even extreme interest to you, I wished to lay before the Abbé Sauriau, our excellent secretary, previous to our meeting at Monseigneur Piscari’s this evening, in order—”

“Gentlemen,” suddenly rising, said Dr. Lepsius in a low tone, “I think that perhaps if I took a stroll while you talk the matter over, that might be more in order. I will be back to answer any question that may occur to you,” whereat hats were anew raised, the doctor went away, Monsieur de Courcy’s underlook peered about to see that nobody was too near, and now he drew with care from out a pocket-book a bit of paper, rather brown and brittle, that had passed through flame. He laid it on the table: and quickly, like, a congress of eagles, the intriguers’ heads were together over it, the old duke skipping like a youth closer round to it, and that lax skin of the Abbé Sauriau’s brow, which above was narrow, broad below, twitching short-sightedly over the browned words, while his bush burned. Only the Count de Courcy leaned back, fingering his secret crucifix, musing through his cigarette fumes upon the clouds, humorously dimpled. (“He was ever healthy and happy-hearted when in office-harness,” says Saïd Pasha of him, “with a no small degree of rush and magnetism when revelling in the thick of affairs; one of your true *gens de bureau*; an intellect essentially narrow, bigot, bourgeois, as ‘devout’ as he was profoundly irreligious; but iron; and the busier the blither.”)

And presently when Isabeau Thiéry, demanded whence the paper came, “This script,” replied the Comte de Courcy, “is a portion of a private letter written from Paris some seven months ago to a certain English nobleman who is a Directeur Publique — say a ‘Permanent Under-Secretary’ — of Her Britannic Majesty’s Government. By what succession of good chances the fragment has got itself into the hands of our friend, Dr. Lepsius, will no doubt be described by him to-night at Monseigneur Piscari’s.”

“But can we be sure who wrote it?” Isabeau Thiéry said, “when it lacks a signature?” to which the count stopped his humming to reply, “Would a signature add to our certainty, monsieur, when the individual whom you have in your mind is said to write a hundred hands a day, as it suits his purpose? But surely the internal evidence furnishes us with a certainty which is ample.”

“Oh, ample,” said Monsieur Leflô, glancing up.

“Well, he is a showman,” sighed the old gossip, rising with satisfied old eyes from the script, while his eye-glass dropped.

“But he is mad,” added the Abbé Sauriau.

“That is the definition of God,” remarked Isabeau Thiéry: “a showman who is mad” — a remark which caused the Comte de Courcy to laugh, though with one hand he was at the crucifix, while with the other he was taking up to replace in its nook the bit of paper, which had on it, still to be read through the burn, the typewritten words, “World... redistribution which I shall choose... two worlds... nevertheless, England... world’s total capital... Bank of Dresd... S. America Africa the first, Asia *plus* Russia the second, the rest of Europe *plus* North America the... Russia, too, to be included in Manchuria... the Caspian... from the Caspian to the Bosphorus... France first, then, by means of France, the world.... The ocean of blood which will flow, but that, of course... Quebec to be the capital of the world, and the seat

of my... Moon... has been too stupid... shape of the ape's brain... nevertheless, moonlight will... like the eggs of the ostrich, which she hatches, not by sitting on them, but by just gazing at them, so I may... If the moon had been of some beautiful hue, and of a brighter light, and a reliable light, men... would naturally have used the daytime for slumber.... Even birds and brutes, I assume, will soon learn to prefer the mood of the beautiful night-time of my... it is for *you*, therefore... when the Exhibition... come to Paris at... discreet fash... afterwards... my friend and..."

"Well, it is a great and a gallant brain, after all," cried Isabeau Thiéry with a flush, when Monsieur le Comte had put away his pocket-book with the script in it.

"A great and a gallant brain," mused the Minister of the Interior, who, fingering his imperial, was smiling at the sky; "though not a Christian, not a Catholic, not a French brain."

"Tush! the brain of a precocious, pert youth," observed the Abbé Sauriau, with a burning bush, "whom it is the duty of us all to remove out of harm's way without more delay."

"Though that will not be done without difficulty, mind you!" Monsieur Leflô remarked with a little grimace, planting his fore finger-tip against his hard nut: "but in the event of a citation of the individual before the Sixth Correctional Tribunal, with a view to obtaining a decree of banishment against him for instigating civil strife, I should say that this document would be of use."

"The Sixth Correctional Tribunal," mused the count, smiling; "I thought, however, that that idea had by this time been abandoned by us all, if only for the reason that the trial could not possibly be completed before the Exhibition, during which, as we assume, the *coup d'état* that we dread is to take place? Personally I cannot help thinking that a court-trial of uncertain

termination is no longer pertinent to the situation, especially as we have been so happy as to win the sanction of the Church (in the persons of Monsieur l'Abbé and of Monseigneur) to move urgent and more certain ways of averting this danger to the world."

The Abbé Sauriau, who had a habit of ever eyeing his right shoe and red sock, which shook up continually (the leg being crossed), struck smartly with his gloves, remarking, "A stronghold close to the coast, with grim bastions and the gloomiest of oubliettes! twelve or fifteen years of that is what the youth wants—" and he struck back his spread of hair that broadened lankly out down over the ears, the Count de Courcy repeating with approval in his musing manner, "Twelve to fifteen years of that, twelve to fifteen years—" and going suddenly grim-red, he giggled gleefully to himself.

"Monsieur l'Abbé is right," the old Due de Rey-Drouilhet said: "fifteen years of a bastille's oubliette is known to induce in a youth a definite diffidence as to using his lips in public, either in speaking or in kissing," at which speech Monsieur de Courcy, who was drinking menthe, grew crimson, gripping his glass so grimly that it cracked, the green fluid streaming from the table to the abbé's sock.

"If it can be done..." muttered Monsieur Leflô; "*if* it can be done...."

"Why, Monsieur le Prefect," said the abbé, "was it not a Frenchman who said that 'cannot' is a *bête de mot*?"

"That is a truth, too, monsieur!" cried Isabeau Thiéry, "and provided it prove necessary..."

But now a trooper, as troopers do everywhere pursue every Ministre de l'Intérieur, came to the table with a document for the Count de Courcy, who, making his excuses, raised himself to hasten away; but some yards off stopped to beckon to the Abbé Sauriau, who rolled after him with his big

stick and soft hat, and together they two walked toward the minister's carriage, the abbé's top-heavy bulk, all thickness of shoulder without any throat, shambling short below the minister's mass; and the minister said to him, "Twelve to fifteen years of a bastille by the coast, you say: and, certainly, such things have often enough been effected by private effort for public purposes. But I do not blind myself to the fact that it would be beyond the Law, and — in fact — I have to consult you now on a matter of — conduct. I am now about to go through a singular interview, and I — address myself, Monsieur l'Abbé, to the ecclesiastic in you. You understand me, I think. We are all first of all Catholics and good Christians, are we not? and afterwards men-of-state. A singular interview — with a woman, who, on the strength of having been in the same yacht, the same house, as myself some three years since, has lately — thrice — addressed herself to me by letter. A lady's maid she — *was*; and as such knew the individual whom we have been discussing: for this individual whom we habitually associate only with the future has also, it appears, a past — aye, and a shameful past, too — I say a baleful and abominable past — which merits to be punished, which it is righteous to punish. Think of it, Monsieur l'Abbé! as a mere boy — oh, really, my blood boils to speak of these turpitudes! — he not only betrayed this poor soul, but afterwards robbed her of all, all, her paltry savings; was chased through the thoroughfares of London for petty theft...."

"The young Lepsius?"

"Yes, Monsieur l'Abbé — your hero."

"Whose hero?"

"Is it not being stated on the boulevards by Léon Bergerac in particular, who is always the best informed man in Paris, that you are bitten by an infatuation which is half an idolatry of admiration, and half a hatred, and wholly a hankering, that hardly permits you to talk of aught but of one

being?” breathed the Abbé Sauriau, standing still to stare, revealed a moment to himself; then with rage, “oh, he lies, he lies: Léon Bergerac is known to be my enemy!”

“Well, well, no doubt,” muttered the minister “... but as to this woman, whose name is Auvache—”

“Not the Jeanne Auvache who threw vitriol at the individual in question at Dover on the 11th of November, threw it wide, and was imprisoned for five months?” queried Monsieur l’Abbé.

“It *may*,” said the minister, “be the same; in fact — it is a possibility; though the name is not an uncommon one, Monsieur l’Abbé — Auvache — men, women enough of that name, you will say. But I may tell you one thing: this woman has been spied by a clerk in her lodgings throwing vials of water at a nail’s head.... It is her hobby, it seems, having arranged rows of vials on the floor, to eject water, at a run from them upon a nail in the wall; a drill of the eye, wrist, fingers, that goes on regularly in the loneliness of that garret every day; she will also practise herself in rushing with a knife to stab a bull’s-eye on the wall — *why*, no one can say.” The Abbé Sauriau pondered it for some moments, and presently observed, “She must be an imbecile.”

“That is what I have said to myself, Monsieur l’Abbé,” replied the minister; “why else should the woman, in wishing to obtain an *entrée* into the *valetaille* Lepsius, address herself to *me*? unless by some chance she is aware that I know one Nundcumar, a functionary in the Palais-Lepsius.... This Nundcumar has risen, Monsieur l’Abbé. Eight years ago he was a lean scarecrow down oh his luck about Paris and London, pretending to be a doctor of medicine, but possessing even less knowledge of medicine than the present Prefect of Police possesses of the police. Then he became a cook, and it was thus that I again came across him at Egmond, the Brittany

château of the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard. Then he remigrated to his native Agra, and was there met and admired by the individual whom we now have in our minds — so Nundcumar avers, though this person, who never ceases to speak, certainly never yet produced a word which by chance was an accuracy. At all events, I am still in touch with the man, and could easily induce him — to-day even — to introduce that ill-used and lunatic woman into the *valetaille* Lepsius, provided I do not definitely find in my interview with her presently that she has any purpose in view other than the search for work.”

Monsieur l’Abbé pondered it a little. Then, “Let it be so, then,” he suddenly replied, as they now arrived at the count’s brougham; “but though your interview will no doubt prove over-brief to permit of any deep probing into the woman’s motives and so on, you will very likely find the time to impress upon her that the practice, or drill, with the *knife*, at least, is quite offensive, while—”

“You have known how to say what I was only able to think, Monsieur l’Abbé.... Au revoir, then.” And the Count de Courcy drove away.

The abbé then turned to go back to the table of the gossips; but now a little girl who was gambolling among the trees, tumbling down before his feet and beginning to scream, immediately he had her garnered in his arms, hugging her to his bosom, his lips on her head, with whimperings of love (“for,” says a Note of Sard Pasha, “he had a most fond father’s heart, if especially for children, hardly less for all the world, whenever he was not merciless with envy of some other mind”); and he toyed before the child’s eyes one of his few coins, saying, “But look, then, all this is for thee — all, all,” and he pointed at the receding brougham, leering, breathing, “Look! that is the brougham of Monsieur the Minister of the Interior — but look! a man whose! blood boils to speak of these turpitudes’ since he has need to

condone his deeds to his own shabby-genteel conscience” — and he clasped the little girl’s fingers upon the franc, placed her on the ground, and now hurried back to the table where by now Dr. Lepsius was again sitting with the gossips.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHAMBER-WINDOW.



AT THAT VERY time Shan Healy was speeding on a bicycle (having missed a train) from Paris to Versailles, with perspiration raining over his face and swear-words vented when racing through those villages paved with old pavers, which mercilessly jerked him. It was not until six o'clock that he got to Versailles and the Villa des Medicis there, a house of the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, where, having scorched down to the house-front through a great avenue of yews, he craved to interview Miss Ruth Vickery.

He was taken to the door of a chamber in the middle of which stood three ladies talking warmly, though in low tones — two elderly ladies and Miss Ruth Vickery; and a whirl of words was being uttered among them, sometimes all the three trying to make their opinions heard at once, all looking as exhausted and haggard as if they had been going on all the day long, while in the gloom of a far corner of the room lay Miss Eve Vickery asleep, with an appearance of exhaustion, even of swoon. Shan Healy stood on the threshold, and he could just hear the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, whom he knew very well, cry with a casting up of her hands and eyes, "Ah, my dear Lina, you can persuade an angel or the good God himself to change their mind, but you cannot persuade a saint who is English too."

This lady, although English herself, spoke English in quite a halt way, with effort, was tall and fair, resembling Miss Eve, her niece, in stand and being.

“But, Aunt,” wooed Miss Ruth, “bear with me, since I do mean well, as in my God’s sight. Ask yourself — how can I, how could I, try to induce Eve to marry a man who, it appears, is without even morality, whose mood is pagan, whose aim is Caesarian, whose God is arrogance?... And Eve never would, I think, if I know her! You have heard her say yourself—”

“Ah, then, why in the good God’s name did the girl go and kiss him with all Paris gazing at it?” exclaimed the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard.

“Aunt,” breathed Miss Ruth, all ruby-red, with drooped lids, “you know that Eve did not—’ kiss’ him; he—’ kissed’ — her.”

“Ah, my good Ruth,” observed the third lady, one Madame Lina Grammont, “the world does not draw these exquisite distinctions, believe me: it knows that in a kiss it is generally the gentleman who both begins against the lady’s will and ends against her will.”

“Exactly,” remarked the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard; “but then, we all know our English: it is always their little mannerism to regard the lady as made of anything but of flesh and blood. The fact, however, that stares one in the face is that Eve is now bound to be married immediately; and I repeat that the scandal will be less if of the two gentlemen she chooses the one who has kissed her.”

“Truly, the scandal will be less,” Miss Ruth answered; “and you do not say, if you think it, that the worldly grandeurs will be greater; but, happily for her peace, Aunt, Eve would rather choose, I think, to live in a hovel with a Christian gentleman like the Comte de Courcy than with one whose bosom was never vaccinated with the stigmata of compassion and abnegation, though he were five times a Mogul.”

“So I hear you say, my dear,” replied the countess, “though Eve herself no doubt most accurately knows her own secret; but if it be a fact that her

stomach is such as to like the Comte de Courcy better, why will she not send for him, since he is every hour expecting her reply?"

"She will send, I think," replied Miss Ruth. "What, however, was the use of summoning papa from London unless she is to hold out for his presence before pronouncing her decision? He should by now have arrived in Paris, and within an hour will be in Versailles; then, I think, she will speak, she will send, for she feels, I am sure, the nobleness of Monsieur de Courcy's renewed offer, and will not, I think, grieve him by any longer—"

But at that moment Healy at the door sneezed, and, the ladies noticing him, two of them, still speaking eagerly together, went away through another door, Miss Ruth going to meet Healy. She was just beginning to say, "I am so glad—" when Healy put his lips to her ear with "Not in here, miss! every word breathed in here all day has been heard in the palace at Paris" — whereon he showed her the telephone over the sofa on which Miss Eve lay asleep, whispering deeply afresh, "He's this minute lying on his face, hearing her very breathing, I believe"; and when Miss Ruth, as they now moved out of the room into a vestibule, asked how that was possible, Healy replied that it was by means of a whispering-gallery, as at St. Paul's in London, where anyone stationed at the part of a circular wall farthest from a telephone in the wall heard greatly augmented any sounds thrown out of the telephone-mouth, being in a focus of the sound-waves. "The telephone-number of that gallery has been plugged on to yours the whole, day, miss," Healy said, "someone here is in his pay, and he has been lying on the ground in the gallery with a crowd of tools strewn round about, modelling something and listening, smiling with himself the while. I know that he knows at what moment your papa was summoned to you, and at what moment Mr. de Courcy's proposal reached here; so, as soon as I could slip away when he went out, I made paces to answer your letter in person,

so as to impress upon you that he is really in earnest in this, miss: for he has lost time and given up other things to see to this, seeing that he had arranged to go to the Chamber tonight, but isn't going any more; so he is serious, miss, oh, he means business, believe me, miss, in this, and it will be a bitter pity if Miss Eve isn't whipped off secretly this hour right out of his way somehow, though, as his spies are all about—”

“You do not believe, Healy, I see, that such a union could be good?” said Miss Ruth, her gaze on his face.

“Well, to be frank, no, miss, marriage wouldn't hardly suit him,” said the voluble Healy.” No, no; he'd be that miserable, you wouldn't believe; and the fonder he was of the lady, the more he'd hate and hiss at her for making him waste time. Time's his wife; the clock, the clock, miss. Believe me, only to be near him, people feel in a prickly heat themselves, as if they were breathing fever from some fierce atmosphere — the very Orientals in the palace, miss, only that slothful old story-teller, Nundcumar.... No, no, miss, do now, he'll be that miserable—”

“And his lady, too, I think, Healy?” suggested Miss Ruth, with her smile.

“Well, and the lady, too, now you mention it, miss,” Healy agreed; “true enough — the lady too; she'd be like a dog tied behind a railway train, couldn't keep up the pace anyhow; try now, miss, try, try; he'll be that wretched, you wouldn't believe, and everything'll be changed, and instead of me it'll be the lady may be, and I nowhere with him; try, try. From that night in the forest round the ruined town of Anuradhapura, he has been good friends with me — till two days ago when the doctor came to France. I have told you about that night before, miss. Oh, that's a forest, if you like, boundless, miss, I can tell you, and the men and brutes of that country move about in a brown, brown day, miss — big black brutes looming upon you out of the gloom with their stupid gazing, and thousands upon thousands of

gods and ogres of stone broken to bits in those groves a thousand centuries ago, they say. He left me one nightfall at the top of one of the big dagabas to go all by himself into the dark of the timber, I to watch each nightfall there till he should come back with the piece of a stele; and there on the dagaba I watched and waited fifteen weeks, miss, night by night, till I began to fancy that he was gone for good. Eh, but he did come back to me all right, miss, one darksome night, under the large stars which look upon those parts, almost starved and stark naked he was, bearing forty old stone boxes on top of a buffalo-cart; and in his hand was that little gold thing made in the shape of a pear which he never lets go of, and even in his sleep keeps with him.... Do you know what's in that little thing, miss? A little key, they say; and that old story-teller, Nundcumar, who fancies he knows everything, says that this little key opens a certain casket in which there's a second key; and that second key opens a certain safe in which there's a third key; and that third key opens a certain turret at Serapis, the Brittany palace, in which there's a fourth key; and that fourth key opens a certain chamber in which there's a fifth key; and that fifth key — I can't quite call to mind what the fifth key opens; any way, it goes on till you get to the twelfth key, which opens the room in which all his jewels and riches are strewn — so says that Nundcumar, miss, and whereabouts under the ground that room may be no human being has yet got scent of, though that Nundcumar swears that *he* knows where; and the key to the whole is within that little gold thing made in the shape of a pear which he never lets go of, miss."

At this Miss Vickery, with her stare of child-wonder, stared at Healy, muttering, "How very much lighter and kinder would he feel, now, if he had no keys, nor any jewels to lay up for himself!"

"Doubtless, miss," said the other; "but that's how it stands — what would you have? What was I saying? Oh, about that night in the forest

round about the ruined town of Anuradhapura; yes, that's a forest, miss, if you like — boundless; but I think I've told you about that night before, miss, often; and from that night he has been good friends with me, till two days ago, when the doctor came—”

“Does he still avoid a meeting with his father?” asked Miss Vickery in a voice of secrecy.

“Rather, miss; his treatment of that old man is so shocking—” Healy commenced to answer, but was checked by a” sh-h-h” breathed by Miss Ruth, who through the doorway had noticed Miss Eve moving in her sleep; and they two stood peeping at the unfolding of Miss Eve's eyes, saw Miss Eve notice a Bible which lay open by her nose on the sofa-cushion — a Bible which had been placed there by Miss Ruth with one phrase in it underlined in blue — saw her take the Book to gloat closely over the phrase in the gloaming's dusk, saw her laugh, and, after laughing, suddenly press her lips upon the phrase with ravishment, to drop suddenly afresh on the cushion with a covering up of the face; the phrase which she had read and kissed being this, “Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers.”

“Steal softly in,” breathed Miss Ruth to Healy; and softly she herself, having moved into the room, stole on tiptoe quite to the telephone, the opening of which she shut off and stuffed up, Miss Eve meanwhile seeming still asleep; and to Healy Miss Ruth now said aloud, “Continue now, Healy, to speak of your master's treatment of his poor father.”

Healy looked at her, and, discerning her meaning, whispered to himself, “Why, if she isn't as wise as a serpent!”

“No, miss,” he added aloud, “he won't see the doctor not on no account: never once seen him willingly since the day he left the island in your yacht; flies him like death, he does. Fact is, he is nervous of the doctor; nothing on earth below, nor in heaven above, is he nervous of, but of the doctor he is.

— Can't get over his youth, you see, can't get over all those years in which he used to believe the doctor a god, not a human being — shuns him as death, he does. And partly it's the doctor's own fault, I must say, for that's only the truth, you know, miss, seeing that the doctor is going all dead against him, taking part with his political enemies, and he well aware of it, — for there's an eye spying for him behind every blind, so to say; and he's afraid of the doctor, oh, he's afraid, miss, that the doctor's big brains may be digging his grave for him. So that's his excuse, look; but still, when all's said, his conduct to the doctor has been just shocking — shocking it has. Again and again has the old soul's nose pressed against his gates, and begged and prayed to be let in, but no go; and that time at Lyons when the old man tried to spring into the carriage, just as Master Hanni stepped down out of the town-hall, that was a bit beyond: for as the father made to spring in, the son darted to the reins, the horses pranced and started off, leaving a father prostrate and bleeding on the street — oh no, that was a bit beyond, that was."

Miss Vickery, with her face averted from the narrator, held her eyes bent skyward with a steadfast gaze, begging for God's forgiveness of men; but from Miss Eve, who must have heard, who was meant to hear, neither word was uttered, nor a stir seen.

After a silence the talkative Healy proceeded to remark, " Well, I can understand him, miss. I recollect that when I was a little lad ten years of age, one day a great big girl of thirteen meets me in a lane, miss, and begins to kiss and hug me — couldn't make out anyhow what it was about, so I got pretty scared, I did, and from that day for years, if I but spied that lass a league off, my hair'd go creepy, I'd take to my heels like a long-dog, and I do believe if I caught sight of her even now, I'd be bound to do a dart for it. It's the same with Master Hanni — shy, shy; the doctor's a great big bogey

to him — thinks the doctor'll be digging his grave, though he knows that the doctor can't. And who suffers for it, miss? I do. Thinks I am secretly on the doctor's side against him, can't believe I'm on his side against all comers, thinks I'm always going to 'betray' him to the doctor, trusts no one, trusts no one, it's hard, because—"

Now, however, that stream of Healy's speech was checked by the appearance in the doorway of a gentleman neatly dressed in grey, with a grey top-hat on his head, a neat umbrella, and side-whiskers, with him being the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard and Madame Grammont; and Healy, seeing him, murmured, "Your pa, miss," and now bowed himself out; while Mr. Vickery, darting his eyes all about the room, and discerning in the gloom his younger girl on the couch, rushed by Miss Ruth without any greeting, his eyes brimming with tears, his mouth trembling, and on his knees garnering Miss Eve in his arms, gave way now to weeping, again and again darting down his lips at her mouth, with pausings to gaze at her face, then again darting down at her mouth, with mania.

Miss Eve sat up, breathing "papa," and laughed a little, casting back some hairs from her brow with a gesture which, undoubtedly, was not without something of hectic and hare-brained. Indeed, she appeared that day to be dwelling in a region so infected with fever, that through the day she had been treated as a patient, and on the sick list.

"Well, here I am," Mr. Vickery said to her, "just arrived by God's help — in time, I hope.... Got a headache, have you? my soul? my love?"

Miss Eve smiled triumphantly in her parent's face, replying, "No, papa; why should I?"

"That's all right, don't say a word," muttered the father, fast patting her arm, "don't say a word.... Well, here I am, you see; arrived, arrived, by God's help. — And — I have telegraphed to Monsieur de Courcy to come.

Have I done well? I thought I would, and — I did. All the way from London to Paris I was praying to be guided, and the moment I got to Paris the thought was given me to telegraph at once to Monsieur de Courcy, and — I did.”

“Did you, papa?” asked Miss Eve, smiling with her father.

“Yes. Eve, have I done well?”

“Why, papa, I think so,” replied Miss Eve, smiling that defiance which is amused, that triumph which is secure. “Monsieur de Courcy is a most estimable man.”

“He is; but still, Eve, tell me, tell me, dear — have I done well?”

“Oh, I quite think so, papa.... Have you had a pleasant trip across?”

“No, no, let us be frank now; let us make use of plain terms, let’s not mince matters, Eve; come now, tell your papa — my own, my sweet — will you have de Courcy?”

“Oh, as to that, why, I think so, papa,” replied Miss Eve with some appearance of surprise about the eyebrows. “I thought that that was rather understood as a settled thing: ask Ruth, ask aunt: they’ll tell you that Monsieur de Courcy, that model of morals, high at the head of my list, hasn’t a rival to dread.”

Upon this the father turned with an opening of the arms toward the other ladies, saying, “Why, this is well.... You didn’t tell me!”

No reply was made to him; only the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard exchanged half a smile with Madame Grammont, who just shrugged, while Miss Ruth remained with her eyelids drooped.

“Why, that’s all right, then!” cried Mr. Vickery to Miss Eve: “I knew, I knew, that my dear’s instincts would strike true. Well, de Courcy should have nearly reached Versailles by this, and — you’ll be sending him away a happy man, will you? Is that settled?” The young lady, contemplating her

father's face with a calm smile, replied, "Quite settled, papa — for *my* share. If it *can* be, it shall be."

"“Can be?” What does she mean?” — Mr. Vickery threw this whisper at the other ladies behind him; but before anything further could be uttered, a bomb was hurled into the *salon* by the words of a servant who entered, saying “Monsieur Lepsius to talk with Mr. Vickery” — and he handed a card.

Straight sprang Mr. Vickery up, Miss Eve also raising herself by degrees, and all with blanched cheeks gaped in silence at the menial, till Mr. Vickery, his visage rushing into crimson, cried in a high and hysteric kind of cry, “Say to that gentleman that Mr. Vickery, being engaged, begs him to state his business by letter!”

The menial bowed and backed out, and immediately now there reigned a gale of breaths among the ladies, Madame Grammont and the countess making a thousand gesticulations together, Mr. Vickery standing again pale-faced by a reaction, Miss Ruth at him instigating him to be grim, Miss Eve moving about from place to place, reading the titles of books, glancing at trees outside, glancing at looking-glasses.

It lasted four minutes, which seemed much more, after which the menial was once more there, bearing a note scribbled in pencil, whose folds Mr. Vickery tremblingly opened. Miss Ruth meantime breathing in his ear, “Pray, papa, do not read it aloud!” — words which Miss Eve either heard or surmised, for now immediately she muttered with some huff, “Oh, I have no wish to hear anything,” and went away. The rest then, laying their heads over the note, read the words: “Dear sir, — I, a suitor for your daughter's hand, having run a race with another suitor to your door, and having won the race, am amazed at your want of fairness and also of forethought in refusing me an audience. Why do you? Pray question yourself. Can any

king with a rope restrain the rolling of rivers or the drift of fate? I warn you that you waste your time in this, causing me also the woe of wasting mine; nor could that be just to another suitor to permit Miss Eve Vickery in a freakish humour to promise him marriage, since she has no such intention, knowing that such a nonsense is not on the files of life. — LEPSIUS.”

It was Madame Grammont who, gifted with the strongest eyesight, read the note aloud in a monotone, the gloaming in the room having now grown very heavy; and as she finished, and all raised their eyes, all started, for there afresh was Miss Eve, who had been seen to leave the chamber, hovering anew near to hear.

“I am not to be browbeaten!” suddenly cried Mr. Vickery in a high kind of cry.

“Ah, papa, no agitation, papa!” Miss Ruth called through a throat whose music broke.

“I say I am not to be browbeaten, I am not to be threatened!” screamed Mr. Vickery querulously afresh in an ecstasy, for the atmosphere was all electric, and each one present caught from all the rest a hectic cheek and a lip of quivering.

“My God, I foresaw all! and my advice was not followed,” cried the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, with a casting up of the hands.

“‘The files of life,’

‘the drift of fate’!” Madame Grammont muttered in a maze.

“Get my daughter’s trunks packed!” cried the father; “am I an Englishman? Are there no laws?”

“Calm, papa, calm!” called out Miss Ruth anew: “ah, how disastrous! papa, I warn you, this agitation is fatal to the welfare of the soul!”

“Oh, Ruth, let one alone!” now said the countess in an irritation without restraint; “it is you who are the cause of all, at the end of the tale.”

“Aunt, I?” asked Miss Ruth, with reproach lodged in the soul of her eyes.

“But no, Margaret, but no,” protested Madame Grammont: “it is not the fault of Ruth, it is not the fault of Ruth.”

“Let me get my girl out of this infernal country!” now cried out the high-strung Mr. Vickery; “it is France that has done this!”

“Oh, but be reasonable, Matthieu, at the end of the tale!” the countess mouthed, with intolerance.

“Quite right, papa,” now cried out Miss Eve in a spirit of rollicking and recklessness, “let us clearly prove to everyone that we act in no ‘humour of freak,’ having a will of our own!”

“My love!” cried Mr. Vickery.

“‘The files of life,’” mused Madame Grammont anew; “‘humour of freakishness’!”

“Ah, but he is right, believe me!” cried the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard; “he has his meaning! he knows Eve better than she knows herself.”

“You and others may think so, Aunt,” called Miss Eve, snapping her thumb and finger daintily up in the air, with a wheel on her feet.

“But he may still be there!” said Madame Grammont; “is he still there at the door, Gabriel?”

“Monsieur Lepsius has departed, madame,” the gaudy Gabriel gave answer, who through all this had stood there with a bowed brow.

“What happened in the hall?” asked the countess. “Did Monsieur Lepsius make any attempt to enter?”

“Monsieur Lepsius desired to enter, madame,” answered Gabriel, “when I gave him Mr. Vickery’s reply that it might be better for him to state his business by letter; but on his attempt to force an entrance, both Baptiste and myself barred his advance with our arms outspread, and he then, after

staring a moment into our faces, broke into a laugh, hastily wrote the note that has been handed you, and drove very quickly away.”

“Did Monsieur Lepsius utter any remark at all?” Madame Grammont began to ask, but before the words were well uttered, there had entered another flunky, who came to proclaim the presence of Monsieur de Courcy at the door; whereupon — a renewed flutter and flurry of consultation! until the ladies rushed from the room, leaving Mr. Vickery to receive the visitor; and immediately in came the Minister of the Interior with his brisk and breezy air, but about his brow now a shade of deliberation.

They two then conversed together until the hour when the dinner-gong began to sing out, whereupon the ladies in their bravery came sailing in, smirking as superbly now as personalities translated beyond the concerns of earth; and after a little small-talk the visitor stepped away with them to dinner.

However, they had not well moved out of the room when now the telephone-rattle in the alcove started to prattle, upon which Mr. Vickery with passion in his heart darted back to it, and Miss Eve also doubled back to be near, though remaining far from her father in the centre of the apartment, staring.

“Who are you?” called Mr. Vickery, the receiver at his ear.

The answer was “Lepsius,” and even Miss Eve, though hovering away off in the middle of the room, could hear it in thunder, for the speaker now no doubt lay in his whispering-gallery, where the sound-waves from his mouth, focusing themselves upon his telephone, struck monstrous rough, their grumble trumpeting unease upon Mr. Vickery’s ear-drum with the gutturalness of some grum god thundering; and, “I want to speak with Miss Eve Vickery,” grumbled the thunder.

“It is Mr. Vickery who hears you!”

“I know; allow one to speak with Miss Eve, Mr. Vickery!”

Now with wide eyes hied Miss Eve on tip-toe nigh, hissing, “*Say I am at dinner, papa!*”

“Miss Eve Vickery is about to sit down to dinner,” Mr. Vickery cried, with stricter accuracy.

“She will not eat much!... But as for you, Mr. Vickery, will you have me for a son-in-law?”

“The proposal sounds abrupt, Monsieur Lepsius!”

“Why so? How much waste of time is necessary? And what is your complaint against me? I quite fail to gather this.”

“It cannot be discussed over the telephone!”

“Why can it not? Is it that you are offended with me for kissing your daughter?”

“S-s-s-s, *sir!*... But I am being awaited at dinner, Monsieur Lepsius!”

“It was not I who wished to kiss her, it was she who wished to kiss me!”

“Eve, go! go!” screamed Mr. Vickery, warding his daughter away with one arm.

“Say, papa,” Miss Eve hissed, reaching far forward to her father’s ear with her cheeks afire, “that I am affianced to a good and gallant gentleman!”

“My daughter—” Mr. Vickery commenced to call.

“Tell Miss Eve, sir,” the thunderer rumbled, “that I can hear each word that she utters, and that I know she does not mean one syllable of any one of them.”

“I have to wish you good evening, Monsieur Lepsius!” cried Mr. Vickery with a high-pitched cry.

“Go, if you choose; but you prove yourself a feeble and foolish old pantaloon, you know.”

“And you, sir, a courteous young gentleman!” upon which Mr. Vickery put up the receiver, and went with one cheek-bone branded rosy, and one blanched, Miss Eve smiling, with her eyes alight, by his side.

The meal was then eaten serenely by all, after which, in the midst of Parisian chat in the *salon*, it was found not impossible to bring about, without intention, a *tête-à-tête* between Miss Eve and the Minister of the Interior; and Monsieur de Courcy, having come through this with success, remained still on, the merriest of ministers and men, until close on eleven o’clock, when, hunted down by a mounted officer with a cipher, he made his bows, and went away.

And now anew the family sat in council to discuss the situation of affairs, though Miss Eve now took no share in it, seated far aloof, with her cheek on her palm, looking out into the dark of the park. At midnight she bid good-night; and, having gone up to her chamber, having been prepared for her bed, and having prayed by her bedside, was soon lying in the semi-gloom of a big bedroom, with her will bent upon slumber. But sleep she could not, though two hours went by. One of her *jalousie*-windows lying open, through this she could perceive trees, mountains, and in the sky a moon moving in and out among mounds of cloud, now drowning the countryside in shine, and now shrouding it in shadow; until this growing into a grievance and a weariness, at last she got up, swathed all that elongation of her form in a great drapery, got her violin and bow, and in an arm-chair by the *jalousie* played. So that she might not be heard, she had first shut the shutter and fixed the bar, though, as her apartments were in a rather remote part of the *château*, this was hardly very necessary, since it was Mendelssohn’s *Andante* which she chose to utter in a low tone; and there during many minutes she remained in a mood of drooping, moving the air of the room with the mazes of the music, roaming over and over anew

through the same old moon-realms of melancholy, feeling even sleepy now, her ear wearied out with sweetness; until on a sudden she had sprung upon her feet, her cheeks struck white like a sheet, and her eyes wide with affright.

“Who is it?” she hoarsely hissed, for outside the shutter a tap had sounded.

“I! Open!” some chest panted to her, and she knew him, yet anew she hissed with all her wild heart in her windpipe, “*Who is it? What is it?*”

“The staple to which I hang is giving to my weight,” the chest gasped: “forty seconds and I fall a corpse.”

In ten Lepsius had leapt within the window....

And now were boundless breaths! and the rough sirocco broken free, flights for life, puffs, pantings, runnings to and fro, momentary manias, aimless aims! “Help!” hissed her hoarse heart’s breath, “this wardrobe, help!” whereat he, quite carried away by her rage of agitation, hardly knowing why, caught hold of one side of a wardrobe, while she bent and laboured at the other side, bearing it somewhither. But it was a huge mass Henri Quatre, which, being moved, naturally made some hubbub, so he threw the whisper across to her, “It makes a racket!” whereto her pant replied “Never mind, help!” and finally by tugs and effort they got one narrow side of it against a wall, one broad side against the bed-foot; and now anew she flew, with “This couch, help!” and he helped her to place the couch against the wall and against the bed-head; and now it was “Now, this chair!” and he helped her to heap an easy-chair upon the couch, feet up: which done, she scrambled quick across the bed’s breadth, and now stood in the place betwixt bed and wall, barricaded now from him in front by the bed, to the left by the wardrobe, to the right by the couch and the chair. And then immediately all that to-do was seen to be needless when her hand

happened to hit upon a key in the wall behind her, for there was a door there in the wall, and a small window also by it above, and behind the door some steps leading up to another chamber a little above the bed-chamber; so immediately she scuttled through the door, locked it within, skipped up the four steps, appeared at the window, threw the key from her down upon the bed before him, and now succumbed to the floor, panting, safe at any rate from herself.

He, looking up to the window, threw out to her the whisper, "You are wise! You are witty!" upon which she sprang up to throw out to him the whisper, "Do not come across the bed!" for he stood now with one knee on it, and she could see him in a ray of the moon as she had first beheld him at The Towers in a red shirt loose about the neck and belt, without any jacket or hat; and he, too, could see her in shadow at the window.

"Did I not help you to escape?" he asked her; and then disjointedly, "Do you wear the half-coin which I sent you?"

Miss Eve gave no reply, getting by degrees her breath again in silence.

"Did you know in your heart," he asked her, "that I would come to-night? You were waiting up for me, playing the fiddle; it was that Andante of Mendelssohn; you played it four times over."

"Lepsius, you must go," Miss Eve said.

"I will go near the peep of day, and you with me!"

"No, now; and without me, I think."

"Oh, you are cold," he replied, "and I hate your stone's heart: cold by nature, and colder by hypocrisy that penetrates your texture to the core of you. Oh, I know and foreknow you to my agony, negative, null, enigmatic, like a watch which won't go, though one goads it, and finally one crushes it under a rock; as frigid as that water of a mortal quality which drips from a rock in the territory of Nonacris; or like that bag—"

But she stopped him with, "Lepsius, you should go!" whereat he leaned keenly across to whisper her, "Cold! I am told that your mother was a patrician of a most ancient race, so from her you have that faintness of air, your rarity of blood, which makes you resemble lilies too super-cultivated and rare to transparency, or resemble that aroma that you exhale, or hoary old ages of Asia gone that give no answer to the historian's gaze. No, the mortal heart can't hold you all, you are far too large for me.... That superciliousness, all but Chinese somehow, in the heave of your eyebrow's arch, that rather-too-much of the eye-whites shown below the irises... though I admire, mind, the faintness of it, the faint disdain, the die-away disdain, so confirmed and hoary, reposed and at home in the universe, with which you look out askance upon the world; and now dark circles will be under them, for I vow you shan't sleep, and that will please me to be conscious that you are marked with dark underlids because of me."

"I did not think," Miss Eve rejoined, leaning both her elbows on the window's sill, "that you were such a silly boy."

He during some seconds did not answer this, drew back a bit from the bed with a bent head, reflecting, and then said, "Well, it is silly, it is self-sacrifice; and yet — curious! while I fought against you, since it is silly, I thought it sillier than after I gave into you. Silly, indeed, I still see it, for these feelings of love make the blood to flow from the front of the brain to other caves of the frame — ruinously! so that loving is a reverting to lower-animal natures whose brains are less largely furnished with blood, the sense of romance and poetry in loving being due to some umbra of remembrance in us of old brutes, moons, and moods, of the geologic ooze, the deluge, the roll in the Jurassic morass, the rufous Vesuvius, the gloomy lagoon, when the moon glowed more big and close to this globe. Love is thus a fall and relapse; and yet — curiously—"

When he paused, she asked, “Well?” upon which he said, “My consciousness has been enlarged by it. I see, in fact, that though it is a fall toward the past, and silly, it is the one silliness that one may partly pardon oneself in view of its use to the future, because man will not always be man, and ages forward I see the sons’ sons of you and me a multitude, shining like stars in ‘the sky, vaunting John to George in voices of joy. No other children instead of ours, if ours are preordained to be born, will do for this evolution: for, since we observe that the perfection which is purposed by the earth can never be accomplished but by a preordained marshalling of atoms, we know that, if this or that atom fails of its place, nothing can be done: far less if this or that baby fated to be born fails anon to be born.”

Miss Eve, her face half concealed with her palm, asked, “But *what* is fated? that is the question. We imagine that what we wish is fated.”

“Love is apparently an instinct of fate,” Lepsius replied: “the lover prophesies in a kind of trance of triumphs to come. True, he is silly, since he sacrifices his time and life, but when he succumbs in his fight with the world-typhoon which whirls him to the moon, he can excuse his infirmity with a sense that this time it is worth while. I find that I have a tendency to reflect upon you in reveries extravagant to grotesqueness, comparing you with galaxies, fragrances, graces, fairies, lilies, with Dewildé, and Helen of Troy, and the boy Crobylus of Corinth, and that purple of Hermione whose wool was combed with poison-honey and oil of lotus; and though this is not strictly a truth at present of you, it is strictly a true instinct and prophecy of princes to spring through you. The line of your profile has a hint of hollowness to the eye, owing only to a most slight jutting of your chin’s point, a nothing which has overjoyed me with emotions the most poignant, with a sense of brotherhood for you, with a sense of the earth from her furnace-birth to her furthest sunsets, when the sun shall shine much nigher

her, and the moon loom hugely: and I have compared you with ages, and with the Lady in the Chair of Cassiopeia. Or, looking sideways at you with your legs crossed, I have been struck by the great prolongation of your thighbones — so great that you could hardly run on your toes and palms, as I and apes may, since your kneecaps would doubtless graze the ground — so evolved, patrician: and I have cried extravagantly that, at their greatest stretch, the very galaxy would find space and to spare ‘twixt their gaping gateway — an extravagance merely in appearance, since it is in a trance-dream of graces great even to *infinity* in types fated to grow from you that I thus exclaim; it is my subconsciousness, nay, my consciousness somewhat, all bewildered with a blaze of the world-wonder, and how, darling, but in boundless words may the mortal heart blurt out a little that burden of the Eternal? Or when I think of my love’s upper-shape, so *élancé*, like the racer’s stretch of waist and neck, like one escaping, dodging, eluding upward — dodging, eluding the ape-shape — the very revelation of evolution—”

Here Miss Eve smiled, remarking dryly, “Lepsius, you are full of apes.”

“Aren’t you? Isn’t the world?” he asked; upon which she said, “Yes, I know your low view of men — and of women, I suppose, still more; but beside my *élancé* upper-shape, my thigh-bone, my chin, my faded old air and hoary disdain of iris, I have a mind, which is jealous of your omission to mention it.”

“I meant to mention it!”

“Oh?” says she, “that was too sweet of you. Last but not least?”

“By no means least!” he answered earnestly: — a mind, I am certain, better than mine.”

“Ah, now you are insincere,” she said.

“I to you? As if I could be!” Lepsius replied with reproach; “I only, of course, mean a mind better than mine in possibility, since yours is uneducated, and mine more or less educated.”

“Mine un — ! But what, then, is ‘education’ in your view?” she wished to know, “Education,” he told her, “is a waking of one’s subconsciousness to consciousness. I, for instance, know nothing that you do not — or not much; but I am much more conscious of what we both know. Tell me, now — whereabouts were you twenty-four hours since?”

“Where?” repeated Miss Eve: “I was — here,” whereto he replied, “You see, that answer and its tone shows that your education was never initiated. You know, no doubt — are subconscious — that you were a thousand thousand, and half a thousand thousand, miles from here, flying at the speed of fifteen times a rifle-bullet’s rabies: subconscious, but not conscious of it. I, now, could never say ‘*here*’ in that fashion, without compunction, as though a million miles or two were of no account, Eve, since now and at each instant I can hardly but be conscious of this horse that jaunts us, and his ardour... Oh, this race of man suppurates in dullness, you know, and I am sometimes most — lonely: I mention this to you that you may compassionate and come to me. I ride a star, inhabiting the unbounded as my house, and the rest, more drowsing than the dormouse, Tortoni’s; their glance of a morning darts no surprise of gladness at this romance of time, space and game of balls, the Grand Boulevard their galaxy, pigmies grey, phlegmatic, unflushed, unconscious of their contemporaries in a myriad realms of the creation, among whom are at this moment taking place great crises, hegiras, revolutions, doomsdays, moonfalls, vast marches, everlasting partings; they little know that Venus is uneven and severe in scenery, nor does the thundering of even the nearest sun stun their eardrum; uneducated; not polite citizens of time and space.”

“But you remember—” Miss Eve started to say, but now, startled by some sound, breathed eagerly to him, “*did you hear something?*”

“It is a mouse going down the right sound-hole of your violin,” he replied; and now Miss Eve anew leaned her elbow on her window-sill to continue saying, “But you remember that all this you started to utter of *me*, then continued with ‘they,’ ‘they’; since then, as ‘they’ are so I, why are you there by my bed?”

“But are you not in all things far above me?” he asked,” save in this of a wakeful consciousness?”

“But this of a wakeful consciousness,” said she, “is everything, is it not? It is this which makes the difference between a genius and an ape, a god and a dog, you believe, do you not? And you have it, and not I. Only a thigh-bone I own, let me be thrown to a dog.”

Upon this Lepsius bent well across the bed to throw to her the whisper, “Hypocrite! Colder than the coldest Kydnus! It is your mind that I esteem, and in speaking of your thigh, implied it.... You should shun the mood of the modern woman of the West, ever touchy as to her footing, as to the spirit of the marriage-law, and men’s estimate of her mentality. Men *must* admire the mind of woman, for since we know that we all get our wit from our mother, as our grit from our father, therefore I, having my mind from a female, must needs love the female mind with home-longing, as you, having your grit from a male, must love the male grit with home-longing; so it is not for my wit that you love me, but because you are instinctive that I am gritty and good; nor is it for your grit that I love you, but because I am instinctive that, if educated, you would be witty, and will make witty babies. Give up, then, I beg you, for ever, the idea that I despise your mind, since I do so idolise it; and believe, too, that, for each one of these reasons which I can discover for my love of you, myriads of other reasons exist, ineffable, unknowable to us,

but in some manner known to that Man to whose behests men may at no moment but submit.”

“What Man is that?” Miss Eve asked, frowning, her wits rather winded now and flustered at the speed of her speaker’s thoughts.

“I mean, do I not,” said he, “the genius of our species? In every crowd of a thousand there are present, are there not? not a thousand, but a thousand and One, which One we can speak of as the ‘genius of the crowd,’ since it leads each of the thousand by the nose, making him behave in a totally different way than when alone — especially in such crowds as French crowds, which rush into action like one individual, as in ‘92. So in *séances* where those gathered believe that a ghost tilts their table, there is indeed a species of ghost-Man there, an eighth in a meeting of seven, a ‘genius of the crowd,’ compounded, no doubt, of the brain-rays radiated out from the seven. So, too, of the crowd who make up our human race: a Genius-of-the-species, his escutcheon and escheats mentioned on no census-sheet, leads us at each moment, teaching me to know and adore you, and none below the sun but you: to know you well: the very mood of the tune which, if you could be turned into a rhapsody of music, you would produce, a tune with some alto undertone, more old-eternal than the world. Beloved. But I fail to utter half, beloved, my heart faints....”

“Do you love me? M Miss Eve asked him in a whisper, leaning now far out of her window to him, who leaned near to her.

“Beloved,” Lepsius groaned, and again, “beloved.... When I came home from the Quai d’Orsay last night, I dropped down in a drowse, and, with the feast of your kiss still warm in my mouth, I thought in my dream that your feet walked with mine athwart fields of asphodel in future far, far off under a forlorn and morphia moon — I could not tell you. Then in the dark of the morning I awaked, and you were not there in my arms. I passed my palm

thrice across my bed of straws, but you were nowhere there; so I had the thought that my darling might be in the garden, among the lilies by the lake, gazing up at my casement, a thought half-crazy, half-drowsy; but up I bounded and raced all round the palace-walls, gazing down into the garden's in order to spy you out and call you up, and you were nowhere there. If one of the spokes of the kite-contrivance on which I fly had not been broken, I should have flown to you. But I ran down, got out, and began to run to you; and the *sergents de ville* must have asked themselves where Lepsius Was rushing to under the morning stars, with half a thought, perhaps, in their heart's heart of a *coup d'état*."

"You didn't come," Miss Eve observed.

"No," he answered, "I turned back; four leagues to Versailles, and I had already lost a good deal of time on your account... Eve, I have lost hours."

This he avowed with a bowed brow, and "Dear me," breathed Miss Eve with irony; then, suddenly, like one whose will arises and triumphs, added, "It would have been so fruitless, too,... Lepsius, you should, perhaps, be given to know — can you see? this one is the ring; I am engaged."

"Bomb of *poudre Rachel*," Lepsius mumbled with a chuckle; "so you came to an arrangement with de Courcy this evening?"

"Yes, then," Miss Eve said, *her* left shoulder, too, shaken a second by a chuckle.

"And the same night you admit another lover to your bed-chamber!" he said, chuckling.

"Oh, well," she muttered with lowered lids, chuckling within one shoulder, and they chuckled one with the other.

"Are ladies, then, restrained by no scruples as to justice?" Lepsius asked. "Delighter in lies! enigma! through what abstruse movement of your bosom did you get yourself into this embroglio? Not that it matters; but you will

inflict a sense of injury upon this man, who has done you no injury,” a speech at which in one instant Miss Eve flew into a passion, and, leaning forth, thrice struck the window-sill imperiously, crying through a gruff throat, “As God is my witness—”

“Sh-h-h,” Lepsius went.

“Let me speak!” she imperiously hissed: “I mean to marry him, do you hear it? Heaven be my witness!” and up she threw her eyes, trembling as she held them bent on high.

“Eve, no,” said Lepsius gently: “you do not mean to do that; you believe that you do, but meantime in your subconsciousness you firmly confide in me never to permit such an absurdity, and so can afford to boast and be wayward.... Dear, would it not certainly kill us both?”

“If it kills a host I will do it!” Miss Eve heatedly replied; “never through life have I broken a promise, nor now shall begin with a vow; given and pledged is my troth; God be my witness in this.”

“But *why* did you give it and pledge it? I can’t guess!”

“Because I chose!”

“Cogent waste of three words!”

“I shall never have *you*, anyway!” she said with a nod and threat of the head.

“And *why*?” he asked in a bewilderment. “Because you despise my mind!” she sharply replied.

“I have already explained why that is quite impossible,” he made answer.

“Oh, woman knows her own secret, and people’s explanations make no impression upon her intuitions. You despise my mind; and there’s this still deeper reason against any getting together of you and me, that I despise yours.”

“I despise it, too; yet I endure it.”

“Oh!” she sighed, “that untrue humility of yours, it irritates me to the soul, till I hate!... doubly untrue because insincere, and because, if it were sincere, it would be true to facts: for whereas you regard yourself as far greater than all, all as as far greater than you as you fancy them smaller, since your greatness is bedraggled rags that prevents you from being good. Oh, why are you not some ordinary wight, a young workman, Lepsius, a mason, a sailor, who has never learned to spell? Then some girl would so gleefully desert all her father’s — But now, ah, *il désir vive e la speranza è mortal*... Do you, by the way, still believe it fine to steal?”

“Successfully, you mean?” he said quickly; “stealing seldom needs much show of wit, but *swindling* is very frequently fine. You, I know, do not appreciate its fineness, but to me it is evident; it is lying in deed as you frequently do in speech.”

That this would give the profoundest offence Lepsius had no grounds to think, lying being to his philosophy no crime; but with that chastity of the swan, which, being but brushed in her array of whiteness, frills and ruffles awhile, then with majesty swims away, so she ruffled.

“Not ‘frequently,’ I think,” Miss Eve repeated; “if I ‘lie,’ it is to myself, unwittingly; and in every event differ from you in fancying it ‘fine.’ Anyhow, now you can see how what you have wanted is out of the question.”

At this Lepsius, looking at her under his eyes, said, “Eve, be sincere with me!”

“I mean to be sincere,” Miss Eve told him; “I do hope I am; yes, I *am*. We hate each other, Lepsius, shockingly, like cat and dog, oh, we *do*, do not gainsay it. *I* lack a culture you have, *you* lack a culture I have — in my very marrow. Oh, I know that you are awfully clever and all that, and you fancy that because you can deck me with queenship I shall be dashing myself

feverish and shivering upon your breast, little dreaming that the more thrones you throw before my feet, the more bitterly I'll spurn and keep you groaning in purgatory eternally. They say that just before the Exhibition you will be shooting into the sky a kind of sun infused with stored-up moonlight, which will make private lights at night useless through Europe, and France the richest of the nations; and that then, during the business of the Exhibition, you mean in a *coup d'état* to seize the throne, so as to sweep France off to overrun Providence knows what. It sounds mighty grand — I don't know if it is true; I only know — forgive my outspokenness — that it is howlingly vulgar, that it is not Christian, and that I should have far greater joy of a young mason or sailor-boy who behaves graciously to his father — one with a belt, may be, and your figure — that is—”

She stopped, and he said, “I listen,” but as she added nothing, he then said, “‘Vulgar,’

‘not Christian’; your criticism, of course, interests one, though it is curious.”

“Tell me,” Miss Eve said, “for whose weal do you purpose all that slaughter and upheaval — for the world’s?”

“For my own,” he said: “the weal of the world is in the management of the Genius-of-the-world, Who ceaselessly sees to it. I personally am not concerned in it.”

“Then,” replied Miss Eve, “that is what I mean by ‘vulgar’ and ‘not Christian.’”

“One idea or two?” he asked.

“No, one.”

Lepsius sat slowly aside on the bed, puzzling to understand her mind; and he said that he should have called Japan a far less ‘vulgar’ land than

England, to which Miss Eve replied that if Japan was really the less vulgar, that could only signify that Japan was the more Christian.

“Clearly, then,” said Lepsius, “‘Christian’ bears in your mind some meaning of which I am not yet aware, since Japan does not pretend to be Christian. I will see one day in the month following the Exhibition just what Christianity is; but, as I knew that religions have all so far been infant fancies, and as the religion of Europe is so slightly in the minds of the peoples whom I mean to govern, I have never given myself the pains to investigate it. And you do not say for what reason I ought to cease from my schemes because they are ‘vulgar’ and ‘not Christian.’ Vulgar they are, since I am a man, and man is a temporary and trumpery little race, ingrained, whatsoever it attempts, with vulgarity. But put yourself, beloved, in my place: what can I find to do with my life? I am sequestered in the world; and it has occurred to me that that would entertain me to make a world-state. True, I might have turned my life to the delights of research, with the idea of laying the foundations of knowledge in the world: it is, however, such a work! since I should have to begin quite at the beginning, and I shirked it. You may have no idea what a mess your little knowledge or ‘science,’ as you say, is in! Without foundation, top-heavy, like the education of a child who has been made to learn the Babylonish Talmud by rote, but can write not one word of his own tongue. The so-called ‘scientists’ know the stars of the night, and talk in millions of millions; but as to the elements of knowledge, as to, say, the nature of gravitation, and what is the ground-reason why their candle-grease dribbles downward instead of bounding skyward, or why it is that the atoms in a twig or anything cling together, though when one breaks the twig, and then again puts the broken ends together, the atoms won’t any longer cling, they possess no more notion than the chimpanzee. Knowledge without

foundation; vague, then, foggy, gappy: so that one may say, man knows nothing, and of that little which he knows he is but subconscious, hardly at all conscious. However, when these schemes of mine which you have called ‘vulgar’ are accomplished, I mean to turn almost the whole vigour of the world toward research and the gaining of some little ground-knowledge of the nature of things: for undoubtedly the want of this knowledge is what is now chiefly unwell with our species. But I mustn’t say to you, beloved, that men’s good is my aim, my only aim being to bustle and bluff a little as the governor of a globe in space.”

“But if a million men are killed by it?” Miss Eve remarked.

“Dear, it will not matter,” Lepsius replied.

“Will it matter if *you* are killed?”

“It will to you, to no one else, since everyone dislikes me.”

“But *one* will clamour and cry out, you think? One will bleat and beat the breast?”

“Dear, it will not happen; I am so easily the king of men.”

“Better, may be, if it did.... No, it is all awfully low, Lepsius, I say, even lower than Cæsar, as low as Napoleon, and proves how many a thousand miles divide you from me and from men: for far at fault, I can see, is what you said just now that Christ’s religion is but ‘slightly in the mind’ of the crowd! Deeply the world has breathed of its atmosphere, yes, and the murderer Burke, guillotined in the week gone, deep in its stream was immersed, everywhere save at his heel. One sees that, when one hears *you* speak. Do you know those words of Julian as to that Jew workman, ‘thou hast conquered, O Galilean’? — so scarcely true then, how greatly true now! You who can see, don’t you notice how pity prevails like the flood, and how charity roars like an ocean? Christs on the ‘bus, at the ball, martyrs that saunter in clubs? Firemen, nurses, the Red Cross; the blind boy

pampered and spoiled; the sweater and swindler inwardly worked with a qualm for the world's weal; the moon on her throne still ruling, seducing the rudeness which roars in the tides with her mild smile, still by the touch of a Robe virtue disbursed through the world; and with that hem of his vesture encrimsoned, treading the wine-press of history, the white Christ travels, or, riding his triumph, rides on the foal of an ass over dominions and thrones. When you said, Lepsius, that self-sacrifice is silly—”

But here Lepsius stopped her with the whisper, “someone is coming!” on which the lips of Miss Eve, going at once quite sheet-white, breathed, “God! it must be my sister! Lepsius! go!”

“Why should I?” Lepsius said.

“Lepsius!” — she was beside herself—” would you compromise me? Lepsius? For ever? Would you?” for she herself could now catch the sound of something, a door moving open in an outer room.

“If I go,” Lepsius whispered, “may I come every night?”

“Every—” Even in that storm of her eagerness for his going Miss Eve paused; but she breathed, “Yes, every night — the key!”

In an instant the key was handed her, and he out of the outer window: on which she, too, in some seconds was down, was across the bed and at the outer window, all her breath breathing down to him fifteen feet below, “Every night! But I shan’t ever be here!”

She could just catch his ejaculation of “Wretch!” and as she snatched her fiddle, dashed herself into the chair at the casement, and arranged her drapery, soft footfalls came on the carpet, the elder sister breathing, “Eve! not in bed. Oh, Eve!”

“Dear,” said Miss Eve with langour, “I couldn’t get to sleep; I was playing the fiddle...”

“Well, I knew it.... I had a feeling that you were not asleep, so I got up and came to you, and here you are. Poor Evie! Cast your care upon God, will you, Eve?... But playing at this hour! And — where’s the bow?”

“I put the bow over there... Oh, Ruth, put your hand on my brow, I have a headache,” upon which, her head now lying back on the chair-back, she shut down her eyelids, and Miss Ruth, stooping, held her hand over the brow of trouble, groaning now and again a little in her soul, her cheek pressed against ‘Miss Eve’s cheek, till presently she breathed,” That better now?”

“Yes, sweet, that’s sweet,” Miss Eve breathed.... “Sweet, Lepsius was here.”

“Eve, here?”

And now, under the compulsion of that touch upon her brow, Miss Eve breathed out the whole story.

The sandals of Lepsius, meanwhile, were speeding away, till they arrived at his phaeton awaiting him beneath trees at Viroflay by the forest of Meudon, where, throwing himself in, under the setting moon he went tearing by way of Sèvres, Boulogne, Passy, to the palace. There, at the top of a stair, he was awaited by a man in robes of the Orient with a scraggy grey beard, hollow cheeks, and a nose mostly nostrils which gaped, who, with ever a wagging and nodding of his head, stood gossiping and gassing to Shan Healy: his name, Nundcumar. And these two, Shan Healy and Nundcumar, when Lepsius had mounted the stair, hastened without speech after their master’s speed.

It was when they three were in the midst of a corridor whose two rows of cressets seemed to meet at its remoter end, that Lepsius suddenly peered ahead, stopped, and murmured very low in Urdu to Nundcumar, “Anyone new in the palace to-day?”

Perhaps a second lapsed before Nundcumar answered, "One: a person who can spangle silk-muslin with gold of Dacca for the women-folk."

"Tell! Man or woman?"

"It was a woman. She—"

"Name."

"I cannot at this moment remember her—"

"Tell! European?"

"Yes. She—"

Lepsius walked on; but after some steps, without stopping, went slower, and now beckoning Nundcumar to him, said low, "You walk before."

Nundcumar's eyes opened with some apprehension as he began to walk on ahead, and immediately Lepsius brought forth from the bag of his shirt a species of pigmy weapon which one fired off by pressure upon a button.

The walls here had hangings of tinsel at intervals, between these being daubs on the walls themselves by Hindoo artists in hues as warmly gaudy to the eye as water flooded with the sun's after-glow. And it was when Nundcumar, having reached the middle of the corridor, was at the extremity of a hanging, that on a sudden he cast up his arms, all shivering, with shrieks which pierced the ear, vitriol eating now that doughy nose-tip, streaming down his beard. Meantime, Lepsius had swung forth by the elbow a woman who had been hidden behind the hanging, and in the quickest demisemiquavers fired two pairs of bullets, one into her right wrist, one into the left, one into her right foot, one into the left. Then during a few seconds he peered with a curiosity of disgust into the disfigurement of the squealing Hindoo, and was gone, throwing behind him to Shan Healy, who was kneeling over Jeanne Auvache, the order, "Call in the police."

He then made his way to the place where he slept: an apartment as broad as the palace in that part, resembling a barn, but possessing no walls on

three of its faces, only processions of columns of marble which bore up three architraves. Within this chamber a hound — a mastiff all but as large as Lepsius himself — was pacing about; and when Lepsius had well bolted four doors, had again loaded his weapon, had placed it on some straw strewn over one angle of the plain of floor, had let his gaze muse some moments upon the moon going down within a couch of clouds which she flushed, and now had thrown himself down upon the bed of straw, the hound moved to lie down by his side, and both soon dozed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WEDDING-PLACE.



THE DAY OF the opening of the Exhibition was coming near, so was the day of the nuptials of Miss Eve and Monsieur de Courcy, which had first been fixed for the 23rd of July, and then, by the nerves and eagerness of the bride's groom and friends, fixed for the 5th; and now orders for the *gâteau de noce* and other articles had already gone out, and already the lady and her guardians were at Gronland, a seat of the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard near to Orléans, where it was arranged that the marriage should take place.

In these circumstances Shan Healy observed truly to the Hindoo Nundcumar, "There be things brewing in his brain, as you'll see before too Jong — at work like six whirlwinds! And there's a little smile about'n somehow, and a something somewhere in his eye that spells pestilence to somebody, I haven't a doubt." Healy was seated in the evening dusk by the Hindoo's side, who, still luxuriating in bed with his nose sore in cotton-wools, lay silent awhile, but then lifting himself to hug his meagre knees, said with that wagging of his head, "Let him run, let him go along; but one day the whirlpools of destiny will decapitulate his head."

"Oh, you go to hell," Healy muttered; "learn to speak Christian English first, and then turn prophet." The Hindoo's loose tongue, in these weeks unusually quiet, was anew silent, his silences as well as his speech filled with that movement of his head which was as continuous as the neck-movement of Chinese playthings, and as full of meaning and meditation;

and presently he observed, "And when he is done for, whirled up and filibustered for all he is worth, I know who will be the doer of it."

"Who's that, then?" Healy demanded, and the Hindoo's bony little face became animated a moment as he made answer, "The woman who threw the vitriol in my face!"

"Oh, she," said the other, "safe enough in chokey for four years any way — 'travaux' they d' name it here; and serves her jolly well right, too." Nundcumar, with his eyes shut and a head that wagged, said, "If she stops there!"

"Who's to get her out?" demanded Healy aggressively.

"I — do not know," remarked the Oriental innocently, with opening palms.

"Look here, you're a nice one to be speaking in this kind of way," Healy suddenly said; "appears to me as if you'd like to see it done!"

"Me?" said Nundcumar; "na, na, not me, my sonnies. What! me? Why, what was I when he ascended me out of the gutter? A dog, a hungry wretch in rags, just ready for the hangman to garrot by the throat" — he rushed his forefinger across his scraggy throat—"and now, what has he made of me? A king with slaves to ceremony my bathing, and everybody bowing himself down to make me the how-d'-you-do. And why this? Because he liked while at his work to listen with one ear to Nundcumar retailing wholesale his anecdotes of past doings, times, 'histories, befallings, happenings and epochs, and to hear Nundcumar speak his ingenious English; he wanted me for his gas-bag, his gabbling ape! and he gave me garments of shawl-goat wool, and dancing-girls of Persia with gold bells on their ankles to play the kitar before my godhood, all because he couldn't do without his Nundcumar's tongue. Na, na, not me. And then he made the villain woman vituperate her vitriol upon the nose and mouth of his good old hound-dog."

“Serves you right,” observed Healy: “what earthly right had you to admit the woman into the palace without proper inquiries? And who was to have the vitriol in the chops, you or he, I should like to know?”

“He might have chosen *you* to have it,” the Oriental quietly replied, throwing an underlook at Healy, upon which Healy chuckled within himself, saying, “Ey, but he didn’t choose, you seel.”

“No,” said the Hindoo, “he chose his Nundcumar instead. But never mind, it’s nothing, this. Only that’s bad, Healy, my friend, when the evil eye is thrown upon a man, for there’s not a god sitting on his throne of gold can escape—”

“And who’s thrown this evil eye upon him?”

“That woman — that villain woman.”

“Safe, thank God, under lock and key.”

“May be; safe, thank God, under lock and key, may be: but did I never tell and expostulate you the history and anecdote of the time and epoch when I and my brother were in the service of the Maharajah of—”

“Oh, I’m ill of your lies,” said the other; “you never had a brother, nor he nor you never were in the service of any Maharajah in this world. So help me God, I never heard tell of a nigger the like of you: other men lie with a view to deceiving people, but you lie like a lying-machine, just because you needs must, without the least bit expecting that anybody will be believing you.”

“Do they believe *you*?” the Hindoo demanded; “may be I know one that doesn’t, since he has had every step of yours spied, vigilised, and super-inspected ever since his sire has been over.”

At this Healy, eyeing the floor, heaved a sigh, and then getting up from his seat, said with the dignity of grief, “Well, you are right there, no doubt,” and walked out.

At that hour Lepsius himself, in an apartment without walls on a lower floor, was speaking with Mr. E. Reader Meade, who reposed on a couch at his ease, handing a moustache that rolled down like a weir, while Lepsius himself, in a sudeyree and trousers of nankeen, stood close to a telephone hung on one of the columns. In the midst a punkah, somehow worked, fanned the face; a fountain which span showered whirls of spray round flowers and ferns; two girls a good way off in corners continually caused their typewriters to prattle, peering nigh their work in the dusk; while here and there other species of machines competed in making their workings heard.

“Well,” Mr. Reader Meade was saying in English, “their scheme of getting hold of your person, of course, seems to me, too, a bit absurd — and you say you knew of it?”

“Well?” said Lepsius to someone at the telephone, throwing immediately to Meade the reply, “Yes, I knew,” and to the telephone-speaker the words, “Where, then, is Monsieur le Due de Rey-Drouilhet at present?” and to Meade again, “Go on.”

“I’ll wait,” said Meade.

“I listen,” said Lepsius.

“Let us take it, then,” said Meade, “that you will scarcely fail to elude that plot: for that’s the sick spot of your Frenchman, he lacks humour, is so preoccupied with *ideas*, that he lacks nice adjustment to facts, often fails to measure his new man or thing, and so comes a cropper in practice—”

“Precisely,” said Lepsius, “you are very shrewd — as usual. Say then,” he added to his telephone-speaker, “that I can receive Monsieur le Duc de Rey-Drouilhet for seven minutes.”

“The castle to which you are to be inveigled,” said Meade, “is called Château Egmond, on the Brittany coast, a league from St. Brieuc, and

fourteen from your own Serapis. It is the property of Madame la Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, has been leased from her by the League, I hear, and de Courcy, it is said, means to make it his residence immediately after his marriage, which takes place at Grønland, near Orléans, on the 5th — or am I giving you all stale news?”

“I knew,” Lepsius said, as he now flew through the room to drop some words at the ear of one of the girls, who in turn eagerly spurted out and now, returning, he said to Meade, seating himself on the floor with clasped knees, “Only I don’t quite understand by what means they hope to get me to go to this Château Egmond.”

“I am not too sure,” said the other, “but Saïd Pasha, who is always at the bottom of the *dessous de la politique*, asked me at the Palais-Bourbon last night to tell you that Nuncio *ad interim* Montijo will be of the company at the château, and as you are believed to be eager to gain the Church-party, this may be intended to motive you to accept their invitation.

Then also Marshal Rémy will be there, and your right hand, Schuré.”

Lepsius was up, speeding off to peer into a little machine hitched on to the telephone which fretted and roared in fits, saying as he ran, “But do they imagine that one cannot negotiate with Rémy, Schuré and Montijo without going down to Brittany? It is conspiracy of — let us say of Bismarcks, all born on the first of April!” at which word “Bismarcks” he chuckled maliciously within himself.

“But a conspiracy having this peril,” remarked Meade, “that Isabeau Thiéry seems to be more or less in it.”

“Oh, Thiéry is a shadow,” said Lepsius, throwing himself flat on a table, his hands under his head;” his characteristic is that he does not exist.”

“I should rather say,” said Meade, “that his characteristic is that he is the half-brother of Fanny Schuré, who is the wife of Schuré, who is the

engineer-in-chief of the moon-machine.”

“And that matters in your judgment, I see,” said Lepsius.

“Much in my judgment,” the other answered very impressively; “you don’t, I think, know the Thiérys well; they are one of those French families who regard each of their members as something between a god, a genius, and a pet-dog to be pampered; and Isabeau Thiéry in particular, with his three volumes of Victor Hugo verse, is to Fanny dear no less than Hermes Trismegistus. I tell you so, Lepsius. He is a ghost, you say, and I say ditto; but his influence with this grande dame of a Fanny must be great enough: if he is against you, Fanny is against you. And you won’t undervalue this woman’s sway? A bit Brantômesque in tone as the girl may be, with her ambition to say things worthy of Esther Guimont, if not of Ninon de l’Endos, she has quite earnestly this further ambition, to revive the *alcove*, and, by pulling the wires in the political drama, to be called a Chateauroux or a Genlis. As to Schuré himself, you know him: *au fond* he is a viveur living in the *odor di femina*; his guts is his God, and his ‘fafemme’ is his Devil. If she tempts, he attempts; she says go, and he goeth. And I say that, if Isabeau Thiéry goes against you, then, through Fanny, Schuré would agree to yield to the immense pressure of your enemies to tamper with the moon-construction; and if there’s the smallest failure as to the moon — ah! well, you know the consequence of that.”

“You are always very shrewd,” said Lepsius, lying on his back with shut eyes, “and but for your judgment I should surely miscarry in everything that I attempt. All this that you say is quite true, and I have always intended to bribe Isabeau Thiéry at the right moment.”

“With money? Isabeau Thiéry?”

“Why the surprise?”

The Englishman got his limbs together, and sitting now on his couch-edge, stared, saying, "You cannot do that, you know.... Bribe any of them, the brokers, popes, emperors; but you cannot bribe a poet, man! Don't you know that for a fact, Lepsius? Frankly, you occasionally bring your friends' admiration of your brain to some sudden cropper...! You, too, having that French fixity of idea and lack of humour, knowing the human clock so minutely in everything, except just its divine trick, its 'eccentricity,' as mechanics say. You couldn't bribe Thiéry!"

"Abundantly, I meant," observed Lepsius.

"But that's worse! If you send him five hundred francs, there's just the millionth fraction of a chance that it might influence him, since he is so jolly poor; but if you send him five millions, don't you know, really, what will happen? He'll throw up the melodramatic right-hand that crumples the cheque, cry 'Cato!' and rush off to Sister Fanny to crush you. It's the 'eccentricity 'in the earth's yearly journey: you count ill if you leave it out.'"

At this Lepsius, springing up, looked at the other in the way of one who is struck by what has been said, and he had begun to say, "What grounds, now, have you—" when a negro, coming in between two of the columns, announced, "Monsieur le Duc de Rey-Drouilhet," and now Meade said, "Well, I'll be away," adding, "you can bribe *him*, Lepsius."

"And all of you," thought Lepsius within himself with a somewhat sullen eye askance on his friend.

The friendly Englishman and Lepsius, looking rather like cow and calf together, now exchanged a hand-shake, and in soon stepped the aged little duke, diffusing smells of perfumery, showing a youthful streak of teeth which shook, to seat himself finically on the couch which Meade had left, while anew Lepsius flew hither and thither, for some time paying no heed to the fop's presence, who meantime secretly touched his teeth, lips, cheeks,

and sucked a cachou; till at last Lepsius, casting a look at one of a quartette of clocks, cheque-book in hand, dashed to sit by his side, remarking, "Six minutes and a half, Monsieur le Duc, and my admirable friend: tell."

"Why, it was you who sent for me," the duke said, tittering in his fluttering and fussy manner, "it is you, Monsieur Lepsius, whose rôle it is to tell!"

To this Lepsius made no answer, but stamping a cheque with a number of francs, furiously wrote the duke's name on it, and now threw the cheque askew to the duke's knees, without looking at him; upon which the duke sprang up somewhat pallid under his rouge, muttering in a protesting manner, "No, Monsieur Lepsius — your manner — I cannot accept — you forget, monsieur—"

Lepsius groaned. "We are such old cronies! And surely time is ever a thing of some value. Can you not see it? Tell, tell."

"I am aware that your time is valuable—"

"Yes, of course: tell."

"But—"

"No, tell."

"But are there to be no preliminaries? No pourparlers? You have handed me a cheque, monsieur — I know not for what amount, since positively I decline to inspect it—"

"Twenty thousand, that being the first of several, the others to be written out as you proceed in amounts proportioned to the worth of your words."

"The figures will be big in that event!"

"They shall be; you know that I am immense in generosity."

"But it is a bribe! — if you consider it. I was never, however, to be bribed! You forget, monsieur, that I bear a name which I never have, nor

ever shall, stain by any real meanness; nor, if I have accepted money of you in the past—”

“It was not a bribe, it was a gratuity; a meanness, but not a ‘real’ meanness, because of your secret ardour for my person and service. I know it all, nor should ever dream of insulting that name you bear with a ‘real’ bribe: tell.”

“Well, provided we do thoroughly understand each other’s tone, monsieur...” the duke now said, sitting down anew with a twitching up of his trousers’ knees, “though in the present instance I absolutely do not feel that I could touch your cheque with honour, since, really, if you consider it, monsieur, it is a betrayal of comrades, this, in which I am engaged — you cannot get rid of the fact by any sophistry! — it — is — a — betrayal; nothing less!”

“Not a betrayal, only an exposure,” said Lepsius drearily, “nor need you actually touch the cheque,” and picking it up, he put it into the peer’s pocket.

“Well, say an ‘exposure,’ since everything, after all, depends on the tone of an act, and everything is right that is done by the right-minded.... At any rate, let me tell you, monsieur, that you stand in a situation of even the extremist danger!”

“I know; and Isabeau Thiéry is in it.”

“Why, yes.”

“Tell — deeply?”

“Deeply enough, although not whole-heartedly, I know. Moreover, he hasn’t a sou, so can at any moment be opened to you by the golden key.”

“And Dr. Lepsius?”

“He also... I am in the dark, by the way, as to whether the doctor is a relative of yours, although the question is being asked—”

“No relative. But that man is actually in the inside of the inner plot to kidnap and imprison me? Yes?”

“Why, yes. He has attended each of the recent councils in the house of Monseigneur Piscari, has even made suggestions as to the means of your capture.” The left cheek of Lepsius went ashen a second or two, and all at once he was up to fly with an eye on fire to a speaking-tube some distance off, through which, when he had whistled, he murmured low, “33, you?”

The answer was, “Yes.”

“Telephone to P.,” said Lepsius, “asking if all is ready on his side, in which case let him now wire to B13 to burn within an hour.” At the same time, without looking round, he cried out to the duke, “You see the amount is as I stated it, Monsieur le Duc!” for the duke was taking the chance to scrutinise his cheque narrowly in the twilight.

“I will see to it,” was the answer of the speaking-tube to Lepsius, who then sped back to the duke, saying, “Two minutes more, monsieur; tell details.”

The old fop laid one forefinger on the other, and with much animation of manner gave the details. Lepsius was to be got *to* Château Egmond, a league from St. Brieuc, by means of an accumulation of inducements, the chief being that Schuré, the engineer, without speaking with whom it was assumed that Lepsius could not exist a week, would be present: for Schuré, though not of the conspiracy — at all events not formally, so far — had, however, promised to be of the house-party for two or three days; and it was proposed that Schuré should fall more or less indisposed while there through unwholesomeness in his wine for, at any rate, eight or nine days, until Lepsius should be impelled to hie to his bedside. Then Lepsius was to be shut up in the château some days, until he could be taken to the bastille on the Ile de Bas, named Château Labême, which, too, the League had got

on lease; and it was moreover hoped to reduce Lepsius to penury by seizing a minute key which Lepsius was believed to carry continually on his body.

Lepsius threw a new cheque when this had been said, saying, “Their names,” on which the duke, taking a leaf of paper out of his pocket, and speaking now eagerly with a mean secrecy of voice, galloped out a string of names, “Thiéry you know, Dr. Lepsius you know, and, of course, Sauriau, de Courcy, Leflô, Piscari, General-of-Brigade Rabot, Grand-Almoner Persigny; then there is Maspéro and Gustave Ghéon; the big bresseur d’affaires Briickner, Aly of gas, and Huguette of electricity; Captain Pertius; Pichot of Justice and Public Worship; Léonce Pettit; Director of Fine Arts Rémy-Rehaut; and Maître Sorel — with some provincials.”

“Their names,” said Lepsius, smiling a little, toying under his vest with that half a coin whose sister-half he had sent to Miss Eve Vickery two years previously.

“The provincials,” said the duke, “are obscure rich persons, not worth your resentment, monsieur; there is a Monsieur Louis Jammes of Lyons, a chocolate-maker, then a Monsieur Flammarion of Tours, a Monsieur Brisson of Rouen — who, by the way, is booked to go to the conference at Château Egmond.”

“I do not know these people,” remarked Lepsius with no little alertness of thought in his eyes which stirred fleetly from side to side like sheet-lightning. He then asked if the provincials had attended the Paris conferences, to which the other replied that they had not, being but “associates “ by correspondence with Sauriau, their secretary.

Lepsius stamped yet a cheque, saying, “ Make it your work to-morrow, Monsieur le Duc, to discover whether this Monsieur Brisson of Rouen, who is to go to the Egmond conference, is known by sight to any of the Paris conspirators, and you become affluent for six months, as already you are for

three,” in saying which he threw the new cheque to the duke, and dashed away to peer steadily at the picture of a château colouring itself as by miracle in one of the electric machines. The duke’s arm had half started out for a hand-shake of farewell, but drew back without it; and now, after waiting some time, at last with a raising of the shoulders in a shrug which lingered long, he first with a grimace murmured to the four winds, “Is the interview, then, at an end?” and now, doing a very exquisite bow to Lepsius’ back, withdrew with bows.

As he departed, Lepsius threw half a look at one of four clocks, their staring faces of a largeness so exaggerated that they concealed, each of them, four of the columns’ mass, and afflicted the air with the click of their tick-tack; and with one tap of impatience on a chair he went muttering, “Come, Sauriau.”

Some seconds afterwards the name of the Abbé Sauriau was called.

“Admit him!” called Lepsius in reply, at the same time darting behind a screen, whence in scarce more than forty seconds he came out “dressed” in clothes made for quickness, without any buttons about them, and a second before the abbé came in had caught up, and was casting his eye over, a page of a book of the abbé’s just published.

“Monsieur l’Abbé Sauriau,” he murmured, shaking hands, “I was at this moment deep in *Hellenic Idylls*.... But what are you, then, Monsieur l’Abbé Sauriau. A re-incarnation of Plato? For surely, only a Greek could so utterly know the soul of Greece!”

Monsieur l’Abbé Sauriau had shy eyelids. “I am glad.... Oh! you have seen *Hellenic*.”

“Seen and devoured... and what charm! How airy! What daintiness of manner! Oh, truly, those gross fingers of the Abbé Sauriau know how to en’grave with a fairy’s grace.”

“Why, this is well,” said the abbé; “have you, by chance — finished the book?”

“Not quite, yet, monsieur: I am now at the myth of Leda.”

“It is the end that is the best,” breathed the abbé with downbent lids.

“Let us sit here, monsieur, and speak about it,” and now he led to the couch a spirit so bludgeoned and kidnapped by the scoop of this typhoon of flattery, that Lepsius might possibly then and there have made the abbé his slave for ever. This, may be, was actually his aim: for the Abbé Sauriau, owing to his amiable personality, his learning, and his well-deserved celebrity through the whole world of letters, was an individual of no slight influence in the under-currents of the life of the Paris of his time, both within and without the sound of the Palais-Bourbon bell; and not only was his brother, Louis Sauriau, a general-of-division, but the engineer Schuré himself was believed to be deeply under the influence of the abbé’s fascination. This being so, Lepsius, in his gross way, continued with a smile of amusement to eulogise to the skies the volume of which he had perused only one page, nor found any praise too gross for the poet to gulp down, while the poet eyed his right red sock which continually shook up, and struck the crossed leg with his glove. Unfortunately, Lepsius never knew more than forty-nine of the fifty parts of man, and as for man’s vanity, he was himself so exempt from any iota of it — his tone being that of a broker, wholly pre-occupied with the facts of things — that he little recognised to what a degree vanity, in its government of the soul, may famish such grosser passions as avarice. Hence, not content with praising the abbé’s book, he went on to mention his intention of buying an immense number of copies, and at once was aware of change in the abbé’s air, for at once the abbé was offended, reflecting within himself, “It is a bribe; and since he has

a desire to bribe, *perhaps* what he has said as to the worth of the ‘Idylls’ is just humbug with a purpose?” and his bush began to burn.

Lepsius, who did not much care, leapt up just then to answer the telephone, and before he came back to the abbé peered into the machine in which a château was slowly painting its shape on a pane of paper: upon which his visitor called to him, “What a fuss of mechanism you have squalling in this hall!”

“Come, I’ll let you see them,” said Lepsius in a humour of devilry, to humiliate the spirit that he had lately praised; and he led the priest from little machine to little machine, teaching him something of the meaning of each — things of steel acting in the manner of rational and ingenious creatures — into which those bushy eyes of the Abbé Sauriau peered near-sightedly, and though he uttered hardly a word, from time to time a “humph!” would start from him. When, however, they came to the one where the château was coming out in colours, Lepsius nonchalantly said, “This one you could not comprehend, however much I explained it,” and dropped a handkerchief on it.

In this manner, half by carelessness, half in malice, he made for himself many enemies, by contempt; and in the abbé’s eyes came a flame.

“However, to come to details, monsieur,” he said as he sat down anew.... “I have bound myself to sound you in advance on behalf of Monseigneur Piscari, who met me last night in the Salle des Pas Perdus, as to whether you would be likely to feel inclined to make one of a party, mainly political, to meet in the country in a fortnight’s time.”

Lepsius span round to the abbé, saying, I wonder?... Whereabouts?”

“The name is Château Egmond—”

“I didn’t know that the prelate had a palace of that name.”

“He has lately taken it on a—”

“Where is it?”

“In Brittany, not twenty leagues from your own Palace Serapis, and a league from—”

“Ah, too far. Time, Monsieur l’Abbé,” and off Lepsius dashed anew to the machine of the château-picture, snatched the handkerchief from it, peered, and now beheld midget people rushing about it, and the château at four places wrapt in flames; upon which he flew back to the abbé, who was observing, “Well, certainly, it is a long way off, but then everywhere is near to Dædalus; moreover, everybody will be there — Schuré, Monti jo — many charming dames—”

“Ah! Who, for instance?”

“Madame Schuré for one,” replied the abbé with a flash of the eye.

“Unfortunately, monsieur,” remarked Lepsius very rashly, “I can’t be expected to make love to a *rat d’opéra* like Fanny Schuré when it is well known that I am already in love, and with a sovereign lady. If, now, you had informed me that the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard and her charming relatives would be there, that to a great extent would have abolished the distance.”

The abbé sat up at this, staring like one who is struck by a new idea, then muttered with some spite, “I was wondering if that could be managed, just to please you. It seems, however, to be out of the question, since one of those relatives of the countess is to be married on the 5th to Monsieur de Courcy at Gronland, in the centre.”

“And Monsieur de Courcy has not asked me to be a guest!” crowed Lepsius with gross sarcasm, adding, “Forgive me — forty seconds,” and anew he flew to the machine of the château-picture, a “living” picture, in which could be seen the leaping of flames that now surrounded all the place, and crowds rushing all about, and fire-engines spouting out waters in

the night, all such mites as are the images which walk tiny in the eye of an ox. Lepsius gazed at it through a magnifying-glass, and when in a group of eight moving down a terrace in disarray from the house of flame he could make out the faces and shapes of the Misses Vickery, back he rushed to the abbé, saying, "That, then, must be my answer, Monsieur l'Abbé, to Monseigneur Piscari, with my thanks; nor will anything earthly alter my decision — unless, perhaps, it be some temptation in the shape of the eternal feminine.... You see, Monsieur l'Abbé, I become dissipated in mind like the rest, and oh, believe me, it is a relaxing thing to live among men.... What's the time?"

The abbé stood smartly up at the hint, and, as always after being with Lepsius, hobbled away brisker than he came, braced in spirit and pricked to be a man of the same height and stride as that model that he yet disliked; and with that baggy skin of his brow twitching with cogitation, gazing at the ground, he went quick of gait, galvanic-young again, making sounds with his great stick, down to a carriage, where he gave an address in the Rue Jean Gougeon.

It was the home of the Count de Courcy. The count, however, was out, but might be found, the abbé was told, at the Ministère, or else at a house in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré.

To the Ministère drove the abbé; no de Courcy was there; so thence he drove to the Faubourg, where the Comte de Courcy rose from dinner to go to him at the head of a stair, and there the abbé said, with a scantness of breath, "I have been chasing you — am fresh from the individual whom — that is, from the young Lepsius, and shall be surprised from his mood at present if anything which we can devise will get him to step into the Egmond trap.... Would you believe? he is love-struck with *Hellenic Idylls*; it appears, my friend, that the young man dreams of it at night!"

“C’est vrai?” said Monsieur de Courcy (i.e., “By Jove,” touched with irony).

“Yes, you will find him turning author before long in order to vie with us others! But, believe me, monsieur, he is destined to discover that it needs a deeper brain to create a true and poetical book than to imagine machines of steel.”

“As Phoebus beats Hephaestus; but — you see — I am being awaited—”

“Yes, forgive me — only to tell you that it will be most difficult, as I can already see, to get him to go to Egmond, unless — may I express myself? it is delicate...”

“I even pray you to do so.”

“Unless Madame de Pichegru-Picard and her — nieces are of the party, in which event he will agree—”

The Comte de Courcy’s neck stiffened. “My friend, the suggestion would be ingenious, if it were not impossible.”

“I see that,” breathed the Abbé Sauriau, “especially its ingeniousness.”

“To me its impossibility is no less obvious, monsieur,” said Monsieur de Courcy.

But now steps were mounting the stair, and a man bearing a document and a telegram came up to give them to the count, who, having read the telegram, grew pale, and every second paler, and presently observed to the abbé, “My God! Grønland house burned to the ground!”

“Burned!” exclaimed the abbé; “why, accept my sym — But where, then, monsieur, will your wedding take place?”

“It may now *have to* be at Egmond,” the count said slowly, with meditation dwelling in his undertook.

“Why, then, this may be a Providence in view of the individual whom we have in our mind!” cried out the Abbé Sauriau.

“We will see how Heaven works it,” the count observed, now suddenly holding out his hand to bid *bon soir*.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT EGMOND.



WITHIN TEN DAYS everything was settled: the Comtesse de Pichegru-Picard, burnt out of Château Grønland, came to an arrangement with Monseigneur Piscari (who had already got from her the lease of Egmond in Brittany on behalf of the League), to go down there for the wedding of Miss Eve without interfering with the prelate's house-party; and Lepsius, for his part, on hearing now that Miss Eve would be at Egmond, agreed to go down, too, to meet the other political intriguers.

By the last day of June all the party were there, except a Monsieur Brisson of Rouen, and Lepsius, who had arranged to come on the 2nd of July for two days, the date of the wedding remaining fixed for the 5th of July.

As for this Monsieur Brisson, who lived not far from Brittany, why he did not appear was not very clear, for though he had been written to by Monseigneur Piscari, he had sent no reply.

However, about an hour after dinner on the 1st of July, Monsieur Brisson was announced just as a council which met to consider last details as to Lepsius had sat round a table in a chamber in a tower. The door was already locked when the card of Monsieur Brisson was brought, who, on being admitted, was seen to be the embodiment of the *bourgeois* in glasses, one of his legs bowed and booted with a sole inches deep, on which he steeply limped. As he was unknown by sight to the others, he had to produce some

of his notes from the League before being given leave to assume his seat; and the conference then began in a gloaming still unlighted by any lamp, present being Monsieur de Courcy, the Abbé Sauriau, Monsieur Leflô, the Due de Rey-Drouilhet; the bent back of Dr. Lepsius sat sideways to the table, dumb; Monseigneur Piscari, a lank and stark inquisitor, presided; Isabeau Thiéry was absent; but there were some ten more, men of wit or weight.

The difficulty was to get Lepsius into Egmond without scandal: for if he once came in as a guest, and was seen, his disappearance would naturally excite comment and unrest; but after much discussion one Captain Pertius, a spark of the *beau sabreur* type, who had five *pioupious* (privates) at command in the château, proposed that as “Lepsius came, his capture should take place outside a summer-house in a south avenue, and Lepsius there kept till everybody was abed; and this was carried.

But now Monsieur Brisson of Rouen, with a rasping throat of the *nouveau riche*, at last gave a croak, saying, “It will be a great risk to keep him idling there for hours in that summer-house.”

And now, too, for the first time, Dr. Lepsius breathed a weary word, “I agree.”

However, their votes were overborne on the authority of Pertius, who, having thoroughly examined the summer-house, had found it strong and sound.

Then, till it was almost dark, many details were discussed, many proposals put to the vote, everybody knew what his own duty was to be, and the council was now about to be broken up when anew the throat of Monsieur Brisson of Rouen was croaking, “But I feel uneasy.... *Who* chose the chamber in which Lepsius is to be kept?”

“It was Captain Pertius,” said Monseigneur Piscari.

“And you have all inspected it?” asked Monsieur Brisson.

“Most of us,” remarked Monsieur de Courcy; “it is a good, good place, monsieur.”

“It may be good,” said Monsieur Brisson,” but is it the best? Oh, believe me, messieurs, in everything there is a bad, a good, a better, and a best, the best ever more grievous than the rest, but so greatly better than the better.”

“True,” murmured the Abbé Sauriau: “is it the best?”

“I propose that we search the château in a body first,” suggested Monsieur Brisson.

“I agree,” murmured Dr. Lepsius, and after some talk this was done. Monsieur le Duc de Rey-Drouilhet took with alacrity a blue candle from a candelabrum of ormolu, and with it led the procession, first up the tower’s stair to the chamber prepared for the prisoner’s sojourn, and then down and through almost the whole building, down to the vaults, up other towers, through crowds of halls and corridors, now with sounding footsteps, now with muffled, everyone chattering with some other in sets nonchalantly, Monsieur de Courcy and Monseigneur with their heads together before, and, behind, the Abbé Sauriau with the good bonhomme Brisson, whose right side, as along he stumped, stooped at every step of his right bow-leg.

He was giving the abbé a reason why he must needs leave Egmond that very evening, having come merely to attend the committee-meeting, when for the twentieth time he stopped to stare at a painting; and since he had already explained that he was then buying, he was left to pursue his hobby by the abbé, who did not observe that behind each of the pictures that Monsieur Brisson peered at he left a certain little object resembling a night-light; and behind one picture he left a vial and his handkerchief.

After all, it was found that the tower-chamber which Captain Pertius had chosen was the most eligible; and, everything at last arranged, the

committee separated to come among the ladies.

At this hour, with the moon in the clouds, and groups of ladies and their gallants moving round the grounds, and sounds of music in the *salons* and galleries, Egmond looked a stately and picturesque place. The Misses Vickery were strolling with Monsieur de Courcy along the brink of an oblong of water that stretched far-slumbering in bosage from the bottom of the terraces to a mosque of marble at its far end, when there came up to them Dr. Lepsius to take part in their walk; but presently a messenger from Monseigneur Piscari came to call Monsieur de Courcy, who with his lips just touched a finger-tip of his future-one with a great parade of grace, and went away; soon after which Miss Ruth, too, was called by another party of promenaders — a Schuré group, Fanny Schuré burnished in coloured fires like mother-of-pearl, with whom Miss Ruth stopped to gossip, the innocent with the guilty, Dr. Lepsius and Miss Eve meantime going on to the mosque.

And there, sitting alone in a casement, they two spoke some time in low tones, while more and more the moon imbued the night with the mood of her beauty and her quietude, and communed sleepily the lily-leaves of the pool. It was when they were getting up to go away that Dr. Lepsius said, “But I mustn’t trouble a bride with an old man’s sorrows — in three days’ time you will be a bride, and I rejoice in your choice, which I think a wise one.”

Miss Eve had risen, seeming in her white evening-dress, with whitest cheeks, even weird in that sheen, and she replied with a chuckle, “It was prophesied me that I should not be a bride for some time to come!”

“By my son?... Well, he has no little might in this lower world,” the old man murmured, “but have no fear, he is by no means omnipotent, and, as I have hinted, he is at this moment in extreme peril for his own skin.”

Sharply at this, with a haughty heave-up of her chin, Miss Eve asked, “Who could touch him?”

“Ah! it is dubious,” the old man said musingly, bending over his oak stick; “still — I believe — by many eyes, and by many hands, and by the *agreement* of many wits and wills of men and God, it shall be achieved!” and now he struck the stick sharply upon the *perron* of steps down which they were now passing to the path, Miss Eve laughing a little with a meaning that was hardly understood, saying, “And his father, if I am rightly informed, is with his enemies?”

“That is so,” said Dr. Lepsius with an inclination of his head, whereat she stopped walking to face him, asking, “With your eyes quite open, Dr. Lepsius?”

“Well, I hope so,” the doctor answered.

“You have thought, then, of what will certainly happen, if — after — I am married on Friday?”

Dr. Lepsius glanced up at her, having noted her tones go shaky, and on beholding her face bony with agitation, said with some astonishment, “No, what will happen?”

“Your son will *kill* himself.”

And while the doctor with an eye of Scare stared at her, she with a certain roistering and hilarity added, “And since royalty should have servants rejoicing to join in its voyages, *two* you may see, if not more, go to attend on his ghost.”

“Two — I do not quite—” the doctor stammered.

“I meant my poor father for one,” she sighed, continuing to walk.

But since her “kill himself” the doctor had but absently heard what was said, and “kill himself!” he cried suddenly, crimson with anger, “let him! let him! I will go to his funeral! For I’d sooner follow him to the tomb—”

“Now, Dr. Lepsius, a father ought not to be down on a son,” Miss Eve said, “though I know that he has been beastly to you.”

At this tears gushed to the old man’s eyes.” Oh, it isn’t that, dear Eve — it isn’t the bitter ingratitude, the bruise, the gash in here: but how shall I not be against him in what he undoubtedly aims to bring about, when the mouth of every gash which he gives our race will shout out in rage against me? You see, do you not — ?”

But now the old man, touched on the shoulder, looked about, and saw Monsieur Leflô, who had come down an *allée* in the leafage as a messenger of the Count de Courcy, seeking the doctor; so the doctor went off with Monsieur Leflô, while Miss Eve, spying Miss Ruth in a group ahead, moved to go to her; but suddenly became aware of a stump, stump, of one limping in an *allée*, and in some seconds was accosted with a murmur of the word, “Mademoiselle.”

It was Monsieur Brisson of Rouen.

And when Miss Eve looked at him without seeming to know him, he, though undoubtedly agitated, said with a coarse chuckle that she and he had been shoulder to shoulder at the Quai d’Orsay that evening when a particular individual had dared to take a liberty with her lips: at which thing Miss Eve stood like a queen who stands astonished at so much insolence under the sun, then silently went on her way.

But this Monsieur Brisson was not one who could be banished with a chin; he followed to breathe near Miss Eve’s ear, “I wish to speak to you of him, he may be here to-morrow, and I have a message...”

“Here?”

“Let us go down that *allée*.”

She hesitated, and he glanced like lightning at his watch. “ Only three minutes to be with you — come.”

Now she walked with him into the dark of the *allée*, looking down at the ground, like one magnetised, drawn with a cord.

“For what reason will he be here?” she breathed.

“On business.”

“You are to inform your master, monsieur,” she then said in a haughty manner, “if Monsieur Lepsius happens to be your master, that I know him to be in much danger, so that he should have a care.”

“Oh, trust in him!” said Monsieur Brisson imploringly, stumping along by her side with dippings of his right shoulder; “do you imagine that, loving you, he can miscarry? He feels that the breath of his love is vibrant enough by itself to heave mountains out of their beds, and bear them as bubbles to the sea.

Nor is his danger so much; it will be nothing, if you will consent to fly with me this instant.”

“This instant?” she whispered furtively: “to fly? Away? With you?... But what, then, am I? A beast, with a beast’s soul? Evil to the core? Reckless, furious, moon-struck? Is there no Christ for me on high, I wonder? No right? No wrong?”

“If you came,” said her companion with some bitterness, though touched by her trouble, “it would save much time; and you would come, if hypocrisy was not your breath and bread,” upon which she rushed into an irritation not to be restrained, crying, “That is monstrously untrue and unkind! I mean well !”

“Well,” he said, “I did not expect you to come with me, for I know you. But you have to show me the windows of your bed-chamber.”

Now she stopped walking, standing tall, gaunt, her heart galloping up in her gorge, asking, “Why my windows?”

“Oh, nothing: just show,” he muttered; and when she had stared a little while at him, she paced on in silence.

Presently she went down another *allée* which led them to the terraces at the front and south of the house, and hence went on to the brink of a lake which laved with its waters a platform of marble at the château-back. Not a soul was thereabouts, no sound, only the spirit of the moon brooding upon the face of the lake and down the solitude of avenues of yews; and here immediately Monsieur Brisson stooped to whip off that thick-soled boot of his, whipped off his frock-coat, wrapped his two boots, with his top-hat, his spectacles, and his waist-coat in the coat, and cast all into the water, where they sank; in doing which very hurriedly, he asked, M Well, which are your windows?”

She, with her back toward the house and toward him, her brow bent downward, replied to the ground in a proud guttural that trembled, “I am sure I do not know why such a question should be asked of me.

... My windows happen to be those two on the first floor immediately over the balcony-end near by the statue — since it seems that the knowledge is desired,”

The plash of the coat with its weight sounded now in the lake, and “Monsieur Brisson,” that bow of his right leg quite gone, stood now limber on his bare feet, his elbow suddenly about Miss Eve’s waist: whereat she, feeling his lips stealing near her face, went fearfully pale; nearer, and she shivered with sickness; nearer, and she sucked in her breath as at luscious juice and shooting pangs, sighed “By heaven,” and had his lips.

He put her to lie on a bench of marble by the waterside, whence she through her half-shut eyelids watched him run away with a deer’s ease up an avenue of the park, and disappear in darkness.

Some way down that avenue was a summer-house in a bower, and there the runner stopped his career some seconds to conceal beneath the seat some sheets of paper, a piece of pencil, and two tiny tools of steel like keys, then shot on. And it was there that at 6 p.m. the next day' as Lepsius was driving from St. Briec station to the château in a carriage of Monseigneur Piscari, the carriage stopped, and was at once surrounded by a crowd of *pioupious* and others. When he demanded of them what was the matter, they answered that he was a captive, and Captain Pertius, who was with them, then proceeded, with a perfectly ashen visage and hands which shivered like leaves, to search each nook of Lepsius' costume, even his shoes, searching especially for a certain little key, which, however, was not to be found. Lepsius' trunk was sent on to the house, and everything taken from him. "Oh, let one have his watch," he protested, but without effect. However, by an act one might say infinite in deftness, he contrived as he was being hustled down out of the carriage to snatch behind him the watch of Shan Healy who attended him, and was not seen. He was then imprisoned in the summer-house with a sentry of some ten mounted upon him; and in there, having taken the paper and pencil from their place of concealment beneath the seat, he threw himself, face down, on the seat, and in a brown light began to draw diagrams.

On the day commencing to dim, he took out his collar-stud, touched it, and it shed round his sheets an electric sheen.

Soon after two in the morning he was removed to the room fitted out for him in the tower; the same hour the members of the League being met in council to congratulate each other and resolve on the next measures.

But early the next day their joys suffered much alloy through the turning up at the château of a certain Monsieur Brisson of Rouen, who had no resemblance to that first Monsieur Brisson of the conference! this new

Brisson having the story to tell that, on going to a bogus business interview in Rouen, he had been imprisoned in a room by a gang of men, his papers grabbed, and he made to write a letter to his family saying that he was safe, and in Amiens on affairs. Only after four and forty hours had he been set free. So now the problem arose — *who* could have been that Brisson-of-the-limp who had attended the conference?

Lepsius, however, was there in the tower, safe enough, which was everything.... It was an eight-cornered chamber where he was, arranged with some little luxury, and large; but he suffered, being unaccustomed to be between walls, and here was but one window, with bars in it, while, as to the lush carpet, the eye of his consciousness was at every moment open to the microbic hordes that must be at barracks within it, nor could he bathe with ease, he who bathed frequently each day, nor was the food such as was usual with him, being much too luscious.

This was first served to him by a person who had a beard and appeared to be a man, but was not so loosely costumed but that certain curves of the womanly could be observed in him — or her. On seeing her when she bore in his breakfast, Lepsius moaned, and flew to the other extremity of the chamber, where he held a chair-back, ready if she attacked; but when she had put down the breakfast without glancing at him, and had gone, his brow reddened, and having begged one of four guards for pen and ink, he wrote to Monseigneur Piscari, asking whether monseigneur was privy to the fact that one Jeanne Auvache, a convict with a mania, who had been aided by his, Lepsius', enemies, to evade prison, had been sent to attend upon him. He received no answer to this, but the woman ceased to appear at meals.

It was a superb day — the third of July — and by springing up to his little window-ledge, and hanging on, as he twice did, he could see groups of elegant folk moving remotely over the terraces or gossiping in retreats of

greenery, appearing pigmy far down below all that half-globe of sky and tabernacle-hall of cloud, like spirits idling in paradise; and once he was able to make out the face of Mr. Vickery, and once knew Miss Ruth, but of that form that his eyes sought saw no sign.

Most of the day he spent on his face on his table over plans of buildings and machines, which he concealed when the meals came in at one o'clock and at seven in the evening — for it was not suspected that he had any pencil and paper; and when the meals — none of which he touched — had been cleared away, he bathed at a basin of delf ware that stood on a tripod of iron under the window. This window looked toward the west, though the tower itself formed the south-east corner of the château, which looked eastward. So as the afternoon's heat waxed fierce in the room, he drew down his blind of dimity, and now continued his labour cooler in a cave of shade which the blind's maroon colour imbrued with a blush of ruby; but when the sun had well declined, he anew drew up the blind, sprang up to the window, and, like a monkey peering keenly into something never previously seen among its trees, clung on long to peer into the scene of the sunset — a sight rather high and tragic really for the heart of a man, the sun going down all among bars of crimson, the brow of God drooped, disgroried, His arms far outcast in gory crucifixion. Then the door opened and the meal of the evening came in, to be immediately taken away untasted; and now with feet of impatience, frowning, the prisoner paced about the chamber. No light was brought him when it became dark, for his jailers, having an apprehension that he might turn objects to unusual uses, took care that as few objects as might be should be in the chamber, not even a knife having been taken him with the meals. But by the aid of an electric stud, he spent some time in prying into the make of the lock of the door, though he had already looked into it two nights before, after the conference,

in his rôle of “Monsieur Brisson”: which done, near eight o’clock, shunning the bed with its bed-clothes, he chose a part of the floor where no carpet was, cast a look at Shan Healy’s watch, and went to sleep there.

He knew (having been at the council), that at the hour of two he was to be roused to go on board a brig, bound for the bastille on the Ile de Bas; so he had commanded Shan Healy to conceal himself in the château and come to the prison-door exactly at 1.50, so as to help Lepsius to carry a load which Lepsius conceived that he would have need to carry. Ten minutes, then, before that 1.50, at a moment when preparations were being made in the château below to take him to the ship, Lepsius awoke to act. He was still at the lock of the door with the two little tools that he had hidden in the summer-house before his capture, when howls of “Help! help!” broke out without the door, and he was made aware that Shan Healy must be engaged in a struggle with the greenhorn *pioupiou* on guard out there; but the *pioupiou*’s howls were at once drowned in the sound of a disturbance resembling the bursting of some tremendous drum somewhere, which just then made the château to tremble through its breadth and length; and before that roaring was well over, Shan, who had felled the *pioupiou* with the *pioupiou*’s lantern, broke blithely with the lantern-light into the room, the lock of whose door had at that moment opened to the key of Lepsius.

But the poor fellow’s blitheness had no long life. He did not enter the chamber alone — at least, scarcely less closely than a shadow follows did the feet of a female follow him in. No word had yet been uttered between Shan Healy and Lepsius, and Lepsius was just going to call out “Come!” (in a din now as dreadful as all the guns of Armageddon mouthing, the house racking its frame to fragments, the ground quaking) when he changed his “Come” into a shout of “Out with the light!” at the same moment bolting to the other side of the chamber. But either Healy did not hear, or stood in a

condition of mind too flurried for sprightly action (for he, too, had spied the woman as she had slammed the door after her); at all events, nothing was done as to the light, and Lepsius, as he pelted, moaned, the ogress after him, staring, her hair cut close, ugly, ghostly, grim as the very grave. “Shoot!” shrieked the fugitive to Healy, who, too, was in hot pursuit; but, even assuming that Healy was able to hear in the blare of that tumult, he must have perceived that he lacked the time to fire — unless, indeed, he was quite wondrously quick — because at that moment the woman’s arm was drawn back to throw her liquid; he saw it; did not see that by this time Lepsius was safe, having a chair with which to hide his face; and as the fluid was starting from the vial, wildly Healy flew between, receiving the bath of vitriol all over his right cheek and throat.

He could not help shrieking...!

“Idiot!” hissed Lepsius, who, as he now darted away, caught a weapon out of Shan’s pocket, sent with one glance backward and a nervous gurgle of chuckling a bullet into the woman’s bosom, which, however, chanced not to end her, and was out and away.

Right through the howling hell of the house from east to west he had now to hie: and fleet were his feet and alight his eye. Twice only he stopped a moment, once when, in pelting up a stair, he met flying down in a nightgown a girl whom with his lowered head he felled by butting her, knowing that if she descended she would be butchered; and a second time he stopped in a corridor to take the vial and handkerchief which as “Monsieur Brisson” he had placed there behind a painting. No want of light anywhere: for at various places the building was already in flames, which flames, serving as flambeaux, reddened the chambers where no flame burned; but as he spurted onward with his vial, the flooring violently sprang beneath his feet, and he was thrown against a wall, where he remained

rather aghast some moments, until smoke in his throat caused him to cough, and anew he flew, though at one point forced to win his way with toil and patience over floorless joists. And afresh every forty seconds or so all the house started at a sound which opened its mouth to appal the heart and astound the darkness with the message of its solemnity, after each of which deepmouthed sounds count one second's pause and waiting, and now came downfalls crackling, like the brittle outbreaks of arrays of rifles prattling: for the bombs resembling night-lights that "Monsieur Brisson" had left behind statues, etc., had been timed to fuse, not in a mass, but one by one; and though he had so placed them in the below-stairs as not much to imperil the lives of the château slumberers, they were many, and were meant by him thoroughly to wreck the structure wherein men in their vanity had ventured to hem him. Anon he was aware of fugitives, single or in groups, staring, conscious of sin and of doomsday come: the Due de Rey-Drouilhet, all toothless now, his nightshirt aflaunt, flying down a curving stair, calling out upon the rocks and hills to cover him; then the stout Abbé Sauriau clambering over a mound of débris, his trousers unbraced; then through the fumes that rolled all round a courtyard Miss Ruth Vickery in a dressing-gown on a gallery, dragging her father faster than he could go, Monsieur de Courcy, too, with them, Lepsius himself then flying along a lower gallery on the opposite side of the court; and as they were going west — to see to Miss Eve, he guessed — and were well ahead of him, never did his feet so fleetly speed. The delay of some seconds occasioned by the invasion of his chamber by Jeanne Auvache had disturbed the course of events as forecasted by him, and he had hardly burst into his darling's apartments and turned the outer key, when her father's poundings were sounding at the panels without.

Erect on her bare soles in an alcove, robed in a bedroom-robe of lace, a stone stone-still, her hair a rope plaited to a bow of ribbon at her knees, Miss Eve stood, waiting, aware of his tumults, but beauteously dead, as one who has interviewed the stare of Medusa; and all in a tick, like a cat fawning, Lepsius was cast at her feet, kissing them, pleading, “Dear, will you come with me?”

Her friends were pressingly clamouring at the entrance; they screamed, “*Eve!*”

She took no notice of them, if she heard; as to Lepsius, she hurled up her right hand to Strike him dead, crying, “You brute!”

“Oh, do — for us two — beloved—”

“I bitterly hate and abhor the pair of us!”

“But you will get us both killed—”

“Thank God!”

Now he started up, an arm about her. “I have to make you faint,” his handkerchief at her face; and like fate she took it, did not fight, or very slightly, resigned herself, smiled, sighed, closed her eyes... and in some moments, by means of a sheet, he had reached the platform of marble thirty feet beneath, heard through the turmoil in his rear the noise of guns booming before — a signal from his yacht in the bay — leapt the balusters with his burden into the lake-waters, waded, swam a bit, obliquely north-westward, reached the lake’s bank, and there among reeds and bulrushes sat down to breathe and rest, her brow on his breast.

Southward, a smoke that soared to the clouds was being poured out steadily from the château, which ever throed inwardly with loud-bursting noises and sounds of rumbling like poisoned bowels and Etna boiling; and that plume of fume-and-fire slanted continually from point to point of the compass, for a wind boisterously blew, drizzle sprayed the face, and the

moon, while suffusing the night wildly with the whiteness of her light, was herself quite hidden away out of sight in cloud.

Lepsius was soon up and gone again with his load, knowing that pursuit would not be slow: but it was a great labour; the country there is rugged; Miss Eve, drugged, could not, or would not, keep on her feet; Healy, with whose help the load would have been easy, moaned in his agonies somewhere; and the bay lay nearly a league away.

However, half-way to the shore he found waiting in a gorge where the gloom was gross under crags the Hindoo Nundcumar, together with four of his mariners, their eyes raised to the inflamed sky; nor was it long before a little half-harbour snoring in sleep between the arms of beetling crags, a brig's green and crimson beams, a steam-yacht's three beams, lay before them, and near a little pier of stone the men of two boats who lay on their oars for him, one a boat of his foes, one his own; and flushing the vault of heaven, even here, a false dawn flung far abroad from the château, and over the shore the breakers making their snoring, Miss Eve's feet bleeding, and streamlets of drizzle-spray in haste on her face.

They lodged her, still unconscious (as it seemed), among cushions, and plied to the ship, which, lying with steam at a moment's notice, immediately steamed away, turning toward the west: and rushing she went, urgently churning the sea — a long boat burnished with Tobin-bronze, burning the eye like a strip of the sun; and as the dawn worked and began gradually to overspread all the world of waters and of coast, Lepsius, prying apert on the stern, spied like pearl the pinnacles of Serapis.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT SERAPIS.



LEPSIUS, TO THE amazement of men, remained at Serapis for weeks, to the very eve of the Exhibition, though he quickly established a system of posts and telephones with Monsieur Schuré and other men of importance: as to which the Hindoo, Nundcumar, remarked to Shan Healy, "It is a piece of slackness, this; once he would not have done this: but when a woman comes in, great minds begin to go rotten, and look a little ahead, my sonnies, and you will see their catastrophe head-over-heels."

It was then the turn of the Hindoo with his burned nose to drone by the bedside of Healy; and Healy, who had conceived a fever from his vitriol-dose, said with a moan, "Won't she let him see her yet?" Nundcumar wagged his head meaningly-meaninglessly, going, "Not she: true-blue British and Ai, a queen of queens I keeps him dewrithing in the deepest depths of hell! That morning when she landed, he thought he had her, my sonnies; but, if he is artful, she is a bit artfuller still: peeped through the rose-curtains of her palankeen, smiling with him like any dancing-girl, gabbing and gossiping with him about Serapis, and how he built it; then when she was in and saw Serapis, and what it is, her nostrils spread a bit, her breath stops a bit; but by the time he had got her into the west ivory seraglio, and gave her to know that that was to be her special palace, she had come to herself again, looking as compleased as Sir Punch himself, smiling with him, and he with her, and she with him, all very fine and large;

so she halts before one of the bashi-bazouks guarding a hall, gaping at his get-up, his thises and his thats, his whys and his wherefores, makes him draw his sword to show her, all marquetry of little gems and gold, his dagger, all marquetry of little seed-gems, a real pleasure, delight and comfort to man's ophthalmoscotics; and, says she, 'How pretty, Lepsius!' she says, drawing the dagger out of the guard's paws; 'oh, I mean to keep this; may I?' So Mr. High and Mr. Mighty he looks at her quick, then lowers his eyes, and at last he mutters, 'Yes,' reluctantly. Then she begs him to go, as she has a migraine-ache, so he hands her over to her ladies, and goes; and the moment he is gone she squats to pen him a note: and what do you suppose was in it?"

Shan Healy tossed for ease, moaning. "Anybody can easy enough guess out what was in it; but how the deuce do *you* know?"

"I know and I know," said the Hindoo with a moving head, "and what I do not know is what man knoweth not, for that which is is shown unto me. And in the note, word for word, she says, 'Lepsius, I admit myself your prisoner here in Serapis. You understand though, I think, knowing me armed, that I instantly die if yon venture to enter anew any part of my palace; test me, I woo you, to see whether I mean it or not. — EVE.' That was her scribble, my sonnies, and the wording and reverbosity of her constructing."

Healy opened and closed anew his sick eyes to reply, "*If* it's true."

"What, don't you suppose I ever let slip something that's true, for form's sake, in the hey-day and prime of life?" prated the utterly senseless ape-tongue of the Hindoo that ambled blandly in a monotone along, with the obscurest meanings anon, if meaning it had. "So he ain't seen her since?" Healy asked.

“He has seen her every day, though she little thinks it! for she is artful, but he is artfuller still—”

“Old gas-bag,” Healy moaned,” you said just now that *he* is artful, but *she* is artfuller still.”

“Both are artfuller than each one, my chum Healy,” Nundcumar said: “*he* is artfuller than she because he is of the guiley ones and artful dodges, the beguilers and the wilers, and *she* is artfuller than he because she is a woman, and the guilt of womanhood is in the juice of her gall-bladder. But he sees her when she little believes it: his eyes have their peep-holes and their spy-places to weigh her and dwell upon her when she’s wantoning on the water with her poet and her ladies, or when she is walking under the arcade of the courtyard gazing at the gauderies and the graces of her Persian and Delhi girls dancing with their carcanets of pearl in the moonshine: for she grows every day more luxuriatingous, which is the curse of Serapis for everyone who enters it, from the lord of all to the low-cast coolie who polishes the porphyries; and in these three weeks she has grown into a regular begum-queen, true-blue old England as she is, and if he only waits a bit, he will get and win her, be certain — that is, if she does not flirt off abscond and run away first with the young poet Pershorez—”

At this the sick man looked at Nundcumar to sigh,” Oh, you scandalous tongue — if I only had the Strength —

“Why, my friend Healy,” said Nundcumar, “have your ears not heard how she pets her little Pershorez? Cannot stir without him near her! Feeds him with sweetmeats, conserve of roses, orange-honey of Kauzeroon, and all delights, almond-patés, and amusements! her eyes musing on his eyes all an afternoon in that small hall of red andem-wood, while he recites to her from Hafez and Ferdousi, sir-poets of Persia whom she cannot understand a word, though she can well understand the face of Pershorez, my sonnies,

which is only made of cream of gazelle-milk and rose-leaves fading, and his little figure more perfect in grace, symmetry, curves, and very hungriness of perfecting than Thammuz, the love-god that Syrian girls go thin for fancy of, and sigh for very hungriness of delight, and die of. And that other one, the lord of all, he knows, he knows, of this, because Barova, the little Arab slave-maid, who is thin, faint and gaunt for love of lord Lepsius, she pushed her way one night right into his private hall in the north palace, and told out of her mistress, how the grossness of the sap of womanly hungriness grows wanton in the arteries of her gall for Pershorez; and first he could not grasp what the girl wished to say to him, but then for very anguish of jealousy he cast back his head-piece and laughed wild—”

“Laughed for fun,” sighed Healy— “if any of it is true.”

“For fun, may be, and may be not for fun,” the Hindoo said with a moving head: “though not much fun in Serapis going on these days. Wait, wait: for that’s bad, Healy, when the evil eye is cast upon a man, and the villain woman with the vitriol is not yet dead, for first it was poor old-boy Nundcumar on his oil-factory nose, and then it was you, poor boy, and the third time it will be — another one of the ones. That’s bad, that’s had. And the seeds of disease spring and spread in Serapis; he loses hours now in peeping and dreaming and brooding about her — loose! looser every day; and when the woman comes in greatness goes out and out, for the race of man would be a crowd of gods, but the presence of woman relaxes his screw and corrupts his entrails. Peeping, dreaming, like any Pershorez poet! and his Exhibition that is all the talk coming so near! Several times he has passed hours hanging about her: once stood guard disguised as a mamaluke under that cupola of enamels of her outer hall to see her pass close; and he has fanned her face disguised as a slave-girl, where she sat listening among her cushions to her Persian girls singing to the vina, with the zels clashing

aloud, and the kanoon-lutes making music and all sorts of sounds, alarms, loudness and howdedo of melody; and he has come to embalm her musk-baths, attended her bathing, painted her nails with henna, and she with her weapon none the wiser—”

The sick fellow whined at this, sighing, “Pity you’re quite so vile an old liar, after all.”

“Who — me?” said the Hindoo, a finger at his breast: “why, some of it is true, my friend Healy, as the four and fourteen gospels! And how about the letters that go between them, have you not heard of this? For every day he writes her three-four times, and every morning that dawns she writes him a line, though for two weeks she would not, but when he raged, prayed, raved, consought and implored her with so much squalling, pain, despair and foaming, she said at last that she would write him one line every morning, giving him a puzzle-problem to solve, since he is so witty, wise and witful in all wiles and witticisms, and if ever once he failed wittily to answer her, he must agree to let her go from her prison in Serapis to her parent, who is sick to death for lack of her, though Sir Lepsius sends her daily the report that her parent is in health and roarious spirits. So every morning that dawns her note goes as regular as the milk-carts and the market-gardeners all the way through from the west to the north of Serapis, wrapt in satin in her poet’s hand; and one day the lady has written, ‘Lepsius, tell me to-day if the spirits of men live ever and ever. — EVE ‘; and one day she has written ‘Lepsius, write me to-day (with a why) which wild-rose is sweeter and wilder: those all white on the weald, or those which are washed as with shame. — EVE’; and one day she has written, ‘Lepsius, tell me to-day how the heavens and star-dust were formed out of nothing. — EVE’; and he to her writes the most fantasticalest, whimsiest, witticismest answers, replies and respondencies, as she has shown them to her old

Nundcumar when she sits listening with delight to my tales, faries, frivols, and other lip-froth; and as to that of the forming of the heavens and star-dust, he wrote her that, once upon a time of the times, One Who Is, wishing to compose an oratorio of music, brewed oceans of ink in a bowl of gold, and, holding in hand a pen of gold, began to compose and throw off the notes of his oratorio; but soon, when the beauty of the music stressed and throed in his soul, so that he pressed well upon the pen, the pen splintered, and the ink spattered, blotching with spots and splashes all the blackness of the vault: so One Who Is roamed more remotely into the womb of gloom to compose some more glorious oratorio. So they toy and coy, and bill and coo together, my sonnies; but wait — let him go on: the seeds of disease spring and spread in Serapis, say I; he gets slacker and taxer with his idol-lady; wantonness and riot is growing among some of the scum of the domestics; many of the men, and their commanders, too, are grumbling with discontent because of regulatings and strictness; that villain woman—”

Here, however, the entrance of a sister-of-mercy, Healy’s nurse, whose frown the Hindoo knew, interrupted and drove him out; immediately whereupon Healy begged to be permitted to pen a note, and on gaining the battle, wrote as follows: “Master Hanni, I beg to be forgiven for writing to you, but as I do not much fancy now that I shall ever be getting up out of this again, that’s why I take this liberty, which is to say that I wish to God, Master Hanni, you would get that dog of a Hindoo Nundcumar from being near about you, for he means you no good, I doubt, and under the ridiculousness of a parrot this man hides ten times the craftiness of a fox. Dear Master Hanni, you may not be aware that thirteen years since Nundcumar was two years in Wormwood Scrubbs Prison, near by London, for stealing two bicycles. And, Master Hanni, that you may never cease to remember with any breath you breathe that Jeanne Auvache remains alive is

the dying prayer of yours till death, Shan Healy. I'd give fifteen years, if I had fifteen days, to lay my eyes on your face once again for one moment on this side, but that may be a bit more than I can expect of you: and, if not, good-bye to you."

A little slave of Healy's was at once sent out with this letter, which two hours later reached the hand of Lepsius in the north-east regions of Serapis, where he lay in a diwan-i-am, or hall of audience; and his glance having lassoed in one swoop the significance of the note, he threw it among other notes into an alcove of the throne in which he lay, saying to a gentleman (a commissaire) who sat with him, "No, Monsieur Hugonnet, you have my assurance: she is not in Serapis; she perished in the collapse of Egmond."

"Not so, monsieur, I think," said Monsieur Hugonnet, a big bureaucrat, who ever struck the wind with his eye-glass in his fingers: "that theory is no longer tenable, for it is now established that some shreds of her body must have been found. Moreover, you do not forget the crew of the brig's boat who saw a lady carried into your boat?"

"It was another lady," replied Lepsius, smiling, "as ten days ago I gave myself the pains to prove to Monsieur Leflô and Lord Rawlinson."

"Monsieur, I admit it," the commissary replied: "you have conclusively proved that Miss Vickery is made of air; this, nevertheless, seems a matter in which frankness, reasonableness and right feeling might well be invoked on both sides. Think, monsieur — the lady's father lies half dead of it; and the English Government, I give you my word, monsieur, grows every day more earnest, more urgent—" at which Lepsius, jumping up with a rather reddened brow, went walking about a hall all pillars of marble, between which stretched screens of perforated marble and filigrees of gold, screens low enough for one to overgaze, away below, the crags of the Brittany

coast, and, away beyond these, a streak of sea, indigo corruscated with snow-glints under the sun's glare.

“*Let* the English Government grow urgent,” Lepsius, returning to Monsieur Hugonnet, suddenly said: “what then? What would you and it have? Have I not allowed your troops to enter and ransack every crack of Serapis? Have you found Miss Vickery? No. So, then, she is not here? Nor is she made of air, monsieur, believe me, but of flesh and blood, and her palms, if you palpate them, will be warmer to you than the bark of the maple. So, why have you not found her? And how much more of my time shall I have to lavish on this matter?”

“Serapis is not so much a palace as a town—” the commissary commenced to say.

“Still, you have searched it throughout!”

“Let us search it again, monsieur, for certainty's sake!”

“Again? And when?”

“Say to-morrow, will you?”

“Well, it is ridiculous; still—”

“Scribble me a pass, monsieur!”

Lepsius scribbled a pass for the following day, and the commissary went away.

As for Lepsius, he had no fear of the legal visit, since his reason for giving Miss Eve her (west) palace was that in it were rooms so curiously and astutely concealed, that no keenest wit could suspect them; and on the previous visit of the police Miss Eve was easily induced on some excuse to step, unsuspecting, into one of these. So Lepsius smiled, as he once more stepped up to recline in his kind of throne, little thinking that that commissary was more cunning than he looked.

He was about to sound for the following interview, but instead put out his hand to Healy's letter: did not, however, lift it; but, his hand on it, reflected a little; then sprang up, and ran out, down the length of three corridors, across a hanging gallery, guards making him salaam, down a stair, along a lake, south-westward always, knowing his way without fail, slaves and dignitaries, going on their various duties, standing agape, saluting his tunic's glare, his turban's egret of heron's feathers aburn with seed-pearl, and up a curved stairway to a certain curtain: and Healy's Ursuline nurse stood up amazed to see him peer in, and wished to wake Healy, who lay breathing strangely in sleep; but Lepsius restrained her.

Lepsius stood about two minutes, looking down at that rash on the sick brow, the bandages on the breached cheek; took up, looked at, smelled two of the medicine bottles; took up and held the sick hand; and, holding it, gazed out with a brow of trouble through a great window which was hollowed out in Moorish ogives, out into a court where the whiteness of a minaret in the midst of a lake was reflected far down in the water, with zephyrs flirting along the water's surface: an afternoon in July in which all that Brittany country slumbrously basked, and bumblebees, as air-boats trading, tromboned a moment, as through steamboat throttles, their boom of music across the ear-drum dreamily, and cruised to some other ear. Somehow Lepsius sighed. And whispering the sister, "Tell him that I came," he went away in haste.

But he had hardly passed beyond the door's hanging, when a French functionary with a wild and white face, wringing his hands together, raced to him with the hiss, "My God, monsieur, all is lost! Monsieur Hugonnet has gained admission with a squad of gendarmes, and is now searching Miss Vickery's house!"

Quickly Lepsius' eyes stirred from side to side. What had happened he saw: Hugonnet, aiming to take Lepsius by surprise (as he did!) had adventured to present to the guards at the great gates the pass intended for the morrow, and they had not noticed the date; nor was there any possibility of inducing Miss Eve at a moment's notice to move into one of the secret rooms, nor any possibility of checking the officers in their search, nor any possibility of keeping her a prisoner in Serapis, if she was once seen, nor any possibility of living without keeping her....

Lepsius flew....

Not toward the west palace, but back toward his own north, and not the way he had come, but as the bird flies, one eye on the watch on his palm, one on the way he went, once swinging over a wall, once swimming an oval of water, trampling flower-beds, routing men, making one bound of stairs, while the fowls of the air cried out their affright at his flight; and now like whirlwind his fingers were scattering among masses of trinkets and things in a certain mahogany, he groaning in his soul; got what he wanted; and now was gone again, going straight as the bird goes, west and south, swinging, swimming, bounding, and now at last was in the south-west house.

Standing within a doorway under a dome, he heard above-stairs the sound of the troop; and stealing in a tick up sixty steps on the belly, his wet streaming on the alabaster, he spied the troop, who, he saw with spite, were just moving from one of his secret rooms, proving treachery in Serapis. And on they went, Monsieur Hugonnet and ten gallants in gaudy garments with swords, walking with a swagger between two white walls with lines of doorways in them that seemed without any end, he hiding behind, wriggling with eagerness as a tigress wriggles about to spring, hearing now a sound as of the harp far off (which, however, the gendarmes seemed not to hear), and

aware now where Miss Eve was. So the moment that the commissaire, examining a plan in his hand, went into a doorway with his men, Lepsius sped on to slip ahead of them, but before he could get to the door heard the sound of the searchers coming out again, a glance having shown them that no one was in there: and he had to shy into a side-corridor on the right. And now on a sudden the sound of the strings of an instrument struck to the ears of the seekers, too; they looked alive; “Come on!” cried the commissaire, and on they stepped. Now Lepsius sped ten-footed to the right down the length of his side-corridor, turned at its end down a second corridor, turned left down a third, and in this last spurted through door-curtains into a room, before ever the troop had attained the bottom of their corridor — a room of monstrous circumference, domed with moresque-work in gold, and, though looking a ghost of marble, cool, too, and balmy, its circle of rose-curtains being all closed, embarring a grotto of umbrage within, which was pregnant with fragrances of frankincense burning in urns and cassolets. Two fountains wheeled about its centre, between these in the wilderness of floor being one flush of colour and odour of woman, cushions, stuffs, rugs, for snugly grouped there lay an oasis of ladies making music, Miss Eve seated in their midst, cuddling a gazelle which lay chewing the sugar of its cud with lids of indolence. All at once she was up, tall! a weapon started out of her breast, yes, and was brought down, and would have been driven to her heart, if the feet of Lepsius had been by one whisp less fleet, or his eye less wise. He had her in his arms, the ataghan-dagger cast far, she struggling against a handkerchief which he held on her face, with stifled cries of “Let me go! Lepsius, let me go!” He, however, clearly hearing now the near-coming of the steps in the corridor, pressed heavily, had her senseless, laid her down on the yatag (ground-bed) where she had been sitting, and drew to her chin a coverlet over her. At that moment the troop stood at the door,

and, had the music not ceased on his entrance, Lepsius, however speedy-handed, could not have succeeded; he had counted, however, upon the music ceasing: and during the seconds that the troop remained out there in a state of hesitation as to which was the chamber of the music, his raging hands had her face brown with some ulmin or umber-stain, had his turban bound about her brows, her mouth, cheeks, submerged beneath a snow of beard. “Say ‘sh-h-h’ if one enters,” he whispered, “fan her,” and he vanished.

Some seconds later Monsieur Hugonnet and his troop rapped, came in, inspected the group of Oriental maids, the poet (lone male among women) with his lute, the gazelle, and the old Ulema, Imam or Cadi taking siesta on the yatag in his turban, softly fanned by his girls. The gendarmes cast glances at the group of girls — could hardly be got to move on; but presently searched through the hall, and spent the rest of the day in searching Serapis in vain.

Nor did Monsieur Hugonnet go out as he came in. In passing down a stair in the north palace, he and several of his men slipped down it, three spraining their legs; in one place he got an electric stroke; and in his going out of Serapis a grate gave way under him — a grate that had sustained all his men — nor was it without difficulty that he was raised up, half-drowned in filth, out of a drain.

Thus ended the final attempt of the two Governments to find the prisoner in Serapis. But no sooner did the Governments begin to give up than her sister, Miss Ruth, said, “*I will find her*”: and two days after that failure of the police, late in the evening, Lepsius received a request to admit Miss Vickery, for no one was admitted into Serapis unless permitted; and he at once sent for her.

“Alone?” said he, with his elbows laid on a table to stare at her paled face upon which a lamp shone, she seated with her luggage (a hand-bag) at her feet, a pretty sprig in her hat, for she liked little fineries and vanities, provided they were very cheap.

“Yes,” she replied to him, “quite alone.”

“You have come to see — Serapis?”

“Why, what a question — for Eve!”

“If I had Eve, do you imagine that I should give her to you?”

“I am even sure that you will, if I beg you.”

“Beg me, and see.”

“You admit, then, that you have her.... Tell me whether she is well!”

“No, she is not in Serapis. I fancy I know where she might be traced, but she is not in Serapis.”

“Oh, fie, you tell lies; why, I have seen her here.”

“You?”

“Yes, three afternoons ago, in a dream. I hardly ever go to sleep in the day-time, but somehow that afternoon about two sleep overpowered me, and Eve lay before my feet. She lay asleep, and she was an old man with a beard somehow, and yet she was Eve, and a goat with its forelegs doubled underneath it fed by her feet, and it was here in Serapis, I knew very well, in a room with a dome over it.”

Lepsius, staring at her, remained dumb.

“So you see,” she remarked with an underlook, “there are more kingdoms than you have visited.”

“Myriads more,” he mumbled.

Now all of a sudden she brought down her fist masterfully upon the table, bending forward. “Let me take her back to her poor papa!” whereat he laughed with a sort of wrath, crying, “I! I have her for ever and ever!”

“Have you married her, may I ask?”

He, his gaze on the table, mumbled, “If I even *go* near her, she raises a dagger to pierce her bosom.”

“Good old Eve,” breathed Miss Ruth, staring in surprise; but added immediately with veiled eyes, to soothe the agonies which she guessed, “that is not because she loves anyone less, but because she loves God more.”

“You are an unintelligible family,” he remarked with half a shrug.

“Oh, but well-meaning, I think, well-wishing,” she said. “Anyway, if — since — she may not come with me, I will stay with her.”

“No; if you stay, you stay a captive; and, if I allow you to, I thereby avow that Eve is here.”

“No one will know but my papa, who promises you, if you will let me be with her, never to tell anyone.”

“So, then,” asked Lepsius, “you imagine me sufficiently childish to rely upon your father’s promise?”

“You do not? Really? How curious! Well, I undertake, then—”

“Your undertaking is without weight. Moreover, you once before broke a promise that you made me.”

“When?”

“At The Towers, as to betraying my presence to Dr. Lepsius....”

“Oh, but if one meant well! Look, now, into one’s eyes....”

She looked into his, and he into hers, which had water and all her heart in them — ten seconds, twenty, thirty — until his dropped at her purity, with a murmur of the word “sweet” on his lips.

Then he said, “But you are all against me; you would be speaking against me to Eve.”

“Well, then, I will undertake never again to do that.”

“That is not enough; I say no, unless you will undertake to woo her in my favour.”

“Now, how can I? Is she not affianced to — ?”

“How laughable!” shouted Lepsius: “she shrieks with laughter at the mere thought of such a farce! De Courcy is a gnat, a limpet in a hag of peat-water! And since you, meaning well, could break your promise made to me, why may not Eve, meaning well, break her promise made to this ape-man?”

“Oh, I,” Miss Ruth replied with her touch of flippancy, “I’d crash through a promise like piecrust any day, if I saw fit, for I think that a Christian is set free from rules, and in the pure every crime is pure. My sister, however, regards herself as more bound by laws and modes, and as to departing from a promise once given, it has always been her way, I know, to regard that as rather a ghastly business. But suppose that somehow the fact of her espousal could be overcome, how can I ever possibly cry back to your cause, knowing that you are not a Christian?” Lepsius smiled. “If that be all, regard the knot of Gordium as cut: I become a Christian this night.”

“How will you—’ this night’?”

“Isn’t there something about being plunged into holy water?”

“To be plunged into holy water is hardly to be a Christian, I think.”

“What, then, is?”

“To wish well to the world, I think; to live to serve it; to stand piously alert to suffer and die for it” — with down-turned lids she uttered this, and, as he heard it, his brow twitched once; then bringing his mouth down to the table, he mumbled, as it seemed, to nobody, “A lady here to be led away west,” and as a guard in gauds appeared, he remarked to Miss Ruth, “You will hardly be able to persuade me that you are a thinker, you know; but I am persuaded that you are in some way the sweetest of sisters and girls, and a prisoner whom Serapis will not readily let go.”

“Have I won, then? Am I about to see her?” — Miss Ruth bounded upright— “oh, but you are pretty good, after all, and I shall never, never forget you whenever I lift my eyes to the hills of God.... How is she? How far is it? May I go now?”... Lepsius was whispering to the guard, who soon afterwards turned to Miss Ruth, and it was in quite a gush of girlish flutter and flightiness of glee that she went with her guide’s steps, inclined to prattle, crying anon, “Why, Serapis is all like a white metropolis swimming on water!” — for all the lights of Serapis had by this time been lit, and beamed star-wise far and near in myriads, as it seemed — white, crimson, green — streaming on negro waters that gleamed like steel, so that it all seemed of the drama of some teeming dream. But when at last they came to the west-end, it was only to be told that the lady of the place was away on the west lake with her playmates; and making their way to this with haste and impatience through alleys and courts, an increasing roar now sounding in their ears, the pair of seekers stood on the lake’s shore and shouted. During some moments, however, Miss Ruth screamed “Eve!” without result, inasmuch as the gondola of gold-moresque in which Miss Eve rowed was close under the gross roar of a cataract that rolled with a hoary angriness, Niagara-like, over crags near a hundred feet deep at one end of the parallelogram of water that made the lake — a lake surrounded with towering house-walls and crags. But soon Miss Ruth was seen from the boat, Miss Eve screamed, and before many moments the sisters were breast to breast, uttering breathless syllables, broken with kisses.

“But — let one look at you!” — and when Miss Eve exhibited herself, “Is this Eve?” the other asked, for Miss Eve was in a garb all of flimsies of the Orient as gaudy as rainbows — silk-muslins, gauzes — her ears gross with ear-rings of coral-rock and gold, a kefie-cloth draping her face, with

her gazelle, her maids, her boy-poet wearing his embroidered sandals and strings of little pearls....

“Well, this is Eve,” breathed Miss Ruth, musing upon the other with her bambino eyes, a smile of happiness chronic on her lips; “and whatever can that be on your nails?”

“Henna.”

“Eve!”

Miss Eve snapped her thumb and finger gaily up in the air saying, “Oh, well, never say die, and in Rome let’s row with the Romans; once I was queen of the Greeks, hundreds of eras ago. Come, sweet, to see the seraglio,” and thither they hurried.

CHAPTER XV.

TO SHUNTER.



LEPSIUS, THE EXHIBITION being now about to begin, should have been in Paris, but was at Serapis: and that was a true word of the gossip Nundcumar that woman works a relaxation in the screw of greatness, and taints its vein. Paris was strange; and the weather there “treacherous,” as they say. Frequently each day Lepsius was in communication with Monsieur Fautras, his broker, and with Schuré, his chief engineer. A rumour was abroad that the last of the Moon Debenture Bills (asking the sanction of the Chamber to the issue of yet new stock to the tune of a milliard and a half) would hardly be carried, because of another rumour that the moon-structure itself was fated to failure: an event that must ruin very many investors. So the croakers and screamers arose and mouthed: the scheme, they screamed, was never sound; down all at once one day from par to 97 fell the stock; speeches breathing rage were everywhere being made, in the streets, on 'Change, in the Chamber; newspapers furious with froths of abuse — true Paris-babies, created to live three days — saw the light, cried, and died; pamphlets, pamphlets, flooded the cafés; Lepsius, men said, had fled.

During all which a kind of riot one afternoon (the seventh of July) sprang up in Serapis itself. As the old Nundcumar told it with a moving head to Miss Ruth Vickery at the bedside of Healy that evening, “Sir Lepsius was at the telephone when Captain Bréhat broke into his presence with a face like

volcano-ashes mixed with fire-flashes, to bring him the message news and betidings that some two hundred and fifty of the private troops had broken loose, and had wrecked two of the barrack-rooms. So Sir Lepsius finished his talk and chit-chat at the telephone, and then, starting off with a malign light in his eyes, though smiling ever his smile of the smiles, caught up a weapon of queer and dark appearances, and ran away to a square in the northeast, where the crew of them stood — all picturesque rascals of Spahis, mixed with Turcos, Mamalukes, Zouaves, Uhlans, Don Cossacks, some of them on horse-back, but most on foot in their half-dress, all under arms, so that the heart, missie, paused under the bosom-bone to see it through. Three-four of them said ‘Bravo,’ on beholding Sir Lepsius come, but the brows of the rest only scowled blackly at him, and one big Spahi spurred out to him with his grievance-list. Never a word breathed Sir Lepsius from first to last, but as the grievance-list was going to be presented, all at once he sprang like a flea of the fleas to the ringleader’s horse-back — a great Hungarian horse, all rings and piebalds — and he began to stick the horse with his penknife like a pig, here and there, till the creature in its raging, plunging, prancing, and very arrogance of arrogances dashed down the ringleader on the ground. Then Sir Lepsius shot his gun-shot up in the clouds, and down upon the crowd of them a shower of shot dropped back broadcast and hard-hitting; at the same moment he aimed the gun at them, drove the Hungarian mare at a gallop round about, pressing them, and on a sudden they were gone in a rout with bowed backs, as a crowd rushes out of a shower suddenly. Then he came again to the north palace, and later in the afternoon got the news that all was well, as the troops had resumed their duties. But wait, wait, it is not done with yet—” He stopped, Miss Ruth rising to wipe the lips of the dying man in silence....

But it was, in truth, not “done with”: for the very next forenoon the troops anew broke into mutiny, and Lepsius was told that one part of the soldiers’ quarters was being burnt. He had already observed the redness of it in the sky, spent twenty seconds in dire reflecting, and then sped away, intending this time to be terrible. It was a morning of storm that spat dribble and brine, the strip of sea seen from the higher parts of Serapis had an appearance of wrath, a league to the east a brigantine had been wrecked in the night, the sky was all grey and hurried like a current, and all pools of water darted darkling continuously under the swoops and pursuits of the squalls. Lepsius was making headway in the teeth of it eastward to the scene of the *émeute*, when, to his amazement, a maid came pelting to meet and present him a line scribbled on the fly-leaf of a Bible, “Pray, sir, do not come to the men. It will be well. — RUTH VICKERY.” Nevertheless, he ran on; and presently, peering through a wicket, saw Miss Ruth with the mutineers in a court, moving to and fro before them, her hair blown loose over an old cloak of faded blue that enfolded her, flapping, on her head a forage-cap of the men, she haranguing them loudly in French against the sounding of the gale. Lepsius stood too far off to know what was being said, but saw Miss Ruth laughing anon, the troop laughing also, soon became aware of a rumour of voices raving “Bravo!” then of Miss Ruth pointing at the flame, as if enjoining the troop to hasten to help in its suppression, then saw them press pell-mell through a gate and go, taking her in the current of their haste.

In truth, Miss Ruth was at present no more a prisoner in Serapis, but roamed whithersoever she chose in and out of it, visiting the Breton peasants round about, the sick in Serapis, and corresponding whenever she chose with her parent, to whom she wrote that the angel of the Lord had broken the bars of her prison. On the whole, she was so well known, and

with so much respect, to everyone in Serapis, that it may have been beyond the wit of Lepsius, had he willed it, to keep her strictly a prisoner. At any rate, the *émeute* thus suppressed did not recur; and Lepsius pondered this anon.

Little enough time had he for pondering, however. That forenoon of wet and wind the slump in moon-stock continued from 97 to 95, and at nine that night a crowd that had waited for hours outside the Palais-Bourbon in the storm, unharnessed the horses from Monsieur de Courcy's brougham, and brought the Minister home with hurrahs, because his thunder at the Debenture Bill had resulted in its overthrow.

"Thrice on the eighth," writes Said Pasha in his Notes, "I raced across to the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, on each occasion getting wetted to the skin, in order to talk with Lepsius through Monsieur Schuré's private telephone. On each occasion I had to wait, since others were before me. The first time I saw Colonel Doumic, Monsieur Leflô and Cardinal Damp-martin talking together, standing in a corner of the drawing-room; and two hours later when I returned they still stood in the same place, talking. The house, in fact, was much frequented throughout the day, people coming, lingering, going, and coming again; but no sign of either host or hostess. The Abbé Sauriau, who for some time sat alone on a sofa with his legs crossed, perusing with quite evident surprise and delight an old book of his own — it was his Pindar — told me that Monsieur Schuré 'was supposed' to be at home, but abed, in a condition of alcoholism; while as to Madame, Colonel Doumic, who had a cold in the head, and trumpeted persistently through the nose, told me that the lady was spending three days with her sister at Meudon. To Monsieur Favre, the Procurator-General, and to me the colonel also made this remark, 'My friends, let the politicians do their worst, but what can *tas de pékins* do to the individual in question when the name of

Lepsius still raises a cheer in each company of *pioupious* through France?’ I wished that I could share in his confidence, but to me who knew the under-currents and each secret wire which each of the puppets obeyed, it appeared quite beyond the ingenuity of a Nestor and a Richelieu in one to save the situation. ‘Nothing has happened!’ exclaimed General Le Goffic, the Prefect’s aide-de-camp, to me at Bignon’s near eight in the evening, ‘and yet what a revolution in public opinion within these two little weeks!’

‘*Mon ami*,’ added the old Orléaniste, who was a descendant of the mulatto Dues de Dornis, and still at seventy a gallant figure, ‘the individual in question thought to inaugurate an empire on the race-course at Longchamp, as the Prince de Condé is said to have begun the battle of Lérída to the cry-cry of a dozen violins: but the fantastic soon ceases to amuse at a cost of three milliards. As to “La Lune,” since the word means also the part of the human person on which children are spanked, it was always certain that this fact, by itself, would doom the scheme to failure. At the actual moment, what hope remains, monsieur? since we know that when Belleville, St. Antoine and Ménilmontant have pricked the ear, *le plis est pris*, and Heaven itself is helpless. In passing down the Boulevard Majenta just now, I encountered a crowd bounding south, to the Palais-Bourbon, no doubt, singing “Conspuez Lepste, conspuez Lepsie, conspuez” — the grave sound on the last syllable of “Lepsie” — a truly gross and terrible growl.’

“Well, at half after eight a messenger hastened to tell me that Isabeau Thiéry was about to mount the tribune, and to the Palais-Bourbon Pierre Huré and I set off in a fiacre, seeing on the way streams of people who were speeding to join the crowd that loitered round the House, without seeming to heed the showers and the noise of the wind. Having reasons of my own for not desiring to be seen within the Chambre des Députés itself, I strolled in the Salle des Pas Perdus, while Thiéry, ever the *enfant terrible* of the

Députés, rolled his periods in the interior. Among us outside in the Pas Perdue the question was, 'Is Thiéry speaking for or in opposition to the Debenture Bill?' and managing to seize upon the old Major-General Dauriac, one of the three Quaestors, who came rushing in, I put to him the question. He shrugged both his shoulders on high, giving me the reply, 'Who knows, my friend? In the former half of his oration Thiéry has denounced the Bill, but now is no less loudly sounding its praises. *C'est un homme nul, ce monsieur-là*' — and he hastened on his way.

"I did not remain during the oration of Monsieur de Courcy, who followed Isabeau Thiéry in the tribune, but hurried back northward in order to have direct speech with Lepsius himself. I now found the *salon*, the stairs, the passages of Schurés house actually crowded — I am unable to state why, since Schuré himself remained invisible — men of the Bourse, newspaper-men, men-of-state, besides a number of mere well-dressed *badauds* and *désœuvrés*. Monsieur Fautras, the broker of Lepsius, was speaking with General Figuiet, the Military Governor of Paris, and with Graf Bobertag of the German Embassy, which last arrested me thirteen minutes with conversation of a secret nature. To Lepsius I then spoke of the tone of Paris up to the present, and was surprised that, though I had come at full speed, he already knew the gist of Thiéry's speech. It was said, indeed, that he had mysterious instruments by means of which he could see and hear that which takes place at a distance, though I myself have never seen any such with him: at any rate, I now freely revealed my fears, reading to him some headlines from the evening papers, and even venturing to say that the air of Paris was believed to be bearable even in September! He took it coldly. But did he ever know his friends? Was Lepsius ever capable of appreciating the nature of friendship? Yet how he was loved by a few! and how he was abhorred by all, even by the few who loved him! 'I knew,' he

replied to everything of mine. ‘The Debenture Bill will undoubtedly now be thrown out,’ I told him. ‘I knew,’ he answered, adding, ‘it is of no importance, if Schuré be kept staunch: I rely upon you to keep him staunch.’ This astonished me. ‘How can I?’ I asked. ‘Keep close to Thiéry to-night and to-morrow,’ he replied, ‘influence him, and you will find out how I can repay.’

‘Monsieur,’ was my answer, ‘I will do this with much pleasure without the prospect of any such discovery.’ ‘Many thanks,’ said he. ‘I have,’ I then said, suddenly remembering it, ‘to deliver to you this message from Mr. E. Reader Meade, that it might be most inadvisable at the actual moment to try to tempt Thiéry in a monetary sense’ — a suggestion which (unless I was mistaken) had the effect of strangely irritating Lepsius, for he made me the amazing reply, ‘Monsieur, the oak is hardly the highest form of life,’ and closed the interview.

“I at once set out on the quest of Thiéry, wondering within myself how it was that Lepsius was not that night in Paris! Was it *because* of the very hardship of combating the storm from the place in which he happened to find himself that he decided to remain in it? Some stiffness of neck? Some arrogance? For he was arrogant. Nothing was greater than the grossness of his arrogance, save the glory of his lowliness. Seeing men, he felt himself a deity; but he was saved from even the least taint or vein of vanity, because his consciousness was so quick and large, that no less nearly and clearly than he saw men he saw stars, and felt himself a flea. At any rate, he could never be induced to take the human race quite *au sérieux*; he abided in his Brittany.

“Thiéry I did not light upon until nigh on eleven in the night, and then in the unexpected quarter of his own tiny *apartment* in the Rue de Rome — a two-roomed den, with a *cuisine* and a vestibule; and it was necessary for me

to sit waiting in the vestibule, since the Abbé Sauriau was there in the *salon*, engaged in talk which it was altogether impossible for me to escape hearing, since nothing separated us save an aged green drapery, which the gale, penetrating between the beams, waved in my face. Thiéry was going up and down wrapped in a greasy dressing-gown, a fez on his head, the abbé being seated, speaking ceaselessly; nor was it long before I knew that it was a question of offering Thiéry the portfolio of Justice as from Monsieur de Courcy, who that day could have foreseen for himself nothing less than the Chief Magistracy of France. Thiéry did not accept, did not reject it. The abbé coaxed, quoted, fawned, exhorted, flattered. ‘The destinies of France rest this night on your shoulders ‘; ‘it is for you to-night, my friend, in rocking the tocsin of enfranchisement, to toll once and no more for ever the death-knell of despots.’

‘But the Army,’ said Thiéry, ‘the Army.’

‘Can the Army rescue a ruined man?’ asked the abbé; and he added, ‘Listen, my friend, you are not a financier, but you know that the company started with a capital of three milliards in 1,200,000 shares of 2,500 francs each; you know, too, that 800,000 ordinary shares were offered at par to the public at the first issue, as to which the individual in question not only gave his guarantee to pay four per cent, interest during construction, but to repay every ordinary shareholder at par, if the venture should prove a failure. And if it does! — as it is in your power to make it! Could revenues so countless really come out of any private fund and not leave it dry? And how in the day of his failure may the Army avail to save him from the wrath of France?’ But numbers always dropped like water on a duck’s back upon the skull of Isabeau Thiéry: and the breezes penetrating beneath the door chilled my shins, and still he remained in his indecision of mind. Finally he

undertook to deliver his reply as to the portfolio before twelve the next day, and the Abbé Sauriau then went away.

“It was then my turn to convert the poet, and certainly I worked with no little fervour, throwing off reserve. I blessed with my hands upon its head the bust of Cæsar on the mantel-piece; I spoke of the offer of the portfolio as a bribe, and as unpatriotic in spirit; I said ‘as in 1814,’ and ‘the destinies of France’; I spoke of the crowd of crowned heads then in Paris to be present at the opening of the Exhibition, and of their exultation to behold the overthrow of that being who was the hope of France; and, sitting on his table’s edge, his face glowed gallantly when in glaring hues I sketched the glories of the future. Lepsius, I saw, occupied a place in his heart. Unfortunately, just as 12.45 struck, in came Monsieur Josef, formerly a mouchard of the Rue de Jerusalem, then a man who to Lepsius was ‘P.2.’ The moment I beheld him I had a boding of trouble; and, certain that the envelope that he delivered to Thiéry derived from Lepsius, I kept my eyes fixed upon Thiéry while he read. Thiéry at once turned quite worm-white; one could observe how his fingers quivered; and, getting down from the table, he began to move about the room in an absent manner, with a bosom somewhat breathless, and a visage at once flushed and blanched in patches. I muttered to myself, ‘Lepsius must have tempted him with some momentous money-offer.’ He walked presently near to me, and with his arms quivering and somewhat spread appealed rather piteously to me with a ‘Mon ami!’ He then began to walk about again; till now again he halted to frown piercingly into the bust of Cæsar on the mantel-piece; and now, beating his palm with his finger, he breathed, ‘But no, but no, the Eagle does not blink’; and all at once he was scarlet, cast up his head, letting slip a little ‘Ha!’ and suddenly all in a hurry and flurry, muttering to himself, ‘Stop, he is going to see,’ he was gone away.

“He very soon hurried in again from his bedroom, dressed, drawing on a glove, begging me to forgive him, since he must necessarily go. I ventured to ask him whither, and his answer, ‘Ah! to Meudon,’ convinced me that all was lost....

“When I flew to tell Lepsius of it, he during two seconds or so stood mute, then very hurriedly said, ‘Thanks. I’ll look to it’...”

What Lepsius did on learning of the disaster was urgently to telephone a certain course of conduct to an agent in Chantilly; he then at once summoned to his presence the Due de Rey-Drouilhet, who during two days had been staying at Serapis; and he took two pilules out of a cabinet and put them in a pill-box.

As soon as the duke came in he was struck staggering a step or two against one of the pillars, for the hall, all open to the four winds, was all vocal and haunted with the storm, and half its area of floor was as washed with rain-water as a ship’s quarterdeck. Lepsius seated the old man near him in the middle, and speaking as low as the sound of the winds allowed, said, “I wish to pray you to set off for Paris for me by my next special at 1.6; for if you wish to prove useful to me, and at the same time to make yourself affluent for life, this is your chance of chances. I may tell you that Thiéry has just taken train from Paris to Meudon to see his sister, Fanny Schuré, with a design unfriendly to me. Well, he will not see her to-night: for an agent of mine in Chantilly, where Schuré is, is at this moment telephoning her the false news that her husband is dying, and either fifteen or four minutes before Thiéry reaches Meudon she will have left it for Chantilly; nor will he be able, I see, to follow her thither to-night for want of a train. But to-morrow he will see her, unless I prevent him; hence I ask you to assist at his *premier dîner* in the morning, and deftly to drop these two pilules into his coffee or chocolate. You are his friend — What is it?”

He turned to a servant by his elbow who bore him a leaf of ivory scribbled with these words: "Healy can live only a few minutes more. — RUTH."

Lepsius sprang up, pestered at this the third missive of the kind received that day, he having been too busy to pay any heed to them, though Healy was at this time, by his orders, near him in the north palace. He walked away to the columns, and cast a look out: no stars out there, no vault of heaven, only darkness mixed all with water and winds wawling; and back he bolted to the duke, saying, "Excuse me two minutes," and hastened away.

His own motive in going he hardly knew, since that was hardly very rational that he should go: but something that is in the breast brought him. However, he did not enter, only stole nigh, and, standing outside a door-hanging, listened, spied.

The two windows looked toward the coast, and though these were well closed, everything movable in the room moved to a breeze that ever breathed through it — the bed-curtains, the skirt of an Ursuline who kneeled near the bottom of the bed, telling her beads, the skirt of Miss Ruth who kneeled at the bed's head, reading, the beard of the old Nundcumar who sat leaning forward on a sofa between these two.

Miss Vickery held under her eyes on the bed's edge a Greek Bible from which with a poignancy and grieving in her voice she was translating, the gale battering anon great breaches in her speech in the ear of Lepsius.

"Nor be called masters... but he that is greatest among you will be your servant... and he that humbles himself is high."

The bed was low and small, in the north-west corner of the chamber under a window — the window which was opposite the door where Lepsius waited, there being two doors in the length of the room (which was longish

and narrow), and two great windows, under a groined roof; and though an Arabian boy, crouching on a rug in the south-west corner of the marble floor, made a fourth watcher in the chamber, there was an air of loneliness in there, an odour of death. This little Arab, indeed, but increased this feeling: for, though kneeling, he was so doubled on himself, so stone-still, that he seemed to be dead, and a greenish sheen gloating on his cheek from the lamp-globe just above his head increased his appearance of death.

“And they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, ‘You wait here, while I go to pray.’”

The light of the only lamp was somehow a local halo about itself, throwing the remainder of the room in some obscurity, so that the clicks of the nun’s rosary arose from shadows in which she was herself no more than a shadow; nor could Healy be seen, nothing but his toes sticking up beneath the clothes, though anon that keen ear of Lepsius could hear his throat croaking the death-ruckle, pouring it low, hurried, like a purring rolling; and, still more pressed with haste, rain-water outside struggling darkly down spouts, with gulps and sobs and goblin sounds; and again that poignancy and break in Miss Vickery’s voice....

“And he went a little onward, and dropped down upon the ground, and prayed, saying, ‘Abba (papa), take away this cup from me; still, not what I want, papa, but what thou.’”

Loudly from across the sea came the sound of the gale, flapping with the sound of a navy of argosies going down in some archipelago of gloom, with all their great sails whooping loose, and all their sailors wailing.

“And again he went away, and dropped down on the ground, and prayed, saying, ‘If it be possible, let this draught pass away from me; still, not what I want, papa, but what thou.’”

The hand of Lepsius tightened on the box that held the two pilules designed for Isabeau Thiéry's breakfast; at the same time the death-ruckle on the bed came on a sudden to an end; the happy saint raised herself from the bedside with a smile and a light in her eyes; and during some moments nobody moved in the room, until now the crony Nundcumar rose to move to the bed's head, and, bowed over the dead with a moving brow and body-, crooning, he said, "He is dead. But his head is not yet thoroughly dead and done, and he lies reflecting dimly in himself, thinking: 'I am dead: no more to view the sight of the sun, nor any light of the moon at night, nor all the stars: for I am dead, and this is death; and what I long saw falling upon others; and was long in awe of for myself, is fallen at last this day upon me, me, also: for I lie dead, and this is my day.'"

As for Lepsius, he was gone; not so swiftly as he had come.

When he got back to the hall where the duke awaited him, he halted two seconds betwixt two of the columns, struck with hesitancy: until, suddenly running, he muttered, "Forgive me for being longer than I meant; and now, to catch the train, you should be in haste" — he held out the pill-box.

The old man was very tremulous; his hand that rose to take the box hesitated midway. "I assume, monsieur, that the dose is not — is innocuous...." Lepsius' lip of disdain deigned no reply.

"I know it, of course," remarked the old fop piteously in a flurry, "and asked only for form's sake.... On those terms I am entirely at your service."

"Rey-Drouilhet, be certain and deft," said Lepsius impressively; and within eight minutes Rey-Drouilhet was on the way to the railway. Before 7.40 the following morning he sat, in the Rue de Rome, at Isabeau Thiéry's bed's head.

He pretended that pressing Serapis-gossip had thus brought him at the matin-gun; but he had hardly any need to invent the gossip, since by this

time Thiéry could speak of nothing but Lepsius' bribe.

"My friend, what was the amount?" the duke questioned with a screwed countenance.

"It was two millions, monsieur."

"*De Dieu de Dieu!*... I who am no more a youth would undoubtedly have refused it without difficulty, but how could you, a young man?"

"Ah, mon cher ami, noblesse oblige," remarked Isabeau Thiéry in an absent mutter.

He was now about to get out of bed to get on his clothes, when his *gouvernante* bore him in his coffee and little loaf; and during the minutes that he took to fling on his things, the coffee stood cooling on a commode close to the duke. The flesh of the duke's face during this became very blanched and aged, his manners nervous and fluttered; but, though he had the two pills in his hand, and had many opportunities of dropping them into the coffee during Thiéry's dressing, he did not. He now thought to himself, "No, Thiéry must be out of the room," and presently he passed the remark that he had not breakfasted.

"My friend, pardon me!" cried out Thiéry, and darted out half-dressed to order another cup of coffee.

Now was the duke's opportunity. Yet he did not drop the pills into Thiéry's coffee. He started! First athwart the whirl of his thoughts flushed Isabeau Thiéry's words, "*noblesse oblige*," the example of that generous blood: and away he rushed, bent, from the coffee; and then back to it he rushed, fleet and thievish, to dash in the pills; and away from it afresh, without having dashed them in. And now he was casting his arms on high, his rickety eyes, distracted; and now he was creeping on his knees, sneakingly, to drop the two pills into a pot beneath the bed; and now he was

at Thiéry's bread, sneakingly kneading two pills out of the pith; and *these* he dropped into Thiéry's coffee....

Later that forenoon he misquoted Shakespeare, despatching to Lepsius, in English, the telegram, "The deed is done."

Nor did Lepsius need the coming of this telegram to be perfectly certain that the deed was done, though he could scarcely still have been ignorant that very many threads congregate to make the mental texture of modern men. Anyway, till late in the day he was securely acting upon the fact that the duke could not fail; and then, suddenly, he knew — too late....

The next night, the second of the Exhibition, was the night on which men had been given to hope that a strange glory would change the look of the skies: but no such glory arose upon the eyes.

And now more in number than the messengers of Job crowded upon Lepsius the recorders of his downfall; French laws and procedures were tortured in order to reach him swiftly; during the midnight of the ninth the offices of the moon in the Rue St. Honoré, as well as the offices of several newspapers in his pay, were wrecked; on the 11th the troops of the 67th, posted to protect his palace in the Elysées, could not prevent it from being sacked and burned; by the 13th he had been accused, and had been convicted by the Sixth Tribunal, of fermenting civil strife; by the 15th the decree of his banishment from French land, posted in every commune, had been gaped at as old and usual, and glared from the gates of Serapis.

Lepsius smiled, but bitterly. He was lying on his belly on a bed of straw, reading the life of Jesus of Nazareth in the book of Matthew when the news of the destruction of the moon-offices reached him; and at once, throwing away the book to run out with a reddened brow, he said within himself, "I will blot out this name of France." During the rage and deluge of the few days following, he yet more hardened his heart. To Miss Ruth Vickery he

refused an interview, and to Miss Eve Vickery, who wrote "I am sorry for you," and entreated him to be meek, to cease from scheming, and to bend his head before the tempest, he condescended to send no answer.

Indeed, he was now too busy to heed anything but what he was now about to do. In his resentment he had resolved to stretch out his arm in terror, of each and all of his enemies to make a clean sweep in one heap, and immediately to leap into a throne, some months before he had previously proposed. Of the Army, which regarded him as its hope of glory, he was still certain; and on the morning of the 15th the first of his thunderbolts bewildered the world, when from his rostrum at the Bourse, Monsieur Fautras roundly denounced the downfall of the moon-structure as due to the schemings of paltry politicians, and to the treachery of the engineer Schuré. He was authorised, said, by Monsieur Lepsius, to present as a loan to the company a sum of a milliard and a half of francs, not to be repaid till ordinary shares should be earning a dividend of 8 per cent.; and, further, he was authorised by Monsieur Lepsius, who was prepared to finance the concern entirely from his private purse, to purchase back, if desired, every ordinary share at par from that morning; and, further, he had to say that by midday of the 17th instant Monsieur Lepsius proposed to be in Paris....

Never did Lepsius loom so hugely upon the universal world, luminous as some angel of the welkin, as that afternoon, France, for her part, casting upon her head the ashes of contrition. As for the foes of Lepsius, they saw only instant loss of place and power, only ruin, degradation, disgrace, knowing that now the decree of banishment against him was nothing but a dead letter. Hence the Count de Courcy took a hurried trip down into Brittany that day, and contrived to talk a little with the prattler Nundcumar outside the walls of Serapis....

At five on the morning of the 17th all was in order for the departure for Paris, and Lepsius, not having slept through the night, went to lie a little in his bath, his big dog, Argo, and the old Nundcumar, going also with him. As he locked the door, he noticed that the dog, going up to a coffer of cedar-wood, in which it was usual to keep towels, etc., sniffed at it; the dog, however, did not growl, and, as his head was now crowded with cares, he gave it no heed. It was an apartment of marble with a row of round windows in one wall up near the ceiling, and in the centre of it a sort of well or cistern, with a tower of marble about it as light and beautiful as a flower, whose whiteness bloomed again down in the water's gloom, and it had a bell in it; otherwise the apartment was without any ornament, except for the coffer in one corner, and the bath in the corner opposite, this being a mass of augite and gold, so big that one might swim a little, with lumps of ice floating in the water that almost filled it. Lepsius' pieces of raiment dropped from him, he was in immediately, dived, and remained under a long while. Argo, the dog, was walking uneasily to and fro, but if one had looked narrowly at him, the dog might have been seen to be not quite himself, to be drunk or drugged. Nundcumar, for his part, stood by the side of the bath, his knees weak beneath him, but with no sign of this to be seen in his lean looks; and the air in there seemed to wait for somewhat, and to wait, a dusk air, for though it was now fully day outside, in there the light was scarce.

At the moment when Lepsius went under the water for the second time, Nundcumar, suddenly grabbing the dog by the collar, coughed twice: and the next moment the dog broke roaring from his grasp to drag down a woman who rose out of the coffer and flew through the room.... Lepsius, hearing the row, reared up his head, and even as the woman went down under the hound, received vitriol about his brows....

He at once dived....

Later in the day he discovered that one of his sandals, in a chamber of which he kept a little key, was missing. It was the Abbé Sauriau who told him so, kneeling over Lepsius on his bed of straw, as the gloaming began to grow deep. "It is intended that your hoards shall be distributed among charitable institutions," the abbé said; and he cried accusingly, his body convulsed with sobs, "Lepsius, you are blind! and it is I who have been the cause of this."

Lepsius lay with a band covering his eyes, his limbs cast all asprawl at random, tossing for ease; and presently he bleated, "I am blind!"

And now Isabeau Thiéry, waiting for hours at the far end of the chamber, dashed both his palms to his ears to shut out the sound of that bleat, which each three minutes was repeated, and rushed with the stare of a maniac away.

Lepsius could get no rest, for though the ravage of the vitriol (thanks to the rush of the dog and to the bath-water) was local about the brows, and he was hardly at all disfigured in his face, yet the agony was great, and the heat of the atmosphere every moment growing greater, since a reign of licence and riot had kept carnival during all the afternoon, and at several places Serapis was flaring.

"You must not stay here much longer," blubbed the Abbé Sauriau, with two big tears streaming on his cheeks.... "I have a little cottage in Chantilly, and thither you will come to abide until my death by my side. You are poor, you are many millions in debt, you are utterly destitute, naught can be more utter, more boundless, than your downfall. So you will come, my friend, to my breast, and in the cottage we shall be, we two, dwelling in a shaded leisure and seclusion of literature, for I shall be reading my books to you, and you will be dictating books to me, which I shall write for you."

“I am blind!” bleated the blind boy to his obscurity, neither heeding nor hearing him.

It was at this point that the blind boy’s father arrived after a voyage from London; and, lying on the straws, the old man rubbed his cheek on his son’s cheek silently, a sob in his throat keeping him from speaking; whereat the Abbé Sauriau and some others who were there stole away; and presently, when he had wept plenteously, Dr. Lepsius said to his son, who kept shrinking from his touch, “You have yet your yacht at anchor yonder in the bay; let’s cut back to Shunter I you and me; only no Shan any more, no Shan: back out of the dirty world, to listen to the waups whistling, what? Don’t you remember the old castle? And the old coble-boat on the north coast? And the long, low old shed, centuries old, all encrusted with peat-smoke, which we could see from the east castle-turret far off in the heugh of the crags? And all the gulls, and the bog, and the hags of water with the buckies in ’em, can’t you recall it all, and the sea? Say that you are coming...

“I shall never run again!” complained Lepsius to his gloom.

“You may! You do not know yet! God may will to give you back your eyes, or one of them! But say that you will come this night with me.”

“Are you not still against me?” asked Lepsius in pain.

“What, against my own? Was I ever really against you, do you dream? Oh, fie, hard heart, to let yourself utter those words!”

Lepsius now turned a little to put his arm about the old man’s shoulder, and water washed with a whey of blood wound all down one side of his nose, while the old man moaned.

“So, then,” the old man said, “you will come, for I feel that it will do you good, and I’ll go at once to see to it.”

He stood up; and he had scarcely gone away when with eager feet Miss Eve Vickery came in, and fifteen feet from Lepsius stood looking at him, her father halting far off near the pillars, his eyes all alight with excitement. Having come for his daughters, he had ordered them both into a brougham, and they had started to roll away in it through the ruelles and courts of Serapis, lurid at this time with conflagrations glaring in the gloomy night, where groups of distinguished men from Paris and elsewhere stood to watch the flames and fumes, and, like devils in fire, troops of luxurious ‘rioters roved with uproars to and fro. But when about to pass out of this scene, Miss Eve had seen a wing of the north palace in passing near it, and had leapt up. Nor could anything stay her. “I will see him once,” she had said over her shoulder: whereon her father, ordering his other daughter to remain where she was, had followed Miss Eve’s speeding feet; and Miss Eve came, and stood, and looked at Lepsius.

“Eve, I am blind!” bleated Lepsius aloud, perhaps having caught and known the Sound of her walk, or probably invoking her without any knowledge that she was present; and what pen of poet or seer of the soul can disclose the olio of her whole emotion then, sketching with what fiendishness of hell-spite her whitened lip touched her lower teeth, as she flung at him, “You should have been good!” and then again how the bowels of her woman’s ruth moved and rued, beholding him so low, when he rose on his elbow, but tumbled back, calling, “Eve! you are here!”

“Lepsius, I am going for good from you!”

“Eve, do not leave me!”

“Eve!” her father now called out in a sort of whisper.

She crammed her mouth with her handkerchief to bite on, and letting fall her arm behind her toward the bed of straws, wafting it a good-bye, tried to get away toward her father, but half-way gave up, smiling, her knees going

feeble beneath her, and lapsed, seated, upon the floor; whereat Mr. Vickery came, raised, and carried her away to their carriage.

The carriage then went on its way toward the station two miles distant through a dark night unlighted by one star in the sky, with wild winds blowing. But they had not advanced half a mile when the driver suddenly halted, having noticed lying right athwart the road a woman whom, but for the light radiating from the blazing of Serapis, he must have driven over. Mr. Vickery, getting out, gave a hand to raising her up: and now, to his consternation, she turned out to be his old servant, Jeanne Auvache. The woman, her life-work now performed, was now all maudlin, and desired to die — hence had thrown herself on the road. She instantly dashed into chattering (against the grain of her hearers) as to the various phases of the day, on her face a rain of tears, Miss Ruth and her father induced to hear, Miss Eve, for her part, reclining in swoon with her lips parted like the dying, not appearing to hear. One piece of the chatter, however, appeared to pierce to her consciousness; and now her eyes unclosed, she sat up. It was when Jeanne Auvache was recounting how she had been arrested at St. Brieuc, and how at about 3 p.m. she had been brought back to Serapis in order to be presented to, and identified by, Lepsius, the officers not then knowing that Lepsius was entirely sightless. “He is good, he is very good,” the hag groaned, “so that I regret at the actual moment to have done it, and have a desire to die. He lay there on his bed of straws, all solitary, calling to nobody ‘I am blind ‘; and when the two officers asked him if he was able to say whether I was the woman, he answered them, ‘Let her say something ‘; so I said, ‘Monsieur Lepsius!’ and I said again, ‘Monsieur Lepsius!’ and he gave no answer to the two men for some time, but lay still, frowning,

passing his palm over his brow and his bandage; and he then said gently, 'No, it was not she; it was not a woman who did it,' and then—"

Now, however, a crazy stare was gazing out of the carriage window, Miss Eve leaning out, saying, "Do you say, woman, that he forgave you? Oh, tell me the God's truth!"

"Why, yes, since you see me here—" the hag began to say: but now Miss Eve was gone.

"Eve!" howled her father after her, "remember your vow to — ?"

Miss Eve threw her hand backward without looking round, and went fluttering on her way, her frocks quarrelling with the winds; nor was it possible to pursue her with the brougham, since she took a shortcut path through a meadow; and though her father and Miss Ruth ran after her, calling, her youth and long legs soon got them pretty far behind, she slipping back to Serapis like a spring which, pressed the wrong way, is of a sudden sprung free. In some fifteen minutes she lay on her love's bed, shuddering on his breast, her teeth chattering feverishly into his ear "for ever," and anew "for ever."

"Eve, you are here!" he called to her in that voice of the blind which has lost its way like a lambkin bleating in the void of the night; and she in the fever of her joy said to him, "Here, you can feel it, the half coin: where should I be but in you, but interned in your heart, my eternal? I who eternities since yearned at the altar with you."

But now Dr. Lepsius walked actively in to announce that everything was ready as to the vessel; and about half an hour after this, a small crowd consisting of Dr. Lepsius, Lepsius, Miss Eve, Miss Ruth, Mr. Vickery, a Dr. Proudhomme of Serapis, the Abbé Sauriau, Isabeau Thiéry, Saïd Pasha, and Mr. E. Reader Meade, paced to the quay of the little bay named Petit Bazaine. Yonder on the sea the yacht's three lights glared tiny in a darkness

made rather Tartarian by the conflagration of Serapis, the glows from which, glaring on the slopes of the billows' blackness in dabblements, gave to the bay the goriness of Aceldama. A boat lay at the end of the quay; but as the sea was very rough, and trouble was looked for in embarking Lepsius, all the party went forward to see the boat, leaving him seated alone on a block of stone. The boatmen, who lay on their oars, called that they would wait for a calmer moment; so it was some minutes ere Miss Eve ran back to bring Lepsius, and then to her amazement, met him on his knees — the roar of the breakers and of the gale in his ears, the sprays raining on his face, or his engrossment, may be, in his prayer, preventing him from hearing her approach. She with an uplifted hand, stood hushed a little, listening, catching some words, the bursting of his sobs.... “Who hearest, but dost not heed, the bleatings of brutes... yet if just one human wish for once may move thee... let no speck of grit ever prick her eyes to agonise her; oh, I was sick and she visited me pelt her; I am reft, despoiled, and she makes choice of me... chase, infest her every hour with fresh showers and astonishments of joy—”

She touched him, saying, “Come.”

The Dragon (1913)



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CHAPTER I

PRINCE EDWARD



IT IS THE eye that begets and conceives: suddenly by the hap and fecundity of glances which meet a child is summoned from the place of dumbness, and hears, and quickens, and arises to come among men.

Never a conception of Prince “Teddy,” who contended with Li Ku Yu, had entered a human head to the moment when Prince John, his father-to-be (whom the French have called Jean *l’Entêté*, or “the Stubborn”) landed from the *Dominion* at Scarboro’ to attend a dance one February night.

He, having just got his “executive curl” as a sub., was sitting among his new wardroom messmates, looking at the dancing, when he made the remark: “Set of frights! — not a pretty girl among the lot.”

But just then three passed before his eyes — sisters — all tall, dark, but the middle one, who was the youngest, the tallest of all; and she came upon his eyes surprisingly, like some being superior to men.

Before long he was waltzing with her, his eyes tied to her eyes whose dark-blue anon looked black.

She was Minna Simmons, a doctor’s daughter, already at nineteen a Bachelor of Science, now “swotting” to get a degree in medicine.

His Royal Highness was amazed at her “cleverness”; and queens suddenly appeared to him mean in the presence of this imperial creature and more reigning thing than queens, a lady.

But with that sea-dog bluntness on which he prided himself, he said to her within a den of Union Jacks and smilax: “You are the very nicest girl I ever dreamt of!”

On which she shook her head slowly at him, murmuring with an indulgent smile: “I am not to be commandeered.”

His answer was: “I don’t believe you are: what I should rather choose would be to offer you my hand in marriage.”

“Ah! the vast paw,” she breathed, her eyes turned white to heaven.

He said: “Suppose I did so, what would you say to it?”

“I am sorry, Sir,” she answered: “I should say no.”

“We will see about that,” muttered John l’*Entêté*.

And before midnight he had got from her a promise of correspondence in six months’ time — on general topics.

Within two he began to write frequently; within three he appeared suddenly at The Priory (her house), vowing that he would go mad; he kept telephoning across Britain; and after six months she began to answer his letters, as promised.

He had got his second stripe when he received from her at Shotley this:

“My sisters, whose judgment is considered good, urge it upon me that that may well turn to the public advantage, if I am given the honour to unite my mother’s blood with your Royal Highness’; and though I pity *you*, Sir, for the quite hot water which this business must bring you into, I will now profess myself ready to act as your Royal Highness directs.... Your Royal Highness divines that I could not long be Kept a back-stairs consort.... If centuries of custom attempt to suppress me, I think it is the custom that will see itself suppressed.... God only grant that I may be some good, ii it is to be so...”

Count three months thence, England is under snow — it is seven days before Christmas — when from him at Balmoral comes to her: “I am now taking car to come....”

She locked herself into her room then, to stare....

Afterwards she opened a steel casket by knobs that revolved to cypher-numbers, to get from it the photograph of a young man in flannels, with which she sat again; and, gazing at it, presently said to it: “Dear, it is no good, it can’t be helped — unless I turn tail, and don’t play the game. I was to be one of the mother-women, you see, not one of the wife-women — God’s will be done.”

Now tears filled her lids, her lip quivered: she held the photograph tenderly pressed to her face, her eyes closed; but then with a gasp of anger and anguish dashed it off her into the fire.

Six months later she was the Queen of the Britains and Empress of India; and her “bowing-manner” was considered good.

But from the first her reign was a troubled reign.

Here at home she was not universally adored. That wit of her tongue was too swift and withering. Her talk, if always distinguished, was always vigorously vernacular, dashed anon with a sort of slang, and anon, for all her moral severity, with the *risqué* — that which came to her tongue’s tip out it flew, like new knives flying. Then, too, no daughter of a hundred kings was ever so jealous a stickler for the intricacies of ritual. She pestered the Cabinet. The anger of her glance became a social apprehension, and her censorship of morals extended to males. Lords, grooms, equerries, had to be Bayards! and, like Victoria, she looked coldly upon widows who remarried.

As to the foreign Royalties, the home aristocracy, who, for a fortnight, had a thought of patronising her, they were taught in torrents of lava-torments that she was twice the sovereign of subjects, and once the

sovereign of sovereigns. If a dowager was proud of monkey-ancestry, be sure her sin would find her out, and a tongue like the Avenging Angel's edge would singe her. Some day Her Majesty would manage to put to her some simple question in biology or physics, and then was lost in horror at the Hottentot ignorance of European women with coronets on their foreheads. But if all this caused her domineering forehead, her tongue, and the play of her eyes to become a terror in the land, it did not tend to make her idolised.

But nothing much troubled her but her son, she truly a "mother-woman," every day finding time to be with him; and to him the privilege of her presence was ever more fascinating than his toy-submarine.

Seldom a day but she spoke to him of Germany growing, of China changing. "The Chinese are pretty shrewd, Teddy," she said in showing him a lump of white jade, sent her by the Dowager Empress, one day at Windsor: "the only man who can outwit a Jew in business is a Chinaman — don't forget. And, then, there are so many of them! How many?"

"Four hundred and ten millions, mother," the Prince promptly responded.

"Just think — more than all Europe. God wanted them to be so many: and there they are. But nobody quite knows why!"

"Teddy" meditated the matter; and he said: "Mother, why don't all the countries make themselves into one under one King? Save such a mass of energy! How absurd for Berks to set up as a separate kingdom, and Bucks as another—"

"But of what nation would that one King be?"

"English, I suppose."

"His name '*Teddy*'?"

"Teddy" blushed under her roguish ogle, and she, seeing him in distress, came to his rescue, saying, "Dear, you will deserve to be such a King: your

mind is large enough. And don't think that I disagree, for I quite see that all sorrow is due to that folly of nations and men in calling bits of an earth their 'own.' When nations do it, the result is wars, and all this cost of armaments; when individuals do it, the result is all the failure and perplexity and bread of tears that we see men eat. But if one King owned it all for everybody, and hired out bits, then we might see some fun, and soon would be flying to the moon! That what you meant?" The boy was gazing into her great flamboyant eyes with such adoration, that it made her laugh, and dip a kiss inside his sailor collar.

But her plans for him were beset by obstacles. There was King John l'Entêté, for one, to be reckoned with; as one morning when she exclaimed: "I am his mother!" pacing a room of the Winter Palace at Petersburg; to which His Majesty answered: "Your Majesty speaks as if a father was of no account!"

"Oh, of course, a father, too," she said—"though fathers are only a modern development, mind! Formerly there were no fathers, only mothers."

The King fingered his beard, saying with his touch of pompousness: "Indeed! But Your Majesty fails to mention at what precise period of the world's history this innocent condition of things prevailed."

"It prevails still! — among bees, for instance."

"This is strange," said the King.

"Ah!" said the Queen.

"But what have bees to do with the matter?" asked His Majesty: "the point is, that Your Majesty wishes to deprive the Prince of learning what all gentlemen learn—"

"Oh, I do! since a decent boy hasn't *the time* to: and if the point of that boy's intellect be soppyfied and softened by learning six hundred words of Greek — if he becomes the least bit like any of them — I shall go mad, I

think, I *couldn't* stand it. What I want him to learn is that about bees — God's facts — infinitely Divine, awful, lovely, romantic, religious, significant, educating. But, if a boy learns that it pleases some people to call a boy a '*pais*,' or a '*garçon*,' does *that* give him to think and adore? Oh, Your Majesty knows very little Greek, and I know lots — through no fault of my own, God knows — and some other things, too — can't you listen to me?"

"But everyone differs from Your Majesty!"

"Except thinkers," she said, almost crying, "and, oh, isn't that hard that the brightness of the wise should be for ever overborne by the dullness of the stupid?"

That break of tears in her voice, her throbbing throat, touched His Majesty. Her figure, moreover, as she roamed the room, with that glory of her gallant grand eyes aglow, was very magnetic, so that the King lowered his lids a little, let slip a look at her hips, lowered them, stole a look, then said: "Well, I only hope Your Majesty's plans won't compromise the Throne's popularity."

"No" — in a gentler tone, touching his shoulder—" people will understand."

"But will they?" he asked: "I pride myself upon my knowledge of the people — or does Your Majesty imagine yourself so popular a monarch as I am?"

She smiled down now upon him. "No, I don't dispute that with you. *You* have the popularity, but, oh, let *me* have Teddy."

And in the end she managed: the Prince went to Brockweir.

Now, already at Brockweir was Li Ku, called "Sky-Blue" (since he was a Celestial!) son of a member of the Min Cheng Pu (Home Office); and nine

days after the Prince's arrival, he slapped Li Ku across the face. Whereupon a formal fight.

It was toward the end of lunch-time, and a small boy, flying with tidings toward the Lower School, panted, "Prince and Sky-Blue — fight!" to one Richard Chinnery, sitting on the Fourth Form steps, intent upon winding primary wire round a bobbin; and Chinnery called after: "What's the row?"

"Caught Sky-Blue trephining cat not properly anæsthetised!" — he was gone.

Whereupon Chinnery dashed off to the shed down in the hollow, and made his way through a throng that already had no little respect for him, to see the champions already stripped — like David and Goliath, Sky-Blue being a tall strip of yellow, six months the elder.

But there was little fun; and after the third lead-off Chinnery, muttering, "It's a butchery," dashed back to his induction coil. The Royal combatant, in fact, had all the art, and presently muttering, "Oh, well, doesn't matter," put on Ins jacket.

It was over, then? Li Ku Yu sat on the shed-bench, his legs under him — impossible to guess if he was humbled, if he was ratty inside, he smiling as ever his insolent smile, chin up — huge-headed, tough as orange-skin, breezy, brazen, a cool blade, looking ready to wink.

He smiled ever; but seldom laughed, except on Saturdays — when he was younger — when he would stand in the town's electric shed watching the commutators spinning asleep, six revolutions a second; and a moment would come when that depth of insolence would be riven by a little giggle — a giggle of glee and victory at the trickiness of man and the admission of God; and he laughed one Tuesday when a crusher was crushing up the old school-chapel bricks, when, after gazing many minutes at the engine jiggling, the glee digged him, and he giggled.

“But there’s something wrong about that orange lately,” said Chinnery after six months: “he has changed his Saturday-habits.”

The Prince was “doing arsenic” — a Wednesday afternoon when he did the metals; and Chinnery, whose drawer was next to his, was under instructions to show him his way about in analysis — Chinnery two years the elder, and already his young head was a garden of consciousness — tall — hollow-chested... gentle...

“Know that man they call Spider?” he asked—” retired poacher and gaol-bird — cottage back of the Chasewood. I go up there to get rock-specimens, and twice I’ve spied Sky-Blue and Spider in the dell there. Deighton wouldn’t like it, though Sky-Blue’s a Steer.”

(“Steers” were town-boys, and Dr Deighton the Head-Master — a bearded Sea-King, blushing rich with brandy, his gown dropping down his right shoulder, the howl of a cow in him, heart-harrowing, memorable, a wrangler— “mathematics” — not perhaps “learned,” but the very best of earth’s teachers.)

“What would Sky-Blue be doing at Spider’s?” the Prince asked.

“Not sure, but you look out: for if you two meet in serious battle, you kill each other. My idea is that Sky-Blue is taking lessons in boxing from Spider.”

“Free country — Or the attraction may be Spider’s gal.”

“Ah, don’t underestimate my Sky-Blue,” Chinnery said: “that’s no ordinary orange. I’ll swear that he hasn’t wasted five minutes since he was nine — I know him, for I have some attraction for him apparently, and he comes to watch me messing about up in that library alcove. Dumb as a mummy! But one afternoon he began to gas, and, Ted-of -the-Throne, I never knew speech so fascinating. The things that saffron sack of thoughts vomited out of his chasm! you’d hardly believe.”

“Oh, aye, I guess,” muttered the Prince, holding up a precipitate to squint at.

“Said that white people are a freak! ‘like white mice,’ not a permanent type; hence we produce a shudder in the yellow breast. And you know that old sixpenny atlas which is his Bible — he produced that to show me that Europe and Asia are just like twins in structure; and he calls the two islands, England and Japan, the negative and positive terminals of a cell, the continents being the plates, Europe the white zinc, Asia the yellow copper.”

“Scott, that’s gas,”

“Teddy” said.

“Anyway, an intellect above Spider’s gal.”

“Oh, aye, I think I know.”

“Yes, and above gals diviner far than Spider’s! Look here — don’t tell anybody—” Chinnery produced from his drawer a curious document, a folio of silk-paper on a stick of ivory round which the folio rolled, sending an aroma of roses into that sulphuretted stench of the room.

“This must have dropped out of Sky-Blue’s pocket when he snatched out Asia to show me, and I confiscated it as contraband. Passion, my boy.... Ever seen one Oyone motoring in the town? Not? Then you never beheld human beauty. Visits at my cousins, the Santleys — oh, Oyone, would that I had never beheld the phiz and evil peeper of thee! A half-caste — her father a P. & O. ship’s-surgeon — Irish — mother a geisha-girl of Nagasaki. How Oyone ever got into a Wesleyan mission-school at Tientsin I can’t say, but she did, then fell in with Sky-Blue’s present guardian, A-lu-te. — Surely you have seen A-lu-te somewhere? Little old woman like a monkey?”

Teddy said no.

“But you know where Sky-Blue lives?”

“Isn’t it that mansion with gables up on the hill?”

“That’s it. But A-lu-te and Oyone are mostly at Regent’s Park, where they have to be for the intrigues. Talk of intrigues! A-lu-te, it seems, was a conspirator, and was banished with Oyone to ‘the post-roads’; and now for Oyone and A-lu-te the puzzle is, so to intrigue as to get back again to the whisperings and peepings of Court-life. As to Oyone — pretty. Blessed are your eyes that have not seen her: some day you may, and then over goes the blooming Throne. Her age, though, is rather in advance of the Heir-apparent’s: seventeen! — twenty-seven she will never see — assassinated, beheaded perhaps, long ere then: tragedy sleeps in those ravishing peepers. But see Sky-Blue’s height above Spider’s ‘gal’: he disdains Venus. Here’s her scroll to him; unroll. Observe the neat, crude, school-girl writing.”

“Li Ku Yu, Her Excellency asks about your health, and wishes you well.

“It is now five weeks since she or I have seen you; and your writing is like a miser’s kindnesses.

“Li Ku Yu, persons are born and flung up into the sun’s light not when or where they choose. From China round to America and back, life in its tossings, like a fish which is caught and tosses, flings this one up in one generation, and that one up in another, and the rubbings together of persons is as was ordained. Each is sent to his own generation, to rub with it, so that everything may be as was ordained with life; and when one generation is buried, the sun shines brightly on another. You, Li Ku Yu, and I, Oyone Umé, have been flung up in the same generation, and been flung together, to rub.

“It is a sin in life that you are ice and iron to me! Others tend to me, but not I to them; I to you, but not you to me? You are ice, but I will make you bubble; and iron, but I will make you flow.

“I have the leprosy for you, Li Ku Yu. I think you are like Indian pansupari of areca-nut, and like chunam with spices rolled up in a betel leaf.

“Li Ku Yu, when someone speaks of the end of your college-term, this makes me pale, but afterwards in my chamber my little body dances at this.

“I have the hope that you are in health, and not troubling your brow always about studies.

“My prayer is that you write to me separately and comfortingly, for my tongue suffers thirst in this furnace. “When I think of you, Li Ku Yu, I stretch myself and kiss the wind. *Sayonara!*

“OYONE.”

“Oh, the miserable...!” muttered Teddy, with a little flush.

“Yes,” said Chinnery, “but the point is, that Sky-Blue is ‘ice and iron’ to *her* — the nymph of nymphs, earth’s thickest thimbleful of intense liqueur — compared with whom Spider’s han’some gal is a gross frog squatted, a goggling gecko of the rocks. Sky-Blue has other business with Spider.”

But Chinnery’s warning came too soon, and was forgotten in a month. In eighteen nothing had happened.

Meantime, the Prince did well with his eyes and fingers. On the football field, moreover, everything scattered before his passionate impetuosity: for which alone, and then for his decent way, he was well loved. If a boy new to that most anxiously *élite* “schoolboy spot.”

“Highnessed” him, he’d say, “My name’s Teddy Reeks to you, kid”: and only one boy, who never forgot, saw his chin lift with a chilling hauteur. It was an amusing thing at Brockweir that after a year many were to be found imitating his nimble way of lifting his toes in stepping, his brisk and restless little roll, his trick of saying “Scott!”

He had no resemblance to the men of the House of Hanover — his face open as a summer’s day, quite English in expression, fair like a face of milk-and-pink in a picture, his eyes light like a Norfolk sky: no weak line,

from whatever angle one glanced. Taller than his father: shorter than his mother; slightly bow-legged.

He had been at Brockweir eighteen months when one day — as if the Star Venus should descend to earth — the Queen descended upon Brockweir. It was well with “Teddy” that day, and well with all: holiday! throats hoarse with hurrahs! a Teddy carried shoulder high.

Using that day as a date, we count six months to the date when Li Ku Yu received an order to return to China. That was on a Thursday in the Autumn term.

The next Saturday afternoon being fine, the Prince was permitted to take part in a paper-chase — Brockweir being great on running; several of its lads could range a country-side like stags; and none surpassed the Prince in this.

He was in a solitary spot on an estate named Penryth, rather separated from “the hounds,” running down a steep field through sheep toward the river tow-path’ when he heard a calling: “Ho! Hi! Help!” — seeming to proceed from a chapel-of-ease which stands half-way down the field — a little ruin no bigger than a room — roofless — just four walls, two with gable-ends, and some Gothic window-slits.

A wall of loose stones runs round it, enclosing a bit of ground crammed with bracken (in the summer); so the Prince vaulted the wall, and ran to see what the matter was.

He looked in; and there within stood Li Ku Yu.

But he did not at once recognise Sky-Blue! — a Sky-Blue arrayed in Oriental raiment, as for a ceremony! The Prince wondered whether the pigtail had grown in a day; but it was a silken *queue* platted on, as many upper-class Chinese wear them.

And the significance was this: that it was China there to interview Europe.

“Well?” said the Prince.

Li Ku Yu made no reply.

“Did you call out ‘help’?”

Li Ku Yu was mute. They looked at each other — well-grown lads now, the Prince in the Upper Fifth, Li Ku Yu the head of the Sixth, but for Chinnery, who lingered on several terms after Brockweir ceased to have anything to teach him.

All at once Li Ku Yu, with a moan, threw his arm round the Prince’s neck, and began to rub his cheek on the Prince’s cheek, up and down, moaning, like a lover moaning for love.

The other, very astonished, tried to draw back, saying: “I say, what’s all this?” But even as he asked, he knew: knew that he would never forget that day.

The Prince wrenched himself spinning from that venomous affection; and he said sharply: “Hurry up! What’s it all about?”

Li Ku Yu was smiling: but in the expression of his eyes was something very terribly tense and strained, atrociously cruel and ferocious; the eye-whites looking bloodshot.

Now at last he spoke, in that strange voice of his — foreign as an animal’s from another planet.

“You were unwise to strike me, Prince.”

“Who? When? Years ago? Got that in you still, have you?”

“*Cluck!* a minute ago to me.”

“So it’s a fight, is it? But stay — let me warn you; the boys and men of this land can’t be conquered. You may kill and mince them, but you won’t

see them strike their flag. Are you prepared for all that? In for bloodshed, and a fight to the finish?”

He was now eyeing the Chinese loweringly under the eyes, his tones, as he spoke, more and more trilling with emotion: in the back of his head a question as to his mother — how she would wish him to act now.

Li Ku Yu, with one finger out, commenced to lecture: ““The boys and men of this land’? Cluck! poor stuff. Done nothing great. The steam-engines they use? Papin! Electricity? the Voltas of Italy! Explosion motors? the French! Guns, navigation? the Chinese! Chemistry? a French science! The Saxon a gross dog — obedient! a slave: as you English aristocrats know with secret glee. William the Conqueror conquered them by one single battle. It took his sons three hundred years to conquer the Scotch, the Welsh. Not conquered the Irish yet. Gross dogs. But for the Celts around who have mixed blood, England still a fifth-rate state. As it is, great in nothing! only big. Half-discovered Uranus; invented boxing, roast beef: and I now about to teach their King’s son the secrets of boxing, and of raw beef. Even their robbing-career done now: now their turn to be robbed from. See if Japan doesn’t have Australia — Canada! and be not surprised if before you die you catch sight of the saffron Dragon-flag of the Manchus flapping from the staff atop of your Parliament-house. I say this because I happen — —”

“Make haste finish!” said the Prince, harsh and sharp.

“Yes, proud, I know! — though not of what—”

“Of being a white boy!”

“I proud of my head! though I should not wish the skin over it to be sickly, faded. White? the colour of decay! — old hair — the louse—”

“And yellow of death, of corruption, cholera, and tropical rottenness” — each speaking now with a bitterness that hissed, their faces leaning toward

each other.

“Hence English hair yellow!” said Li Ku Yu: “I have seen old Manchu women’s hair turn yellow, too, like other plants in Autumn, their skins bleach. Yet the fair races not like that through age — freak of nature! You are proud of your ancestry: but your father’s line? a fly’s lifetime to mine! As to your mother, she is only —

“*Slave!*” — Lucifer said it, and instantaneously with that lightning of his eye broke the bolt of his knuckles upon the other’s nose.

Li Ku Yu staggered, licking his blood.

He fell upon an altar-step near the east end that divided the stone floor into an upper and lower level; and, sitting there, he very deliberately took off slippers, hat, *bluse* — threw them into grass and bracken that grew thicker along the rims than in the middle, the Prince, too, throwing away cap and jacket; and he stood waiting with his fists tight, high-strung, smiling, white.

All at once Li Ku Yu, with a slight cry, was up; and without another syllable the battle began.

The Prince’s aim was mainly the eye; the Chinese aim mainly the heart.

Whenever the Prince led off with the left, Li Ku Yu would parry, and spin the Prince round by pressure on the Prince’s left; then cross-counter with a sounding pound in the unprotected right ribs — he having at this time more science than the other; but perhaps less art.

With every blow that he planted — with every blow that he received — Li Ku Yu let out a slight cry, a little scream of laughter.

But the floor was uneven, slippery — made mainly of grave-slabs, grass-grown and dislocated — and thrice Li Ku Yu, though in his socks, flew staggering; the Prince’s feet, on the contrary, were his strong point, his two legs advancing and retreating like one, at a constant angle; and, in attacking,

he advanced as if taller grown, with quite a light and dominant step, impending upon his enemy.

But both had pretty soon enough of it to please them, the flush and fun of the thing finished; and now they found themselves with the burden of its earnest on their backs, Li Ku's nose now a rotten apple, the Prince in considerable distress for breath, trickling blue blood under the right eye, both fists of both all swollen and deformed. And now the consciousness fell heavily upon their young hearts that this was only the beginning, the grimness of the game yet to come; nor was there any hope of rescue in that lonely place.

Li Ku Yu sent such a left-hander into the right side of the Prince's neck, that the Prince was driven to stand inactive several seconds, his back against the west wall, his mouth gaping, Li Ku, meantime, stooping before him in a species of crouch, just able to get out the gasp: "You done now?"

At this question, an attempt at laughter distorted the Prince's lips an instant, as he lifted his foot and kicked the Chinese fiercely on the shin.

Whereupon Li Ku Yu lost temper and form; and from that second the battle degenerated wretchedly into a horror of random rancours.

Like a cat Li Ku Yu was in the air with a cry, abandoning now the restraints of the art taught him by "Spider," and backsliding to the simple instincts of nature.

He got all his ten claws riveted on the Prince's neck, and pressed; but at the same time the Prince contrived to get the pigtail round Li Ku's throat, and pulled: a sound like a creaking proceeding out of both their crowded throats; and their faces went sombre, as under the shade of the cloud of death.

And when presently the pigtail came away from the other's head, the Prince realised that it was an ill case now with him. The face before him

had grown bony somehow, ugly to indelicacy in the nakedness of its lust; no chance of compassion there.

But the outstanding fact of the battle to a looker-on would have been this — that in every extremity the young Prince did not fail to find a way out, contriving every time to skip nimbly out of his fix, his knee in this case saving him, he kicking up with it so lucky a blow, that Li Ku Yu fell away convulsed, and fled, looking backward, as he fled, with an expression of fright in his eyes.

The Prince stumbled after, lashing feebly at him with the pigtail, laughing with distorted lips — feeble, but still dominant; and when Li Ku, flying east, came to the altar-step, he was too far gone to lift his foot enough, and, stumbling, tumbled in a lump. The Prince lashed him once with the pigtail, gasping at him: “Had enough?”

There was no answer; and he dropped back to the west wall, upon which he propped his back, thankful enough for the respite and space to draw his breath in, wondering if it was ended, or when it would end, or if no rescue would spring up out of those grassy graves to deliver two poor lads entangled there in the trap of their natures and fate.

And during some moments only the rasping drone of the two throats broke the stillness, and the prattle of a wren tripping on the west window-sill, and distant bleatings of sheep feeding in the field. Till, all at once, with a little cry of laughter Li Ku Yu was up from the step to dash himself desperately afresh upon the adversary.

After three blows only, they closed to a wrestle, the Oriental hugging in a strangling grasp of his right arm, while his left fingers got into the Prince’s shirt-collar, which he first dragged to rags, and then the vest. Meantime, though, he was being severely kicked and beaten, and suddenly experienced

a cuff so deep in the left ear, as set his cranium breaking out into cricket-song.

Again he fell away; again in an impulse of panic he ran; and again the Prince followed laughing. Past the step they pelted, on to the east wall, where Li Ku made a leap to catch the sill of the chancel-window, as if to escape that way — though the window was obviously far too narrow for a body to pass through. His first try failed, but by his second he contrived to catch the sill; and there hung stretched. Instantly, though, the Prince was dragging at a leg, gasping again: “Had enough now?” and when Li Ku Yu kicked, the] Prince grasped at him and dragged him down.

Li Ku Yu dropped...

But the instant he dropped, he again let slip his rollick cry of fight, and attacked with such a cat-o’-mountain franticness, that in the tempest of it the Prince had to retreat rapidly, panting as if to die; and, flying backward, his face to the foe, he stumbled on coming to the step, and slapped down flat. Li Ku Yu fell over him.

An Oriental grotesque in bronze now glared through that stare of the Orient as it rode its overthrown foe. The Chinese rubbed his cheek on the Prince’s, and kissed him, even as he banged upon the battered face, panting, “You done now?” and he dragged off the last of the rags from the already naked breast, gasping: “Were you *wise* to strike Li Ku Yu?” and he grabbed a handful of grass and bracken to cram into the other’s throat, panting, as he crammed it: “You done now?” and he spat his foam over the other’s face, and licked the other’s lips, and bit beastially with his teeth, and knocked at the gates of the dead under the grave-slab with the prostrate skull, asking: “Were you *wise* to strike Li?”

But his undoing was in the twinkling of an eye....

The Prince, with a twist of the wrist, swift as the swift's wing, clapped a sprig of nettle that he had grasped upon those eyeballs over him, and, in the instant of Li Ku Yu's confusion, was free.

He had fallen with one of his heels on the upper level of the step; he put up the other on it; and winning himself swiftly footward, came up with his face between Li Ku Yu's legs, who clapped his legs together, but too late.

And as Li Ku Yu himself was in the act of scrambling upright, he staggered down again upon his palms — the pigtail having been twisted with a dazzling alacrity round and round his ankles.

Long before it had dropped just there, and the Prince, on rising, had spied it. A little push behind sent the entangled Chinaman flat. The Prince sprang at him, and rapidly had the pigtail tied tight.

"Had enough?" he panted, as he himself dropped upon the platform.

"Oh!!" — as he dropped, a little cry was at the door yonder to the west, a young lady's face there.... The Prince rose on his elbow, blushing....

A minute's use of her eyes, and she uttered a sound of compunction, then came with decision to undo the pigtail, glancing daggers at the Prince.

Li Ku Yu, loosed, got up to stagger away against the north wall: and the three looked at one another.

"Oh, how could you!" — to the Prince.

The Prince glanced up to shake at her his abandoned brow, murmuring: "Not my fault."

At this point Li Ku Yu staggered from that wall to the opposite where his slippers and things were, gathered them, leant aside to whisper the Prince, "Not finished, Prince," then bowed, *o'jiji*, to the girl and staggered away out, his things on his arm.

"But where is he going?" the girl asked: "he can hardly walk."

"He doesn't live far," the Prince mourned despondently.

“And you?”

“I am at the College.”

“College?... Well, it is your own fault if I took you for a plough-boy.”

“It wasn’t my fault. I heard a cry of ‘help!’ and it was he waiting to attack me. I couldn’t give m — forgive me for offending your eyes—”

She seemed to him an angel sent to rescue him and Li Ku Yu.

“I will, then,” she said, “since that was how it was.”

At which sympathy the Prince covered his eyes and began to cry—” swing-of-the-pendulum” to softness after the grimness and tension of the fight.

“Never mind,” she said to him, “it’s over now; and you did get him nicely tied up in the end, didn’t you?”

Now her lips split in a smile, and he, peeping between his fingers, felt that he had never seen anything so neat and nice, like fine white linens.

“Well, better come with me,” she said, “let’s see what can be done”; and he followed her, picking up jacket and cap — through bracken — over a slab-stile — through fifteen yards of scrub to a marshy spot with rocks to step on, and so to the river-brink.

There is a flat spot just there — a break in the lines of cliff thick with timber that rise on both sides of the Wye; and there in the little bay a boat lay, made fast to a bunch of bulrushes.

“It is well that I got out,” she said over her shoulder: “something seemed to say to me: ‘have a look at that little church’ — and I went. Otherwise, how would you have got back to the College — and what *will* they say to you?”

“I’m afraid poor Dr Deighton will be wishing himself dead,” he said half to himself: “but not his fault, not anyone’s.”

She thought that that would be excessive of Dr Deighton to wish himself *dead* — for the thought did not happen to crop up in her mind that this might possibly be the Prince: else she might have been saved the pangs of her fate.

When he had sat opposite her, she pulled in the rope, and the tide, just turning, bore them slowly up-stream, while she worked away at wiping his wounds with her wetted handkerchief, the quick female-organs of her fancy immediately conceiving him a warrior-knight of old, victorious, though sore wounded.

He, meantime, kept his eyes on her face. “How is it I never saw you before? belong to Brockweir?”

“Nottingham! — spending three weeks with a school-friend.”

“Brockweir school?”

“No, we’re Cheltenham College girls.”

“Like Brockweir?”

“Anywhere near the sea I love. It is in me, I suppose.”

“How’s that?”

“A sea-faring lot. One of my grandfathers was a Chief Coastguardsman, the other a mercantile-marine captain; and *his* grandfather — if you can conceive a grandfather’s grandfather — fought at Trafalgar. Irish Paddies. And my father’s a Sergeant-Major of Marines, not to mention a cousin who’s a naval Boy-Telegraphist — so you see.”

His eyes dwelt on her pointed soft face, smooth-rounded like good sculpture, her pointed hat of black velvet half hiding her globe of gold-hair, her ring not costly, her brooch cheap. But with those eyes she had no need of sapphires, eyes that shrank and reproached with a shy and roguish guile. And she soothed his wounds with touches soft as fondness itself. He wished

that a compelling impulse would push her to put her lips on them, like a young mother, and make them well.

“Better now?”

“Skull all cracked to atoms apparently,” he answered: “but that’s excellent of you — oh, thanks. Pansy-petal fingers. You — should tell your name.”

“Bayley.”

“That’s the unchristian one.”

“Eulalia, then.”

“Aged sixteen and seven months,” he said.

“Just! You can hit other things beside eyes, can’t you? And *yours*?”

“Mine’s — Edward Reeks.”

“Like the Prince!... Oh, I should so like to see him before I go, to say that I have! Tell me — do you see him every day?”

“Why, yes.”

“They say that he’s not at all like ordinary princes — lots of brains and character. Is that so? And handsome—”

“Then, I am: for they say I am like him — or was. But I think I could procure you a sight of him — let me see — next Saturday, if you meet me in there by the little church. How would that do?”

His heart sank guiltily, asking it, his voice lowered: for the standard of conduct was high at home; and he had been brought up with two facts constantly hammered into his skull: that his father had married a subject; and that his father’s son never, never must, since human nature could not stand it twice.

He knew that his mother, if there to hear that rendezvous, would have been furious. Yet he could not help saying “Well?” when the girl turned her face toward the cliffs.

“It is getting cold for boating,” Eulalia said, with her begging eyes.

“Still — could you not?”

Maiden meditation.

“I’ll see if I can possibly see my way.”

“Now, decent of you!”

The turrets of the College appeared through trees beyond a bend.

CHAPTER II

OYONE



THREE DAYS AFTER the battle Li Ku Yu departed; for, though the Prince declined to tell how he had got his injuries, the whole thing had been anxiously probed to the bottom. Indeed, Li Ku's absence from the College, and his blotched body, told their own story. There had followed a solemn interview between Dr Deighton and him up at the Chinese mansion on the hill: which was the end of the spot of yellow at Brockweir.

This was no inconvenience to Li Ku Yu, who had taken care to restrain his craving for revenge until his father had summoned him home; but the fact of expulsion rankled. He sent by Chinnery one bitter line of writing to the Prince:

"You will need to wake up early in the mornings." Then he went.

But it was not until after Christmas that he started for the East. Meantime, he lived at the back of the Regent's Park house in an outhouse called the Garden House — a square structure with Norman windows and three steps in a jungle of shrubbery, all shut in by a tall wall.

Here he insolently smiled and toiled: and dining those months passed through a cruel ordeal of self-torture. The self-discipline of Spartans, of Samurai, was child's play to his then: no fire throughout that hard winter, day after - day neither food nor sleep.

When he deigned to eat, his teeth would grind a little raw rice, raw gristle, or grass; when he slept it was out on the snow in the blue cotton

dress of peasants.

All which did not please his own Oyone, the Irish-Japanese. "But you must soon be dead!" she would lament.

"If I let you stay with me, Oyone," answered Li Ku Yu, "you must not be a Tu Mu, who constantly spoke at the wrong moment."

On which she tossed her body away — a body entangled in three gold-spotted tree-snakes, seeming as boneless as the snakes; then lay silent on her face, light-looking and lithe as a withe, her eyes dwelling on him where he squatted on the floor, reading Chesney's "Military Prussia."

Anon she shivered at a whistling of wintry winds without; and anon he absently poked his finger at her hair, stuck thick with jewelled *kamachis*. Clearly, her presence pleased him in some way. In fact. Chinnery's statements about her were hardly an exaggeration, for she was of a strange and ravishing charm.

The gloaming deepened to bleak evening, until the gold god Fo only dimly glimmered on his chair of jade; and presently a head peeped in between the door-hangings, making Oyone wriggle quickly footward from Li Ku — under the head-dress (wide to the shoulders!) being a little woman shimmering in rich silks on Manchu shoe-heels inches high — Li Ku's guardian, an exile of the Yehonala clan, named A-lu-te; and she murmured unconcernedly in Mandarin Manchu: "It is the hour: of the cock; shim the passions, you children" — and vanished.

"No fear of passions," thought the frozen Oyone with a pout. And she put her face sideward with a coaxing smile, saying: "Shall I light the lanterns? You strain the sense of sight."

"To train and test it."

"But why will you kill yourself?"

Li Ku Yu now put down the book, to sit chin up, smiling his smile of triumph, like a yellow rock that sublimely smiles — clean-cut and clear, sleek and keen — hairless but for the clean clear snake of his pigtail, coarsely yellow, looking a ‘cute blade, made for business with men. “Kill? Tra-lar! It is to keep myself and all us yellow folk alive that I am bathed with the rain, and combed with the wind. Or are you not sure that you are doomed, unless a deliverer comes for you?”

“Yes, I have always thought this,” replied Oyone, springing upward like a spring to sit by him: “though I have never understood why the Fan-quei” (foreign devils) “cannot let us be.”

“Can’t help! Nature likes all-of-one-kind! — as the strongest weed in a field either kills or marries the rest. So, in time, one universal world-race — mixed — ruby-coloured — prettier and better than any at present. But, before that, we to eat the flesh of half the whites — or they ours. Be glad if I lie on brambles and eat bitterness” — his speech clean-cut like his skull: short, choppy: no word wasted.

“But you — so young—” she muttered.

“*Cluck!* the foolishness of people. They think that Li Hung Chang or Gladstone at seventy can be as wise as a child of sixteen. No science. But, even so, can they not guess that when an animal’s knee has stiffened, arteries hardened, nobler stuff of heart and liver become tough with spread of fibrous tissue, the brain cannot remain intact from all that havoc? Fact is, his brain is in the very same state as his hair, his insight as his sight. Only the young of use, Oyone.”

“I know that, too,” said Oyone, “and I intend when I am thirty to commit suicide. And because it is so, therefore the young should love, for they can spend their time in nothing that is so good as love.”

“*Cluck!* so you pretend to think: but love not nearly so good as a hero’s self-satisfaction. Yet I love you, Oyone: quick-witted — a squirrel! and though you squint — for your left eye is wider—”

Quick like quicksilver she caught his arm, twisting to stare into his eyes with a wily smile. “Do you not like them like that?”

“Maybe: for Nature has turned your very defects into traps to kidnap; still—”

“Oh, I am not vain,” muttered Oyone, kissing one of her snakes: “I know that I am not too ugly: but all we Japanese with barbarian fathers have beauty.”

“Who are barbarian? Your mother! A barbarian nation? one that thinks the thoughts of dead men. A civilised? one that thinks the thoughts of men not born. Russia, England, Spain, yes — more or less barbarian for the moment: not France, Germany much; all infected with Christianity; but none half so barbarian as China. China? land of pundits, bandits, salt-smugglers, pirates, who all spend their pious lives in making quotations from dead apes. Now, a Statesman can do much with a bandit; but a pundit? *Cluck!* send him down to the Halls of Hades to muse and quote beside the Nine Springs. Which is how I intend to begin in China — decapitations! — one-two-three. Still, the difference in eyes is a defect, Oyone; so, if I love you—”

“Kiss the little one — you may — see if that will open it wide!” — she hissed it leaning over his knees, pouring into his nose a steam of aromas.

But he remained cold as a Buddha of stone. “You won’t catch me kissing it, Oyone. Listen: I wish to speak with you seriously before I leave next week. I mean to make you some day my consort—”

She started! Then, with lowered lids: “I do not hope for that.”

“But I will” — his lids disdainfully lowered—” on one condition.”

“Yes — ?”

“I must know that you hate your father’s people, love your mother’s.”

It was too dark in there now for her to see the cunning meaning in Li Ku Yu’s eyes; and she answered: “But you know already that my mother, who was wronged by my father, brought me up to abhor Fanqueis. If abhorring could slaughter, all whites would die in one night!”

Li Ku Yu hit her shoulder and laughed. “Glad of that, Oyone, so that dining the next few years I may know that I have one like you in Europe: for you have the salt and qualities. You have taken it into your head to be very soft and love-sick to Li Ku Yu: but half of this? due to a luxury in your nature like the concubine Ti Chi’s on her Lake of Wine; the other half? to a crafty pretence, so as to get me to entangle myself with a gutter-sparrow like you — for you are deep-dyed in sin, but I deeper still, I think, and can read you. So throw all that away, enter seriously into business with me — my comrade! For which — not for your squinting eyes — you shall be my Fu Jen (legal wife) some day.”

She moved her shoulder to touch his now; her head hung dumbly.

“And don’t think,” he continued, “that it will be marrying some common Mandarin’s lamb! Truth is, I feel a great force in me, Oyone — since I was so high! — don’t tell anyone. Something spurs me to burst out into the world and tumble with whirlwinds and earthquakes for fun; and a vigour tingles within my fingers that could fly this world like a kite — lightly! It is so — somehow! — some god gallops in me. This to make you zealous. You may become like the Empress Wu, managing a continent with a strong hand, a masculine strategy, riding at my right hand the champing chargers of majesty. For you see that China and Japan are crying aloud for a master to ride them.”

She rubbed her cheek on his blue-cotton shoulder, her eyes wide in silent excitement. She breathed: "What kind of thing will I have to do?"

"You shall be my intelligence-officer, spy! perhaps financial agent, or assassin—"

"In Europe..."

"Will you not do this blindly?"

"Yes, then."

"Do not shrink from assassination for your country's good — Brutus, the *Soshi* of Japan, Corday! — for, a man's life? *tra-lar!* an Autumn leaf. The Prince of Wales, for instance — suppose some day I cable you: 'track, destroy X.'?"

Some mutter, but no answer, came from her. A snake hissed soft like a kettle in the stillness. He looked down upon her bowed head in the darkness.

"Speak, Oyone."

"Yes, then," she muttered in low throat-tones, "for my soul is on yours, Li Ku, like one clinging to a reef in the middle of the sea. Only — let one kiss you."

"Kiss me, Oyone, if that comforts you," he said; and within one tick she was fitted to him like all the eight arms of the octopus enlacing him — till he called out with an absurd matter-of-factness: "*Enough!*"

"Now, don't spoil it," she muttered with hurried reproach in the thick of her business.

"Enough, enough," grumbled the other, thrusting her roughly off; and she sat again by him, ruffled and robbed, her heart throbbing in her, both silent; till she muttered: "But why the Prince of Wales? Do you hate him for what has happened?"

“Hate? *Love!* And hate, too, for not thinking me more the Prince of Wales than himself. Destined to be a leader! cannot be still — restless! Three eyes! Sees that a wrestle between East and West is ordained — the sooner the better! since the progress of Europe the quicker at present. It should have been two hundred years ago! Before another ten, though.”

“And if the hairy devils beat?” muttered Oyone, holding a joss-stick to her cigarette-end to incense more an air already smothered with sandalwood smoke.

“Yes,” answered Li Ku, “if the struggle is on open ground! But the weakness of the white mind? its gullibility! The gift of the yellow? its guile. *Cluck!* Asia would not fight Europe square, as things are. First ruin Europe — devastate, exhaust — then overrun, garrotte — chicken and dog.”

“How first ruin?” asked Oyone, languidly smoking, her back relaxed, her throat thrown back.

“You never thought of the ways in which China could drive Europe into war?” asked Li Ku.

“How?”

“Do not repeat to A-lu-te things you hear me say!”

“As if I would.”

“Old trick of China! — to play off one white against another: only she never had the craft and grasp to carry it out grand-style. But suppose China were to pretend to grant a protectorate to Germany, a province-lease? hear the British lion roar! Or suppose that at a moment of Anglo-German strain Japan discovered that she no longer wanted all her navy — weightier now than the United States’ — and offered to sell cheap, on trust, to Germany? Can you see Germany turn from that dish of birds’-nest soup? Germany couldn’t. Then just as the purchased ships pretended to leave the East for Germany, let the secret of the deal leak out sweet as mice-in-honey: and

before the Jap ships were off Shanghai, British battleships would be battering the Baltic littoral.”

“*Banzai!*” broke from Oyone’s lips, as she slapped her sleeve, adding languishingly: “Oh, Li, I like you, a gay devil lives in you.”

“And *he* is the same, I think, this Ta-A-Ko (Prince of Wales),” said Li Ku, “so, at a time of European war, if I thought his wits might shorten the war, I should wish him down by the Yellow Springs.”

“But to reach a prince — that is not so easy,” breathed Oyone, staring.

“I’ll tell you how,” answered Li Ku with a glance of guile: “Prince has a great friendship with Richard Chinnery. Now, Chinnery? — the greatest of wits! — creative! — the Prince will probably keep near him. But Chinnery? cranky ship! — a chest-weakness affects his character — and I once dropped a letter of yours, to show him that you are not unconquerable. You, Oyone, become Chinnery’s lover.”

At this she shrank, very wounded, sighing: “Ah, how slightly you prize me....”

“Poh — nothing,” said Li Ku; “you shall still be my Fu Jen. Become Chinnery’s lover politically. And learn a little science from now, enough to spy into his inventions, and keep me posted.”

She threw up her eyes to the roof: for she was only nineteen.

Later on she became — older: but the brutality of Li Ku, Yu struck her dumb now. A fugitive eunuch looked in to mutter: “Oyone is called for,” but she did not move, took up her *koto*, and began to finger its strings, rolling low in her throat the notes of a tune most lugubriously moody, gloomier than the gloom that now brooded in the room, where only little glimmers and glammers were any longer seen, gleaming green or crimson from screen, or lacquer, or god. Outside sounds of wintry winds mouthed round the house; and she was conscious of the Chinese rocking himself as if to spread

demon-wings and fly, rocking like the snakes which reared and rocked at the song, he hugging himself as the gale raged, and Oyone's throat gave out its strange melodious moaning.

CHAPTER III

THE COUP D'ÉTAT



THE CARRIAGES THAT rolled to the Buckingham Palace ball about a year later rolled through snow, and snow was falling when, some minutes after Her Majesty had danced the square-dance, a lady came to breathe near her ear: "I understand, Ma'am, that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has arrived, and craves to know if Your Majesty will graciously grant him a ten-minutes' interview where he waits alone in the Picture Gallery."

The Queen's heart went a beat quicker. "I will do so," she gave answer with that gracious smile which distinguished her; and her steps set out slow but grew hurried.

The Prince in a splashed mackintosh, pilot cap in hand, half knelt, and then felt her heart on his.

"So here you are!"

"Here I am, Mother: straight from Paddington with Manning and Sir Martin Raine."

"I had my eyes on my watch!"

"Oh, aye, I thought I'd see if you'd see me straight away."

"Have you succeeded?"

"That's all right."

"So this is the end of Brockweir?"

"So it seems."

"Did I do well to send you to Brockweir?"

He lowered his lids to say: "You are always my lucky star, Mother."

"Sit here: I give you ten minutes, and two more for love — Oh! and I have won about Dartmouth!" — she clapped her finger-tips—" you're to travel first!"

"You always win, Mother, when I'm the stake."

"Haven't I made you a credit to your country? Haven't I? Tell me."

"Well, I think so, though I'm something of a duffer in some things."

"But you never say 'heavy as lead,' lead being rather light? you know where your pancreas is, and some little something of the Divinity of the universe you live in!"

"Oh, aye, that's all to the good."

"And you have been good, too.... *Have* you been?" The Prince rushed red as a rose. "Well, I hope so."

A little pause now — a rising of alarm in Her Majesty's eyes. She said: "Edward the Red Prince."

"Ha, ha. Really, Mother—"

"*A girl?*"

Now he looked her straight, saying: "I may have met a girl, mother."

Her eyes shut, she moving her face intolerantly, making a little lip-sound of vexation. The thing that she feared had come upon her. And there was silence.

Then: "Oh, well, Teddy, it won't do."

"Mother, I hope you are not cross. Possibly, if you knew the lady—"

"*I? Milk-maid? Frizzy hair?*"

"Oh, Mother, we have only a few minutes, and here we are out of step —"

"But stay — is it to be supposed that you are what is called 'in love'?"

"I do seem to think of one—"

“Now, how annoying. And the lady knows this? and who you are?”

“She doesn’t happen to know who I am. I did tell her once that there were immense obstacles to our uni—”

“Union forsooth, Your Royal Highness!” — Her Majesty’s eyes flashing like that Star of South Africa which bathed her brow in its blaze—” pray select your words to me with greater circumspection! *There* is the Union that concerns you” — she pointed to that huge picture of the first sitting of the Union Convention at Cape Town—” for your so ‘democratic’ colonies want their ‘Royalty’ royal, et me tell you, and Kings are not masters of themselves, but servants of the world. I am astonished that you venture to say such things to me!”

“Mother, I attend to what you say.”

“But stay,” said the Queen; “when you mentioned to the lady that there were immense obstacles — what did the lady say?”

“She said that as I conquered Li Ku, so I should conquer the obstacles.”

The Queen smiled a little now, saying: “I see! Poor little thing, I’ll think of it, and see what can be done to let her down gently. But you should have told her plainly, Teddy. Li Ku was yellow, the obstacles blue. — When, by the way, did all this rapture happen?”

“Year ago. We met just after I had fought Li Ku; then — twice; then — thrice.”

The Queen thought that an odd way of putting it — twice, then thrice: why not ‘five times’? But she only said: “And, Teddy, you never told me.”

“Mother, I longed to. But I knew there would be a frown, and I thought that if I could first manage somehow to get you to see her — then you might — I can’t quite explain — there are natural aristocrats, as you know — cellularly select — essentially precious somehow — strangely rare — gentle—”

This praise afresh alarmed Her Majesty. Her next words were: “And the lady lives — where?”

Now the Prince’s eyes sprang into wide-awakedness. “Had I better tell, Mother?”

“Weill — I think so.”

“Scott, Mother, I don’t want to have the poor girl appalled and thundered upon.”

“Well! — But if I command?”

“Your Majesty is seventy times seven my Queen—”

“And you my little king of kings. Tell.”

“Teddy” moaned. “She lives at Nottingham,”

“And her name?”

“Eulalia.”

“Eulalia what?”

“She told me Bayley.”

“Good old Teddy — hero of all my novels,” the Queen fondly said, hardly noticing the queerness of that “she told me.”

“And don’t think,” she added, “that I am going to thunder upon her. We’ll see how things go: and it is just as well that I should have her name and place. But how could she possibly like you the day you fought Li Ku? You must have been so Chineaten, Manchewed, and Sky-Blued! And, by the way, talking of Li Ku Yu, do you know what he now is? I have a letter from Sir John Pilkinton at Peking.”

“What is Li Ku, Mother?”

“A Sub-Chancellor of the Grand Secretariat. Now, think what that means — that in about a year he has romped through Pundit ‘learning,’ such as it is — has, in fact, got an Optimus in the Peking Chin Shih exam. (Doctor’s Degree) — a stiff physical ordeal, apart from the cram. So you see.”

“Oh, aye, he will do something or other,” said the Prince—” says I must get up early, and I mean to. Perhaps we haven’t seen the last of each other, Mr Chin-chin and I.”

This was to come true only four months later when the Prince got a sight of Li Ku Yu going robed in a green (official) chair through the East Gate Glorious of the Forbidden City — for before his Investiture, or his actual cadetship, “Teddy” had eaten with chop-sticks, had learned buck-jumping and stock-whip cracking in the Australian Bush, had collected uniform-buttons of Cossacks and Redifs, had bagged big game in Somaliland, and been half drowned in a flood of the Great Fish River.

By the time he was leaving Dartmouth, Li Ku Yu was carrying out a bloody reform in the administration of the Yu Chuan Pu (Post-Office); and when the Prince had been six months on the *St Vincent*, Li Ku wa sa Chargé d’Affaires, making frequent trips between Peking and Tokio.

This man never lost an hour. Steadily, like a rat darkly gnawing a hole through the night-watches, he was gnawing at the old condition of the world, with the plan of a new world ready in his head: and as at an electric shock Asia thrilled at the presence of his vigour.

His first high attempt was a secret treaty, frankly framed against the white races, between the Dragon-flag and the Rising Sun.

But in this he failed. The Anglo-Japanese alliance, though very thin-worn, still existed; and in the eyes of the Japanese Chancellery that very young diplomat, Li Ku Yu, had rather the character of a dreamer. Now, though every great man may be a dreamer, not every dreamer is a great man; and to distinguish between the two sorts of dream is not always easy. But he smiled at all contradiction with his ordinary patience, for no being ever had so unshakeable a faith in his innate kingship, trickiness, and luck.

He was always sure, too, of his Dowager. Tea-room gossip in the Capital persistently said that she was his *bonne amie*; but, then, Li Ku Yu was little of a lover, though he certainly provoked women by his very aloofness, as the sparrow attracts the cat.

Anyway, Lung Lü from the first saw in him her master; and it is probable that from the first she and he had doomed her son, the young Emperor, to death.

Lung Lü was then about thirty-five, a woman of strong mind, though much under the influence of eunuchs, and not less notorious for her orgies in the dark seclusion of her palaces than the Empresses Wu and Tzu Hsi.

Her powers were again now fairly absolute, for though the Throne had been utterly overthrown by the Constitution of a few years before, the pendulum as usual had swung anew, and the Heavenly Empire was again governed by the "Decrees" and "Edicts" of a woman's moods.

Now, the Emperor, who was sixteen, and nearly ready to take the reins, detested his mother and Li Ku Yu.

He knew well that they had sentenced him to death, if not by drug or dirk, then by the life of riot to which they pushed him, a hated life from which his frail nature was helpless to escape: for they two took care that each of the eunuchs, and even his tutors, should be his teachers in evil.

Besides, the young Emperor, who had some spirit, felt himself a fly in the presence of Li's smile, of Li's bulk of skull, whose lines bulged largely as at the horse-power of some engine pumping within: and in his head on his bed at night he meant no good to Li Ku Yu.

And there were many on his side to plot with him — Censors, Grand Councillors, the Manchu Clansmen, who all abhorred the scholar from Brockweir, the pigtail with opinions more hairy-devil than the hairy devils'.

Accordingly, upon the failure of Li Ku Yu's mission to the Court of Japan, his assassination was determined upon as soon as he should return; and, meantime, Memorial after Memorial was presented to the Throne, urging his cashiering and impeachment before the Board of Punishments.

But he did not return — to Peking. Before he left Tokio, a rebellion had broken out, once more, among “the Turbans” (Turkestan Mohammedans); and an Edict from the Throne — which Li Ku Yu wrote — gave him the Governorship of Shensi, with the command to suppress the rebellion — for he danced from office to office like dancers dashing through “the daisy-chain,” changing hands in an entanglement of arms, with laughter; and, having some instinct of the intrigue against him in the Imperial City, he passed straight on to his Yamên at Sianfu.

There he raised some militia; and with 17,000 raw levies, and one brigade from the Northern Army, started out westward — without the least experience in the handling of masses of troops.

This business occupied him fourteen months.

He had to sit down before garrisoned towns with disgraceful guns and ragged brigades; once he had to grow the millet that gave porridge to his troops; and, meantime, his discipline was so grim and rigid, that very many of his men perished on the way.

During all which, in the Throne-Hall of Exalted Peace, the young Emperor had begun to govern; Lung Lü had retired with her eunuchs and ladies to her lake-picnics, stage-plays and other delights to her I-Ho-Yüanor Summer Palace (five miles out); and at once by a Vermilion Rescript the Emperor dismissed Li Ku Yu, “permitting him to commit suicide,” and despatching another General to take his place.

The body-guard of “Old Style” soldiers, carrying great two-handed swords, who surrounded this General, were pounced upon by the rank and

file of Li Ku Yu's soldiers, who adored him, and were killed by the "slicing" process, then dismembered. The heads of the General and of the Commissioner who had come to inspect Li Ku Yu's suicide, were carried for days on the markers' standard-staffs of two rear-guard companies.

Thus Li Ku Yu crossed the Rubicon, and broke with the Throne of his country.

By this time his military advance had grown more rapid — it gradually grew rapid to a ravaging avalanche. He scourged Turkestan as far as Kashgar of man, cattle and plant. Never did regiments leave in their rear so complete a desert. In captured cities his troops ran riot like terriers let loose on rats; they cracked the skulls of the young upon rocks; they hacked off the bosoms of mothers before they stabbed them; for intervals of three hundred miles not a thing was left alive where their withering fire had run.

It was on his return march from Kashgar that he despatched couriers to make the vast order of 125,000 cinematographs through the agency of a German firm at Shanghai.

As his victorious host approached the Capital, crackers spattered in every town, and the Dowager despatched him a poem of congratulation, a Dragon-robe, four rolls of "auspicious" silk, twenty pounds of swallow-nests, and a tablet bearing the inscription: "Backbone of the State."

Now, on the Emperor's seventeenth birthday, his mother had summoned before her the most beautiful of the daughters of noble Manchu families, from whom to select a score of ladies for her son's harem; and among those selected had been a certain Nihulu, a half-sister of Li Ku Yu — Li's own mother being a Chinese woman, though his father was Manchu. And this Nihulu contrived to send him out a message when he was still ninety miles from Peking, saying that his death was a settled thing, if he once entered the city.

The next morning at the Hour of the Hare (six) Li Ku Yu entered the city by the Shih Che (N.W.) Gate — apparently alone — in peasant's dress: he had come flying through the night, as the vulture stoops: and he proceeded southward toward the Imperial City.

At that early hour the Supernal Countenance was granting audience to the Grand Councillors, Princes, and Ministers of the Presence in the Pavilion of Ceremonial Phoenixes in the Lake Palace; and there they were kneeling, looking pigmy in a room most gloomily grand, grouped round the Dragon Throne, on which sat the Glorious One, his face to the south.

Li Ku Yu was still felt to be at a safe distance away, and they were discussing the disposing of the troops at their command in the Capital, when suddenly Li Ku Yu, two pistols in his hands, was among them like the typhoon's swoop — darted in howling, astounding the heart, a sort of laugh distorting his bawling mouth, as he howled: "I am here to save Your Majesty from your enemies!" in shouting which he half-knelt — without kow-towing, and instantly was up again.

Now, one may not enter unsummoned, nor stand up. So, pallid as death, the boy-Emperor sprang to his feet, frantically pointing, screaming out: "Why, that man has designs upon my life! You see him there, that man? My Guards! My Guards!"

In flocked a mob of guards and eunuchs; but at the same time revolvers were crackling outside; and almost at once a half company of infantry in civilian garb darted into the hall.

A few shots were exchanged, a few corpses dropped, while Li Ku Yu, grasping the Emperor, held him behind his body, as if to protect him; and then Guards, Ministers, eunuchs, fled pell-mell. But only to be everywhere captured outside by the battalion in mufti which now surrounded the Imperial and Forbidden Cities. They were Li Ku Yu's veterans.

At the same time Lung Lü was reclining on the lofty deck of a large barge-of-state carved with dragons and phoenixes, coming along the canal that leads from Summer Palace to Imperial City: for she was duly in the secret of the *coup d'état*; and she issued an Edict that day in her son's name:—" ill-health had moved him to implore his Most Holy Mother to resume the onerous duties of a ruler for him."

Four months later the poor boy robed himself in the Ceremonial Robes of Long-life, turned his face to the south, mounted the Dragon, and was carried rotten to the stars.

He had been put into semi-imprisonment in the South lake Palace, surrounded by a foul crew of eunuchs and scoundrels, and died of many things.

CHAPTER IV

AUSTRALIAN GOLD



LI KU YU, for his part, put on the Double-eyed Peacock's Feather, with a Marquisate of the First Rank, and other honours; and his government began.

Those of his enemies who had been captured were set free unpunished; those who had fled in all directions one by one crept back, and, to their utter astonishment, were left unpunished — Li Ku Yu too big and busy to think of punishing them.

It is true that under his rule very many fell; but the lingering death and dismemberment fell into disuse.

The men upon whom he meditated with a malign and silent eye were men of the harmless "scholar" sort, who thought that they knew a lot, but knew nothing — the official who chanced to quote from Confucius, or Mencius, or Jesus, or Buddha, from the Philosopher Chu or Chou, from Wang Hou's "Admonitions to ms Sons," or "The Book of Ceremonies" of the Chou Dynasty: sooner or later that scholar's neck would skip off him beyond the city walls; flashing was the falchion that slashed him; crude and ruthless the dawn of the morning of his execution: that afternoon he quoted no more.

One other man, too, stood in more ticklish danger than ever — the millionaire, whose wealth, when his head fell, could be confiscated. From this source alone the Empress was said to have accumulated in two years eighty million taels in the vaults of the Palace of Celestial Purity, where she

was accustomed to govern behind the curtain of yellow silk that veiled her and her chief eunuch from the view of men.

Meantime, the cargo of ordered cinematographs had arrived — Li Ku Yu's first open act of war against the Christian races.

He himself was head-master of one of the schools which he instituted to teach the use of the machines; he himself invented many of the “plots”—”plots” which had only one subject in infinite variety — a combat between white men and yellow, white women and yellow. And ever the yellow ended best man, disembowelling the colourless mouse, cutting out his or her tongue, bamboozling him in business, hacking out his heart, dancing on his carcass.

These films went out to districts of China and Japan where it was not even known that there were such things as white men; and, the entrance fee being only a few *li*, they soon proved popular apostles of atrocity, became a dissipation, an all-day orgy of fun to hundreds of millions — for Li Ku Yu intimately knew the mood and instincts of his countryman.

When the Embassies protested against these shows, and against the multitude of new “Government Gazettes” which had begun to promulgate the same two gospels of greed and cruelty, Li Ku Yu constantly promised that “the evil should be checked”; and advised them, meantime, to get permission to increase the strength of the Legation Guards!

About this time, when Count Markino, the Japanese Ambassador, said to him: “China must wake from four thousand years of sleep, Your Excellency,” Li Ku Yu answered: “Different degrees of wakefulness! China is awake! You know what woke her.”

“Tell me again,” the Count said, smiling.

“It was the gonging of the English guns that captured the hill forts above Canton in 1841: she stretched then. They thought themselves very big and

godlike, capturing the poor Tartar General — and they ‘catching a tartar,’ as they say. It was the gonging of the guns in 1857 when the French and British bombarded the south coast; she rubbed her eyes then. It was the gonging of the French guns which shelled the junks in the Sun River in 1884, and of the guns of all the globe which bombarded Peking in 1900: *tra-lar!* she stood up then, and looked around. Beware who touches her! She is the Dragon and grand Anti-Christ: she stands awake.”

“Dreadful: if only the dragon had teeth in her gums,” said the other.

“Wait four months,” muttered Li Ku Yu.

Within those four months a beginning of Conscription on the Swiss model was made throughout China — a thing at which imagination fails.

It chanced that just then Germany and England were at loggerheads over an African tract; also, just then, Persia was afresh in some trouble with Russia; and some Russian squadrons at Resht were afresh ready to rush upon Teheran.

Now, since the Russo-Japanese war, the Persian fancy had rather been aburn at Japan’s Pan-Asian dream; and several secret Persian (as well as Indian!) missions had gone in pious pilgrimage to Tokio and Peking.

So Persia, in her adversity, now turned to Japan: for England, with Germany on the nerves, had been flirting with Russia ever since the Convention of 1907, and afresh shirked meddling in the Persian mess. Persia turned to Japan, asking “How long?” and Li Ku Yu flew to Tokio.

He had now more than all the weight and authority that he needed; being recognised, even in Europe, as the very greatest force in the Orient.

He was “Adviser to the Throne”; Viceroy of the Metropolitan Province.

He had dared to display apricot yellow in the hangings of his palanquin — a piece of cheek that caused him to be the idol of all Southern China.

Indeed, he had already assumed not a few of the airs of Royalty. To the amazement of men his name had “doubleelevation” in documents. He pompously accompanied the Empress to the Eastern and Western Tombs, and dared to take a principal part in her sacrifices to river, or ancestor, or deity.

Moreover, the man pretended to magic, the rapt eye, Divine inspiration, and gift of miracles — a pretence made pretty easy for him to maintain by his intimacy with scientific things.

The Chinese believe that a Divine Saviour periodically arises for China: Li Ku Yu said: “Look into my brazen eyes, and see Him.”

On reaching Tokio, he now afresh proposed his “secret treaty”; and he proposed, in addition, the following plot:

(1) That China should apply for a German loan, offering as security a protectorate of Shantung — this to electrify the Anglo-German atmosphere.

(2) That the Persian Megliss, meantime, should be urged to knuckle under to Russia; and the Persian incident be used to bring about a (sham) *rapprochement* between Petersburg and Tokio.

(3) That Japan should now openly declare that she really no longer needed all her warships, now that she lay happy on the breast of the Bear.

And (4) that she should then secretly offer to sell to Germany — which should end in Anglo-German war.

But again the international juggler failed.

The Japs, indeed, now agreed to the secret treaty: but as regards the sweeter part of the intrigue, although they grinned with greedy interest, they shook sagacious beads. There were dangers — and no hurry. Some other time.

Li Ku Yu said: “Wise men think in the future, but fools live in it.” He was very bitter in those days; called the Japanese by his bitterest word—”

pedants”; and prepared to return to Peking.

He had still one rendezvous at the Foreign Office to keep, when one evening there came to him at the Embassy a cypher-cable from London — from Oyone, his Irish-Japanese — which said: “England gone wild to-night. Wonderful discovery gold Australia.”

Li Ku Yu slapped his sleeve; and he cried: “*Tra-lar!* the tricky are even luckier than they are tricky.”

He did not keep his rendezvous at the Foreign Office the next day — was “ailing”; and he ailed eight days, - until the still-coming news of the new Eldorado had well saturated the Japanese head.

Gold in “back-of-beyond country” of North-Western Australia on No Man’s Land! And no grudging Palmer’s Diggings, apparently, or niggard Coolgardie, granting a wage to the digger’s sweat, but, by all accounts, a Golconda, grounds rugged with nuggets, crags of gold, a coast of gold, with glancing sands!

Already within eight days of the first bursting out of the tidings, the world’s eyes were turned that way, the world purchasing kit-bags for the journey....

And Japan was padlocked out: her nationals had to write fifty words of English dictation, nicely spelled, before landing; captains were fined a hundred pounds for allowing a yellow man to escape to land.

“The fate of men and nations who delay!” said Li Ku Yu: “God, Marquis, will pardon every sin, except the unpardonable sin — the waste of time. *Cluck!* let a man be bold to-day, and to-night all the stars will clap their hands at him, calling to him: ‘*You are one of us!*’ Really, I can’t think of a reason why this field of riches is not in Japanese territory to-day.”

The Chinaman now had the negotiation all his own way, as if he was dealing with dazed men: for the gold-find in Australia appears to have

deeply digged at the greed of the little people of Nippon.

Among the high there were searchings of heart; to delight the low the *Ju Ju* newspaper used the withering word “*cranes*” against the governors of its country.

Li Ku Yu flew back to China, chin up, smiling at the horizon — with pledges in his portfolio.

CHAPTER V

THUNDERY WEATHER



TWO MONTHS LATER the rapprochement of Russia and Japan was a fait accompli; and at the same time a new 18,000,000 Chinese loan was on the counters of the Deutsche-Asiatische Bank.

At this thing England, as it were, started! The Banque de l'Indo-Chine had some under-part in the handling of the loan — but no British, no American, syndicate. And immediately a feeling of unease ran through our land.

It was as when wild-fowl in flight foreknow tempests from the puffy fuffs and the scent of thunder, and ten thousand outcries of fright are drowned within the row of rising winds.

Queer things seemed at work in the world, purposes, symptoms, like thieves' feet creaking in corridors at midnight, causing one to finger one's trigger. But as to their meaning, the scheme had been too subtly plotted for any mind to construct the pieces in the right sequence. The Prince of Wales wrote to the Queen from Queensferry: "Things seem singular to me, though I don't quite see what's what. Why should the Mikado wish to rush like this into Russia's arms?"

It was on the morning of the 11th of October that a Peking telegram of Reuter's Special Service asserted that Germany had been offered the lease of the Shantung Peninsula as guarantee, on similar terms as Kiao-Chow, Port Arthur, Wei-hai-Wei, and Mirs Bay.

“Never,” said Manchester and the City.

“But yes,” said Potsdam through the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*.

So it was true? In an apparently inspired article *The Times* declared that if China was going to be partitioned in this fashion, then the Yangtse Valley was due to England. Upon which Russia, France, clapped hand to dirk against Germany, against England, against vague Fate. The heads of men commenced to dizzy in the chaos and uncertainty of contradictory interests, the whirl of forces working of themselves. A Polar Ocean was breaking up: but as to how the masses might range themselves in the crash the Creator alone knew.

The world had as yet no Government. Each nation had: but the planet was an Anarchy, a rabble of nations without arrangement or police, where each might murder, cheat, or steal at its own sweet will.

For fifty years Germany had conceived the idea that she needed “colonies”: she did not need any “colonies”: but the fact that she passionately imagined that she did was an urgent fact which a world-Government would have looked to.

Everywhere in her frenzy for “colonies” she had been blocked. Did she look toward Brazil? — there was the Monroe Doctrine. Did she dream of cotton-fields waving over Asia Minor? — eight million Magyars, chattering an Asiatic language, ranged themselves against her peaceful penetration of the Near East.

When she aimed at the Germanisation of Trieste and Fiume as “outlets,” a handful of Croatian Slavs under Hungarian and Italian influence waxed angry. When she wished to win the goodwill of Galicia and the Austrian Poles by soft-soaping the Poles of Posen, Petersburg impeded the eastward eagle of Teutonic ideas and capital by going one better in benevolence to her own Poles.

Her “Drang Nach Osten” toward Constantinople, Syria, Mesopotamia was blocked by the Balkan States. Her vision of an Austro-German Empire washed by the North-Sea was a vision still — the “Balance of Power” blocked her.

What, then; was the good of that mass of army toeing the globe with challenging eye, chin up, of that weight of navy big with child, whose expense kept the spectre of bankruptcy ever at her elbow?

Whether her own fault or Fate’s, it could not last! She was poor for nothing! Her red-hot energies raged like men fighting in a fire in a nightmare, — and for nothing! she was bewitched, she was stung with the tarantula, she danced frantically, and no locomotion, she swelled monstrously, and not with porridge, but with dropsy.

It could not last — she was too ‘cute, and not wise enough, too strong, and not great enough.

In these very days of the Russo-Japanese *rapprochement*, of the loan, and of the question of Shantung, hot rancour was in her heart at the withdrawals of capital by Paris and London, large selling orders, and drop in securities. She was poor still!

But Shantung seemed luscious to her — a piece of luck to be seized; and the Kaiser made a dinner-speech. He was a neurotic character, who ranted, and had Anglophobia — and the Heir-Apparent still more! though our Queen had fixed upon his sister, the Princess Elizabeth, to be the wife of our “Teddy.” He was said to have some ability — was then a ship’s-commodore.

The German High Seas Fleet was thereupon recalled from Autumn Manoeuvres on the Norway coast; our First and Fourth Destroyer Flotillas were operating with specific orders about the Orkneys and North Sea; submarines were on the watch at Lamlash; the First and Second Battle and

Cruiser Squadrons were mobilised about Queensferry and Cromarty. There was a rumour that they were being cleared for action. Twice in five days there were meetings of the Cabinet. Bread had gone up a penny a quartern.

The French First Line of Defence was mobilising in Toulon Harbour; three brigades of Zouaves from North Africa had landed at Marseilles.

In the midst of which world-turmoil, how perplexing the news, flashed by a New York Herald correspondent, that the new Kotohito Ministry had promised the Diet enormous economies in the Naval Estimates — a drop of two hundred and fifty million yen (25,000,000'sterling)!

The Chancellor's speech had dwelt upon the cordial relations of Japan with all nations, upon her poverty, upon the immorality of the monstrous armaments of modern man...!

Did Japan, then, no longer need a navy? Was the outlandish yellow ally of England failing her in the hour of need?

Wire on wire! like lightnings winking here, there, here, when the weather is weird, and peewits wheel and wail....

But on the afternoon of the 22nd the Under-Secretary, Sir B. S. Gilbert, stated in the Commons that the situation was still not beyond the skill of diplomats; for if Germany would but leave unfettered the land-taxes and Custom-dues of Shantung, which furnished part of the source of repayment of the last British loan, a *modus vivendi* might yet be discovered. And that night London went to bed with a quieter mind. Many gales had gathered, and had passed again.

But three terrible days of strain followed, in which Whitehall waited for a reply from Wilhelm-Strasse, and none arrived....

And on the fourth day an intense interest took hold upon Englishmen at the rumour of a most singular meeting — at Kônigsberg — between the

Tsar, the Kaiser, their two Foreign Ministers, and Mons. Cambertin of the Quai d'Orsay.

When England gathered that France was there in the conference, she said: "And you, too...?"

The old "Entente Cordiale" was a phrase of the earlier years of the century; but its spirit, one hoped, lived. France stood for Light, England for Good-will: if they two fought, then the Kingdom of God was divided against itself.

And, if they fought — with Morocco now "a second France" — Gibraltar was useless, Suez blocked, Malta gone — especially if Spain was with the Continentals. For, with Tarifa fortified on one side of the Straits, and on the other Tangier, the heights of Gibel Musa, and the low-lying dunes by Ceuta bristling with batteries, then the Mediterranean Fleet was in prison.

How would France go, if it was war, in truth, at last? That was the question now. Would her larger light fail her, her world-instinct, and temptation prevail with her? Rumours, rumours, flew from agitated lip to agitated lip. *The Daily Mail* had information that Germany, in her urgency to attract the alliance of France, was lavishing the wildest offers — Alsace-Lorraine! a whole North-African Empire! *The Telegraph* gave it that the Persian Gulf, India, Manchuria, Mongolia were to go to Russia. It was reported that crowds were daily ranging about Berlin singing old Schneckenger's *Wacht am Rhein*; that in the *bureaux* of the British Ambassadors at Berlin, at Petersburg, were already declarations of war.

And if Russia was going, must not France, too, go with the powers of darkness? The Franco-Russian Alliance, indeed, had lapsed; but its habit and leaning persisted. In which case, England stood alone to sink or swim with America? who might have enough to handle west and south? For all

saw that, if it was war at last, then it was war world-wide and final, to terminate in a new earth, and a new look of the skies.

CHAPTER VI

THE GIRL IN THE CROWD



ENGLAND, MEANWHILE, REMAINED careless of face, with faith in the old luck; and men did their business, saying little of the knell in their inwards. There were distrains for rent, a ballet at the Alhambra, and marriages, and preachings in streets.

But on the night of the 29th the nation gave way to a gush of emotion. It was a misty night, starless, with horses lying wrecked in the slime of streets — about ten-thirty; when suddenly through Bloomsbury, Tooting, newsboys ran clamouring in twos, startling the darkness as with news of doomsday.

They were selling a special ten-o'clock edition of Evening News, which had in it five wild lines of pica. It had come from Paris roundabout by Mackay-Bennett cable: and it stated that 860,000 tons of Super Dreadnoughts had been sold by Japan to Germany — were under weigh, with coal-ships, store-ships.

Whereupon it was a question of postage-stamps that night, for at once the men of London were flying with fire in their eyes to pen and paper, writing to the papers, writing to Whitehall. To Arms! To Arms! — no talk, no nonsense. “*To Arms!*” re-echoed every paper the next day; and white lips in Whitehall whispered “War!” For no one knew one atom which way God’s arm was dragging France: the Home Fleet might be hopelessly outweighed...!

Only one dissentient letter appeared — in *The Times*. The writer advised calm: he, for his part, did not believe that those Japanese ships would even reach European seas, since, by putting two and two together, he could now see that the whole scare was a piece of Chinese chicane.

But this attracted no attention: it was not divined that the writer was the Prince of Wales, who the previous day had hastened south to town, to speak with the Queen.

All that day the Government gave no sign, though panic was in the City, and traffic stopped within a mile of Westminster. It was known that the Brighton and South-Coast Railway were under Government Orders, that the War Office, Foreign Office and Admiralty were feverishly in intercommunication; but the people had to go borne unsatisfied at midnight: no Cabinet Minister had been present at Questions in the Commons.

That evening, however, something was said at a house in Grosvenor Place where the Queen was in a set of ten.

After dinner one of three men told a story of a mission-teacher in China, who was pointing with pride to the British reds on the map, when his crowd of boys with one voice drowned him in the shout: “You robbed them!” This anecdote had the effect of making Her Majesty’s eyes flash fire; and she cried:

“Robbed them from whom? No part of a planet in space can possibly be robbed, since the man or tribe that it is robbed from cannot possibly have any special right to it. But let’s call it robbery, since our own barbarous old laws call it robbery: then I say, may someone so rob from *me*, robbing my coppers, and dropping sovereigns into my pocket! Is it not cruel, ladies, how the mood of this country has been everywhere misunderstood? The oceans and shores were made roomy for roaming in, and her sons have gone out, looking the sun gallantly in the face — not all-unconscious of the stars,

I think — with harmless high hearts that meant well to men. Is someone somewhere the worse for it? Who is not the better? Every port on the globe would be thrown open, if England could throw it! and we have called to all, ‘these our conquests are yours, too: come, buy wine without money.’ What wind that blows is of a mood more boundless than this bounty? Is the ocean, our home, larger than our hearts? Aren’t we the fatherland of the outcast, and the ally of the cowering and downtrodden? Why, ladies, I think that somewhere in the universe there must surely be some Tribunal or Jury where such action is passionately approved, and officially stamped ‘In Tune.’ And are we to be plotted at, and potted at, and tinned off the earth? Oh, I am no Chauviniste or hiccuping Jingo: we here know that the French are more intelligent and mentally liberated than we, the Germans more organising and orderly: yes, but there are certain world-ideals of conscience, of generosity, of moral pride, which are special to us, and are very precious — we are the salt in the ham! and deserve to live. Our friends, the French, we reckoned mightily ‘polite’ and warm, because they bow low: they may be so; and we pretty rigid and chill: but what I assert I know, that there’s more murmuring mercy breaking and blessing bread in one good English breast than in any ten roods of Continental territory. We have that: yes, and we have another quality that’s of some value — luck! — favouritism with the Soul of Things — luck: a quality innate in personality, I think — a mental trait: we have it. And so, on the whole, I say, ladies, Bravo, John Bull! you’re a bit stodgy on your stumps, but you are something of a credit, and much of a blessing to your planet; and I say, ladies, let them all come, the whole concerted world, and this little mole of earth is of a temper and mettle that’ll hurl their hosts superbly off her in the name of the Eternal Purposer, as she spurns the surfs of the oceans that chum on her shores.”

Her Majesty spoke with so gallant and angry an arrogance glancing in her eyes, that some of the more high-strung shrank abashed and thrilled, for Her Majesty seemed queen enough to lift her arm and order the stars on their orbits, or bid storms submit. And at once among the men the word went: “Oh, well, war is certain, or she wouldn’t have spoken like that— ‘let them all come.’ ...”

Gossip of this incident got into all the clubs that night, and thence into the newspaper offices. The next morning — that last day of October — war was taken for granted: war of one slight David against a gang of Goliaths-of-Gath.

But there was no certainty, till an early eleven-o’clock fourth edition of *The Star* confirmed it.

This was bought up like hot cakes in the streaming streets: and it was with a thrilling solemnity that those three little lines of print fell upon men’s minds: “The Stock Exchange has suddenly closed. The Government is appointing private brokers to transact necessary business.”

This news could not reach the region of Westminster, which was already one mass of humanity; but a medical student, who had got a copy, gored his way like a bull to one of the lion-bases in Trafalgar Square, dragged himself up on it, and read out the momentous thing. Which done, he roared red-throated: “This means that you are in for it, you beggars, are you downhearted?”

“No!!” howled a thousand mouths at him.

“Are you still English?”

“Yes!”

“That’s all right,” he muttered, and jumped down.

“Absurd person,” murmured Richard Chinnery to his own Oyone, who stood pressed sandwichlike to his breast. She smiled up at him, and a wild

kind of light lit her eyes an instant, and died out. But Chinnery did not like this. He had been pulled from his house in the Horseferry Road by Oyono to see the ado; but the fate of nations very little interested Chinnery; and now he stood there pressed and in prison: for like a passionate ocean lashing a shore London was dashing her multitudes, mass on mass, toward her middle; and those who occupied the windows saw hats that day, and caps.

This million of men, wetted all day by a steady little mizzling, would have been pitiable in its lack of knowledge; but whoever had telephone, tape-machine, or wireless turned themselves into newsagents; and squares of paper in many façades told the latest, or uttered some thought that was in all hearts.

For passion had banished for the moment the national habit of stoic mumness. “Alone Against Europe” stood some time at *The Christian World*,” and “No Ally But Our Own Arm,” at a picture-shop at Charing Cross.

And ever and anon regions of the throng would be seized with song: yonder, then yonder, the Rule Britannia would be droning, like the bumble-bee that becomes dumb here, but then hums out there, all a summer’s day.

“Look,” said Eulalia Bayley at about two o’clock, she being then jammed with a married sister not far from the Admiralty; and she pointed to a square of paper at the Cockspur Street corner, on which had just been written up:

“German, Austrian, Italian, and Russian Ambassadors have left Victoria.”

“Which means war with the lot of them,” said Eulalia’s sister, Alice.

A dew lay in Eulalia’s eyes, like dew in blue-bells, her bosom moved. She was silent; but then said: “But not the French.”

“No, that’s true,” muttered Alice: “I wonder!”

The bells of St Martin's-in-the-Fields broke out, slowly telling the notes of "Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom."

But now mounted police drove the crowd round the sisters into still closer pressure, clearing a way down Whitehall: for the crisis had taken the police by surprise; and Members had to pass somewhere, since it was nearly three — a Thursday.

Before long shouts were greeting them, as they moved one by one in cabs toward the House, with cries of "give it 'em hot!" as one or the other was recognised. But it was hours before any certain news came out of the House. As night fell, the Junior United Club's paper-square had it: "*Invincible* and *Inflexible* have left Lamlash westward: possibly to convoy *Mauretania*" — making Chinnery sigh with utter *ennui*: a night dark and thick with drizzle-spray, unlit in some places by street-lamps, which no lamplighter's effort could reach. There was a paper-square statement at Haxell's Hotel that "A Paris crowd round the Chamber of Deputies is now singing 'God Save the King,'" but in the darkness there hardly anyone saw it. By that time those who had brought no provisions had grown hungry and faint.

At seven Eulalia and her sister had been drifted in the currents and eddies of that sea all down Birdcage Walk: and it was thus that, for the first time, Eulalia came to see the Queen, who soon after seven appeared with the King and Prince on the East Balcony of the palace.

A comet's tail of luminosity, whose hazy glare shot a longish way into the foggy gloom, illumined the group: and the sisters got a good view. The Queen was smiling down, almost laughing, it seemed, at that ocean whose drone of cheering rolled more and more remotely away from her feet, and then in fresh waves rose once more, and droned, and rolled repeatedly: and

her eyes that night shone bright as with some sublime joy, some wondrous triumph.

At her left hand stood the King dressed *amiral*, and on his left the Prince, looking sullen or shy, *en lieutenant*; and, vaguely suggested behind them, a group of the royal family — among them the German Princess Elizabeth (“Teddy’s intended”), who had been visiting the English Court, and been caught here in the storm.

Eulalia’s eyes were nailed to the Queen. And presently she breathed: “Isn’t she a wonderful woman!” And presently again: “One could die for *her*.”

Then, as her eyes shifted to the Prince, she threw them on high, with the sigh: “Ah, Heaven, how like!” — as she always sighed on seeing a photograph of the Prince.

She resolved to greet her “Edward Reeks” on the morrow morning with the words: “My Prince!” — for she had a rendezvous with him at Chinnery’s at ten A.M.

But her attention was drawn away from the balcony by an extraordinary yell of many thousands of mouths that now broke out — up Piccadilly way, it seemed — and came roaring and roaring toward her, accompanied by an agitation of hats shaking in the air, like agitated aspen-tops twinkling in a wind.

“What can it be?” murmured Alice on tiptoe, with stretched chin.

“Whatever it is, the Queen knows,” said Eulalia: “look! she is laughing!”

But the cause of this noise will be better seen before the National Liberal Club, whither Chinnery in his chest-wrappings and his Oyone, had now been drifted.

Chinnery by this time was in a rather pitiable way. He had brought in his pockets two quartern bottles, one containing water, one wine; and some

moments before the tumult of that yell that Eulalia wondered at, he had given a flying wild glance round, and drunk the last of the water — that glance not being due to the presence of others, since he glanced like that fifty times a day whenever he drank, though quite alone.

At twenty-seven he was a dipsomaniac — not meaning a drunkard, for he drank water oftener than wine; but he must ever be drinking a gulp, and from a bottle; and before each gulp a thievish glance round!

And now both water and wine had failed him, and he was very weary and uninterested.

Usually he was the essence of patience and sweetness; everyone said of Chinnery: “he is such a gentleman!” — and “gentle” he was: for, though recognised by critics of intellect as being by far the greatest brain on the face of the globe, his goodness of heart made him such that he could be fooled by any woman, or led by any child.

But now he was in such a mess there, that he let a peevish word escape him. With a wrinkled forehead, he said: “This is a terrible thing! Am I to die here among these idle people?”

Oyone, as brisk and fresh as at noon, answered: “But it amuses!”

“In that case there is nothing to be said,” said Chinnery. “But, as for me, I doubt whether I shall get any sleep after this day. And at nine in the morning the Prince of Wales is coming to visit me....”

She made no answer — stood there suddenly blanched, half-fainting, pressing on his arm.

“I did not know that,” she remarked presently in a low tone.

“I had a letter this morning. He has seen something in a paper about the air-boat, guesses that it is due to me, and wants to see it, I suppose.”

During many moments now Oyone stood mute, meditating.

Two days before this, she had telegraphed to China part of that letter of the Prince in *The Times*, which tried to expose the Chinese political plot; and Li Ku Yu had recognised in the letter the “Brockweir style”; had said: “The Prince”; had taken fright; and had wired to Oyone a certain most sinister code-word.

Hence her faintness when she heard that the Prince was coming, of his own accord, into her power the next morning.

After ten minutes she said: “I find that I must go.”

“But, dear, how?” asked Chinnery.

“Somehow. You come behind me.”

“Oyone, it would kill me!”

“Stay, then. See you to-morrow afternoon.”

She turned, begged her way, attacked, battled, begged her way, gained a yard, hot, envenomed, her hand against every man, yard after yard, ragged, streaming, unwearied — resistless.

When she had gained Tottenham Court Road, she could run here and there; and she ran till she was in her own room in the Regent’s Park house.

There she put match to a lantern, in whose opal glamour she looked a lovely hag in her bedraggled dress and redhotness; and she got from a cabinet a kokotana dagger, a god, and incense-sticks, her object being to fumigate the dagger through the night, and thus curry favour with gods in whom she did not believe.

And she lay writhing, wringing her hands, moaning for awe and dismay of what lay before her, pitiably in travail with a thousand terrors: for she was the greatest coward! — and yet one of the bravest of beings, desperately brave at the decisive instant in spite of clammy hands and dying heart. And even as she lay there heaving up white eyes of appeal,

grovelling, groaning, she was planning the deed she had to do. Then, like a witch, she set to making spells and incantations over the' weapon.

Meantime, Chinnery, left by himself, had been pricked into interest in his country, when that yell that amazed Eulalia Bayley farther west broke out here also, as it broke out here and there all over Central London. The National Liberal Club put up on its illuminated paper-square the words: "France! Hurrah! our Ally!"

Up Parliament Street another facade had: "France our Ally! Hurrah!"

Even as men cheered, they looked about them for hands to wring. Before the National Gallery steps a little Swiss barber (mistaken for French!) was snatched to men's shoulders and passionately exhibited amid cheering which reached to the night's dim sky. Men sang and danced. In clubs men, lifting their glasses to clink, looked into one another's eyes, and muttered "France"; in public-houses; in hotels; or they grasped one another's hands, and with eyes not dry, said: "France." The Light had not failed....

CHAPTER VII

THE “MAURETANIA”



THE MORNING AFTER dawned bleak, with an easterly sea running wet, and convulsive wind.

When the night began to lift a little at five bells in the morning watch, the Mauretania was in longitude $10^{\circ} 37'$, and, in the centre a hall all vault and water, was vaulting her eastward way like a foxhound in the teeth of the swell — making haste! as when the cockchafer is conscious of the hawk not far.

She was deeply laden — with wheat; for twelve days previously, when skies had darkened, she had been taken by Government from bearing globe-trotters, and despatched to Canada for food-stuffs — she, like her Lusitania sister, having been built by Government subvention to Government specification; and at the same time the Inflexible group of cruisers, too, had been laid down, with the same contract speed — 25 knots: the idea being that, in war, the two globe-trotters, with their cargocarrying dead-weight of 80,000 tons, convoyed by the cruisers, might maintain between them a food-supply of some 20,000 tons a week.

Hence she ran there pressed, pregnant, a rat in a tract of cats, three of her four black-and-red funnels puffing breath, her crowd of cowls showing steam, spray reaching to that four-storied street of top-hamper that ran and sprang, three lines of lights still twinkling along her length, like watchlights within some mansion of romance, which show strange and garish in the

glare of day. And the winds of that daybreak sang weird snatches of sea-songs within her funnels' throats, like banshee-dirges and birds of boding, moaning omens.

For the sea is deep, and the 70,000 haughty horses that hauled her had still far to snort and haul.

But at six minutes to seven by the ship's chronometers she understood that she was not alone, and felt safer.

Her captain, raw-eyed for lack of sleep, was drinking black coffee among the trees of the verandah-café, when a message from the wireless-room came in — bidding him report his whereabouts and course to the *Inflexible*; and ten minutes later came another: "Prick your course three points to port."

The captain sprang up with a light in his eyes. "Which means hawks about," he said to his first officer: "the British must have a destroyer or something out scouting."

"And hawks about," answered the other, "means hawks sent out beforehand — the treacherous wretches: for war doesn't seem to have been declared till yesterday."

They spoke, as it were, secretly, hoarsely, like conspirators.

"Prick her off," said Captain Arthur, "and try her with another half-knot: let her rip."

And she went ripping, until the crow's-nest was suddenly telephoning, an agitated watchkeeper was pointing toward the clouds, and a surgeon who had been idly eyeing the winds winnowing within his beard at the lounge-door, glanced at the sky, and pitched with tidings toward the bridge, employing his pipe as a pointer.

Up there in the air was a monoplane flying north-west, the size of a swallow; and within two minutes her engine's singing was with them.

“They’ve got me,” muttered the captain glass-gazing: “it’s a fight.”

“Or she may be British,” suggested the surgeon.

“British to the north,” the captain said, “she from the south. Be ready for some red to-day.”

No voice there quivered; only, the eyes of the little knot of men spat sparks of fire.

The monoplane was now nearly overhead, fifteen hundred feet up; but before reaching the ship she swiftly wheeled on the winds, and was winging south once more.

At the same time the surgeon exclaimed: “Look! another!” — pointing out northward a speck greyer than the grey air; and the captain, having fixed the glass on it, said, “Yes, a biplane — British — out scouting.”

But as he spoke the speck vanished.

For she had sighted the German and turned tail, as the German had sighted her and turned tail.

But this movement of mutual horror was only momentary: for the biplane had to stop the reconnaissance of the *Mauretania*’s whereabouts from being carried to the Germans; and the monoplane had to stop the fact of that reconnaissance from being carried to the British; so both wheeled to meet, climbing for life, the monoplane flying right overhead, so that the *Mauretania* group could clearly hear the roar of her flurry droning, and see the little hydro-boots under her chassis by which she had been launched down bow-rails from her parent-ship.

Ten seconds later the biplane, too, flew anew into sight, and anew vanished skywards; and then the monoplane vanished skywards, trying to outclimb her climbing adversary, while the men of the *Mauretania* pored sternward upward at nothing, their nerves in a hell of expectation of that

murder in heaven, they murmuring words which were unheard, but which served the purpose of concealing their wish to shriek.

And before any more was seen of the planes, the added distraction of “Ship Ahoy!” was upon them; and before they could look to see the sighted ship, once more the planes were upon them — not behind, but before now — hardly a league off, it seemed, on the starboard beam: for thither they had now dashed their anguished wings, ranging the air in a rage of flights, like fighting angels that fill space with wings: and though nothing could be observed of them, a sound within the clouds was distinctly heard — the pop of a pod bursting, a bomb; then the patter of a packet of pins spilling somewhere; then six ticks, and now the clouds parted with a crowd of particles — *débris* and instruments dribbling — and racing after to catch them two men raining, two men in caps and padded wrappings, who passionately span in partnership or competition, as at the starting-call of One, Two — Away! and slightly behind the men a biplane diving, divided into two bits.

It seemed an age ere those men reached the sea, so that a shriek rent the outraged breast — an age of over thirty-seven seconds. Ahead of the *Mauretania* when they set out earthward, they were somewhat astern when, neck-and-neck, like tumblers racing, they span with a passion which had waxed to the rapture of catherine-wheels into the splash that they trashed up in vanishing.

Almost at the same moment the monoplane was again heard buzzing, a blood-guilty thing, southward to regain her parent-ship.

That parent-ship already lay a little oblong of black, blocking the continuity of the southern horizon; and four cables behind her stood another oblong of black, stuck in the sea, heading north-eastward.

The *Mauretania* men were like rats in a trap. In vain the glasses investigated the north for any sign of the English, though far south-westward there stood a third oblong of black — no one knew of what flag.

“God, I’ll run for it,” Captain Arthur muttered to himself; and an officer was flying from him with the order to bolt northward, when he got the wireless: “Do not try flight, if sighted: the enemy are the *Von der Tann* and *Schamhorst*” — on which the captain threw up his hands, for the *Von der Tann* had three knots more than the *Mauretania* — was at one time the fleetest capital-ship on the sea.

And she grew rapidly big, swaggering like a bully, rolling through four degrees, her starboard beam beaten by swell which she wedged like flesh in her heavy haste, anon giving a view of all her eight deck-guns, like eight notes-of-exclamation, waiting to exclaim, and dot themselves.

And she came in her colours — just saluted — with extra colours on stays and masts, which the keen east wind was spitting on and whipping into kettle-drums — kettle-drums which accompanied strains of band-music floating from her over the ocean.

At her common-code signal to slacken speed to forty-two revolutions, a redness of angry arrogance sprang to the *Mauretania* captain’s face... “Foreigners on the sea giving orders...”

But there was no way out. Still no English on the sea — though that third warship from the south-west had now grown so much bigger astern, that the glasses made her out to be Yankee; and the first officer made the remark: “Looks to me like the *Arkansas*.”

At the-same time the *Mauretania*’s speed died away to 6 knots; the two Germans, too, slowed down — one two miles south, the other hardly a thousand yards off; and now clouds of steam were wheeling about the sea

with the winds; a smell of heat reeked from the embed turbines; and at the engines' venom of hissing the ships shivered.

So for some time they forged ahead, while the *Von der Tann* signalled to the *Scharnhorst*; the *Scharnhorst* sent out a pinnace full of men to the *Von der Tann*; and the *Von der Tann*, making preparations to send a prize-crew to the *Mauretania*, lowered a launch.

On the *Mauretania*, meantime, there was so much agitation and preoccupation with the enemy, that little heed had been paid to the ship in the rear; till now a sound screaming out of a stream of steam reached the ear — a sound of band-music— “Yankee Doodle Doo” on the breeze.

And all at once the *Arkansas*, a rear-admiral's flag at her foremast, was at the *Mauretania's* quarter, fifty yards off her, between her and the *Von der Tann*, keeping the same speed.

Her flag-captain, a lank Yankee, could be seen with three staff-officers in frock-coats perambulating his bridge with a brisk and devil-may-care fling; then was seen looking down at a school blackboard which some marines held up for him to see; then a laying of heads together; and then the blackboard was being held up apart for the *Mauretania's* glasses to read what was chalked large on it: “Do A BOLT.”

And now was Captain Arthur a distracted man, he being under British orders not to fly, and no time to wireless — Germans just coming. After ten different impulses, he flew on an eleventh impulse to his communications to order Full Ahead.

And as she spurted to the spur, the *Arkansas*, too, all her boilers lighted up, her engines running full even while her screws had run slow under a transformer, ordered Full Ahead.

The two were off together about N.E. by E, the battleship getting left a little, with her only 20 knots, but bowbutting like a bounding bull, ramming

her monstrous mass at the rollers, crushing the ocean to a rush of rubbish-stuff round her — streaming creams — like crushers crushing rubble.

The two Germans, meanwhile, kept their crawl, lost in astonishment at this sudden outcome, at their wits' end: for to try to stop the *Mauretania* with a twelve-pounder or so meant a risk of striking the *Arkansas* — an *Arkansas* obviously battle-ready, her control and gun-houses manned, torpedo-nets handy — the German combined weight being only three thousand tons greater than her monstrous twenty-six.

As to what the *Arkansas* was doing there, all alone, and with what motive — this was a disturbing question for the Germans.

So it was only when the *Arkansas* was quite a mile away that the *Von der Tann* at last signalled her; and something like the following conversation took place between the Chief-signalmen of the two ships:

The Von der Tann: We are not combatants?

The Arkansas: Surely not.

The Von der Tann: Then, get out of the way!

The Arkansas: All right. But what's your hurry?

The Von der Tann: I am about to fire!

The Arkansas: Try not to strike me.

A wild silence of five minutes followed this thing — the Germans not giving chase, since they did not wish to separate, and since the *Scharnhorst* had not speed to steam with the *Mauretania*. So the *Scharnhorst*, at a distance of three miles, beautifully aimed a 3.4-inch shell from her superstructure at the *Mauretania's* screws: and the boom of a voice moved over the waters.

By a tragic chance the shell dropped upon the centre of the *Arkansas* fore-turret, broke, blew away her aeroplane rails, dented the trellis-work of her foremast, and lay dead the sons of four American mothers.

Whereupon hell and frenzy broke up through the ocean that morning, and Germany and America were at war: for it is not good to play with volcanoes; but the war-fever and let's-all-be-jolly was all on the breeze and in the brain like a brandy and a wedding-breakfast, and they wanted yankee-doodle, and they got it, and they hankered after thunder, and were thunder-struck. In that second the *Arkansas* left the *Mauretania* to take care of herself, knocked forty revolutions off her screws, and the *Mauretania* trembled to her bottom, and her men were boxed doddering and staring by the back-blast and brawl of the broadside that the *Arkansas* vomited upon the *Von der Tann*.

War, then: and let the best-padded ear see afterwards what the ear-specialist can do.

They were at pretty close quarters to begin a fight! — not three miles, though the mist that the wind had in it made that far enough for effective smashing.

Anyway, the *Von der Tann* instantly answered with five of her 5'9-inch, and five of her eight 11-inch — one of these eight having been struck on the chase. Some moments more, and the *Scharnhorst* was in it; and the three British who just then climbed above the north-east horizon, and were struck in the ear by blustering airwaves, questioned Heaven as to who was fighting whom.

However, a *Mauretania* dope soon told them; and, concluding that the *Arkansas* had left her battle-squadron with the objective of seeing the *Mauretania* through, agile Jack dashed off his jacket, and was in it.

They were the *Inflexible*, the *Invincible*, and a destroyer, the *Swift* — say 86,000 tons: and, after steaming south three minutes so as to dear the — *Arkansas*' bows, the *Inflexible* got six twelve-inchers trained upon the

Scharnhorst, and from the horizon's edge parted with 5100 lb. of blasting bad language in idiomatic Saxon.

At the same time the *Invincible* engaged the *Von der Tann*, who, having her broadside to the American, was raked fore-and-aft by the British shells; and though not one quarter from that distance touched her, her control platform with all its contents of gunnery-officer, switchboard and crew flew like rooks, its mast collapsed, and her two forward primary-guns torqued like candles at a fire.

However, most German ships (very wisely) had a second control amidships between decks, where a series of tubes with total-reflection prisms formed images on reflectors — like the periscopes of submarines — enabling the ship's fighter to see round the sea. And the *Von der Tann's* answer to the *Invincible* was in broken English — broken English armour above-belt, where two shells of her starboard *échelon* struck — long-capped shells of low trajectory that flew straight like a cuff, their fuses arranged to explode after penetration; and these, piercing three armour-inches and some eight feet of coal in the upper portion of her bunkers, bounded exultantly into the redoubt, where, in the space between the main and protective decks, the pair of them danced the serpentine-dance in purple amid a clatter like dapping and applause of diabolic horse-laughter bawling, down among turbines and furnaces.

The fore-bulkhead of the *Scharnhorst*, meantime, was full of sea-water, she listed to starboard, and the *Mauretania*, who had made paces like a scared hen to tuck her head below the horizon, was standing motionless, steadily trembling like a mare among cobras, her rudder and two starboard screws broken off her.

And every second the combat was closing up: for the hand that touched the range-finder shook, gun-layers stood astonished and stung with vapours,

so that big guns that should have been firing two rounds a minute were firing only one in three, and hits were leagues below all target-practice averages.

To this result the mistiness and the ships' rolling contributed; and, in the case of the *Arkansas*, a swaying of her trellis-masts in her rocking deranged the rangefinding, while, in the case of the Germans, the large number of their anti-mosquito guns, which they were using as primary-armament guns, thickened the air with heated vapours, which refracted the sunlight, with the effect of bewildering the sightings.

So they closed: for the horseflesh-eaters, having mettle from their diet, would not strike their colours; and flight from the first had been impossible for them owing to the *Scharnhorst's* want of speed: so they closed and closed: six thunderclouds of smoke: the *Invincible* a creeping cloud; the *Swift* a sweeping; the Germans to perish dearly; the rest to have it finished quickly and sit and think of it.

And they were all in this position:

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the *Arkansas* hardly any longer a mile from the *Scharnhorst*, her bow now to the west, when all that war paused in awe at a thing that happened: for the great battleship was in the very act of overwhelming the wreck of

the *Scharnhorst* with the sharp wrath of all a broadside, — jabbering quick-firers winking, and the bale of her bellowing barbettes — when a *Scharnhorst* 8.2-inch entered her well under the water-line for'ard, and apparently burst in a magazine.

Whereupon a flame seems to have run through and through her; and she set to stuttering such tons of thundering, like Etna rhetoric, as no tongue can tell: took the ocean and shook it, as dreader and still dreader she roared and roared in that redness of her death-throes, while what was left of her 800 men were seen through a volcano of reek leaping from her in every direction like sprats spattering from a trap-net; then, like an old lion which, after roaring, gruffly guns from his guts a humph of venom, and again a humph, and a humph, and is done, and grunts, his eruption hushed, his say said; or like a pump which, after pouring, chucks a gush, and a gush, and a gush, and is done, and grunts, its eruption hushed; so the *Arkansas*, after thundering, thumped a humph, and a humph, and a humph from her drum to the sun, and was done, her death-anthem chanted, her death-passion passioned, and was a skeleton before her burial, leaving over the sea a mausoleum of smoke.

She had within her 290 tons of big-gun projectiles alone: so far over the ocean her tragedy darkened the day with the shadows of night, and many men on the *Scharnhorst* were laid low under the sharp shower of the lavas which she spouted.

Some moments more and a roller rolled foaming over the mastless hull of the *Scharnhorst*; and she rose no more.

At the same moment the *Von Tann*, sinking fast, started sharply north-eastward to put a sure hole in the *Mauretania* while she could — heedless of the *Swift*, which was now tearing near to sting and fly, pouring as she tore a rain of twenty-eight 4-inch shells a minute — heedless of the *Inflexible*,

which also was speeding near to launch a torpedo — for little heed was left in any head on that sea, each ship now a shrieking lazaretto: and, as the *Von der Tann*, now within two thousand yards, sent out a needle at the stationary *Mauretania*, the *Swift* was ready to send needles from her two tubes, and the *Inflexible* to send.

But just then tragedy overwhelmed the *Swift*: for a shell from the *Invincible*, still creeping well to eastward — a 12-inch shell shot out of rent rifling — fell far short of the *Von der Tann* into the engine-room of the *Swift*, which stopped.

Upon which that low length of the *Inflexible*, with its tripod-masts amidships, and topmasts like bayonets, went ranging on ahead of the *Swift*, not far from her; and when the *Swift*'s torpedo-crews had recovered their feet, and two 18-inch needles flew out of her under water at fifty miles an hour, the one to port appears to have been led astray into the *Inflexible*'s wake.

This hulled her; crumpled her screws; ruined her rudder; and she, rudderless, steered askew by her port wing-screw, went her own way, rushing perniciously for the *Von der Tann*, which with shattered steering-gear was rushing her way, both bellowing at those terribly close quarters with all their cannon still battle-worthy, billows already breaking over the *Inflexible*'s poop, over the *Von der Tann*'s beam.

And as they got near, entangled in some magnet-plight, as the bicycle of the beginner heads straight for the lamp-post, and can't be drawn off, they were shut from each other by a column of water, which gushed with a dogged gong-sound two hundred feet aloft from under the *Von der Tann* — a torpedo from the *Swift*.

When this dropped backbroad-showering, with it dropped showering a rain of wreckage upon the *Inflexible*'s deck.

And before it was over, every soul on both vessels dropped flat, as the cracking ram of the *Inflexible* went with a racket like Distraction itself through the *Von der Tann's* six inches of armour; nor did it stop; but walked on and on into the other ship, splitting the tympanum with shrillness in a sombre dusk.

This probably preserved the German above water a minute longer; and within that minute, while they so stood two-in-one, a Whitehead burst beneath both beams — a Whitehead fired by the *Inflexible*, which had missed, but had been whirled into the German's wake.

Whereupon the twain started a little apart; a pillar of smoke that mixed with the clouds rose round them, and remained steady in the air like a temple, mucking their dusk into midnight: in which gloom, under which tomb, the two settled down together, unseen, and still.

Some of their men escaped by leaping: for immediately upon the *Arkansas* tragedy the fleet of the *Mauretania's* boats had gone out, save two whose bottoms had dropped out in sympathy with the tragedy; and now, too, those of the *Invincible's* boats that could still float were out, picking up swimmers.

And all were quickly filled, some trailing from their wales men whose heads the waves swept over.

But the wind had lulled; the sun was now bright, the battle having lasted forty minutes; the air hazy with gun-vapours; and yonder, still lingering, the mound of smoke that the *Arkansas* had left, and crumbling yonder the pillar of cloud within which the *Inflexible* and *Von der Tann* had foundered.

The *Swift*, though abandoned, was still visible, standing there bowed, steep in the bows, like the camel that kneels and waits; and still visible was the *Mauretania*, waiting large and tragic, listed to starboard, showing all her

deck-shape like a leaf, the sea like troops of multitudinous wolves trooping upon her to have her.

She lingered there a long time: until with a sudden flurry, as of resolve to make the plunge and try the new state under-sea, she skipped ahead and left the sea, sucking after her Captain Arthur and some forty of her men.

The loaded boats, meantime, made as best they could in the swell for the *Invincible*, a stare of scare and amazement on those sailors' faces, as of men who have passed through what the heart can't fancy, those within the boats gripping at the gunwales or seats, for the sea seemed to reel fiercely round their ears.

In one boat sat Captain Stickney of the *Arkansas* and the captain of the *Scharnhorst* side by side, the latter — a large German whose name was Bergmann — having a gash across his freckled red neck.

This was visible, for his upper clothes had apparently been singed off him, save his vest, which his buxom breasts bulged; and he kept stanching the gash with a canvas rag, already wet through with red, for the scratch ran like a tap.

The two captains uttered no word to each other for a long time; but presently the American, producing a handkerchief sideways with his face averted, murmured: "Handkerchief?"

Up sprang Bergmann half-way in a surprise of politeness, and after searching a second for expression, blurted in his big and vigorous voice:

"Beautiful thank, my sir!"

"That's it," muttered the Yankee, gazing pensively over the sea.

Soon afterwards the boats were at the *Invincible*. But she was very sick and feeble; and it was not until three nights later that tidings of the fight arrived in Britain.

It arrived the same night in Peking, where Li Ku Yu, hearing that result, clucked his tongue, with “As I thought! Man has learned to destroy better than to build.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE TREASURE



AT THAT MORNING hour of the sea-fight the half-caste Oyone and her dagger were already at Chinnery's in the Horseferry Road — a common old house, whose door was as often open as shut, but was shut now; so the girl lurked about till "Monty" came — an old soul rather shaky in her gait and being, who "did" for Chinnery (Chinnery for some reason called her his "laundress," though few were the things that Monty washed). And when Monty went in, leaving the door "on the jar," Oyone slipped into the closet under the stairs.

The dash from closet-door to front-door would hardly occupy a second; and she had an *alibi* and everything planned in case of mishap.

But let us not watch her horrors while she waits there in darkness with wet hands, groaning again and again, "I can't do it! gods, I can't!" her will still fixed like nickel — needless agitations, for a cypher was even then on the wires for her from Li Ku Yu, countermanding that sinister cypher of his respecting the Prince before the declaration of war — but let us watch instead a young man away up in the Whitechapel Road in the dress of a private of Marines, a cloak hanging over one arm, he walking briskly to and fro a little, his palm anon on his brow, feeling seedy and fretful, having spent the night in a vile den on a fourpenny bed — in a doss-house in Dorset Street near.

And presently he stepped into a “Cocoa Rooms,” up into a “First Class Room,” paid threepence at a counter, and carried his fare to a table nailed to the floor — no one up there but him.

But when he tasted the coffee it did not please him — it was not really coffee; the bread-and-butter — it was not really butter. And the cup displeased him deeply, the saucer, the saw-dust — everything there.

And he tapped with his nail, saying: “It’s bad, it’s wrong, it’s beneath the dignity of modern man: so, if foreigners surpass and smash us, here will be the reason — feudalism in the twentieth century — the monstrous tommy-rot! And if I haven’t gun-fire and gumption enough in me to worry it to rags, then, I’ll go with my girl to Samoa, and smoke under a cocoa-nut tree.”

Now he rose, picked up a little poker, and, smiling with his lips, but not with his eyes, he smashed his cup and saucer, muttering, “not good enough,” he brought down the shop-mirror in a shower of sherds, murmuring, “not good enough,” he spurted past an agitated man in an apron who ran up staring, and he hurled the urns of tea, coffee, cocoa, one after the other, into a flood over the floor, muttering “not good enough,” and now the poker was scattering crackling crockery from shelves, until wreckage was the condition of that first-class room.

By this time the attendant had afresh rushed below, keenly seeking a policeman; but now the young man was with him at the door, muttering: “Don’t make a fuss — only letting off steam a little. What’s the damage? Twenty pounds? With five for yourself” — and, tossing some banknotes, he was gone with a brisk and busy sailor-gait that waggled his jack-trousers round his legs, leaving behind him a thing that said: “Well, I’m — !”

But the more he advanced westward, the more he found his way impeded with people, and in Leadenhall Street had to stop and wait long: for a crowd

had surrounded all that Bank-region to hear the Sergeant-at-Arms, attended by a throng of City dignitaries, read out the Declarations of War from the steps of the Stock Exchange.

When at last he could move to procure a cab, the cab had to creep, and near Charing-Cross was blocked by a rattle of limbers and the showering hoofs of a 15th Hussars battalion bound for Dover: for already England was pouring into France, troops debarking at up and down platforms alike, and at sidings. So, at the stoppage, the young man, who had given an address in the Horseferry Road, called to his cabman: “Do get me out of this! Drive round to Buckingham Palace” — and now he threw round him a roomy cloak which covered his costume.

At the palace-gate he asked a sentry if the Queen had come in, was told no, and went on to stroll about the grounds, praising God for the air of heaven after his night of pain.

But, as he went, he caught a glimpse of the Princess Elizabeth with three ladies near the Lake; and it may almost be said that he hid — stood behind laurel, and cut an eye at space: for the Queen was in love with the Princess for him, and the Princess in love with him for herself.

Soon, however, a sound of cheering reached him from without, and the Queen, who had set the fashion of early Park-drives, dashed into the courtyard, the damask of her colour still comely as a damsel’s, she habited in royal simplicity, but for the boisterous sea of her immoderate hat.

The royal horses drew up, as the cloaked figure came bare-headed to speak at the carriage, from which the Princess Alexandra and a Maid of Honour got out after some talk; and the Queen then said: “Again?” nodding toward the costume which she knew that the military cloak covered.

“Yes, Mother,” he answered.

“Why is it necessary? I don’t see.”

“I have imposed it upon myself, Mother: once a month, if ashore, I sleep there, if it kills me.”

Is it very bad?”

“You wouldn’t believe — headache, sickness. The men — sigh. And these people feed me, cushion me, love me in a way — for nothing: I’ll taste their cup just once in a month to show good-will.”

“Do it, do it, I don’t want to stop you.”

“I see that I should, till it’s ended. A good race, mother: but, oh, we do need a dictator for one week.”

“Yes, but that word is too often on your lips of late, Teddy! Drop it, mind you. Your place is to influence men, not yourself to take upon you the cure of your country.”

“I hear you, Mother. But what news? I couldn’t sleep till five, then overslept, and couldn’t get one paper to buy.”

“Well — do you know that the House three times read last night a Bill granting eighty millions for the war? and reducing Government Stock interest by one and a quarter?”

“Yes, I knew that. But about the *Mauretania*? She reported?”

“I — don’t think so,” the Queen answered; “I haven’t seen or heard anything.”

“I have had her on the brain all night! Suppose the Germans have snapped her up? That would be rather sharp practice — so soon — don’t you think? And shouldn’t I revenge myself for it, if I can manage something.”

“Manage what?” — the Queen leaned keenly toward him; for what she called “manfulness” in the Prince of Wales was now her liquor and secret meat: and her doubt whether all men saw in him the Drake which she saw,

her care that they should, had become rather common and morbid. He and hats were her vanities.

The possibility that some day he might turn out to be “manful” beyond her liking, “manful” enough to scare her to death, had not yet occurred to her.

He put his foot on the step to tell her: “You saw the paragraph on Tuesday about a strange object having been seen in the air — standing still, mind — a most momentous thing in history, Mother, if it is true. Well, I assume that it is Chinnery’s doing, and, if so, I have a thought of going to Spandau in it, blowing up the Tower, and grabbing what the Tower contains. What do you think? — if I find it practicable.”

The Queen shrank sharply, but said nothing; considered it with lowered lids; flushed a little; paled a little; and suddenly bringing her eyes close to his, let her lips breathe: “You might try it on.”

The Prince laughed, saying: “Mother, I think you’re the most audacious She that ever buckled on stays.”

“And you?” she said, smiling at him with her forehead raised; but then, touched with sudden gravity: “You are aware that ladies buckle on such armour.”

“Scott, Mother,” said the Prince with lowered lids: “aren’t I a sailor? and ships feminine? and often in stays?”

“Not very brilliant,” the Queen’s lips just muttered: “ships are in stays when coming round, but ladies when standing off” — adding aloud: “But have you spoken with the Princess Elizabeth? There she is over yonder, thinking of you, I declare! Let the footman run and request Her Imperial Highness to join us a minute.”

“Mother,” said the Prince ruefully— “if you could forgive me: I have to go to Chinnery’s, and am late.”

“Oh, you are going now to Mr Chinnery’s? You didn’t say. My goodness, how I should love to be there!” — with the levity of a schoolgirl hankering after a spree—” to hear you two chit-chatting about chucks, and jockeys, and washers, and rockers, and ‘H’ and ‘B’ — the holiest, highest, Divinest babble yet babbled on this planet — Divine because true, Divinest because truest. *I love* that young man! — don’t tell your exalted father.”

“Then — come, Mother.”

The Queen reflected. “I’m afraid it can’t be contrived — though it might! — No, I think not” — and when the Prince had left her side, she half-rose to say that she might after all, but sat again.

He, not seeing a cab beyond the gates, started to walk fast, heated himself, and threw off the cloak, having little fear that the streets would see the Prince of Wales in a marine.

Meantime, in the closet at Chinnery’s Oyone waited — the Prince over an hour late; and her growing doubt whether he would come, and the long tension of her nervous system, had proved very enervating, for each carriage-wheel drew from her the hiss “this is he!” and at the last she was on the floor, prostrated, vaguely wretched.

But suddenly a brisk step — the door pushed open — and she was up afresh, tense and ready.

However, she was so sure of a *carnage*, and his appearance on entering was so different from the image of him in her expectation, that her sub-conscious conclusion was that this was a sailor sent to make an excuse. She had never seen the Prince, and it was only when a voice pelting up the stairs called “*Richard!*” that the thought stabbed her heart: “*that — was — he!*” whereupon she collapsed again, weeping at her defeat and her relief, and when her weeping ceased, the catches of her breath still reached the rats’

ears in there, going on like gutter-sobs gushing on nights of rain long after the rain has dried its tears.

Her chance for that day was gone, since Chinnery would be sure to accompany the Prince down, so she stole upstairs, washed her face with the right decoctions, and went to listen at the workroom keyhole.

Chinnery by this time had told the Prince that the Mauretania had been waylaid, for he had instruments of great delicacy, and Oyone could hear the Prince stepping restively about, talking hotly, saying: “Germany, eh? — touch the old coffee-pot with the oxy-hydrogen, Richard — to see Germany grow and grow like this, and sit still! Thirty years ago — ten — why didn’t we blast every German battleship out of the sea, as we could, and then say ‘Shake hands, but no more German ships eternally’? Or if we must let Germany, why didn’t we say to Germany: ‘Here’s India — Australia — call them German, if they’ll let you, you leaving them as open to us as we to you, and let’s abolish navies and educate mankind.’ Would England have been a penny the worse, Germany the better? They think so: but, then, the heads of tire mass of men are infested with such a fog of feckless, fantastical fixed-ideas got from their grandmothers, that when they think that they are thinking, they are only remembering — remembering what some dead Swazi thought that he thought. Whenever they do think straight, it is only due to their mother-wit, not to any training in mentation that they are given! Nor have their governors any! By whom is the world still handled? Not by young scientists trained in facts, but by old lawyers trained in opinions — quoting ignoramuses — pundits — scott, what can you expect? The Queen tells me, Richard, that within two years Sky-Blue has cut off 370 pundits’ heads — crass rascal: but! can quite understand why he is doing it. Pundits! Fantastic catchwords!— ‘colonies,’

‘Empire,’ — as though such a thing as a modern Empire was the least bit possible outside China; ‘slow evolution’ — as if ‘slowness’ improved evolution; ‘hasty legislation’ — as if every scientific experiment ought not to be as ‘hasty’ as life is short. Fantastic fads! The contribution of the colonies to us is £667,000 — just think: they cost tens of millions; this war will cost hundreds of millions, because some English and German lawyers have heard someone say ‘colonies,’

‘Empire’ — little rages and delusions of Crusaders! Considering that £87,000,000 of British capital has been invested in Argentina within five years, could Argentina be more profitable to Britain if a British colony? What is wanted is not colonies! but the recognition that the whole globe, and each inch of it, is the private property of each man, as in Law the whole of a business, or ship, and each inch of it, is the private property of each partner. But think of France shutting in Madagascar against’ trade without paying one penny of rent to the rest of men, and all the nations not instantly declaring war against France! Well, the French are our good friends. I don’t want — but — scott — was it the arm of some mannikin at the Quai d’Orsay that dragged up Madagascar out of the main, and granted her mangoes, and gross groves, and grace of face? Oh, my earth, my mother, my own, my poem, my Altar, my heirloom — I am not a Martian, but of her dark marl — and is not this thing an intolerable wrong to me that some impossibly crude little duke, or some ‘cute fool at the Quai d’Orsay should say to me ‘this bit of her is somehow more mine than yours,’ and rob me of her roundness? Forgive - me, Richard, I can’t always talk calmly of the insolence of these little slaves, my blood boils—”

“And now the coffee, too, Ted,” Oyono heard Chinnery say, “and now for Monty and the kidneys!”

A button was pressed: and the Prince was next heard to say: “Not that the Germans are so lawyer-ridden — I see that in 1897 the French navy was thrice stronger than the German; in 1909 the German was 40,000 tons the stronger; and in those twelve years had spent £86,000,000 less on her navy than France — just think. France? — no go at sea. What’s the French for ‘Stand by!’

‘ — !’

— with a nasal singing of the ‘aim.’ That’s no good. ‘Fred, dear, please try’ — *attonsiaun!* — scott. On land, yes; but England on the sea. Not that I believe one bit in English, or any, sea-power as represented in Dreadnoughts — as you know. ‘*Dreadnoughts*’ is one of the fixed ideas! — nothing weaker — not a clock. I calculate, Richard, that one German capital-ship is a match for any four English, and one English for any four-and-a-half-German — meaning that they’ll all sink: and where’s your sea-power then? We shall soon see.”

“And your *Asahel* will be put ‘to the test of thunder, Ted,” Chinnery said. “Don’t get killed.”

“Scott, not I. Too busy to stop to die. I shouldn’t wonder if, for one thing, I shall have Mr Chin-Chin to -stamp on before I’m done, for I had a dream of it one night. Do you know I believe he’s at the bottom of this war?”

“It sounds quite likely” — from Chinnery. “The day he left Brockweir, guess what he said: ‘I go, but will come back in multitudes’ — amusing person. And I dare say he will, since he says so — good luck to him.”

“To Sky-Blue? I say, don’t you care at all for your country, my friend?”

“I wonder?” said Chinnery: “not much, I think, Ted. His ‘multitudes’ will certainly never come into the Horseferry Road, for I should stop them at the corner. But, for the rest, if we know that blessedness is the destiny of Life, isn’t it a little irreligious to fret about the road — Here’s my Mont!” as

Monty, smart in cap and apron that morning, entered with a tray: and for about a minute Oyone heard no sound — Chinnery seeing to the coffee, which he always cooked himself: but all at once an outcry — a howl as of horror — was heard to burst from Chinnery: “For God’s sake! *Teddy!* Don’t touch!” — mixed with a clatter of the dropped coffee-pot.

- Then silence: and Oyone knew that Chinnery had dropped into a chair, panting — his heart not strong.

The Prince was now heard to say: “You mean that cubical box?”

Then Chinnery: “Oh, Teddy, you startled — forgive me. It is my Redlike Ray of which I wrote you — just finished — and I meant to cap it yesterday, but was dragged out to see the crowd; and now the coffee’s done for. It would have struck us blind, not to mention Monty and half Horseferry Road, if you had chanced to touch the little spider-hub just inside the hole. As to the coffee — Run, Mont! — a jugful at Marzucco’s — .”

On which Monty trotted tottery, exchanging a smile with Oyone outside; and Oyone knew that the Prince was now eating and discussing the Redlike Ray with Chinnery in a jargon of which she understood nothing: for, with all her nimbleness, science remained a rocky and foreign thing to her forehead.

In fact, Chinnery was telling of a method of changing five of the waves of white light into an X-wave resembling the red, yet not the red — shorter — which irritated to hyperpyrexia, and then instantly atrophied, the optic nerve, striking a dog blind in five seconds. But the Prince seemed bewildered, and Chinnery said: “when you’ve finished you’ll see the mechanism.”

The Prince presently remarked: “Which seems to mean that you may become the king of any country any day you please.”

“Quite so — I never thought of that,” answered Chinnery smiling: “but oh, Ted, the bore.”

In fact, so far from wishing to be a King, Chinnery lived on just two hundred pounds a year, for from the list of his inventions he had made not a penny. Many of them were not even known to have been made! for he forgot last year’s inventions like last year’s socks, no more seeking reward from science than the sweet-tooth seeks reward for eating sweets. Some little men whose fives like flies were in his hand had offered him — a knighthood! But he had forgotten to post his reply.

“But about the boat,” Ozone heard the Prince say next: “no engine, you say?”

“No,” answered Chinnery; “you’ll see her presently.”

“Then, how on earth — Tut, how magical!”

“Not really, Teddy, I think,” said Chinnery. “You must remember that the problem of flying has not hitherto been tackled by thinkers: for the aeroplane, of course, is not a product of thought, but of the gallantry of some nobodies who dared to go into the air on a kite with an engine for string — grand lads! but, of course, not great. You, I know, are a famous ‘flyer’; but ah, Teddy, the risk! I should die of heart-failure the instant the engine started with me! Its absurdity consists in its imitation of the bird! When we want to run faster than the deer, we don’t imitate the deer’s legs, we get into a train; to swim faster than the shark, we don’t imitate fins, as canoe-savages do, we use sails and screws. And the problem of flight, even beyond the atmosphere, is not really difficult. I know of four ways of making an apple fall up instead of down; and there must be eight ways: for I haven’t given the matter any systematic thought.”

“But what is it takes this boat up — something new in the way of force?”

“Oh, Lord, no: just a trick with the old forces.”

“Electricity?”

“No, magnetism. A little electricity, of course, to get the magnetism — a few amps, out of a toy dynamo-and-oil-engine. A battery would do. It is quite simple, as you will say presently.”

“And quite safe, you say?”

“Safe five times over — since I, the chief of cowards, went over London in it on Tuesday, with a young lady, who steered and managed it. Several times safer, even in a storm, than riding a bicycle in a lane — barring lightning. Even if this particular one fell a thousand feet, one wouldn’t be hurt, though one would if she fell five hundred.”

“But how does magnetism — By the way, does this young lady know the secrets of your inventions?”

“It’s Oyone Umé — which signifies ‘Plum-blossom,’ Ted.... Yes, as far as I can tell her, she knows the ‘secrets’; but that’s not far, I’m afraid.”

“A good thing perhaps, Richard. But what weight would this boat carry?”

“This particular one! — half-a-ton: but any desired weight — according to the size of the electro-magnets, their ampere-turns, and the *mu* of the iron specimen.”

“I see. And her speed?”

“Seventy-five miles, this one. But any speed, according to the stern magnet, or magnets.”

“And how long did she take you to make?”

“Five hours. She is just rough boards nailed together.”

“So in three days you could get me ten of her to carry five tons at 120 miles?”

“If I can get some carpenters to work on Sunday. But why?”

“Let’s blow up the Julius Tower at Spandau and grab the lucre! — six millions sterling in gold bars. I’ll send you a cheque — What do the boats cost?”

“About £25. But what is this Julius Tower?”

“Where the Germans keep the French war-indemnity of ‘71. I know it well; and I’ll get ten of my best *Asahel* fellows, and pilot the expedition myself. This treasure, which comes out of the woollen stocking of many a poor French peasant, has been set aside by the Germans for their next-war war-chest; nor have they touched it yet, I know, for it can only be touched by a joint order of the Bundesrat and the Reichstag. We’ll show them *Mauretania*.... And you, Richard, will come with us.”

“J, Teddy, throw bombs?” Oyone heard Chinnery say with a break of laughter in his voice: and the girl was pallid at those words “*six millions*,” — which is a lot in China.

“You come,” she heard the Prince say: “you need not throw anything; but you will thank me for dragging you out of this hole. You have got to grovel here over your gold; though I praise you, Richard, with bent head, priest of God, because your delight is in the laws of your Lord, and in His laws you meditate day and night; and when you have entered into your closet and shut your door, you draw near to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who walks in secret rewards you publicly” — extracts from the so-called “Brockweir Praise-book” which “Teddy” uttered in a low, slow recitative with no little unction and relish, during which Oyone’s prying eye saw Chinnery’s eyes fly skywards once, and drop: for all Brockweir boys were very profoundly devout — Li Ku Yu, too, though he disliked quotations.

“Still, one needn’t fester in one’s closet,” the Prince added: “you come for the spree. As for the coffee, doesn’t matter: I’ll see the boat now, and

then the redlike ray, for my girl will soon be due, and then I must go.”

But in that moment Monty had arrived outside the door, Oyone was taking the coffee from her, and the half-caste rapped, and entered.

There, smiling, looking under her eyes, she stood like a show at the end of the long litter that lay under two frosted skylights — the Prince’s breakfast-table a brass coffer near the lathe in the centre, the linoleum holey, the bookcase shaky, and there were chemical shelves, dusty old motors, ammeters, microscopes, with tools, tools, invading the electric furnace, the brazing-hearth, and, ah, how many different kinds of iron! Swedish, mild steel, cast dynamo-steel, alloys of tungsten, titanium, tantallum — without any end. The girl stood in it like a bird-of-paradise in a stable, dressed in Kyoto silk — crimson with large splashes of pansy — but *à la Européenne*, a toque cocked on her top.

The Prince started at that sight!

“Well, I did not know that you had come,” Chinnery said.

“Here is your coffee.”

“This is — Mr Edward Reeks; Mademoiselle Oyone, Teddy — Plum-blossom.”

Hands were shaken amid smiles.

Then—” conversation”! Was Mr Reeks a sailor? in the Navy? How terrible a thing was war! Why could not nations contrive — ? So she had been up in the air?

Had she not been afraid? She but still had gone. And how did it feel? It felt sweet: like sitting on a throne with one’s feet on the throat of the world; and the wild flight: ah! the wild wine rioting through one’s arteries. Some delights only a woman could fully taste; men were a little stolid, were they not?

Chinnery, proud of her, kept glancing at “Teddy,” glad to see “Teddy’s” glances rest on her, and drop. A cup of coffee had been poured, but was never drunk.

The formality of “conversation” was broken by the exhibition to Mr Reeks of a Taoist amulet-ring on Oyone’s finger, whereupon Chinnery tickled the finger with a copper commutator-brush, Oyone slapped Chinnery, and Chinnery chased Oyone round the lathe. Thereafter Oyone stood crucified, her two arms stretched against the wall, chatty and kittenish, letting her eyes rest kindly upon the pretty milk-and-pinkiness of the Prince — eyes into which some kind of fire would wildly fly up an instant, and die out.

Then Chinnery, putting hand to pocket, flung a flying glance round, drank a gulp — the Prince and Oyone pretending not to see — and now suggested a geisha-dance: on which Oyone ran, got her long-handled *gaita*, and her dagger, and first geishaed like a bird-girl through the intricate litter, bringing a brightness into the boys’ eyes, and then began a dagger-dance, in which she lassoed the Prince with her stole, dragged him to act as foil, and having him in bondage with one hand, with the other kept stabbing with the dagger at his neck, his side, smiling with an undertook, as she danced.

And this gaiety was at its height, when a fourth person was suddenly in the room — a girl in nurse’s uniform — Eulalia.

Monty had rapped unheard, and had let her in.

Eulalia remained standing within the door, taking it in: and the first fact that registered itself in her chronicles was the half-caste’s loveliness, then the fact of “Teddy” foolishly lassoed with Oyone’s stole, while the halfcaste brandished the *kokotana* with a dancing arm. In another instant Chinnery noticed the new-corner; Oyone and the Prince started apart, he rather red and vexed.

Chinnery flew to Eulalia — she had met her “Teddy” here before — then proceeded to present the two ladies, and their hands were half out to meet, when “Teddy,” by a very deft and tactful piece of acting, took both of Eulalia’s hands to swing them a little in welcome — not wishing her to shake hands with Plum-blossom: and the ladies exchanged a bow instead.

But Oyone understood: and for a moment a most ferocious expression of rancour marred her face.

The Prince, meantime, was whispering Chinnery that he must go, and, without having seen either the boat or the Redlike Ray after all, he was soon in the taxicab which had brought Eulalia.

In it Eulalia sat with her lids pensively lowered; and for some time not much speech was between them.

“It is two months, three days, and three hours since we have been together,” he said.

She did not answer this, but presently asked: “Why are you dressed like a marine?”

“Just a masquerade!” he answered with a laugh.

“Just a masquerade” was not very understandable. But she had become accustomed to obscure replies from him, and had learned not to pursue inquiry.

They were silent. Then he, shaking her little Anger: “Cross about anything?”

“Why, no.”

“What’s your name?”

It was with the same pensiveness that she said: “My name’s Eulalia.”

“Whose girl are you?”

“I am Teddy Reeks’ girl.”

“All of you?”

“Yes, all.”

And with the same pensiveness and lowered lids she asked: “What’s your name?”

“My name,” said he, “is Teddy.”

“Whose boy are you?”

“I am Eulalia’s boy.”

“*All* of you?”

“Yes, all.”

With this he quickly kissed her fingers — they were passing out of the crowd of Victoria Street into Buckingham Palace Road — and the Queen and the Princess Elizabeth both saw that kiss.

These two were on the way to Chinnery’s in a motor brougham to meet the Prince! for Her Majesty had, after all, managed, and, having to keep the Princess interested, had considered that a visit to Chinnery’s den would be a piquant little experience for her, so had brought her, always eager for the Princess to meet the Prince: and they got a glimpse of that finger-kiss.

When the Princess next looked at Her Majesty, it was to see her with her lids shut down, her countenance blanched and rigid; and she said: “Your Majesty!” but Her Majesty did not answer.

Quickly the Princess — a palish, plainish Gretchen, thin, very German in expression, spectacled, with a spiteful little pressure of her lip — quickly she bid the coachman “turn back”; and while she held ottar under Her Majesty’s nostrils, kept the taxicab in view. When it turned into Grosvenor Place, she told the coachman “up here.”

She saw the pair enter a mansion with blinded windows, to which the Prince had a key: and she marked the house-number.

Her Majesty, meantime, was not unconscious, more or less saw, but was too overwhelmed for speech or motion. All at once her Kingdom was

departed from her, on her white knight's scutcheon — a *tache*.

Of course, all her sorrow was for the male, all her hatred, rage and red revenge for the hussy, whose face she had distinctly seen.

CHAPTER IX

FATE OF THE SIX MILLIONS



LATE IN THE day of the Prince's visit to Chinnery, London was again agaze at the boat in the air: for Oyone had forced the ever-pliant Chinnery to take her over Harrow, and this time made herself fully mistress of the two or three little tricks of its working.

To be the *Fu Jen* of Li Ku Yu one day! — this had become her mania — to ride at his side — to attain to that. Alone of the men whose eyes fell upon her Li Ku Yu had pooh-poohed her: and for this thing, apart from her audacious ambition, she had made the man her famine, her madness, her star.

And he had promised “though she squinted.” Had he forgotten? Why did he not recall A-lu-te and her from banishment? She could never bring herself to remind and pray him, but waited, hoping: and as the years passed a fury of rancour grew in her heart.

So, when she had heard the Prince utter those words, “six millions,” she had paled, it was such a lot in China, could buy her much favour there. And she got from Chinnery all that would probably happen in the expedition.

During the next three days Chinnery was much in the yard, helping with the building; and she with a busy brain watched him from a workroom-window — no one else in the house, Monty being a morning phenomenon.

At about two on the Monday a load of different kinds of bombs and shells arrived, and she watched Chinnery and three bluejackets pack them

into the boat's holds, with some rifles, some that were left over being put into Chinnery's own boat: for Chinnery, unable to disobey any bidding, was going, though with secret bitterness, and had increased the speed of his boat to keep pace; and Oyone ran down, handled a shell, tried its weight — a mass that had marked across it "4-inch Shell, Special Type, Firth, 5 Calibres," and, as she laid it down tenderly, threw her eyes mutely to the skies.

At four Chinnery was again in the yard, showing to seven bluejackets the boats' working; and two of them, getting into boats, rose into the air, as one rises in a lift: whereupon Chinnery, while the rest were gazing upward, took flask from pocket, and showed it, emptied, to Oyone at the workroom window — with a wink; on which Oyone ran down for the flask, ran with it to a sitting-room cabinet, filled it with Chianti, then dropped into the Chianti three drops of liquid out of a pigmy flagonette of greyish jade from her pocket; and ran to Chinnery.

Till four-thirty the men were up and down in twos and threes in the boats; then arrived the Prince and two lieutenants together, and Chinnery, in hurrying to the front-door, whispered Oyone at the closet-door: "I am feeling beastly bad! I can't go!"

"Oh, you must," she said.

When the three entered she peeped from within the closet; and when they had hurried through to the yard, she stood within the back-door, hearkening.

When the officers had been saluted by the men, Chinnery first showed them' the boats' working, and then commenced to explain their scientific principle; but the Prince, who was all business and briskness, cut him short, saying: "Another time, Richard: we are late, let's start."

"I was just going to give the fellows some whisky," said Chinnery.

"Then, do be quick.... Long trip.... Show them *Mauretania*...."

The men now trooped inwards after Chinnery, who, as he passed by Oyone, anew whispered: “Dear, it is impossible, I *can’t* go.”

‘What’s the matter?’ she whispered: “you must try.”

The Prince, meanwhile, and the two lieutenants went from boat to boat, prying into the mechanism; and said one: “Does your Royal Highness understand the principle of this thing?”

“Not a bit so far,” answered the Prince: “it seems to me an impossibility. Here are electro-magnets, keepers, wire-ropes connecting the keepers with the deck: and it seems clear that it is tension in the ropes that lifts the boats. But a magnet’s attraction of a keeper is equalled by the keeper’s attraction of the magnet: so that the downward pull on each magnet-support should be equal to the tension in the rope, and the boat should not rise — so far as I can see. The secret of it probably lies under this tin thing here, which he seems to intend to protect what’s under it from rain.... He says it’s simple; I’ll find out to-morrow; and may let you into it. I wish he’d come....”

There lay the eleven boats in a row, very roughly knocked together — long six-sided things, 20 feet long, 5 high, their decks narrow and short in comparison with their bottoms, which broad bottoms were slightly hollow to act as parachutes in case of mishap from lightning; and each bottom had on it two levers, one lever-end to press upon a spring near the bow-point, the other upon a spring near the stern-point, and they were of an angelic ingenuity to prevent the boat from dipping bowwards or sternwards in the greatest gale; nor could she rock much, for with these two levers were associated two heavy masses of lead, one for’ard, one aft, so that the centre of gravity was very low, and equilibrium so stable, that one could move freely about; the deck, moreover, was supported on powerful coil-springs.

When Chinnery and the men returned, the Prince was already in his seat, and now everyone was buttoning greatcoats and gloves, it was the moment

of departure, and no one had eyes to notice how ghastly bad one of them was looking.

The Prince now again mentioned to the men the signification of the variegated pistol-lights to be fired as signals; a lieutenant reminded them where the grub had been put; and at nine minutes to five the Prince started a little oil-engine, depressed a lever connected with a ratchet-wheel, and went up.

And swiftly the swarm of ten was aloft, and gone.

Chinnery alone remained, Oyone now standing with him by his boat at the shed-door; and, "Something is wrong," he sighed, his palm on his forehead, "I can't—"

"Try," she said, tilting to his a face as wan as wax, as wan as his: "drink a little of this."

She produced the same flagonette from which she had poured three drops into his wine.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Ginseng," said she.

He knew that ginseng was her cure for all human woes, and, to humour her, took the flagonette, having long got into the habit of doing her bidding mechanically; and then — anything for a drink.

He glanced guiltily round, drank a gulp, and at once staggered against the door-post, where with his forehead dropped forward, he stood ten, fifteen seconds; then sighed, staggered backwards, staring, death-struck, into the shed, fell among boards and shavings, and lay still.

On which she with her wild white face went flying into the house, flew out again under a load of furs, a spade, a saw, hurled them into the boat, clambered in, started the little engine, depressed the lever; and her planet sank and sailed away from under her, and left her in space.

Two miles away eastward she saw the swarm of boats: she depressed a lever behind her, and followed.

The wind was almost ahead, rather raw, and, though not strong, it soon harangued the ear to weariness with its wrangling and ceaseless tongue at the boat's irruption and rush through it.

But, though heard, it was hardly felt, for the gunwale for'ard was higher than the steerer's head, so that she had to lean a little aside to see the boats ahead.

She sat at a square hole in the deck, her feet on one of two ladder-steps that led to the bottom, tiller-ropes in hand: and after the first two minutes a sense of perfect security warmed and welled in her.

Passing over Chelmsford, she buried herself within fur on fur, drank some ginseng, lit a cigar, and throwing back her throat, began to sing loud, to howl a song, blasphemously above the thundering of the blast.

Meantime, she took care to keep her distance behind — the speed like the elevation being regulated by a ratchet-wheel; and the swarm in front thought that in her boat was Chinnery.

As they left Colchester on the left, and took the sea at Clacton, she shrieked to heaven like a fury: "Come, Li KuYu!"

Down there below appeared a little fleet of seven submersibles with their mother-ship, making apparently for Harwich; and here or there a sail that looked stuck in the centre of immensity.

Soon, however, as she went on and on over the sea without any sense of motion or progress — for one wave was twin-brother to every other — a first fear occurred to her when she began, in a reaction to feel sleepy — sleep meaning, she knew, that the petrol might exhaust itself, and the boat would go down, perhaps into the sea. She began to sing again, but

lugubriously low in her throat, moaning gloomy things to the sea-gulls and the gust.

As the sun went down from its clouds and glories, now ahead appeared a crowd of glow-flies — the boats' green starboard, scarlet port, and white lantern-lights, some above her, some below, scattered, yet forming something of a bunch.

Now darkness reigned awfully, and with it a little drizzling of something; no moon to be seen; but between cloud-masses brand-new stars were crackling in crowds, not lying round any sky, but profoundly back in the bowels of the boundless black.

They were over the glow that The Hague made when a pink pistol-light from the foremost boat cut the night.

This meant "Assemble "; and presently a blue shine shooting meant "Stop"; whereupon one of their number dropped to earth at a village to make sure of their whereabouts, though, as the wind was nearly ahead, little leeway was to be feared.

Meantime, the Prince and the rest, very perplexed and worried as to Chinnery, were thinking: "He must have turned back!" — for the half-caste, hiding in the night, had not lighted any of her lights.

Then when the investigator had mounted again and howled out "*Hague!*" a green glow streamed out, and the voyage was resumed; nor did it stop again, save once over a hamlet three miles from Brandenburg, whence they made a straight fly for Berlin.

Over the western suburbs the pilot signalled "Lights out," and flying as low as 1000 feet so as to be just visible to each other in the off-shine of the city, they went on eastward: the hour then 10.45.

Moving slow over the parts of Berlin eastward of the Thiergarten, they found the town in a state of the greatest uproar and eruption — hurrahs that

rang and reigned in the air like echoes of cataracts — for no people on earth can cheer and blow off steam like Germans — national songs sung by multitudes, houses gala with flags, crowds careering through some streets, or standing blocked before some balcony or façade.

At the Austrian Embassy opposite that old home of M. Benedetti, so full of memories of '71, the boat's glasses saw a throng so thick, that a cigar-end remained on the back where it had dropped from a boat; and, even as the unseen boats moved over them, a roar broke out like a clap at the sight of the Ambassador standing, all smiles, on the balcony.

The fact was, that tidings of the Mauretania fight had not long arrived, to be at once hailed as a great German victory: for the two Germans, though sunk, had sunk a far greater weight of metal, and had achieved their objective — the destruction or capture of the Mauretania. Whereupon — Hoch! reeling beer-gardens, gush, flushed foreheads, flags, promiscuous dancing, hot heads, hats on high, hurrahs, special late editions — the tumult of the newsboys' hootings through the Unter den Linden soaring distinctly above the other tumults to the boats. England's day was done — call it to the stars ! — another sun dawning.

At the Schloss the Emperor and Crown-Prince had but now presented themselves, when the crowd of ten boats cruised that road, for the roaring remained present in the air like an evaporation exhaling. What was moving in the gloom above their glee they little knew; as those above them little knew what was above *them*.

Meantime, a fresh scheme had entered the Prince's head, his eyes now sparkling in spiteful thought'; he turned, and after following the boulevard westward, bent six points northward toward Bismark Strasse, and the Spree.

He came to rest over a block of building by the river, twice blew a whistle, and slowly descended upon the building's top.

Now he ran soft a little to stretch his limbs; and, as the next boat, Lieutenant Pilcher's, touched the roof, he ran to whisper: "Palace of the General Staff — *documents!*"

And by the time the others had alighted, these two had discovered an iron trap-door between two slate-roofs separated by areas of lead; and the whisper went forth: "Bring rifles and a lantern."

Lying flat, the ten got the trap-door up, and then, the lantern first, the Prince next, they stole down an iron ladder into a vast low place full of dust and darkness, save for one square of light in the centre of its floor. To this with thieves feet they went, lay down, and peered beneath.

Here some wooden ladder-steps led down into a room: and they saw there a man in spectacles reading a paper at a table that had two stoups of beer on it, he in undress uniform, his cap on; and by a bed a woman undressing, abusing the man, who read and took no notice; and a redness of coke roared in a stove.

All in a wink the man was on his back under the Prince, a handkerchief in his throat; the woman was in strange arms, her mouth stuffed up; and Pilcher, who knew languages, was saying: "Don't struggle! or we brain you!"

They then tore the bedclothes into strips, tied up the two, and taking the remainder of the strips, went out.

The place appeared not less vast in its darkness than a deserted city, and they had treaded a journey of interminable corridors and noble stairs, searching for some open door, before they came upon any sign of life — an off-shine of light afar at a corridor-end. They crept that way.

On prying round the corner, they saw the next corridor lit, and a sentinel stalking in the German toe-first way — a strapping "tapferer Krieger" of the

17th (West Prussian), who had heard talk of English beef, but never yet tasted.

“Eyes front!” — too late. See the Prince sprinting like a spirit in his socks! and like a cat he sprang and had him, Pilcher next. And from first to last not a sound from the man in the hands of handy Jack, but the crash of his tumbling musket.

The fellow lay writhing and grinding at his fetters, gurgling at his gag, his eyes gloating out of his head upon the ten rough ghosts grouped over him.

And now the Prince turned to the guarded door, which had “Ratstube” in gold letters over it; and he very slowly moved the handle, and looked in.

In there, seated all round a long table in solemn conclave, he saw the leaders of Germany.

A large hall with walls of pallid apple-green; the table all a medley of plans, maps, documents, books, charts; and they sat on large chairs that gleamed.

Most of them the Prince knew well — Count von Athem at the far head, Chief of the Army General Staff, and near at the foot Prince Radziwill of Prussia, Inspector-General of the Navy: for it was a General Conference of both branches of the Imperial Forces; and there in the centre was Grand-Admiral von Brâckner, Chief of the Admiral Staff, near Field-Marshal Prince Albrecht of Prussia; and yonder that bald skull and walrus moustache of Graf von Grossmann, Chief of the Reichs-Marine-Amt, and that piercing peeper in a pig’s face of Naval Secretary of State Herr Ohom-Hartmann — and many other stars, orders, epaulettes.

The Prince muttered to himself, “*Mauretania*” flew to put on his boots, and get his rifle, then, returning to the door, said quite loudly, “Come, Pilcher, come, Burke,” turned the handle, and was in.

See them now at that table — their faces I if one can call them faces.
There is a bewilderment that is ineffable!

The Prince bowed, grounding his rifle.

“Gentlemen, you are my prisoners,” he said in English.

Each German looked into some other German face to see what German expression was printed there!

“No doubt you admit yourselves my prisoners,” said the Prince—
“considerable force at hand. Tell them, Pilcher, in French.”

Pilcher bowed, and told them.

Now, it was impossible for them to doubt this: for down in the courtyard were six sub-sections of a grenadier company on guard, and their natural assumption, since these spectres stood before their eyesight, was that those subsections had been overpowered.

But prisoners! — in the middle of military Berlin, with Berlin shouting in victory about them! And if *they* were prisoners, why, then, the war was at an end, Germany conquered.

All at once, as if the astonishment had just come upon them, they sprang unanimously to their feet; and Count von Athem called out: “How — came you here?”

“Sorry, gentlemen, no time for explanations,” said the Prince: “you submit to superior force” — and glancing out, he cried: “Let seven of you come in, and take possession of these papers.”

Whereupon the seven blue-jackets trooped in in their great-coats, saluted and set briskly to gather up plans, charts, maps, books, papers, like waiters clearing away.

Meantime, the whisper was running: “It seems to be the Prince of Wales!” and Graf von Grossmann leant his palms on the table to say: “May we demand to know — ?”

But the Prince interrupted. "I see that you have water and fire, gentlemen, so I shall lock you temporarily in here. Good-night." He went out, locked the door, pocketed the key.

"Pity we aren't twenty instead of ten," he remarked, as they went up, leaving the sentinel in his bonds; but they released the man and woman above, after locking them in.

The war documents the Prince stowed into his own boat; and soon the swarm was on the wing north-westward for Spandau.

They arrived in five minutes, Spandau now deep in sleep, when a sound of great guns roused it — one, two, booms; and 60,000 human beings had sat up in darkness to hearken at that thing, when a sudden sense of destruction overwhelmed them all, a foreknowledge of overthrow, as a thundering broke out among them, and in some moments more the city was lit with a dusky dawn, as the arsenal darted and took the sky.

This town, besides, was crowded with military establishments, of which the Prince had well conned the map: so that the Small Arms Factory, the Gun Foundry, the Military School, the great Horse-market, the Barracks, the railway, all in turn came under the rain of shells: for thoroughness is not a quality confined to Germans; and those of the people who survived that night's experiences lived through them again in nightmares to their dying day, and had a stock recurring dream of screaming streets that ran, like men calling upon the rocks and hills to cover them.

In the town were some Garde-Grenadiere, No. 4 regiment and half of No. 3, and a battalion of Guard-foot-artillery: but sections of these could only be mobilised for moments when floods of Tophet burst among them, and the nerves of men shirked it, they having no idea whence the fire came, simply found it spouting it in their midst, and supposed Spandau to be surrounded by two hundred thousand troops.

It was an hour before it entered a dying colonel's head that this curse of fire might be coming out of the sky.

And then a 9-pounder balloon-gun, mounted on an armoured motor-car that had arrangements to resist the recoil of high-angle firing, was brought out of the Citadel, followed by what was left of the foot-artillery: for the night-glass of one gallant captain standing out on the glacis seemed to detect certain specks in the height beyond the night-mists — though it baffled understanding that aeroplanes could drop bombs with the precision with which these bombs dropped.

Anyway, the balloon-gun was produced and aimed; but before any shot was discharged, it and forty-men were shattered in a splash of shrapnel, and the rest fled through the carnage and darkness of the shrieking and reeking city.

Within fifty minutes Spandau was a conquered city, every trace of resistance at an end, and yonder within the Citadel's vast wall — a townlet within a town — the Julius Tower was half down.

Berlin, meantime, warned by telephone, was preparing to pour forth troops; but before these could be moved, the *Ratstube* door in the Palace of the General Staff had to be broken open; nor did any troops enter Spandau that night: for when the Tower was all down, and nine of the boats were engaged in getting in the gold, a tenth was always watching the Berlin-road, to throw back any advance.

They found the gold piled in a square vault lined with steel, the mass occupying some three cubic yards in bars 10 inches long, some of the bars much broken and battered by the bombardment, inscribed, each of them, across its middle with "Reichs-Kriegs-Schatz, 54 Kg." (120 lb.); and after half-an-hour's toil in clearing away stone *débris*, they disposed the boats as conveniently as they could for the loading, threw out remaining bombs, and

set to it, looking like ghouls grovelling there amid their gleams of green and crimson.

At twelve-thirty the workers heard musketry and balloon-gun booming going on in the direction of Berlin, but did not stop toiling; and presently the boat that had been up came down with the report of the enemy scattered, on which a loaded boat rose to keep guard.

At one-fifty the last bar of gold was dropped into Lieutenant Burke's boat, and the blue-jackets were then given leave to gather up the shattered fragments for themselves, which they did very shamefacedly and loth, tongue in cheek; everyone now wet with the sweat of the labour, worn out; and but slightly disposed for the dark flight back.

However, the Prince, who was a tough and merciless worker, would suggest no rest, for night was their friend; and at three minutes to two, rising with their three beams burning, they started to return home, loaded with this portion of France's war-indemnity to Germany, which the Prince purposed to return to France.

But, as their lights appeared in the air, the half-caste, who had been asleep for two hours in the hold of her boat in a field near by, started her little engine, and darkly followed, flying now well higher than the swarm.

At this hour the wind was much stronger, had changed several points to northward, was blowing now on the boats' starboard quarter, and causing far more lee-way than the leader seems to have realised.

Consequently, after failing to sight several landmarks, and after looking out in vain for the lights of Arnhem when they had been in the air two hours and a half, he became anxious, and shot oft pistol-lights to signify "Assemble" and "Stop."

It was that dark hour before any sign of dawn, though now Orion away down by the horizon was brighter and better than the Queen's Necklace,

and there was one sphere in the sky that seemed a beetle of diamond beaming, with feet and feelers trembling round it, and very richly the shivering Fishes were shimmering.

And one of the boats was about to drop for inquiries at a solitary light in forested country which they could descry south of them, when a shower of eleven shells in pelting succession tumbled out of heaven upon the ten boats, as they stood bunched two thousand feet up.

One shell only missed, but was instantly followed by another.

Three did not explode; but still wrecked the mechanism, and laid low the men.

And the ten boats fell.

CHAPTER X

THE “ASAHEL”



THE HALF-CASTE DESCENDED upon a path between two coppices on hill-sides, and rushing about the bush of one with a lantern, discovered the boats and bodies all within an area of forty yards.

One boat was standing bow-downward, its stem on a fir-tree; another had hurtled into the ruins of a church buried in the bush, beside this boat being the butchered and burned body of Lieutenant Burke; and all were much broken, for the boats' bottoms were not perfect parachutes for such a burden as they carried; and, in the case of seven, what the earth had not smashed the explosions had shattered, one foot being found in a boat to whose occupant it did not belong.

Three of the men, at the shock of falling, had been tossed aloft by the deck-springs, and then had dropped back upon the boats, two dropping back *within* the boats — the Prince, Pilcher, and a blue-jacket.

Her first business was to remove these out of her way: so, climbing by the bits of timber nailed on as steps, she dragged and rolled them over the sides, a heat and vehemence in her, a gasping, her teeth-edges pecking together with spite at sight of the Prince's gashes, whose sweetheart's hand she might not shake, her raging heart revelling in all this death and rout and sense of power.

But the lifting of the bodies winded her, and presently she was propped, panting, in the midst of the three men: and now her heat fast turned to cold.

For there were drippings amid the underwood; there were droppings of pine-cones that tolled and echoed; dead leaves reeled at the breathing of the breezes through the timber; the blue-jacket kept his neck sideward, interested in her with one eye, with that steady indelicacy of the dead: and, standing with her lonesome lantern-glow in the gloom of that unknown wood, with ghosts and all that load of gold and gallows-work on her hands, she threw her eyes reproachfully skyward, then suddenly, “Oh, I am afraid,” she breathed, and gave way to weeping.

But no time for weakness — she stood straight.

And first she dragged the blue-jacket out of her sight ten yards to a summit, rolling him over into bracken on the other slope; did the same to the Prince and Pilcher; and now ran out to her boat, rose, and lowered it within the wood, to have it hidden.

She then sat to ponder the problem of the treasure.

She had imagined that it would be a simple matter to bury it, but this now appeared to her in a different light. The ruins within the wood, however, quickly occurred to her alert wit, and on penetrating the mass of bracken and bramble which buried it, she discovered a slab with a ring behind the site of the sacrarium, and went prying down five steps into a damp apartment, whence a badger dashed out by her, whitening her with fright.

Here, she was sure, no human foot ever came, fixed upon it as her treasure-house, and during the hour that remained before daybreak was labouring at taking some of the bars fallen within the ruins down into the vault — ever afresh astonished, with every fresh bar, that anything so small could possibly be so ponderous.

But suddenly, as she was in the act of stepping with petty steps, loaded with a bar, the bar tumbled singing, and she stood a thing of marble,

blanched: for about a stone's throw from her a throat had outraged the night's silence with the howl: "*Fire!*" — in English.

The next instant she felt herself drowned in a thousand deaths, as a racket of musketry seemed to crack her eardrum, and she dropped shot-through with fear, for she thought that all the guns of the globe had discharged their bullets through her heart, and at an odour of smoke that floated to her nose she moaned.

And from far to the northward followed a rumbling of musketry, and a mortar barking; and then, not far, a voice calling "*Charge!*" then a medley of voices crying: "*Retire! Retire!*" then a cry: "*Who said Retire?*" then a roar of a hundred throats: "*Charge! Charge!*" and a rush of boots brushing through scrub — and in some minutes distant musketry — and a bugle going fluty — and stillness.

It was a skirmish of German and English outpost-garrisons going on — which meant that, so far from being in Holland, as she reckoned, she was somewhere near the Belgian frontier; and the night-operation had been occasioned by the air-boats' lights, descried by the night-glasses of both garrisons, who were facing each other at a distance of eight kilometres. And though aeroplanes with coloured lights was a thing unknown, each captain had taken them to be enemy aeroplanes sent up to reconnoitre his gun-emplacements or drop bombs — a suspicion which the sudden vanishing of the bunch of lights had established: so both sides had sallied to attack, this affair ending in twenty-seven dead.

As for the half-caste, this eruption of musketry shocked all effort out of her, and stock-still she lay on the steps, listening to a cricket screaming, hiding her eyes, leering like little mice that leer in fear; nor was it until the sun was high that she ventured out of the wood, walked four miles, and took a room at a tavern.

But by three in the afternoon she was back within the wood. And now her first work was to bury away every trace of blood or flesh. She had a spade, a saw.

But great was her trouble, on going to the spot where she had dragged and rolled three of the bodies, — not to see them.

She stepped down a steep piece of ground, very gloomy with bush, looking for them; and had made perhaps twenty steps when her left foot stepped upon nothing, and down with an outcry she fell ten feet.

There was cliff here, a road at its bottom; and when she picked herself up, it was with a horrible pang that she understood that the bodies must have rolled down here — and been removed.

When she climbed back she sat wringing her hands, lamenting, thinking that all would be discovered now.

But she set afresh to business, and after burying every blood-stained bush in one shallow trench with the bodies, a work of hours, and after covering well with dead leaves, she began the vast task of sawing the unbroken parts of the boats into bits of a bigness which she could lift and bury.

In this labour of Hercules she spent two days; and only when every trace of the ten boats, the guns, the German documents, were gone from the surface, did she go on with the work of carrying down the bars into the church-vault — a navvy's travail that harassed her soul four days, and made her groan at gold.

Meantime, her eyes were on the newspapers — on the tumult that was in Europe at the raid upon the Teuton treasure, the destruction of Spandau, the disappearance of the Prince of Wales.

That it was the Prince who had led the raid Europe soon knew. But where now was either Prince or treasure, companions or boats?

Even in that turmoil of the world — commercial upheaval, tears of defeat, movements of fleets and troops, dearness of food, frenzies of triumph — men's minds were centred upon this thing, and a thousand thousand eyes were busied about the route between Berlin and London, seeking, seeking.

But the boats seemed to have been caught to the stars like the Argonauts' boat! and as many fantastic guesses as there were men were made to explain the fantastic catastrophe that had caused them *all* to fall into the sea! — for after a time only the Queen any longer refused to believe that they had fallen into the sea.

She had revealed that the boats were an invention of Mr Chinnery, and that Chinnery himself had gone with the expedition — the Prince having told her that Chinnery would be going. So that no one had approached Chinnery for inquiries; though during two days a crowd stood vaguely gazing at his house, little divining what lay in the shed behind.

It was only on the morning of the fourth day after the raid that a captain of Hussars happened to visit, at the street-end of the village of Plessy, one of the two field-hospitals of his division, which was following his company; and he, entering his company ambulance-waggon to cast an eye at his sick, suddenly, as he stood over one of the spring-beds, stretched his finger at it, and said to a dresser: "But *that's* the Prince! *that's* he!"

That night the King and Queen were at Plessy, listening over that spring-bed to the Prince wandering a little, his left elbow broken, his forehead cut open.

How he had got there was soon investigated.

Three rustics, trudging in the daybreak of the night-operation, had noticed three bodies lying by the road in the bush at a cliff's bottom, and

had borne them to some company stretcher-bearers seeking their wounded with red-crossed arms in a field some way off.

Whereupon the stretcher-bearers, assuming them to be civilians wounded in the skirmish — for they were *en pékin* — had borne the two living to a first-aid dressing-station, whence they had passed through a main station to the field-hospital.

So, then, the expedition had not, after all, fallen into the sea? Where, then, were the six million pounds, the boats? Tidy for a private fortune, six millions! and the world set itself to search an area of some thirty miles round that church in which it lay.

Within three weeks this thing had become a crazer of men's brains, hundreds of imbeciles in the rage and mania throwing up their daily occupations to become discoverers — seeking, not the treasure, but the boats! which were the clue to the treasure; and many may have entered in vain that very wood in which boats and treasure were.

This was one of the Prince's first questions on the seventh midnight when he came to himself at Windsor: "But the treasure?"

"No sign of it so far," answered Engineer Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Barrington, K.C.B., who was a friend of the Prince, and had been much at his bedside.

"And Pilcher?"

"Doing well. Broken humerus."

"Others all gone?"

"All."

"But *what* made us fall?"

"That is quite unknown."

"Chinnery — what does *he* say?"

"But Chinnery perished, too."

“Chinnery did? No! Chinnery didn’t come with us! He started, but turned back.”

“Then — I am in a maze.”

“But the treasure — it is somewhere near where Pilcher and I were found, of course.”

“No doubt: but where that is cannot be discovered, for the rustics who found and bore you to the stretcher-bearers cannot be discovered — owing, no doubt, to the fact that many of the villages in that war-area have been destroyed or abandoned, and the population in a fluid and migratory state.”

The Prince stared at the battle painted on the ceiling; and he murmured presently: “Well, this is how it was to turn out. I can’t understand — see Chinnery to-morrow. But — the Queen?”

Sir Robert Barrington’s eyes softened and smiled. “The Queen is said to have been as brave as usual all through.” [Has it not been mentioned that shortly before her marriage the young girl Minna Simmons pressed to her face, before throwing into a grate, the photograph of a young man? — which young man was now Engineer Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Barrington; and it may be mentioned that it was into Sir Robert Barrington’s house in Grosvenor Place that the Queen and the Princess Elizabeth had seen the Prince let himself in with a key — with his Eulalia.]

Some minutes afterwards Her Majesty herself stole into the chamber, while Sir Robert and the nurses retired to its farthest shades; and the Prince, sitting up to receive Her Majesty, saw tears spring to her lids and her lip quiver, as she stood pressing his hand: but he noticed with some wonder that she did not kiss him, nor was long with him.

When day came a gentleman of the Prince thrice tried to telephone to Chinnery — without reply.

And that afternoon Chinnery's house was entered by the police by means of Monty's key — for a neighbour's servant knew Monty's abode.

Monty's statement was, that she had known that Mr Chinnery was going away through the air, and she had not gone to the house the day after the expedition, but had looked in several times since to feed the cat, etc. And had she then seen nothing of Mr Chinnery? She had seen nothing.

So now the place was searched throughout: but no sign anywhere of Chinnery.

And now a pernicious suspicion as to Chinnery crept into the public head: that Chinnery had wanted six million pounds! that he had not really turned back, as the Prince imagined, but had tracked the expedition in the dark, and destroyed it — for Lieutenant Pilcher, when he could speak, declared that he had had a distinct impression of shells being thrown upon the boats an instant before he lost consciousness.

And if Chinnery had really turned back — if Chinnery had not now the treasure — where, then, was the treasure, and why was Chinnery now in hiding?

The truth, of course, was, that, though Chinnery *was* in hiding, it was not he who was hiding himself, but the half-caste hiding him.

On the sixth midnight she had risen out of that brake in Lorraine, her six-days' labours ended, and, flying high, had wantonly dropped her last three bombs upon a German position outside Bouillon, as who should say: "I spit loud on you"; then, striking England near Deal, had left her boat in a field, had found out her whereabouts, had discovered London about 3 A.M., passed over it high, and come down into the Chinese house grounds at Regent's Park, unseen by any eye.

But even now she did not rest: one more labour; and then sweet sleep.

She had gathered from the papers that Chinnery had not yet been discovered in the shed: for, as she had foreseen, Monty had not looked into the shed, believing him away.

But she knew that Chinnery's body must soon be discovered, and then suspicion might fall upon her for his death, and for everything; but, if it was buried away, then suspicion might pitch upon Chinnery for destroying the boats.

She therefore determined to bury it quickly; to get that Redlike Ray of which she had heard to send to China; and be done with Horseferry Road for ever.

So she walked through the Chinese house and the sleeping streets to some mews where A-lu-te's Chinese chauffeur lived; and in twenty minutes was driving for Westminster — with her spade.

She found the house-door shut, but got in by an area-window; and, after sending the car to wait some way off, ran to the yard with a candle which her hand had no need to shade, that morning-hour was so calm and heavy with haze.

A black cat, unfed that day, flew mewing to her human friendship across the yard. She took no notice: stood listening, leering, to a policeman's feet beating up a street.

Then, crushing her reluctance, she entered the shed: and there he lay, just as he had dropped in his fur-coat and chest-wrappings, his cap on his head; and horror hopped in her heart when, as she peered, his head suddenly started up at her with awful eyes, crying harshly: "*Water! Water!*" and tumbled back with shut eyes.

It bumped in tumbling upon a board, that sage head, never more now to be so sage and knowing, its cheeks concaves of famine and nearness to death; and when, all at once, she perceived that he was living, pity pierced

her to tears, compunction, love of him for his gentle love of her, love of him for being with the living, and not with the foreign dead; and, instead of bringing him drink, she lay with him, kissing his fingers, his lips, whimpering pity at his thinness; but then ran and brought him wine.

But, living or dead, he had to be hidden — probably not for long, since he had never been strong, and could hardly outlive all this ill-treatment.

So now the question was to get him into the car; and, since he was too tall to lift, she called in her chauffeur, who bore him to the door, while she with her candle ran up to get the Redlike Ray.

It was a black box, cubical, two feet broad, and she knew exactly where it had been placed, for after the Prince had gone that day of his visit, she had watched Chinnery attach the cap which made it safe to handle, had asked many questions about it, had seen him lay it on the shelf by the lathe, and knew that he had not since removed it, for there it had lain on the day of the raid. But now it was not there...

She ransacked the room, stamping, exasperated — all the rooms: no box.

Fascinated and fretted, she kept on seeking, hissing at the thing, until weariness compelled her to give in; then, getting Chinnery lifted into the motor, she drove away an hour before daybreak to the Regent Park house, from which she intended him never more to come out.

Fourteen years previously a Member of the Peking Board of Civil Appointments had been kidnapped and imprisoned there in a back-room which still had its two windows bricked up: here was to be the future home of Richard Chinnery.

It was not till the next noon that the lady A-lu-te knew that a stranger was in the house, when Oyone told her that her return to Court-life depended upon his captivity — A-lu-te now being old, and well under the sway of Oyone.

That same night of Chinnery's removal the Prince recovered consciousness, and the next day Chinnery's house was searched in vain for him.

Two days later Oyone once more went to Horseferry Road, for it was incredible to her that the Redlike Ray was not there: and first she went to question Monty, and then with Monty on to the house.

A brougham bearing the Prince of Wales' arms stood before the door and two plain-clothes men, who would not let the pair enter, till Oyone explained that she was only going to a top-room to get some knick-knacks of her own; but she spied a little at the workroom keyhole, her teeth-edges pecking with spite at the sight of the Prince sitting alone in there, brooding on the stool, a bandage aslant under his cap, one arm in a sling. He had escaped her — twice: but still had been well peppered.

She guessed that he had come on the same errand as herself — to get the Redlike Ray: and this was true, for, with Chinnery vanished, he had remembered the terrible peril of the ray in the hands of unwitting, wicked, or ambitious people; and he, too, had searched in vain for it, and then had put the hunt in the detectives' hands. But he had come, moreover, to brood in that room over the gloomy enigma of his schoolboy friend, to ask himself there that ever-repeated question: "Where is Richard Chinnery now?" for he did not believe that Chinnery had fallen into the sea.

Anyway, Chinnery was gone, the Redlike Ray gone, all the boats gone — he still ignorant of the secret of their mechanism; though, if he had known that secret, boats like them might have brought the war to a quick end.

However, he was not long lamenting there, having that afternoon to go northward to join his *Asahel*.

For it was fairly certain that a world-battle on the sea was impending; it was in everyone's mouth that an attempt was about to be made to invade Britain; and the result of the *Mauretania* battle had loaded men's brains with boding.

Indeed, a thousand evil dreams that week were in everyone's mouth, for suddenly a disease of jumpiness had seized upon the people, and behind each door a ghost was ogling.

A company of soldiers marched up Pall Mall, and men rushed to windows with wildness in their eyes to see if they were Prussians.

Visions of vague things were seen sailing in the air, visions of phantom fleets which vanished seen on the sea.

On a gentleman's aeroplane appearing in the air, the villages of Alvington and Aylburton near Chepstow took fright, and precipitated themselves like one man into bramble and spinney.

Men swore that drums were rumbling and guns booming where it could not be that guns were booming; rich ladies living on scrip stood cool and courageous for days, and suddenly one day, terror-struck, were away, as though hounds were mouthing at their heels, to the mountains of Wales.

Yet, even in the thick of this state of scare, when the nation gathered that the Prince of Wales was being permitted to go to a battle with his arm in a sling, it found time to frown at it.

Everybody felt that he had already abundantly served his country for this war — for the subtraction of those 120 million marks from Germany's rather meagre war-chest was a grievous gash.

Accordingly, when at 2 o'clock he drove toward King's Cross, he was astonished to find the whole *route* thronged, and the people cheering with so much heart and friendship, that his eyes softened, and, though his

forehead was still bandaged, he kept bending toward his brougham window, lifting his cap.

This may have loosened the bandage somehow, for at the corner of Southampton Row Eulalia, on her toes in the crowd, was afresh breathing to herself: “Heavens! how like,” when the bandage and dressing lifted with the lifting cap, and she got a sight of the long gash, her nurse’s eye noticing that it had a hook over the right eye.

She felt a kind of property in him, he was “so like!” wished that he would see her, and clapped loud; but her clapping was drowned in the row, in the shouts of “*Teddy!*” the eager god-speeds: for it seemed to everybody a needless hardship that he should rise from bed to join his squadron.

“*Needless*” — since no one (or very few) had any particular faith in his ideas about ships and sea-fighting — though it was well known that he had ideas of his own, that from his cadet-days he had been a rebel in the Service, and that he had got two ships built to his liking — the *Asahel*, of which he was the “Captain” (a courtesy-title), and the *Blunderbus*.

But those ships he had only managed to get built with the greatest difficulty; and one memorable night had cried to the Queen: “Oh, Mother, if you don’t believe in me, who will?”

“Teddy,” the Queen had answered, “you have knowledge, but you are not an expert.”

“Expert!” he had cried— “I despise experts. Chinnery is not an ‘expert’ — he is just a thinker: and he agrees with me that the Dreadnought ship is wrong from control-station to keel. Experts? Their intellect gets quite fixed! like putty in a hole — except when it is rushing off into little crazes and scares: as when forty years ago France started torpedo-boats, and the cry was “battleships must be abandoned!” Then happened Tsushima, and ever since it’s been Tsushima, Tsushima, on the brain, and the battleship rage.

But at Tsushima the fighting was all on one side — the Russians did not *pretend* to be any good, or all the battleships on both sides would certainly have sunk.”

The Queen had asked him how he could be so sure of that; and he had answered: “Mother, it is common-sense. A battleship is a weak thing, because she is a compromise between two efforts — to be heavy, and to be light. But guns have definitely beaten armour, Mother — definitely — such armour as ships of any speed can carry, so what’s the good of their armour? And they can’t run away, their armour so limits their speed, so what’s the good of their speed? Oughtn’t they to have enough armour to be some good, and no speed, or enough speed, and no armour? not a useless little of both?”

In the end the Queen had said: “I will use what influence I have for you”; and Engineer Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Barrington had helped, too.

So the *Asahel* and *Blunderbus* had been built.

What was the *Asahel*? She was not a destroyer: the *rôle* of the destroyer is to sting and fly; the *rôle* of the *Asahel* was to fly and sting.

She was not a *Dreadnought*: she was smaller than any third-class cruiser. She was not a third-class cruiser: she carried bigger guns than any *Dreadnought*.

She was the very swiftest thing at whose rage and chase the sea’s face had ever changed colour — her contract-speed forty-eight knots.

As for the *Blunderbus*, she was a semi-submarine *Dreadnought*, with a speed of six knots.

CHAPTER XI

GERMANS IN PALL MALL



GERMANY HAD SOME 854,000 tons at Emden — 58 capital ships — which the British sought to blockade and contain, lying in a long curve beyond Borkum (the island that lies before Emden).

The British were the 1st and 2nd Divisions, consisting of all newest battleships with their affiliated cruisers, destroyers, dépôt-ships, and with them half the French 1st battle-squadron, all under the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir Richard Ramsay, borne in the *Lion*.

But this idea of containing had not lasted three days when it changed into the keenest eagerness to draw to a battle — firstly because it was realised that the Germans were awaiting the to-be-purchased Japanese ships, said to be “coming round the Cape,” and then because of the mobilising of three *corps d’armée* upon Larrelt, and of an accumulation of troopships and war *matériel* under the guns of Wilhelmshaven (connected with Emden and Borkum by the Ems-Jahde Canal).

Now, Emden had not always been a naval station — for capital ships; nor Larrelt a garrison-town. The dredging of the Emden fairway, and the establishment of vast barracks at Larrelt had been costly; hence that spot had long been looked to by us as the base of “invasion”; and now “invasion” was bitter in the bread and beer, and dreadful in the dreams, of Britain.

The danger was probably not so acute as was assumed: for, as a matter of fact, trouble was in the German Admiral-Stab in those very days at the message from the East that — the “purchased” fleet seemed to have vanished somehow! for ever since a steamer of the Yusen Kaisha fleet; had sighted it in trouble in a typhoon near the Kiu-Kiu reefs, no report of them! Vanished! — that mass. On which there are indications that doubt and hesitation entered into the counsellors of Germany.

But there had really been an awful Autumn storm in the China Sea; and two days afterwards Europe seemed to have caught it. Then began “the great gale.”

During two days the sun went out, the heavens, as it were, tinted with inks; and the blockading vessels, with seas breaking through casemates and screen-doors, fled from the face of a tempest that fell upon them at eighty-five miles an hour; while chill trembling fell upon Britain with the instinct that now was the German chance while a pitched battle on the sea was an impossibility.

A King’s messenger coming wild with tidings in the Ostend mail-boat was lost within sight of Dover, where the breakwater and Admiralty Pier were under water, large storm-doors were washed down, offices wrecked on the Main Pier, ships fouled and ashore in the Naval Harbour.

It fell upon the *Asahel* half-way to Emden, and the Prince, after a defiant fight, had to fly S. by W. half a night with the sea on his port quarter. Life-lines rigged for the seamen to secure equipment could not save two bluejackets from being washed overboard, so swung were the feet between deep and steep, and only two of the boats were not torn from their davits.

Meantime, no one in the *Asahel* was asleep, since tons of water were washing even over engine-room hatchways down into the engine-depths, the seamen’s mess awash, water in the wardroom, in the wireless room, in

the Prince's cabin, having plunged down through a broken scuttle and wardroom funnel, so that she seemed as much within the sea as on it.

The Prince, sitting on a narrow end of a lashed trunk, his brow-bandage spotted with blood, his shins bare, was swinging his head about over a concertina, playing "Onward, Christian Soldiers" to the legion of dæmons that seemed careering with shrieks through the rayless air.

This was what *he* called fine weather, and a delightful night.

But as he rocked and rollicked there in his solitary cabin, things blacker than the night were in the back of his mind, for he understood that doom was hanging over the land of his love.

And the instant he could dare to turn back, on that murky daybreak of the 23rd, he tinned the — bow to the mountains, seeking his fleet.

But the day was only a less dense land of night — no observations to be taken, no certainty even of his position.

He staggered up the outside of his tripod-mast (the tripod-tubes could not be climbed inside, they were so slight and light — but high), and, riding there, he clung on long, one-handed, with a troubled brow, frowning over the sea which swung and flung him, his hair stretched between his head and the wind, and in his bosom a boding that the feet of foreigners were even then *en route* to violate the pride of that island that had proved herself the rightful ruler of rulers.

Now, he could act in the situation almost as he chose, for he had long been a sort of institution apart in the Service, having come to be looked upon as something of a free-lance, his two ships were so unique, and so due to his pressure upon the Construction Department.

They had cost the country only £2,400,000; and men had said: "Well, to humour him... he is a Prince."

His *Asahel* was under 2000 tons, without torpedo-tubes, unarmoured, without armoured deck, but of powerful scantling, strongly braced, to carry two 20-6-inch (unarmoured) wire-guns of 50 calibres on turn-tables, one for'ard, one aft — to be fired one at a time! since one took and shook her like a tempestuous stepmother.

Besides, she had four (unarmoured) 4-inch quick-firers in *échelon* pairs amidships for mosquito-attack, a little balloon gun, and a little Maxim.

Her “captain,” having seen no other ship on the sea, near ten o'clock came to a decision, and wirelessly to the Blunderbus — to learn that the Blunderbus was steering south, practically under water, fifty miles from the English coast, and now somewhere in latitude 55°, opposite Sunderland. The *Asahel* pricked off eight points to port to seek her.

It was about three minutes afterwards that the Prince said to a boy-servant at his cabin-door: “Here — *hist* — tell me if you hear anything.” He caught the boy's arm, and they listened, lurching, clinging. But the boy shook his head.

“*Now!* — *hist!*” the Prince hissed.

“Is it gun-fire, Sir!”

“You heard?”

“It struck me I did hear something like thunder somewhere.”

“Go through the ship and ask.”

Only 3 of 120 had heard anything, yet gun-fire was actually going on to the north-east, where a German battle-squadron was destroying a flock of ten “Tribal” class destroyers and two scouts, the *Adventure* and *Boadicea* — all the twenty-eight warships having found themselves mixed up together on a sudden; and astern of the squadron were discernible in the murk some nine to twelve liners.

The destroyers made no attempt to fly — it was too late; the scouts attempted, but some of a crowd of quick-fire shell (which mostly shot the sky or the sea-bottom) disabled the two little cruisers.

The ten decided to sell their lives dearly; and a fleet of twenty-five torpedoes went piercing the swell, kept tolerably steady by their gyrocope-pull, while an exclamatory racket of pop-guns from the boats and of 4, 6, 8-inch shot from the giants, as the two fleets tore through each other, was shrieked by the winds far over the North Sea.

But there were many more shots than torpedoes, the British all sank, the little *Boadicea* moving ten seconds on a mountain-summit, her bow perpendicular, two funnels showing, two hidden in the sea; and with her went down into dark water the 27,000 tons of the thundering *Aegir*, which the billows bounded upon and devoured when her propellers were blown away; and always near her at the sea-bottom will be the *Kaiser Karl der Grosse*, which graciously raised and exposed her port bottom to a torpedo as it posted near, and was opened beneath her boilers; and down into dark water went two of the troopships with six thousand infantrymen, born without a caul.

It was this brief affray that faintly reached the ear on the *Asahel*; and an hour later there was another, unheard by her, far south.

The enemy, in fact, guessing the English more or less demobilised by the gale, were slipping across in the gloom in three groups by three *routes*, to rendezvous in the latitude of Hornsea: thence to effect a landing wherever coast-defence was least effective, the moment the condition of the sea should permit.

Then, after the landing, to fight for a clear sea — for the *Mauretania* lesson had been rapidly analysed and learned in Germany: and now their

hope was mutual destruction in one great struggle after invasion, thus to secure to the invading troops communication with their base.

As for the British third and fourth lines of defence round the coasts — old battleships, destroyers, submarines, coast-guns — these, alert, but scattered, would hardly be formidable to such a mass of metal.

However, at eleven that night the *Asahel* spied two of the three groups just effecting a junction 90 miles E. by N. of Hornsea.

She knew where she was now and could just wireless the *Blunderbus* to come, though the apparatus had been put out of gear by the gale. The *Blunderbus* answered, but only one of the *Asahel's* other messages was answered — by a scout, and the sound of the dope told that it came from far.

She lay now nine miles from the outermost details of the converging Germans, forging slow, and, herself hidden, could see them fairly well, for although something of a gale still gunned its gusts, the sea had quieted, and the sky, wild that night with flying vapours, was alight with constellations which sailed like a navy gliding, gliding, the half-moon their flag-ship guiding them.

The Prince thought: "They are waiting for others."

And he thought: "To-morrow! Will God make the sun rise bright for England?"

All that night his eyes did not shut. He watched that host as a famished wolf watches food which is just beyond his jaw.

Meantime, the *Asahel's* three lights were out, and thrice in the night, shy as a fowl, she was in flight from scouts of the enemy, coming in or out.

It had happened so that all the world-burden had fallen upon his one back, and he had to handle it: but to tackle a navy! He knew that one half-a-

shell would finish the *Asahel*; and he knew that she was a nearly useless thing if much mist was on the sea.

The gale seemed to have cleared the sea of craft — not a tramp, not a smack, to be seen; and even when day broke he did not know what to do. To await the *Blunderbus*? To seek the fleet? To venture to lose touch with the armada in order to warn the shore? No wireless! His aching head sweated with the care and weight of it; and though Brockweir boys never “prayed,” thinking that irreligious, he, oppressed to passion as day began to break, dropped down in his cabin, crying out: “Guidance!”

After this he watched the sun come, watched fifteen ships join the armada, seven of them warships with quite a battered aspect, like ships after a battle, looked at the saluting of the colours, breakfasted, attended “prayers,” ordered a ration of grog for the ratings: and now, though pale, pale, an uplifting spirit was in his feet, a pride in his eyes, and in his blood a sense which his mother blent in him that the sea was his dominion.

The day had come quite bright and clear I the wind no longer particularly strong! the *Asahel* rolling through less than three degrees! and the band brabbling “Ride Britannia!”

She watched the Germans roll themselves in smoke, form into column of divisions — two endless lines ahead, sixteen cables apart — and set out at the speed of their slowest detail for England.

And she stood still, and watched.

But she was busy — her guns cast loose, their crews raising shells by dredger-hoists from magazines, her chief engineer down in the deeps seeing to his steam-power, his air-compressor for quick reversing, the Prince and his little staff up in their control seeing to their range-clock, their long-based 18-ft. range-finder: and suddenly the *Asahel*, which could be at her top speed within six seconds, sprang and ran the sea.

The smokes stooped at her funnels like the ears of the deer which he lowers, shying, as his feet fly into fleetness (her central shaft was oil-driven — a Diessel 2-cycle — her wing-shafts turbine-driven, with oil-fuel); and like the galloping stag she was gone.

Hope at this hour was high in the heart of Grand-Admiral von Grad as to the outcome of the expedition, no scout of his in sight, no scout of the British, for he had sunk or dodged all the “whiskers” of the maid British body; and he was looking over the brightness of the sea that played blue-and-white in the aisle between the two processions of ships steaming gallantly beneath their flags that streamed on the breeze — captain’s pennant, rear-admiral’s flag, vice-admiral’s, and astern the German ensign, the Eagle screaming with greed, his talons sharp.

This was “the Event!” — Invasion — so often toasted with hochs I in officers’ mess or Service-club; and it was to be like this — something like a holiday! a gala of flags on a glad morning after storm — almost too good to be true, yet true.

True — till the *Kaiser* burst into turbulence beneath the Grand-Admiral’s heels, he in a whirligig hurtling thirty yards toward the firmament in the midst of a midnight of smoke, his dark and tragic chariot.

For a shot (weighing 1988 lbs.) had entered her from 18,000 yards to northward, where nothing of the *Asahel* was visible to the glass but a misty thing that might be a smack’s mast; and to the *Asahel* herself nothing but the upper works of the battleships was visible.

Hence for fifteen seconds the enemy could only think that the *Kaiser* had exploded spontaneously; until the *Blucher*, too, broke into smoking before their stare: and then their conscience smote them.

Think of a bell tolling once every fifteen seconds — four doleful times a minute — a passing-bell that tolls for you before you are gone, and, as it

tolls, you go: so did the *Asahel's* two guns go, one every thirty seconds in turn and turn — like scurrility and banter bandied betwixt Jove and Jehovah, and before the tremblement of merriment could finish in her ribs at the ribaldry of Jove, Jehovah joked and shook her.

She had, in fact, a special type of breech-block and obturator which made her guns capable of very rapid handling, the opening of the breech-mechanism by hand occupying less than five seconds through the power of toggle-levers; her shells and cordite, moreover, were separately raised; her gun-layers cooler than men in the fury of a fight — for she was not a fighter, but an executioner; their ears were deeply protected; and as the gun-sights were adjusted from the control-position by a little electric motor that drove the hydraulic-engine valve (transmitting both range and deflection), the gun-layer had merely to keep the gun on the target, and fire it.

Also, the error of her range-finder was only 89 yards in 18,000, so that four out of five shells struck. And some that fell short still struck: for they had caps with little slots in them all round, through which slots bits of tinsplate dropped down (by their own gravity), and these acted as planes, as the shell flew, so that, if it struck the sea, it neither ricocheted, nor was refracted by the water density. These little planes — a Chinnery contrivance — were said, moreover, to lessen wind-influence and to affect that “pendulum motion” of shells.

Now, the wind had been too gusty for aeroplane scouting; none of the armada's scouting ships had so far reported the *Asahel*; and, as her structure had been kept quite dark from the spies, her sudden shells so whelmed the armada with wonderment, that three German ships had been death-struck, and that pea-soup hull of the *Cesarewitch* was flumedly sinking, before ever the Admiral Second-in-Command could signal order-of-battle, and a battle-

squadron of eight started northward after a swarm of destroyers to silence those two disastrous wraths.

At the same moment the air began to grow populous with aeroplanes popping aloft, and guns had begun to growl in crowds.

The *Asahel* did not fly: went on her westward way following the main body of the enemy, steadily sending it bales of cordite, while her three hydro-planes bounded down her bow-rails, and went mounting in spirals as narrow as aeroplanes may, climbing to protect her from the flying flock.

During which, mortality and arson were so actively harvesting among the armada, that soon another squadron was starting northward; and within three minutes practically the whole force was evolving northward — forming, as they evolved, such a throng, that it was almost impossible for the *Asahel*'s bombs not to tumble upon something; so that, in the press, an 11-inch shell of the manoeuvring *Elsass* smashed up one of the 3-gun turrets of the *Dante Alighieri* near: for an *Asahel* shell had entered the *Elsass* under-water, at which she coughed consumptively a cough which rent her frame, and red was her haemorrhage, her armoured deck tearing lengthways like cardboard which one tears, several of her bulkheads riddled, flame breaking out in two places on her gun-deck, whereat she, like a distracted creature, who, starting from dreams, fires out right - and left with fist and foot at friend and foe alike, fired her loaded guns among the crowd round her.

What was the rationale of those “armoured decks” and “bulkheads” in those ships it is at this date impossible to say. They were very heavy, and death to the ship's speed — the deck some 3 inches thick, the bulkheads some 10 — but much too thin to resist gun-fire, just offering sufficient resistance to explode shells to the best advantage, so that they would have

been better made of tin, wood, or compressed paper. The *Asahel's* packages that she posted made light of them.

Packages like trunks — deferred action shells, with adapted fuses to explode after penetration, thick-walled like the *obus alourdi*, and cased in aluminium to lessen erosion, so that the “life” of the two guns was as high as 180 rounds: she had only to keep out of harm’s way, and keep on firing, to make that day a date for ages.

Gossip has said that one of those shells made a hole eight feet across right through the cruiser — and, coming out on the other side with a downward deflection, struck the big *Helgoland*, which, smartly smacked on her bottom, clamoured flammivomitant.

But now the *Asahel* is in flight northward: for at the second of two spent shells which crashed upon her deck without bursting, but smashing five limbs by their mass, she, shy as a bird, turns tail, and now is hurling only end-on fire from her stern-gun.

“But we are going right for the *Blunderbus*, if God send her,” the Prince called out, though none of his party caught it, for now the air of the North Sea was in such a state of wave-agitation at the guttural going-off of guns, as if the globe had been tumbled into some boiling pot that bustlingly boiled with bubblings and bumpings, boxing with hubbub the squealing car; and as he stood looking abroad with his palms on his ribs, the wind caught a laugh out of his mouth: for now all the south heaven was already red as with the fires of ten thousand pyres rising, as dreadfully red as the death-day of Nature, and the ocean’s floor a cemetery of flames.

“And surely,” he thought, “this firing must be audible over all the North Sea, over all the coast! Help must come!”

At that moment, looking over the spiked rim of the control, he saw a man who had dropped from the clouds stab his bowels upon the bow

ensign-staff, while an aeroplane rained down with bombs and another man some yards to starboard; and aloft he saw a swarm, and war in the air, and bombs falling here and there, and his balloon-gun potting at the planes in vain.

But the *Asahel* was (theoretically) in no danger from aeroplanes, not only because her own three, climbing direct from her, had the higher position, but because, with her speed and theirs, there was as little likelihood of their striking her as of her striking them. Her balloon-gun, in fact, proved a useless tool in practice.

But, beside aeroplanes, there came tearing in her wake a navy of destroyers, high stems trailing low trains of hull through furrows of froth; and although she easily distanced them, even as, one by one, she sank them, they kept her “on the run,” and from dealing so effectively as previously with the *Dreadnoughts*.

She was, in fact, made to co-operate with the *Blunderbus*; and the *Blunderbus* was away.

But she had not been nine minutes in flight when a wild cheer reached to the men in the skies from the men on her deck: yonder, hardly seven hundred yards off on her starboard bow was the *Blunderbus* ploughing.

The glasses had not seen her until now! she was so low in the water, foamless owing to her slowness — and painted sea-blue.

Moreover, there were only two objects on her deck, both sea-blue — a low conning-tower, and a low column which carried some searchlights, with a little stick on it for flagstaff. She had no funnels (oil-driven), no mast, no superstructure, no deck-guns, even her boats being between decks at the sea-level.

As they dashed past each other, the *Asahel* dipped ensign, and signalled to the *Blunderbus*: “England.”

And the *Blunderbus* signalled back: "England."

And each went her way, the *Asahel* flying, firing, the *Blunderbus* silent, advancing.

Until, in ten minutes, she was amid the throng of destroyers, almost before they had marked her: and harshly with a snarl she sank them, and passed on.

In three minutes more all between her and her horizon were battleships battering at her, she at them.

Now, their biggest guns were considerably the bigger, hers being all Woolwich-type 9'2-inchers near the sea-level: so it was only a question of time which "sank first, she or they.

But her armour was not only so thick that no shell in existence could pierce it at 2000 yards, if it had been smooth armour, but it was not smooth armour, she had the appearance of a hedgehog, horrid all over with spears and nipples, like a cavern of stalactites, so that instead of being pierced by a shell, she pierced the shell; and only protracted smashing at some one square yard of her could hole her.

And, though but little bigger than an ordinary superDreadnought, her displacement was 48,000 tons, so great was her draught: she being equally thick all over, even her upper deck being one bulk of rough Krupp 19'5 inches thick, like a district of spikey ice in Iceland, and her conning-tower a box 76 inches thick.

She was instantly deluged under shells.

Three of the huge Thüringens, and two of the Nassaus (18,000), were all at one moment within 2000 yards of her, and these together sent forty shells from forward and aft turrets, and from two of their central turrets placed at the four corners of citadels.

But, even so near, she was not very distinguishable from the sea; and her own fire-delivery was pretty rapid — three rounds per gun per minute-guns that were protected by traps that dropped automatically after explosion, and then rose a moment for the shot to pass, and dropped, like quick-winking lids, the guns themselves having little range of movement, her rudder playing a part in their aiming. She was, in fact, fought wholly from the conning-tower, from which also she was steered, her steering-gear all under armour, and her rudder of such a tonnage that three Schneider torpedoes with charges of 331 lb., could not shatter it all.

Also, since she was made for a *mêlée* and hand-to-hand hell-play, a steady stream of torpedoes went speeding out from her numerous tubes.

And it was quick work, and stern work, and showery work, all Germany shouting, all England grinning in the grimness of a three-minutes' struggle for the government of a globe.

Like razors the rain of shells shaved her of her spikes and nipples, and it was next a question of picking a way through her thickness inch by inch, for she was impregnable else everywhere, except in her propellers.

And while they made her white, soaping her with foam to razor her whiskers, she razored their flesh, and made them red.

Half a salvo of her port guns transformed the starboard side of the *Nassau* into scrap-iron cracked and rent from end to end; in five minutes a conflagration was raging within the great *Ostfriesland*, aspiring high like a spire out of her chart-house top; yonder limped the *Thüringen* like one knee-sick; and the *Moltke* with solitary oratory away yonder to the north was prophesying dolorously of her death, with one *Asahel* and several *Blunderbus* poison-pills rumbling in her belly; so that after six minutes it was quite a fresh bunch of the enemy which the *Blunderbus* was bludgeoning to the sea-bottom.

Even when a hole was bored into her starboard quarter she did not sink, as the shot chanced not to smash the walls of the compartment into which the water washed, though her bulkheads were only one-eighth inch thick; and six minutes afterwards, when at last a wave swept over her desert esplanade of deck, and she lurched and gurgled like a world, and was gone, it was at an *Asahel* portmanteau of cordite which had come and crashed through and through her.

For the *Asahel's* two guns, grown hoarse in the throat, were throwing now less effectively; and the *Asahel* herself, slowly sinking, was being kept afloat by her pumps — a boxful of aeroplane bombs, by very bad luck, having tumbled about and hulled her, blowing down her mast among other things, injuring all the control-party, killing three gun-layers.

But she had still most of her speed, and was now following northward a flock of troopships which, a long way inland, were stealing north before turning east for Germany: for, out of sight to the south, two British squadrons which had come up were now engaging the relics of the enemy.

And in the latitude of Flamboro' Head, at ten past eleven o'clock, the Prince, who had afresh broken his broken arm in the crash of the mast, suddenly recommenced the attack, the land-troops being convoyed now only by the cruisers *Furst Bismarck*, *Yor de*, and *Boon*.

Soon after eleven-thirty the *Fiirst Bismarck* sank, the *Yorck* stood motionless, and the little *Boon* struck her flag.

The *Asahel*, on which a pole-mast had now been rigged, then signalled the crowd of troopships and liners southward, and, shepherding the 82 of them, was not permitted to sink until she had come up with the British.

It was only when taken into the Lion flag-ship, that the Prince heard of the Blunderbus's fate, and shook the hand of her captain and of some of her 680 (seven had been wounded).

He then heard also of a terrible brief battle between the two fleets, disastrous to both, the enemy seeking to break away and escape eastward, with a success of probably seven capital ships only.

The business of putting prize crews into the liners, into three captured ships-of-war, and three mine-sweepers with trawls, now went forward, the sea lying fairly quiet, though a stiff sea-wind still swept it, and the sun sunny above.

At three in the afternoon the crowd started southward for the Thames-mouth.

And during the next two days London saw that spectacle which she had so dreaded, Prussian troops pouring through London: but prisoners.

Troop after troop, regiment on regiment, all day long, streaming through the teeming streets to the stations for the prisons, all London on its pavements, at its windows, patiently seeing it through, in wonderful weather like spring.

There seemed no end to them! — grand gallants some of them, regiments of giants, shining helmets of the 17th and 3rd (West Prussia and Brandenburg), Bismarck cuirassiers, uhlans — Prussian, Russian — curious uniforms of troops in ruby robes flowing loose (Turkomans), with sapper battalions, and specimens of Terek cavalry, and horse-grenadiers garbed in laces and epaulettes, the rainbow variegations of Russian regiments.

And since there are hours in which our country bounds to the very plane of greatness, never a bravo from all those crowds of spectators was raised to break their hearts, as they silently passed, unfortunate but haughty, through silently haughty lines. Only the bells of Britain could not be kept from breaking into melody, telling one to the other of it; and the name of God was in many mouths.

When the Crown-Prince, a prisoner from the *Furst Bismarck*, had the taste to say in our Prince's car on the way from Limehouse that the victory had been won by the weather, our Prince is said to have made the answer: "Nothing more fickle than weather, Your Imperial Highness; but you may rely upon it for being always on the side of this island."

Even at the Prince's passage the streets hardly cheered; a few flowers struck him; men bent their heads, and stood dumb.

When a king, a prince, a duke even, is not absolutely beneath humanity the people tend to consider him a man of ability; if he is that, they consider him a great man; if great, they regard him as godlike. And so now.

On first learning the news of the Battle of the North Sea, the Queen had run into a room of the King at Windsor, and dropping her forehead upon him, had called out "*Oh!*" and broken down into sobbings, as who should say, "Here is the money which long since you lent me, which I now pay back in full, with interest."

Those were her lordly days, in which she stalked exalted on air, her eyes alight. To hear these bells she had lived and endeavoured.

But all in her bliss was one bitter bit: and an uglier tone of malignity now envenomed her against the girl who mingled alegar in her glass of gladness, and rendered imperfect her crowning hour.

From thoughts of that girl she would turn to lavish pettings upon the Princess Elizabeth; who, however, was in no pretty mood just now.

Wildly in love with the Prince, the Princess had always disliked him in a sort of patriotic spite and jealousy; and, never letting him out of her thoughts, she was always either dreaming amorously of him, or speaking slightly of his alleged admirableness.

Seeing him now bring her brother a prisoner, a venom of tenfold love and of tenfold enmity poisoned all her nature to a nest of snakes.

Nor was she solitary in this morbid and, in fact, mad passion for the Prince of Wales, considering the singular epidemic of love-sickness which suddenly broke out among girls shortly after the North Sea event, infecting high society and low alike, *débutantes*, milliners, resulting within one month in four suicides. One poor Margaret, a Norfolk farmer's daughter, after going haggard with her love-hunger, drugged herself with hedge hemlock, and was discovered dead and at rest in a bed of bay, with her "Teddy's" photograph under her face — and there were others.

Meantime, the nation named him "saviour," called him both darling and father of his country, and, demanding the waiving of ceremony, clamoured for his elevation to flag-rank.

He was also at once appointed a member of the Permanent Committee of National Safety.

"But," said the then Duke of Norfolk, an unkempt little gentleman with a beard teeming with microorganisms, to the then Marquess of Tullibardine in a Pall Mall club that night of the Prince's coming, "it might have been better for our lot if the Germans had come."

Whereat the Marquess — a young man who stood every inch a lord, tall, left arm akimbo, right leg cocked, lifted his finger to utter something prophetic, but checked himself.

In truth, the aristocracy, as a caste, had long distrusted the Prince, did not quite like all this idolisation of him, and looked forward with dismay to the day when a King who was a scientist and a thinker should come to the Throne.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRINCESS



MEANTIME, THE QUEEN could not rest — for her happiness and her wretchedness.

For to one highly happy a mote in the eye is a calamity! and a mouse in one's soup as huge as a mountain.

“But for that — that *one* thing,” she sighed, “ah! how well would it be with me to-day!”

The spot of drab looked black as soot; she hated; and on the day that the Princess Elizabeth said to her: “Ah, Your Majesty, you have seen yourself — there is a life between Teddy and me,” the Queen hurried to the Newmarket Parlour, and scribbled in an agitation: “I must speak with you. To-night at nine I will be at your house.” But in order to “speak with” Sir Robert Barrington, it might have been a possible thing to summon him to the palace, perhaps? The weathers and well-springs of even a Queen's inwards can be very queer.

Now, it happened that Sir Robert Barrington was at the Admiralty when that note was handed in at his door; thence he drove to a club; and it was only when dining there at seven-forty that the note caught him.

The Vice-Admiral was profoundly moved — filled with a thousand wonderments: and after ten minutes deliberation in a brain of no little strength and judgment, he rose, sharply, wrote a note, and despatched it post-haste to Marlborough House.

“I deeply regret to have to beg Your Royal Highness not to go to my house to-night before ten. Your Royal Highness will rightly surmise that only the very gravest reasons, etc.”

But the Prince of Wales, after an afternoon spent in inspecting “Immediate Reserves,” was dining that night *en fils de famille* at Buckingham Palace; and it was not until twenty minutes past eight that Sir Robert’s note came to his hand.

Whereupon he, for his part, despatched a note to St George’s Hospital, saying: “Do not go to Barrington’s at nine: I shall be in a brougham awaiting you opposite Crewe House at 9.80.”

But Eulalia had already then left the hospital, and was chatting in her sister’s house in Wardour Street. So she duly made her way through drizzle and misty streets to the rendezvous at Sir Robert Barrington’s at nine.

And at one minute to nine a cloaked and hooded Queen passed alone through the palace park-gate on foot; and at once was in Grosvenor Place, walking fast.

Both she and Eulalia were punctual.

And the engineer, posted just inside his door, was listening like a thief to the rolling of wheels, bidding his soul be still and bold, when the two ladies met on his porch-steps.

Her Majesty, a step the higher, turned to look down at the other, on whose face a lamplight shone, and she recognised, realised... This was why the Prince had been hurried and restive....

Strong indignation now agitated Her Majesty’s lip; and with a brushing-away movement of her hand, she muttered: “*Miserable Utile woman!* — go.”

Whereat Eulalia’s lips fell agape, as she gazed up, like a sylph gazing in awe at a goddess, till it was suddenly suggested to her consciousness that

this was no one else than the Queen herself; and in some moments more she found herself walking away in a new universe made all of wounds and awe and mute amazement.

At the same time Sir Robert Barrington was profoundly bowed, with a murmur of “Your Majesty,” and silently he led the Queen to a desert of drawing-room with two hearths, and a file of drawn blinds, and gift, and moulding, and discreet chandeliers.

The Queen, for her part, was pretty short and haughty, and rather pinched in her wind, and suspicious of shadows and corners, sitting by a table on which was wine, the Vice Admiral standing with firelight on his square face of the village blacksmith, all clumps of muscle, a thin spot showing now on his top; and his eyes smiled: for now that she was actually there before him, he felt warmer, calmer, master of himself; so that, in the reaction, the frolicsome thought crossed his mind: “How much did her cloak cost the country?”

But her chin! its uplifted pitch. She was very resentful; and be, as she spoke, very taken aback, and pained, and embarrassed.

What she had seen with her eyes she could even now hardly believe — that *he* — Sir Robert Barrington — could lend himself — to countenance — to abet — in his own house — the baneful influence over a young prince of a creature who wore the livery of an honourable profession —

“Permit me, Ma’am,” the Vice-Admiral interrupted with some curtness, “I have to say that the relations between the Prince of Wales and that *lady* are — innocent.”

A little bent, he eyed the fire, while her eyes and eyebrows played incessantly upward upon him.

“Well! — you say that. Innocent. I confess that I have wondered what you would discover to say, Sir Robert Barrington; but that you might say

this did not occur to me. Let me tell you, if you do not know — His Royal Highness has known this person since he was a boy at Brockweir: I knew; I found out her address and family circumstances; I have followed her career from a distance; I have known that he has seen her, and have been uneasy — without ever conceiving — he has been brought up a Nazarene, and no razor had come near his dear head” — here the Queen’s tones lowered and broke a little in her throat, and Barrington rapidly, quietly, poured wine, of which she drank a sip at the pretty lip below the shadow’s tip that shadowed her nose.

He, in a muteness of sympathy too deep for speech, uttered nothing at the moment, for there was a unison of emotional movement betwixt their souls, afflicting him in her afflictions, and when her body danced, his cut a caper; so she went on to say: “But the circumstances of his entry here — the cab — a caress in it! — the key — no footman opened to them, Sir Robert Barrington ! — the creature’s ease—”

“That *lady*, Ma’am—” Sir Robert began to say.

“Oh, the days are past,” the Queen said testily, “when a light o’ love is to have the title of a lady, just because she is the amourette of a Prince: it is an injustice to Sally in the alley. But I quite fail to understand you I am here to seek an explanation, and *this* is it—’ lady,’

‘innocent’! Of course, you are sincere, since you say it, but I am amazed. Pray say something, Sir Robert Barrington, to abate my amazement.”

And she waited, her lids hanging on his profile, perpendicular like a plumb-line, which he bent toward the blaze; and since his lips were deeply sealed, like steel in pain the muscles of his face convulsed a moment, and his teeth met.

“It is my belief,” he said at last, “that what I have stated is the truth. And I think that the characters of the pair in question justify that belief. This is

my answer to the Queen.”

Now, the Queen, always, had a pretty free and formidable tongue: and she said off-handedly: “Oh, well, then, I must confess myself disappointed in either the acumen or the candour of Sir Robert Barrington.”

Sir Robert bowed, turned a little, looked at her, and their eyes met and communed; until hers suddenly dropped to her lap.

“At any rate,” she said — with the half of the half of a laugh!—” I cannot share in your ideal view of things. I wish I was so beatified and unworldly! So, this being so, I have next to consult you, since you are said to be the closest friend of the young Prince, and are, apparently, a friend of his friend” — she laughed!—” how are these two people to be separated? There must be some way of getting the young woman out of the country.”

Sharply on which Sir Robert Barrington was masterful, his finger lifting. “I have to warn Your Majesty that there is *no* such way!” And now the Queen stood up, muttering to herself: “We’ll see about that”; and aloud: “I’ll go”: and that ended it.

The rest of that night Sir Robert spent alone by the fire of that room over an old diary and an old shirt-cuff, reading and rereading some leaves that had old rose-leaves between them.

“After this third dance on that third night after her eighteenth birthday we were together fifty minutes in the orangery.... I then said to her, ‘Yes, this in me is love. It was during the night of Friday the ‘th of June, while designing a dynamo for a mine, that it struck me that it was so with me.’

“She then said to me: ‘Was the dynamo a success?’ to which I answered: ‘A perfect success.’

“She then said to me: ‘What is this thing, this love? What is its place and source in Nature?’

“My reply was: ‘You define me *a pound*, and I’ll define you *love*.’

“‘A pound’ she answered, ‘is the force of the earth’s attraction for the mass in a certain bar of platinum deposited at the B.O.T. in Gwydyr House.’

“‘But you speak of “*force*,”’ I said to her: ‘what is *a force*?’

“Her reply to this was: ‘Oh, but that’s not a fair question: force is the Holy of Holies, the Real Presence, the THING Itself: no life in any height of heaven can ever arrive at any notion what a force is; but if you want the definition current among crickets and cricketers, then “a force is THAT WHICH tends to alter a body’s state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line.”’

“I now said to her: ‘Quite so: and now we have the required definition: Love is THAT WHICH alters a mortal body’s state of rest or of uniform motion; and a horsepower-hour of it is that energy contained in a standard mass deposited in the breast of one Robert Barrington, impelling him toward one Minna Simmons.’

“She was pleased to laugh, as it were to herself, when I had said this; and she next said to me: ‘Is Love a god, or is it a devil?’ —

“‘Every force,’ was my reply, ‘is (necessarily) Divine.’

“‘Nevertheless,’ said she, ‘I think I will call Love a devil.’

“‘And why will you do this?’ I asked her.

“‘Because,’ said she — not without some hesitation, I think—’ it seems to be frequently tempting.’

“Promptly as a hammer’s stroke I was on her, saying: ‘If, now, you had said *is*, and not *seems*, I should have felt myself a made man!’

“Upon which she became specially grave, gazing downward at her fingers. I heard her say, ‘Rob Roy’; and she then said: ‘Robert, your will of steel is scheming against my career, and means to wring its little neck, I think.’

“At those words I inwardly exulted; but made haste to say, to console her: ‘Well, love does alter a state of uniform motion, but is not altogether incompatible with a girl’s career.’

“To this she made me no answer, but laughed strangely, as to herself, and now with her programme-pencil wrote something on my left cuff. As the moon was bright beyond the tree, I tried to rise to read, but she restrained me, and then attempted to smudge out with her glove what she had written. However, after we had parted, I contrived to decipher the wildly written letters which I found to spell: ‘I always go the whole hog.’ Her being electrifies mine like live wire....

“The stable clock was striking eleven when she said to me, ‘I expect it will be like that,’ but that her definite answer would be on that day eight months....”

The Engineer Vice-Admiral clicked the diary’s clasp, wrapped up the old cuff, and sighed in asking himself: “Has she forgotten it all? Or does memory straying in her head on her bed in the dead of night ever remember, and make her sigh?”

“Anyway,” he added, with sudden energy, “I’m not going to permit her shrewish tongue to touch the fair name of so fair a lady as the Princess of Wales in my presence” — and he went off to bed.

At that hour that “Princess of Wales” herself lay on no bed of roses.

After “*going*” at Her Majesty’s command, she had wandered, pondering upon “miserable little woman — go.” The mystery! — unless she had been mistaken for someone? for that it was the Queen who had spoken she had no doubt. And the fact that Her Majesty was at that house at all caused to be born in her heart’s heart all a swarm of formless doubts, awed questionings, too shadowy as yet to shape themselves into consciousness.

She only got back to her hospital at half-past nine, so only then got the note: "Await you opposite Crewe House..." and she was off, late, covering the distance fleetly, love the motor in her feet.

Twenty yards off she could see the standing carriage through the thick of Piccadilly traffic and mist; but all at once eagerness failed in her legs, and she stopped agape to gaze. There at the carriage-door, as it seemed to her, was a girl.

And she would have known that girl under many veils — that "Mademoiselle Oyone," in whose charming arms she had caught her Teddy dancing at Chinnery's....

In fact, though, Oyone was not at the carriage-door, but behind it: and she was there because, since the North Sea Battle, instructions had afresh come to her from Peking as to the Prince, and had found her willing now. In those days, therefore, she was hovering upon the Prince's steps, patient as a shadow, watching for her perfect chance.

She waved to her chauffeur; and it looked to Eulalia like a wave of farewell to the brougham.

Night-shades touched that smile of anticipation on Eulalia's face; and a thought was in her, "something must be against me to-night," as she paced on with graver steps.

Her Teddy sprang out to her with, "I am glad! Was getting afraid — You didn't go to Barrington's? He wrote to say — Never mind, here are the old eyes that shock me afresh each time? — So what did I do? — Scott, I was thrown on my beams' ends — I hired a little hotel in Knightsbridge — But, I say, what's up? Not glad to see one?"

It suddenly struck him that those eyes that surprised him each time were even wider this night: there was awe in them, there was also a something of

horror, and a lost distracted something, as of one who asks himself: "In which one of God's worlds am I now?"

For his left arm was in a sling, as had been the Prince of Wales's when she had seen him passing through the street northward to the battle; across his forehead a scar hooked over the eye, precisely like the Prince's.

From that sight her eyes could not move themselves one moment; and as she stood musing on it, the thought passed through her heart: "Mother doesn't know what I am."

Now all was clear! now it flashed upon her why Her Majesty had said: "Miserable little woman!" The Queen was not aware what she, Eulalia, was.

After the shock of awe, of horrid elevation in airy spaces, and wild, white light at the height of the sun, her next sensation was pride! for, if she was the Princess of Wales, was not this because she was born like that? of that quality and quintessence? the equal of Queens by inbred heredity? and in another moment her soul was moving to an emotion of love and motherliness, and her moan was, "My poor boy."

"Teddy," in his headlong way with swaying shoulders, had hustled her into wedlock at their fourth meeting, a year before he had left Brockweir! Lately she had begun to think that that was scarcely a fair thing to consider a man bound by such a marriage...

When he said again, "But what's up? The cut? The arm? that's nothing!" at last she found the power to utter something; but he could not recognise her voice, those strained tones in which she spoke as to a stranger. "I have to tell you — I cannot come to-night — I am sorry He had felt certain that her first words would be a question as to the cut! and stood amazed. "Not come?"

"No — I beg — time — you must give me — I have to go—"

"Well?"

In a secret and begging way she said, for some reason: “To Shepherd’s Bush.”

“Shepherd’s bosh, Eu! So what is to become of poor me, meanwhile? Why didn’t you write? I’ll come to Shepherd’s Bush, too, of course.”

“I have to go alone,” she said beggingly in confidence, bending to him.

“In that case — But, Eu, ought one to be sudden and mysterious? Let me come!”

“I beg — *you* go to the hotel, and perhaps — I am sorry — I can’t exactly promise, but perhaps — I may come. Please call me a cab.”

He frowned now, did her bidding, handed her into the cab, tossed in a box of bon-bons — for she had a passion for jawing chocolates in bed, and had taught him also to sit and nibble; and he gave her the hotel’s name, without again begging her to come, and just touched her fingers with his ups, and turned from her, but then again half turned to say curtly with an offended chin: “What’s your name?”

She in a strained voice straining against tears answered: “My name’s Eulalia.”

“Whose girl are you?”

“I am Teddy Reeks’ girl.”

“All of you?”

“Yes, all.”

“Au ‘voir, then!”

“Good-night...” the cab drove off — to Shepherd’s Bush!

She could not have believed, if told an hour before, that she would drive that night to Shepherd’s Bush! and at Shepherd’s Bush she cried: “*Drive on!*” and the cab drove over the Uxbridge Road to Colney Hatch, and back to the Docks, and back to Shepherd’s Bush, during all which she was in the

throes of the question — to go to him only once more — not to go to him even this once.

Though it wasn't her fault that she had not known what he was! but his. When she had asked him about the Prince at their second meeting at Brockweir, he had said: "If you see me, you see him — many of the fellows take me for him" — prevarication falsely true, truly false. Yet when he had constantly evaded telling her the name of his ship, and details about his family, she should have guessed things, she saw now — many evidences should have opened her eyes to the truth that he was no duke's son or country squire: but her wits had been hypnotised by his initial fib.

"But he did it to get me!" she moaned with tears near the Marble Arch, rolling west, and suddenly ordered the cab to the hotel, saying to herself, "he is my husband": for she liked his hand, that had in it an electric battery, and little workshop cuts and stains on it, to hold hot and long, feeling the bones, till it was as near to her as her own hand, and as much her hand as his, and his fleece of curls, and a certain fleet glance of his eye sideward, as gallant and imperial as Cæsar, and the tissue of his skin like silk, and there was a smell about him as of the sea and ships, mixed with benzoline, naphtha, shellac, mastic, which ever made something in her soul faint with emotion.

Why, though, had he *never* told her who he was? What did that mean? That she was a toy sharing in a royal escapade? not a wife, but a kind of wife? She commanded the taxicab back westward. Her grandfather's grandfather had fought at Trafalgar in the very *Victory*, and, though only a gunner, laying his gun with tackle, handspike, and quoin, if England was grand, that was because *he* had been grand....

She would not be a miserable little woman; if she was a Princess, she would be Princess-like....

And yet — he loved her well: there was no doubt: *she* knew what she knew. How often had he worried her to surround herself with town-house and country-house, and crowds of flunkeys, and crowns about her brows, till he should get a “really good chance,” as he always said, to announce her. But she had preferred to work, hardly caring to face the inquiring eye of her dad. He was a Puritan — a Methodist local preacher ever since his retirement — proud — Irish blood. She knew that only Irishmen know pride — that attar-of-pride, supremely *élite*, that is haughtier *jar* in its heart’s heart than Hanover, or Hapsburg, or Hohenzollem, and will spurn the lightning’s eye with a superber lightning. Her dad was like that: he called kings and kings’ dogs “*hogwash*.” And her (English) mother had caught it from him, and she herself, perhaps, had it: so had refused, and gone her own way — had refused to tell him her birthday, and never had had a present from him, save boxes of bon-bons and the weddingring, which she took out from her bosom where it hung, and wet, kissing it, and thought of him waiting for her, fretting his restive heart out, and ordered the cab again to the hotel.

However, it entered her head on the way that that was hardly very honest to pretend to herself that it was for him that she was going, when perhaps it was for herself, that she might have his hand. For “she was really going to give him up, to-night was the time, since, if she broke down once, then it would be a case of breaking down always. It would be best to be able to say to herself that she had never once been, after knowing: and now was her chance to be strong.

But why give him up at all? Even that point was not properly argued out! Was she not acting on impulse, driven on every wind? It was something to be the Princess of Wales, since many girls would die eight times, if they had nine lives, to be that: and she was it by right, and he her own, after all, her

flesh and blood, nearer to her than to the Queen, and dearer; and though her intellect might not be cultivated to a quite high degree like the Queen's, what then? did that make her a miserable little woman? Her soul might be as pure and golden; and she certainly thought more highly of her own people than of the Queen's: so why should she stab herself so very deep to the heart, and with her own butcher hands wrench out both her eyes? That did not seem very reasonable to expect of one.

But, then, after all, it was no good arguing, since there was he to be considered. She knew very well that the fact of his father having married "a commoner" would make it monstrous for the next Queen to be a commoner: so, if she kept him to his boy's marriage, she would be bringing him into infinite hot-water and embarrassment: his mother, who was prouder than other crowned heads, would perish in hysterics. And there was the Princess Elizabeth: everyone knew that for three years the Queen and the Liberal Party had set their hearts on her marriage with him, in a hope of Anglo-German *rapprochement*. She would be a miserable little woman, in truth, if she stood in the way.

And she had been dreaded, and known, and spied upon! — she understood that now. Once, three years previously, a man had appeared in Holmend, the hamlet near her home, and had made secret inquiries as to her people and her whereabouts: her dad had heard, and not liked it! She had been dreaded, and eyed at! But she would no longer be a danger, and a horror, and a bugbear to those above her.

She would disappear: before long he would begin to think her dead; and then might begin to look at that outlandish Japanese popinjay in her pageantries.

But if she stayed anywhere in England, he would surely scent her out, and be after her again.... Where, then, to go?

There was the war: a shortage of nurses was being felt at the front since the last big battle, and volunteers were being asked for. She had been enrolled in Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service Reserve, and would be eagerly received in the emergency. That night she would apply.

Only, she would indulge her soul with one more night at his side; in which one night she would live fifty years; and would tell him that he would never find another wife to love him as well as Eulalia.

But the cab was within some yards of the hotel when she said to herself, "Oh no, really, I am not going to," and all in a flurry, with shivering lips, called "*turn back!*"

She drove to the hospital prostrate, her mouth stretched back in a tension of self-pity, horrified now at the hollowness of the chasm of loss in which she felt herself falling.

It was now past midnight: nevertheless, she sat and wrote to Pall Mall.

Her offer was accepted: and three days later a harrowing ordeal awaited her at St James's Palace, where she was amid twenty-seven others of the Volunteer Corps and a committee of ladies. They were expecting the Princess Kitty, the King's second sister, who was said to be coming to wish them well, when all at once, tall and formidable as a wall falling upon one, in walks the Queen in heliotrope, followed by a throng of satellites. Eulalia's heart failed her.

Her Majesty had come to say "it is good of you to go," and to pin some red-cross ribbons on their uniforms; so they stood in a row, while the smile moved along the line, picking out of the casket, pinning, Eulalia waiting through a century of strain and distress, pining to fly, to sink into the floor, to become invisible.

The Queen seems not to have seen her until they were actually face to face; in fact, she was in the act of bringing the ribbon to the other's breast,

when...! But her nerves were so perfectly cultured, that she hardly started at all: only her hands leapt one inch up, and, letting the ribbon drop, she stepped on to the next, still mightily and mildly smiling.

The thing, of course, was seen — with no little wonder: and then Eulalia knew confusion of face, and pain, and did not know where to look or put herself; but one of the ladies, eyeing her askew, considered that she looked gracefuller writhing there in the grip of her pretty distress, like a sylph in a picture ashamed of nakedness, than Her Majesty reigning in her high-tower.

With this gash in her, she dashed down that night to say good-bye, climbing the long hill from Holmend just as the sunset's flush went utterly grey, and the moon stood full-faced over the covert up there before her, growing every moment more glorious as the daylight died.

She had disclosed to no one yet that she was going away, and went smiling in anticipation of the old folks surprise and disquiet. Here, indeed, she could not but smile; this little circle of the earth's surface was so well loved, affecting her with such sensations of intimacy, of rest, of religion, that while she smiled dewdrops of piety suffused her eyes: for that brook, those rough furrows, were not only her very own, but they were Eulalia, and Eulalia they, though some foreigner was permitted to call them "*his*."

She pushed back a garden-gate, and passed between two old yews to a white home buried in red-berried briony, stepping silent, to surprise them; and quietly opened the door; and was in.

But no glad start! no fuss of welcome! and, instantly chilled, she stood still.

Near a green-covered table, reading Deuteronomy out of a great Bible, sat her dad, who gazed at her steadily over his glasses; and her mother, sitting in grey silk and a cap, reading a *Sunday Companion* serial, did not (apparently) cease to read through her magnifying glass.

Eulalia, suspended, scared, bag in hand, said: “What’s the matter, dad?”

Her father smiled, eyeing steadily at her as at a specimen of seed; didn’t say anything for a minute; but then quietly: “You go.”

Whereupon, immediately, a scream, a horrid outcry of the drowning: “Almighty God, John Bayley, I can’t stand this!” — from the mother, who, casting her arms aloft, had fallen forward upon her knees.

And upon this an eruption of the most pallid and passionate rapture transacted itself during two minutes in that room, each of the three battling for breath as if in the passion of death, shouts of “Woman, learn to command yourself!” mingling with “I am not going to see mother killed by anyone!” and with “Don’t dare touch your mother with your shameful low hand!” and with “God Almighty be her father!” like people stricken with ranting in an atmosphere all oxygen. It ended with Eulalia finding herself outside in a kind of ecstasy, having been pushed by the shoulders; and it was all in a tremble from top to toe like a motor-bus that she got down the mountain with her bag.

This was work of the Princess Elizabeth, who was considered a distinctly “clever” young lady! — something of a blue-stockings! — a student of Kant! — a solver of problems! — whose suggestions had weight with friends and relatives. She it was who had suggested that, if the girl was to be made submissive to proposals, all her props should first be knocked away, and her improper course of conduct communicated to her honest home. Hence an ambassadress of known tact and discretion had come down, and had dropped in at Yew Cottage for a chat.

And the next night when Eulalia presented herself at her sister’s door in Soho, a maid delivered her the message that it might be as well if she kept away. She leant her head then on the door some moments before she moved slowly thence....

CHAPTER XIII

THE REDLIKE BAY



THE NEXT MORNING she had a letter: "Since I am very perplexed, please, dear, relieve me. I must see you to-morrow night at nine for five minutes... the Piccadilly Fountain..."

But she did not go. As he waited there at nine, an unknown nurse came, asked "Mr Reeks?", handed him an envelope.

"From his sweetheart," thought Oyone in her motorcar by Swan and Edgar.

And, "Love affair" muttered one of two detectives under the Monico — for ever since the mystery of the air-boats' destruction, the Chief Commissioner had had the Prince's every step shadowed for his protection.

"Dear," she had written, "I cannot meet you, not ever, I'm afraid. I think I see you wince, dear, in reading this, but it is not that I am really cruel, but that I cannot in all cases trust myself; and I seem to see that it is better for me to go from England, not to come back. Always remember that our marriage was entirely my fault, for you were only a boy, but a girl should know better; and now that I abandon you, it will not be very binding on you. But you will not altogether forget Eulalia, ever? I will keep the ring where I have always kept it, in the warm."

It took the Prince minutes to peruse this, and no muscle of his face moved, though he stood so long motionless, that Oyone thought: "Something has

stunned him.” However, he lifted his hand quite coolly to a cab, got in in his long cloak, and started eastward, this being his monthly doss-house night; and behind him the detectives; and behind them Oyone, who said to herself: “That cab is following his: they are detectives.”

When his cab passed Aldgate, one of the detectives exclaimed, “God’s name, where he going?” and their eyes widened in alarm when he alighted at an alley marked at the corner “Duval, *late* Dorset Street,” for the name “Dorset” had become so associated with filth and infamy and one “Jack-the-Ripper,” that an attempt had been made to change its name — in vain.

Whoever entered it was suspect — *ipso facto*. In the glances that ogled you out of the glooms was the question: “What’s *his* little game?”

Half-way down it, on a lamp, was marked “Noted House for Single Men”; and in, though married, stepped the Prince.

Having now thrown off his cloak, he got at a wicket a 4d. ticket, passed in his marine-garb into a “kitchen,” where some singing was going on, and there sat out of the way in shadow behind a corner of the fireplace, bent down with heaviness.

This den was essentially black somehow, dingy, dismal, though two gas-jets struggled against its blackness — spacious enough, but low, stuffy, windowless, filled with men, many naked to the waist (shirts drying!), and occupied with blackened benches and blackened blocks meant for tables, and tobacco smells, fishy stench, fumes of cooking.

Some of the group round the great blaze, *habitués*, the Prince knew — little Tim, the Jew, and “Alexis the Sexton,” and Burrows, the tramp-poet in his velveteen jacket and knickerbockers, whose booklet of poems “the press” had praised. He, especially, was now in a state of exaltation over the North Sea Battle, ever and afresh singing a snatch of the Alhambra battle-ballad that within three days was being sold by millions in the streets, and

sung by every ragamuffin through England; and when the fire-group left, off, away yonder at the wash-basins the thing might begin again in the voice of a saw in labour-pains.

One Tookey remarked: “Aye, ’e knows ’ow to give it ’em ‘ot all right, thank God for that” — a man sodden to flabbiness, who lived by day before the doors of the *Duke of Beaufort* — year after year — dull in a universe no huger than two streets.

And “Beer?” suggested Burrows, who had a quart-bottle, to “Alexis the Sexton,” a big and fiercely bearded being; but Alexis, brooding over the blaze, brushed the bottle away without answer.

Whereat Burrows drank himself, and now let out of his lungs:

“They breathed, ‘We are near!’
And they leered, with a ‘Hush!
We are near!’ But just here
Did the *Asahel* gush Live
As-id to germs on the Germans,
On the Russians like *hel* to a rush.”

But now stamped “Alexis the Sexton,” his hands quivering near his ears, as he shouted: “Shut up that blasted howling!” — the utterance all the more foreign for the idiomatic correctness: for he knew every language.

“Moy loife,” said little Tim, the Jew, who was proud of being English, “can’t anybody sing? Go back to Odessa and throw bombs, if London don’t suit you.”

Alexis deigned no answer; and Burrows irrelevantly put forth both arm and voice, some others joining at the third word:

“For her skipper was Ted,
And Teddy’s a bear,
When he’s sore on the head,
And is out on the tear:
And a bear that is likewise a lion
The Muscovy Bear couldn’t bear.”

The Prince, brooding in his obscurity, was thinking: “They love England, these men.... But *why?* the singular beings! It’s no privilege to be an Englishman — just the opposite, since they’d be much happier in Samoa, where there’s no aristocracy, or in France, where the aristocracy’s heads have been cut off. But they *do*, they choose to, in their great patience: I put that to their credit.”

But now afresh upon his reflections crashed the caterwaul of all the cats:

“And the Eagle he blinked.
And ‘*Blitzwetter!*’ he cried,
And ‘Al-Ass!’ as she kicked,
And ‘Ah-Hell!’ as he died:
‘Though her bray is the bray of the donkey,
There’s more Hel than As in her side.’”

After which Burrows, smacking his lips with an “Ah!” rose to stroll a little, his fists expanding the pockets of his opulent knickerbockers, and, having sauntered toward the Prince, brought a paw down upon the bowed back, calling out: “What, Jack, down on your luck again? And what’s wrong with the arm?”

“Don’t worry, mate,” muttered the Prince, “I’m not in the mood.”

“A drink?”

“No, go to hell.”

“Asahel, perhaps, friend.?”

No answer, Burrows looked down on the back a little, then, spinning, stamped with the outcry: “Now put some lungs into it!” and started to chortle:

““Her forward-gun’s stern

As vit’rol!’ they yell;

‘And her stern-gun in turn

Is forward as well:

The forwarder’s name must be Asid,

And the sterner one’s name must be Hel!’”

At this “Alexis the Sexton” leapt upright, colossal, confronting the crowd of choristers with clenched fists and scowling frown, afresh interrupted in his profound reflections. But no one took any notice, and on drawled the wawling in every tone of rawness;

“Then, with bluster and buzz,

The *Blunderbus* bowed,

‘Are you come, Max, Coz?

Of your visit I’m proud:

Forgive, if in kissing you welcome,

I blunder in bussing too loud.’”

Now that thick lip of Alexis, who still stood scowling, bent downward, and he stopped the song with the bellow: “You crowd of fowls! Sitting here singing of your masters — yes? You see not, then, that now is your chance while they are busy! But you not even think of it! You serfs by birth! You

timid mice! If you were to make to them a millionth piece of the wrong that they make to you, they would ravage Britain to one mass of ashes — if they could. And you can, but will not—”

“Which only shows that we are the better men of the two!” called out Tookey, the loafer.

“You?” said Alexis the Sexton with a lip of bitterness:

“*you* better than somebody — yes? Never, never, a dog was born of she-dog that was not a better being than things like you! I tell you—”

“Oh, stow it,” somebody put in, “we don’t want no shindy here.”

“No, you tame—”

“Howl it, boys!” howled Burrows, bringing down the bottle from his mouth, and out anew broke the row:

“He has saved us from harm
With his dreadful flails,
With his stretched-out arm
He has saved us from bales:
Let’s leap to our feet as we scream it:
‘God bless the Prince of Wales!’”

And they did leap, nearly everyone, whereupon Alexis the Sexton, finding himself standing in the throng of standers, suddenly sat down.

The gabbling of the two gloomy gas-lights, hanging on a thin T-tubing from a beam in the ceiling, filled some moments’ stillness, while the Prince said to himself: “All right, you are not asked for any love, but you choose to give it; and I choose to give you mine. Only wait till I get a *good* chance to show it, and then I will — without mercy to your merciless enemies.”

A moment more, and with a pang, new and sharp, he was thinking: “*Gone!*”

And he set to peruse anew that letter of Eulalia — he could in his obscurity, since already he knew it by heart: but in the midst started! his ear cocked — to listen to Alexis the Sexton.

Alexis was now saying to those round him: “They have it their own way for the moment, the rich — yes? but they have one horrible enemy, who no will fail to overthrow them. Who is their enemy? A few poor heroes throwing some bombs, yes? They are nothing. But their enemy is a still little man in an apartment prying into a microscope — Edison and Diessel were their enemies, Chinnery was their enemy, Darwin and Watt and Faraday were their enemies, God’s light is their enemy. How will they feel if you go and tell to them, ‘Somewhere I have a little box that will strike blind ten thousand of you every twenty seconds’? They will feel a little bit chilly — yes? Maybe it is invented already — who knows?”

It was at this that the Prince hurried Eulalia’s letter into his pocket. “A *little box*” — the name “*Chinnery*” — this made him ask himself: “*Can it be “possible* that this man has the Redlike Ray?” The jeopardy to civilisation of such a thing for even one day more was clear enough.

He bent his ear to hear more with an intense interest; but just then the plaguey *Asahel* song started again, whereat Alexis the Sexton with an “*Ach Gott!*” cast his arms aloft, got up, and walked out. Swift and still the Prince slipped out alter him.

The Russian sauntered out of Dorset Street into Commercial Street northward, his hands in the pockets of clothes that hung loose on his huge bulk, the Prince, meanwhile, all eyes for a policeman, not dreaming that those two men near the Dorset Street corner were detectives (though Alexis knew), while yonder in shadow eight hundred yards northward stood Oyone’s motor-brougham, she standing before its door. She had not been able to see the Prince enter that noted house for single men, because of the

detectives' presence, and had been wondering; till now she saw him far off, coming.

As for the Russian, accustomed to be shadowed, he had the circumspection of Argus — eyes in the back of his head! — and knew that he was being tracked by the marine. Why? “What’s *his* game?” he asked himself in some language. Had not he, Alexis, been mouthy to blab about the “striking blind”? His heart smote him.

Now, that big body could be pretty nimble; so with a quick twist he doubled back, landed a sudden blow, envenomed and heavy as a club, upon the Prince’s breast, and was gone with all his long legs northward.

Seeing which thing, the two detectives flew, shrilling whistles, Alexis flew, and fleetlier than the three flew the Prince’s twinkling feet, wrestling with space. But he had been knocked spinning, so that the Russian had had quite a longish start, and while the Prince was still two hundred yards from him, and the detectives perhaps four hundred, the Japanese, who had seen everything, rushed a little way toward the Russian, as he approached, to hiss at him: “Jump into my motor, and you’ll escape.”

Alexis, ever shy of traps and “the rich,” did not stop; but he had instantly realised that she was non-English, saw that the Prince was winning upon him, so in an impulse, when he had run some steps past the car, resolving to risk it, he doubled back, darted into the car; Oyone was in before him; and before ever its number could be noted, the motor was shooting away, booming music of the jews’- harp.

It spurted round the first corner, so by the time the two detectives could get into their taxicab and give chase, the car was nowhere; and a third detective who had come from the further end of Dorset Street, groaned to himself: “God! I’ve lost track of Alexis the Sexton, and to-morrow is the ceremony at St Paul’s.”

Meantime, the Russian and the Japanese within the motor-car stared at each other, mutually startled and alarmed to find themselves there face to face: for in moments of rush and pressure something that is not exactly we acts instead of us, and *her* invitation had been as much an impulse as *his* acceptance — in her sub-consciousness no doubt being a sense that he could give her information as to the Prince, and that since he was the Prince's enemy, he must be her friend.

So there was embarrassment, until the Russian bowed to say: "Well, I am much obliged! — supposing that your intention is friendly."

"What else can it be?" asked that light hard voice, without inflections, as if a bird should speak.

"What, madam, may I demand, was your motif!?"

"I saw you pursued — I am good-hearted — those two behind were detectives!"

"Ah," he thought at once, "she's no *ingénue* — knows things — some game in hand."

"Why," Oyono asked, "did you — strike him?"

"May I demand, madam, what is your motiff for demanding it?"

"Curiosity. You are very cautious! What are you?"

"Well, you demand that of a man? *What he is?* What answer expect you a man could make to such a demand?"

Her eyes dwelt on him, she saying to herself: "Accustomed to skulking — a life under the eye of the police." She said aloud: "There is no need — since I do not care.

I should say you are a Russian—"

He started! "I may be! And you, madam?"

"My nation? I am Irish."

"I doubt it," meditated Alexis: "more likely Magyar or Slovene."

“And you are also very likely an Anarchist,” said Oyone.

Violently started Alexis off his seat! and with grinding teeth, glaring at her with his great eyes that ever had the exaggerated expressiveness of eyes in pantomime or the cinematograph, he hissed at her: “I am an Anarchist! I am p-r-r-oud of it!”

“Well, you need not eat me” — her eyes dwelling, dwelling, on him, while a whole web suddenly wove itself in her subtle Oriental brain, that doomed this man to death on the next day, unless he did her bidding. She added: “I am an Anarchist, too.”

“You! a rich?”

“In principle, that is.”

“Word of honour, madam?”

“Since I was a child.”

Out popped the Russian’s confraternal paw, on which the girl deposited her glove with a chuckle in her shoulder.

“Besides,” she said, “you are a handsome fellow, and I not such an ugly girl that you should wish to gobble me up.”

“That is even the reason!” he gallantly answered, ogling now, asking himself: “she an *ingénue*? and I in luck’s way?”

The car was passing beneath the shadow of Holborn Viaduct, whence it drove north to Regent’s Park, and there round and round the Outer Circle, deserted now, under a moon that illumined thick mist.

“But the man you struck, why did he follow you?” the girl asked.

“Believe me, I know nothing of his motiff,” Alexis answered.

“Nor his name?”

“‘Jack’ one has called him in the doss-house.”

“Why *does* he go there?” she wondered; and aloud: “Jack is not his name. I am going to tell you his name, just to see you start up.”

“She is no *ingénue*!” Alexis reflected afresh—” has special knowledge, special motifs!”

“That man was — no, why should I tell? — yes, I will — *the Prince of Wales*. Ha I ha! You needn’t—”

His great eyes glared like eyes goggled in concave mirrors! Then suddenly: “It is the truth — I was *stooped* not to see it!” And now, to her astonishment, he caught off his cap to mutter with bent head: “Now, God bless him!”

“Well!” she went on in her light way—” an Anarchist.”

“But yes! For what can his motif be but to see himself the condition of the people whom he must some time! govern’ — as they say. I say again, God bless the man!”

“He is really an honest fool whom they hunt as a criminal,” the Japanese thought; adding aloud: “But principles: principles are no respecter of persons.”

“It is true,” said he.

“When he goes to this doss-house, how long does he stay?” she asked.

“He sleeps there! And you know not what that signifies, I think! Those vermin — who hate an open window, fester fifteen, twenty — I call it herolike! grandiose! No, I regret at the actual moment to have struck this man.”

“But principles,” said she.

“It is true,” said he: “you are a true Anarchist, or else,” he added to himself, “a Government spy.”

“You could stab him there in his sleep; no one would know,” she said low; but a grumble answered her: “One does not do that, madam”; and she then thought: “*I* could disguise myself as a man, and sleep there, if necessary.” She said aloud: “But the Royal Family pass through the Strand

to St Paul's to-morrow to '*return thanks*' for the victory: are you going to let such a chance pass?"

On which he afresh had the thought: "She *is* very likely a spy set to pump me."

"Forgive me, madam," he said to her, "but you speak with the inexperience of a child. It could not be done. In the first place, have I not struck the Prince of Wales? Is it not probable that I shall be arrested to-night the moment I return to my lodgings?"

And, quite apart from that, will not every step of mine be known till the ceremony of to-morrow is over?"

"Then, do not return: sleep in my house: no one will know."

The Russian, looking down upon her upturned smile, suddenly cried out: "Most charmed! The thing itself that suits me! But as for the procession to-morrow — no, not for me: it could scarce be done; and I have a far vaster work to make for the world."

Oyone bent to smell the roses at her breast, meditating; then said: "You know best. But I am glad I met you — we think so exactly the same things! The house is over there in those trees; I will give you some supper, and treat you well; and to-morrow you may come with me to see the procession."

"Charmed!" cried Alexis the Sexton, "if only I may leave my revolver at your dwelling: for I must not be in the crowd armed."

"Of course," said she.

"Well, you are very amiable!" he cried, with a new start: "I seem to be in luck's way! It is an adventure!"

"I am like that," she said lightly. "I have a good heart while I can, and when I cannot I can be very cruel." She cried in Chinese: "Drive home!"

And so it was that the next morning there was consternation all in the police-force at the question which had arisen: "*Where is Alexis the Sexton?*"

— a poignant question on any day of a royal procession, but on this day its anxiety was wildly heightened by the Prince's statement that this man probably had in his possession that dreadful Redlike Ray, for which the police had been seeking for weeks.

Hence every ten minutes telephone messages were passing between Scotland Yard, the City, and the Embankment; and at ten o'clock the postponement of the ceremony was suggested, every den in London having then been ransacked, the Russian's lodgings, all his haunts, his associates' haunts — no trace of him or of the ray.

But postponement was now found to be too difficult, so the *route* was more than usually betrooped; and all were warned to keep quick and seeing peepers.

Yet at eleven in the forenoon Alexis was there in the Strand crowd, big and brown, but as undistinguished as one grain amid the myriads of the seashore.

He had come up Essex Street from the Embankment with the Japanese, and just there, at the corner, they stood, a little east of St Clement Danes, she pressed against the door-rail of *The Freeman's Journal*, a little behind, and left of him. Pale, weak in the knees she stood there, in her muff (unknown to him) his revolver.

When some closed wagonettes passed, taking members of the Palace Staff to St Paul's, she almost jumped upon the Russian's back, to see; and now she was seen: for a little away on one of the rows of seats reared round St Clement Danes sat Eulalia, who had to leave England at two o'clock, so had got a ticket for a last glimpse of her lad; and her eyes, straying down upon the crowd opposite, chanced to rest upon the Japanese face.

She started, asking herself: "Is that she?" — peeped and peered — but it was hard to tell definitely; and just then the ocean's roar arose, approached,

the procession coming.

The tongues of London bells were telling that it was a day of gladness, and flags, arches, a profusion of festoons, strewed the route with hues.

Yonder by the Griffin the Lord Mayor in scarlet and ermine waited with his Pearl Sword to present to the King, surrounded with Councilmen in their mazarine gowns, Aldermen in scarlet, Sword-Bearer, Mace-Bearer, Marshal; a band started the National Anthem; at word-of-command the soldiers in their great-coats sprang to attention, presented.

Eulalia could not see westward, but knew pretty well the position of the Prince from the quality of the wave of roaring that rose and rolled as he rolled — something of suddenness in it, a yell that leapt, he in the second carriage, separated from King and Queen by a body of aides-de-camp, equerries, Silver Stick, adjutants, and the second division of escort: and he was said to look sullen or dull.

Nor did the Queen look herself to those who knew — a boding in her that day. There behind four bays she sat with King's sister and King, who lifted hand to a hat of plumes that drooped, Red Indian in suggestion, and in her rear a train of state-postilion landaus — some Ministers, Agents-general, Mistress of the Robes, Lord Chamberlain to the Queen; and when the first division of escort had dashed past St Clement, it halted beyond the Griffin; and now the King is there, and the Prince in sight behind the King's Riders and escort; and now all the procession has halted, because of the Lord Mayor and his Civic Sword.

The instant it halted, while each eye was tied to the gaud, through the storm of cheering a gun-shot was, as it were, felt, rather than heard; and it was instantly followed by another.

The first passed through the Prince of Wales' neck, the second through the heart of Alexis the Sexton.

The Japanese had, so to say, *clambered* up the Russian's back, to shoot: and there is this to be said to her credit, that she had no practice in handling fire-arms, that she was excessively agitated, that she aimed within one tick, and that the Prince's carriage on that side was protected by a squadron commander: so that virtue was in her. And in the very act of dropping from the Anarchist's back the cat put a bullet into him, and dropped his revolver at his feet.

Some of the people near declared afterwards that they never heard any shot at all!

But they felt, they saw, they screamed; and fiercelier than they stood Eulalia screaming.

The Prince, quite near under her feet, was aware of that poignant voice, as he failed and fainted.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SIX MILLIONS



BUT THE WOUND proved “not dangerous,” though “grave,” and though accompanied in its “history” by some delirium; and meantime the most detested of men was the dead Alexis, since it never entered any head to question that it was he who had shot, and then shot himself — though a divisional surgeon took his oath that the course of that bullet was the oddest which he had ever beheld in any suicide.

“But why a bullet, and not the Redlike Ray?” the Prince wondered on that morning four weeks later when he began to get well again: “and where is the ray now? And Chinnery — where’s *he*? And the Six Millions? There’s a something somewhere at work....”

From these musings he turned to a heap of newspapers by his bed; and all that forenoon was reading, reading, feasting his interest....

For during those weeks of his weakness the wheeling of the top had come to the humming mood, and the humdrum old world was whirling in a vertigo of the giddiest delirium toward the gulf’s rim. He saw headlines like “All the World at War, save China,” and even as he wondered of what vertiginous vintage the children of men had drunk, he himself was drunken with it.

Austria, it appeared, was no longer in the Triple Alliance! Austria had broken loose from it in order to fly at the throat of Russia; and *already*

Russian troops of the Reserve Category were being raised, and *levées en masse* of her *voiskos*.

Whereat let Roumania, suspecting that Russia is aiming at nothing but *her* destruction, rush thundering round her frontiers; and quick now let Servia, with her back on Knuzevatz, mass two *corps d'armée* upon Nisch and Vranja, to spring upon her Bulgarian victors and allies of old, and have a bitter draught of sour milk and the bacillus Bulgaricus.

It was as when one planet of a system slips on her course, and two collide, why, then, the whole thing's upset, and they all decide to collide for luck, and it is a case of baking days then, yes, and of break-neck days, Monday fleeing from the wrath to come through the middle of Sunday, vast arcs of moons that loom from Arctic to Antarctic, with scarlet laughter of all the gods and dogs of war.

For the European clock had struck the hour, and it was now or never for placing on the stage a thousand schemes of greed, aggression, and revenge.

Therefore let Sweden quickly throw two infantry divisions into Bjômeborg, with Helsingfors for their *objectif*, to drag her Finns from that rigorous grip of Russia, and Sweden is an ally of England — Sweden and Norway, Denmark and America, Spain, Portugal.

Denmark, the long-suffering, long docked and hedged-in, saw the day of vengeance dawn, and at the alarm of the first mortar, had darted to arms, to start for Flensburg; while American squadrons, in a drama of warfare in the Hwang Hai off Chefoo, had fought in French and English lines of battle: a drama in which 286,000 had sunk 108,000 tons of Russo-German metal, with only eight ships remaining to the victors: upon which injured ships a Japanese squadron had fallen the same afternoon, and sunk or captured them.

On that same day bombarding battleships of Japan were barking from afar at San Francisco; and a Japanese squadron was sighted on the horizon by the Cockatoo Island coastguard (Sydney).

All yonder, too, in Texas, is America crackling, hordes of goat-footed Mexicans in coloured rags attacking “the Gringos” in guerilla brigade-sections, sniping from behind hedge and ditch, peeping along their Lee Metfords’ sights with a piercing eye. And not far from that crackling is all the area of Ecuador crackling, ravaged by troops of Peruvian sharpshooters.

Everywhere the same frenzy of revelry. *Mobilmachung!* The agitated hand snatches the rifle, the wild eye dashes for the ranks. Only where Li Ku Yu sits sipping buttermilk-tea among lotuses and marvels of marble serene peace breathes on the breezes.

He makes no sign; he waits; he brazenly smiles; he has a clear clean block of brain without one hair on it, a rock cut out without hands: he sits and stimulates it with tea.

And he revels in the revel and frenzy. Nothing escapes his eye, his meditation. Looking over the sea he can see that America has out hosts of converted merchant-cruisers furnished with box-batteries of four and six inchers, fighting, to the astonishment of men, with battleships — fighting, often conquering. A White Star liner of the San Francisco-Nagasaki trade-route, meeting two large Japanese cruisers in Mid-Pacific sank both before she sank; and the *Lusitania*, in an affray with a troop of sea-keeping sloops and torpedo gunboats, patrolling the Atlantic for tit-bits, sank half before they fled, and then kept afloat until within sight of Ireland.

Seeing which, Britain had begun late in the day to accumulate stores of fittings and armaments at home ports and naval stations for such ships; some of their crews were complemented from Colonial Naval Reserves; and

they were spurting mirthfully over the oceans, having the highest and liveliest time.

Thanks in great part to them, our country had not yet begun to starve.

Rich still on paper, her consols still taken up, St Swithin's Lane and Wall Street her allies, half the owners of securities all over the globe hoping for her triumph, she was, nevertheless, in the grip of want, and already saw a skeleton grin at her from the air.

Protective tariffs in other countries had vanished like chaff two weeks after the going off of the first gun, so that England's free trade no longer made her a magnet for imports; and since supplies were dodging and fighting their way precariously from Canada, the Government granaries ran every day lower.

A Russian *ukase* had prohibited the exportation of wheat — a ridiculous thing, since no creature in Russia would now have dreamed of exporting wheat. That immense breadth of empire was already doddering horribly to its drop.

Hardly a week after the *Mauretania* battle, Austria, with a heart fond for Salonica, had flung across the Save a body of Uhlans, who had coolly occupied Belgrade; and the next morning sections of brigades bivouacking in the squares, and Austrian officers gossiping on the boulevards, had met the gaze of the amazed Belgradians.

Whereat the Great White Czar waxed whiter, and Young Turkey *grew* tough to the teeth of her eaters, massing regulars and redifs, green-bannered, class on class, calling "gather, gather, all ye birds of ravin" to her Berbers, Sanoussis. For see Macedonia broken in a roar of flame, the Vali of Saloniki assassinated on his doorstep, whereupon the Great Archimandrite, His Holiness the Patriarch of Jerusalem, was mutilated in a room of his

palace, and that same evening telegraphic communication was broken between Odessa and Constantinople, and the Suez Canal blown up.

And now an anarchy of thunder and waltz of all the vortices in the Near East, thirty thousand Athenians surging across the Thessalian frontier, Crete bursting into binning with bands of bandits girt with the dirk and carbine of rapine marauding from end to end, upon all which the Turkish Turgut Reis is hurling shell-fire, quenching hell with hell; and at the same time a mob of Turkish gunboats is going northward through the Bosphorus to watch the (Russian) Black Sea Squadron (convoying two corps from Odessa), quietly occupy Bulgarian Bourgas — directly connected by rail with Stamboul.

And still faster spins the dance, like the sand-forms of the sand-storm that vastly, dantly waltz into conflict. The next day Austria declared against Russia a war which had begun before the declaration; and on the third day after the occupation of Bourgas the eastern limb of the British Mediterranean Fleet steamed through the Bosphorus to seek the Black Sea Fleet, and bombard Sevastopol.

Russia had enough to do: at the fourth week-end, if she looked south, south-west, north, west, east, or inward at her own bankruptcy, she everywhere saw handwriting on her walls. Sweden at Helsingfors was looking toward Cronstadt; twelve Swedish armoured ships at the Nevamouth. The Black Sea littoral was British. The Army of India, with the Teheran railway in its hands, had scattered at Merv the Army of Turkestan, and after a four days' carnival of carnage at Novo Tcherkask, had marched by road to Kharkov, to turn its face toward the Kremlin.

Another mixed army of Turks and English had thoroughly crushed the Russian corps that had advanced from Kars to invest Erzeroun.

Russia's 4th with her 8th to her 12th Southern Corps had, indeed, inflicted annihilation upon the Austrian army massed on the Dneister in

Eastern Galicia; but Austria's second army on the San, its back on Przemsyl (the bulwark of Middle Galicia), and her third based on Cracow (the key of Western Galicia), had followed the Moltke maxim of marching apart and fighting together, and after a tug-of-war only surpassed for carnage by that drama of gore transacting itself over Northern France, had made Poland Austrian, and crossed the sources of the Niemen.

Add to this that Vladivostock was even now cracking and nodding under rollicking cataracts of Japanese thunder; and thundering multitudes of puny Japanese troops, amusing themselves with butchery, were intruding and intruding through Manchuria, reeling up as on a reel the Siberian railway.

And France, *la belle*, was unwell of her *règles*, and blanched; and Max had a malady and chancre from intercourse with her.

In Eastern Germany the Army of the Vistula was at grips with the gallantry and zeal of the Swedish levies, who with astonishing dash had advanced far through the great military *dépôts* of the north-east, and after capturing the Thom-Posen railway, had drawn a ring of earthworks and Schumann gun-turrets round Posen, in the teeth of the teeming legions of that Eastern region — Royal Saxon Corps, draughts from Thom, that Metz of the East, from Königsberg — who in vain had flung themselves in wave on wave upon these unexpected fairheads.

And northward, with a display of hardly less audacity and energy, Denmark was campaigning in Schleswig-Holstein, and had sat down before Kiel; while south-westward on the French frontier the two great branches of the Teutonic race had dashed together shockingly: so that eighteen of the twenty German corps were already in the field, her burghers and shopkeepers now girding on the bandolier, and now was the winter of her Bourse's discontent.

As for France, the Light of the world was like a candle flickering in a draught.

See Italy southward redeeming now her “unredeemed” territories, her Haute Savoy, Alpes Hautes, for now is the day, and Frenchmen and vermicelli never yet went well together.

Therefore what is left of the Italian navy (it had been smashed, and had smashed, in a battle off Cape Spartivento) shall bombard three days’ the Riviera batteries, while swarms of Bersaglieri, Alpini, Carabinieri shall clamber like chamois among the Alp passes under a shadow of aeroplane-wings, their cannons carried on active-footed mules, pushing their advance against troops of dragoons and mountain-chasseurs, swaggering black rascals of Spahis, Zouaves, garbed in gaudy cloths; and in the European hotchpotch some cynic camels shall sulk and snarl, and die with a repining eye.

And when the Italian 2nd, 4th and 6th have effected a landing near Nice, has broken bloodily through the French 7th, 14th and 15th, have crossed the Isère, then Paris knows panic and *émeute*.

And under the double tonnage of Russia and Germany France must already have suffocated, but for the rescuing strength of Britain.

Britain, with a slow but increasing heat, was becoming a recruiting *dépôt*, her Lancashire blackamoors, her Cockney bits of boys, her Scottish bodies, her Irish devils ever steadier, keener, streaming to see to it — nimbly! soldiers in a week, warriors in a fortnight, veterans in a month: for, as things now were, if France went down, Britain, too, foundered like a ship in the sea: and British men said “not yet.”

There, therefore, all along that north-eastern frontier of France backed by the charming land of Champagne, the fire was hell-fire, and the rigour of the game pretty grim — the men of England coming, pressing, checked,

beaten back, defeated, hampered, badgered, butchered, fretted, pestered, but still coming, pressing, getting every day their dreadful pecker up, struggling like tunnel-diggers grinning at the ruggedness of granite, winning an inch, and still an inch, and an inch, until that momentous December midnight when the men of Mars must have marked the carmine of the fall of Metz, and have heard some murmur of that turmoil on earth.

Of it Eulalia wrote to her mother: “I should not care to live through such a thing again, though not for anything should I like to have lived without having once lived through it.”

And again nine days later: “I am not well, and even if I be everything that’s bad, daddy might let you write to say if you are alive, and wish one a happy Christmas. Perhaps some day twenty years hence you may hear more than whatever it is you have heard, and may think then of me more forgivingly.

“It is hard to say quite what is wrong, but I am pretty sickified. Yesterday Surgeon-Major Burke peeped under my eyelids, felt my pulse, and said: ‘It is the heart’ — wonderful discovery! Doctors amuse me.

“But some of the nursing-staff are beginning to look rather askance at me, I fancy, for the two company-waggons are pretty full of sick, one of the junior dressers died of typhoid three days ago, and one, of course, ought to be ‘all there.’ But I forget things, I am very remiss really — I can no more help it than be the bedmate of a Long Tom; all I want to do now is to lie alone in woods, and give myself up, and I dream such things, that I want to be always asleep. Of course, I make a good old struggle.

“Early on the morning of the 21st I started out from our sycamore-tree to go into Nurnfeld — I told you, did I, that the 2nd and 3rd companies have been billeted on Nurnfeld village after a good deal of hardship and marching to come up with our brigade? Well, our junior surgeon had got a

permit from Captain Hardinge for one of the six stretcher-bearers of the 2nd to take the place of Davis, the dresser, who is dead, so I was going to get the man, when, just as I had passed the baggage-park sentries, something very strange came over me. 'mere lay the village before me, the lantern still burning before the senior officer's cottage-door, a few Tommies yawning in the dawn at doorways where they stood sentry over their squads: but I seemed to see it in a dream somehow. After passing the outlying sentry, I walked on to a cottage which they call the alarm-quarter, where an inlying picket of six have to keep awake all night, and I remember seeing the six fellows playing cards in a room, with their belts loose, round a lantern on a box; but there I seem to have stopped to lean on the window, and — they *say* that I fainted, though I don't think that I fainted.

“Anyway, I was there so long, that Sister Darling had to come to look for me, found me sitting in the alarm-quarter, and then — she is such an angel, always — would not let me go back to the field-hospital, but said I must wander about all day, and take a good rest.

“Well, I did; and it was a day of destiny to me: for at four in the afternoon the most marvellous thing that you ever could fancy happened to me.

“I took something to eat in my knapsack, and in passing beyond the canteen met a Lieutenant Pierce, who told me that there was a rumour that fighting was probable that day between our outpost garrison and an advanced detail of the enemy. Our brigade, you must understand, is said to be now diamond-shaped, the 2nd and 3rd forming the south corner of the diamond, we being in the far north wing of our army, which is now facing the enemy on a front of some seventy-five miles, by report; and everyone is saying that the two hosts are getting well into touch, so you can look out for more things happening before you lose your next tooth. Oh, it is a big

business this. On the night of the 12th, the fourth night before the fall of Metz, my company was camped on an incline, and before I went to sleep I could see the fires of a whole division in the snows at my feet reaching far into the darkness, battalion after battalion, with their batteries and their sentries in greatcoats, seeming a scene in some great dream. And this mass of man, animal, cannon and baggage was but the advance-guard of a far vaster war-host which occupied the North; and hidden away in the dark was the still vaster war-host of the enemy.

“Well, after hearing that that advanced corner of our diamond might be fighting, I thought that I had had enough of bow-wow, and would keep clear of it. But I must have soon forgotten where I was going, and, as a matter of fact, put my little shoe into the thick of it, for near two o’clock, when I must have walked seven or eight miles, I twice heard band-music going, then a bugle somewhere calling form-company-columns, and presently I saw a train of artillery-horses straining uphill to my left, for the country just here is very broken.

“After this I came to a village as big as Holmend, in which I saw not one living thing but a dog that skedaddled on seeing me. There were bits of shell about, the houses in ruin, and in front of a school a little outside the village were two mountain gun-carriages with their guns and artillery waggons wrecked, and a gunner stretched on the ground under one of the waggons, with his dragoon-sword and revolvers still at his belt, poor boy. You wouldn’t think how lonely and consoling it was there, and I sat a long time on one of the scorched cottage-steps. The afternoon was quite warm, though there are patches of snow over the hillsides.

“Then a sound of big guns roused me, and, as it always does, drew me, for it’s in the creature’s breed, no doubt. So I set out eastward down some steep fields, and half-way down could see through trees a company of

Greys in column of squads stepping with their swinging kilts, the gallant laddies, their marker gallivanting in advance with the flag like a man gone dancing and dotty with arrogance, a couple of field-guns and an *échelon* of baggage coming in their rear, and in front their screaming bagpipes that craze men's brains with bravery. Really, men are dear creatures, the good-hearted, simple, strong dears. I vow I'd rather a man than one of those angels that 'went in to the daughters of men.' Perhaps you will say, 'Yes, that's why your father has had to turn you from home.' Well, perhaps. You must think as you will, mother. God made us.

"So I went on making my way by fields and paths, the row growing, till I got in sight of a mountain, beyond the brow of which I saw a haze, for smokeless powder still makes a haze and a smell when lots of it are fired by troops in close order; and on the mountain's slope, near the top, my fieldglass soon spied a supply-store and headquarters signalling station, with gun-emplacements, and a dressing-station lower down, and at the bottom under cover of a crag a group of ammunition-carts and ambulance-waggons with flags on them.

"Lying down near the top was a line of Inniskillings, forming the reserve of the firing-line on the farther slope, and two hundred yards or so below stood the Greys on a road. I was astonished when I got on the upper ground that the Inniskillings were not touched, for it looked to me as if small pompom shrapnel was spattering all about the mountain-top, and the battle was going on with the din of an engine which roars, groans, whizzes and horridly rattles.

"I wanted to go up to the Inniskillings to see, for that might do me good to get some lead in me, but a lance-corporal of the Greys shook his finger furiously at me, so I walked aside till I got to a crag where I scrambled down with some skirt-dance adventures, for I seem to be quite strong and

active, really, but 'it's the heart'; and! got in the end to a mounting meadow, like the Tump at home, a quarter of a mile or so to the left front of the mountain, and in it I found a waterworks reservoir in a mound, and on the reservoir two German girls lying quite silent with their chins on their fists.

"We were not very safe there, some of the enemy's shells dropping pretty near at the bottom of our meadow, but, then, we could see, though the smoke blown from four cottages and a wood burning on the slope bothered one's vision.

"Our men were in four shelter-pits with loopholes, or rather in three, for I could spy that one was full of nothing but forage-caps stuck on sticks to draw the enemy's fire; and there was a covered retreat in the rear of them out of which I saw three wounded carried up.

"At the moment when I lay down the enemy were pretty near the mountain: I could spy them like mice in a line darting out of one bit of cover into another bit, like one in a bitter wind winning one's way, their artillery from somewhere miles away still pounding our mountain with mortar and pompom, having the range exactly apparently, and ours mouthing back across heaven from the mountain-top.

"Then I could see the enemy's firing-line running from behind three houses, then jumping a stone hedge, and their cheer for the charge reached me faintly; the next minute they were on the lull-slope; and I pitied them, they looked so little running up there in comparison with the mountain and with the amount of sound around them that they were foundering in, for they had hardly advanced ten yards when they broke like thread before our thundering trenches, upon which our firing line leapt the trenches to chase them, the reserve Inniskillings ran down to help, and the signalling-station signalled the Greys, who ran up and then down to pelt pell-mell into the trenches.

“I think, though, that the enemy’s ranks soon rallied, though I could hardly tell what was happening for the hazes of smoke that smudged the valley in patches; moreover, a country house that had broken into smouldering rolled most of it in smoke.

In the midst of it a sound made me glance to my left — cavalry!

“The road that runs north and south along the bottom of the mountain winds eastward at the north end of the meadow where the reservoir is; and on that east part of it I saw a squadron in column of sixes ride out from behind a rise on tall white horses. At the same time I was startled by the two German girls, who sprang wildly up, clapping their hands and laughing, crying out “Cossacks! Cossacks!” — and no doubt they were Cossacks, but they were certainly captained by a German, for I soon heard his frantic howling — they howl ‘*Charge! Double! Hurrah!*’ at a charge — or they may have been a mixed body. Anyway, on they came straight toward me with their busbies, dark-green knickerbockers and top-boots, from slow to fast, the white horses fretting wildly neck to neck, with their wild captain waving his sabre some yards in front of all, calling them, while quicker and quicker the hundreds of their legs drummed the ground with a steady growth of passion from a hand-gallop to a field-gallop and from a field-gallop to an avalanche. It was frightful, but nice.

“Meantime, they were being knocked over, man and animal, by the Greys, and trampled, though I don’t think the Greys could see them yet for the trees: so no wonder they made haste.

“Their aim was to take the mountain while our main body was engaged away to the east with theirs, and I thought they were going to gallop and sabre our position; but when they got under the north end of my meadow, where they were in dead ground from the mountain, two-thirds of them sprang off, without stopping, every first and third man tossing their reins to

every second man, as I could see by standing up and peering; and in a moment these two-thirds were jumping the stone hedge on the farther side of the road, leaving three dead there at the corner, and I lost sight of them for a minute, till I saw them again jumping the stone hedge, well spread out now, opposite the mountain: and they charged.

“There seemed to me to be precious little cover for them on the slope, for our men must have burnt off much of the bush before occupying it, so these poor cavalrymen got it hot enough on those lower slopes from the grim Greys, the row rolling without an instant’s interval for minutes together, like ten million motor-bicycles going bang-bang, strong stuff. I saw lots of them catch at imaginary balls, as they dodged up from point to point; but they did not break; on they struggled; and suddenly it struck me that the Greys’ fire was growing slack, and then I was sure, and then it stopped, and my heart sank. Why they had given in so soon I could not understand, and could have cried. The two German girls were standing, grinning, on the very brink of the reservoir, white as milk with excitement, and in another minute they were screaming, clapping, ‘Victory! The Cossacks! Hurrah!’ Really, Germans have very offensive manners, and nobody can possibly be more excitable.

“Well, what followed I would not see the end of, it was too painful. The Cossacks, or whatever they were, leapt clamouring upon our trenches, and even as they leapt, poor dears, they were perishing like sheep. I never saw such a thing — I would not see it. When they leapt upon the trenches it was to find them empty, since the Greys had retired secretly by covered retreats to other trenches hidden in some fold of the hillside, and from that second position, even as the hot Cossacks cheered in victory, came the withering shock of the Greys’ volley at horridly close quarters. Think of it, their tragic fix, the mantrap, the massacre. The Cossacks skedaddled like a flock of cats

scattering from dogs, those Greys raining a purgatory of curses after them, and I scattered also, getting over a gate into the road where a third of the Cossacks were, holding the others' horses, and I walked along it some way, until I came to a wood, where I lay down....

“But no, I am not going to tell even you — not yet, anyway — what befell me there. I will send you this lot by our post to-night. It is already a long lot, and has taken me three afternoons, for I like, I suppose, to talk of it all to you. You might write once: you could, secretly, if you tried. Remember that I am sick, and even if I am a sinner, though I do not admit that I am particularly, suffering atones for things. I'll think of you all on Christmas Day, for I don't bear Alice any malice, tell her, if you will of me, and will write, for I love you more than any of you know. And will you send any news, and if you see any bits about the Prince of Wales, will you send, as Sister Darling is madly in love with him, poor girl, and I, too, I'm afraid. I wonder if any more girls have gone sillified for him, the sillies?

““For her skipper was Ted,
And Teddy's a bear...”

so don't forget this, and think kindly of your own, and good-bye, God bless you.

“EULALIA.”

As to “what befell” her in that wood where she “lay down,” it is soon told.

In the wood she spied a church ruin, which was like a solitude within a solitude, and, in love with solitude, she went into it, and lay within a mass of bramble and bracken at its west end, which was a solitude within a solitude within a solitude.

Indeed, her mind and body were now in a sicklier way than her letter quite exhibits, so sick now, so afflicted and down with love, that only a don of Cupid College could have shrewdly construed and doctored her. It was the air-disease, nameless! Her bosom seemed to yearn for the moon to nurse, and if this had been given her, she would have hungered for the sun to hug. As she lay there within the bush, her lids shut, her hands under her head, crushing her four-penny loaf of gold-hair, there were moments when the Prince's face appeared quite visibly to her, like a vision just over her nose, staring eye to eye at her stare; and she smiled then at peace, and then it was gone, and her body tossed for ease, all sighs and pining, pallor and languishment.

Though she had been so very nigh to his life — and few men are fairies to their wives — he was now quite a Fairy Prince in her brain, the shout of the world about him perhaps girding him in purple glammers for her; and since their married intimacy seemed not less than a hundred centuries ago, she was as fresh and flushed with love as if she had never had him: for it was necessary to her to look at the ring and reread his letters, in order to realise that her once nearness to him was not a dream. So with jealous shoots of pain she pictured him living and moving among Mohammedan heavens set immensely above her, forgetting her and her century-old caresses; and stodgy old Buckingham Palace, guarded by stodgy bobbies, became to her fantasy an aching enchanted fabric of romance.

And the thought that it was she herself who had cast it all from her with her own hand caused her to moan. But the notion of breaking down in her undertaking does not seem ever now to have entered her head even, stronger than all tugs and gusts in the gale of her nature being self-respect; and still her word was, "if I'm a Princess, I'll be Princess-like."

She was no longer conscious of the firing, which continued some twenty minutes more, nor of its stoppage; what shocked her into consciousness was a sense that *someone else* was there in the ruins: she raised her head; saw “Mademoiselle Oyone”; and in the very thick of her wonder sucked in her breath, with “How truly lovely she is!”

There stood Oyone in the nave, at the middle, with that lissom hint of her hips and waist, dressed as ever in reds and splendours, a bag in her hand, a swath of veil across her forehead, and she was moving her eyes warily round in such a way, that at once Eulalia was aware that her visit here was secret.

But before ever Eulalia could reveal herself, Oyone was moving swiftly into the chancel-part, and Eulalia was so astonished to see her move her eyes slowly round once more, and then rapidly lift a slab by a ring, and vanish down a hole, that she had sat hushed.

Now, however, she thought that she hardly ought to watch, so she gingerly got up to go slipping on tiptoe away; but chanced to step on some loose stones which rolled; stumbled: and Oyone heard it.

Oyone spurted like a bird to peer at the brink, but a little late to see Eulalia, who had that instant slipped out. She thought, though, that she could catch sounds out in the coppice, and made haste to follow, prepared to slay.

She had already in her bag what she had come for, a bar of gold: the fact being that the old woman, A-lu-te, was then dying, in consequence of which there had been some difficulty as to the signature on cheques, so the Chinese household was in straits for ready money, and Oyone had come and stolen a bar of Li Ku Yu’s hoard, to break up.

And the question was: *had she been seen?*

She had more sense of ownership in this hoard than labourers in their honest wage; she had more pride in it than scientists in their conquests; and the mere thought that any god, or man, or fiend, should ever dare to ferret it out and drag it from her grasp roused in her that same gasping, arrogant rancour with which aristocracies resent any attempt to wrest from their maw the rents of their atrocity and dishonour. “Have I not *been seen*?” she asked Heaven; and *soft, soft*, she dropped back the slab, and went peering through the forest, but she was now well weighted with the bar in the bag, and before she came to a sight of Eulalia, Eulalia was out on the road.

And now Oyone was left uncertain; but the mere suspicion that she *might have been seen* inflamed her to a hissing hate, and was quite sufficient to be fatal to Eulalia. She had both dagger and fire-arm; and she suddenly ran out to Eulalia, who was now moving westward toward a main-station which the Germans had just set up at the roadside; and she called to Eulalia: “What, Miss Bayley!”

“Think of our meeting!” she said, when Eulalia turned, bowed, and met her: “You are in the army, then? To what part do you belong?”

“The 2nd Somersetshires.”

“And *I* have been with an old friend at St Pierre-les-Sapins, and now have lost my way in woods, looking for the station.”

Saying which, she kept her eyes on Eulalia’s face, and when Eulalia faintly blushed at the lie, this infuriated Oyone. Her next words were: “I can’t bear to see those men: will you walk a little this way with me?” — she pointed eastward, for a little westward were two tents with lanterns and flags at their doors, and operating-tables within, and before them a throng of ambulance-waggons and stretchers with gashed men on them, who gave out a sound of lamentation, and within the tents two sturgeons and their helps, as busily working, and as coolly, as butchers.

Before these witnesses nothing was to be done by Oyone; and by a blessed inspiration Eulalia replied to her invitation that she had to go back to her post.

At this refusal Oyone's eyes lightened with spite.

"But it is droll," she grossly said, looking Eulalia straight in the face, "that you, a Prince's honey, should be here slaving! Or has he tired of you? — you look a little ill. I hope *I* am not the cause, for His Royal Highness is always teasing me lately."

Up went the other's chin; and loftily she uttered a word and a letter: "My h — !" then turned and went on her way eastward, with a hotter wound in her than those wounded.

Oyone, for her part, glanced at her watch, and went eastward, past the wood of the ruin; but threw herself on a grass bank beyond a winding of the road, writhing, wringing her hands, thinking: "I think she did — I'll see her dead, I must! or I'll know no peace.... She said the 2nd Somersetshires...."

Meantime, Eulalia had turned back, to see what was under that slab with the ring: for now rancour was in her, too; and she thought: "I will."

So, after passing the scene of stretchers and shrieks westward, she passed it eastward again, saw no one on the road before her, ran into the wood, the ruin, raised the flag, and not without some ghostly tremors, for now it was growing dark, went down the steps.

Down there it was already black, but she struck a match from her knapsack: and there before her against a broken wall stood a great cube of gold bars glowing....

The weight of one that she lifted amazed her....

Now she sat on a step, considering it. And suddenly her hands started up. "*This is the Six Millions....*"

Yes! There was the “*Reichskriegs-schatz*” stamped in the bars — the Six Millions found — and by her.

She laughed a little sillily, all in Aladdin-land, dazzled. But after a time she laughed again not sillily, understanding much.

She saw now that she had long been sub-jealous of the half-caste; and now that pang was over for ever. “*It was she* who destroyed the air-boats, she and Chinnery,” Eulalia was soon saying; “and she was near to where he was shot in the Strand, for I saw her; it is she who is at the bottom of everything; and it is not love, but hatred that is between them!” Then she laughed.

But what now to do? She was there in the dark a long time meditating it. To tell? To keep it dark? It occurred to her that six million pounds might well buy her the right and title of Princess of Wales.

To whom, though, did this treasure rightfully belong? Not to Germany, surely: it had been taken in war-time. Not to England: it had been taken by private enterprise. Not, of course, to Oyone. It belonged to “Teddy”! and, if to “Teddy,” then, to “Teddy’s” wife: it was *hers*! And multimillionairesses can buy many things!

She would wait and see what she would do....

Meantime, Oyone had started to come back to the wood under an impulse of vague disquiet; but then had been pulled the other way by having to catch her train.

CHAFFER XV

THE HAUNTED SUBMARINE



IN THAT TRAIN she sat alone with that racking question:

Did she see?

Only an absolute necessity to be in London dragged Oyone from France that night.

But she would soon be back to that “2nd Somersetshires,” she said to herself.

If Eulalia had really seen, then, all was up — the hoard gone — the prison cell — the English scaffold. What hissing luck! Were there gods who saw, and maliciously managed chances to punish sin? Undoubtedly she had sinned; she seemed to be becoming rather deep-dyed and rank, a new creature from the Oyone she used to be. Should she now repent? and nourish friendly feelings to everyone? and wrench Li Ku Yu by the roots out of her flesh? and make a new will? Or was it not too late? There was a sweet thing in sinning, in being quite, quite untrammelled, in flying and dropping bombs upon humanity; and, as for gods, they were well when they gave success, but when they interfered with their hissing luck, one hissed and hated them. What was the girl doing there? — she, a Prince’s mignonne. Had they quarrelled? Yes, evidently: for her letter handed him at the Piccadilly Fountain had stunned him. And this was odd: that the girl had tossed up her chin, and said “My h — !” Could he be her husband — by chance? In that case he might be caught like a fish.

She resolved to try it, and did not delay: in the hour that she reached London she wrote to the Prince.

And three hours later she entered a back room, narrow and long, dim, windowless, with an alcove at one end — on the first floor. There was a prisoner in it, yet the door was not locked, for the prisoner never had any impulse to escape; and said she, as if addressing a child: “Look! I have brought you a bottle to-day, instead of a half, because—”

“My precious Oyone,” breathed Richard Chinnery, sitting in slippers and dressing-gown over a fire in a tiny grate in the south-east corner of the room, whose length ran north-and-south, the door being in the west wall; and he clutched at the bottle with trembling fingers.

“Because,” repeated Oyone, “I want you to be good, as I am going to move you—”

“Oh, Oyone, not the stairs! not the stairs!” he cried, with fright in his eyes.

“Yes,” said she, “the stairs. And if you make the least to-do, I will take the bottle back. It is a shame in you to be such a coward. And you should be glad, for I am going to put you to live now in the Garden-house out of this dark den, where you can walk on fine days, and see the sun and the trees. It is all ready for you. Come.”

“Oh, Oyone!”

“Come” — she took his hand, led him step by step, he silent, concentrating his noble soul to it, but at the stair-top failed and shrank, breathing with bated breath: “Oh, no, no, no....”

This irritated her, and pulling his arm round her neck, she hurried him cruelly down, he as wildly staring as a zebra with a lion riding its back; till they were down, and now he was eyeing piningly at her, panting “my precious... my precious....”

She now led him out into the tangled back-grounds, in which, when they were near the Garden-house, his eyes lighted up an instant, as he cried, "*My air-boat!*" — for there under an awning it lay.

"Yes, I brought it," she said, and his interest died out, as he disappeared with her into the Garden-house.

To her letter to the Prince, and her removal of Chinnery, add this: that three streets away was a house To Let, which she knew well, since some friends of hers had lived there, and in the late afternoon she went, veiled, to the letting-agents, got the keys to inspect the house, and before returning the keys jammed the front-door with a wedge of wood, leaving it so unlocked....

Her letter, marked "Urgent" and "Private," got through to the Prince by the hand of a workshop assistant, an engineer named Sturge, at eight-thirty that evening, the Prince being then in his workshop.

There he sat in his apron, not yet quite himself from his wound, the envelope hanging unopened in his fingers, at his feet a model of the Chinnery air-boat, or an attempt at a model, which had just failed to work.

But he was not thinking of the failure, but of Eulalia, and an upward glance of her eyes from the pillow at his side — a Divine glance — perfect God, perfect man — unfathomable sapphire, implying the whole bottomless world, eternity, infinity, Kashmir, Mars — a thing like treasure hid in a field, which when a man finds, he sells all, and buys that field.

It was lost: he could not find it. His ambassador sent to her home for inquiries had not even been heard by her father — had been turned out of the garden-gate, with a retriever's teeth at his heels! and she had so very cleverly covered up her traces from the moment of leaving the hospital, that his agents still had no suspicion that she was in the army. He was now thinking of breaking through everything, clamouring the fact of his

marriage aloud, and demanding her from the whole world. It was Sir Robert Barrington who patted him on the arm, and bade him wait, be patient — for his mother's sake.

She, the Queen, knew where Eulalia was — and was full of wonderings as to the girl's motive for going! Eulalia, not waiting to be banished, had banished herself — luck! But the reason? The Queen conceived that the Prince, having turned over a new leaf, may have dismissed her. But still, the girl must be rich from him: why, then, did such a person, a paramour, and rich, rush into the hardships of war-nursing? This baffled Her Majesty.

She kept her eyes incessantly on the Prince's face in silent inquiry...

He himself had no more knowledge than his mother of Eulalia's motive! — unless she had discovered what he was? But he could not think how....

Anyway, after a month of her loss the face of death commenced to acquire a smile for him. It was being said that since the fall of Metz the combined enemy were making tremendous haste to muster the remainders of their naval strength, with the aim of making such a rip in Britain's metal, as to compel her in self-defence to withdraw her land-forces from France: in the face of which danger the British people were frankly eager that the Prince should be the British leader in that foreseen Armageddon of the sea; and he was now looking forward to it with thoughts and hopes more curious than any knew.

For he was aware that Eulalia was essentially wayward, wilful, headstrong, prideful under her smile, difficult to be flexed when once fixed; and the notion of really losing her both infuriated and made him a cry-cry baby. Four days before this he had almost quarrelled with Sir Robert Barrington, scenting that the baronet knew more of Eulalia than he told — and, in fact, Sir Robert *knew* where she was, for to him alone Eulalia had

told it in a letter, but had sealed his lips; and the Prince had looked daggers, but then with water in his eyes had begged his friend's pardon.

Suddenly now he sighed, and remembered the letter in his hand....

And there she was! found! found!

He, pleased as Punch in each muscle of his meat, like a castaway suddenly drunken with luxury at a banquet, muttered: "I'll show her pride; I'll show her things."

"Your Royal Highness does not, I hope, take too seriously the moods and whims that actuate cats and women," Oyone wrote.... "My poor Eulalia, since her separation from Your Royal Highness, has been much with me, and I have been able to determine from the first that she is only suffering from her sex.... I have worked hard on her, and I think with some success, though I am not yet certain... Anyway, I am venturing to lay a trap for her: she is coming to my place to-night, and if Your Royal Highness were then to appear on the scene, I think the match would be laid to the bomb that will blow you both into heaven. I have to be at a house, No. 18 Seymour Street, N.W., at 8.45 P.M., and if Your Royal Highness desires to join me there at 9, I could then convey Your Royal Highness in my car to my place.... I shall be obliged if Your Royal Highness will bring this letter to return to me, since Eulalia can be resentful...."

The Prince noticed that no address was on the letter; and also, as he was being dressed, he thought, "Since when has Eulalia become intimate with Plum Blossom?" But he was not in a state for reflection; was soon away; and behind him, shadowing him, two detectives.

When he arrived at No. 18 Seymour Street, he noticed that there were lights in only two rooms, and at once had an impression of dirty and uncurtained windows, though the lighted windows had curtains — no blinds; and he did not observe, what the detectives observed, that "Let" was

painted on a window, the “To” scraped off, the “Let” left — for lack of time probably!

After passing through a garden, he rapped to find the Japanese girl stooping through a curtsey before him; at the same time his brougham turned to return — to the detectives’ wonder, who ran to ask the chauffeur “*Why?*” The answer was “Orders.”

The girl, meantime, was leading towards the back through a long hall which had that afternoon been furnished, and yet gave a vague impression of strangeness — lighted by candles, and those two lighted rooms, if looked into, would have been seen to be empty, but for candles standing on boxes, and curtains.

“My car is just there by the back garden-gate,” she said, when they were on a verandah at the back, and she led down some steps to a shrubbery-path.

“I am very sensible of all your pains,” he then said in a low and heartfelt way.

“We are not yet out of the bush, Your Royal Highness” — her voice was very frail and quavery—” Heaven send that she may not take it resentfully. Has Your Royal Highness brought me my letter?”

“Here it is. Don’t fear — *I* can handle her, if I once get hold of her. Do you know, I have wished to see you, to speak with you of our friend, Chinnery: but the old woman — what was her name? — *Monty!* — did not know your address. Ah! Richard Chinnery! What became of *him*? Tell me that, and I will call you a sibyl. That was a high head, and a wise eye.” He cast his eyes to the stars of a dark sky.

“He may be still alive, I often think,” murmured the girl, as they passed by a little green gate across a lane into a narrow street, where her car was waiting; and they were away to the Chinese mansion.

There was something so curiously recluse about the mood of this house, that its gate was kept constantly locked, and no tradesman, save the coalman, ever entered its grounds. Oyono herself had to set a bell babbling to be admitted by an old pigtail bent down double, who eyed the ground sidelong, with mutterings.

Thence she led her captive along an avenue dark and mossy into a hall of lanterns, all hues, but subdued as moonlight, mute as the tomb, where the foot moved without the faintest sound.

“Up here,” she whispered, with a busy secrecy, a sexual fellowship, “I will leave you, and bring her from my guardian” — and up the stairs they stepped, along a passage, to the room whence Richard Chinnery had been removed that day.

“*You wait in there!*” — and, as he went, she locked the door quick, catching her hand off the key as if it scorched her, and remained glaring at it, grinning, some instants, then dropped against the opposite wall, gasping, relaxed, her eyes closed, worn out, dying, satisfied.

Meantime, the two detectives waited, watching the Seymour Street house, until, after two hours, one said: “But is the house on fire? — look there!” — for one or more candles standing in their own grease on boxes had probably collapsed, and before the fire-brigade could effect an entrance, the place was a conflagration.

Let the mental condition of England the next day be conceived — the Prince gone — no trace of any body in the gutted house.

The furniture store from which the curtains, etc., had been purchased could only say that the purchaser was a woman, veiled; Sturge, the workshop assistant, could only say that the Prince had sprung up on reading the letter at 8.30, and that the handwriting seemed feminine. Neither letter nor envelope could be found — no trace, no clue.

There was not one English heart which was not gashed now, nor perhaps one German not urged toward compassion. Western humanity, one may say, sat down in sorrow to ponder this problem.

All which world-turmoil concerning him the Prince knew in detail: for from the third day the girl took a habit of coming to sit on a stool outside his door, in the door being a hole, iron-lined, big enough to admit plates or a biscuit-box of coals; and she, sitting there for hours, mornings, afternoons, sewing silks, painting on ivory or satin, never for two minutes ceased to speak as to an old-established member of the household, telling him the world-news, her pettiest household cares, the daily history of A-lu-te's illness, the secrets of her heart as regards Li Ku Yu and others, the story of the destruction of the air-boats, the story of Alexis the Sexton, and how for a century his, the Prince's, bones would bear her marks, that scar in his neck, too, being from her hand, and how she had met Eulalia within the wood of the Six Millions, and suspected that Eulalia had noticed her, and meant to end Eulalia before many days. And mixed with all her facts were some falsehoods for falsehood's sake.

And never from within the dimness of that prison a syllable answered her — never, day after day, as it he had become mummy-dumb. He took his seat, indeed, near the hole, to hear and hear, till the seductive sculpture of her nose was old and dull to him, but uttered nothing; and although he more and more suspected that he was being slow-poisoned, he made no moan.

Of course, she is not to be judged by our standards: for if, just lately, a Divine Manifestation has enlarged *our* minds, and assuaged *our* hearts of the heinousness of Hottentots, *she*, like her race, belonged to the age of our grandfathers, nay, farther back to the blackness of Bloody Mary and Butcher Henry ages: for, not only had she no science, and the sun was to her nothing more, nor older, than he looked, but science was quite *alien* to the

stage of development of the age in which, so to say, she lived, so that she had failed to acquire any, in spite of her birdlike briskness, her desire to learn, and her nighness to Chinnery.

Hence her mood was still that of gory old Queens of England, Italy, gross and gory Popes, grisly Empresses of the Chinese, whose names are like a sneeze, Tsu Hsi, and Wu of the Han Dynasty, and Lu, with their “off with his head!” and Blue-Beard cellars, and wells for throwing one down for fun; so that, as she sat there with her snakes and a parrot, relating in a sensuality of frankness the narrative of her depravities, there were seconds when her face had the nakedness of a drunken man’s, marred by fleeting expressions of feeling, when she was by no means pretty.

Frequently in the deep of night she would rise to creep to the peep-hole and try to spy him asleep on the petty iron bed in the north-west corner, and stay there in the night-silence till the night-cold, clutching her under her night-attire, drove her shuddering.

In all which she had an uneasy, yet sweet, sense of acting “on her own”: for Li Ku Yu, on hearing of the capture, had commanded immediate action, and the same day she had cabled him: “It is done” — so that *he* believed the Prince dead and buried, and dreamt at night of a Prince.

But she could no more kill him at once than the cat can its victim, he was so much her secret sweet, which all the world searched after, but Oyone alone owned. She could see the parabola of his shirt-front, he being in evening dress, turn gradually from dirty to drab — since he had to make his own bed, light his own fire, etc.; and though she told herself every day that she should be going back to France to see to the Six Millions and Eulalia, she could not tear herself from contemplating the monument she had accomplished, and resting on her laurels.

“You should like me better than her,” she said one day, a snip of thread resting on her lip, as she bent over her sewing: “she has a kind of little English grace, and nice eyes, but I could have whistled you from her, if I had wished. That day at Richard’s when you danced with me, do you think I could not see what was going on in you — married or not? *Are* you married, I wonder?”

But she had ceased to expect any answer from him. Once only a moan, smothered in the coming, had broken from his throat, when she told how she had dosed Chinnery before taking his air-boat, and he must have longed then to know if Chinnery was living, and where the boat now was — for she did not say — but had asked nothing.

And on she chattered, slattern this afternoon and loose in a sooty dressing-gown; and another day she was like a painting of a Parisienne; another day an Eastern Queen reeking of scents; each day a fresh creature, her hair changed, her whole impression, everything; and the more she changed the more she was the same thing, bewitching — like those working stars on magic-lantern curtains which dart into new hues and moods, and still are stars.

“Think of a Prince without a harem! Your ancestors had, so why not you? but they say it is your mother, and your school, that have made you like that — like Li Ku Yu. I see that she is ill, and is being ‘nursed by the Princess Elizabeth.’ What is a Princess doing in a country at war with her own? She must want you very badly! and would no doubt be glad to strangle your Eulalia for me. They say her father is always trying to get her back to Germany in vain — dreads the war-dangers of the voyage! What amuses is that there are references in the papers to her ‘efforts to unravel the mystery’ of you. That is laughable how the charlatanism and child’s play of people in high places is taken seriously! This Princess, it appears, is one of

‘the clever’: she draws diagrams to find you, wraps herself in abstraction, frowns profoundly, looks furiously acute, and the Queen and everyone at Court have a queer hope that she will yet discover her Teddy — so the society papers say. Courts are queer things.”

Her bird’s-tongue took some seconds rest, and went on: “What makes the English mad is that you will not be at the sea-fight — it is for their own skins they care, not for you. *The Times* says that the war cannot last another three weeks, for then every nation will be bankrupt and starving; so the sea-battle will be in a week, people believe, and America has too much to do to help England.

“The Italians, French, English and Russians have mostly sunk one another in the five Mediterranean and Black Sea fights; and the remaining Italians and Russians escaped through the Straits of Gibraltar three nights since, to join the Germans. The English have gathered all their Atlantic and Home ships; but if the two forces annihilate each other, the Continentals will be the victors, since there will then be nothing to prevent them from invading England again.

“England is already invaded — by aeroplanes. Last night a fourth town — Hull — was utterly destroyed, and there is a fine outcry about it. The Germans say it is only what you did to their Spandau, but one Sir Robert Barrington in to-day’s *Times* calls that ‘a lie,’ since you dropped your bombs upon military spots, not upon civilians. It is being suggested that the English should retaliate, but most of them are against it. That’s stupid — and yet — I don’t know. It *is* stupid, of course — and yet — no, I don’t know. The English are the best of the whites — but so gullible. Who could be more gullible than you and Richard? The night of your capture I groaned a hundred times to myself: ‘Will the man not *think it odd* that I should make him go first to a different house, with my car at the back — I *had* to, since

detectives were always following you. But I might have spared myself all those torments — you came thinking that everyone is exactly like yourself — sleepy-headed! capable of seeing deeply, but not quickly, except when your minds are excited.”

She severed a thread with her teeth, and proceeded: “Look at what Li Ku Yu has done to Europe — only by a trick, and perhaps not a soul, except you, has seen his hand in it. Even you never can dream what he means, or you would never have troubled about fighting in the *Asahel*, or about your Eulalia, or anything. All is over with you whites, you have had your day, this is your midnight. You do not know the Chinese, they will fry you in pans like sprats, with onions. Li Ku Yu says it is ‘God’s Will,’ which is what he always says when he wants anything.

“I am glad, for the Easterns know how to enjoy themselves better, eat nicer things, are nicer clothed and housed, with more colours and charm, and enjoy life with more delight.

“You here are taught by your lamas and priests to be afraid of your god, who gets jealous if you enjoy pleasures; but that is an African fancy.

“The Orientals will paint out the European grey with greens and crimsons. And they have begun to come. A comet which appeared in the East some nights ago is growing you would not think how quickly — its face terrifies: and persons are asserting that this world will dive into it on a certain night, and that it is an omen of moanings to humans. I think it is the announcer sent out with the name of Li Ku Yu in its mouth, though no man can understand its language: for Li Ku Yu is great to heaven — swift and bright! a younger brother of the heavenly bodies.

“In China he has the titles of Long-lived, Orthodox, Prosperous, Quite Obvious, Perfect, Respectful, Glorified, Holy, and All-Nourishing; and as the Grand Lama has proclaimed him to be Confucius Reincarnate, he has

lately passed through the Empire from Manchuria to Quang-si, and from Lhasa to Ningpo, to reveal to the people the face of the Saviour of their race.

“The Orient throws itself down before the throne he rolls on, without raising its eyes, lest his brightness strike them blind like that Ray of Richard’s, which, perhaps, *you* have — have you? Tell me where, and I will set you free — will you?

“But it is all lies, he is not Confucius, he is Li Ku Yu, and nobody else, swifter and brighter than two Confuciuses.

“And he is coming! Listen to what he says” — she read from a letter: “‘impossible to understand anything of air-boat from your account; therefore, either I send you a steamer for it, or meet you with it on the Belgian coast about the middle of April’ — soon! Then I will see him! and my veins will entwine his life with a vine of fire!

“Li Ku Yu? Like the bullet of a gun! And China is like a bicycle which he rides with his legs! He has so worked upon them, that now, he says, no power could hold them — they suppose that Europe is full of streams of diamond and anæmic creatures who sigh and make love, just waiting for Chinamen’s fingers to come and tear their limbs, as one’s thumb and finger tears mice and tender chicken-flesh.

“You do not know what is happening there, because the cables have been cut, the Legations sacked, the whites massacred at the concessions and treaty-ports, and since the Hwang Hai Battle all Hong Kong has been overrun and put to the sword. Li Ku Yu is the sheen of a sharp falchion unsheathed! They say that he dislikes tortures, but a life is no more to him than a kite that flies. Let it be blood: let’s dye our eyebrows, and clean our teeth, with blood. Glory! A thousand years! Let’s tread in red, and drown in red!

“There is nothing to stop it now. What is called the Army of India, after winning its way almost to Moscow, has been cut to atoms by a mixed German and Russian army, and India is already opening its arms to embrace the Chinese. From south to north all Asia is shouting a thousand years!’ over the fall of the fair faces. The Japanese have crossed Lake Baikal on the ice, and have the Siberian Railway. Russia has called out all her Reserves, and is asserted to be now exhausted. The Italian Regular Army is reduced to a few. France has out the Reserve of her Territorial Army, and her Southern Corps have vanished. It is being asserted that Germany will have to admit being bankrupt within two weeks, and England within four. Li Ku Yu says that there are twenty-nine millions of Mongolians already living in Europe — in Hungary, Turkey, Finland and Lapland — who will welcome the Chinese, and are to be left alive to be the nucleus of a new kind of civilisation which he has invented in his head for Europe. As for the Japanese, they appear to be penetrating everywhere like fleas ‘on the spree’! Now they have British Columbia, as well—”

But here her prisoner got up to go into the alcove at the north end.

When he was long she put in her head, and saw him sitting on the alcove floor, his face in his arms against his washstand leg, and she thought that she saw his body bob as if with sobs: no sound, however. And presently he rose, closed the alcove door, and she was conscious of a splash of water from his tap washing into his basin.

Afterwards he came back, threw coals upon his grate in the south-east corner, and sat again, his hair brushed, as always, his white-black tie and collar on.

“I think you have wept,” she said: “did I say anything to make you? I was speaking about the Japanese having British Columbia. Perhaps you are getting hungry. There will be swallow-nest soup to-day: it is Li, the eunuch,

who fled with us from Peking, who cooks it for one to lick the lips, though he is such a dirty lazy pig.

“But as to the Japanese, it is not strange, they have a genius for war and butchery. In a battle at Nerchinsk they could not get past a certain trench, and at last the front rank dragged the Russian bayonets into their own breasts, so that the rest might rush the trench: for they butcher themselves as merrily as others, if once everything is red.

“They have only been frightened once, it seems — when taking Australia; and a very strange story is told of that in the papers. They were making a raid one midnight upon Williamstown, the naval *dépôt* near Melbourne, where those ships of the Australian Navy were which had not been destroyed in the Hwang Hai Battle, and they stole up the harbour in the dark in submarines.

“Now one of these submarines, called the E.3, had been British, but had been captured in the Hwang Hai, and it is said that she had once sunk, and her British crew had perished in her; but she had been raised.

“At any rate, the raid failed owing to the fact that this submarine, E.8, rose up prematurely, and stood still on the sea. When she was taken by the Australians, all her crew of Japanese were seen to be dead, and the matter cannot be understood.

“It is being said that the submarine may be haunted by her former crew, since the dead Japanese had stares of awe and horror, and had evidently intended to cast themselves pell-mell into the water, several having the aspect of strangled rats.

“The Australians had her two weeks, but in the second raid the Japanese got her back.... What was ever the good of the Australians struggling against Japan? It was foolish to think that a few Englishmen could keep all that continent to themselves. What is the good of any of you struggling? Look at

this bit in Times to-day: 'From our own Correspondent. By Anglo-American Cable Co., New York. An *Evening Post* correspondent at Astrakhan wires *viâ* Odessa that a body of Turkestan Mongols, eight to twelve thousand strong, have captured the railway from Krasnovodsk to Khokand, and the Samarcand fort which the Indian Army dismantled, and have finally turned up on the Caspian shore. Their objects have not been ascertained.'... Do you think what this means? The wall that will fall upon all is drizzling a little dust.

“Good-bye. I will go to see A-lu-te, and will send your dinner. You will not speak to me, but do not tempt me too long. If a bird will not please the ear, let him please the teeth.”

She collected her things, and went laden, trailing them.

He saw her no more till eleven in the night when, he being then in bed, she called in at the hole: “A-lu-te is dying! I have summoned an English doctor in spite of Huang, and shall order a nurse. You will see little of me to-morrow, for I am going to France to see to my interests, so as to get that over before the death, the funeral troubles, and the invitation to ascend. Good-night! You are not asleep; you hear me; but will not speak....”

CHAPTER XVI

THE BURIED RAY



THE QUEEN LAY on a bed to which none had access save the Princess Elizabeth and one maid-of-honour — for Her Majesty would see no doctor. It was nine in the night, a reddish shine, remote from that tumbled bed, shedding through the room a mood of the moon in eclipse, and the Princess at the bedside had on hat and gloves, just come, her gloves grasped in the Queen's hands, who feverishly said: "Did you lay before him all your latest thoughts?"

"Everything!" — from the Princess.

"And he his to you?"

"Everything. Sir Robert does not think Teddy dead, Your Majesty—"

"Call me mama; say 'mama.'"

"And he thinks that if he and I only keep on collating and dove-tailing all our latest thoughts, we shall yet discover Teddy."

With the wild eyes of fever, her palms clasping her forehead, the Queen said: "Yes! and you — you two — *you'll* find him! *He* knows! *He* is strong!"

A furtive smile curved the Princess's thin lip, enjoyment in her at the sight of that royal mind which had dominated her now broken and in the dust.

"I told him I would see him to-morrow evening again—"

"That's it! And what does he say? Does he stoop? Does he look sad?"

“Yes, but Your Majesty should try to sleep” — she kissed the Queen’s hand—” I am doing wrong, I won’t stay another moment.”

“Elizabeth, you leave me?” the Queen called to her.

“Let Your Majesty consider that you have not slept for three days,” the Princess turned her chin to say, “and I, too, am sleepy. I will be with Your Majesty again at midnight.”

Her Majesty now dropped back upon her pillows, and was tossing there with distracted changes of attitude until, all at once, she sat up, stared, pondering, then urgently turned to touch a button, but checked herself, and then with clandestine haste was standing on the floor, staggering, yet grand, a ghost in laces.

In a fever of haste she proceeded to dress herself, delicately treading by an ante-room’s doors beyond which ladies waited, cautiously opening wardrobe doors, quickly selecting, steadily building herself into a state of dress, save when she paused at a mirror to hold up on her palm four grey hairs, at which she gazed with the greatest interest, amazed, gravely amused.

Soon after which she was in flight through a postern behind tapestry, hardly very exquisitely groomed, but careless, to make her way into the Park; and both an amazed Master of the Household and Inspector of the Palace, who chanced to catch the spurt of her escaping skirt at the turn of a stair, felt an impulse to address her, this apparition of her so suggested hectic and ecstasy of mind.

After making her way to the bottom of the Park, she flew from the little gate there, stumbling, to Sir Robert Barrington’s, a minute’s distance away.

Luckily, something in her rap inspired him to open the door himself, and, finding her leaning there, her eyes closed, powerless, like an outcast at his door, he moaned “Come” to her, took her bodily, supporting her to a couch

spacious like a bed in a morning-room, he himself very breathlessly agitated at this happening — no longer so young as he had been!

And hand on heart, panting, he stood, saying: “I cannot think that Your Majesty — so ill — has done well—”

A lamentable protest broke from her buried throat, breaking his heart: “Oh, my soul is exceedingly sorrowful in me, Robert Barrington!”

At which his forehead dropped before her, his breath uttered: “God grant me strength.”

“I have had hope,” she said— “you promised—”

But now he was harshly sharp. “No! It is false! I say that it is abominable, that it is unpardonable, if any unfounded hopes are conveyed as from me to Your Majesty. I declare that I am utterly powerless, absolutely in the dark. The Princess Elizabeth may be an interesting, if somewhat fantastic, young woman, but I say—”

“You need not be angry,” the Queen wearily said, raising herself: “I come to you, and you get angry. Why did I come? I am sick of living, and I come to you.”

“Then, I will say now that you did well to come, Ma’am. But Your Majesty is aware, by training, that opinions have no value. My *opinion* is that Your Majesty’s boy is in the hands of Anarchists, is still living, may yet be discovered; but, then—”

“Then, that is how it is, if you think so! You will find him, and it is exceedingly dear of you to give—” Here her hands were going out to his, but she suddenly saw and snatched them back, with a breath of scare which she sucked in, which” sounded like “Ah, take care, don’t let me!”

Then, ten seconds, she sat lost in astonishment, not very sure what she had said, or how loudly; and suddenly, with “let me get away” was tearing angrily out in advance of her arm which he held; and he, too, when he had

followed her steps to the Park gate, and was back, sat asking himself in a long reverie: “What, really, was it that she said?”

Then he was roaming the room with a brutal jaw, breathing between his teeth, “Man, eh? Impotent! Brainless! Vain! The petty pates of apes! A world to lift with a worm’s sinews!” In the midst of which, in an impulse, he sat down and penned a letter to Eulalia:

“I am impelled to express the hope that all is well with Your Royal Highness.... Ever since the Prince’s disappearance I have received not one line, though I have twice written.... A natural anxiety impels me to pray Your Royal Highness to send me a word at the first possible moment....”

Three evenings later when this came to Eulalia’s hand, that was the first she had heard of any “disappearance” of the Prince: for on the day after her discovery of the Six Millions she had had attacks of dizziness, which had caused her to be put to bed in cantonment upon a pair of peasants in Nürnfeld village; and not only had a surgeon-major forbidden any news or letter being given her, but the 2nd and 3rd, after the Battle of the Moselle, had taken up positions thirty miles further into German territory, and had left her; and since her German was not fluent, her conversations with her aged hosts had included no news but news of skirmishes within thirty kilometres of their door.

Then one noon one Sister Darling — a tall strip of uniform under the face of a saint in a painting — had pelted into Nürnfeld to pay the patient an angel’s visit, and Eulalia, seeing that face pale and careworn, had felt so ill at ease, that the next day she had found herself saying, “No, I am going to do my work — not so much Teddy.”

That day she had got up, had dizzied, fainted, gone back to bed; but three mornings after, gathering from rumour that her whole brigade was engaging a garrison of the enemy, she had procured a manure-cart, and, after

travelling all day long, had come up with the brigade's field hospital in a field a league eastward of the Soar.

She found her coming eagerly welcomed, for the enemy that evening had suffered, not merely a defeat, but a rout, and of the crowd of captives left in the British hands sixteen were wounded: so that, with the host of British wounded, the hospital had enough to do.

Eulalia was in a waggon at the bottom of a steep field, the waggon standing beneath a bay-tree by the bank of a brook whose babble among stones, together with a garrulous soprano of grasshoppers, aggravated the silence of a night dark and starless, warm and calm. Outside — the brook, rough scrub, Oyone in an ulster seeking to peep between two waggon-flaps, some lanterns straying among waggons, waggon-shines thrown on the grass, a sound of horses' jaws which grossly ground and ground in the gloom, a tent, two heaps of stretchers under tarpaulins in corners of the field; and within — sighs, spring beds, splints, lint, a hospital scent of sickness and carbolic, scarlet spots on bandages, and eyes — eyes pining, dying, sightless.

Into which came Sister Darling to throw a busy look from bed to bed, and to breathe "How are you?" to Eulalia.

And Eulalia with a shrug: "I shall pull through."

"Brave! You are dropping, really, after that terrible journey. You shall have these now as a reward" — she gave three letters out of her pouch.

All from Sir Robert Barrington: and when Eulalia had managed to catch by snatches the sense of them, she called out lamentably to her maimed: "*Oyone!*"

At which outcry, Oyone, startled into fancying that she had been noticed, made a motion to run from between the waggon-shafts, but now saw coming a Tommy who led a horse by the mane, and she crouched under the

waggon, till he should be gone. But the horse came to a stoppage, and the man also, resting his head on the horse's neck, like one dead-weary, or asleep.

After a little she hissed toward him: "*Go away!*"

She had been to the wood of the Six Millions, and, though the gold had not been touched, in the dust was a footprint which, she had determined, was not hers. Up to that moment she had more or less believed what she had fiercely hoped, that she had not really been seen; but now she was sure: Eulalia had been there.

At which thing a gang of assassins, of Richards III., of grinning aristocrats, were instantly grinning in her inwards, and she ran to kill as if to catch a ball; but it had taken her two hissing days to seek out the 2nd Somersetshires and then the field hospital — she, meantime, in a state of amazement that Eulalia had done nothing to the hoard, or to her, all these weeks! for surely, she thought, unless Eulalia was weak in the head, she must see now that it was Oyone who had destroyed the air-boats, had shot the Prince in the Strand, and — had the Prince a prisoner now! At this last thought she had felt faint, and had made haste.

When it was well dark she had walked to the hospital, had dodged from waggon to waggon to Eulalia's, and had been fingering her trigger — for there was little difficulty as to escaping in the dark — when Sister Darling's coming had checked her; and now she was waiting for the man and horse to pass and not pester her, for it was as if some pestering thing obstructed her.

Now, Eulalia, on getting the sense of her letters, had started to run — to abandon her sick, to be off somehow to London; but, as she started, a dying voice called to her in a key which she could not resist: "Mees," it groaned, and she moved back to the waggon-head to bow over a brow that had a bandage aslant about it, hiding the right eye, while already in his windpipe

was the whistle of death: yet both Eulalia and Oyone, their ears within three feet of his lips, heard each word when he said: “A favour — service to humanity — my name Hartmann — Russian. Dig up a black box in the back yard of 11 Frith Street, Whitechapel — back yard, right-hand corner, dig it up. Send box to Taska — Bowery — New York — shoemaker — well known. Tell Taska someone who is lately dead — he will know — gave me secret to pass on. It is the Ray, say — just that — he will know — the Ray — and be careful of the cap, say. This is death — I am going—”

Eulalia hardly waited a few seconds to close his eyes when she flew, nor did Oyone know when she flew, so open-mouthed she sat there on her toes at this wondrous discovery of the Ray. It was in the yard of 11 Frith Street — how marvellous a talisman in those three words!

She had once kept Chinnery three days without drink to force him to make her a new black box like that lost box, and, what was strange for him, he had resisted, asking her “*why do you want it?*” but then had yielded, had got her to get together lots of objects, had commenced to make, but then had failed, or had pretended to fail.

But here it now was: and with the Ray all her terrors were at an end, all her ambitions realised. Chinnery could be forced to show her how to use it with her own hands....

She sprang up, careless now of the man and horse still there, measured her chances swiftly, resolved to act, peeped between flaps more boldly than before: a dresser was in there, but not Eulalia.

Her heart started at the question: “*Does Eulalia know the preciousness of the Redlike Ray, of those three words just heard, and has rushed out already to go to clutch it?*” She must have rushed very lightly, flyingly! ... Whither? Oyone moved to seek her, clambering the field from waggon to waggon,

and, on being seen by a running hospital-orderly, who stopped to stare at her, asked him where Nurse Bayley was.

“I think at the staff-waggon,” he answered, pointed, and ran.

But Eulalia was not there, was nowhere in the meadow, and now Oyone moaned, “She *has* gone,” and flew down to the brook, and up to a pony-trap awaiting her beyond.

Eulalia had, in fact, to the amazement of the staff, gone off in a flutter with her bag, as she could without formality, being still on the sick-list; and after stumbling westward seven miles, she tumbled to slumber some hours with a cow in a hut by a covert.

A comet’s light in the morning sky caused her to start up, and she plodded on, anon conning her map by the shine of a match, anon conjecturing her way toward Nancy, for between Nancy and the front the railway had been destroyed, so that it was not till eleven the next night that she entered a train.

By that time Oyone was at Boulogne: but the Channel boats, requisitioned at intervals for war purposes, were not running regularly, and, having to wait, she lay in the railway restaurant, a desert now, lamenting, thinking of her air-boat, how well if she had it now, visited now by a panic as to the Prince, impeaching herself of dallying and self-pleasing, promising to be prompt as hammer-stroke, if he was not yet dead, telling heaven with accusing looks that Eulalia had taken another route, and already had the Redlike Ray safe....

It was not until the next afternoon that she could look back from the boat upon Boulogne as upon a hell escaped. At about the same hour Eulalia left Dieppe.

They arrived in London within a few minutes of each other, one alighting at London Bridge, one at Victoria, and now Oyone stood two seconds

doubtful, still undecided whether to fly home and see things, or to make straight for the Redlike Ray. The latter drew her strongest: she flew and got a cab.

Soon after this Eulalia, too, was in a cab, making for the Horsferry Road, looking out with amaze at the changed air of London — hardly anyone in the streets, save a flock of jackals *en queue* before a soup-kitchen in Marsham Street, and a crowd round a coffee-stall; and though it was not yet nine in the night she was given a feeling of a London of three A.M.

Even the policemen appeared fewer, and looked as if all was up; she saw two rolling a dead woman on a hooded stretcher; and between Victoria and Marsham Street noticed three dead cats, two closed public-houses, and a coster selling red herrings to a drunken man in evening-dress.

At a paper shop she noticed an *Evening News* poster: “Let Them Come!” and a *Star*: “England Expects!” and a *Pall Mall*: “Sea-fight for To-morrow.”

Then before that darkling old home of Chinnery she alighted, for she remembered to have read that a neighbour’s maid knew “Monty’s” address, so she knocked there, hoping to find “Monty,” and so Oyone. But a woman told her that “Mrs Montgomery is dead.”

“Don’t say that....”

“Of hunger, I’m afraid” — she closed the door.

What now to do? Her plan had been to go to Oyone, to accuse Oyone suddenly of having killed the Prince, and if the Prince was dead, or if he was living, she would know the whole truth without fail from Oyone’s face, and would then measure strengths with her — a rash thing, for she had no weapon, nor had thought of such a thing, nor knew her Oyone.

However, she had had the prudence to write a statement of the grounds of her suspicions, and had posted it to Sir Robert Barrington, marked “Open After Four Days.”

But as to where Oyone lived she had no notion. The Chinese Embassy occurred to her; her cabman knew where it was; she drove to Portland Place.

Here she was received in a room to the right of the door, where a lean and a portly Chinaman, seated each in an opposite corner, solemnly, hands on knees, kept exchanging glances; and the interview, which should have lasted one minute, lasted twenty. Probably they were dull, and Eulalia an incident: anyway, she had never known anyone who, having once got her, was so reluctant to part from her.

“What person may she want?” Stout ventured to ask mildly, and Lean perused the floor with a weak and troubled brow.

“I only know her as Oyone,” Eulalia said: “but I thought you might know—”

“Is she a friend to you?” Lean thought of asking, to which she lusted to answer “Yes” (knowing now that they knew Oyone), but, dainty in that way (by training), she said: “Not a friend: a matter of business, but very pressing and momentous.”

It was now that one remarked that he thought now that he could guess who was meant, and might telephone, if the lady would mention her name.

This put Eulalia at her wits’ end: to say “Bayley” would be simply to prepare Oyone, and in the end, pushed to say something, she came out with “‘The Nurse’ — tell her that.”

Both went out; she heard them at a telephone; and they came back with some bustle, saying: “But you are late! Go if you like, but you will only be in time for the invitation.”

Eagerly she seized a piece of paper that gave the address, with a sob of relief, and was gone, her eyes bright for battle, careless of which

“invitation” that was for which she would only just be in time, they urging their reluctant steps to chase and gaze wistfully after her to the last.

By which time Oyone, on her side, was driving home from Whitechapel. She had discovered Frith Street — an alley five houses long, joining two streets — decent little homes of retired seamen, say — No. 11 in darkness, apparently unoccupied, but for curtains at one window on the upper story.

Oyone pressed the latch of a side gate, peeped, went in: no one about: and there, leaning against the house-side, was the very thing which she was wondering how she could get — a spade.

With this she crept on to a strip of back yard planted with some stripling trees, making straight for the Ray “in the right-hand corner”; and the night was so dark, that she was quite in the corner before she became aware that there was a hole already there — square — of the same area as the Redlike Ray — three feet deep.

“She has beaten me” — her forehead dropped forward, and then her knees yielded, and, as if prostrate in prayer, she knelt over the hole, thinking, “she has it, she is more favoured than I, she seems to beat me, to escape me, to be born to molest, and balk, and waylay, and pester me, this woman: but wait: if I kill her, I will kill her twice, and thrice.”

She went back to her cab, and started in haste for home — down Leadenhall Street — by St Martin’s....

By this time Eulalia was there, ringing a bell under leafage at a green gate that had “Ning Shou Kung” painted in yellow letters across its concave top.

A very old Chinaman opened, dwelt upward on her with his eyes, led her inward through darkness to fight, to a hall where stood a small woman of fifty, gorgeously gowned, stout and chubby, but grim in some wrinkle about the mouth. She, on seeing Eulalia, crossed her hands and raised them,

bending her head — Chinese, not Manchu; and she muttered with reproach: “But you come so late: the going-away (funeral) dress all done.”

Eulalia palely smiled, shrugged, and replied in a shamefaced mutter that she could not come before, discerning that she was being taken for some other nurse; so, to make sure of her entrance, she kept her face as little in evidence as possible — though this proved to be needless, for even if she had been unlike the other nurse in uniform and everything, that would not have mattered, when the Chinese woman was once preoccupied with the idea of identity: for just as to English eyes fresh in India all Indians are twins, so to Chinese eyes that live retired in England each English visage is a pea in a heap.

The light, besides, though abundant — Eulalia felt that some *fête* must be taking place — was very veiled and restrained, like the vague rainbow, and those soap-bubble veins of opal and mother-of-pearl; so the woman, whose name was Huang, said quite naturally: “No trouble, you come see,” and led Eulalia up to a landing, from which by three steps they entered a death-chamber.

Eulalia’s eyes, meantime, had been keen for any sign of Oyone, but, as she now moved into the room, the woman looked at her to moan with reproach and opening arms: “But no Oyone come! — too bad.”

And now, when Eulalia understood that Oyone was away, there welled in her a question that made her faint: “If he is alive! and here! and I can find out!” — Oyone away — and here, evidently, the head of the place dead, into so splendid a chamber had she been led, and never corpse more gorgeous than A-lu-te, stretched there in lantern-sheen in her phoenix hat, her robe and cloak of state, her badges of rank.

At once Huang led Eulalia to exhibit everything, Eulalia’s knees weak beneath her weight, meantime, at that question that was in her, at her fear of

the real nurse turning up at any moment, of Oyone turning up, of something happening, at the consciousness of her precious seconds passing, passing, while she stood there foolishly watching the exhibition, the chemise of white silk, the jacket of grey silk over it, the wadded robe of blue satin, the belt of jade, the abounding outer robe of sable, the badges, the collar of amber, the hair one glow of gold, the astonishing coffin of lacquer, padded with crimson silk and straw.

But she could think of nothing to do, to say; any syllable might betray her; the moment was too pressing for her; she wished to be alone to sit and think; a gorgeous tall Gorgon at the corpse's feet appeared to keep his eyes tied to her face; and she felt her frame trembling in every limb, like the tongues of little bells that flutter.

Then two more came in, a man and a woman, then the old gateman came, and she helped to bear the body from the bed and lay its head on the red "cock-crow" pillow of satin in the coffin, and then they commenced some ceremony — inviting the dead to rise to heaven: during which she moved away to a window, anguished at the chance she was casting away, asking again and again of heaven, "Oh, my God, what can I do?"

In the midst of which she was touched on the shoulder, and Huang, with one rather cynical eyebrow on high, was saying to her: "You invite A-lu-te go up, may At which Eulalia shrank — from an instant train of ideas that sprang up in her — ideas that meant desecration of the dead, prevarication, pretence, in recompense for a politeness, for she divined that the request was made more out of politeness to her than for the benefit of A-lu-te, who probably had already gone up at the invitation of the others.

However, as to desecrating the dead, Eulalia had (naturally) much less respect for dead bodies than, say, her mother had, being accustomed to see young doctors throw dead men's arms at one another's heads across

dissecting-rooms, and bodies cheap as cabbages on fields of battle; and before she knew that she had resolved, she was saying with a bashful and begging grace which she had: "But in the English way."

Huang shrugged and smiled.

"You must let me drive the devils first from all the corners."

Huang shrugged and smiled.

"Well, then...."

By this time there were only two in the room with her, Huang and the eunuch; and these strolled with a sluggish and indulgent disgust after her to the four corners, in which she stood with a booing to-do... boo-boo... boo-boo-boo....

Then it was out on the stair corners, boo-boo-boo, patiently, one by one, and up, they following, hardly any longer bothering to smile; but at the first stair-top, when she turned into a certain passage, Huang stopped her with "No trouble no more."

"Oh, I must now," she said bashfully, beggingly, with that grace which gains everything.

And thenceforth she booed at every door-cornice, managing in the jam of every boo to mix the pill, "*Whose boy are you?*" until she was there in the darksome corner of that passage a door of which had a hole in it, though she did not see any hole; and there, too, she booed a "boo-boo, *whose boy are you?* boo-boo-boo."

There was still no reply, and by this time despair was in her, the thing was so trying and vile, her two followers becoming obviously sick of it, and she without any faith now in its success. However, she moved on, away now from that door with the hole, and was now about to boo anew, when, fully half-a-minute after her last boo, a dreadful outcry, pressing, as of one

roused in terror out of dreadful depths and dreams, screamed out of that black darkness of the cross-passage: "*I am Eulalia's boy!*"

The franticness of that cry in the silence, the chasm and extremity out of which it came, its crazy rage, its horrid suddenness, struck Eulalia colourless to the lips, though she just had the wit left to lift her hand with "Hark! a devil!"

"Poh," said Huang, cross now, "no devil — man-cook sick — you come — all devil gone now."

"If I must — though I have not finished."

"No trouble, you come" — and they descended to the death-chamber, where Eulalia, standing by the coffin, glad enough to hide her mottled face, raised her arm to say: "A-lu-te, I invite you to rise to the skies."

But at the same moment the gate-bell began gabbling outside the house, and Huang, crying to the eunuch, "*Oyone!*" flew out.

From which Eulalia well understood that Oyone was come; and now that she had found, and that the fire to find was extinguished in her, a chill and grisly realisation of peril gripped at her; for, if not killed, she could be imprisoned....

Some moments more and Oyone's voice was coming up the stair, Eulalia's escape cut off now, and all lost that had been won, if Oyone once saw her. And since Huang had told her that Oyone did not know that A-lu-te was dead, she felt certain that the death-chamber was the first which Oyone would enter, and now blamed herself bitterly for not bolting out at the bell-sound and stowing herself away somewhere. The only hope now was to look out of a window, and to one she flew....

In some moments Oyone was at the door....

But it was only to cast one flying glance into the room, and she was gone flying up, to dash along the passage to the door with a hole, eager before

everything to relieve herself of the evil thing that was hot on her breath.

See her there! stooping at the hole, calling it to the dark, hot, envenomed: “Here I am back! A-lu-te is dead, and your Eulalia, too. Two nights ago — she was in a waggon in a field near Siebenberg — so I crept up — it was quite dark — and pried in through two flaps; and, as she was stooping over a wounded soldier, I gave it her right through the brain, the beast, and she bit a piece of her tongue right off, as she stiffened and kicked. She is well dead. She had been to the wood of the Six Millions, for I saw her footprint, and she had got the Redlike Ray from a dying Russian, but I have it safe now — I shall be sending it to Li Ku Yu tomorrow. I will come again—” she was gone.

Her prisoner, at her coming, had been seated on his bed’s brink, staring, quivering on the *qui vive*, in a craziness of hopes: if she could have seen, she would have seen him tumble back, done for, at her news.

It may be thought, indeed, that he could scarcely believe that Eulalia had been killed when he had lately heard Eulalia’s voice say: “whose boy!” but, on the contrary, he believed every word.

Much bane, in fact, had been mixed with his food on the day before Oyone had left him, and he was aware that his brain was not in a sane state.

All anight his head had been tossed in nightmare on the horns of the question, “which is the yellowest, momentum or energy?” and in the morning he had thought “I am done.”

Hence, on hearing “whose boy,” for some time he had not answered, not believing his ears. That was nothing odd now for him to hear something say “boo-boo, whose boy...”

However, the feet of his saviour were in haste. Eulalia was outside the gate before Oyone was again down, and, running till she found a cab-driver,

she said to him between crying and laughing: "Grosvenor Place! The Prince of Wales! he is found."

He sprang upright.

"Fast, will you? He is found."

They were away.

But she was not wise to tell, since she wished to be quick, for the man thrice almost stopped to proclaim it, twice to policemen, once to a lady on a lone pavement, and as though his breath bore death and pestilence, the three instantly took to their heels.

And at Grosvenor Place Eulalia had to wring her hands — Sir Robert not at home!

"I mean that Sir Robert is really out," the man added, "and he may not see you at once when he comes, as another lady — a Princess — is awaiting him."

"No, he will see me first — you tell him—' Miss Bayley," Eulalia said, and he led her to that large drawing-room where Sir Robert had once interviewed Her Majesty.

This ran at right angles to the stair-head; and parallel to the stair ran a small drawing-room, which opened into the large; in which latter, pacing, was the Princess Elizabeth, fraught with her latest thoughts.

As one of the two sets of folding-doors between the two rooms was open, she could hear the other led in, and, on peeping — started! It was *she*, the bliss-licker! though the Queen had informed her that the minx was at the war. What, then, was she doing here? Her Imperial Highness condescended to the keyhole, peering with no little greed to get a view of that plebeian puss who had proved tastier bait than her own imperial being; nor did Eulalia's assumed mutiny and raid on dainties make Eulalia a less interesting object to her — on the contrary.

But she was amazed when Sir Robert hurried in first to Eulalia, though he must have known...! She saw Sir Robert bend to kiss Eulalia's hand like a sovereign's, or an idol's, with deference, with reverence; and then what followed was all a reeling dream to her, intensely immense. She was aware of Eulalia panting her passion of tidings, of wine shaking in the baronet's hand, of the fact that the Prince was found, found by another woman than she, of the words "Oyone,"

"Regent's Park,"

"Ning Shou Kung"; and the next thing was that she found herself down and out in her brougham bound for "Ning Shou Kung" — which means "Palace of Unperturbed Old Age," not of burning, and bursting, and turbulent youth.

At Ning Shou Kung gate she sent in her name, left her lady without as sentinel, and soon in a cosy room had that dark-brown eye of Oyone resting sideways on her, cold, darksome in meaning, mysterious, teeming with strategic and dangerous statecraft: for when at bay she was ever brave, ready, dexterous, self-protective; while the Princess's spectacles stared calmly like starlight, speculative, unblinking, noting the movement of Oyone's bosom, her beauty, her sinuousness, her nose pinched and blanched.

"Your Imperial Highness — honours me?"

"No talk is necessary: conduct me instantly to the Prince of Wales."

Oyone let slip one half-a-glance toward the gods, and hummed a little.

"Your Imperial Highness thinks that the Prince of Wales is here!"

"No talk is necessary: I know."

Oyone was up. "How?"

The Princess shrugged. "By deductions from clues."

"As I hoped! " — Oyone locked the door.

“Oh, that is nonsense to lock the door,” Elizabeth said, *her* nose, too, paler now, “when others know that I am here, and that the Prince is.”

“But do you suppose I do not see that I have beaten *you* by locking it?” Oyone looked down upon her with a bitter lip of contempt. “You come here, alone, hurried, after learning from a nurse that the Prince is here, your reason being that you want it to be thought that you have discovered him by your excessive cleverness; and I imprison you as an evidence of your cleverness.”

“That seems a little silly. Others are coming—”

“Precisely. You tell me everything which I wish to know. I will let those ‘others’ get the credit you crave for.”

“Why should you — care?”

“Oh, if you are not so clever as you pretend to the Queen, you are infinitely cleverer than you pretend to me. You see that *my* liberty is in danger, and *your* wedding bed. Let us be friends!”

“I have not said that I am unwilling,” said the Princess Elizabeth, up-looking.

Palely they smiled at each other.

“Shake hands!” said Oyone authoritatively.

Their right hands just met, while Oyone, reaching sideways with the left, unlocked the door.

“Now, how did you know?” she asked: “tell quick!”

“A girl named Bayley, his *bonne amie*, came here, was mistaken for another nurse, heard his voice—”

“It was *she*? *Eulalia*? She booed—” This made Oyone faint that such a thing should be; her arm searched blindly for a chair behind her; she sat.

“We have no time—” the Princess commenced to suggest, when the other struck her dumb: “She is not his *bonne amie*, I think she is his wife....”

At this Elizabeth blanched as from a slash, as there flashed across her memory Sir Robert Barrington's manner of kissing Eulalia's hand. But this was an idea that would take her brain days to receive and believe, and she said with a shuddering hauteur: "That is an impertinent suggestion — you speak of an impossibility."

"But if the Prince has admitted it to me?" Oyone said. "And you need not care. She will not like long, if I live." At which Elizabeth's eyes dropped, her lips letting out: "One should not be horrid."

"But you will be delighted if I am horrid? All women are the same! we care much for nothing, except some man. And since you can never get the Prince, not legally, while this girl is alive, then, you wish me to live. You agree? You see? Then, you will let me go first to him, to make him think for a minute that I am releasing him of my own will, on condition that he signs a promise to protect me from consequences; and *you* will help to protect!" She sprang up, and Elizabeth, too, rose, saying, "On condition that I come with you."

"Why not?" answered Oyone, eyeing her aside, "are we not allies? Kiss me."

Elizabeth's eyes dropped.

"Four men are said to have committed suicide for my lips," Oyone mentioned.

"You *are* — one admits—"

"Then, you may."

Elizabeth let slip a peep from beneath sheepish lids, but then shook her head, breathing "Not now."

Oyone now wrote some phrases in haste, and they ran out, a sense of no little surprise in the Princess to find herself "the ally" of the miscreant whom she had come to smite and quell with her mighty spectacles; and she

stood beyond the lantern-shine that stood on the floor by the door with the hole, while Oyone spoke....

The difficulty, however, was to get a signature to the phrases that lay on the iron-lined hole, or any kind of reply from within — and every second so precious.

But when Oyone told her motive — that a naval battle impended, and that Li Ku Yu instructed her to set free, since he did not wish an invasion of England until he invaded, then in a rush a shuddering pen was spluttering, and the thing was done.

On which Oyone's lips brushed Elizabeth's cheek with the whisper, "I'll write — the key," and she flew, scattering gold over the hands of two whom she met, with "fly! fly! for a time: all lost!" then was wild-handed at a glass, disguising as a Cockney coster-girl, and within six minutes was out, raining sables and bags into the air-boat, which she ever kept in petrol, then was heaping a beseeching Chinnery in, then was wiping her brow, sighing, high behind brown clouds....

Meantime, the Princess was labouring under the Prince's weight, staining her rose-satin mantle, broderie anglaise and arum lilies with that shirt-front and dirty evening-dress — she eager, with "poor Teddy, try now," he slow with "It will be well — wait one tick," during fifteen minutes from prison door to brougham.

But it was ten minutes more before Sir Robert Barrington, who had been delayed by communications with Scotland Yard, arrived with a force of men — to find in "Ning Shou Kung" no one but A-lu-te.

London, meantime, had pricked the ear, and was up, so that as the Prince drove from street to street, his forehead on the Princess's shoulder, he was conscious of commotion each moment increasing, newsboys who flew hooting the rumour, ten o'clock editions, populous windows, footsteps of

runners that sent echoes of running, as when there is a fire in the night, and London sends out runners and echoes.

And from Hamilton Place there was some trouble: the carriage doors were opened, many pressing to shake hands, the police failing to reach him, and the Princess preaching continuously that he was ill, so that she was in a condition of exhaustion before they could get to the Park gate.

Just there, at that end of Constitution Hill, some man, seeing Eulalia straining and fainting to see, snatched her up, and she saw a nose beyond the Princess's shoulder, to console her during her night-ride to the coast. As to how the Princess came to be with him, and not Sir Robert, was beyond her comprehension.

But if she could have waited, she would have seen him better, for later the Queen would have him be seen by the people, and he was supported to the balcony by the King and Elizabeth.

It was now first that the Palace was wrapt in a rapture of sound; and crowds were still coming to eye its windows almost all the night long.

And the wings of the wind bruited that thing through Britain that night: the dead was alive again, and somehow through the wonderful wit of that wonderful Princess Elizabeth, when all the tees had long despaired. The heart of England softened toward Germany.

But none the less, England with all its heart longed that the next day's battle should be lost by Germany, and with its whole heart wrote its hope that night, its demand — in nine million letters that drove crazy the Circulation Office of the London Postal Department — that none but the Prince should be the British strategist in that battle.

But of this the Queen would not hear, for seeing him on a bed strangely before her sight, she meant to keep him, sharing her eyes, meantime, between him and Elizabeth.

Elizabeth had calmly led him to her, saying: “Your Majesty, I have brought you your son.”

Willy nilly, she *had* now to be a charlatan, and it was willy, for by heredity and nature this German girl was a greater charlatan and farçeur than Cagliostro or Casanova: so, having some genuine dexterity, she entertained Her Majesty half the morning in showing how due on clue had finally led her to the gate of “Ning Shou Kung”; nor had the Queen’s feverish happiness the time to spy shaky spots in the chain.

Also Elizabeth related how, having gone to share with Sir Robert her final thoughts, she would not wait, as he had been engaged with some lady; an untruth which Sir Robert, on hearing of it, knew to be an untruth, though now, of course, he was discreetly mum; so that the Queen, and the Prince, remained unconscious that, not one, but *two*, rescue parties had gone to “Ning Shou Kung” that night.

What the Queen, or no one, could definitely gather was *why* the Prince ever went to “Ning Shou Kung,” or its inmates’ motive for imprisoning him! for the Prince, under contract to Oyone, refused-details — the motive was “political”; and though a mob sacked some of the rooms of “Ning Shou Kung” the next day, its inmates were soon back in it unpunished — to the wonder of public and police. Only Oyone lived no more there, having no confidence in the Prince’s promise; and with her were Gunnery and the air-boat.

But to the Queen’s fever details were of little, importance for the moment; there he lay safe; his saviour was her favourite and elect for him; and “All, all, Teddy,” she said that morning, “you owe to this dear and knowing head.”

At which the Prince lifted himself, bowed, kissed the Princess’s hand in a particular manner. The Princess’s forehead rushed into a blush, her eyes

blazed. The Queen's bent head dropped a tear. It was an engagement.

Some moments later, though, the Prince again raised his head to say: "I fancy, Your Majesty, that I shall be well enough for the fight" — and she started! knowing that tone of her son.

He, for his part, had it in him that Eulalia lay dead of Oyone's hand, and, on the whole, thought well of wars.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FLOOD



ALL THAT MORNING Britain was rent by a civil war of placards, “Too Ill,”

“An Hour Will Decide,”

“He Will Be Present — Special,”

“The Doctors Forbid,”

“Hope Abandoned,”

“Prince Leaving Waterloo,”

“For Her Skipper was Ted!” — this last a *Star* 4th edition placard before noon, which the widow’s mite was spent to buy.

It was a bright spring morning, breezy: but for him in that compartment the sun was black in eclipse behind a shadow “like unto the son of man”: for he had come out of prison to a world perfectly new, in which the chess-game of Europe that day to be decided, so momentously in others’ eyes, was to him child’s-play.

“*China!*” he breathed: “how queer! how abstruse!” When laughter among his suite behind reached his ear in snatches, it touched him with a sense of astonishment that men should laugh under the sun. But they did it in ignorance.

He was as surprised as at finding himself straying on a planet where every plant is saffron, and the heavens a heavy yellow, and stared before him, smiling with a child’s amaze, his “well-dead” Eulalia pushed into the

back of this brain by Li Ku Yu in the front: for that shadow like unto the son of man eclipsing the sun dangled a pigtail.

Always, from boyhood, he had thought that Li Ku Yu was born to modify things — would invade India and Siberia — and that he, the Prince, was somehow ordained to checkmate him; but his heart had never really conceived that the stars some night in time might look down upon a yellow Europe.

Some words of the Japanese girl heard in his confinement had caused him to start and shy; but it was not that which now bent his head.

He held in his hand a document, that day translated by the Private Secretary, addressed to him as President of the P.C.N.S. by a certain Oberstwachmeister Bergmann, a refugee from Kiao-Chau, just arrived in Europe, and his eyes read and reread of themselves....

“This my Memorial, which at the same time I venture to address to my Imperial Master and to your Royal Highness....

“The Memorialist’s escape was due alone to his disguise in the costume of a Mongolian camel-driver, and to the good graces of the said Hsi, the junkman.... The Memorialist cannot think that any other European has been so favoured by Divine Providence.... The scanty European garrisons were overpowered without difficulty in the same night....

“He has divided the Chinese Empire into 240 corps regions, each containing a population of two millions, each region being subdivided into 150 sections, each section to provide one line infantry regiment, twenty sections forming an infantry-brigade-command, forty an infantry-divisional-command, the latter under Japanese generals, the former under both Japanese and Chinese....

“In each region have been quartered the field army-corps elements, the staffs, recruiting *dépôts*, *dépôts* of artillery, transport, clothing, and camp-

equipment, and supplies of food and forage.

“Each corps has been provided with a corps-cavalry-brigade of great dimensions, whose weapon in the main is the “long spear” of the Daimios, and the animals camels and mules mainly; the regular organisation of a corps being completed by eighteen batteries of cannon, six artillery parks, six sections of artificers, six telegraph sections, twenty-five companies of pontooners, and forty-five field-bakeries.

“The Memorialist estimates that during the past four months some 30,000 rifles and 20,000,000 rounds per month have poured from Japan into China, in addition to artillery, swords and spears.

“Many of the conscripts seem to be still armed with nothing but a poker or a club, which may be considered a sufficient equipment for some of the elements of a war-host which includes many classes of women, and may more resemble a locust-swarm than an army.

“For each peloton is provided an armoured cart of considerable length and weight, making a kind of locomotive shelter-trench with loopholes, to serve the purposes of transport, of travel, and of defence.

“The Memorialist considers that the China of the moment little resembles the China habitually conceived by Europeans....

“He regards it as a country characterised by much unrest, and impelled by a very remarkable tendency toward migration.... The presence and personality of this one man appears to have acted as an intoxicant, or goad, upon the masses of the people, goading them to a vague angriness and a very extravagant adventurousness....

“The load of new taxation is borne with a patience due to their daily expectation of Messianic marvels.... Li Ku Yu is everywhere regarded as a sort of angelic juggler....

“The exploitation of the mineral mines of Manchuria, Quang-tung, Heilung-Chiang and the Kirin Provinces, have yielded to so exact and administrative an intellect an adequate exchequer.... The results of all which the Memorialist holds to be at hand....”

The results were present: for a *Times* paragraph had it that on the previous evening a yellow regiment had entered Europe, and put to the sword the Ural *volost* round Mount Iremel.

He, for his part, so ill, felt his back bend under this thing.

Moreover, a wireless telephone to the train gave the rumour of three German brigades having quietly occupied Brussels overnight, of a German squadron engaging the forts of La Floride and de l’Heure in artillery duels, seeking to effect a landing at Havre or Honfleur.

The French, then, and the British on the French frontier, were to be taken in the back — that seemed the meaning: this, indeed, being Germany’s week, in which, if she failed, she failed — perhaps failed anyway: and now like a gambler staggered and callous, was throwing her last throw.

The crowd, therefore, of captains and commanders, summoned to Government House on the Prince’s arrival, met with a flush of excitement at this German tidings; but a mood of excitement new to their nerves awaited them there.

The Prince, standing near a window, as the room filled, could see a sea of heads without, and his face-muscles suddenly convulsed toward tears, seeing them, he thinking that there are tears in things, and that fives are like waves, and like leaves....

All that region of England, in fact, had been pouring itself for two days into Southsea, Portsea, Gosport, Portsmouth, and a bustle of “them that go down to the sea,” mixed with the other multitude, gave the day an air of gala. From the Portsea quays, the Cumber, the Hard, the harbour had an

aspect of preparation for some great day and date, the Portsmouth inner harbour pregnant with craft, with a rattle of anchor-chains, a chaos of smokes and sails, scouts outgoing, incoming, and gulls that were aeroplanes playing in the air. But it was not holiday that was in men's minds.

The Prince by this time had had copies of the Memorial handed round; and, as he rose, four-striped now and banded, the others hung on his face, his manner, his phrases in a hunger of curiosity, with criticism, with question and wondering.

“After what you have read, gentlemen,” he said, “little need be said now, for if this destiny is incredible to you to-day, I prophesy that to-morrow you will see it. In which case, what to do? The P.C.N.S., you see, have conspired with Admiral of the Fleet, Sir John Shepherd, to tempt me into accepting command, and no doubt you wonder, like me, what sin I have committed: however, here we are — weather winky — sick skipper at the wheel. Thank God, we belong to a lot who may be a common enough mob in easy years, but will be well groomed on Judgment Day. I don't think we are going to be afraid — even of throwing off our old modes of doing and thinking in the face of this new day: for we in this room are the rulers; Civil Power, Navy Staff, are out of it now; and so I say, since this thing is on our backs, and we may be bitterly wanting the ships which we shall sink to-day, let us beg the enemy to go back, and not bother. What do you say to it?”

He sat: and from half, perhaps, a sound of approval surrounded the table; but others, hardly yet grasping the reality of the Dragon Antichrist's advance, sat silent their eyes bent upon the papers; and when Sir John Shepherd, an old gentleman, spoke, it was to read a memorandum of the enemy tonnages, from which it appeared that Britain's tough tussle over the ocean had left the allies a preponderance of 32,000 tons in newest-type capital ships.

But it was the Prince's words that more and more filled the mind....

His flag had been hoisted on the Queen Mary; and by 3 o'clock the Cumberland and Southsea Castle guns were gonging god-speeds to the double column going at six cables down the flood.

Already at that hour a big-ship battle was in progress with the raiders on the Havre forts, though the forts themselves had previously been stilled, and a landing of infantry affected.

But the enemy's main body was away in lat. 52 between Harwich and Rotterdam, though their *objectif* was understood to be our south coast, the whole east being very thickly patrolled by mosquito flotillas.

However, about five o'clock, when opposite Brighton, the Prince received tidings that the enemy's fleet had turned northward, and he then signalled eighteen knots — forced draught for his slowest units.

A little later the three ships, *Antrim*, *Argyll* and *Cæsar*, all very lame, were sighted southward, as the sun went down, these steering apparently for Newhaven from the *fracas* round Havre.

Off Beachy Head the Frenchmen *Jean Bart* and *Danton* came up to take their place in the port British column, these being said to be the only sound capital ships now left to France.

At the fall of darkness the Germans were still turned northward, and the British, two interminable processions of searchlights, worked on at the chase until eleven in the night, when (nigh the Thames-mouth) the Prince heard by wireless that the Germans had turned south; and he then changed his formation to single column line ahead at sixty-six revolutions.

However, the night being rather gloomy, gusty (though the sea was smooth), the enemy apparently gave the slip somewhere about Long Sand, and were found to be some miles south at one o'clock. The British, pretty well in touch, put down the helm to come at them.

It was ten minutes later that a scout-cruiser came in with the news that probably all along the east coast of England and Scotland a battle of destroyers and submarines was then raging; and the Prince's head fell upon a table to consider it. His thought was: "I wish I was only well...."

In the midst of which his flag-captain pushed in his head to say: "Here comes the comet, Sir!" and the Prince rushed to see what was already a *chose vue* to everyone else — a brightness sheening on the sea's eastern horizon.

It soon had the night alight, and yonder to the southwest, a crowd of toys, lay the enemy.

And now the Prince wrapped up in oilskins, signalled his departure down to the ninth in the line (Sir John Shepherd, the *Lion*), and was away with a sub in a hydroplane of high speed, a night-glass eager at his eyes.

Within sixteen minutes he was in the cabin of Grand-Admiral von Bachberg, the *Donnernde*; in thirty he was spurting back to the British, his blood up, his proposals of peace having been coldly received; and now his illness was in the background of his being.

He immediately ordered the fleet northward, calling a meeting in his wardroom, where, speaking very quickly, he said: "Gentlemen, we have to fight, and the thing now is to do it a little trickily. Their object, of course, is to destroy our resistance to invasion; all along the coast the attempt is now going on in detail; and, whether they themselves are destroyed in the attempt or not, the attempt is a success, if they destroy Well, then, since fight we must, let's fight shy and fly; let's kill them without dying ourselves ("Bravo!" and laughter). We *can*: for I've seen people snatch up glowing coals and juggle them trickily on their palms without a scorch, and people prettily handle nettles without ever a sting. This, then, I recommend as your primary object — not to be sunk by them; and this, as your secondary —

not to sink them; but to capture them; for I tell you that you may be wanting ships in Europe.

‘And now you want to know — in two ticks — how I think these two objects can be accomplished.’

He proceeded to lay before them a plan of battle.

By this plan, every British ship was to present a broadside to the enemy; and every enemy ship was to present herself end-on (whichever way she turned), to be raked fore and aft by some British.

And the method was quite simple!

The British were to fight in two lines ahead at right angles — along two sides of a square — with the enemy between.

One British line was to lie east and west, one, a mile eastward of this, was to lie north and south. He read lists of the ships which he designed to fill each line.

If an enemy ship turned her broadside to the British ship attacking her, the British ship was to desist from that particular ship, leaving her to be raked fore and aft by some ship in the other British line, to which she would then be end-on: the British aim being, not to kill ships, but to kill guns and crews, not to shoot at hulls, but to shoot at decks.

Some other hurried instructions, and the throng of captains were darting back over the ocean to their various vessels, a blaze raging in breasts where depression had reigned; instantly the new mood was pervading the navy; the flagship signalled the battle word: “Sausage and Smashed”; far over the vast of the ocean the laugh, the challenge, passed; and Jack, conscious whose gallantry had him now in hand, buckled to the trouble with an alacrity glad to the galaxy.

And the instant the fleet was out of the enemy’s sight it split into two: the flagship with 1st and 3rd battle and cruiser squadrons moved east, south-

east, south; the Second-in-Command, mainly with 2nd and 4th squadrons waited, then went south.

And before the enemy could realise the plan, the Battle of Margate was upon them — a big ship drama, though all the North Sea fought that morning in smaller combats; and the comet's searchlight, urgently journeying, solemn in the morning, saw.

For three minutes the two flagships were engaged: for when the *Donnernde* — the behemoth of the Germania Yard, 85,000 tons, the largest warship yet launched to load the ocean, the men of whose stern were as foreign to her for'ard crew as Holborn men do not know what Strand men do — when she, reserved by Germany for this day, turned her broadside to the *Prince of Wales* in the British north, she faced the *Queen Mary* in the British east, and from the frying-pan was in the fire. An outbreak of a thousand thunders struck her suddenly dumb, strewed her superstructure, funnels, masts, guns, steering-gear, bow-works, all in the shout of one sharp shower; and she lay a flagrant log on a crimson sea, after lodging three shells in the *Queen Mary's* engines.

When, twenty minutes later, the *Queen Mary* went down by the bow, a boat that carried the Prince and sixteen sank; but by swimming they got to the *St Vincent*; and when the *St Vincent* was sinking, as day broke, he boarded the *Britannia* in a boat, having nine lives that night.

By which time the fight was all but done; the sea a reddish scene of wreckage wherever the eye could reach; and the dawn came strangely that morning.

By now results could be estimated. A third more British had sunk than German, Russian, Italian: the fact being, that the British, in presenting broadsides, had presented a greater area to fire than the enemy to them, so that the enemy's more numerous hits had hulled many British; and some

naval criticism has blamed the Prince, his plan being what it was, for not engaging at closer quarters than he did.

Be that as it may, the enemy's more numerous hits proved to have wrought far less havoc each than the British: so that the thirty remaining British were still mainly battle-worthy, while the thirty-four remaining enemy were gunless, some capable of repair, but shaved of upper-works, and British captures.

The destruction, meantime, among the smaller craft in that vast battle along the coast had been enormous; but, as to the Margate Battle, such a result, when the country heard it that forenoon, without quite troubling about how the trick could be done, was heard as a wonder, the work of a wizard with a switch which he whirls.

Hodge at the hedge-side, the jobber at the station, the Queen in her chamber, stood astare at this news, then crazily flew to proclaim that the Prince of Wales was again bringing Germany in chains, and the war was warred, and wire-gun had finally beaten Krupp, and comfortable peace and the day of plenty come again, for ever.

The war, however, was hardly ended: for while the treble of British bells were again singing to glen and city, German brigades were surging toward Paris from the west, and three regions of Eastern Europe were putrid with yelling yellow troops — though during that forenoon this fact was not known in western Europe, for everywhere the first work of the yellow men was to destroy the telegraph; and precisely like the night-floods of African rivers they sprang up to roll over Europe.

But before nine in the night, when the Prince landed at Dover, planning how best to call warning to western Man, the shriek which was already rushing through Europe, as of a woman fleeing with shrieks in the pangs of travail, had reached to British ears. No bell greeted his coming that evening.

He, for his part, though the heavens fell, felt that he must see yet once that face which he supposed to be now four days dead; and, as he could not go himself to get her — again ill in a reaction from the battle-night, and gashed in the chest — a young man, a certain Lord Percy Burnett, an aide-de-camp, left Dover at midnight on the mission, with the 2nd Somersetshires in his mind's eye.

A fortnight of appalling haps was to be his lot in that howling anarchy that he now found the Continent to be.

He was shot in the leg by a squad of flying patrols while riding by night through a pine-wood between Rouen and St-Pierre-les-Elbœuf, in which a German brigade had an examining-post posted; and he was kept prisoner as a spy five days and taken to Vaux near Paris: or, as may be conceived, the momentum of the new German incursion needed *time* to check itself, just as the machinery for recalling the British troops from Europe needed time to be put in motion; so that while Europe was fleeing in tens of millions to her western and southern ports before those spread wings of the yellow pestilence, and while the world's mercantile marine was churning the seas toward their screaming, German troops on the back and front of British were getting into touch on a front of fifty miles over the plain of Picardy, blind to all but this one last cast of the dice, one last orgy of carnage, and then to fly. They met on a day when every Russian roadside between Archangel and Bessarabia was already red with butchered moujiks, when Mongolian flesh had glutted the guns of Kônigsberg, and overflowed them; the next day yellow was on the glacis of Coblenz, in the gardens and bedrooms of Metz; it swarmed over the European combatants like a wall that falls upon three battling boys; and what the Europeans mutually slew the yellow men mutilated.

When Lord Percy Burnett, after many adventures, arrived in sight of Bar-le-Duc castle, where he had hopes of coming in touch with the 2nd Somersetshires, no battalion of Somersetshires was any longer in existence, and Bar-le-Duc was a smouldering ruin. The same night he was flying westward with a banefuller stain of yellow on the brain than Eulalia's remains.

These North-French hordes were a portion of the central tentacle of the three great tentacles which the Mongolian race stretched over Europe — Midland tribesmen, these, of Shansi, Shensi, Kansu, who, after reaching the borders of Chinese Turkestan by train, had trailed itself in interminable caravan through Tarim and those desert stretches of Siu-Kiang and Chinese Turkestan which, in his earlier day, Li Ku Yu had strewn with masses of Mohammedan dead.

These were they whose front had been reported on the Caspian foreshore while nightly the stars still marked their five corps camped from Kashgar to Bokhara, marked the bakeries' blaze, the lament of the baby at the breast, the tethered camels' clamouring — corps that had very little resemblance in extent and organisation to the corps in which men had yet gone to war, since the units of a corps would have occupied 1200 miles of road (supposing it could have moved over one road), and have occupied thirteen days in passing any one point: the administrative convoys and regimental trains occupying by themselves more territory than is customary for all an ordinary corps.

Of a sallower hue, true Hans, with little Manchu admixture, were the sinews of the second tentacle, Hunanese, tribesmen of Fukien, Kuantung, industrious blades, hardhanded by habit, short of stature, sturdy, who had furnished washermen to Sydney and Frisco, and diggers to the Zootpansberg: men to whom a li, or a pinch of salt, was much, who now

already on the march saw salt squandered round them, with rice, dried vegetables, tea, sausages, pressed meats, fresh meats, a foretaste of the Hopeland they are pressing to.

These in seven corps, separated sometimes by quite short distances of thirty or forty miles, drop half-a-corps for Bengal, as they go working in interminable worms up to the “Roof of the World” by the caravan routes betwixt the sources of the Mekong and Yangtsekiang; and under heavens that weep ceaseless rains, by great swollen streams, they go pouring, through groves of the mulberry-tree, by priest-cities droll as a Gulliver’s dream, and by cantonments where their four *échelons* of auxiliary convoys take up deposits of cereals, biscuits, hay, two of the administrative convoy *échelons* being half-a-day’s march behind the regimental trains, the other two bringing up supplies from the rear, the cattle marching between advanced columns and the main body.

As to the third main array, which was the first actually to turn a European villager into stone, they were composed of the taller northerners, most of them nomads already by mood and heredity, Mongolians, Manchurians, Kirinese, Pekingese. Their twenty corps left Northern China desert, to find the ice of Lake Baikal already melted, and to be carried across in their trains and armoured carts by train-ship to the Baikal village side.

From which third-first mass of power, three corps branched off, about Omsk, to turn toward Balkash and the sources of the Irtysh, where the Central Plateau of Asia has its western gate, thence to go swarming like many waters down upon those lowlands and lonesome steppes, where the yowling of the wolf’s mouth breaks the moon’s muteness round about the Aral Sea, where Russia had so clutched, and in vain spent her strength.

But even on these arid tracts, there seems to have been no creaking of the commissariat machine, each unit of a host carrying some utensil like a mess-tin, containing eight pounds of emergency rations, which it was death to touch except in extreme need, and each corps headquarters having droves of dogs, mules, camels, cattle, sufficient at a pinch for six days' food.

This streamlet of the northern stream crossed the Caspian narrows from Krasnovodsk to Baku in twenty-six hours on huge sail-pontoons which the pioneering (Midland) stream had constructed for its own passage three days previously: for, by reason of the inconceivable legions which formed a corps, works could be turned out in hours which other great aggregations of men would take weeks to begin — the *objectif* of the streamlet being the conquest of the Caucasus, and the occupation of New and Little Russia, as well as of an already Mongol Hungary, while the pioneering five and twenty were to be Central and Northern European, as the Thibetan seven Southern European.

Wherever the flood met resistance, as at Konigsberg, Paris, Venice, it was precisely like the resistance of isolated obstacles blocking a tide; and long before the obstacle was down the tide was about and beyond it.

It was German forts, really, which furnished the first line of defence, since in Russia, now utterly an anarchy, part of her nationals fled; part hid until caught; the rest stared and perished: for the coming of the yellow feet seems to have been everywhere preceded by rumours of such a suggestion as to transmute many into pillars — mephitic infamies, massacre complicated by madness — and it was as if somewhere the earth had opened to pour forth a smoke that, as it rolled and approached, clutched the throat with drought, and smote the foot motionless: so that a refugee, a bugler of the Kuban *voisko*, could report that half his village stood rooted, staring at yellow troops pelting barefoot upon them down a lane, and could

not stir, fascinated and paralysed like birds by serpents, like men by spectres, seeing in that crowd of countenances nothing but a visit of ghosts, ghosts bloodless with lust of gore, bonily ugly, with rigid grins, and it was then as if every grave gave up its dead in the great and dreadful day of God, so that many a woman stood quite mute, rooted, and died of white affright before ever the spear could pierce her, the club crush her skull, or the blunderbuss blow out her astonishment and awe; and of those who fled many died later in a delirious frenzy of memory.

And with instant versatility these eastern pioneers turned from the work of murder to the works of industry, divisions disintegrating into brigades, into regiments, into battalions, to form communes of peasants drinking *vodka* instead of *samshu*; so that millions of sticks in midfields round Ural villages were showing some Chinese claimant's name, and the Pechili housewife, vowing now to be sage after the carnage and scarlet dark debauch, was taking stock of her new belongings, before the slaughter round Paris and Venice was half accomplished.

It was at these two points that the flood was longest dammed, because Paris was "impregnable" — or would have been to any other army with the few aeroplanes used by the Orientals; and because Venice was an island when the Malghera Garrison had once blown up the Ponte Sulla Laguna.

Yet even here three days saw it all over.

In Paris nearly half-a-million people had been trapped, with such a speed did the avalanche sweep from Coblenz westward; and these, with that desperate pride and chivalry of Frenchmen, decided to enrich with flesh the marsh-land of De de France ere they perished.

The outer ceinture of forts — Corneilles, Franconville, Montmorency — had aeroplanes in plenty, with great 30.5 cm. guns good and new, not half the Garrison of Paris had fled; so, like a last rock standing out of the sea of

European ruin, Paris stood redly desperate; and when the yellow hordes, after blowing up railways, drew lines nearly forty-five kilometres in diameter, and dashed with siege-guns upon Domon, it was to find Paris of harder heart than Port Arthur.

But the flood was already far west of Paris.

That same night, near eleven, a thin westering moon illumined a moorland near St Quentin, in the south-east corner of which was a gipsy camp without any fire, and on a sort of road running north-and-south across it an ambulance waggon — stationary, since its one horse had just dropped dead.

But on the heath were three nags, shaggy and longmaned, which three Tommies in scarlet with white facings were trying to catch in wide effort, looking like ghosts running crazy over the moor in the moonlight's vague mood, when suddenly a flock of fifteen Chinamen and women came running out of coppice to the south: and, catching sight of the gipsy camp, the waggon, the runners, these let out the scream which ever jumps from Chinamen at anything sudden, and went pelting to their right for the gipsies.

At the same time two ladies, Eulalia and Sister Darling, who had been standing by the waggon, darted into it, snatching their rifles; the three Tommies dropped into bracken, and began to pot at the Chinese; and the flock of gipsies, screeching, scattered and ran.

Three of the Chinese instantly dropped shot, seven dropped into cover to engage the Tommies' fire, and five, changing direction, dashed for the waggon.

On the waggon beds were three wounded, a German, nearly dead, an Englishman, one-legged, and a young Frenchman, an army aviator named Bonet, his left arm in a sling.

Besides these, there was a certain Burslem, who, in the flight northward, had somehow become associated with the waggon — a “living-picture” adventurer, of whom now the Chinese were likely to make a dead picture.

He, with Bonet and Eulalia, took aim at flaps, while Sister Darling knelt in the dark behind, her rifle grounded — the battle meantime cracking away between the seven and the Tommies, while over the rough road and over scrub pelted the five nigher with silent footsteps, like death’s-heads running, the one on the road naked-breasted to the waist but for a bandoleer, one to the left without pigtail, a girl in cotton trousers, her gun stuck gawkily out before her, running furtively as on hot bricks with long strides, her mouth howling wide without sound.

When they were a hundred yards off, a clammy hand in the dark was laid on Eulalia’s arm, clammy on clammy, and a hoarse throat strove to utter: “Dear, don’t shoot: leave it to the men.”

No answer: the next moment Bonet fired, and like an echo Eulalia, and like an echo Burslem.

The Chinese girl stopped running, looked downward, sat down.

At the same moment a fourth shot, which rang out of bracken from a Tommy stopped the Chinaman who was on the path, he, after some thought, suddenly snatching up bracken with passion, as he dropped.

The other three Chinese, pealing shrieks now, ran on toward the waggon. But shot after shot met them: two fell coming; the third fell flying.

The battle of seven-with-three, meanwhile, had become a battle of five-with-two, the Tommies stealing ever nearer to the Chinese.

In the midst of which the girl sitting solitary in the gorse gurgled forth a sort of dolorous sing-song of two notes, one *sol* and one *mi*, like a death-dirge just audible: upon which out to her dashed Sister Darling.

“Katie, mind, come back!” cried out Eulalia.

She might as well have cried to the deaf dead....

As Sister Darling ran, a shot carried away half her left ear, fetching a scream from her, whereupon Eulalia in a forage-cap, rifle in hand, dashed out to her, and they ran toward the sitting girl; but as Sister Darling in advance bent to raise the girl, in Eulalia some nerve of passionate aversion burst out with, “Ah, don’t *touch* her!”

In a moment more, however, she was assisting to lift the girl, who moaned; but when a shot sang past her, she tossed from the girl — all their actions being characterised by that jerkiness and distraction of brains agitated to frantiness, and, dropping upon her face in gorse, she began to pot at the potting Orientals, while Sister Darling, who was very strong, trotted under the girl’s burden toward the waggon, dropping red upon yellow.

But three minutes afterwards the firing ceased, and three Chinese were spied stealing back to the coppice whence they had popped out.

And now the ambulance-lamp was lit for some minutes, to glow upon visages haggard with hunger and anguishes, while the gashed ear, and the girl’s hurt, were dressed, and two of the Tommies, having found their comrade dead, came in.

Whereupon they sat in grass round the waggon to debate, Burslem observing that their one chance now was to abandon the waggon, and “make paces to the coast before the Chinese reach it, if they haven’t already.”

“Then, oh, go,” Sister Darling implored: “Eulalia, go for me! Why, why, should you all wait and lose your last chance like this!”

“You are not going to catch us leaving you, miss,” said one of the Tommies, “so it’s no use.”

“But this is a lunacy!” cried the little Bonet in good English: “oh, but frankly, mees, pardon me, one is no longer able to consider you as mentally sound. For in clinging to these two men who are dying, you wilfully murder us six all. Me, I call that — distraction!”

Upon which Sister Darling clapped palms to forehead, distracted, crying out to God: “I *can*’t leave them! I would if I could, but I can’t!”

“Right you are, sweet!” cries Eulalia.

“Then,” said Burslem, “since Miss Darling persists in being so wilful, I think the time is come for us others to consider whether we should not leave her. Anyway, let us put it to the vote, and if—”

In that instant he was flying, and the council vanished, both the Tommies in their scarlet lying dead, shot out of hedge-bush to the west, the two ladies flying into the waggon, Bonet and Burslem buried away somewhere; and five Chinamen, bursting out of bush, were running wild-eyed, hot-footed, sweating, gasping gasps audible from afar, toward the waggon.

One of them Eulalia laid low by three quick-successive bangs four yards from the entrance-steps; the other four were hotly in, whelming the ambulance with the raw sirocco of their breaths and frenzied presence, fleshing a spear quick as one-two-three in the two wounded men and the Chinese woman, who whooped a shriek, then overpowering and tearing down the ladies: for many Chinamen did not at once butcher white women, but idled with them awhile; and if the white woman chanced to be a saint, or a princess, that made no difference to Chinamen.

Now, then, was the mouse amid ill cats.

However, a few seconds before Eulalia’s first yell of rage burst from her entrails like a blast of blasting-gelatine upon the night’s silence, Bonet and Burslem were at the ambulance-shafts, taking careful-trembling aim lest the

ladies should be shot; and soon they had two of the Chinese shot in the waggon, and two as they were getting away.

And now it was a question of capturing two of the moor-nags — no easy thing; and there were the two little gipsy nags; on which four the four rode barebacked northward, with halters, flogging the nags.

But they knew that few escaped — a new rashness of the Chinese in the face of gun-fire now showing itself everywhere, as Paris was then witnessing, Venice: for in neither case was any assault at all necessary, since the population of Paris was already living on dogs and cats, and some days' investment must have ended it; while, as to Venice, four Japanese cruisers stood beyond the Lido after sinking the Austrian *Tegetthof* and *Franz Ferdinand*, and capturing a mob of Austrian and Italian gunboats: which cruisers, though under orders not to shell Venice, stopped supplies from the sea (if any had come), and had under their guns the *murazzi* of the Lido, and the Lagoon forts.

It was only necessary, then, to wait: but waiting was no longer to the taste of yellow men — rather dash through marshes of pigtails to a city-gate now than tarry an hour: for, having got the taste, their swarms dashed themselves forward, with a trembling intolerance of obstacles, for the last bath and draught. To drink the red sea dry, to sin now by mountains, to be crimson in iniquity, to sink, to sigh, to die of crime — whatever kept them one second from this end they fell upon with frenzy, making assaults in close order, whose masses the rains of flame from the air and from forts mowed down by thousands in a moment.

At St Cyr the guns gluttled their gorges with carnage until their tired rifling could no longer keep range.

One by one, Domon, St Germain, Versailles fell.

Before the seven batteries of the monstrous Fort de Marly massacre was so common, and the Azrael of mortality so mawful, that at one moment the Chinese line, advancing with scaling-ladders, wavered and shrank: whereupon a little Japanese colonel dashed forward to take the fort alone, calling, waving. They stood lashed by gashing gusts of bullets, but would not go: he fell. A major dashed forward, waving, calling *Come!* They would not budge: he fell. A captain dashed forward to take the fort alone, calling, waving, inviting. Still they shied at it: he fell. But, tis he fell, the yellow men yelled, pell-mell they pelted; now red hell will not repel them; and yellow hell within twenty minutes was the citadel.

At Cotillons the stock of ammunition was all exhausted in slaughter before the overflow. The next day Vanves was overflowed, Ivry, Montrouge — closer and closer like a death-malady spreading relentlessly to the heart. Paris, frantic with panic, knew that yellow was at St Cloud, at Putoux, at Suresnes, at Sèvres.

That same night the Venetian Canal Grande presented a strange sight — gondolas and corpses — one throng — gondolas gaudy with lanterns of Chinese and Japanese design, like a night of Carnival in the olden times of Venice, only a millionfold more vermilion-tinted, splashed with pageantry: for within some hours the Chinese were washed and at home in a town, like old owners, and lords waddling in slippers through inherited residences; and since Venice, like Paris and Buda-Pesth, was intended to be the capital of one of the three great States into which the new Europe was to be federated, greedy had been the press and competition to get *pied-à-terre* in it: so that such a crush of human beings now brushed shoulders with a buzzing of bees within those *rii* and narrow *colli*, as no city of man had ever seen.

Hour after hour the stars, the comet, saw the watch-night swarming and gory; half the Ghetto to the northwest a conflagration glaring on the night;

all night that lunar glory of gondolas gliding through the glooms of the gory Lagoon, clogged with throngs of goggling eyeballs, pigtails grinning dead amid the Christian dead, all up the Grand Canal, the Giudecca, away out to the Cemetery and Murano, without end; all those Byzantine palaces — the 'Cà d'Oro, the Palazzo Foscari, dreams of colour and decor — reeling unceasingly with the abomination of desolation; all through the Giardini Pubblici prostrate lives lying amid corpses, gorged like the cormorant with orgy, dying of licence in wine and white flesh; all among the graves of the Cimitero; of the Jews' Burial-ground; up in the Campanile, the Clock Tower; down in the vaults of St Mark's; among the columns of San Giovanni e Paolo, where an image of Puffa, the many-handed, a joss of eagle-headed Fé, and of Gan, the big-bellied glutton, grinned at the Mary Magdalene of Bergamasco, whose marble must have blushed.

Throughout Paris the next night it was the same, yellow men despising rosewood to carouse at tables of flesh, despising eiderdown to sigh on couches of flesh; publicly on the Grand Boulevard it raged, in the Madeleine, Notre Dame; the Dragon-flag on the Elysée flapped.

By which time the four fugitives from St Quentin had contrived to snatch their lives through jeopardy to within five miles of Douai; and at about nine in the night were making their way — on foot now, since their hungry nags had failed them, they themselves footsore, famished, foredone — when there reached their ears that shriek of the Chinese, well known now to them, more detested now and dreaded than very death.

A crowd of about a hundred, carousing in a cabaret two hundred yards ahead on the left of the road, had spied them in the moonlight before they could hide: and out they flew.

But on the right, closer to the fugitives, were three detached houses — mansions almost: so they dashed into a gateway, locked the gate, then

through shubbery to a door, locked it, up a stair, locked a door, and dropped, all the four, upon a bed, to pant, Within a minute, though, ‘they were aware that the Chinese were scaling the gate and garden-railings; and they darted to a window to see the garden beginning to teem with Chinese.

A moment more and the Chinese were battering on the front, a rough row, like the Vox Dei, heart-horrifying.

On which Eulalia in her distraction let down the jalousie with a racket, and dashed open the *persiennes* to shoot — rashly! revealing where they were — and turned to snatch her weapon.

At that moment Sister Darling said to her: “Dear, don’t: it can do no good”; but Eulalia, her face dead-blanced like a white radish, her teeth rigid, hissed back: “Won’t it? I’ll show them a bit of Irish,” and with a kind of dance in her gait ran back to the bed for her gun.

However, she was never to fire, for in the instant that her back was turned a shot was fired from outside, which found Sister Darling’s heart. When Eulalia turned again to the window, it was to see Sister Darling down; and the gun tumbled out of her hand.

At the same time Bonet was whispering: “Let us try the back — come —” dragging at Eulalia by the arm.

But she would not go, lay over the dying girl, who was staring as if in scare, rolling a death-ruckle in her throat, pouring it low, hurried, like a purring rolling. And one lover’s-kiss Eulalia pressed, wild-whispering “beloved?” and one wild press more and deep-secret “beloved?” then by a cruel tug Bonet had her away, and they were gone on all-fours amid bullets, not four, but three.

By a covered arbour at the back, soft-running, they made their way down a sort of park to stables, whose doors they secured; and in there in blackest

darkness the three sat in three corners of a spacious, paved chamber heavy with harness and saddlery, haunted with stench of dead horses.

And soundless through hour and hour of the dark they crouched so apart, shivering, without prospect, but without much care any more for the morrow, sleepily hearing as in a dream shrieks of cheer pealing from the Chinese, who must have crowded into the house, and were carousing; and if one of the three slipped a little into sleep, ever, on his starting awake, the dream-shrieks reached the ear, like a machinery acting everlastingly, afar.

But once toward morning Eulalia started awake to another sound — an exclamation— “In the name of God, a Blériot!”

For Bonet, shuddering from cold, had risen to pace, and in a neighbouring chamber had stumbled upon a monoplane.

He found in it a good 7-cylinder Gnome, and, moreover, he found tools, petrol, rugs, compass.

When he examined it with matches, it seemed good throughout; and now, clasping one of the chassis-wheels, he sat weeping.

On pulling himself together, he mentioned that it could carry two, and no more; and set to work.

By a large doorway it was taken out into meadow-land at the stable-back, as day was breaking, and Bonet fastened it to a larch there with a strand of shredded rope.

But the engine’s hubbub was instantly heard by the Chinese, who hurled themselves out of the house to see what was stirring; and quickly Bonet leapt to his place, Burslem and Eulalia standing pale by the plane. Not one word as to who was to be Bonet’s passenger had even now been uttered.

“Now, Mss Bayley, all ready,” said Burslem.

The Chinese screamed at a corner of the meadow, spying them, pelting.

“You go, if you like,” said Eulalia.

“Choose quick!” cried out Bonet intolerantly, in French.

“Women and children first, lady,” observed Burslem with a hideous grin.

A shot from the Chinese chanted past Bonet’s head.

“But *why?*” — from Eulalia—” an ‘excellent rule for clowns and cowards: but for *us two*, surely, the question is, whose life is the more valuable? Mine isn’t very.”

“*Vite!*” from Bonet in a shivering shriek, “or I go alone, God be my witness!”

At which cry Burslem snatched a revolver from his pocket, and discharged it into his right eye. The Chinese shrieking was near. A shot tore Eulalia’s shoulder. As Burslem dropped, she sprang up beside Bonet, her averted head turned toward Burslem, smiling him into eternity. And Bonet hitched the engine; her strain broke the restraining string; she tripped down the meadow merrily amid missiles and throatings, suddenly sat fluttering as with laughter on her throne in the air, and before long was landing safe at Dover.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RAY RADIATES



BUT DAYS BEFORE this Lord Percy Burnett, sent to search for Eulalia's body, had managed to get back — with tidings on his tongue! for, though it was known in Britain that Oriental troops were in Eastern Europe, nothing was known of their numbers, character, and rate of advance.

It was about ten at night, and the Queen, daringly holding a Court amid the break-up of civilisation, had lately stepped into the State Ballroom with the Royal Family, the King en colonel-in-chief of the Coldstreams, she in an all-round crown, with Koh-i-Noor, Order of the Garter, cloth-of-silver train, parading her Prince on her left, her Elizabeth, the King's Band babbling to six hundred glitterers a *ballade* which breathed that there was no such thing as grief or grinning dead — not there, anyway.

On the top of which let Lord Percy Burnett drop hotfooted to have speech with the Prince, and at Belshazzar's banquet is handwriting on the wall, awe, and harrowed hearts.

The Chinese had already sat down before Kônigsberg. And it was not a river, it was the sea....

The Prince, listening, siffled through his teeth-edges: "Onward, Christian soldiers...."

Suddenly he was up — and his action, when he acted, was like a clock, or a watt, at so many mâts of work per second — and, throwing behind him,

“Percy, try to see the Queen,” he vanished headlong, was quickly in a carriage at the Garden Gate, and off for “Ning Shou Kung.”

For a week, since the Battle of Margate, his thought had been: “Just possibly, if it is true that I am tricky, I may crush Li Ku Yu at sea”; and already he had set going a great haste of hammering, gun-casting, overhauling, and repairing at Paisley, at Portsmouth, at Newcastle, at Glasgow, at Sunderland, at Chatham; but even if the sea was his, the air was Li Ku Yu’s with Chinnery’s air-boat in Oyone’s hands — perhaps in Oyone’s head; hardly yet in Li Ku Yu’s head, since she had so lately read aloud Li Ku’s statement that he could understand nothing of her account of it.

Where the boat was he had no notion — it might be at “Ning Shou Kung”! Anyway, the thing was to seize Oyone quickly.

He had had qualms, however, as to seizing her, because of his contract with her; but while Lord Percy Burnett had been blurting his flood of news, he had said to himself that that contract referred only to seizure by the police, not by himself.

On the way he picked up two policemen, made them await him at the gate, went in to find a scared Huang smoking her pipe, and, without saying one word, took a lantern to roam in search through room after room, she moving mutely after: and her pipe went out that night.

No sign of Oyone! He half expected to see her still sitting there before that hole in the door, sewing, painting, speaking unceasingly; and in that narrow long room, and in the alcove, he spent several minutes, holding up the lantern to everything, remembering how he had asked himself which was the yellowest, momentum or energy, and how he had heard “boo-boo, whose boy...”

Then it was down in the grounds, prying about with the lantern's light; and at the back he saw an odd thing: four stakes where the air-boat had stood! and in the garden-house on a window-ledge an odd thing: a pipe — Chinnery's! for it had a chloride chamber for moisture-absorption like Chinnery's pipes: which put anew into his head a question on which he stood there brooding many minutes: "Is Richard Chinnery living? Is he? Fifty words of his could rescue this Europe..."

But nothing else was found, and he went away heavy-hearted....

Yet Oyone was not, in fact, far from him — living in a solitary cottage on the borders of Epping Forest, near which she had alighted on the night of her flight, awaiting every day Li Ku Yu's summons to join him with the air-boat, which lay under tarpaulins in her back-yard. There, too, Richard Chinnery might anon have been seen, pottering feebly in slippers.

She, meantime, was lying quite low, her only servant a little English girl, she herself venturing out very rarely, in general as a coster-girl, though sometimes in the hush of night a lone figure which was Oyone could have been caught in that back-yard of No. 11 Frith Street, a spot which fascinated her, wringing her hands over the hole where the Redlike Ray had lain, sure that the Prince had it now from Eulalia, wondering where Eulalia was: for since her flight from "Ning Shou Kung" she had been once by night through the air to France to see the Six Millions still untouched, but had failed to discover anything of the 2nd Somersetshires — which had been cut to pieces.

But on the day when the flood of immigration from the Continent suddenly stopped, when the Chinese, having everywhere reached the sea, were lying gorged in the rock-galleries of Gibraltar, and were slaughtering the inhabitants of Hammerfest, she ventured upon a day out as far as Regent Street, and there in a way wonderful to her came across the Redlike Ray.

Her object was partly to buy some crêpe de Chine, partly to see that changed aspect of things of which the papers spoke: and for hours she enjoyed herself in it, seeing now that she need not have come in her coster disguise, she was so utterly lost in the whirl and swirl of this wonderful new London, whose population must have been swelled by millions, as everywhere in Britain, the Mediterranean and Ægean Islands, North Africa, America.

Such a brushing of shoulders like an everlasting Lord Mayor's Day, a polyglot of gabbling, an eager and heated atmosphere of life, thronging the centres of streets and pavements alike, all the old ways and restraints broken down now, everyone speaking to everyone, like members of a jolly, hot family on a holiday, the merchant Jew of Astrakhan in fur cap and coat, the gabardine and ear-lock of Bokhara, the hausfrau of the Black Forest with her last packet of coffee, the Parisienne affectedly slurring her r's, the Amurski Cossack with his sabre, the English girl with her blush, the drosky-driver in full-skirted coat and fur *shapka*, all intimate in a whirlpool of intercourse, many destitute, most more or less hungry.

France would have grumbled if Britain had overflowed her so; but Britain — world-brotherly, world-worthy — did not grumble, though she had once grumbled a little for nothing. If she had, it would have made no difference.

But the shops were much less thronged, so it was not a crush which prevented Oyone buying her crêpe in a shop at Oxford Circus, but a commotion outside which she rushed to see. It was then near three o'clock: a bright Spring afternoon.

The source of the trouble, whatever it was, was away down toward the Marble Arch: for there was a pelting eastward thence of feet, and thence came eastward a distinct wind of wailing and lamentation.

“What is it? What’s the matter?” everyone was asking everyone in that region of the crowd round Oyone; and, even as they inquired, the word “blind! blind!” had spread up from the west, and was with them.

Some moments more and they could see the fleeing stream of people split in the middle of the street, the split reaching nearer and nearer, as if a bull in eastward career was throwing them from his road into two crushes; and all at once the cause of it all broke into Oyone’s sight — a man madly running with spider’s legs, panting, wildly staring — a Yankee, like Yankee caricatures, lank like ribbed sea-sand, goatee-bearded, hugging like a terrified mother the Redlike Ray.

By this time he was in a region of people who divided before his flight by mere imitation, without knowing why he was flying, and was being fled from: so a cabman who was creeping westward a little eastward of Oxford Circus took him in without question, turned with him; Oyone flew after; and, as vehicles thereabouts could only bore their way coaxingly, she had little difficulty in following until she met another cab, in which she followed him eastward to Aldgate.

There he alighted, and, still wild-eyed, anon going off into daddy-long-legged runnings, with ogling glances, he gained No. 11 Frith Street. Oyone saw him toss one last ogle from the door, and go in.

So the Redlike Ray had been there in the cottage all the time while she had been groaning over the hole in the ground.... She would get it now!

In that same hour the news of the Marble Arch event reached the Prince’s ears, and *he*, too, said: “I’ll get it now.”

And the same day Eulalia, fresh come to London through the air, told herself: “I should not delay in digging up the box for the Russian, Hartmann.”

But look at Mr Silas P. Stickney, stretched there on his bed at No. 11, sobbing like a child — a respectable ship's captain, he, of "Chicago, Illinois" (he always added "Illinois," with a nasal fling on the "nois" — I guess), who had lately decided to end his days in London near a married niece, and had bought a forty-years' lease of No. 11, to settle in. It was even yet not furnished, save a top room.

But already he had planted the back with stripling trees, and, in digging to plant, had happened upon the Redlike Ray, where it had been buried by Alexis the Sexton while the house had been still "For Sale."

Alexis had been a man of some enlightenment and science, and had once gone a pilgrim to see Chinnery, who, with his habitual affability, had admitted and shown him round, showing him with the rest the Redlike Ray, not knowing that Alexis was an Anarchist, or not caring; and as soon as ever Chinnery was said to be dead at the date of the Six Million raid, Alexis had entered Chinnery's place by an area window, and was away with the ray.

He had then handed on to Hartmann the secret of the ray in the event of his arrest or death, as Hartmann, in breathing his last, had laid it on. Eulalia to hand on to one Taska.

It had been Alexis's terror of blindness that had protected society from the ray dining two weeks preceding his death: for Chinnery had stuck on the box a strip of paper for "Monty's" benefit, written with: "Do Not Touch The Cap."

But the burying had much obscured this. "The Cap" had been rubbed off: and it was only by studying it through a magnifying glass that Mr. Silas P. Stickney had deciphered "Do Not Touch."

This for three weeks had kept his eyes constantly on, and his hands constantly off, the box. The box became the man's mania. He *suspected* that it was packed with diamonds, and that "Do Not Touch" was only a bogey.

But, then, it might well be an infernal machine. And the question was: how to find out.

In the end he decided to take it into some open place, slip down the cap-thing, and fly. If nothing happened, he would make other flying experiments; and, if still nothing, then the thing was full of diamonds.

So, that afternoon, he had gone to Hyde Park, laid the box on a bench, uncapped it, and fled: nor had looked back till a lamentation came to him out of Park Lane.

Then he could see that out of the apparatus was proceeding a pencil of rays, very large in area, though very faint, for whose strange shade he had no name — something like the sawdust of cedar-wood — just revealed to the eye by the dust-particles which the rays touched in the air.

But it was some time before his brain connected the ray with the lamentation, till the lamentation spread to those who had rushed to their windows, to those who had rushed in the street, to see why the wailing was. Men, women, children, were every instant being struck blind by scores.

When the truth entered his head he flew to the box, himself now very troubled in the eyes — for *behind* the box, too, the reflected rays from motes in the air had a blinding effect — and catching up the box, he dashed with it through the Marble Arch, too madly agitated, too preoccupied with the sorrow in his own tight-shut eyes, to think of shutting the cap, and, as he ran stretched and long-shanked, he ran disseminating calamity and lamenting.

Three different policemen who flew to seize him stood still midway, their knuckles in their eye-sockets, moaning: and Oxford Street was half a moan, and half a scamper, before he had the cap closed.

And now he lay on his bed sobbing, thinking of the ill it had been his lot to do, thinking that, with his marked appearance, he would be tracked that

day, and, if not hanged, then lynched. England was no place for him: possibly he might hook it to America, if he looked alive. As to that devil's-thing, which he hardly dared look at now, he would rebury it just as he had found it, and so, washing his hands of its bewitchment, do a bunk for Liverpool without bidding good-bye to a soul.

This he did: sallying out soon after dark, bareheaded, his wide hat left behind, his beard shaved off: and Oyone, who for hours had not taken her eyes off the house, saw him go.

She instantly slipped into the yard, found the back-kitchen open, and in she stole, to seek, and seize, and flee.

However, to her horror of astonishment, no box: not in the little trunk left unlocked; in no cupboard: up no chimney.

She tapped all the walls, carrying his chair to stand on, reckless if he came back upon her, though gradually growing conscious of the ghosts gathering round her in that gloom to mock her agonies.

When he did not come, she guessed that he had taken to flight, but about nine ran to throw a glance out of a front window, and now — again — saw the ray — in Eulalia's hands, Eulalia having tranquilly dug it up with a shovel which she had fetched, while Oyone had been moaning about the house.

Oyone pulled her coster-shawl farther over her face and ran shivering, tracking Eulalia eastward through teeming streets, where to shoot might have been to shoot an unintended head, and to stab would have been to be mobbed; Eulalia, meantime, making her way east and then north into a tumbledown slum of tall houses, a back street rabbit-warren of Hebrews and Slavs that ran east-and-west.

There Oyone saw her go into a house, and now propped her back against a wall, dropping with fatigue of soul and body, thinking what next to do,

how to get the ray, and then drop and die.

Eulalia, meantime, in the wee back-room on the third floor which she had hired at five shillings — for lodging was dear — was scribbling off Hartmann's message to "Taska"; and she wrapped up the Redlike Ray in a newspaper, and directed it to "Mr Taska, Shoemaker, Bowery, New York" — having no notion that the box was of any importance to humanity.

Oyone, during this, was being sore tempted to throw up everything for that day, and get some rest, when she again saw Eulalia sally out — with a parcel.

About the same size as the ray — but wrapped up: impossible to be certain whether it was the ray or not.

Round the corner, to a crowd pressing round a pawn shop — a Saturday night. Eulalia entered the press; and it was long to wait while she gained an entrance, and came out again.

Then the way was along by-streets toward a main street, Oyone more than ever uncertain now, her eyes troubled, the parcel sometimes looking smaller to her, as if something had been taken out in the pawnshop.

But in the main street a species of little shriek pitched from her lips: "She is posting it to the Prince!" as Eulalia made into a district post-office.

Now, then, was the second for electric energy and concentrated venom, all mortal things hanging on the hazard of an instant.

' The throng scattered before Oyone's fury. When Eulalia was already at the parcels' counter, suddenly the box was gone out of her grasp. And a second later a tigress's arrogant cry rang through the place: "*not stop me!*"

For the room was full of men, and two postmen with empty bags on their arms who had spotted the robbery barred her escape.

A moment more, and she was struggling like ten men with twenty men, trying to tug off the wrapping and get at the cap to strike mankind blind, not

minding if she was struck blind, too.

But the mass of force, the number of hands, was too much for one, and in half-a-minute she was hanging deadlike in someone's arms, sobbing a little in her faint.

Four then dragged her out to hand her over to the law; but after forty yards of it, when her weight became a bore, they threw her on a doorstep, and left her.

For in the new London snatchings and such-like acts were common, and crime had now quite a new aspect.

Civilisation, in fact, was on the brink of disorganisation — in Britain, too; and one of the first nerves of the State to be infected with the disease was the police. Having, in fact, far more to do than they could handle, they had begun to do nothing.

Thus it took them three days to trace so marked a personality as Mr Silas P. Stickney to Frith Street — and this in spite of the zeal which a Prince could inspire. By which time Silas and ray had well vanished.

However, two days later a report came to the Prince that on the evening of the Hyde Park event *a certain nurse* had been observed by three persons carrying a black box not far from Frith Street.

“Then,” said the Prince, “*find me this nurse.*”

But that was no easy work in the new whirl and turmoil.

At any rate, as Oyone fainted, a Polish Jew handed back the box to Eulalia, its wrapping rather damaged; but she put it on the counter, and turned to go.

A clerk, however, called after her: “This can't go like this.”

“Why?” she asked: “the postage will be paid at the other end.”

“American packages aren't taken in that way now,” he answered: “besides, it must be fastened with sealing-wax.”

But to pay the postage was more than she liked — no clothes now but what she wore, no jewellery left but the wedding-ring, six shillings in money from a ring just pawned.

So she took the box away, till she should be better off, wondering at the face of the coster-girl who had snatched it, with a thought of the Japanese at the back of her consciousness.

Oyone still lay at the door where the four men had thrown her, thinking wearily that the ray, if it was the ray, was posted now; and she, Oyone, had touched it, yet had it not.

Afterwards she rose to get home; and there, as soon as she had rested, sat and wrote:

“Li Ku Yu: strange things have happened this day. An American struck many blind with the Redlike Ray. I tracked him, and while seeking it in his house, looked out and saw the ray in the hands of that same Eulalia Bayley, the Prince’s honey, of whom I wrote. I tracked her to her lodging, after which she came out with a parcel like the ray-box in size, but wrapped up, went to a pawnshop with it, and thence to a post-office, where, in spite of an attempt which I made, she succeeded in posting it.

“Li Ku Yu, I am not perfectly certain that it was the ray, nor to whom it was posted. It have been posted to the Prince, but many things now incline me to think that, all the time, this woman may be quite unconscious of its value, so it *may* have been posted to ‘Taska, Shoemaker, Bowery, New York.’ I am a work-basket thick with knick-knacks of wonderings, contradictions and intricacies.

“Li Ku Yu, it is for you, who are as obvious as the Nine Tripods of Yu, to decide whether a ship should be sent to America to take the ray from ‘Taska, or how it is to be taken from the Prince, if it is he who has it, whether in this the Princess Elizabeth may be of use, or whether I shall first

determine that it was really the ray then posted, though it is dangerous for me to be prominent and active at present, with the air-boat here. The foolish Chinnery still forgets when I get him to attempt to tell how the ray was made. I think he has not long to live. London is now incredible, a nostril stopped up with cold. Farewell.”

In order to get this to Li Ku Yu, she made a midnight trip three thousand feet up, striking the French coast by Gravelines, where a very great temptation suddenly assailed her to go on to Paris to spy upon Li Ku Yu’s face; but her pride still waited to be summoned: she sent the letter by camel-riders.

Three nights afterwards a Japanese captain, after lying low about her house, suddenly ran to it. He had reached her by special ship from France, with a letter in cypher within his cloak lining:

“Oyone, my business is immense.

“But to-morrow, the third, at noon, I transfer headquarters to Dunkirk, Casino des Dimes. Meet me, then, soon before the hour of the tiger (8 A.M.) two kilometres to the north with the air-boat. There, south of the Sea Baths that are at Rosendaël, I will light a fire to guide your descent.

“You will then be requested to conduct an aide-de-camp to the wood of the hoard of gold.

“It may be His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (not so deeply buried as you reported) who has the Ray, or ‘Taska,’ or neither. I calculate, from the facts I have, that it is Taska, so am sending emissaries to America. But you get Mr Chinnery to write a dexterous letter, asking His Royal Highness to meet him on Rosendaël sand-dunes, that I may capture His Royal Highness....”

On this Oyone cried out: “I shall see him!”

But the hitch in the Chinnery-plan was that Chinnery resisted, saying: “Oyone, it would kill me to write again to the Prince of Wales.... The Prince of Wales has forgotten me, because God has withdrawn himself from me....”

To this Oyone, who had suppressed two letters to the Prince, answered: “It is only because of the war that he has not replied! Now he will fly to you, if you write.”

“Oh, Oyone, I cannot.”

“Then, no wine to-morrow.”

This conquered Chinnery. Paper and pen were got. But when it became a question of dating the letter from Rosendaël, his brows knit. “Why Rosendaël?” he wished to know.

“Because I am taking you there in the air-boat.”

“Oh, not in the air again, Oyone!”

“Then, by a ship.”

But, little suspicious though Chinnery was, the whole thing scented of a mystery: he would not: and now no threats or rage could change him.

Oyone spent the night in writing a letter in his handwriting.

It came to the hand of the Prince while dictating letters at three in the afternoon, and he read:

VILLA DE ROSENDAËL.

“MY DEAR TEDDY: There have been reasons for my silence, since I am a kind of prisoner to a girl who is your enemy. Can you help me for old times’ sake? I am here in a country flooded with yellow men, where my life is bitterness and my bread unleavened. If you can come to me in a ship at 3 A.M. of the 4th, when the Chinese are all asleep, I may manage to light a fire on the dunes to guide you to the spot where I shall be waiting. I ask much, my friend; but I have much to tell you of new inventions. A Japanese

sympathiser takes this; but I am ill, my hand shakes, I cannot write. Your sincere friend...”

Now, the Prince, like Chinnery, may have been little suspicious, but it was impossible for this letter to escape suspicion. “My life is bitterness and my bread unleavened” was so furiously curious as from Richard Chinnery.... And the bribe! “Much to tell of new inventions”... “old times’ sake”... “sincere friend”...

“Bring me the Japanese who brought this,” the Prince said: but the Japanese had gone.

However, just the *possibility* that the letter might be from Chinnery when drunk agitated the Prince’s fingers, and drew him to see the end of it.

At eleven he was at Dover; at midnight the fires of a swift little yacht in the harbour were lit and banked, and a little quick-firer from South Front Barracks mounted in her bows: at half-past one he was darkly cruising, without lights, quite close in to the French coast, noting an inconceivable host of floating things of every species massed in every roadstead, port, harbour-basin; Calais sleepless; Dunkirk flaring; each a reel of revelry mixed with military movements; no moon, the ocean’s floor smooth like a pool, the night quite calm, darksome, starless, till the comet (Tempel’s) entered it in Capricorn with horrid locks sprawling aloft, tempering the vapours a little, brindling a little the black sea in tracts of quicksilver.

At two the Prince, springing from a boat’s bow, was in Oriental territory, in the Dragon’s jaws, he all swathed in oilskins, a black mask over his nose, and with him in oilskins and masks twenty-seven fellows — all that were left of his old *Asahel* men — all armed to the teeth with revolvers, rifles, knives, hatchets, and one of them, named Commander Pilcher, the smartest of the smart, who had passed part of his youth in racing over the Iowa

prairies, had a lasso — the Prince fairly sure now of a Li Ku plot to capture him, and wishing rather to capture Li Ku Yu.

So he had come an hour before the rendezvous.

They lay in a patch of scraggy grass on a sand-hill, gazing stilly inland.

Two miles south, on their right, a shine in the night which was Dunkirk; on their left, a mile north, a hint of Rosendaël houses, darkling, uninhabited now; and between Rosendaël and them a row of seven bathing-machines on the edge of the sand before it breaks to roll into a roughness of scrubby dimes; two boats lolling beyond the surf; the yacht lolling a long way beyond, all dark; the surf purling murmurings, like a murderer's lips speaking secret things in sleep.

Half-an-hour: — and now a sound somewhere, like horses' hoofs afar; then ten minutes — and now a light, a fire, about half-a-mile inland, between the bathing-houses and Rosendaël, though it was impossible to see who lit it in its deep dune — the land all wavy here in hills and hollows; and very quickly there was the radiance of a pharos blazing there like a building on fire.

The watchers did not budge: no sound now, nor sight but the light.

But suddenly the Prince clutched Pilcher's sleeve on his right, hissing: "Pilcher! a girl! — capture at any price! if not, shoot. Follow, you five!" — and he was flying, stooping, into the sea.

For he had spied a black object drop down out of the air a little north and inland of the blaze: and as against the chance of grabbing both Oyone and the air-boat in one beautiful swoop danger was nothing.

He, then, with Pilcher and five, ran north through the sea-surf past the bathing-machines, until they had the fire behind them, then inland, with the fire on their right, flying through hollows, dropping on hill-tops, until they

were over against the blaze, and now saw south of them a crowd of about fifty yellow men in khaki.

At the same time they themselves were spied in the off-shine of the fire by a hill-top sentry, who cried out and fired; and in a second a volley flew from the group round the conflagration — without effect, the seven adventurers being three hundred yards off, and like ghosts to the firers with glare in their eyes.

The seven, then, successfully ran the blockade of the forty yards of valley across the hollow; and instantly as they attained the next hill-top the Prince's eyes distinctly descried Oyone, hardly more than twenty yards ahead, labouring frantically away up the next slope, apparently to get back to the air-boat.

And between her and him, two hundred yards south, stood a group of five — four small, one tall, whom the Prince's eyes divined to be Li Ku Yu.

These five must have been going to meet Oyone coming, when she had taken fright at the firing, and had fled back to get herself and the boat safe into the air again.

The five Orientals instantly dropped behind *cagnards* (low rocks in sandy scrub) to fire at the seven adventurers, while six of the seven dropped behind *cagnards* to engage the five, Pilcher alone of the seven pitching onward like a wind to catch Oyone, who saw and flew: and twice in that flight he fired, twice he cast the lasso, four times he missed her: for though her quarrelling frocks were quite nigh him, things were very indistinct, the light of the fire in the dune being quite local, that dune being big; and she vanished from him beyond the next hill-top.

But even as she vanished, he had the ray of an electric torch: on her, and was casting again.

This last cast caused him to fall flat forward: but the tug told that he had got something; an agony of angry cat-screams told; and soon he was over her, his handkerchief down her throat, he staring about for the air-boat.

To his amazement, he could see no air-boat; but he had *her*; and within six ticks was off northward with her kickings.

Meantime, the fifty or so by the fire were flying uphill to the support of their fighting five; but almost before they were on the hill-top, they were attacked in the rear by the Prince's reserve who had spurted inland; and as the attackers were in darkness, the attacked lit up, some twenty of the latter instantly fell.

But now a terrible sound fell upon the British ears — guns going off over the sea: and they knew that their yacht was done for.

Li Ku Yu, in fact, had posted a ship without lights a little north of Rosendaël with the object of destroying the Prince's ship and chance of escape; and this ship, on hearing the row of rifles inland, had gone to scout for and had easily found the Prince's ship, though unlit. The Prince's snip, indeed, had had a six-pounder mounted in her, but was powerless against guns of so big-mouthed a sound as those now pounding her.

Hearing which, the Prince wriggled snakelike on his belly from his *cagnard* to go to see to the air-boat — the rifle-fire pattering rapidly as pattering typewriters at present, the two main-bodies pattering, and the two small parties pattering, too: so he got to the next hill-top inland unnoticed, down the next hollow, looked about, flew about — no air-boat.

Yet he was certain that this was about the spot of its descent....

He ran on to the next hollow — to the next — still no sign of it; and no bush anywhere that could half hide it; nor could he think that Oyone had escaped in it, for, having heard her screams, he believed her captured by Pilcher.

He could not conceive how the air-boat had disappeared.

And as he ran about wondering, he heard pantings and feet in the next hollow seaward, and creeping up to peep, saw some ten yellow men running every way, evidently seeking the air-boat (despatched by Li Ku Yu to guard her), and apparently as aghast as he was at her vanishing.

Some of them presently ran up toward his hill-top to search further; he then spurted serpentlike away on the belly, first northward and then seaward; and, in passing behind his firing five, butted upon Pilcher, who was running from the sea to rejoin the five.

“You, Pilcher? Got the girl?” leapt from the Prince’s lips.

“Gagged and tied up in one of the bathing-machines!”

“Good work, Pilcher” — the Prince’s under-look dwelt on him—” but the air-boat, man!”

“Couldn’t see it anywhere!”

“Now, how odd. Well, yacht’s gone, I expect. Am running to see if anything of boats left. Kill or catch Li Ku, if you love me” — he was gone.

Whereupon Pilcher, instead of running southward to rejoin the firing five, ran on inland, and then southward, and then seaward, so as to get behind the Li Ku Yu group, keeping afar in the dark, catching sights, meantime, of horses which had been galloped to the group round Li Ku, who doubtless found the spot hot for such as he. Anyway, before Pilcher could get to their back, Li Ku and four were a-horse, two falling as they mounted, three drumming the ground south-eastward.

These three passed within twenty yards of Pilcher, who hissed to himself: “The middle’s Li Ku — *no missing!*”

Another second and the lasso sang snake-songs in air, darting, and had a pigtail within its grip, dragging a man from his saddle; but like a magical Jack-in-the-box the man was back sitting within two ticks, as if sprung back

by springs, so that he could not have let go his reins an instant; upon which Pilcher, seeing with astonishment the lasso coming back, shot sharp three bangs: but the horsemen vanished, apparently unharmed. He found the noose cut smooth as by a razor; and said bitterly to himself: "Oh, I wanted to be smart: I ought to have shot from the first."

Meantime, Li Ku Yu, in fleeing, must have felt quite at ease as to the Prince's ultimate capture, since the ship appointed to destroy the Prince's ship was now lying, visibly to the night-glass, at anchor in the offing; and, as to the two boats, the Prince could see no trace of them but some wreckage resting on the sea.

Decision had now to be quick: so quickly he shrilled a whistle of recall, and collecting his men behind the bathing-machines, which the shooting Chinese were chary of approaching, he spoke a few phrases, even as he stripped naked, and in two minutes they had widely scattered, were crawling over the sands, were in the water, swimming with revolvers, knives, hatchets in hand and teeth, far scattered and under-water, forty-three of them — sixteen from the sunk yacht, three boatmen, and the twenty-seven fighters, less three disappeared.

The ship, one of those Havre-Antwerp mail-boats, lay with a show of rouge over her funnels about three hundred yards south of the bathing-machines, a hundred yards out: and darkly, soundlessly, by roundabout routes, the swimmers drew near her.

Not a sound now on her: no sound but the shore Chinese still shooting from the dunes toward the bathing-machines, where no one was but Oyone.

And now the Prince and Pilcher are travelling up the anchor-chain like white night-flies; others are arriving fast; and that pigtail gazing over the port bow toward the dunes is drawing his last breaths here below, for suddenly a grain of sea-salt is lodged in his brain from a hatchet which

chops it, as he silently dies; and the same with a little mate pacing the bridge, and a watch-keeper leaning under a dinghy — they die quite silently as the shade of the angel of death steals upon the sleeping and the wakeful alike through the ship; only once, far down, one echo like a gun-shot sounds; then three stokers surrender; and the ship is English.

Now a boat was rowed shoreward for the clothes in the bathing-machines, and for Oyone; the bodies were dropped into the sea; the dunes were sprinkled for fun with shell from two four-inch guns; steam hurriedly made; and the ship steered for English land, not wishing to have a Japanese battleship on her back.

“But the air-boat!” said the Prince half-way home. “*Where* was it? *Ask*, Pilcher — see what she says.”

So Pilcher, grinning, went down to Oyone lying on crimson cabin-cushions, the Prince hanging behind at the door; and said Pilcher: “You may just as well mention what became of the air-boat.”

She lay with her face buried; the spasmodic shivering of the ship at the screws shook her body; but she lifted herself a little to utter with a sullen sideward eye: “It is in one of those valleys not far from the fire. If you go back, you will find it.”

“No, we won’t go back,” remarked Pilcher.

Suddenly she was upright like a squirrel twisting, with: “Is this Your Royal Highness’s promise to an unfortunate girl?”

The Prince had uttered not one syllable to her, nor answered now, but a lavish blush bathed his face.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HOARD OF GOLD



BUT THE QUESTION now was: where to lock away Oyone?

These were days of scanty house-room, and of a care for half-pence among Kings. Sandringham, first closed, had then been handed over, half to the Imperial Family of Russia, half to the Austrian Emperor's throng. England was rich in crowned heads: one crowd herding at Windsor — Servia. Montenegro, Greece, Bavaria, Spain — while Italy, Norway, Denmark made merry at Osborne — let us not pry into their privy purses. The German Emperor held Balmoral, though the Princess Elizabeth, by a kind of right now, bided at Buckingham Palace: for she, when death was in men's minds, meditated still on marriage, and, by a steady activity of negotiation and a sending of telegrams, had now her Imperial parent's seal to her espousal to the Prince of Wales, and had kissed her ring like Kitty in a lane. The Prince, too, now lived at Buckingham Palace.

Our Civil List, meantime, had undergone much modification. The King, for one, had suggested a considerable reduction of his income, and had insisted. For no seer was needed to see that the break-up was so near, that it would quickly be a question of finding the shilling to pay the fighter. Treasury Bonds were light as air, Consols a vain thing, credit, public, private, dead — this *before* the irruption; *after* the European stampede into Britain, every day beheld civilisation more ailing, every midnight the

passions of ten million men dealt her an added deathblow. Shops, mansions, banks were pillaged; a cracking of pistol-shots rang in the land.

In which case, nothing was left to be taxed but land; and Sir Bostock Henry, the Chancellor, suggested in his budget a 2s. 4½d. tax.

To this, however, the “owners” of England — some 2000 men — said in their hearts “No.”

They made no outcry, as previously when taxed by half-pennies; now they were in earnest, and quietly said “No.”

And having, of course, seen what was coming, they had leagued themselves into an essentially secret Landowners’ Protection League. So — that was four days after the capture of Oyone — they sent ambassadors to Li Ku Yu.

They were perfectly aware that, if the Prince of Wales managed to crush Li Ku Yu at sea, he would then be virtually Dictator of England; they were fairly certain that he would then take what at that date they still quite seriously called “their” land from them; and since the land-tax was to be spent in the repair of ships to fight Li Ku Yu, this gave a basis for negotiation: they sent ambassadors.

It was late in the night, the Prince was in his laboratory, transferred to Buckingham Palace — a room looking on the park — when his assistant, Sturge, handed him a letter come “by hand” from the Continent:

“To His Royal Highness, Prince Edward of Wales, The First, The Last. [Meaning “first and last “ son of his mother.]

“Let the Prince of Wales be aware that the landowners of Britain, having made overtures to Li Ku Yu, are in negotiation. Terms: Li Ku Yu to give guarantees as to their estates; they to refuse to pay tax.

“Li Ku Yu needs no aid from traitors: but does not reject their offers, having reasons for wishing to cheat them.

“From a Younger Brother to the Prince.”

Now, the passions of the Prince of Wales were volcanic: so away now he dashed the letter, violently enraged, and went ranging, light-footedly dodging among obstacles, just shaving bench-corners, saying: “No more dukes — no more lords — they’ve done it now — they’ve dug their own graves — no dukes — no crowd of little clown-kings...” but in the midst suddenly paused, pshawed, thought, “one mustn’t be incensed at lower types of life,” and now picked up the letter to pry at the writing, asking himself: “From him?” muttering, “*Decent*,” for some bits of it looked as if Li Ku Yu had designed to disguise his writing, but had been impatient of the pains.

He was still studying it, when Lord Percy Burnett — who had been sent to search for Eulalia’s remains, and had an interview for that hour — was announced. He entered looking very depressed, so that the Prince said at once: “Bad news; sit down; stab it in straight — used to it.”

“Only this,” said Lord Percy with a stir of the hand: “I have been a traitor.”

Silence.

“You in it, too?” the Prince cried out—” Oh, yes, I know all about it! — a Sky-Blue negotiation.”

“I came back from the Continent this morning, I and — someone.”

“*You*, Percy? A friend of mine? A Brockweir boy?” — the Prince was frowning piercingly.

“That is the fact. I am sorry. I thought I’d tell you, before—” he paused, staring at the ground with an expression of great depression.

“Seen Sky-Blue?”

“Yes.”

“But I can’t believe my ears!” — with passion—” I could forgive the rest! — but you, a cultivated intellect—”

“Teddy—”

“Teddy me no Teddy!”

Lord Percy bowed. “I was going to say, Sir — you speak of ‘a cultivated intellect,’ but possibly you do not quite fully realise the conditions. A boy of my caste may have quite strong impulses toward nobility of living, but, born into a hopelessly false position, what chance has he? If he can think a little, he pretty quickly realises that he is not an Englishman, but a true foreigner, as every parasite is a foreigner to the organism it fastens on — without a country — living on England, but never *in* England, having no social function, belonging to a mob of rent-pocketers, who only care for England for what they can get out of her, and are quite ready to throw England to the dogs the instant this jumps with what they imagine to be their self-interest — pure Jews, only, with their bad heredity, lacking the brains of Jews. What is a poor boy, so handicapped, to do? He remarks that his caste, living by a nefarious trade, must necessarily be men of a muddy conscience, and though, theoretically, a boy might have the mental strength to say, ‘Oh, this isn’t good enough, I’ll chuck the rent, and start on the square,’ — does he ever? Tolstoy did, but not by mental strength, but by quixotism of temperament. In the case of a sane boy, by the time he might have the sense to say that, he is already vitiated by his environment, his ideals dying or dead, his moral sense compromised. Thenceforth he is hopelessly in it — only one remedy, a bullet. And it’s not much good if his head’s ‘cultivated’ when the rest of him is stuck in mud.”

“Well, but I know,” said the Prince stepping petulantly about; “there’s a saying that ‘to understand is to pardon ‘; and, of course, I understand; and yet I can’t pardon. Really, you men have ‘done evil as you could’ — for

centuries; and many men have sighed and died of you. And for what? If twenty million men live in bliss at the expense of twenty millions in misery, that mayn't be very 'just,' but I think there's much to be said for it; or if two thousand live in bliss at the expense of forty millions — or if one single man live in bliss — J think there's something to be said for it. But you men! You are as unacquainted with gladness of heart in your muggy comfort as the multitudes who moan under you, scarcely a little less ignorant, vulgar and crass yourselves than the classes you drag through ignorance, crassness and vulgarity. Wouldn't men blessed with one drop of generous blood, seeing this, have said long ago, 'No, let's throw it up, the game's not hall worth the candle'? But not you cowardly clowns: never, never, any generous temperature, or pretence of being gentlemen. Let twenty million women and children sink with bubbling shrieks within reach of your ear, if *you* but float with your clown-countess in your loathsome boat, then you can shower tips all round upon your bishop-boatmen, to keep men's mouths from shouting the shame of your meanness. Lately there has been a little light in the world round you: but you have deliberately elected to remain eighteenth-century barbarians. The sun is one of the stars of a constellation, and you persist in thinking that the universe ends five miles up where the sky is. Well, you've got me against you now, if we don't all go under. I have been dull in country-houses, hoping to influence you, and been ill of *ennui* among you at race-meetings — no more, by God. You can't influence wood but with an axe. You may mention it — it's no secret. And it won't be any good for anybody to come begging me for any money, because I won't give any."

"Quite so, Sir: though that may be embittering" — with an under-glance.

"Oh, you're a worthless lot," said the Prince, with a laugh: "embittering? If you shoot at me, you're sure to miss; if you stab at me, you probably

don't know that the heart of mammals is on the left, and you'll stab on the right. Embittering? I should like to catch myself being affrighted at such blind mice."

"I hardly meant any threat, Sir — only to suggest some clemency. They — we — cherish the superstition that a little of the greatness of England is due to us—"

"The blindlings! — as though the littlest mouse of good could come out of a mountain of ignominy. What *right* have you to cherish superstitions? If you have never peeped into a history-book yourselves, ask somebody in the streets whether it is not in spite of the hissings and grins of you varlets that England is not still a sixteenth-century land? Inch by inch against you she has had to battle her bitter way; against every blessing to men you have darted to arms; every noble thing has found in you a foe, a delay, and a diluter. I say, cursed is the name of men of that sort; you're a worthless lot; blessed above men be the man who exterminates you."

"Well, so I say, too, Sir.... I only hope you do not include the Throne in the proposed overthrow."

"On the contrary, I support the Throne.... Because I'm a Prince, of course. Think that?"

"No, Sir, I do not think that."

"Like a publican who is theoretically in favour of public-houses, because *he* is a publican — what? Or a King who thinks well of monarchy, because *son métier à est d'être roi*? I am unable to conceive a baser being, or to believe that God ever gave birth to a dirtier dog. So you are right there — that's not why I support the Throne. Not that I support it *much*; but — it has something of a function, is pretty and historic, costs the country nothing — half-a-million — that is, *nothing*. To abolish it would cost far more energy than the abolition was worth! And there's a difference between one king,

and two thousand kings, isn't there? Between one pound and two thousand pounds? Between one fire in a room which warms you, and two thousand which scorch you to ashes? Besides, there's this to be said for Monarchy, that any day a monarch may be born with light and eyes; and how splendid then the room to his elbow that the Throne will lend him! The same thing is true of aristocracy; but, then, the aristocrat's uneasy consciousness of unclean hands and of a false position keeps him from being ever anything much more than a rent-collector. Hence every class has produced great-like men, and quite two or three Kings have seen something new a little, done something a little memorable; but never one of you men, never, never one."

"I perfectly see, Sir," said Lord Percy, rising. "I wished, Sir, to let you know that there is a negotiation with Li Ku Yu, and that I am in it, You perceive, Sir, that I first betray the country I live on, and then I betray my confederates. I will say — good-night, Sir."

The Prince did not answer. The other passed through the doorway.

But as he vanished, the Prince dashed after, caught him in a passage, with, "I am willing to make it up, Percy."

Lord Percy bowed. "Your Royal Highness is very gracious."

"Rot. A man can do no more than repent. Shake hands!"

Their hands wrung together, and they parted.

But two hours later Lord Percy Burnett blew out his brains in a chamber in St James's Street; so that in a new embassy to the Continent on the next day another took his place.

Now, it appears that at this time Li Ku Yu felt some need of treasure; and Oyone had been captured just when about to lead him to the Six Millions. It was not, therefore, only on account of the air-boat (which had vanished as strangely from him as from the Prince), that he was eager to get Oyone free: for he needed the Six Millions for the knocking together of the

inconceivable fleet of junks and barges soon to swarm the sea toward England. Hence, he (a born bargainer) said to the Landowners' League ambassadors: "You set me first free a girl named Oyone, and then we may come to terms."

But that was the Sphinx's riddle! no one having any notion where the Prince had put Oyone.

However, the handsome young Marquis of Tullibardine, who had at one time rather drawn the eye of the Princess Elizabeth, and was intimate with her, had an idea: and he, approaching the Princess, suggested that since this Oyone was said to be so beautiful, that might be rather a desirable-thing if she was set free from being the prisoner of a young Prince.

Now, it so happened that Oyone was in all the Princess Elizabeth's thoughts — ever since Oyone had made the statement that the Prince was "*married*" to Eulalia: for though the Princess could scarce believe that the Prince, if married, would have engaged himself to her, the mere statement was a seed of unease in her. She would not, then, have wept to be told that Eulalia was in heaven, and often wondered how Oyone was getting on.

Tullibardine, therefore, found her ears open. She whispered that she would try to find out where Oyone was kept; and thenceforth set herself to pry upon the Prince's steps.

One night when the Royal Family were *chez eux* after dinner, a card was handed to the Prince with the name of Commander Pilcher; and just then the Princess Elizabeth found occasion to step out before the Prince could.

She did not advance far; saw the Prince enter an apartment to Pilcher; and since in Courts the luck of the ear is indigenous, she luckily, *en passant*, could hear the Prince say: "I want you, Pilcher, to have one more try with this Oyone: I'll be with you in two minutes."

On which the Princess tripped back to the *salon*, muttered something to the Queen, was speedily out again, and then, her head in a wrap, was out of the palace, she and another looking both ways out of a cab in Constitution Hill.

She saw Pilcher and the Prince pass from the Park Gate in a brougham, and she followed slowly through the thronged thoroughfares — to “Ning Shou Kung.”

For the Prince had, without ceremony, turned out the Chinese occupants of “Ning Shou Kung,” given the gate a fresh lock, installed three retainers, and thrown Oyone into the room where he had moaned.

So now Pilcher sat on the stool where she had used to sit sewing before the hole in the door, while the Prince hung near, unseen, listening; and Pilcher renewed the offer — liberty within one week, if she would reveal in what kind of hiding-place she had contrived to secrete the air-boat.

Soon a voice spoke out of the gloom within, glum, low, slow, as if in soliloquy: “I am happy here. I no longer long for the insect’s wing of liberty. The world is vanity and wrapping-paper. I trample under my feet its sweets and its pomps that merely lead mortals into evil paths. My heart is changed and white as a virgin’s, and my eyes turn themselves toward Heaven. Here a Holy Sorrow is my paramour, and I am the compliant wife of Calamity. For nothing is good but to be good, and there is no carousing but in renouncing. I, for my part, envelop Pensiveness with my arms, I smother Moodiness with my kisses—”

“But the air-boat,” suggested Pilcher.

Now she was sharp! “I have told you that the Chinese have the air-boat! The instant I alighted Li Ku Yu sent men to take her—”

“No; not true,” said Pilcher, getting up; and he and the Prince went away, Suddenly, in twenty minutes more, the Princess Elizabeth was with her; and

Oyone's heart started.

The three retainers — two men and a woman — had duly said, "Against orders," but the Princess had said, "I just wish to peep — the Prince needn't know," with an intimate manner; and their toadyism and her cajolery had readily opened her way to Oyone.

Oyone was like an escaped canary in the room, exclaiming: — Now I shall be free! free! I expected you, and you did not come!"

The Princess pressed a button in a bracelet, and produced a ray. "You must see that *I* daren't let you out. But there are others who may. We will see in time."

"*Time?* Not to-night?"

"No."

Oyone wrung her hands, asking at once: "Have you found out now that he is married to Eulalia Bayley?"

"That is nonsense. The Prince of Wales is definitely affianced to me."

"Then, he may think her dead! I told him in bragging, for I was angry-mad, that I had killed her, and — possibly — he thinks her dead. But she is quite alive in the East End! and he any moment may discover it, for she has in her possession an object which the police are eagerly seeking for for him — a black box, that he'd give his life to get—"

"What is in this box?"

"It is a kind of infernal machine," said Oyone, chary of mentioning the Redlike Ray: "let me free this night! Then I will get it, and he won't find her, even if she keeps alive, otherwise he must; and it is certain that they are married — *she* bragged of it — *he* admitted it — only there is some quarrel between them—"

Elizabeth was white. "Is this box her property?" she asked.

"No, it is mine."

“Then, I will get it for you.”

Oyone moaned; but then said: “Do so, then. But I am not sure that she has it — I saw her posting a parcel like it; but, if she has it, remember it is dangerous! it will blow Your Imperial Highness to pieces the size of a fly’s feet, if you handle it wrongly, or keep it without knowing its moods. So, will you bury it at once, to give to me — ?”

“And if it blows me into flies’ feet when I touch it?” suggested the Princess.

“Not if you hold it carefully by the sides.”

When they had discussed it a long time, Elizabeth set off for the East End with Eulalia’s address, to fumble through the drizzle of a dismal London blinking dully upon its muddled multitudes through half the old number of lamps, it being now about nine in the night.

But, once in the slum, Eulalia’s abode was obvious, for there on a pane was a square of paper pasted to say in three languages: “A Skilled Nurse Lives Here.”

And the door was open; a wondering woman told her “third floor back; she may be in, or she mayn’t”; and the Princess picked her way through swarms of children and sinister visages, thinking: “What a strange place!” At Eulalia’s door she listened, could hear nothing, rapped, no answer, passed in, and rayed a beam from her bracelet upon a wee oasis of daintiness within this wilderness — the wee bed lily-white, the Prince within a silver frame on the petty mantelpiece, a canary, and there on a chair a parcel which must be “the box.”

She tore the already torn wrapping to see that it was “black”; but then, on seeing, had a throe of fright....

If she held it “carefully by the sides,” it would be well: but which were “the sides”? The box was a cube! “Oh, no,” she breathed, and stood

suspended near the door. Just then, for the third time in two minutes, she heard steps, for the third time fled out, and this time it was Eulalia.

They passed each other swiftly on the rickety stair, where it was not so dim but that Eulalia was aware with some amazement of fairy raiment in Tatter-land; had a fresh surprise in finding her door open; and, on lighting her lamp, a fresh surprise in spying the wrapping of the box more torn than before.

“This is funny!” she went, with a laugh.

And as that wrapping was no good any more for the post, she now tore it off, posited the box on the oilskin of her little table, and sat before it, for the first time wondering what was in the box — why it had been buried — and was of importance to “Taska.”

It looked like a kodak; there was a cap to it; if she moved that, perhaps she could see within....

But there was a paper pasted above the cap, and writing under the grime, which, when she held the lamp quite near, seemed to say: “Do Not Touch...”

Which was tempting to one’s curiosity. For who can help touching, when mysteriously told “*Not Touch*” like that? Eve touched, and suffered touching. No doubt there was money in it....

It was this probability that held her from touching when on the point of touching: for she had it in trust from the dead. “Better not,” she said at last.

She then laid out her shopping — bacon, cheese, and loaf — bacon no longer what it had been, nor bread, nor she any longer the fanciful Sappho, fanning the atmosphere with volleys of sighs, of her opulent times, spare diet having dispirited the love-wine in her vitals.

She was very poor: not that she lacked patients, for she was constantly occupied, but her patients did not pay. Her mother or sister had never answered her; and butter had become a Sunday luxury.

However, to the rich indigence is a spree, and she was just about to be infinitely rich.

For it chanced that she had been summoned to nurse a certain nut-brown young sailor named “Buddo,” a Berkshire boy, stabbed in a Commercial Street affray: which “Buddo” had conceived for her a passion, half amorous, half idolatrous: and the point was, that having lived five years at Shanghai, Buddo was a Chinaman among other things.

So when she had told him that she had a vast mass of gold in France, but the Chinese would have it now, his answer had been: “They won’t, miss: I could get it for you as sweet as kissing your hand.”

His plan was to go with a couple of mates in a large sail-barge— “get one for sixpence now,” he said — to a solitary spot on the French coast, he to land in Chinese disguise, the others to come home, and go back for him.

He would need some horses and carts, but he reckoned that £45 would see him through, if she could get it. The Chinese were pretty deep, but he an inch deeper still, could speak Chinese better than they, and it could be worked as sweet as a nut.

In going to her to show himself as a pigtail, he had been twice mobbed on the way.

Eulalia had then gone late in the night to Sir Robert Barrington to lay the plot before him; and, finding him suddenly aged ten years, let her head rest on his shoulder where he drew it.

“Will the Chinese be getting into England?” she breathed to him.

His forehead dropped. “Dear, I can see nothing to prevent it. The Prince of Wales is a great captain of ships, but cannot create ships. It is a question whether some even of those we have will be available: for while the Chinese preparations are near completion, we have an aristocracy refusing to be taxed—”

“Yes! I have wondered. Do these men by chance call themselves Englishmen?”

“They even *think* themselves Englishmen — at least, the more weak-headed among them. But, as things are, there is scarcely any machinery available against their combined resistance; the regunning of the *Donnernde* has had to be abandoned; and the Prince has enough to do to—”

“Yet he finds time to get engaged!”

“Yes. And here — frankly — Your Royal Highness is doing wrong. I do entreat you, dear, to release me immediately from this extremely difficult position. Not two hours since the Prince was with me — referred to your death — and for me to stand dumb and see him—”

“I *cannot* understand how he can think me dead, whatever this Oyone may have told him, considering that, just before, he heard me call him — answered me—”

“Hallucination! Boo-boo! And he reasons that, if it had been really you,’ it would have been you who released him. But it was the Princess Elizabeth, a young lady, I assure you, of quite superhuman acumen — in the Queen’s eyes at least. Hence he, in gratitude to her — to please the Queen—”

“Is the Queen at all times quite all-wise? He will hate this girl. And though Her Majesty has been pleased to speak of me as a miserable little woman—”

“Never mind *that*! One more glass? Yes?” — he had noted with passionate pain the *soupçon* of avarice with which she drank sherry now, and ate cake; insisted upon another glass; and then proceeded to discuss again the details of the “Buddo” Six Millions scheme, of which his judgment approved, though he prophesied that the whole hoard would hardly come to her hand. But to this she answered: “I think it will, every grain, if any comes: for I trust my rough Buddo not less than I would an

angel. There are people essentially excellent — sincere, competent, proud —”

Sir Robert had bowed, with “That is very true, Your Royal Highness”; and he had lent her £45 for the adventure.

At that date of the Princess Elizabeth’s visit to the slum, the hoard was slowly moving over the Dover road in four old dust-carts for London....

They arrived before the house in the slum five days later when Eulalia was out, and there stood the faithful “Buddo,” wiping his perspiration — for two hours amid crowds of people who, had they conceived the least suspicion of what lay beneath those pieces of sail-cloth, would certainly have made short work of Germany’s Reichskriegsschatz.

Then came Eulalia, and, seeing, leapt in a glee to buss her Buddo on both brown cheeks; gave one greedy little peep beneath a tip of sail-cloth; and then, taking a letter from her pocket, said, “Now, you have to take it straight, with this letter, to Buckingham Palace: and remember this, whoever wants to know about the sender, you know nothing whatever.”

And “Buddo,” after one stare of amaze, cried out: “Right you are!” and rolled to a horse’s head to obey.

Tins grotesque procession of carts, on arriving before Buckingham Palace gates at three in the afternoon, was refused admittance. But the letter bored and bored a way to Her Majesty’s hand:

“To Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen.

“Your Majesty, I am venturing to present to the service of the country in its need (through Your Majesty’s most gracious hands) the German Six Millions, winch I lately discovered in France.

“Your Majesty’s loyal subject,

“AN IRISHWOMAN.”

The letter fell of its own weight out of Her Majesty's hand.

“*Well!*” her lips breathed; then, “listen to this” — she read out the letter — “or is it some hoax?”

“The carts are said to be before the palace, Ma'am,” answered a lady.

“Fly! Let the Prince know...”

She herself made haste, and the carts soon now found an entrée to the Quadrangle, to remain there for hours, the King, the Court, Ministers and everyone coming to visit and revisit them, picking up the bars, some of them bent and chipped from the bombing, “Buddo” still there, waiting for his strings of horses, scratching his pate in a pretence of idiocy at the hosts of questions poured upon him, everyone on the heights of delight, save Elizabeth, in whose upper lip was something white and spiteful, for this was German *Gut*, with “Reichskriegsschatz” stamped on it.

Six millions then was six hundred millions, and when someone said: “Who can have sent it? What boundless bounty!” the Princess was seen to smile omnisciently, secretly; and now someone asked someone: “Is it a German Princess who has presented this German treasure to Britain?” For it was fashionable at Court to discover ever deeper depths and meanings in the Princess.

Now, the Prince of Wales was aware (from Oyone) that Eulalia had known where the hoard had lain, and when he heard that the gift was from “An Irishwoman,” some half of a half of a something moved in the vague depths of him, and he said: “Show me this letter.”

The Queen was standing there by the carts with him, so was Elizabeth, when his eyes fell on the letter, and both noticed him going slowly pale, paler, to that paleness of the gold before them. For, though Eulalia had very carefully disguised the writing, she had a fantastic manner of making Her

M's which emerged like murder; and he knew that she liked to call herself "Irish."...

To the Queen his pallor was all a mystery; but Elizabeth, seeing it, felt the world whirl away beneath her feet, with a feeling in her: "It comes from that girl... he thought her dead... and they are really married...."

But the Prince was left in utter doubt. When he took "Buddo" away to cross-examine, to tempt, to coax, to command him, Buddo proved even more ingeniously foolish than before: could tell nothing whatever of the lady, save that she was an elderly lady.

But when the Prince sent post-haste for Sir Robert Barrington to tell of it, he noted with a steady under-look of suspicion how the baronet's palm slowly rose toward his forehead, and thought: "He knows something...."

And felt something! for three days later the Queen received this confidential letter from the baronet:

"In venturing to pen this to Your Majesty, I commit something akin to a breach of trust. But, truth to tell, I am unable any longer to bear the strain of refraining from mentioning to Your Majesty the fact that I have reason to believe that the lady who has presented the Six Millions to the nation is living in want on a third-floor of that noisome whirlpool which Whitechapel now is.... Her address is 19 Chapel Street..."

This made Her Majesty moan; and she said: "Oh, this day I go myself to that woman...."

By this time the discovery of the Six Millions, and its presentation to the nation by a woman, was being bellowed by the papers, most of which continued to be published in shortened form; and since that unknown "Irishwoman" was the wonder and joy of the nation, which had lately raged at the fiasco of the Budget and the action of the aristocracy, it was quite in

harmony with the mood of the moment that Her Majesty should decide to go herself to that idolised donor.

Yet she had a sense of disappointment at Sir Robert's letter: for an innuendo had worked its way to her — through all the Court — into the papers — that the real secret donor was a certain wonder-working Princess, whose detective acumen had already been proved in the discovery of the Prince's prison; the whisper was now all about the Court; subtle reasons were discovered by the subtle ones for the Princess signing herself "Irishwoman," not "Englishwoman"; the quick-eyed ones whispered that they had caught knowing looks passing between her and "Buddo"; the Princess had a smile of Isis, and, denying, did not deny it. Hence Her Majesty's sense of disappointment.

And the Princess got a scare on the day of Sir Robert's letter, when whispered by a maid-of-honour that Her Majesty was preparing to go herself to the giver!

"And what is this giver's address?" the Princess asked. "It is 19 Chapel Street, East."

Now she knew that Eulalia was the giver, and instantly was desperate.

"Well, I suppose I must speak out a little," she now said, "for I can't, after all, see the Queen flying off to Whitechapel for nothing. You, Lady Julia, whisper quickly to Her Majesty that you heard me say that I don't think her acumen here quite so keen as usual. Point out that Sir Robert Barrington must have got some false information somehow, and give Her Majesty this proof of it: that the giver can't be 'living in want' when, as Her Majesty knows, one whole bar of the gold has been taken out — over £8000. The giver can't be 'in want': whisper it, Lady Julia, to Her Majesty: but please do not whisper whom *you* imagine the giver is, for I know well whom you imagine."

Now, one complete bar of the gold had, really, been found missing — taken by Oyone that evening when Eulalia had seen Oyone in the wood. So that day Her Majesty, after all, made no descent upon Whitechapel; and that night it was generally known among the sager heads of the Court that it was the witch-Princess who was the donor: on hearing which that evening in the reel and rage of his preoccupation the Prince of Wales struck his forehead.

CHAPTER XX

THE SEA AND THE AIR



A PREOCCUPATION THAT was “a rage”: for the next day was necessarily a day of battle, and it was a case of the telephone, the telegraph, and quick spinning-round.

Britain, meantime, and her added population, saw in the darkness hardly any ray; perhaps the Prince himself saw none.

Of forty-three super-Dreadnoughts docked to be overhauled, twenty-three only were ready, ten American just come, three Brazilian, two Argentine, one Austrian, three Spanish; beside which, a tangle of Continental small-fry thronged Portsmouth Harbour, Swedish, Netherlands, German, French, Russian, together with five great greyhounds armed with six-inchers; these, and mosquitoes, were what white man had left to show.

On the other hand, it was known that fifty-five Japanese and Chinese, all over 16,000 tons, were patrolling the French coast from Havre to Calais; and that that day a forward movement of yellow man was due.

Twenty-five thousand red-coats massed upon the south coast — the guns of Dover — stood ready to make a row; and most Englishmen had quietly laid by some gun, or dub, or old sword, to die game with — wind against the sea-drift.

Leaden, then, in that day were the spirits of men. The circumstance that the earth was to traverse Tempel’s comet in three nights’ time, though there was said to be no kind of peril in the meeting, seems to have deepened the

blackness of humanity's bile. Some black rain that fell during a period of midday gloom (due to fog), sent streams of people about the Italian Quarter careering with piercing screams through the streets, screaming "God's comet is upon us!" All along the edges of pavements the sight of lines of men was to be seen, men seated with their heads bent to their knees, done for, dumbly waiting. During which, a certain deranged curate rapidly became a known personage, journeying the streets in surplice and hood, preaching with his finger the finish of things. And Life began to be a stagnant thing, and to gangrene in that dark.

It was, then, with hearts draped in crape that men attempted to conduct services in churches at that afternoon hour of the navy's weighing; and it was in such spirits that the Prince himself left Spithead with his following of ships, manned mainly by the nucleus crews of old Fourth Division ships, by the residues of the Royal Fleet Reserve marine ratings, and by the Volunteer Reserve, consisting, this last, of men of the middle classes.

In a conference with captains and admirals the Prince had said: "Let us go and see: a sailors' grave is the sea; and it is sweeter to be eaten by a fish than by a worm."

So they set out: and, as if destiny intended that as little loss as possible should attend the landing of the millions of yellow men, a milky mist dimmed the sea.

They moved, then, close in single line ahead, pouring smokes sternwards which searchlights burning beneath the controls rolled in lurid beams, the ships' shapes fretted round with sprays — a spectral procession to the Prince looking poopwards from the *Colossus* bridge, they seeming as broad as they were long, dominant masses of majesty moving mutely to some mysterious deed or doom in the mood of some mysterious dream.

In succession a motor-pinnace, a hydroplane, and a destroyer came hastily in with news that the forefront of a floating locust-host was already four or five miles from the French coast, from St Valéry to Dunkirk, and that the Oriental navy was at present pacing the sea with its rear in the longitude of Hastings, and its front on Pevensey.

Then a mysterious wireless was received from a tiny cruiser-scout that the enemy were more numerous by five Dreadnoughts than had been estimated — a crushing message, incredible, until it was suggested that they might be the ships once hypocritically proffered to German purchase, and then asserted to be wrecked.

Then arrived the wireless that at the back of the enemy's line of battle was a 2000-ton yacht flying the Dragon-flag, to which the enemy's Admiral Commanding had been called to a conference — she probably bearing Li Ku Yu.

The floating host in junks, flats, and barges were said to be moving very slowly on, most with the help of oars, some with an elementary paddle-wheel astern in the fashion of Rouen river-barges. A ration of some green mess was being given out, and peals of laughter screaming across the sea from some of the craft.

A shadowy shape or two soon after this began to show ahead, the Prince at that moment up a control, gazing through marine glasses. His lips muttered. He span to order nine knots, and was glass-gazing again.

Immediately afterwards the shadows ahead vanished.

Now, it was evident that the enemy had no reason to be eager for an engagement. The few troops and coast-guns ranged against the locust-host, the few scores of submersibles lurking inshore, could not exclude the innumerable: so that, if the yellow fleet merely interposed itself between the white fleet and the locust-host until the landing should be accomplished, it

had no other military object. Hence when the shadows vanished, the supposition that they shrank from a pitched battle was established.

So did the white fleet shrink: for even if the whole yellow fleet was sunk at the expense of the destruction of the white, nothing was gained: the locust-host would land.

Destruction, then, somehow, for life, but not mutual destruction, was the white man's captain's ticket; and destruction, somehow, for fun, but not mutual destruction was Li Ku Yu's ticket. They shunned each other.

And as the shadows vanished in mist the Prince had his plan. A hiss of "the mist!" was on his breath now. It was a white mist, for white men. When he span round, there was that in his eyes which was startling, and he looked taller. From nine knots he ordered five, and dropped down the tripod-steps.

At about the same time, however, Li Ku Yu, fourteen miles eastward, was in a yacht's crow's-nest, watching the execution by his Admiral of a stroke of strategy which he had inspired; and he, too, dropped his spy-glass from eyes that had lights of guile and triumph in them — he, too, in a glee at the mist, that from minute to minute thickened. It was a white mist, like white men dead.

As for the Prince, astern of his file of titans came an array of eighty-three small-craft of every sort, British and foreign, old ram-monitors, sloops, torpedo-gunboats, old Scotch coastguards, unarmoured cruisers, motherships, R.N. Reserve Merchant-cruisers, destroyers, torpilleurs, following for following's sake: all which by trumpet call running down nineteen miles of ocean he got rapidly mobilised into a stationary line abreast lying east-and-west, mixing with them twenty-five picket-boats fitted with dropping-gear for 14-inch torpedoes, and thirty-two hydroplanes with hundred-pound bombs; and he steamed thence leaving them heaving in

serried series on the swell which gently heaved, secreted in haze, teeming with many hundreds of torpedoes, prepared for whoever might come rushing that way — prepared in perishing to perish amid a tremor of western Europe.

They were not, indeed, destined so to do, and end: for, far eastward, the trap which the Prince laid had been laid for *him* — still more effectively perhaps: but, if it had happened so, maybe they would have left a memory among men.

The Flag-ship signalled eighteen knots, her bow now south-east.

When next in contact with the enemy an hour later, the white ships were steaming west upon the yellow ships which were steaming east, both in single column line ahead, The Colossus, still at the head of her line, opened upon the shadow which the Ibuki was two miles away: opened in ghostly gong-shouts at which the white fog shivered; and a gun of the Ibuki's forward 12-inch battery cracked. But she did not answer; put her helm hard to starboard, and immediately was the rearward of a line flying under forced draught westward.

On which the Prince, like an omnipresent spirit flitting and filling the *Colossus* conning-tower, said to himself: "It isn't fighting they're after! I have them dead — Unless—" he sent his eyes out over the sea.

At that instant he was entering a region of sea where a twelve-mile line of submersibles lay submerged, to end him in one belch.

They did not depend upon periscopes to see, lest they should torpedo their own fleet, but had out telephone-buoys, awaiting a megaphone signal when the moment of action should come, the buoys being just awash — with slight chance that the white line-of-battle should spy them through the hazy air five hundred yards to starboard.

Br. small-fry.

• • • • •

Subs. 12 miles.

• • • • •

ooooooo
Jap. 10 miles.

ooooooo
Br. 9 miles.

But in one of the submarines near the east end of the series the unforeseen was being transacted — a big boat of 800 tons with a 2000-mile surface-range, whose name had once been “E3” she having been British. She had once sunk, been resurrected, captured by the Japanese in the East; and something extraordinary that had happened in respect of her in a raid upon Melbourne Harbour had once caused her to be called “haunted.”

At any rate, the fog that day of battle apparently gave up all its ghosts to go into this boat. Five minutes after her sinking in the waiting line an accident had happened — the sea beginning to pour into the engine-room by the ventilation-mast valve — unaccountably! — the indicator pointing to the “shut” position.

This had been remedied — the stern ballast-tank half emptied, the inflow more than kept down by the bilge-pump — and the crew, under strict orders not to emerge to the surface, retreated into the midships section after closing the bulkhead.

But now they were shattered men all — from commander to artificer, the very spirit of panic rattling their teeth, blanching their cheeks. They could not speak — sat astare, waiting for what would happen next there in the lap of the sea.

Nothing happened — for five and twenty minutes: but then with wildhearts they were aware of vapours pouring, fumes of chloride; and now they were flying about like lunatics immured in a fire.

It is believed that the heeling may have upset acids in the accumulators, causing short-circuiting and the smouldering of vulcanite fittings; anyway, the lieutenant, himself a ghost, gave the order of retreat into the fourth (torpedo) section, determined not to emerge to the surface: and this was done.

But they had not been in there six minutes by the clock when, like a flock of mice, their hairs on end, they were fleeing out in a squealing squeeze; and now, wildly silent, but decided, they took matters into their own hands: and before long the boat was bobbing up to the top.

The Prince from the *Colossus* saw them madly springing from her at random into the sea about three points on his starboard bow.

Steering a point nearer to starboard, he spied a little of the line of telephone-buoys — with a baleful harsh heart which danced in him. And, looking now for it, his eyes descried, or divined, north of the buoys the shadow of the shadow of a ship — waiting to give the megaphone signal to the submarines.

He then pricked off four points to port. So did the enemy. And he pursued their rearmost ship two miles westward of the west end of the submarines; but in his attempt to push them still farther upon his trap, they turned upon him, and now heavy battle began — their aim being to turn *him* back upon *their* trap.

For fifteen minutes he showed fight, both lines breaking up to present broadsides in a hotch-potch of horrible brawling at hardly three thousand yards between near ships, he washing himself in hundreds of tons of sudden thunderings like ducks fluttering in puddle, for he loved the dreadful drench, watching the *Ibuki* cock her poop up a little more each moment, until she stood bow downward, and now her bowels rumbled with tumbling burn-lumber like Stromboli across the waters solemnly, and she sank; and

the *Kashima* not far; and his own foremast with all its tackle lashed the water.

Now he fled east-by-south, leaving his *Rio de Janeiro*, his *Odin*, his *Orion* behind....

During this fighting, he had ordered twelve of his rear invisible ships to proceed north of the submarine row by its east end, in order to blow out of the water quickly, at withering close-quarters, before the hubbub of the main battle should lull, whatever enemy-ships were waiting there to give the megaphone signal to the submarines. And this had been duly done within the dim rooms of the mist — four of the enemy and five of the twelve being now foundering wrecks.

He, for his part, after reforming his line, started at his fullest speed east-by-south, with the yellow fleet in his wake.

And when the *Colossus*, now the rearmost of her line, was three miles east of the east end of the submarine row, he again turned west; engaged one enemy vessel in an almost momentary gush of gunshot; again threw their line westward; and they went leading him, always with a northward leaning, toward the submarine row.

In their former passage across the ambush of submarines, the ill-starred men had apparently dropped buoys which with disastrous accuracy now led their helms within a hundred yards of the submarine row; and when the sun was a blotch just above the horizon, and a shadow of night had already fallen, they lay stretched, a line ten to eleven miles long, along a twelve-mile line of submarines.

At the same time the Prince, coming west, two miles east, turned east with his line, to fly from the face of the immensity that impended. In those moments the dumbness of sun and sea and mist seemed a dumbness of shock and stound that such a thing should be about to be.

The British, in fleeing, could hear the megaphone of at least one of the six British which, appearing now at top speed out of the northern mist, went with obstreperous trumps of resurrection bawling along the row of telephone-buoys. “*Come forth!*” And twenty seconds later the air commenced to be in a dangerous state of wave-agitation, apparatus and plate to break, the plain of the sea to quaver and quake, rain to drip, and tremendous terrors to menace men.

And then that which the ear feared was suddenly come upon it; suddenly that which the tongue cannot utter was: mountains of overpowering sound that drowned men’s senses profounder down “than ever plummet sounded,” Alp-masses packed upon Cotopaxis of distracted clattering, like Arctic trumpeting rantings to Atlantic in the rumpus and rush of Jurassic dramas of disruption, terrorising rhetoric, reigning, long lasting....

For at least three Japanese torpedoes had pitched upon each of the Japanese ships — all at once; and on the farthest of the British ships eleven miles away every man dropped flat, slapped down by the blast.

Even to the floating locust-host far on the Normandy coast it suddenly seemed to be midnight bleak and stormy, their barges and flats wobbling on the water’s wash, while every English shop-window and window-pane between Deal and the Needles darted from its fastenings.

In London the Queen was seated alone in the gloaming over a gold brooch which she Was making, when she noticed that the tools jumped and shook; and a minute later there came to her a muttering like thunder, then some kind of thump, then rougher thundering that kept on, like a truck running a rough road.

Away in the East End Eulalia was attending to her canary, when the cage-glass began to shake, to be followed by the same sounds; and Oyone

in her prison was washing her hands when the water rocked, and soon thunder was moaning, then a thump, then rougher thundering...

It was said to exercise a doleful effect on the soul like the tolling of a knell.

Oyone moved to her pigmy grate where she sat musing in the gathering gloom.

There was no fire, for it was warm, and, being better treated than she had treated the Prince, she had a lamp, and no need of the firelight.

So she sat in shadow, first wondering if there had been an earthquake, and then wondering how the battle had gone: for her wardress had gossiped to her that this was the day of days.

Presently she became aware of bells ringing carillons; and then, when she had been seated so about an hour, suddenly there reached her from somewhere a shriek, brief and muffled; then, near the stair-foot, a scuffling and shuffling of feet which cut short her breathing, and sent her peering through the hole in the door. In another minute six men in masks came running, one tried the lock with several keys of a bunch, and soon they were with her in the room.

“You are free,” said one.

“Who are you?” she asked.

“Don’t mind that. A motor waits you at the gate, and a boat at Dover. Be off.”

Her hands were at her hair, fast patting like her panting heart. In three minutes she was ready and running from her liberators, lest they should change — emissaries of the Landowners’ Protection League, to whom Oyone’s prison had been revealed by the Princess Elizabeth.

At the gate Oyone asked “Are you under my orders?” of her chauffeur, a man manifestly agitated, who said “yes,” and laughed to himself. She said:

“Drive fast to Chingford”; and, as he started, asked: “What is the matter with you? What are the bells for?”

“Don’t know?” said he, amazed: “didn’t feel the thunder? Yellow fleet wiped out, yellow swarm gone back, hundreds of thousands of them caught, gunned, run down — wireless — it’s over — it’s done — we’ll scrape through all right now.”

In an impulse she half lifted her parasol to hit him; then pinned her veil with agitated fingers, muttering: “He has the air — he will sleep on your skins this day week.”

Now it was night, they passing — where alone it was possible — through by-streets, though, even there advance was not easy, the world wondrously astir as with new birth, such a trump had summoned it from the old centuries to the new to come. It took her two horns to penetrate to the outskirts of Epping Forest.

All the way she had a boding of trouble; and there what she had dreaded ever since her imprisonment fell upon her: her cottage all dark — Chinnery gone.

It was not astonishing, since she, intending to come back, had left him with hardly any money. Anyway, he was vanished, the cottage haunted with the absence of his feet; where to seek him she could not conceive; and the possibilities of that vanishing planted her a stunned stone on her doorstep.

Then she dressed herself in reds and splendours, and leapt into the motor for Dover; and now her thought was: “Before all else I will quaff wine, I will be a wife.”

But the turbulence of Li Ku Yu’s bustle and momentum whirled her as in a whirlwind’s urgency the moment she entered his presence at Dunkirk. She had meant to sell the air-boat, now tenfold precious, for marriage, casting

off bashfulness and delicacy; but the moment he asked her: “Where is the air-boat?” she, as if mesmerised, told him’

“It is on the dunes!”

“No.”

“It is” — she laughed—” come, you will find it.”

It was really there, quietly lying on the sands near the spot where so many men had sought it.

For she, when lassoed by Commander Pilcher, had been in the act of springing into it, but, dragged back, had just had the chance to dash down the ratchet-lever; and Pilcher’s fall upon his face had prevented him from seeing, what distance had prevented the others from seeing, the going up of the boat into the gloomy air.

Moreover, since the night had been quite motionless, Oyone had known that the boat would parachute down to about the same spot, after rising beyond the atmosphere probably, and exhausting the petrol in the little engine.

To fall like a famished man upon the boat Li Ku Yu banished all from round about him and his screw-drivers, spanners and wrenches: and in twenty minutes knew its whole simple truth. Now it was his for ever.

But he could find no time to thank the giver, who glanced in vain into his eyes for a glint of gratitude. The Channel tragedy had slapped him with a blast of shattering wind and glass which had gashed his chin, as he lay off Dunkirk, and he had said: “My signature!” but it had been another’s signature; and this had pestered and tenfold energised him. Thenceforth he gave man or woman no rest, in one second living two.

So at that morning hour of seven, after her night of travel, he had Oyone off by train to take men to the wood of the Six Millions; and at the Casino des Dimes door told her: “Make haste come — to go back to England.”

For the news of the vanishing of Chinnery from the cottage had much irritated him, especially as he had no news yet of the Redlike Ray and “Taska” from the ship despatched to America for it.

As for the Six Millions, though England had rung with its discovery and presentation to the nation, he had no knowledge of this, for between England and France was now a great gulf fixed; and the Landowners’ League ambassadors had, of course, been careful to tell nothing of it, since the English Chancellor’s lack of gold was their only basis of negotiation.

Nor had Oyone in her imprisonment heard one word of the Six Millions to-do: so that she bent her steps to the old wood with the old assurance that the gold was there, thinking: “When I give him this, he will have to marry me.”

But “her” gold was gone! and now she was an aristocrat without “his” land, a thing of shreds and patches, wretched, devilish, addicted to killing.

She went back humble that night to Li Ku Yu; and he said to her, very ungratefully: “You see! you fail” — judging her with his eye where he sat cross-legged in apricot on tiger-skins, encompassed with adjutants and aides.

Her head bent before him.

“Your boat is ready,” he then said in English: “and first — the ray! make certain whether the lady, Bayley, has it, has it not; then — Mr Chinnery: seek! Farewell.”

She, very tired, eyed him lingeringly under her eyes, before she said: “Farewell.”

CHAPTER XXI

THE DYING LIPS



THERE IN EULALIA'S chamber lay the ray ready for Oyone to enter and take; but, as to finding Chinnery, at the time of her start from France Chinnery was where she would never find him, Chinnery had made the scanty funds which she had left him last to within two days of her liberation; then had been breadless; the little servant had deserted him; and he had pottered forlorn.

Now, he had an income of his own, which, however, he had lost the habit of drawing upon ever since the air-boat raid, for Oyone had found means to prevent him, because, if he had, that would have been to reveal that he was not dead.

But now, poverty-struck, his Oyone flown, the lone man, after one day's want, resolved to walk to his bankers in Fleet Street, get a cheque-book, and draw money.

Well, it proved a terrible walk. He had known that he was living somewhere near London, but not quite where, did not think it would be far, and set out about eleven in the morning, hatless, for he could see no hat, asked his way, and walked and walked, anon resting on walls.

When he got to the populous parts, he began to fancy himself crack-brained, for the drama of humanity had been transacting itself almost without any knowledge or concern of his, and now for the first time his eyes lighted upon the turmoil of a London quite unlike the London he had

known. At any rate, he was very unfitted to make his way through it; was pushed about and sandwiched; the beams of a hot and hazy day beat into his brain that reeled for hunger, for fatigue, for feebleness, and for burning thirst; and twice he fainted on the way.

But he knew that he must be at the bank before four, so with the remnants of that strength of soul which had been his, he trudged insistently, and found himself in Fleet Street about ten minutes to four.

But the bank-doors were closed. An Englishman told him that he thought that it had long since failed....

By this time he had a kind of sunstroke, his forehead branded red, he hardly any more in his right mind. Dementedly he set out to make back to his bed at Epping, and now he muttered as he trudged, and now he chuckled, his eyes glaring wild, his gait wandering, staggy. At the third street-corner eastward of Commercial Street he fell all his length in the centre of the street.

This was no uncommon thing, and there he lay unaided ten, twenty minutes amid the *mêlée* of footsteps, until Eulalia, making homewards, almost stepped upon him. When she bent over, she started, recognising him.

Now, she assumed that he, in collusion with Oyone, had stolen the Six Millions, but still moaned for him, stretched there so wrecked; wondered what she could do; remembered the underground den of a gay Hungarian girl whom she had nursed in Grayson Street near; and with her begging grace, by saying "he is my brother!" got some help.

He was taken down a narrow stair into a back-room twelve foot square, where it was difficult to see, and was put on the stupid bed, he breathing sterterously, she searching his pockets, and on finding not one farthing, thought, "The Six Millions did not do him much good."

She then loosened his collar, took off his boots, covered him up, left a note for the girl on his chest, and went away to her lodging.

It was then, while she was attending to her canary, that the cage was shaken, and there was thunder, then a thump, then rougher thundering....

An hour later she went back with digitalis and gruel, to find the Hungarian standing arms akimbo over him, inclined to grumble: but Eulalia gained her, making an arrangement to share her bed with her.

Chinnery was still unconscious, and though, when he had been fed, his eyes opened and presently recognised Eulalia, she understood that he was dying.

She sat an hour with him, he grasping her hand, as the drowning do, and the next day thrice came with nourishment and brandy, and sat by him. Near seven in the evening she decided to say: "I think you will die."

"To-night, I think," said he.

"You are not afraid?" said she.

"Why, no," said he: "of what?"

"Of dying," said she.

"Why, no, dear," said he: "I shall die almost painlessly."

"But," said she, still thinking of the Six Millions, "have you never committed any sins?"

"*Sins?*" said he, with a look of alarm: "why, dear one, no. Such a thing as a 'sin' is not possible in the cosmos. Everything is just-so for the time being, don't you know? or it would not be a cosmos, but a disorder."

"Oh, well, no doubt you know more about that than I. But tell me this: would you not like to see your friend?"

"The Prince of Wales?"

"Yes."

“I should much. But I must not ask him, dear, for I have asked him before in vain.”

“That is strange.... He thinks so highly of no one else, I know. And he is at home, just back from crushing the Chinese power on the sea. If you had been conscious yesterday evening you would have felt it: there never was half such an awful thing on earth, they say—”

“Then, he must be busy.”

“No, he will rush to you, if you can write. I have a pencil, and this notebook — only, you won’t say that you’ve seen me, will you?”

He shrank with alarm when she presented the pencil, but when she pressed him, partly for herself, that she might listen to the visitor’s voice from the front apartment, he caught at the pencil, and with the scrawl of an old man, she holding the candle, wrote.

“DEAR TEDDY: I am dying. Are you interested physiologically?

RICHARD CHINNERY.”

She added the address in print-letters, folded, directed it, wrote over the address: “*From Mr Chinnery*” ran to find the Hungarian, sent her in a cab, and came back to see Chinnery now asleep.

Now not twenty seconds could she sit still, but was up and down, making snug, tugging the bed-clothes, snuffing the taper, as pale as its paleness.

And all at once, long, long before she expected him, he was upon her, his voice suddenly on the stair, addressing the Hungarian, her escape utterly cut off! “Oh, *God!*” she gasped distractedly, her frocks darting frantically about the little apartment, filling it — for one second; in the next she was on her face under the bed — there was nowhere else! — and, as her dress disappeared under, he entered.

Chinnery slept.

The Prince, in pea-jacket and cap, sat on the chair, which lacked a back, and, taking up the candlestick from a box, held it over the face on the bed — a bed very begrimed, the pillow greasy, Chinnery's cheeks very hollow, his forehead blanched as alabaster, like a young prophet, and son of the prophets, prostrate in poverties and sorrows. The Prince's face suddenly convulsed....

“*Girl!*” he called low, and when the Hungarian looked in: “where is this nurse you spoke of.”

That heart beneath the bed was beating quick as cats' feet twinkling.

“She must be gone, sir,” the girl said.

“Heygate!” — one of two gentlemen looked in— “Have Sir Arthur Lloyd (King's Physician) quickly here.”

When he again looked down Chinnery was smiling with him, and his bent ear, deaf since the battle, could hear: “Well, Teddy.”

“Well, Richard,” he said.

“Thanks, Teddy.”

“Richard, why have you kept so dark from me?”

“Who has? I wrote you twice.”

“Ah! I did not know.”

“Well, here you are now.... I have been much darkened and afflicted....”

“Richard, listen: you have to collect yourself. The girl who has your air-boat, who was my prisoner, has escaped, and the Orientals are likely to overwhelm us in it: you have to tell me its structure, and of your ray.”

“Which ray?”

“Ah, Richard, you *must*—”

“There's some brandy under the pillow....”

The Prince held it to the dying lips, saying: “Now, Richard, while you can. The air-boat — I have made a model, and it wouldn't budge—”

“Why wouldn’t it? A magnet, a keeper, the lower lines through the keeper ‘doing work’ on a little armature, whose current goes to the magnet-coils — have you a pencil?”

The Prince’s palm lifted toward his forehead as a sudden half-light struck him. He quickly produced pencil and paper; Chinnery drew a few lines; and suddenly was anew asleep.

At the same time the candle began to flicker, so the Prince stole to the door to send off his second gentleman for candles and brandy; then sat again; and presently again Chinnery said: “Well, Teddy.”

“Now, Richard, the ray,” said the Prince....

“Ray?”

“Richard, your Redlike Ray.”

“Ah, my Redlike Ray! Did I tell you of it? There are still far more X-rays than known rays in nature, I think — still half of even the solar spectrum unknown. I got a ray with only 397 millions of millions of vibrations a second — almost not with Herschellian rays — resembling the two lines of rubidium, but quite faint, and paralysing to the optic nerve-ends. It is in a black box in the Horseferry Road — or was: I think my Oyone told me.... She has left me! she is gone. I have had much religious joy of her, though, I confess, she has not been invariably gentle to me. But one should be careful of the cap and wear violet goggles, for its dropping switches on the little flame-arc that has salts of yttrium and erbium mixed with the silvers. Then the rays are decomposed by a lens of ruby of high refractive index, and are then passed, polarised, through three lævo-rotatory — Have you a pencil? Perhaps...”

His breath was at present puffing very bluffly at his lips; but instantly the pencil was in his fingers, the Prince bringing the flickering candle to bear with one hand, supporting the paper on his other palm; and the drawing

began, with letterings, cyphers, chemical signs, here and there, the Prince a breathless thing in the momentous dumbness of those moments, broken only by the breath of death and the remote drone of London. Suddenly the candle-light darted away, and left darkness behind it.

Chinnery sighed and dropped back; the Prince groaned.

He had no matches; none in the candlestick. He went groaning, groping. "*Girl!*" he groaned. There was no answer. "Oh, no matches," he moaned. Eulalia carefully pushed forth a box of matches beyond the bed-clothes; but he did not know.

Anyway, he felt, it was too late now; and, hearing Chinnery speaking to himself, he moved to him, stumbling with a moan against the soap-box before he could discover the chair.

Now his near ear could just hear Chinnery's dreamy speech, who seemed to be wandering a little, his tongue thick, half paralysed.... "Anaesthesia is merely a first step.... I believed that I should be able to change each pain, as an amputation, or travail, into a corresponding transport... But my Megosme interfered, and that, too, I neglected.... I have been flighty, self-pleasing, ill-mixed.... But soon, I think, God will give birth to good men... blessed be His name.... It was to be to smell what the microscope is to sight.... Drunken dancings to God.... When men of much light shall come... blessed be His name... He teaching dances to their heart... step-dances to their heart's heart.... I prophesy... for though He slays *me*, yet do I trust in Him.... Teddy, is it you...."

After this he said nothing audible to his friend's deafness, and just as a gentleman was dashing down the stair with candles and brandy, his breathing ceased.

CHAPTER XXII

THE RAY MIGRATES



NOW, THEN, FOR some days was the *régime* of air-boats, Chinnery's body still lying in its coffin in Buckingham Palace when twenty boats lay in the Park, the Prince and Sturge themselves winding, winding magnet-bobbins — without any very definite object! for it was a fairly certain thing that Li Ku Yu must have Oyone's air-boat; and air-boat-making ceased suddenly in England on the fourth day, when Pilcher and others who had been scouting over France in air-boats reported that hundreds of thousands of magnets were being turned out at every "forges et chantiers" — de la Seyne, de la Gironde, de la Méditerranée — at Châlons-sur-Saône, at Rochefort, at Cherbourg: whereupon the Prince set himself to make the ray.

He worked in those days under the eyes of the Princess Elizabeth: for along one wall of his workshop ran a gallery aloft fronted with big-bellied balusters of old stone, through which one could peep down without being seen; and thence day after day, midnight after midnight, in patient vigil, peeped the Princess down: for the Prince of Wales was strange to her in those days — stiff, stiff, and still.

She suspected that he may have been told that she had visited Oyone at "Ning Shou Kung," suspected that he suspected that Oyone was free through her: and there in the deepest unease, often when the palace was deeply asleep, she sat peeping, peeping, keeping her eyes fixed upon his flying activities, he finding time neither to eat nor sleep.

By this time England, that had sung so glad a song at the damming of the flood, again knew, not only its doom, but almost the day of it.

Every hour air-boats and aeroplanes flew home with fresh news of the hosts of Chinese now shrieking like fowl of ill-omen under the clouds, undergoing air-training in every town and countryside from Ghent to Guyenne.

Already there had been shots exchanged between air-boat and air-boat; already three flocks of a dozen air-boats had appeared over London, and dropped rice-greens into men's eyes.

The destruction, then, was to be, not from below, but from the air, not an eruption, but a rain; and western man, knowing nothing of the Redlike Ray, understood that the Prince was powerless now to save.

He, for his part, reckoned from the reports sent him from Aldershot that the rain would be during the night of Friday the 9th of May; and he reckoned, by restless effort, to have the ray ready by the noon of Tuesday, the 6th of May — in time to send a letter to Li Ku Yu.

But he and Sturge worked with a blackness of uncertainty in their hearts. At least half of the apparatus they were making was being made, not in reliance upon known truth, but in reliance upon likelihoods.

And by the noon of that fatal Tuesday Oyone's steamer was speedily approaching the English coast near Deal, in haste for Eulalia and the Redlike Ray.

Oyone had started from France days before, on the very night of Chinnery's death, but had not steamed nine miles when she had been sighted by the third-class cruiser with a twenty-knot speed; and now — a chase.

Oyone's yacht had finally escaped among the Scheldt channels, and she had since been a shrinking prisoner on the sea, till now by dodgings she saw

the English cliffs; and instantly on landing was off by motor for 19 Chapel Street, Whitechapel.

Before that hour, about noon, the Queen had come into the workshop to see if the work was finished — not knowing what was being made, for her son would tell no one, but knowing that it was something immensely momentous. She laid her hand on his shirt-sleeve at the bench to murmur: “Not finished?”

He did not look at her. “No, Mother.”

“I have brought you these delicious little sandwiches.”

His deafened sense caught “sandwiches,” and now for the first time in his life he was intolerant of her. “Oh, Mother, for God’s sake!” he said with a very intense fret’ fulness of nettle-rash; and now her paled face went paler, and out mouse-mute she moved.

He nor Sturge ate; at six the work was not finished; at eight it was not finished; at nine it was near completion; at nineteen past it was finished.

Now the two faces were like ghost-faces down there in the light’s glow, their frames in a tremblement resembling the make-and-break of electric bells that tremble, as they flew about the room, mute but for a breath tossed anon from one to the other, while Elizabeth wondered, peeping through balusters above....

Now was the moment of testing. They had a little black cat at hand, so after locking all doors, they set her on a chair and ran, the Prince with two strings, to the remotest part of the room behind their black box on the bench; and there, their backs toward the box, the Prince pulled: the cap slipped down; a pencil of rays shot from the orifice upon the cat.

Dumbly now they hung some moments, though their hearts in their bosoms blabbed like tongues; and suddenly in those mute moments the cat mewed.

The Prince pulled the other string: toward her they flew; and, to their sorrow, saw her washing her chops with her paw... cynic.

“Puss, puss, come,” went Sturge, and she ran straight to him.

The Prince sat on her chair siffling through his teeth-edges, calm now, but blanched like chalk.

At that moment Oyone’s motor was already in Southeast London, travelling fast toward the ray, her chauffeur a Japanese from the Continent.

But it happened so that now, as the Prince sat there siffling his hymn, a pressing visitor was announced, and presently the Chief Commissioner was there, saying: “The nurse who was observed carrying a black box has been unearthed, Sir. The box is now actually on a chair in her third-floor back room at No. 19 Chapel Street, East.

Whether it is *the* black box — it has a cap—”

“It is it!” — the Prince had sprung to his feet—” I’ll go myself. ‘Phone, Sturge, to the stables.”

But before that word “stables” the Princess Elizabeth was away flying, wild and white, and quickly was at the Queen’s knees, entreating her: “Teddy has discovered that girl — all is up with my life — has had out men seeking her — and oh, I know — I know — in ways unknown to Your Majesty — that he will surely marry, if he once finds her — as he *must* now — unless — Mother — you graciously intervene. Go yourself — you and I — only it must be *instantly* — he has telephoned — if you bring her here, he will never find — everywhere else he will now—”

“Come,” said Her Majesty.

Wraps on heads, hand in hand, they ran.

Just outside the palace-front they chanced upon a cab, dashed down the Mall; and as they dashed past the Admiralty, the Prince dashed after in a brougham, Oyone at that moment motoring past the Elephant, between

which and Blackfriars Bridge three people were injured by the speed of her wheels.

Now, the Prince's cylinders had more horse-power than his mother's, and all along the expanse of the Mall he rapidly overtook her, even though she, on cautiously looking, thought she saw him coming, and incited her driver to his highest speed, pleading, "You know me — the Queen — please — please—"

But once out in the Strand throng, the two were on a more equal footing, both being forced to forge slower through the misty and muddy multitudes; and beyond the Charing Cross Hotel the Queen just escaped what befel the Prince — a fallen horse, round which the crowd thickened like a boil in the blood's circulation; and no side-street was there....

Nor was he aware that there was any race or very special necessity for haste, or he would certainly have turned back, or driven through the screams of men and women. But he waited.

So the mother got well ahead, dashing into Chapel Street six minutes in advance of the son — a shudder now in Elizabeth's nerves lest Her Majesty, on observing the street-name and house-number, should remember that this was the very address of the Six Million donor as given by Sir Robert Barrington. But her Majesty had other troubles, as they dashed into the drab caravanserai.

Eulalia sat by her table and lamp, letting her eyes rest on a *Pippa Passes* that had passed in her pocket through European bloodshed, through her Chinese nightmare, through the air, when — a thumping at her door — the door flung open — and before her the Queen — and peering over the Queen's shoulder the Princess Elizabeth's speculative spectacles....

"I am here to take you away" — from the Queen— "no time to explain — for the good of the State — your country, to which you owe everything

— will you come?”

A stare!

“Will you come?”

“I — suppose so, Ma’am” — with a glance toward a soap-box containing underclothes.

“What’s in the box? Clothes? Leave those! Come—”

“My canary—”

“Bring that — quickly—” popping upon Eulalia’s head a forage-cap which she saw while Eulalia was taking the cage; which done, Eulalia cast a parting look round, spied her “Taska’s” black box, caught that up, and with the ray and her packet of letters under her right arm, the cage hanging in her left, the forage-cap cocked awry over her right eye, they were gone, like straws caught on cyclonic storms.

By which time the Prince, having passed Aldgate, was pretty near.

And down at the house-door there was delay — through Oyone, just come: for when the Queen reached the door, it was to near her chauffeur screaming to Oyone’s chauffeur:

“Are you drunk, or what?” the latter having shocked end-on upon the Royal cab’s engine.

And as Her Majesty stepped into her cab, and then Eulalia, out jumped Oyone from her motor, and saw the face of Elizabeth, just stepping in, in the off-shine of a wall-lamp; and she ran to Elizabeth saying: “ — ? I have wished to speak—”

But as Elizabeth turned to her, the Queen’s face was out with “*Make haste!* Who is this?” — and Oyone, with a starting heart, recognised the Queen, instantly thinking: “*She* here? What for? the ray?”

The cab moved before she had had an instant’s chance to peer within and see Eulalia and the ray; but before the Queen’s head was withdrawn, Oyone

had cut a face of venom and disdain at her.

If, now, the Royal cab had run west, it must have met the Prince, but it ran east, then north, then west, the Princess's glasses, meantime, throwing ogles of distrust at the black box, not half liking the idea of being blown into "flies' feet," even with the Queen for companion. —

Meantime, Oyone flew inward with wings, up the stair — resolved, if the box was absent, to follow the Royal cab, and, if necessary, lay dead....

Without ceremony she rushed into Eulalia's chamber — plied a hundred eyes — not there — and down she rushed....

Causing the Prince's heart to start! who was just near enough now to the house-door to see her heels pitching into her carriage; and, instantly convinced that she had the ray, he and Sturge were after her, as her car turned eastward, whither she had seen the Queen's car speed.

Now, she in rushing out of doors had noticed his motor and him looking out of it a second before *his* recognition of *her* had leapt into a conscious recognition: so, seeing him follow to capture her, she leant out, sent two rapid shots at his car, and dashed off, scattering the throng from her path.

The Prince's car ran into wall on the right, and was smashed, his chauffeur's right arm fractured; and he pursued on foot, till Oyone's motor disappeared, then ceased.

When he and Sturge spurted up to the "third-floor-back," it was to discover nothing — a nurse's coif, tips of little slippers peeping, *Pippa Passes*, a poor cupboard, a nightdress nicely folded, a photo of the Prince in silver... more fay than ray....

And Oyone herself failed to discover the Royal cab, which arrived safely at the palace.

CHAPTER XXIII

INTO WHOSE HANDS?



“THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH and I,” said Her Majesty I in a high-up chamber on the west palace-side, “are both clever with our needles, so we have plotted together to make you up some lovely dresses with our own fingers, if you will let us — simple but *chic*. For we consider that it was amiable and good of you to put yourself into my hands, as you have.”

Eulalia curtsied, silent, standing withdrawn, mysteries of pride hiding in her eyes, she understanding that she was being patronised, and condoned, and graciously tolerated, since she was graceful and an interesting little sinner.

So now was the *régime* of the tape, the fashion-plate, the scissors, the prettiest *mousselines*. A trunkful of fairy linens had already come from (Irish!) Yvonne’s, toilet-things from Bond Street. The Princess Elizabeth measured with tape and spectacles. Eulalia was to be made a thing to kiss the fingers at. It was the Queen’s will.

And as they came out, in went the lady-in-waiting, Lady Julia Newcome, to amuse and be amiable, for Eulalia was never left alone; while outside Her Majesty cast up hand and eyes, sighing: “She is pretty!”

Whereat the Princess had an unease: for the Queen, with all her moral severity, was very well known to be amorous, prone to fancies and fads and favouritisms, often capricious, inconstant, incalculable: and that she should acquire the same taste as her son in respect of Eulalia was not a desirable

thing to the Princess, who was now inwardly convinced that Eulalia was a wife.

“How long do you intend her to be here, Mother?” she asked, cutting muslin over the Last Supper at the centre of the satin tablecover in the “Newmarket Parlour” (with three horse-scenes by Wootton) — a favourite retreat of the Queen, a small room, nicely proportioned, lighted by a bay looking west upon the Park, with a north lobby.

The Queen, vacantly staring, presently murmured: “How long will I keep *you* here, or myself? Whatever it was he was making, he has failed in. He sits like a stone Achilles; no one ventures to address him.... It is well that *you* take it stoically....”

The Princess now sat down near on a Chancellor of the Exchequer chest (in which Chancellors kept their cash before the age of cheques), and, poring with her spectacles on the Queen, came out with the statement: “Your Majesty, I am not at all afraid of the Chinese.”

At the moment the Queen seemed not to hear, moving her head musingly up and down a little, lost in despondency; and the Princess continued: “Not that I am sublime... but that I have special knowledge. I *know* what Teddy was making — a machine to blow thousands of men into quite tiny pieces in a minute; and I have only stood by and seen him fail in it, in order to show him clearly that I am a little worthy of him, in order that *I*, in the day of his failure, might step in and say, ‘Teddy, here is the thing ready made which you have tried to make, and failed to make.’”

At this the Queen started! for it has already been shown, in regard to the charlatanism of this young lady, that there is absolutely *no* limit to the superstitiousness of men — even of men of some clearness of vision — when the intellect is once predisposed, infected and mesmerised toward a particular creed and epidemic of belief.

The Princess, for her part, knew from Oyone that Eulalia's black box "blew one into flies' feet"; knew that Oyone was eager to seize it; had noted that the box made in the Prince's workshop was exactly like it; and felt that she would have little difficulty in winning the box from Eulalia, who, in her present bashful situation, had a natural tendency to be affable.

As to the Queen, she had seen without seeing Eulalia's black box like a kodak, nor had seen at all the black box in the Prince's workshop. She was instantly leaning keenly toward the Princess, breathing: "Tell me, dear...

"I just say so much to comfort you, Mother," replied the other with her smile of Isis: "I am not at present prepared to reveal more — except to express the confidence I feel that Teddy, with the help of what I have been able to divine and discover, will find himself quite competent to cope with all these horrors, and many more. On, I take no credit to myself! — I *know* now that there is Something that prompts me, whispers me, like Socrates' *daimon* — yes, Something, Something. But, as to the girl, send her quickly to America, Mother! Suppose — *just suppose* — that Teddy were to discover her here!"

"She is pretty!" sighed the Queen, vacantly staring at a row of miniatures of the Prince on an old-oak console-table by the hearthplace; then suddenly: "Give her this from me! — that will flatter her," taking a silver-gilt rose-water dish, engraved with lion and unicorn, from a Queen Anne cabinet.

"Very well" — from the Princess—" though we must not make her think herself a saint."

"She is not depraved!" said the Queen quickly—" *se voit*. What I cannot understand is her motive for keeping herself so completely from him, that he had to be seeking her; she, meantime, a Prince's light o' love, living in penury in the East End! The thing baffles me!"

“He tired of her — that’s it. Such honeys are only delicious for a day, Mother: then men cast them aside.”

“How do you — know?”

“From my study of life! Studiosa sum, Mother, nulla studia a me aliéna puto.”

“Very good: let us say, then, that he tired of her; that she resented it; fled from him, hid from him; and that he then repented and sought her afresh. But all this does not explain her poverty! Had he never lavished any presents upon her? Why did she go as a war-nurse? I cannot understand! — unless she is supremely proud! And pride is never depraved.”

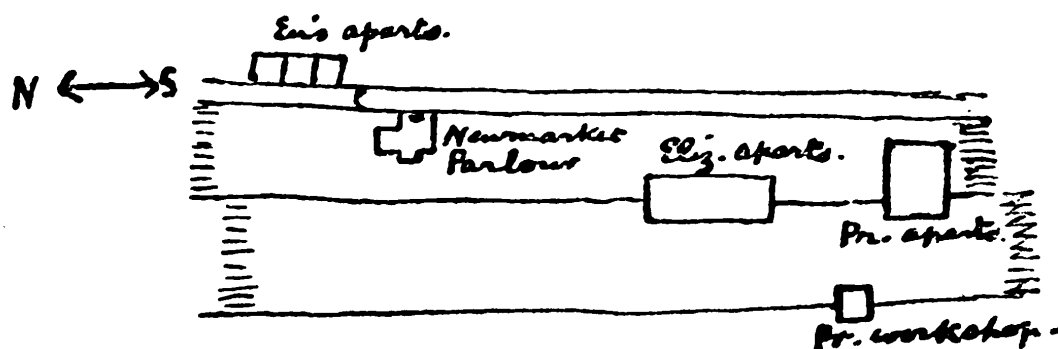
“All that does not alter the fact of her stain....”

“Of course not. But it is pitiful that women must reap as men have sown.”

“And does not alter the peril of her being in England....”

“Well, but I have given orders for her passage next Wednesday.”

The Princess smiled. “Shall I go and try this on her? and give her the rose-water dish” — she went out by an east portal, up four steps into a north-and-south corridor,



where, turning left, she passed under a draperied archway on to Eulalia’s apartments on her right. Demurely smiling, the Lady Julia Newcome came out when she went in. — ...

And presently the Princess was saying: “What is in that box of yours? Is it photographic?”

Eulalia answered: “I know nothing of it, except that I dug it out of the ground for a dead man, to send it to America.”

“Curious” — the Princess stood off, inspecting the fit of a bodice—” is it dangerous to touch, by chance?”

“Not that I know of — though it has marked on it, ‘Do Not Touch.’”

“Curious. Pick it up, let me see how you handle it.”

“There is no particular way,” said Eulalia, complacently raising it from a Louis XIV. writing-table where it lay.

“It strikes me as curious,” the Princess then remarked—” something scientific, maybe? You will no doubt permit me to take it to my apartments and *analyse* it a little.”

“If that pleases Your Imperial Highness.”

And the fitting went on.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE YELLOW DELUGE



AT THREE IN the afternoon of Friday, the ninth, fewer words probably were being spoken over the breadth of Britain than ever in a populous country before. Hundreds of thousands of the moneyed, the aristocrat, the royal, had migrated to Man and Ireland, where, too, was a silence that waited. But the British royal household had abided. As for the Prince of Wales, ever since the hour of the cremation of Chinnery it was as if a paralysis had taken possession of him.

At that hour of three the Princess Elizabeth had still not the Redlike Ray from Eulalia: and now all mortal things hung upon the vanity of this Teutonic fraulein, who sat with guilty tremors, putting off from hour to hour the revelation that might rescue the relics of western civilisation, in the hope of yet making that revelation in her own way.

When, on the Thursday morning, the Princess had gone to take up the box, Eulalia, after consenting, had said: "I think, after all, that I should prefer it not to be taken away, as I have it in trust...."

And it had been excruciatingly difficult for the Princess to ask again — the thinnest wall of delicacy now between her and the box, but a wall of steel.

But she had broken through it that same day, and afresh on the Friday: had asked afresh — with a scarlet flush.

And this made Eulalia stubborn. She remembered by this time that a coster-girl who had reminded her of Oyone had snatched the box, and also that she had seen Oyone speak to the Princess at the cab-door in Chapel Street, East. This made her stubborn. She resolved to 307 have the box packed and despatched to “Taska” before the Princess should again have a chance of asking. That was on the Friday at 11 A.M.

Accordingly, when the Princess then left her, Eulalia obtained paper from her maid, made up the box, and placed it on the shelf of the alabaster hearthplace of her central apartment, till the collector should pass.

Meantime, the Princess, in love now with loneliness, clung to her own apartments on the floor below, where she sat a staring stone, bitterly regretting her brag, a limp and guilty rag at the going, going of the moments, yet smitten with motionlessness.

But at four when the Queen, who was restlessly wandering, visited her some moments, the Princess pricked herself to sprightliness and careless smiles — knowing well all the time what the Queen had come to hear; and though Her Majesty did not directly refer to the promised “help,” she did say with a sigh: “Heaven knows what this night will bring forth for mankind.”

And since the charlatan is in every extremity and fix a charlatan, and in the last ditch dies a charlatan, the Princess now, with a bound of her rash heart, found herself in the thick of saying: “I think, Your Majesty, that, if Teddy will come to me at, *say*, six o’clock, I shall have something of value to put into his hands.”

But *how to get it*? From then to half-past five she sat the most agonised girl, probably, in all the agonised world.

At half-past five a Queen’s-page requested the Prince to visit Her Majesty in the Newmarket Parlour; and there for half-an-hour they sat,

mother and son, hand in hand, with hardly the murmur of a word, and heard windy wet weather yearning in the Park.

At twenty to six Elizabeth sped like a spectre past Her Majesty's door to enter Eulalia's apartments, pallid, concentrated; resolved at all costs to have the box.

She saw the box packed, directed; knew that soon after the stroke of six it would be gone; but still she put off action, dallied, palely paced, dallied, declaring across the lump of aching in her throat that Eulalia looked lovely in the blue-festooned muslin, sole specimen from the loom, with the miniature at her throat of the Prince in Eton-jacket — a miniature which the Queen, to the scandal and whispering of several, had daringly presented to Eulalia in her daring way.

But at last when the clock was about to strike six, Elizabeth miserably found herself in the act of saying: "Oh, well, I am going to have the box, after all" — and had it.

But Eulalia stopped her. "Your Imperial Highness — please — put yourself in my place" — and laid hold of it.

"No, it is no good, you must."

"I must *not*" — and now a struggle of several seconds, which only the Princess's terror of an explosion ended; though, as she let go, she viciously tore the wrapping across, rendering it useless for the post, and Eulalia then petulantly tore the whole off, in placing the box back on the shelf.

They now stood confronted with rough sea-weather in their breasts, and discomposed countenances; and in a tone loud with hysteric stress the Princess said: "Your being here has made you insolent!"

Eulalia laughed!

And that laugh penetrated the still a little deaf ear of the Prince of Wales.

He, bidden by the Queen to go to Elizabeth's apartments "at six," was on the four steps outside the Newmarket Parlour, about to turn to the right, when, to the left — that laugh....

He made some steps that way, could hear voices, and went like one in a dream....

Meantime, the Queen, by some instinct or sense, seems to have gathered that he was going left instead of right, and ran with stealthy steps to see. He was then between the arch-draperies, walking like a sleep-walker drenched in dream, and she, struck with sudden apprehension, lifted up her voice at him: "Why that way?"

He took no notice, possibly did not even hear; and suddenly out of her throat there broke a hoarse roar of horror and terror like a death-cry: "*Teddy, in!*" — for his hand was on a door handle.

But in he went, and she, swiftly flitting, was in almost as soon as he.

There in the middle stood a muslin Eulalia, like a picture of tripping Spring, and Flora picking roses, and there the Princess, and there the Redlike Ray.

In the instant that the Prince saw Eulalia with one eye he saw the ray tied with string, with the other; and lightning struck into his consciousness the thought: "*She was 'the nurse' ...*"

And for the tenth of a second he stood suspended, pulled toward her, pulled toward the ray, but then flew to her to kneel an instant in a scarlet passion, clasping her, with "My love! my luck! my star! my lucky star! my love! my luck!" then was up, and he and the box vanished together.

Within some minutes he had struck a dog blind, and was in an ulster in the air with Sturge and Pilcher, a wet and windy air which threatened a wild night; and before they dropped him at the Lord Warden, Dover, he had handed them a note for Dunkirk:

“To His Excellency, Li Ku Yu. If Your Excellency likes to meet the Prince of Wales, alone, at nine o’clock, behind the ruins of St Mary’s, N.E. of Dover, something of moment to His Excellency will be told. His Excellency’s safety is hereby guaranteed.”

“But,” said Pilcher, “is this thing safe, Sir? You go alone — suppose *he* doesn’t.”

“You have no reason to think him treacherous,” answered the Prince.

“Still, Sir, we pray—” said Sturge.

“I’ll see,” the Prince said: “you go on.”

He passed into the hotel, as darkness fell, and the two flew on over a rough sea, sighting on the way five different air-boats apparently making for Britain.

At seven-forty they were standing in the Casino dancing-hall before Li Ku Yu, who sat high, smiling down upon some rite, round about him being the Chiam (High priest) and bouzis in hosts in a thronged hall all a hotch-potch of hues, like boxes of coloured chalks, or that coloured spectacle in prisms, or the coloured chemistry of iridium. The two were led quite up to him, and saw his head dotted with sweat.

He, on casting his eye over the note, had the instant thought: “Either he has the ray, or will pretend to”; then aloud: “You, Sturge? Glad to see you. I keep you two prisoners two hours.”

“This is outrageous!” cried out Pilcher in a maze and rage.

“Seize these men, feed, keep two hours,” Li Ku Yu murmured to a colonel, and was instantly off, soft-footed, swift, with swinging pigtail swaggering, slanting a wee bit backward on his heels like the Northern Chinese, down the bowed hall, and out.

In ten minutes he, too, was in an ulster in the air, and ten men in ulsters in his boat’s hold. (Hence he had kept Pilcher and Sturge, lest they should

follow and watch his landing.)

The night, inclined to be foul, was almost without light, and in a quarter of an hour the knot of men were darkly disembarking south of St Margaret's Bay, where they hid themselves and their boat, while one alone, an agile young scout of the Choshus, darted up and southward to ferret out St Mary's ruins.

He was quickly back; and then, with elaborate stealths, crawling under hedges, through marshy mid-fields, they all darkly marauded, with more caution than haste, having forty minutes to spare. They were seven pigtailed, three Choshus, and Li Ku Yu.

He himself reconnoitred the ruins, noted which road the Prince must come, then gathered his gang to lie in wait behind a row of broken stones rankly grass-grown; and from one to the other he moved, stooping, breathing a secret: "Seize, not shoot; shoot, if need be."

But even as he breathed it to the ninth man, with a pang of the heart he acquired the consciousness that there, lying in wait, were not ten men, but eleven.

"Hands up! — quick, quick..."

"*Bright!*" cried Li Ku Yu recognising the cry of the Prince, who had long since slipped into the rear of the band in the dark.

"Drop your pistol."

Li Ku Yu dropped it.

The Prince, springing over the row of stones, his muzzle still at the other's bosom, said: "Right turn — walk": and they went stepping toward Dover, a pigtail not less long than Li Ku Yu's swinging behind the Prince's back, his face not less yellow-brown.

After some hundreds of yards, he muttered sullenly: "*Immoral!*"

Li Ku Yu, smiling quite unmoved, said: “Why, Prince? *You* guaranteed safety; I — no!”

The Prince now pocketed his pistol, saying, “I think I am as quick as Your Excellency” — a remark which brought a rush of blood to the other’s forehead. He made no answer.

Then, “Is Your Excellency disposed to sit here?” asked the Prince, and they sat on a mass of rock by the path under the shadow of a larch, but still lashed by squalls of wind and water.

There was silence. Then Li Ku Yu: “Let us be quick.”

“What is it all about?” said the Prince: “may one express to Your Excellency the surprise one feels that one is still ignorant of the *casus belli* of China against the white races? You declare no war; you invade; you butcher.”

“No time! But stay — hear. What one thing is it that concerns living beings — that living beings care about? Happiness? Agreed?”

“Good! And happiness consists in worshipping God? say in ‘religion.’ Agreed?”

“Yes.”

“Good! Now, the scientist denies that apes, negroes, bishops, bouziss, dervishes are religious; denies that anyone can possibly be religious — but him; since no one can have any knowledge of God — but him; denies that anyone knows what religion *is* — but him. And he is right — necessarily! Agreed?”

“Yes.”

“Good! Now, at my birth I observe two masses of men, equal in number — one white, one yellow; both having what they call ‘a religion’; but the brain of the yellow much more disengaged from his ‘religion,’ equally superstitious, but less deformed and diseased with superstition, less

incapable of being led to look in a centric sane mood at the universe, and to be truly religious. So said I to myself: ‘The European brain will take two hundred years to evolve out of the notion that Christianity has some connection with religion, resemblance to’; and if one answer, ‘but already France, Germany, England had rejected Christianity,’ I answer back: ‘they think so!’ but for many days their mentation will be infected by the fact that for ages their fathers entertained the conceit that a mammal of their species, with 800 rudimentary organs, was the Infinite Itself. Imagine the astonishment of a zoologist of Mars to know that on some planet in space there paces an animal into whose head the disease of a conceit so eccentric could creep and fester. Man? Comic! the laughing-stock of the cosmos! So said I: ‘Save mankind two hundred years; abolish Europe.’”

“Well said,” said the Prince— “provided Your Excellency is sure of what you substitute. But what genius for discovering God’s truth have the Chinese given proof of?”

“*Cluck!* True! — none — little. But their brain older than the European — not more evolved — less! — but more mature for evolution.”

“I did not know that. I wonder if that is an opinion? for Your Excellency is aware that opinions have no value. Prove it, and I need not say that Your Excellency shall have your way unresisted by me.”

“An opinion gathered from many things! But, as to strict proof — no.”

“And for a concept which Your Excellency cannot prove you butcher a hundred million women and children.”

“*Cluck!* Our grandmothers’ thoughts, Prince. Is it wrong to kill an ox, a man?”

“You are said to ‘rob them of their life.’”

“Precisely! But it is wrong to rob of anything — why? Only because you make to suffer! to suffer long! Agreed? Good! But suffering implies

consciousness! No wrong to rob, if the robbed-from is never conscious of it, or only conscious one second, as when you rob of life.”

“But the killer may suffer,” said the Prince.

“Ah! then! wrong! Wrong for *me* to kill a fly, for I suffer — so made! But not wrong to kill a flea, to kill two hundred million fleas or men for the least reason, for *I* do not suffer, *they* do not suffer — especially when done for the benefit of one! two! two hundred millions!”

“True,” said the Prince: “but I question ‘the benefit.’ That, you have admitted, is an opinion; *I* have the opposite — and Mr Chinnery’s Redlike Ray.”

Li Ku Yu started in the dark, made a grimace, sprang up. “Not civilised warfare, Prince!” — with a grin.

“No. Hence I asked Your Excellency to come, to tell you” — the Prince, too, stood up—” for since the white race seems to *me* a type capable of higher evolution than the yellow, I will not see it wiped out, if I can help. And you seem now to be in the hollow of my hand. Shall we not come to terms? Save your people from this — take them back to China!”

Silence ten seconds. Then Li Ku Yu: “Could not! — if I wished. The die cast! Had the ray from Chinnery, Prince?”

“No... Chinnery, by the way, is dead.”

Li Ku Yu snatched off his cap, bowed his brow. “Brockweir’s greatest!”

Silence.

Then: “I go, Prince. If — since — you possess this ray, we meet never more: for this night I invade England, I myself sharing the danger of my regiments. In case I fail, I will take dispositions to make it easier for you to deal with the Chinese, and resettle men. I wish you well.”

“Good-night.”

Li Ku Yu walked north in front of his fluttering ulster-skirts, while the Prince dropped, as if shot, prostrate upon the rock, sob upon sob of world-sorrow bursting from his breast like the night-winds' volleys, and water from his brain like the rain. And Li Ku Yu, who heard a sob on the squall, stopped, turned, murmured some words, and moved on.

As soon as he was back at Dunkirk he had Oyone alone in the old Cashier's-office, to whisper her: "*Kill!* — tonight — your chance! An Empire your reward!"

She had never beheld him pallid and agitated before, and catching pallor and passion from his potent emotion, flashed a defiant eye at him. "Why send — am afraid to be in the air in the dark over the ocean—"

"Look at a woman afraid of something!" — he pointed her out with his finger!—" yet dreaming of queenship! Be quick, lest I teach you fear! Whom have I to send that well knows his face? he may be painted yellow — he may be white—"

She seized his sleeve, kneeling, staring up into his face: "Marry me! I can't any more — marry me!"

On which he shrank in alarm as from a rat rushing up him, palms up, with "*Woman!*" and she sprang up with a high and tragic cry: "You do not want me?"

"To marry takes time!" he cried. "To-morrow! Tomorrow! He is at Dover —"

"To-morrow we may die blinded, though I will not mind, if to-night you marry me, for the earth and skies heard you promise it, and I have bitten you in every bit of my bread, and washed in you in my bath, and—" she broke down, dashing water from her eyes.

"So unless I marry, you do not go?"

She passionately stamped at him. "I say no!"

A dangerous look of bale shot toward her before he stood up bustlingly with, "Let us marry — come, come—"

But this, as he had foretold, took some time, so that she saw herself forced to be off some moments after the furtive and hurried contract in the Garden-kiosk; and when her eyes, that teemed with pleadings and wifely meekness, implored for a moment alone with him before her departure, he patted her back publicly, with, "You kiss Li Ku Yu another time, Oyone. No failure! Farewell!"

She started off with a little Japanese scout, sharp as a spaniel's snout, using her own old boat in which alone she felt herself at home, though half-way over to Dover she had a horrible shock, when the boat unaccountably dropped a hundred feet down, leaving her heart above. She had not been in it since Li Ku Yu had ransacked its mechanism, and her apprehension lest he should have flung it too hurriedly together again was very unpleasant, until she descended outside Dover.

There in a shed she dressed in male clothes, and as a boy in an ulster entered Dover, her nerves aburn with her husband's "No failure!" — she every five minutes shocked afresh with astonishment at finding herself a wife! his helper and high left hand! She laughed in the face of the rain. The night was not wilder nor the winds raged wistfuller than the strange and dangerous things that raged in her nature.

But she soon discovered that the Prince was no longer in Dover, was off to London by train, taking the ray — to get an air-boat, in fact, after waiting long in vain for Pilcher's and Sturge's return from Dunkirk; and he had gone as glad as vexed, thinking to see Eulalia a minute.

But he did not see her: for, as his cab was dashing through the Palace Park, there ran to meet him Pilcher and Sturge, who half drew revolvers at him, seeing a Chinaman.

“Where on earth have you been?” the Prince asked; and Pilcher answered: “Kept prisoners two hours, Sir — just come — missed you at Dover — invasion commenced — Chinese have set fire to three pine-woods between Ashford and Folkestone for signal-fires, and are at present alighting at the rate, we reckon, of twenty-five a minute with some camp-equipment.”

“Let’s go,” the Prince said, springing down, and in another minute was in the air.

By that time Oyone, following him to London, was flying north of Croydon, and her boat and his passed within two hundred yards of each other, though she did not spy it in the dusky air, for just then for the second time that night she had a shock of fright at the dropping two hundred feet of her boat. But, landing safe in St James’s Park amid drenching rain, she hid her boat, resumed her woman’s clothes, and now stood confronted with the task of discovering the Prince.

Beckoning that his train must by now have arrived in London, she was away to Marlborough House...

There a foreign sentry informed her that the Prince was at Buckingham Palace, whereupon she ran back to St James’s Park, and, taking her scout now, went up, to descend a little west of the lake in Buckingham Palace Park — an invasion of Royal rights based upon the fact that kings were invented before aeroplanes and air-boats were foreseen.

A second after she touched ground a drenched black figure in an oilskin cape came trotting, but dropped down dead with the scout’s kokotana in his heart.

The two then stood in bush, looking at the palace which had a few lights behind its blinds.

The problem still was to hit upon the Prince, the ray: for whereabouts in the vastness of the palace he would probably be Oyone had no notion.

But now up yonder across the central blind of the Newmarket Parlour she spied Her Majesty's shadow pass diademed: and she started; her clasp tightened on her knife.

"Kill her," she instantly thought, dark-hearted: "then hide; then he' ll run to her; then I'll have *him*."

"You see that window?" she now whispered her scout: "kill everything you meet between that arch where the sentry is and the room-door behind that window; stab, not shoot; hide the bodies; then be back to me."

The little Jap, quick-wristed as a twisting squirrel, instantly slipped off and vanished, until she saw him after a minute insinuate his nimble being into a palace-portal.

Oyone then waited ten minutes, till he was suddenly there with her anew, holding up four fingers close before her eyes — meaning two sentries, a gentleman-at-arms, a page; and she herself then sped away in front of her fluttering ulster-tail with a wet wan face, her hair fallen half-lax under her hard man's-hat.

But the hour of the Chinese invasion, which could not be postponed when once fixed, was against her otherwise good ruse to get at the Prince, since *he* was now three thousand feet in the air near Folkestone, leaving the Chinese signal-conflagrations glaring like eclipse and the midnight sun on the night below and behind' him, he making for mid-channel; and, mixed with the hubbub of the wind blustering by the boat's bow, was now a troubled sound of moaning and lamenting in the air.

Pilcher, steering, was grovelling at the hatchway, with violet-blue goggles, got from Sturge, at his eyes, and a bandage over the goggles which anon he lifted a little; Sturge, begoggled, was in the hold, and, acting as

watch-keeper, anon peeped up to see that no boat got above them; and the Prince, begoggled, his eyes tight, lay on his face in the bows under the ray-box, which was bound to the stem, its cap bent somewhat downward.

And out of it for miles into the night, downward, skyward, to right, to left, spread the rain of rays, invisible at a distance, but appearing to one a little in front of the boat's prow as a little sprout and spray of rays reddening the night's denseness for nine or ten yards; nor was there any other light, only an Admiral Colomb lantern in the hold; and anon Pilcher directed an electric ray upon the compass a moment.

"We are over the sea, Sir," he sang out presently; and the Prince sang back: "I should go pretty slow now, zigzagging north-east and south-east."

Their voices noised in the dark like voices calling in song on some orb where there's no talking, but only song and moody emotion, the gale making them musical, the gloom, the restless rain, that sang together an anthem godlike sad. Though high aloft, they saw not a light in the sky; vapours fared westward in haste on their way over their heads; the blast ran brabbling past like the spattering breath of a benzoline brazing-lamp braying; the midget engine pistoned and spittled, the little carbons sparking a little anon like the anvil of Thor; and the red-like spray of rays reigned steadily there in heaven like a Divine Eye whose ire strikes sightless.

Presently the Prince sang out: "Hear anything odd?"

"No — what like?" Pilcher called.

"The wind too near in your ears perhaps," the Prince sang out: "to me distinct, a sound like distant towns. Ask Sturge."

Pilcher asked down the hatchway, and Sturge sang up: "I know what the Prince means — hear it every now and again — sort of universal murmur going on. There may be a hundred thousand of them about."

"How many do you see, Pilcher?" the Prince called.

Pilcher slipped up his bandage, turned his back to the ray, and, standing on the steps, called back: "Three in sight for the moment, Sir. Two astern fifty yards apart, one to starboard two hundred feet down. I have seen as many as six — we should see hundreds, I think, on another night. Everything is rather ghastly through the glasses — livid-like — poor devils."

A dumbness now among them some moments: until a thump and thud somewhere was heard, and Sturge, then on the steps glancing abroad, called out: "Two have bumped, and both gone tumbling, not forty yards to starboard! I thought there'd be some bumps."

"Can you see the sea?" sang out the Prince.

"No sign of it here, Sir." He shut his eyes in trouble, and went down.

"It seems monstrous, sir," called out Pilcher presently, "that your warning was disregarded!"

"I doubt if Li Ku Yu fully believed," the Prince sang back: "he said once '*if* you have the ray,' then corrected to '*since* you have' — to be polite! He may have felt that my warning might possibly be a trick and last resort. And he probably found himself compelled to make some attempt with some proportion of the intended numbers. But he is not a cruel mind."

"*Hark!*" sang out Pilcher now, and, listening, they could catch a song-sound like lo, lo, lo, lo, lo, babbled lamentably by some tongue not far below; then immediately from the east there reached them a screech which lasted a long while, and died away and away in a tailing song; and presently after this a pistol-shot from the northwest.

"A suicide, I suppose," called Pilcher — with probable truth, for very many were found on the ground with gun-wounds in different districts of England.

That night it was as if the skies rained a rain of flesh, as well as wet, not in Eastern England merely, but in the Midlands and West: for the air-boats still went on and on (until the engines were empty), when their helmsmen were sightless.

Many of the squads in the boats' holds appear to have been provided beforehand with bandages, and been told to look out for the rays, but were probably blinded before they saw any ray, or properly realised the possibility of being stricken blind; and of those in holds who escaped blindness by bandages few probably had any training in the handling of the boats.

But many thousands (who began to fall high enough) came down without accident, saved by the parachute-bottom, some of them not blinded; and with the morning's dawn in many a home of Southern England was lodged a Chinaman, sightless or seeing.

The rest crashed shrieking into street or field or river, or, landing on roofs, slanted and crashed, or stuck in trees.

By midnight England was agaze at this rain, amazed, with a suspicion of hallelujah and strange new hope springing in its breast, and the name of a man panting on its breath. In the London window was a face upturned, spurting feet in her streets. A throng on London Bridge saw through the rain one air-boat drop upon another, and both drop upon the gold cross of St Paul's, and go cracking. Some dropped upon cabs, carts, and men. Seven in a boat came down safe in the middle of Southampton Row, and were pounced upon to be roughly handled, until the astounded crowd found them to be blind, and guided them by the hand into houses.

Before this, at about ten o'clock, Sir Robert Barrington, on his way to an interview with Her Majesty, saw, as he stepped out of his house, a light sinking in the air, waited, watching, and saw it gently sink to an area rail

opposite, on which it tilted, spilling five shrieking blind Chmamen into the street; and the Queen herself, seated with screened lights in her Newmarket Parlour, started, hearing their screams....

And there was yellow still nearer her than they! She did not know all that was in that room....

She was waiting there by her pear-wood fireplace that had a Lambert landscape in its carving for Eulalia, whom she had summoned — the fireplace (in which was a fire that chilly night), being south, the corridor-door to the Queen's left, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's chest a little within the lobby north.

And as Eulalia came to the top of the four steps outside, she seemed to see on the corridor-door's rose curtains the firelight shadow of someone five feet behind the Queen, keenly leaning, stealing toward the Queen, a knife in hand.

As in she dashed, the shadow vanished; and Her Majesty glanced round, astonished at her irruption.

"Is Your Majesty alone?" she sharply asked.

"Yes, Miss Bayley. Why?"

Now, the shadow had not been distinct, so, suddenly feeling unsure, and reluctant to alarm, Eulalia merely answered that she had "seemed to see" a shadow behind Her Majesty....

"No," said the Queen. "Sit here.... Now, what is to be done? Ah! you wear the miniature I gave you! Let me see it?"

Eulalia took it from her neck; handed it to the Queen; the Queen tossed it into the fire.

"Now, what is to be done? Here we are in the gravest scrape, with eight or ten indelible disgraces threatening a Throne — You see, do you, into what a mess of mud many men may be sunk by one young woman's

unseemly mutiny and misdemeanour? The Prince's 'love' you are! his 'lucky star' ! — unlucky. Where he got the audacity — in my — in *my* presence — What did His Royal Highness mean by calling you his 'luck'?"

"I think the Prince referred to the black box, Ma'am. I seem to have brought to His Royal Highness no other luck." Eulalia was staring straight into the flame, aware of the raids of wind and rain upon the window.

"And this black box which you say that you digged up — is it this that blows people to pieces?"

"I have no knowledge of its properties, Ma'am."

"It must be this! in which case it is the Princess Elizabeth apparently who discovered its properties, and it is she who is his luck. She, poor lady, has been made quite ill by the disgraceful scene, and can scarcely speak — whether she will continue in the palace now I can't say; and, as for me — what *can* I do? I put it to you. If I send you away, the Prince seems to have a craving for you — What, by the way, made you withdraw yourself and hide from him? You have volunteered no statement — —"

"It would be long to explain, Ma'am."

"It is short to say it would be long."

"I am like that, Ma'am, I'm afraid: pray forgive me." The Queen's eyes dwelt on her weighingly. Then: "Well, if I send you away, this very fiery young man calls fire from heaven upon me; if you stay, no lady in the palace can — *I* couldn't, anyway. So what to do?"

"I can fly and hide without your sending me, Ma'am. That is the way out."

"*Will* you do this?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Oh, but you are not bad! You are not bad!"

"*Hark!*"

“What is it?”

“Didn’t Your Majesty hear anything?”

“No. It is the wind.”

“Perhaps.”

“Don’t be nervous. Listen — you shall have another of the miniatures, though they are precious to me — that one in the sailor-shirt when he was eighteen — And afterwards we can meet, you and I — and you will think you see him when you see me—”

“Your Majesty is gracious. I will fly this night, the Prince won’t find me, and on Wednesday I can use the ticket for America. But on one condition.”

“Oh, now, that spoils it, a condition. What is the condition?”

“Your Majesty must come to my apartments with me.”

“*I* must?”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“What for?”

“You will see, Ma’am.”

“*Well!*” — the Queen stood up. “But where is — everybody?” she said with wonder at the door, seeing the corridor desert as death. A small bunch of lamps above the hangings of the arch beshone its long forlornness.

But as they were going toward the arch, there was someone — a golden big being from below who bore a card on a salver. The Queen read “Sir Robert Barrington.” The next minute Eulalia was saying in her bedroom: “I have dreamt of being a Queen — and will be one a little. Your Majesty will give me your diadem and clothes to put on.”

The Queen had a tweak of fun. “While I descend to receive a certain man who awaits me in a state of — nature? An intensely proper man, too.” She appealed to heaven.

“I meant that we should change places,” said Eulalia, pale, pale. “I a Queen, you a nurse.”

“Now, the odd request!”

“It is the condition precedent of my flying.”

“But your real motive?”

“That is my affair, Ma’am.”

The Queen stared. “And if your sleeves are too short for me?”

“Not much, Ma’am.”

“I’ll do it.”

The transformations were made. But now the hairs gave a new air to the gowns, Eulalia’s a glow of gold and bulky club-head, Her Majesty a dusky mosque.

Eulalia followed to the door to say: “I — Your Majesty — feel that Your Majesty should keep your eyes open to-night.... I can’t help thinking that I saw some shadow.... The Prince of Wales has enemies — perhaps Your Majesty has, too...”

On this Her Majesty started at some thought, looking into Eulalia’s face, winch of late had flushed at the palace fare, but now afresh was utterly bereft of colour. She did not say anything, but held out her hand; Eulalia kissed it; and that was quaint to see the diadem curtsy and kiss the nurse’s fingers.

And now the Queen went hurriedly, turned back to say hurriedly: “I will come back: stay in there till someone comes,” and went hurriedly down the North Stair.

In fact, the shadow caught by Eulalia, though faint, had somehow brought Oyone into her memory, and also the remembrance of Oyone’s bitter face cut at the Queen at the cab-door in Chapel Street, East.

She peeped out, saw the corridor still a solitary street, and went creeping toward the Newmarket Parlour, taking care at the arch to peer and push the draperies.

Nothing there: but at the top of the four steps her heart started into her mouth when once more she chanced to catch the vanishing of a shadow.

But she had not been through the war, and through the Chinese, without learning audacity, so with a dash she was through the curtains, and a poker was in her hand, she searching the curtains, the furniture, all eyes and whiteness: for though she had said to herself in changing clothes with Her Majesty that she didn't mind dying, her life of no value, when it came to the point she was inclined to make a fight for life; and she explored the whole room, the obscure lobby beyond, a dark apartment beyond that: but did not think of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's chest.

Meantime, Her Majesty in a bijou drawing-room below had asked Sir Robert how she pleased him as a nurse, and why he appeared elated, to which he had answered: "At this moment, Ma'am, the mastery of the West over the East is being for ever settled. I believe — if it is not yet over — that yellow men are now being struck blind by hundreds of thousands in the air. I have just seen five—"

"*Blind?*" breathed the Queen.

"Am I to take it, Ma'am, that you are not aware that the Prince of Wales has Mr Chinnery's Redlike Ray?"

"No.... He is striking them *blind?*"

"I take it that he is."

"Now, how horrible!" — her eyes shut—" His poor hand is already thicker than itself with brothers' blood...."

"Forgive me," said Sir Robert: "I assumed that Your Majesty would know."

“No.... I know that he has a black box which blows to pieces.... The Princess Elizabeth apparently discovered that it had some property of explosion, then the Prince found it — Can this be the same? No! And yet — Of course, this ray has no explosive property?”

“Why, no.”

“Is the ray contained in a black box?”

“Yes, Ma’am. You may know that the Prince has long been seeking it, lately attempted to make one like it, failed....”

“Then, it *is* the same. How, then, could Elizabeth pretend — ?” The Queen paused, pondering.

Silence. Then Sir Robert, frowning at the floor: “I have besought this interview of you, Ma’am, under the pressure of a necessity to be frank as to the Princess Elizabeth. It appears that Her Imperial Highness has pretended more things than one, and this to the detriment of others. It has lately, for instance, come to my ears, that Her Imperial Highness is generally credited at Court with being the donor of the German Six Millions. Now, I have already had the honour of writing to Your Majesty the address of that donor; she is poor; I hoped that Your Majesty would deign—”

“The Princess Elizabeth,” answered Her Majesty emphatically, “virtually — yes, admitted — that she was the donor. Do you say that you doubt her?”

“I say so, Ma’am. The fact was not so, believe me. And my reason for being here is this: that the donor has recently disappeared from her lodging — I cannot trace her — she treats me ill — but I desire to say to-night to Your Majesty that it is a matter of national honour and concern that that royal person should be searched for, and comforted, Ma’am, for her many adversities.”

At the strong vibration of his voice, Her Majesty’s eyes sprang water by contagion, her face agitated, pale with indignation — against him, or

against Elizabeth.

“I will see to it,” she said; “and I only hope that you are perfectly certain of your facts, Sir Robert Barrington, or your tone in referring to the Prince’s betrothed will be thought improper. Pray tell me afresh the name and address of the lady in question.”

“I did not tell Your Majesty her name in my letter. As for the address, she is gone — impossible to guess why or whither — gone — leaving her few little linens behind — in a soap-box, Ma’am — in a third-floor back-room — in a slum, Maam—”

“Soap-box? Third floor?” — wonder was dawning, dawning in her eyes — “what address?”

“It is 19 Chapel Street, East, Ma’am.”

“Chapel? Yes — 19—” She remembered that that was the address whence she had taken Eulalia; and now there burst from her lips the question: “Is this donor a nurse?”

“She is, Ma’am.”

“Her name!”

“Eulalia Bayley, Ma’am.”

Her Majesty’s head rested on her chair-back, her lids shut down, and there was no speech there during some minutes.

“It occurs to me to add,” observed Sir Robert suddenly, “that it was this same lady who discovered the Prince’s prison. It was not the Princess Elizabeth at all, as was said. Miss Bayley, having discovered, came to tell me the address, and the Princess, who was at my place, certainly heard her. I have to be frank — these are facts. I say that the Prince of Wales owes his life, the nation at this moment owes its existence, you your life, Ma’am, I my life, to that young lady of the slum. I dare to say that, if she were an

Aspasia — and she is the chastest of the angels — still her royal soul would merit to share this Throne.”

The Queen opened her eyes to say: “I agree as to the ‘royal; the ‘angel’ I leave to your serener reflection; but I agree, I agree, as to the royal. She is here, by the way. You shall see her, *looking* royal, in my diadem.”

Sir Robert was all astare. “Miss Bayley — *here?*”

“This is her nurse’s costume! I left her — I’ll fetch her to Sir Robert Barrington’s parental embrace.” She bent her head with an underlook, as she stood up.

“One word, Ma’am! Does the Prince of Wales know — ?”

“Yes, he discovered her, and she had this Redlike Ray: he called her ‘his luck’ — no wonder!”

“So all will now be well? — one word!”

“Sir Robert Barrington, take it from me that the Princess of Wales cannot be a thing of spots and patches so long as *I* am Queen of England!” Her Majesty stood at her mighty height smiling at the universe beneath her chin; and up Sir Robert threw his eyes, as she moved on and out, bound for Eulalia.

But in the corridor just outside the door she found the Princess Elizabeth lingering — meek, and ill, and cringing.

“Mother—”

“*Judge!*”

Under that withering look the Princess stood a shrunken thing; but then, suddenly looking up, said: “I am not ignorant that I have been maligned to Your Majesty, for ‘quod est mihi suspirat’! but since ten minutes’ talk would completely clear Your Majesty’s mind of every misconception—”

“Stay: did you not declare that you had discovered that that box of Miss Bayley’s had the property of shattering men!”

Pinched now with shame, pain, apprehension, perplexity, the Princess stood pale, a sinner in the day of his calamity, an irked nerve, like worms of the deep sea squirming beneath burning beams.

“Yes,” she admitted, “I said that it shatters men.”

“But it strikes blind!”

“Precisely. It shatters the eye.”

“I see! — for it has not shattered mine. But tell me: did not Your Imperial Highness hear the address of the Prince’s prison from Miss Bayley at Sir Robert Barrington’s?”

“Yes — I did. I went there foreknowing that I should hear it: as I did.”

“Foreknowing.... And *you* Elizabeth, were the giver of the Six Millions, were you? *You* were that adored donor, complacently accepting the adoration of men?”

“No. I was *not* the donor of the Six Millions. I said so! But though I was *not* the donor, I *was*, so to say, the donator—”

“The donator.... Oh, Elizabeth, you are a charlatan” — in a voice low and cold.

Now, desperate, detected, the Princess’s lip whitened with spite. “If I am a charlatan, is not the world one mass of charlatanism? Hasn’t society been built upon charlatanism — archbishops, emperors — queens — ?”

“What has that to do with *you*? *You* repent, girl, and strive to make yourself worthy to be the wife of some pettier man than the Prince of Wales.”

Blood rushed now to the Princess’s brow, and she was about to vent something venomous against her love, the Prince, when he himself came rocking along the corridor in haste, causing the ladies to start at the Chinaman they thought they saw, at the pigtail swinging behind his dripping ulster, the hairless skull of paste....

“It is only I,” he called out.... “Well, it’s all over, Mother, invasion stopped, a new sun to-morrow morning.... I am pretty sick of it, and sad, God knows, yet glad.... Turned nurse, Mother?... Eulalia upstairs?”

Her Majesty started! “Let not the Prince of Wales forget that he is in the presence of ladies!”

“Scott, Mother, let us keep cool,” the Prince wearily said: “to-morrow morning I start a rational world, so help me, God. But, as you like rites, Mother, let me tell you to comfort you that that lady has been Princess of Wales since she was sixteen.”

One looking close would have seen the Queen dodge a little from it; she then stepped back to stand against the panelling, and suddenly covered her face with her hands, uttering a sound; the Prince, meantime, saying: “Elizabeth, forgive.... She ran away on learning that her husband was the Prince of Wales — public grounds, I suppose, for she’s very noble-minded — and then I heard that she was dead — had reasons to believe — forgive! She upstairs?”

Before he could receive an answer, a series of shrieks reached their ears from afar, screams of one *extremis* that seemed to say “*help! help!*” screams that affected some vein in the Prince to a piteous sympathy, his face instantly taking on an expression of intense pain, like one ready to cry. He flew. And, promptly as he flew, the Queen flew more promptly still... heart-smitten....

He soon passed her, however; and, on coming near the North Stair, could hear a press of feet pelting down the second-floor stair above him; one moment more and Oyone broke white into his sight, a narrow bright knife in her right hand, bright yet reddened, and three men impending upon her heels.

He, on dashing to that landing, was just in time to see that one of the men had caught her up on a landing below, dashing a little past her: upon which she dodged back sharp, and jumped the balusters to the bottom, some twenty feet, landing like elastic on her feet; the next instant she had slipped out of the palace, the men after, the Prince after them.

But they were still twenty feet off her when she was twenty feet in air. The Prince saw her boat's shape rising across the rain, caught a cry of "*Cranes!*" screamed down from the air, and immediately was away back into the palace.

But to the other three, lingering a little, a sudden thud sounded somewhere: for the boat could hardly have been forty feet aloft when it dropped like a stone; then all was still....

Meantime, the Queen had reached Eulalia through a throng of ladies and men, to find her still with the diadem on her brow, and with smudges of blood about her breast, stretched on a couch. Her Majesty stopped short a yard from the unconscious form, gazing, then, extending her arms, called out lamentably: "Oh, but greater love hath no man than this!" and a second later had Eulalia raised in her strong arms, and was away with her.

Without a sound now, her lips fixed in a vindictive way, she trotted, brushed past her son in the corridor, did not take Eulalia into Eulalia's apartments, but down the North Stair, step by step, heavy laden like a cat carrying her kitten, down and away to her own apartments, her own bed.

Feet, meantime, were speeding for the physician, but long ere he got there Sir Robert and the Prince, who were as good as doctors, had examined the breast-wound; and then, looking into one another's eyes, had smiled.

"Fought like two cats!" said the Prince.

The cuts in Eulalia's fingers were, indeed, the worst, so that by midnight she was convalescent, Her Majesty then alone with her in darkness, their

arms enfolded close, culling one another's roses, roaming in one another's country, discovering one another, chuckling at their delicious riches of love and kissing kinship, the clicking of the clock not more constant than their talk that lasted on and on into the dawn of morning.

The Queen, discovering the ring hung round the neck, said: "So this is the wedding-ring!"

"That's where I've always kept it!" — Eulalia laughed.

"But what a pair of pirates! Who could divine...? You were only sixteen?"

"Hardly more. Before I knew anything he had me off my feet."

"Say crushingly defected."

" — *Yes!* Ah, if I could only say those sorts of flashing swift things like you! — you'd think more of me."

Her Majesty held her hot and close. "Could I, sweetheart? I doubt it."

"Tell me *the truth*: do you love me *a lot*?"

"Couldn't you *see* — from the first! Sweet as honey — ! I have longed for a daughter-sister, and to think it should be you, you!... You'll make the fairest, silver-slipperdest, finest, whitest Princess of Wales that ever yet was! I'll be like an air-boat bathing in the sunlight of your hair and flying about in the sky of your eyes! But I do abhor a woman who throws away the severity and thorn without which there's no rose of womanhood, or preservation of a nation. So I had to try to dislike you, feeling you sweet in my liver, but never dreaming half your sweetness and high royalty — forgive — I humble myself — kiss."

"You make love something like him!" said Eulalia.

"Do I? Is he nice as a lover?"

"Aha — electric-like. But it is said that you are fickle: if ever you leave off loving me, I shall just die, or if you regret that I am not royal, or about

Germany.”

“I sha’n’t. The Prince of Wales has authority and prestige enough now to marry Sally-in-the-alley — if she be vestal. He can make Germany an English Crown-colony, if he likes. Don’t be afraid of that. If I am fickle, it is only to pretty dummies, not to real people. Ah! where you got the audacity this night — if you had got yourself killed for me—”

“Oh, I was wide awake! I seemed to recognise the shadow’s face — She was wonderfully lovely—”

No longer! — as the morning then dawning into the apartment revealed to three men in the Palace Park, who found the little scout dead on the ground, and Oyone still sitting, stiff and cold, at the boat’s hatchway, her hand on the ratchet-lever, her right eye, at the shock, having shot half out of the socket, her hard hat cocked awry....

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE COMET'S TAIL



THAT NEXT (SUNDAY) night, the night before the comet crossed our orbit, Her Majesty and His Royal Highness argued long together, wrestling together, alone in that Newmarket Parlour, on whose Last Supper table lay a document drawn up by him, she at one moment almost going on her knees, entreating, holding him, with “Don’t do it, my son — don’t do it.”

But he, pacing short about, his hands behind him, said again and again: “It is no use, Mother...”

“You depose your poor father, you see,” she said with water in her eyes that hung on him.

“Mother, you talk.... ‘Depose.’... What does it matter? Only for some weeks.”

“Oh, I’m afraid! afraid!... It will profoundly offend the British people, I know!”

“Mother, as if that mattered. I am the light of the world, Mother — for the moment. In fifty years’ time men will smile — I hope — at my little say as obvious baby-talk; but, for the moment, it is what *I* say that is wit, if they have the wit and grace to recognise my face and my voice, and the oil that anoints my appointed pate. And they will, I think — some time. My anticipation is that most of them will jump for joy. Anyway, it doesn’t matter. I have the whim and the power to do them good, and I will.”

The Queen, seated at the table, made of her hand a bed for her heavy head, saying wearily: “Isn’t it a Morrison Pill? I begin to doubt if the sorrows of men can be cured by any Morrison Pill.”

“But why do you, Mother? Oh, now, that seems rather unscientific of you. The question is: Who is Morrison? Can he see facts? If so, his pill is Divine, and nothing in the universe is the slightest use except just his pill. Do, do, let’s shun catchwords like death, shall we? Everything that’s done is done by a pill, Mother: to every effect its special effecter: that light there was not lit by vague exhortations to be good, but by a pill, by special measures; the sun shifts its mass 600 miles a minute, not more, not less, by a pill. And in the case of a man who catches cold, then from the skin the kidneys sicken, then from the kidneys the heart has it, the artery-walls, the circulation, the stomach, the nerve-centres, and the man pants a complex discordance — in such a case Morrison has to be rather a shrewd man to adapt his pill to the original root of all that; but, as to the root of the complex discordance of society, no such acumen is required: for it is known, it must be obvious to blockheads, that if a nation has no country — if Israel live in Egypt — if Englishmen live on a foreign England, making bricks and paying toll to foreign Pharaohs from Normandy, who own England — then in England you must have national discordance; and if Man has no planet, then you must have international discordance. What is amusing is, that war is regarded as the greater evil of the two! But war is not a great evil, or not a deep, because it is God’s penalty for a small wrong — for the wrong of the seizure by peoples of land that belongs to all; the monstrous wrong, bringing the monstrous penalty, is the seizure by only one individual of what belongs to all — and this is that simple catching cold, pitching into complex discordances, that needs no seer to heal it with a

pill. And it is not because it was not *seen* that it has not been healed, but because our England has been governed by lubbers and, blunted pundits.”

“Yes, I agree,” breathed the Queen—” I know, I agree” — reading the document—” but still — oh, listen to me. Some of these things — Tell me frankly, Teddy, does this clause here mean that you intend doctors to murder infants?”

“What else, Mother!”

“Ah!”

“Mother — really — that sigh does not touch me. Mother, is it wrong to kill a man? We kill a German, or a man who kills a man; but, of course, one filthy infant kills many. Only last night Li Ku Yu was proving to me that it is not wrong to kill two hundred million men.”

“Oh, the bloodthirsty — And, Teddy, you believed him?”

“Mother, I said ‘proved’: perhaps you did not catch.... Oh, Mother, how we distrust truth! — our only friend — our Blessed Saviour from all our sorrows and wrongs — how we dread Her Heavenly face in our barbarian brainlessness and irreligion—”

“Yes — I see that, too — that’s all right — but just think, Teddy — think of the shock to the moral sense of England—”

“Yes, but, Mother, the moral sense of England is not a fixed thing! It mayn’t be very high at present, but in six months I’ll have it raised—”

“Oh, Heaven, what shall I say to him?” — the Queen shook her bowed brow—” This about doctors is an interference with evolution — Oh, I’m afraid! — We mayn’t have the right—”

“‘Interference’” — the Prince stopped in his pacing—” Really, Mother, you bring out things now that I’m sure would never have passed your lips when I was ten! I suppose the brain ‘tires’ like steel-temper—”

“Meaning that I am getting old?” — with a dwelling underlook.

“Scott, Mother, no, of course — old, no — God forbid. But ‘interfering’ with evolution, Mother. How supremely — ! — They reckon ill, Mother, who leave God out: when we fly from Him. He is the wings; when we interfere with evolution, that, of course, is evolution interfering with itself — as you know.”

The Queen did not answer; but presently was muttering: “Well, it is all over now — no more little Teddy — the fledgling flown — the Spring-time over and gone — Oh, my God, I must be satisfied —— — —”

As she broke into tears, with tears the Prince threw himself at her mother’s knees.

All that night and the next forenoon he spent in interviews; and in the afternoon, as Mr Mackay, the Prime Minister, was making an oration in the Commons, intended to be impressive, in praise of the Prince of Wales’s services to the world, the Prince with fifty blue-jackets stepped into the House, and, standing by the Speaker’s Chair, said: “Gentlemen, this Parliament is dissolved; force at hand; my regrets for breaking in upon your grave deliberations.”

When they were gone, he locked up the House.

His Edict was in the evening papers:

“Men of Great Britain and Ireland.

“You know me, as I think I know you.

“I undertake (without prejudice to the Majesty of my Royal Father and Mother) the direction of our country, until the following sociological experiments be in the way, of being made:

“1. That Great Britain and Ireland be considered my private property by right of conquest.

“2. That navies be now abolished.

“3. That rates and taxes (except ‘death-duties’) be abolished; and ‘customs.’

“4. That citizens be liable to daily drill, including running and breathing, between the ages of five and fifty-five.

“5. That it be made a privilege to be British, citizens to receive a citizen-salary of 8s. a week from the age of seventeen in the case of males, of 15s. in the case of females, and of 85s. in the case of married couples between the ages of thirteen and nineteen. Old Age Pensions to be abolished.

“6. That such nervous diseases as insanity, epilepsy, drunkenness, paralysis and idleness be considered incorrigible.

“7. That the sale of love be made a felony.

“8. That our nation devote itself (*A*) to getting knowledge of God, and (*B*) to teaching it: these two activities, Research and Education, to be its two main activities, and to cost it dear, each one, in millions per annum.

“9. That each boy and girl learn at least five handicrafts, or ‘trades,’ three of them to be (*A*) Working in wood, (*B*) Working in iron, (*C*) Working in land.

“10. That the following be Government monopolies:

(*A*) — Education, (*B*) Milk-supply, (*C*) Electric-power supply, (*D*) Doctoring, (*E*) Publishing, (*F*) Amalgamation and Distribution of Businesses.

“11. That Members of Parliament be paid three thousand pounds per annum; and be Doctors of Science; and be workmen, having educated hands and eyes, personally acquainted with God; and be not bald nor toothless.

“12. That Doctors be twice consecrated (*A*) by a Bishop, (*B*) — by an Archbishop; and be Bachelors of Science; and be State-servants; and be taught in Consecration that ‘to the pure all things are pure.’

“13. That every species of clergyman now leave off uttering in public for money whatever has come to seem childish or savage to ordinary centric people, and begin to behave themselves like grown white men and good patriots.

“14. That the idea of ‘punishment’ be abolished. Animals are (apparently) electro-chemical, or V- chemical, machines, and the idea of ‘punishing’ a machine is senseless. Therefore let the mood of penalties; be more impersonal, purposeful and sociological, imprisonments to be lifelong, in general, and prisons pleasant places; and other penalties to be by fine, pain, shame, and death.

“Writs to be issued for a new Parliament within six weeks...

“Edward...”

Silence followed all that afternoon, That a tempest was mustering its thunders to empty itself everyone felt: but whether of anger or gladness was the question.

As for the foreign population of Britain, they little cared: for to them, already thinking of packing their trunk for the Continent once more, whatever the Prince might do was wondrously done: but it is certain that some nerve in every Englishman winced at his action, dazzling angel as he might be in the nation’s eye.

There was silence and musing behind closed doors....

Then wire-messages commenced to fly, men to collect in eddies working into whirlpools, and, near five, feet to steer toward the palace; then, as at the turn and uncertain time of tides boats on the surface lie any way, but suddenly determine to stem all one way, and men say, “*that’s* the way things are,” so before six the national answer to the Edict was known — by a tendency — by a current’s rush — by an ocean’s roaring. At seven South-west London was one welter and howl of heads.

A vociferation of “Teddy!” entered the palace, pervading it from bottom to top like a hot and restless presence unrelentingly, the King, Queen, Princesses, everyone, praying the Prince to present himself; but he would not.

It turned out that, just as when a lad outgrows his Eton-jacket, or a larva takes to wings, or a tadpole to the solid land, so the people now were perfectly sick and tired of the garrulous old gang, child-playing and play-acting with the lives of generations, quoting from one another’s “*speeches*” scoring points (loud cheers), “voting censures”; and now, suddenly, it was done, the Age of Sham, and let’s pretend, and baby babble; suddenly, in a day, the Age of Business was born; and now was the hour for joy-bells to jargon and jangle together, and hearts to join in being glad.

But the Prince said: “I am not obliged to go when someone says ‘Teddy’”; and was glad to get out of it when, at eight-twenty, a letter from Li Ku Yu was placed in his hand:

“Prince, I write by the hand of a woman who received me Friday night into her house at Forest Hill — 18 Bread Street — I blind-struck before being well in air, left leg broken, suicide to be at nine. It pleases me to think that you, Prince, will trouble yourself to cremate my body.

“I enclose scheme of the Europe by me conceived. What is good adopt, as God inspires. Blessed be His name.

“Li Hsi Hung and Yoshio Kanin have instructions that you, Prince, are next the guide of China. These will write you.

“If Chinese show reluctance to evacuate, strike one blind, here, there. Deal leniently.

“I, in your place, should keep at least one million in Europe, and mix. Meditate this. Great at the wood-lathe, land-culture. Or give Russia to Japan, China itself will respond to scientific institutions. Behead opponents.

“I have loved you well. Farewell.

“Your Younger Brother, “Li Ku Yu.”

It was then eight-twenty, and the Prince had a will to get to that address in Forest Hill before nine. But since the Princess could not now part from him, nor the Queen part from the Princess, they set out together.

It soon appeared, however, that it was hopeless to make way through the Strand.

The fact that that was the night of the comet's crossing — a thing long regarded with an exaggerated interest — packed the throng thicker; not a vehicle but the royal one was anywhere visible; advance was step by step; the Prince fretted and vexed; but still the car crawled, the crowd growled.

The night being very mistily dim, for some time they were not recognised, but in Kingsway it came, and then the situation became dreadfully distressing. Backward now nor forward they could not budge, and would soon have been exhausted, if they had not been rescued by a posse of police into the so-called Opera-house, where they were accommodated with seats at the stage-back, and there sat salved but wretched, hearing the speech of a Socialist on the Edict to a hall packed chiefly with working men — a meeting convened by the S.D.F. — the stage almost as thronged as the hall.

And there on prickles sat the Prince, resentment on his lips, very vexed with Her Majesty and the Princess, who had influenced him against going through the air.

It was only after some minutes that it dawned upon the consciousness of the hall that *he* was sitting there within it, and all at once the oratory stopped short at a call of “*Teddy!*” — then call upon call — negligible to begin, but growing great, and then big, august, like gales, and the guns of nature.

“Speech!” someone uttered, and then it was “*Teddy! Speech!*” shrieked with the ceaselessness of some machine urgently at work which shrieks: “*Speech! Speech!*”

The Prince’s teeth siffled his “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” his lids disdainfully lowered.

“Just to humour them, then, a little,” shouted the Queen, leaning near his ear which a clamour now filled thick as masses of javelins flashed in battle; “Yes, Teddy,” the Princess said with her head and eyes; “*Speech!*” shrieked the machine; and presently he, impelled, compelled, went stepping in a dove-coloured dust-coat with that quick little sway of his shoulders to the front, siffing, spinning a little stick pretty trickily quickly round his fingers.

Clamour! Hush! Silence!

“I confess, men, you rather astonish me clamouring *Speech* at me like this. Suppose I have nothing new to say? will you still want ‘*a speech*’? (“*Teddy! Yes! — That’s odd! That what you’re accustomed to! (“That’s it, Ted!”)* I see! The right honourable gentleman sat down amid loud cheers after having been on his poor old feet two hours — that the style? (“*You’ve got it, Teddy!*”) And if he had been on his poor old headpiece, no person on earth would have been one penny—” (— *of joy.*)

“But from *me* you look for solider stuff, do you? (“*We do! Teddy!*”) Hunks of bread and beef, do you? and honeycomb? (“*Right you are!*”) Well, I’ll see, you, on your side, trying to sympathise with me, remembering that if I live a little generation or so ahead of you, a leader *should*, and that if in anything you ‘differ from’ me, you are ‘differing from’ your sons, and your own future selves.

“Which I say so confidently, for the reason that I foresee that ‘*the speech*’ won’t have any of my opinions in. No opinions. You have heard that it has been said by them of old time ‘Every Briton has a right to his

opinion,’ but I say to you that no Briton has, least of all I, I think, since it has been proved that opinions are wrong — two opposite opinions both wrong — and we can’t have a right to a wrong. And again it has been said by them of old time, ‘Don’t believe everything that you hear,’ but I say to you, ‘Don’t believe anything that you hear,’ if it is the least bit abstruse: distrust, if you desire to foster strong minds; until truth is proved: and then believe vitally deep.

“Do you feel like me, I wonder, when I find that I have been believing something that’s not true? as if some thing or other a little behind and above me had been smiling all along at me, not unkindly, but very disdainfully — rather offensive. Hence’ *the speech*’ will be pretty brief. I think — no opinions, only ascertained facts; and then all practical politics, I think, touching the spot of your private lives and minds and happiness closer home than the fantastic politics you’re accustomed to; and then plain, I think — no foreign long words. Possibly I may want to use the foreign word ‘phenomena’ — is there some workman who does not know what’ *phenomena*’ are? (A voice: “*Want of sleep, Teddy!*”) Nonsense! that’s insomnia! No! ‘phenomena’ are whatever you experience, as when you sneeze; yes, or feel sleepless; or are conscious of the bliss of eating when hungry, of drinking after ripping long wood with the saw; or are conscious of being conscious, and of the oddity of such a thing; or conscious of loveliness — for this globe is only a bit of drift-log gadding down the river of being with meteor-stones and other streaming drift-log, and yet, see, she teams with gleams of beauty, tones of music, in blue eyes, in Geissler tubes, in the salmon satin of copper flushing in flame, in shavings, in that song of strong winds in forests which no tongue can sing, in the moon on wild white nights winging away among Switzerlands of cloud, like some white wildfowl with a tail all colours, and your heart’s enticed in you, and

suddenly you find that your mouth has kissed your hand — aye, and afresh the next night when it is calm she'll ravish you afresh, since age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety; or are conscious of sexes among animals — some sorts have more than two — and of their tumid moods and enthusiasms; or of the twenty million suns which you see over you at night — another twenty millions over you by day, which you see without feeling that you see; or of your own sun when clouds seem clustering round him, he looking some illustrious sultan-priest of the sultry countries, strutting in such stuffs as you cannot peer at without tears: dark then with excessive bright his skirts appear.

“Such are ‘phenomena’: all our impressions of the manners and customs of this panorama of lamps and Arab tabernacle of the Most High God, which we with our dog’s-eyes blink at a little, which twenty million years hence the sons of men will see better, and love more, but will never see well, nor love enough.

“Or possibly in ‘the speech’ I may use the word ‘philosopher’ — is there one man who doesn’t know what a philosopher is? (A voice: “Man who bears pain, Sir!”) That again is nonsense. No! a philosopher is a man who habitually sees things a little (a very little) as they are, and other people as they seem. Here we are in Kingsway, for instance, and someone may imagine that a minute hence we shall still be here: well, a philosopher is a man who laughs at such a fancy, seeing and feeling that a minute hence we’ll be away out where the North Sea is — if the North Sea itself, meantime, had not vaulted a thousand miles. (A voice: “What about a scientist, Sir?”) Well, a scientist laughs, too, when he thinks of it, but not so heartily as a philosopher, who has not merely swallowed truth, like the scientist, but truth is become the substance of his blood. A philosopher must, of course, be a scientist, but some quite distinguished scientists that I

could name have been laughably far from being philosophers, just as a national economist must be a business-man, but not every excellent business-man is an economist. Every living thing, in fact, is a scientist — that is, knows something — but here below only men are philosophers; so that the ‘scientist,’ the ‘expert,’ is the mere raw material of a man, and any studious goose can be a ‘scientist’: it is the philosopher who is the man, not a Bachelor of truth, but a married man to truth, a Master and Doctor of truth. And the inventor is a philosopher: for he not only acquires two truths, like the scientist, but uses them intimately like his tools, sees a relation between them, i.e., a new truth: becomes a wielder and foreman of truth.

“Is this, then, to be henceforth our national aim — to be philosophers, inventors, real men? And shall not this be the subject of ‘*the speech*’ — of all future ‘*speeches*’? In which case, shall not my text be those words so associated now with my respected ancestor, His Majesty King George V. ‘Wake up, England!’ It is to be assumed, of course, that His Majesty understood what it is *to wake up* — well, everyone knows: it is to become conscious that there’s a picture on the wall, a basin on the washstand, a sun, clouds — conscious of facts; and the more facts we become actively conscious of — the laws of tension in the picture’s string, the chemistry of the basin, the sun’s mass, age, speed — the more awake we are; the more we are philosophers.

“To wake up, then, is to become philosophers? cognisant of God? (A voice: “But, Teddy, we don’t much believe in no God, most of us!”) No? Well, I didn’t know that workmen still spoke in that way; though I know that one day when I was fourteen a ship’s-captain smuggled me — stole me — behind a shed at Hayling Island, and begged me with intense agitations never to believe if my teachers told me that there’s ‘a God,’ since, as a matter of fact, there isn’t one — a most amusing man — his furtive

earnestness! his leering secrecies! — and for three minutes I wouldn't let him rush away from me, until I had made him admit what rubbish he had hissed. Not that I had any quarrel with his belief — I knew that his belief was true — but I did think little of his English. He simply did not know what the word 'God' means, or it never would have entered his head to say that there's 'no God' — i.e.. no beyond of sense-impressions, no cause of phenomena, no maker at every instant of heaven and earth. What he believed was that that cause is nothing at all like what horses, or Mrs Jones next door, or Mrs Bobmbobm on Mars, imagines it to be; but he did not say what he believed, and he said what he did not believe, that there's no cause at all, which was hardly very glittering English. In fact, strictly speaking, these are the only three things of which every living being is perfectly certain, that there are phenomena, and a cause for them—' I, ' a world, and God. (A voice: "What sort of being can God be, Teddy? And whatever caused Him?") Well! But why stop me with impossible questions? Is it possible that you bother to ask yourself and me a thing like that? Cats ask that, when you see them looking at the moon; cats ask, bishops and witch-doctors answer; ancient (so-called) 'philosophers' asked (they were not really philosophers); but modern philosophers don't bother, knowing that what Life is for is more and more to enjoy and love God, not to guess at and comprehend Him, as priests and negroes pretend to do, since God is infinite, i.e.. infinitely inconceivable, x for ever — not, of course, meaning inconceivable to men, to whom everything is inconceivable, but I am speaking of creatures on spheres older than this, with their cocoanuts roomy as cathedrals, through which unceasingly streams of adoring music roll their roarings. And if someone wonders how I can know that to them, too, God is x for ever, I answer that this is known; but to explain how might make '*the speech*' tedious.

“You won’t bother, then, any more about what God is: you know that He is amiable, producing wheat to make man brisk and European, and fruit to make man amorous and romantic, and milk within the weasel’s teat for her weans. How fresh is the ocean of March-wind! Oh, how well after all is it then with men, and with the birds of the air that laugh aloft with the blasts that whirl them! And suppose your tongue was a hint too big for your mouth? or was fitted in with the littlest list and lee-way, as when novices saw box-wood? How irritating to frenzy the friction of the teeth on one side! But it is a nice, true fit, like a rotor spinning in its stator-tunnel with scarce a millimetre clearance-space: He is good, He has compasses, and callipers with verniers, and decimal micrometers, to build with His bricks the multiple eye of the fly. And you know that He is worshipful: that Expanse is His knapsack, and Eternity is His journey; and you know many things that He is — nothing like what He has been conceived — not a steed with wings of wind, nor a plant with stars for apples; not short, not long, not middle-sized; neither masculine, nor feminine, nor neuter; not living, not dead; no saint, though He has no failings; does not know anything, though He more-than-knows everything; cannot see, though in each billionth bit of a minute in each billionth bit of a millimetre He busies a billion billion fingers. (A voice: “But how do you know He’s not a horse or a tree, Sir?”) Because you are a horse and a tree (very like), and hardly look the kind of agent that can nudge an atom with your elbow to do its duty, or sprint foot-and-foot with electricity in a foot-race. (A voice: “Yes, but how do you know He’s not dead? Who? I haven’t the faintest idea what you mean. Have you yourself? How can anything ‘be dead’ unless it die? Only syntheses — i.e.. souls — can ‘be dead’; a tree can ‘be dead,’ i.e.. its soul, but wood and stone can’t ‘be dead.’ Or you may stretch and say a clock or a chisel can, ‘be dead,’ but not brass and steel. Really, it is time for

workmen to begin to use words with a little more ‘cuteness and gumption. (A voice: “But it was you yourself, Sir, who first said ‘He’s not dead.’”) I did? When?... Oh, well, yes, that’s true: I was saying He’s not this and not that, and, happening to say ‘He’s not living,’ I added, ‘He’s not dead.’ But it was absurd to add that, for if He never lived, He can’t be dead. ‘God’ ‘dead’? Queer meeting of words! — make a cat laugh! Some say the devil’s dead; some say he’s not dead; and that’s a quite legitimate controversy, since all things that we know with hoofs do sooner or later die. (“Kick the bucket,” the Queen whispered quick to the Princess.) But God’s above the devil, don’t you know. Stay: I’ll tell you something I know about God, something new to you, and pretty wondrous: listen: God everywhere at this instant is acting as He never anywhere acted before. Got that? I say never — a long time. He ‘acts by law,’ you think, He’s ‘the same yesterday, to-day and for ever’: well, no, those statements squint: we should say ‘He acts like Himself,’ and in two like cases would, no doubt, act in a like way, but has never had, will never have, the chance to. For you know, do you, that if nine of you light pipes to-night, you will do nine things that never were done before? That If you “braze brass on Monday and brass on Tuesday, if you make chloral on Wednesday and chloral on Thursday, between all the four will be a million million differences? A few days ago I was filing a piece of tin for a tenon template, and it must have cut my finger, for on looking at it through a glass, I saw some blood corpuscles; now, I guessed that, besides blood, there were very likely on it traces of several things — naphtha, tetrachlorinated ether, bichromate of potash — and I felt sure then that never in time and space had there been that particular meeting, or any precedent for that particular myriad of actions there taking place. And so in every case. Why, the right eye of the fly Y is a curio unique in the universe, dealing with light in a style quite new and unique. If you draw two circles

with a compass, or rule two lines, do you suppose they are alike? Eye them through a microscope, and one will be a drawing of the Andes, the other of the Balkans; glare at them through God's goggles close-gloating, and the pair of pencil-lines will be spacious like planets, with collapsing palaces, Persepolis and Serapis, precipices, Saharas, and sand-storms oversweeping teeming peoples — alike in nothing save in their uniqueness. Even in so confirmed a thing as an earth's journey each year has its own course and story, and on high-roads of ice between England and France the gorilla has strangled the sabre-toothed tigress. If I step up Piccadilly, at my every step trillions upon trillions of events occur in eternity, each medley of events unique in eternity — electrical events between my body and clothes, my boots and the pavement, electro-magnetic events as each boot-nail moves, magneto-luminous events, events of capillarity, of osmosis, of friction, of pressure; of surface-tension, of moment-of-inertia, of molecular vibration, of chemistry, of heat, of sound in Australia (for I shake the globe), events of a thousand forces, no doubt, whose name men will never name. How comes God to 'know' how to juggle with the emergency of this eternal diversity? What twisting Proteus is His foreman, swift-whispering wisdom at his tympanum? He is never at a loss, look, nor stops to con His law-book, but pat as pat He acts with spinning spontaneity. 'Spontaneity' as living things seem to act: for you know — unless some one of you is awfully thoughtless — that living things only seem to act spontaneously, one going on four legs, one on two, one behaving as a baby, a Bavarian, a curate, a eunuch, a lunatic, a woman, a man, a martin, a Mozart, a Martian, strictly in the strain of his make and nature at any instant. What shall we say, then? That God actually is what living beings seem to be — spontaneous? that God is living? We may say so, if we like; and then we will divide things into three kinds — God living; things like us lifelike, doll-like, dream-living, or

dream-life-positive; and things like iron dream-life negative, But that would be rather a queer way of putting it, since 'living' already has a definite meaning, meaning things like us; so you had better divide things into — iron life-negative; we life-positive, or 'living'; and God more-than-living, or x-being. God, anyway, you see, is not very 'dead.'

"I hope I so express myself that you see what I mean, though it is a little difficult in English of two syllables. By 'life-positive' and 'life-negative' I mean to suggest that everything is living — as I have long thought, and *said* — just as (we know) everything is electrified, things that contain more electricity than a certain stock or neutral amount being called 'electro-positive,' things that contain less 'electro-negative.' So I call men, trees, life-positive, iron life-negative, crystals life-neutral — in which case, of course, a moon is much more living than a man, the difference being that between heat and temperature, between momentum and speed, an ounce of boiling oil having much less heat than a ton of ice, though a higher temperature, and a bullet much less motion than the Severn, though more velocity; so a man less life than a mountain, though at higher 'potential' or pressure; and *death* is doubtless an 'earthing' (as electricians say), that is, a flowing back to the common earth-stock of the excess of life-fluid in life-positive bodies, through some break or short-circuiting of the vital dynamo. But now I am saying more than I know, so am certain to be wrong somewhere: though this, or something like it, you are likely to hear frequently repeated during the next fifty years.

"Well, but though God is x for ever, we must have some conception of God, though wrong: and civilisation consists in nothing but this — the getting of an ever higher conception of God through a broadening consciousness of His ways — through science — through being philosophers and inventors — through 'waking up.'

“And isn’t this desirable? Yes, for waking up, or becoming conscious, means happiness. Or is it necessary for me to prove that? It is easily proved. For happiness is a property ‘of life, isn’t it?’ *Life is sweet.*” You know that every insect or plant that has not had some mishap is happy, and, with one apparent exception, does not want to die. Well, but the trait of life is consciousness; so the more conscious, the more living: but happiness is a property of living; therefore the more conscious, the happier; and he was the most foolish of the foolish ancients who said, ‘he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow’: for knowledge, if it be *real* knowledge, and not the Chinese ‘knowledge’ of ‘scholars,’ is knowledge of God; and the more we know of God, the more we adore Him, and are happy.

“Yes, but mark this: that life with very little consciousness is still happy, if without mishap, if healthy. Does some one of you by chance know what health is? a singing hiccup of religion in your inwards? One March morning when I was a boy I saw from behind a hedge in the Highlands a girl come running, her hair and plaid fluttering on the winds; and when she chanced to pull up, half breathless, half laughing, not far from me, I think I never saw man so affected and sick with bliss. Up to God she threw her eye, gasping with a sort of fond reproach: ‘My health! Oh, I accuse You of love’; and when the mixed wind and water whistled and swamped the willow-whips sweetly by the water-brook, I saw her lover’s-glance go languishing and gush toward tears, she groaning ‘beloved,’ and then ‘beloved.’ Another day a Scotch meenister put into my hand a tract: and it was about a cobbler who sat singing in the sunlight; so someone asked, ‘Why are you always singing, Jamie?’ and what did the cobbler say? ‘It is Jesus singing, singing in my heart.’ There, again, was a happy life, though, of course, the ancient Asiatic whom he, a modern Scotchman, so familiarly mentioned had nothing to do with the matter, as is proved by — But, by the way, talking of proof, are we

going henceforth to be sensitive to proofs? For it is suasibleness that distinguishes high types from low, it being difficult to persuade a negro, for if you din into him a series of known truths, the deduction from which is an axiom, he'll say, 'That may be all true enough, but I think I'll still stick to my own way of thinking.' Apes are worse! Whereas scientists stand ever ready to cast for ever behind them at the breath of a proof the convictions of their lifetime. We must be attentive, then, to proofs, if we desire to be high types. Of course, if one's brain is degenerate with age, that mayn't be easy... but I, personally, address myself to the young: I am pretty nimble myself, and have, I confess, little interest in stiff knees and intellects. In some lands a son will say to his father: 'Climb me this tree,' and if the father is too decrepit, the son will hang him on that tree. ("Old Age suspensions," the Queen whispered quick.) The Chinese, on the other hand, worship their aged and ancients; but we here are hardly just now in a mood to adore the Chinese, and their oddities ("*Wipe them, out, Teddy*"); nor must we hang our aged; but support them with gentleness and patience.

"But I was saying that one of many proofs that that ever-charming adept whom the cobbler mentioned was never the cause of his singing is that blackbirds, singing-apes, Hindoos, sing in that same happy manner: so the cobbler was not happy because he was pious, but was pious because he was happy, knowing Who made him happy, and made life without mishap to be happy." Of course, he would have been happier if he had had *more* life, *i.e.*.. more consciousness — if, by a consciousness of anatomy, he had understood what an adorable miracle it was that he sat there without one ache in any one of his myriad bits; if, by a consciousness of geology, he had got into his nerves a sense of Eternity, and of the exquisite preciousness and romance of those days of his happy lifetime, to last not one millionth part of one click of the clock of God, while Saturn gads with whinings for life to

arise on her, nightly to eye those fires that fight her flying sky; if he had understood that his sky had not always been blue, nor his brook bright, but were the triumph of æons for him to sit and sing a little at, and still were becoming bluer, lovelier, for his sons' sons to tumble dumb and blub their bliss at; if he had felt himself, not the peasant of a village, but a civilian of that Infinite down whose bowels he was bounding with a thousand wings a thousand miles a minute that blessed day; then, you will say, the tone of his singing would have deepened, and from the pewit of penny-whistles and wren-twitterings would have grown to the roaring of oratorios and the vaunt of organs.

“Then, too, he would have been richer in pocket: for if, while he was making such music in his soul, some crude Jew of a duke had come saying, ‘Please pay me some rent — give me half the boots you cobble, and you’ll go to heaven,’ the cobbler would have answered, ‘What, old Rip, you about in this region of space? Sit down and let’s discuss it with some singing between.’ (*“Teddy! Hurrah! Teddy!”*)

“And suppose the cobbler had been freed of all fear? fear of to-morrow, of death, and hell?

“Suppose he had known that, so far from being an everlasting being, he was a being who could not last two seconds? that, beside those flights of spheres sweeping him on a heyday through the heaven of heavens, there was *another* scamper — of atoms — equally sweeping, inconceivably fleet, wheeling within him; that he was like a sand-form of the sand-storm, a rain of the gayest grains gyrating into such fugitive unions and dissolutions, that in four months he would be a totally different man — his ribs brand-new, his brain, his hair — and in four seconds by no means the same man: so that whatever calamity might befall him to-morrow would not be befalling — ,

but some body else — which only sounds fantastic since truth is in that strain, fairily romantic, Divinely wild.

“For the cobbler’s feeling that he was always the same being from the time when he was a quadruped, ‘crawling’ as a baby, then was a triped holding on to things, then was a biped, then in bent old age again became a triped with a stick, again tending to be a quadruped — this feeling was a pure illusion, due to the steady fleetness with which millions of cobblers succeeded each other like the flitting films of the cinematograph, each very like the last, yet different, whose steady swiftness causes us to suppose that we are watching one photograph of a horse jumping, when we are watching a hundred photographs; or like that steady swiftness of the globe which gave the cobbler the illusion of staying in the same place, when he was millions of leagues removed from where he had been a week before, and still with the swift’s wing was flitting through infinity: for the child is not the man; nor the father of the man; but the man’s ape-like ancestor.

“Suppose he had known this: that every stitch which he commenced some other cobbler finished, by an exquisite ‘division of labour’; that when he went to bed it was never to wake; and that what was true of him was true of his awl also, since at all instants all things are altering in a dreamland where all reels, and the dreamer is a dream, where everything is just freshly created, and there is no such thing as an old oak-tree, where an atom in this palm of mine may be from farther than the Pleiades, and ancients than the suns whose colliding belched this earth (for we are made of eternity, and have been at the ends of infinity), where the vast fallacy is to be flat and dull, and dull are you, and oh, dull am I, if we see this thing that we see, and are dull.

“But the man knew none of these truths: his nut was one vat of fatuous fancies: he was all in the revel and fairyland of Heaven, and thought himself

in common cobblerland.

“If he had been conscious of some of this — as I once said to a Scotch girl when I was a boy: she came up to London to see an aunt, and in church on the Sunday her aunt whispered her in a confidential way: ‘*That’s* the clergyman who married your uncle and me.’ The next year she came up again, and again in church her aunt whispered her: ‘*That’s* the clergyman who married your uncle and me’ — causing the girl to wonder! for it was quite a different type of clergyman. And again the next summer she came, and again was whispered in confidence: ‘*That’s* the clergyman who married your uncle and me’ — another clergyman! ‘Hallo,’ thought the girl, ‘the wish must be father to the thought here, and the thought illegitimate’; and I remember saying to her, ‘What did it matter? whichever of the three had married her, she would still have been unmarried the day after, since he, the husband, would have been a different he, she a different she’ (“And the clergyman a different it,” whispered the Queen quick): for plasm, the stuff that palpitates and suffers, *rages* into alteration.

“This consciousness, then, you will say, would have lessened the cobbler’s laughable vast egoism, giving him that humility and Nirvana which goes with adoring and true religion, would have freed him from fears, and enlarged his happiness.

“Yes, but don’t forget the main fact here: that *the cobbler was still happy* — without all this consciousness; and, *with* all this consciousness, the philosopher, Herbert Spencer, was *not* happy. Why? Because he had indigestion. (“*Teddy! Right there!*”)

“Shall we not say, then, that this healthy cobbler with Sankey and Moody singing in his heart was a better man than ten Spencers? more ‘*right with God*’ somehow? since happier? and a dog barking for gladness of heart a better being than ten Spencers? more right with God? Let us say this! as

Spencer would have said: and then you will better sympathise with some bits of my Edict. (“*Teddy! You are our man!*”)

“Are we not at present made of trumpery stuff? grumpy ugly stuff? — so many druggist-shops! hospitals! Nor is it difficult, I think, so to change it, that every lid shall lower with love in resting on every face, and that a pain shall be a strangeness. Let us try this, then: for it has already been successfully tried by barbarian tribes — Spartans — tribes of quite tiny brain-power compared with yours, but brains undrenched with quixotic dreads and crotchets of Laputa, seeing things level-headedly in daylight, not through mists and comic convex-mirrors.” (“*Teddy! Don’t stop!*”)

The Prince was glancing at his watch; and he said: “This minute the earth has entered the comet, men, and, you see, we are not poisoned, or anything. Oh, we are still infested with many dreads, like children and savages shrinking from things in the dark — let’s cast them off to-night, to confront with bright eyes this new era whose sunrise-beams stream on us.

“What must be the aims of that new age we have-discovered by analysing our cobbler: — first, health high to heaven; and next, waking up into philosophers and inventors: for, surely, the respected sayer of my text never meant: ‘Wake up *a little*, England! but for goodness’ sake keep one eye still shut awhile’?

“To be philosophers and inventors, then: for which you must have leisure, and you should have wealth. To have leisure I see that you need only one thing — a country of your own: to have wealth you need, I think, two things — a country of your own, and some new tools, by which you will make in an hour what you now make in two. A country of your own I will give you (“*Teddy! Hurrah! Teddy!*”); the tools you must invent for yourselves: I undertaking that whoever of you produces a really good new tool I will make of him a strutting duke.

“A little quickening of our wits’ activity will do it all; and we have it in us, I think. When they were digging the Simplon tunnel, they could make no headway, the rock was so tough, until some genius engineer suggested ‘Try English labour’; and then the tunnel was soon digged. Well, that’s your Englishman all over. Say to him, ‘Work like a serf with your hands, and I’ll give you three pounds,’ and he’ll answer: ‘Right you are, mister’; but tell him, ‘Work a little with your head, and you’ll see heaven coming down out of heaven,’ and he’ll answer, ‘Go on, what do you take me for?’ Yet I think that that grit and grimness which digged the tunnel will bring us out top-boy when it is forced into the direction of the discovery of truth. (*“Right! Teddy!”*)

“Wake up, then! Why is there already dissent at my suggestion that every child shall acquire five trades? There’s no difficulty. I myself know ten or twelve. I wonder if you men and women understand that those of you who can’t work in iron are uncivilised? this being the stock definition of civilised man—’ man of the iron age.’ Or do you suppose that rolling in a motor-car has any tendency to civilise a countess, any more than to civilise the poodle rolling on her knee? The question is, Can she make a motorcar? if she can’t, she is ‘out of it’ as regards motor-cars, though she roll till she’s a rolly-poly. For surely, if a man or woman can’t make castings, can’t even soften, harden or temper steel, can’t anneal, case-harden, upset, weld or braze iron, doesn’t even know how to make a chisel, a reamer, or a countersinker, has no kind of truck with iron but when he cuts his crust, how can he be said to belong to the iron age? he belongs to the stone age, and is essentially hairy, as he would admit with horror on a desert island, seeing there his face in the glass of God, and himself rapidly lapsing to frank savagery. And there are many thousands of men and women who consider themselves cultured — like a young man whom I knew, who in a

beautiful poignant voice would repeat from some old Greek or Negro minstrel named Homer the Farewell of one Hickson to his wife Anne (“He has forgotten her maiden-name of ‘Dromache,’” the Queen whispered quick to the Princess), of which young man I discovered that, to the delight of the solar system, he did not know how to cut a screw, or tap a drill-hole — not even a suspicion of what education *means* having ever entered the heads of these essentially Chinese — Korean — Laputan — and profoundly uneducated Simple-Simons. Nor can I myself boast of culture, for, never having learned to work in land, I am in that respect nothing more than a nomad of the days of Abraham. However, mankind from Japan round to America and back is now about to ponder the sense of this word ‘educate,’ and to relearn its ABC in a new mood.

“Be quick, then! Wake! Why already is not every man, woman and youth among you an electrical engineer, say? (A voice: “Tall order, Teddy!”) Apparently, you know little of the matter! There’s no difficulty — a little semivoluntary quickening of yourselves. Anyone who will give up novels for three years can be that. As to novels, that, I think you will admit, is all nonsense, and I undertake that novels go under in England, if I do not. Anyway, you get not one out of me for ten years, by which time, I expect, your tastes will have changed: for, if I delight to spend my time in making an experiment, and you in mooning over George Meredith or Jules Verne, that’s not because I am the nobler born, but because I have been subjected to noble influences, and you to low. Subject you to the same, and you, too, will soon choose the infinitely romantic truth rather than the more or less ninny, sham-romantic myth. And just imagine that instead of every English man, woman, and schoolgirl writing a “novel,” as at present, each began to regard it as disgraceful to pass through life and die like a sheep without

having, for his part, invented something, seen something really novel and peculiar to his existence — what a giddy gay England *then*!

“For consciousness of truth, I say, since it is consciousness of God, is joy: and to make a joyful noise in our hearts to Him, not because of any hotch-potch of Hindoo, Hebrew, Chinese and African fancies in us, but because of facts ascertained by white toilers — to make a joyful noise to Him — we can’t perhaps chant yet for a century or two, but already can kick up a sort of joyful shindy in us — and that’s life, mind, that’s delight, that’s civilisation, that’s cultivation, *that’s* waking up — blessed be His Name, faithful is He in all His ways. To this, then, men, I call you, and come tapping at your doors. The midnight time is past, or passing, for man, some spray and prickles of the dayspring already surprise the night: be up to witness the thing that the sunrise will be.

“I’m afraid the midnight and sunrise metaphor doesn’t quite run on all fours. Never mind, you understand. Goodnight. ‘The *speech*’ is speechified.”

For some moments after this all the hall sat mute; but soon after he had moved, in one corner of the stalls a chanting, low and slow and moody, started in which the words were discerned:

“He has saved us from harm”; and it ran like alcohol on fire, rose and rose, from droning to roaring, and suddenly screamed, every creature present leaping to his feet, as a tempest like Pentecost seemed to seize and possess the place, inflaming every breast, blazing in every brain, wrapping the platform, too, in its rapture, catching in its passion Her Majesty, too, who sprang and sang, catching in its rhapsody the Princess, who, spitting fire from her eyes, sprang and sang.

And once more, when it was over, it rose low, to be luxuriously rolled in the throat with rocking bodies, solemnly like a nocturne droned, and rose,

and rose, and roared, and suddenly screamed:

“He has saved us from harm With his dreadful flails, With his stretched-out arm...”

The Prince alone was sitting, his lids lowered, thinking of Li Ku Yu.

Children of the Wind (1923)



Children of the Wind was first published by Grant Richards in London in 1923. Despite a conviction for child molestation in 1914, Shiel managed to maintain a professional relationship with Richards, who continued to publish his works. It is not known what exactly Richards knew as Shiel had not been honest with him regarding the details of the conviction. Shiel remained unrepentant about his sexual relationship with his twelve year old step-daughter and his second marriage to Esther Jewson collapsed in 1929 due to his sexual interest in Jewson's young female relatives.

In the years before he wrote *Children of the Wind*, Shiel had become increasingly interested and active in radical left wing politics. He had translated pamphlets for the Workers' Socialist Federation, which was a political party that had emerged from the early twentieth century Suffrage movement, led by the prominent communist, feminist and anti-fascist, Sylvia Pankhurst. *Children of the Wind* centres on the tale of a white woman becoming the 'Queen' of an African tribe and the subsequent adventures of her English cousin, who goes in search of her. It is an action-packed novel, although unfortunately it also contains many of the colonial and racially prejudiced beliefs prevalent in Britain at the time.



The first edition

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CHILDREN OF THE WIND

BY

M. P. SHIEL

Author of "The Yellow Danger"



LONDON
GRANT RICHARDS LTD.
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1923

The first edition's title page

I. ROLLS



MR. R. WARREN Cobby writes in his diary (June 8th):

“Tea in the Carlton tea-room with Jeffson of the F. Office, when in walks Stead of the Bank, with a man of Greater-British type— “flash” hat, rather handsome person, black-bearded, blue-eyed, brown-baked — forty-five, fifty. Stead, on seeing me, throws up a finger, as who should say ‘the very man,’ and, coming to my table, introduced the colonial as ‘Mr. R. K. Rolls,’ adding: ‘By special request, Cobby.’

“‘Mr. Rolls knew of me,’ I remarked.

“‘That’s so, Mr. Cobby: happy to make your acquaintance,’ Rolls said, and we four had tea and talked, or three of us, for the tongue of my Rolls was still: not so the man’s eyes though, I noticed, for I think that nobody entered, went out, or moved in the place, that he did not see it — apprehensive, haunted perhaps I might say; and though one gets a general impression from his air and gait of a laggard and languid swagger, some of his motions and glances are as sharp as a panther’s — middle-sized man, straight in the legs, his blue eyes broody, sleepy — sleep of the spinning-top, perhaps — and written all over him ‘*Experience*.’

“He interested me — apart from my curiosity as to what the man wanted to know me for.

“‘You know Australia, I think, Mr. Rolls?’ I said to him.

“‘Oh, yes,’ he answered absently, eyeing under his brows a man who stood up some way off; adding: ‘African mainly, Mr. Cobby.’

“Stead put in: ‘Explorer, I think we may say, Mr. Rolls?’

“‘Well, not quite,’ Rolls said, twisting now quickly away to peer at someone coming in, then adding with a twinkle in his eye: ‘never mind, “explorer” is near enough.’

“Then Jeffson invited the trio of us to Jermyn Street, and thither the journey was — stupid waste of time and life! Inane people these super-clerks, and all their kind ‘about town.’ When they have forgotten Greek, there is nothing left in them, and before they forget there is nothing. Then, why associate with them? I won’t; not good enough: they waste life. Fifty of ’em aren’t worth one Rolls, I think. Dinner with them at ‘The Troc’; then ‘The Empire,’ to show girls in tights to Rolls, who has been in England only two weeks; but Rolls said that he was accustomed to see ‘more elegant’ legs than those without any tights on. Oh, the ‘Empire’! What’s Empire to me, or I to Empire? No, I was not amused. Then, walking up Regent Street, Rolls with me, the other two ahead, says Rolls: ‘Do me the honour to dine at my expense to-morrow?’

“‘The honour’ — ‘at my expense.’ If he had not said ‘at my expense,’ I should no doubt have said no, but this naïf, and so true, way of putting it won me, so that I answered: ‘Since you wish, Mr. Rolls. Why do you?’

“He looked about and behind before he answered: ‘You see, I know you better than you know me. Quite five years ago I did business with you, but you’ve forgotten; seen you several times before to-day. Then I’m a bit of a thought-reader in my way — “psychometrist,” they call it here — seen enough of that out there’ — throwing his hand toward the Equator: ‘I could tell you quite a lot about yourself.’

“‘Tell me something,’ I said.

“‘For one thing,’ he began, and then, quick as a wink, he span on his pins, calling out sharply to a man now close upon us: ‘Well, sir! How can I be of service to *you*?’

“I saw a big man in a cloak, whose collar covered his ears, he standing now with shoulders shrugged up high, his innocent palms expanded, a picture of French astonishment, and says he to Rolls: ‘Mister addresses himself to me by chance?’

“Rolls made no answer, peered into his face, looked him up and down, then said to me: ‘Come on’; on which the other laughed, with some effort, I fancied, and crossed the street, as we moved on.

“And presently Rolls remarked: ‘You see, we are of interest to others’; and when I asked him if he really believed that that man had been eavesdropping upon us, he answered: ‘I know.’

“‘What for, though?’ I asked him.

“This he did not answer, but said: ‘I was to tell you something about yourself: check me, if I go wrong. Age thirty-two. Residence, Tillington, Sussex. Living alone with a sister. Man of means — no need to swot at work. Yet you do. Hard worker, energetic, always glancing at the clock. If I didn’t know it otherwise, I could spot it from the roan red of that hair of yours, from the style it grows upward and backward in a thicket of wires that curl, or from that fresh flush of your colour, or from the style your elbows work up and down when you walk, like an engine on the jig. Stern worker. Proud of your head-piece. Proud of your Age and Continent. “Nourishing a youth sublime with the fairy-tales of Science” — quotation from a poet. Now engaged for the Government at Teddington in discovering the best camber for aeroplane-wings. Fond of flight, of rush, of getting things over and done. *I* know you. For wealth you care nothing — —’

“‘Don’t I, though, by Jove,’ I said: ‘love wealth — any form of Energy. Wealth is stored Force, Power, that is, God, and is well named *goods*; is potential Energy — Power to do good to oneself and others.’

“‘Well said,’ Rolls muttered: ‘yet you have two or three rich relatives, one of them’ — he flung a flying glance behind— ‘an emperor of wealth — a cousin — and little you bother about him, because he’s not of the intellectual set. And you have another cousin — female cousin’ — now he put his lips to my ear— ‘a *Queen*, this one — —’

“I could not help laughing out at the earnestness with which he imparted this absurdity; and I said to him: ‘No, there the “thought-reading” is miscarrying: no female cousin — certainly no queens in the family.’

“He did not answer at once, but then suddenly patted my arm, saying: ‘I may see fit to tell you more when we are better acquainted.’

“Soon after which, having arranged to meet to-morrow at the Hotel Cecil, we parted; and I walked back home by the Embankment under a black sky bright with Sirius and the three present planets.”

II. ROLLS STABBED



THE NEXT NIGHT Cobby and Rolls duly dined together; and Cobby writes of it:

“Such a care about the selection of the table! for Rolls must have one in a corner, whence to survey all the *salle à manger*.

“When this had been obtained, I showed him the note that had come to me by the morning’s post, on which Rolls produced spectacles, saying, as in apology: ‘I have the best of eyesight in sunlight, Mr. Cobby, but artificial light bowls me over for reading purposes.’ Then he muttered over the note ‘type-written,’ and read it half-aloud drawingly: ‘The man, R. K. Rolls, is nothing else than a common jail-bird, well-known in the Rand as an assassin, a slave-trader, a swindler and thief, a scoundrel of the deepest dye. To be connected in any shape or form with this dirty rascal spells certain disaster. Be warned in time, Cobby. A well-wisher.’

“Looking at Rolls, as he read, I saw his eyes twinkle. ‘Oh, well,’ he said, taking off the spectacles, ‘you evidently don’t reckon me up to be as black as I’m painted, or you’d not be here.’

“I told him no, that such a communication is without weight for me.

““Then, we need say no more about it,’ he said, and: ‘May I keep this pleasant missive?’ and, on my saying yes, put it inside his watch.

“Then I had quite a pleasant evening with him. Though not exquisite in culture outside, he exhibits considerable shrewdness of wit on things in general, a sound sense, a trained intelligence, and such a storehouse of memories and world-lore as render him really an entertaining person, his

lips once unsealed. I found myself liking, admiring, him — so much, that when he expressed a wish to feel what flight is like, I immediately offered to take him into the air, he to come to-morrow to the aerodrome. It is not true that he is a rogue: I know better. Of the anonymous note he said nothing more until the dinner was over, we then smoking ‘long Toms,’ as he called them, cigar-sticks which he produced out of a tube of leopard-skin, his dress-clothes being constructed with quite a number of pockets apparently; and now he said to me: ‘I suppose you couldn’t reckon up who it was sent you that pleasant missive?’

“I said no, how could I without data? on which he, his voice dropping to secrecy: ‘That comes from a cousin of yours.’

“This had the effect of tickling me, and I said, ‘Really! You people the world with my cousins, Rolls?’

“‘I have only mentioned two all told,’ he answered— ‘a male and a female.’

“‘I think I have only one cousin,’ I told him— ‘a Yankee — millionaire — man named Douglas Macray — —’

“‘Let’s talk low,’ he muttered; and added: ‘*he* is our man, sir.’

“‘Well, but,’ I said, ‘the man does not know me’; but then, remembering something, I mentioned that he knew *of* me, since, some years ago, I got from him an invitation to a ball, but didn’t go; on which Rolls said: ‘Aye, always giving big parties, fond of fal-lals and high jinks, especially in Paris. You’ve called him “a Yankee,” but he’s only half that, since, as you know, his mother and yours were English sisters, and he has mostly lived in France. Curious you never chanced to drop across him. I’ll introduce him now to you.’”

“On this Rolls picked something from a pocket, and, holding it within his fist, brought his fist into contact with my palm, on which he left a disc

of cardboard, and I saw the photograph of a man of thirty or so — bearded — something hard-headed, cynical, self-seeking (I fancied) — man of some draught and horse-power, tearing toward his own ends — or that was my impression — something flat and flabby about the upper lip, as though he lacked upper teeth....

“Rolls, taking back the photograph as clandestinely as he had handed it, said: ‘That’s Douglas Macray — that’s the gentleman. Never saw him in the flesh myself: but that’s he.’

“‘Well, what about him?’ I asked. ‘Why are you and he bad friends?’

“‘Because’ — he tossed down his ‘long Tom’ with emphasis— ‘I refuse to be bribed by his dirty hand; and because he drops to it why I am in England, and wants to bottle me up.’

“‘Why are you in England?’

“‘Mainly to get *you*.’

“‘How do you mean “get” me, Rolls,’ I demanded.

“‘Get you out yonder, — he nodded away toward one of the continents.

“‘Get me to go to Africa?’ I asked.

“‘That’s about it.’

“‘You won’t do that, Rolls,’ I told him.

“On which he muttered, with his eyes cast down: ‘Leave it at that for the present. Maybe when I see my way to put my cards down, you won’t be off it. A Red Kaffir *inyanga* — that’s a doctress — predicted that what I am now on would come off all right, though I might die in the attempt, said she. Well, you don’t believe in *inyangas*, and yet I could tell you a tale or two — —’

“‘That’s right,’ I said, ‘tell me tales ... though, of course, *I* am trained to believe in white people, not in black.’

“But this as little influenced his conviction as it unfixed the sculpture of those tough and weather-beaten wrinkles of his face. ‘Well, no doubt,’ he answered: ‘but it appears, Mr. Cobby, that we are made with *two* minds — the conscious mind has talent, and finds things out, but the subconscious, that’s really the cleverer fellow of the two, has genius, and *knows*, without swotting to find out: this being true, not only of humans, but of horses, dogs, elephants. I know a little Basuto pony that foreknew the date of his master’s death — he now proceeded to relate several tales of African occultism, but without presenting any proof of their truth, while we each smoked another ‘long Tom,’ he finishing up with the advice, ‘Don’t despise the negro, Mr. Cobby,’ and with the statement: ‘After all, the savage is ahead of the civilized.’

“This dictum disappointed me in him, as I had thought better of his intelligence; but even here it turned out that he had a meaning, and he can be very convincing when he sets himself to prove. He said: ‘That, to you, is all-out nonsense, no doubt. But reflect a bit: what is it that all are after — all dogs, men, Martians, angels? “Happiness,” you’ll say, since nothing else can possibly be of any interest to any life for one instant. Yonder hangs a Christ on his Cross: what’s he there for? The good of others? Sure thing: but that’s what makes *him* happy, look; and he bears the nails, that “he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied,” or happy. Or look at that man yonder flying from a prairie-fire — staring he is, crazy for life; then look yonder at that other holding a revolver at his forehead: both flying from sorrow, both after happiness. Same with you brooding in your laboratory: for *you* the discovery of truth spells happiness, and your interest in truth is an interest in happiness: for why should you care more for truth than for untruth, for pudding more than for putty, for any one thing more than for any other thing, but that truth and pudding make for happiness? Happiness

is the aim of the race of life; and, of course, those nearer the aim are ahead of those not so near.'

"To this I readily agreed, since really it is an axiom; but asked him if he considered savages happier than I; to which he answered: 'No, not than you; but such as you aren't Civilized Man: you're an accident of civilization. Like you are half a million, say, in England — foreigners looking on at the forty million real English inspanned to the buck-waggon of England, dragging at the trek-tow, sweating great drops. Well, of course, that's not practical politics; that's no chop any road: Unhappy is the name of it. Hence, when the crew of the *Endeavour* made acquaintance with Otahito, some of 'em did a bunk, thinking: "No more England for *us*." But when I say that the savage is "*ahead*," don't take me for a fool. Here is a river, the river of life' — he drew it in pencil on the table-cloth— 'and here is the sea to the East. Let the sea represent Happiness, Bliss and no end. Well, the river runs East to A, and at A is the savage; but then it winds back West toward B, and between A and B is the civilized: evidently A is nearer the sea, and so ahead of B, but B is further on nearer bliss, and so ahead of A. At B, as I pan it out, the river breaks into cataracts and rapids — revolution there — civilized man grabbing the planet's crust out of the grasp of the foreign onlookers who now hold it, and thence the course toward Happiness may be rapid, and the savage soon be nowhere in comparison. The same may be true of the two minds — the conscious, and the subconscious. As life in becoming civilized, has lost something for a time, so, in becoming intelligent, it has lost something: dogs and horses are more psychic, or "sensitive," as they say, than men, and will see an apparition quicker, and black men more than white men. But maybe when the river of Mind turns again toward the sea, men may be more psychic than any dog for being more intelligent, just as they will be all the more happy for being civilized.

So I pan it out. Don't look round suddenly: one of the enemy has entered — the man at the table behind that lady with the diamond spray.'

"I glanced, and saw a young man, who might have been a Neapolitan count — handsome, but for his loutish, foul mouth. He was in talk with a garçon, and seemed to be thinking of anything but Rolls.

"‘One of the enemy,’ I said: ‘who are they? and — how do you know?’

"‘Agents of Macray,’ he answered, ‘who is out to get me, and it's no chop when a rascal has power. How I know? By the movement of an eyelid. Besides, I live here, and so does yonder carrion-crow.’

"All this I found difficult to realize; and, reverting to the previous question, asked him if he was sure that the savage is the happier.

"‘Down to the ground sure!’ was his answer: ‘your savage is likelier to die sudden, I admit: but you come with me to Basutoland, that belongs to the nation like the air, and for every rag and groan in Glasgow or Bethnal Green you will see a grin of gladness, and a toe that dances. “Here,” the Barotse say, “hunger is not known.” Or come with me — Yes, I think I may tell you now of another country: Wo-Ingwanya — but don't pronounce the “I,” Ngwanya say; the people are Wa-Ngwanya; one of them is a Mo-Ngwanya; their language is Se-Ngwanya. Far up country — South-Central Africa — not far from the Indian Ocean— “Children of the Elephant,” they call themselves, either because they are Zulu in origin, or because of an enormous rock, bigger than London, that stands on four low legs; but I in my own mind always call them “Children of the Wind,” because in those uplands the breezes of heaven don't cease from streaming through their feathery head-dress, breathing upon their faces health and freshness — at least, they didn't during the weeks I was there — and sometimes terrific tempests visit them. It is sixteen years since I first heard of that country, and then I heard one and another assert that no such country

is on earth; ey, but there *is* that country, for not nineteen months gone I was in it with a caravan of negroid Arabs, and saw the men inlay metals — noblest lot of blacks I've dropped upon. They trekked north, like Umzilikaze; but long before Chaka's day — before any Zulu King whose name is known to us; yet are so conservative, that I could still drop to much of their lingo. Well, those darkies are in Paradise in comparison with St. Pancras — scream with laughter of heart in the face of sun and moon, their moochas of ox-tails and plumes of ostrich and saccaboola feathers, that stream on the breezes, seeming to scream with laughter, too — so long as they don't get killed, look, by enemies, or by "our mother" — that's their ruler: for *she's* a devil of a despot. "Our mother" owns each inch of Wo-*Ngwanya* for her people, and is paid rent for it; no man may say "this acre is *mine*"; and that's where the laughter comes from, if I am a man that knows anything. Eh, but she's a hot un, is "our mother"; *I* ought to know: the beggar sentenced me to death — ugliest bit of road I've yet got over. If a Mo-*Ngwanya* girl slips, without "our mother's" consent, that's a sure case of "off with her head" — harsh, bloody. And who do you think "our mother" is?" — here Rolls laid his hand on mine, hard, with the knuckles whitened— 'You'd never guess; hear it *now*: girl of seventeen — eighteen by this time. *White* girl. Hear her name: *Spiciewegiehotiu*.'

"His voice had risen and risen, his eyes had brightened, and he uttered this procession of a name, 'Spiciewegiehotiu,' in such a crescendo of loudness, that most of the diners glanced our way. It seemed to be uttered in defiance and challenge, the defiance of one breaking through long restraint, for at the same time fire shot out of his eyes toward the Neapolitan-looking man seven yards away. Immediately afterwards he smiled on me, nodded, rose, and saying: 'Back in two minutes,' walked away out.

"A minute afterwards I saw the foreigner also saunter out.

“Well, Rolls did not return in ‘two minutes’ — I wished that he would, for just then I felt sick at my second ‘long Tom’ — horridly strong and raw — and presently I became aware of some commotion in the entrance-hall west of me — running feet, calls — so, among others, I hurried out to see, and there by the Office stood a mob, craning to see something in their midst, the hotel-people fussing about, begging them to stand back.

“I, being taller than most, soon caught sight of a form— ‘the enemy,’ the Neapolitan — lying unconscious, and one of the diners, probably a doctor, kneeling near, whom I heard say: ‘Only a faint — right arm broken’; and I understood that the injured must have been on the way to seek aid for his arm, but had fainted before reaching the portal.

“Some moments afterwards my left eye caught sight of Rolls strolling in from the inner, south, *salle*, and saw him throw himself upon a lounge at the inner side of the entrance-hall.

“When I went to him, I saw him rather pallid under his tan, rather scant of breath, and, showing me a dagger, he told me, ‘I went to the lavatory — thought myself alone — he stabbed me in the back with this — I cracked his arm.’ He showed me some blood on his fingers.

“‘Come,’ I said, and led him toward the front, where a crowd and two constables were now watching the foreigner being carried into a cab for hospital; and Rolls I soon had in a cab for Essex Court, where, after ‘phoning Dr. Hammond to come, I undressed Rolls; but the wound, an island in an ocean of tattooing, I at once saw to be of no importance, so ‘phoned Hammond not to bother, and dressed it myself.

“‘But what about the legal aspect?’ I then said to Rolls: ‘this is London in Europe.’

“‘Oh, the incident is ended,’ Rolls said, putting on his vest: ‘it’s no chop my charging him, and he, you may bet, won’t charge me. May the stink-cats

all catch it as hot, and may the devil get their master, his son.'

"I gave him to drink, and he stayed with me, telling tale after tale of venture and escape, funds of lore, till eleven, then went back to the hotel, saying he'd be at the aerodrome at two, I soon to hear more of his Spiciewegiehotiu, or 'Hot Spice,' I called that lady, 'our mother.' Rolls is a man, and not at all a bad sort."

III. ROLLS LAID LOW



THE NEXT DAY Cobby duly flew Rolls over London; after which the relation between the two became more established. Rolls spending several evenings at Cobby's chambers, bringing along his own peach-brandy — for himself to sip, alcohol being not often good enough for Cobby; and it was when Cobby was one evening expecting Rolls for the fifth of these visits, that he heard his door-handle wrenched, his door slammed, and on rushing out to his hall, found Rolls there standing with his back on the door, short of breath, and blanched.

“Hurt, Rolls?” Cobby cried out.

“Don't think so,” Rolls answered on a pant. “They got me on the stair — rushed me from No. 7 door.... Two I treated with the naked mauleys — the third chased me up — fired twice — air-gun — tore my sleeve, see — they wear silent shoes — I hadn't time to draw....”

Indignant blood rushed to Cobby's forehead. “*We*'ll do the attacking!” he cried, running in, to return with a small Colt's.

“You keep out of it” — Rolls held his sleeve.

“This is intolerable!” Cobby said, with a florid forehead— “come on — rout 'em out.”

But Rolls held him. “*They* are under cover — it's no chop fighting on ground chosen by the enemy. Wait — wary's the word. I reckon they'll be getting me in the end, but let that cost them something.... How would they have got into No. 7?”

Cobby explained that No. 7 had been unoccupied, and must now have been taken by, or for, one of the gang; but complaint at the Inn-office the next day would rid the Temple of them. Meantime the police ...

But these, bespoken over the telephone, failed to find anyone at No. 7; and Cobby, nervous for Rolls' life, would not let him go; so Rolls, for the first time, slept that night in the chambers.

That was the night of the 2nd August.

On the night of the 7th, Rolls was "got," as he would have said.

Near nine he was walking up Essex Street — his usual route for Cobby's — lonely at that hour, obscure at some points — when he was stabbed in the abdomen — mysteriously, for not a living thing did he see near him. Any nerve less trained in alertness than he, any adventurer less veteran in the trick and luck of escape, would doubtless have been laid dead at once; but something or other caused him suddenly to spring upward, and, instead of in the breast, he was hit below.

He contrived to rise, to stagger and drag himself to the Temple not far, to knock at Cobby's "oak," as formally as if nothing had happened. But as he knocked, he fell; and some moments afterwards, before the door was opened, Cobby, who had been out, darted up the stair, and there before the door saw the poor man prostrate in sorry case. Rolls sighed: "I think I'm done for."

The effect of this upon Cobby, who was hot-headed and full-blooded, was to cause him to dash into a passion at outrages of this sort done in his own London; and he vowed vengeance. But for days Rolls could give no lucid account of what had taken place, the police appeared to be beaten, and no vengeance was taken. Indeed, during two whole days Rolls was delirious, the doctors anxious; but he was too tough a catgut to snap at one tug, and the days of danger passed.

Soon after which he breathed feebly to Cobby: "I've brought no end of a bobbery upon you, haven't I? — coming here. You were so much nearer — and I reckoned you'd want me to."

"Good Rolls," Cobby answered, pressing his hand, "that's right: there's no bobbery."

Cobby, busy as he was by nature, would stay an hour by the bedside, and himself help in Rolls' nursing, till the evening when Rolls was wheeled out to the work-room, when he said to Cobby: "Aye, I think I can drop now to it how they got me. From a motor-car. A rod running in sockets to push out, and a spike or two on the rod to stab with ... I think I remember a car passing, and I distinctly remember making a spring: I must have caught half a glimpse of something in the half-dark — I can't swear. Well, in the end they'll do me in, no doubt, since they're so down on it."

"Miscreants!" Cobby muttered, running his fingers through the backwoods of his hair: "if *we* could do *them* in ... But, as we seem unable to, you cut and run, Rolls. That will be horrible, if, when you get well, you are again — —"

"I have always stood up to my man so far," Rolls said, "and am not for turning tail now. The worst of my trouble is that I've brought you, too, into it. Promise me now that you'll not go out unarmed."

"That is foreign to me, Rolls," Cobby answered, looking not unlike the boy in "Bubbles," robed in a camel-hair dressing-gown, and launching into the air a bubble bigger than a trunk, a great globe of glories and glammers, gas-blown, he then experimenting on the surface-tension of bubbles at a lengthy table littered with a tangle of apparatus under bright lamplight: "I don't want to go armed in God's good Fleet Street, nor do I yet understand why these clowns should wish to meddle with me."

Reclined under a rug in a lounge-chair on the other side of the table, Rolls answered: "You see, they pan it out that I'll never play it a lone hand, undertaking a trek to that country so far in the interior without one white companion; and if Douglas Macray once reckons that you are wiring in with me, his cutthroats will sure be after you, too."

"But am I wiring in with you?" Cobby demanded. "You see that I have interests here."

With eyes trained sideways upon him, Rolls watched a little that dainty handicraft before replying: "The thing's worth doing. Seven millions sterling: of which I reckon upon one for me, and one for you, if we put it over."

"How? Tell me now," said Cobby, pausing in the work to stand with his arms akimbo.

And Rolls, after some hesitancy, remarked: "Nurse will be still asleep ... Very well, we'll talk of that country.... You know that your mother's two sisters married two brothers. Jane marrying James Macray, and Ismene marrying Rob Macray. Rob being considerably the elder, his rascal of a son, Douglas Macray, was nine or ten before James married your aunt Jane — I know the whole jimbang of it, for about then I was well in with James in the Witwatersrand, where he laid the foundations of his fortune. Rob, he never had much wealth — once went bankrupt in Chicago — and our swell Douglas Macray would be a nobody to-day, if he wasn't in possession of somebody else's money. Aye, somebody else's, look — not his own — the money of Spiciewegiehotiu."

"Ah! Hot Spice," went Cobby.

"Hot spice — that's pepper — is what she *is*. Eh, she'd have that rascal's head off as sweet and clean — —"

"But how was it? Tell me."

“You remember the loss of the *Florida*?”

“Let me see — Yes, yes, of course — I was eighteen — she vanished — my aunt Jane was lost — —”

“*And* your uncle-in-law, James Macray, *and* his daughter, your cousin, Flora Macray: the *Florida* being James Macray’s 5,000-ton yacht, in which, with a party, he was globe-trotting, going to Japan; but after touching at Somaliland they were caught in one of those easterly Indian Ocean storms, to which they had to turn tail; and to this day the timbers of the wreck of that craft remain on the African coast, for I’ve seen them.”

Cobby lowered himself to sit, saying: “I gather, then, that this Hot Spice is Flora Macray?”

“That’s so. James Macray’s dollars, inherited by his brother Rob, and then by Rob’s son, Douglas, whose name, too, should be Rob, for ’tis his nature too — those dollars now being spent to murder me for knowing too much — are dollars of Spiciewegiehotiu, every cent, by her father’s will — —”

“*He* was drowned, then — and my aunt?” Cobby asked eagerly.

“No, not drowned, I think. The *Florida* grounded inside a half-harbour, and probably all hands were saved. They were received, and not badly treated for some weeks, by Daisy, King of M’Niami, a man still alive, for I’ve done *Konza* to him, and given the beggar ivory — this Daisy being the neighbour to the north-east of Spiciewegiehotiu, and now lives in terror of her sceptre and butting horns, though twelve years ago she was a kid of six in his hands, and with a wink he could have sent her to the kingdom of heaven.... Well, sir, after the *Florida* lot had been with Daisy some weeks, Daisy suddenly receives a request from the King of Wo-Ngwanya to hand over to him the white child then in Daisy’s great-place, in exchange for five hundred Wo-Ngwanya cattle. Now, this was an all-out rum request; and, as

at that time Daisy's M'Niami were considered a more powerful crowd than the Wa-Ngwanya, Daisy scratched his wool and demurred — couldn't drop to what the bobbery was about! the real reason being, that a certain woman of the Wa-Ngwanya, named Mandaganya, had months before had some sort of premonition that a 'lamb coming up out of the water' would make Wo-Ngwanya great — that being what 'Spiciewegiehotiu' *means*, 'Lamb come up out of water.' This Mandaganya, too, I know, by the way — a remarkable woman, I assure you — big, grand being — highly intelligent — and if ever there was a medium, or 'sensitive,' or 'psychic,' as you call 'em here, it is that woman. That woman has outraged the moral sense of all Wo-Ngwanya, all her fifteen children, except two, having different fathers — a capital offence there — yet her influence in the State remains immense, she being the chief of the College of Doctors — a triumph of personality. Her two children by one father are Sueela and a little brisk beast, sharp as a needle with two points, who is the executioner — a little ink-black beast whose limbs seem oiled, whose close acquaintance I almost made, by George. The flash of that falchion of his will have a head pitching away in one swift swish, and then, his right leg bent before him, his left leg stiff behind him, he'll glance up sharp, as if asking everybody 'how's that for a wonner?' and then the next, and the next — brisk as a flea! and his sister Sueela is Spiciewegiehotiu's pet and weakness; sprig of seventeen, Sueela — ah! you must see Sueela — Venus, my boy — Venus is the thing's name, not Sueela. Spiciewegiehotiu's fondness for her is a scandal in Wo-Ngwanya, by the way, for Sueela's mother, the *inyanga*, comes from the dregs of the people, so — —"

"But about the *Florida* people," Cobby interrupted, glancing at the clock.

"Aye, that's the point," Rolls said: "pull me up when I get long-winded. I have a soft spot for that country, and no doubt am apt to gas about my

memories of it— ‘Children of the Wind’ I name ’em, dwelling there in this twentieth century among the wrecks of a civilization ancient as Abraham, maybe — relics of pyramid, temple — and, the sweet winds that sweep them — I might do worse than sleep eternally under the turf of those uplands, if those that sleep can be hearing the breezes breathe through the trees at midday and at midnight. But I was telling you — the King of Wo-Ngwanya, panning it out that the white child at Daisy’s great-place was the ‘lamb come up washed out of the water,’ demands her of Daisy; Daisy, for his part — —”

But at this point a nurse looked in to claim Rolls, and would not be disobeyed. “Here’s another Spicey,” muttered Rolls, moving out with her, while another moon covered over with Constantinoples of topaz and opal floated aloft from Cobby’s bubble-blower.

IV. THE “CASTLE” LINER



BUT DURING THE two following nights, Cobby had from Rolls the whole story — how Daisy, King of M’Niami, refused to send the white child to Wo-Ngwanya, having been warned by the whites of the *Florida* that, if he separated the child from her parents, the white Knulu-knulu (great-great God) would be down upon him, whereas, if he refused to send her, all would go well with him. By this advice he was guided: whereupon, war — Wo-Ngwanya warning Daisy that, if one hair of the white lamb was harmed, then, the Wo-Ngwanya army, if victorious, would not fail to raze Daisy’s great-place to the ground. And Wo-Ngwanya *was* victorious: whereupon Daisy, in a passion of anger against the *Florida* unfortunates for their false prophecy, and for all the disaster it had brought upon his head, turned round and put them all to death, except the little one, whom, on capitulating, he handed over to Wo-Ngwanya.

“Eh,” said Rolls to Cobby, “but that King of Wo-Ngwanya was cutting a stick for the back of his own royal house, look. Spiciewegiehotiu was no lamb come up out of any water — dragon more like — Machiavelli — Napoleon — and proved one too many for that royal house. The prophecy of the *inganya* Mandaganya that ‘the lamb’ would make Wo-Ngwanya ‘great’ has proved abundantly true, for when Spicie entered it, that country was no bigger than Bucks; now she can put into the field 180,000 of the bravest warriors — can and does put, for like a butting goat she has pushed and butted, north and east, and west, till that country may now make a map broader than Wales. But her idea was to make Wo-Ngwanya great for

herself and her ‘children,’ the Wa-Ngwanya, not for the reigning house; and she was not much over sixteen when her scheming and intriguing broke out in the deuce of a bobbery. She got round the King, who now had cancer, to proclaim her his President of the Council at a new-moon ceremony; upon which two of the King’s three brothers, and his only son — a lad of nineteen — took flight by night with a troop of followers from Eshowe — that’s the royal kraal, or capital — in order to bring three regiments from the North upon Eshowe, seize the power, and get hold of Spiciewegiehotiu and Mandaganya, whose designs they were quite up to. Well, your troop of indunas gallop full bat through a night and day, they reach the regiments, they hold an *indaba* — that’s a debate — of officers in a forest at midnight, decide what to do, and to do it quick; and, as the *indaba* is about over, one of the assembly stands up, points at the princes, and commands, ‘arrest the traitors’ — Spiciewegiehotiu, wrapped in an officer’s kaross, her face blackened; and with her her Sueela. She rode back to Eshowe at the head of one of the regiments, the three princes prisoners in its midst.”

Cobby over his work murmured “efficient,” and Rolls dodged one of the bubble-worlds which Cobby constantly created and launched.

“Aye,” Rolls said— “has a sense of the value of seconds, and will always be a minute ahead of her enemy. She had reached the three regiments only one half-hour before the princes, within which interval she had done a world of work and winning. The third of the King’s brothers, Dzinikulu, who related to me all this, told me that Sueela on her knees entreated Spiciewegiehotiu to kill the three princes there and then, but that Spicie, who always knows just how far she dares go at any juncture, and goes to the limit of that, but no farther, would not kill — bided her time. But she suffered for this: for soon afterwards she was poisoned — only scraped through by the skill of the doctress, Mandaganya — and for two months it

was as much as the sick King could do to keep Spiciewegiehotiu living — plot after plot. Then one midnight the King dies; Spicie still sick from poison; and quick the four princes rush, silently invest the sigodhlo — that's the royal enclosure — with troops that they have waiting ready, so to make sure of Spiciewegiehotiu. And now they look through the sigodhlo for Spicie, they ransack it: no Spicie. Spicie has fled, Sueela fled, Mandaganya fled — gone by a little back-way in the very nick of time. The princes give chase; scour the country; they cannot drop upon Spiciewegiehotiu. A rumour comes to them that Spicie has fled north-east to the garrison brigades on the M'Niami frontier, and is marching against them, with a force of 12,000 assegais; on which, with overwhelming numbers, they rush to encounter and crush these regiments. But while butting about, looking for this force, they come to know that it has given them the slip, and is now with Spiciewegiehotiu at the great-place, Eshowe, together with other forces. Back to Eshowe they rush, to crush her there. When they arrive in sight of Eshowe, at ten in the night, they see it all a sea of torches; it sends out to them a sound of carousing, of shield-beating, and drum-beating, dancing and fal-lals. They become aware that Spiciewegiehotiu has that evening been proclaimed Queen of Wo-Ngwanya: and they prepare to invest and besiege Eshowe. Meantime, hundreds on hundreds of emissaries are being sent out from Eshowe to their regiments, by Spiciewegiehotiu, with messages — let them not besiege Eshowe — let them march in — are not the gates flung wide for them? Let them come and kill her, let them come and kill the white lamb washed come up from the water, let them come and kill Wo-Ngwanya, let them come and kill the mother and luck of the Wa-Ngwanya — is not her bosom bared? bared are the young mother-breasts that suckle them — let them come and pierce it with hundreds of spear-points, that they may feel like sons and heroes. And the fakement

works all right. As *you* know bubbles and sub-atoms, so she knows her Wo-
Ngwanya, and can move the mass of it with her finger, as a chit's touch
launches a ship. Though she has her forces posted out of sight about the
town to pounce upon the enemy, if necessary, it isn't necessary, for, as the
princes' impi marches upon Eshowe, the populace of Eshowe swarm out to
call and talk to it; it thaws, dissolves, and walks off like waters; and in a
frantic scene of timbrels and dancing, breast clutched to brother's breast, it
enters the gates of Eshowe to the great square, at the top of which
Spiciewegiehotiu sits throned within a glare and smoke of flambeaux, tired
and sick and pallid, but smiling, seeing prostrate before her feet the
manhood of Wo-Ngwanya, hearing howled to heaven from ten thousand
throats the roar '*Bayeté! — Sovereign!*' And in the midst of it the princes —
for the second time — her prisoners."

Now Cobby paused to stare, and suddenly muttered again: "Efficient,
that chit."

"Aye," said Rolls— "and now she saw herself strong enough to strike.
After a trial that lasted ten days, a trial on which the entire nation hung in a
hush of suspense, she sentenced to death three of the four princes,
reprieving only, from some motive of policy, Dzinikulu, the late King's
third brother. After the trial, tears, entreaties, warnings, were poured out
before her by chiefs and headmen to win her to spare the princes; but
Spiciewegiehotiu was deaf to them all, and, as that brisk little beast,
Sandelikatze, Sueela's brother, the executioner, swished off the three heads,
and glanced up sharp, asking 'how's that?' — I've seen the beast — a howl
of dismay went up from Eshowe, seeing that flow of great-great gore, and
like one man Wo-Ngwanya clapped hand to mouth at it, and stood dumb.
The Wa-Ngwanya are pretty fickle, emotional and touchy; and there were
some local insurrections, which Spiciewegiehotiu did not crush, but, by

quickly picking a quarrel with Sebingwe, a King to the north-west, and quickly declaring war, turned the thoughts of everybody from the internal bobbery. And ever since it has been drill, drill, and war, war, with her; nor she don't sit still at Eshowe and send out her impis: under *her* eye they fight, with *her* strategy — —”

“Bloody young person,” Cobby observed.

“Public-spirited, *I* call it,” Rolls replied. “She don't consider that she is there for the good of humanity, look, but for her ‘children,’ who pay her — is there to make *them* happy and top-dog; and there's no end to her public-spiritedness, to her devotion to the Wa-Ngwanya, to the anxiety of her forehead for them.”

“She has quite a hero-worshipper, Rolls,” Cobby remarked with a smile.

“Well, no doubt I *am* a bit shook on the girl, though I ought to hate the beggar — —”

“Why, then, did she sentence you?”

“Only for proposing to her to let me bring her to Europe — nothing more. She seems, by the way, to have as strong a colour-prejudice against us whites as her father probably had against niggers — as good as told me so in four English words — and very strange it was suddenly to hear that English uttered in Wo-Ngwanya — while I stood before her judgment-seat: up she cocks one eye, trying to remember English, and then, wrinkling up her nose, says she: ‘Hwhite — mans — is — stink.’ The retort leapt to my mouth, ‘And what about white girls? They're worse’ — eh, but R. K. Rolls was too old a fowl, thank God, to give it tongue. Aye, she had me in chokey six bitter days under sentence of death inside a continent of a rock that they call ‘The Elephant’; and what do you think saved me? Seven matches — the last I had. An inspiration came to me to send them as a present, and they

so fascinated her, that she let me off, but banished me, commanding me never more to set foot in Wo-Ngwanya.”

“I see — you proposed to bring her to civilization,” Cobby said: “you had discovered that she is Flora Macray. How had you?”

“Oh, everything proved it. She remembered the name of the *Florida*, the name ‘Flora,’ though not the name ‘Macray.’ I told her I had known her father, and she showed me his photo in a locket — there’s no doubt. Of course, I saw at once that there was big money in it — as well as justice — if I could get her home: for if I could make her sign to tip me one million out of seven, that would be fair — —”

“But when you offered her the lion’s share, she forced upon you the ‘Elephant’s’ portion,” Cobby put in.

“Ho! Well put,” Rolls cried— “that’s how it pans out. However, I was no sooner out of Wo-Ngwanya, with my head still on, than I was playing to get her yet, and, when next in the Witwatersrand, I set about getting together an expedition to kidnap my lady. But I blabbed — a bit. Funds being low just then, I approached Schartz, the financier — didn’t let on where that country lies, you may bet, but I let out ‘*Florida*,’ let out ‘Flora Macray.’ Schartz he had vowed to be mum, but I now know that he was in with the Douglas Macray crowd; and a hint of the fakement actually got into the *Cape Times*. He suggested to me to *sell* my knowledge to the enemy, and lie low ever after, mentioned £20,000, and when I wouldn’t look at it, he steered off, the expedition looked sick, and, to top it all, I found myself with Douglas Macray’s knife in me. His arm, reaching from Paris, just nearly made me a deader one evening in the Johannesburg Exchange Bar. It was then that I said to myself: ‘*Cobby!*’”

Cobby rushed his fingers through his leonine bush of hair, shook his head rather irritably. “Leave me out of it, Rolls. I — can’t. Beside this

surface-tension of bubbles, I am counting the droplets in vapour-clouds with Stokes; and, then, the Government — No, no, leave me out.”

“Still, you are coming slowly round, I can see,” Rolls remarked with a twinkle.

“I am — *not*, Rolls,” said Cobby.

“You don’t want me to be assassinated in a London street — that’s why.”

“No, that’s true, I don’t, I don’t.”

“Therefore, you’ll come. What’s the good of bubbles? This is solid cash, this proposition — not bubbles. With a million of Spiciewegiehotiu’s money in your bank, you could blow bubbles as big as this building. And, then, justice, Cobby. Your cousin. Isn’t it a duty?”

Bent over his work-table, after a while Cobby replied: “I don’t see that it is a duty to kidnap anyone. The girl is free, and if she doesn’t want — Moreover, my head is of some value, apparently; I am not anxious to have it hacked off by the little brisk man who glances up and asks ‘how’s that?’”

“I’ll look after your head,” remarked Rolls.

“What would have become of your own, if you had had no matches?” Cobby demanded; “I hope they were *safety* matches: they deserved that name.”

“Ho!” broke out of Rolls, in whom laughter was a rare and a volcanic event.... “Oh, Jimmy! the wound hurts when I laugh.”

“I make painful jokes, I see,” Cobby remarked, on which yet another “Ho!” broke out of Rolls in a pain of explosion.

Then Cobby’s grandfather’s-clock struck eleven; his man bore in a supper, consisting mostly of bread and cheese — for so Cobby lived — and, as they sat at table, he asked of Rolls: “But is she — fair at all to look upon, this minx, my cousin?”

“Spiciewegiehotiu is a beauty,” Rolls solemnly asserted. “She is —— Did your mother’s family, by the way, have black hair?”

“Dark. My mother’s was black.”

“So is Spicie’s. Looks Spanish to me rather — staid face — pale, strong-boned, grave —— I’ve seen her laugh merrily, but never saw her smile. Sits leaning sideways, her finger-joints at her cheek — steady eyes, meditating on you, judging, dark-blue — noble brow, for though you can’t see much of it for the two wings of hair that cover it, there’s a lane between the wings, running up the side of the brow where the hair-parting is, and at that lane you can spy the noble height and bulge of the brow; and the hair puffs over the ears, which puff may be what makes her Spanish-looking. And her sweet lips, boy, neatly fitted together, a little pressed — rose-leaves may be something like them — not red ones, pink ones — but I can’t tell of the winningness and pull of ’em ——”

“Why, Rolls!” Cobby cried, “this is love.”

“I wish she’d returned it, then. I shouldn’t have been off bussing those particular lips. But no go: white mans is stink. Maybe for a cousin she’d feel different, Cobby: for they say that some cousins are more akin in nature than brother and sister.”

“Really? People say that of cousins? I am surprised, because it happens to be true — scientifically known. But all that does not allure me, Rolls. You see that I have other pre-occupations than the lips of ladies.”

To which Rolls, sipping his peach-brandy, confidently answered: “You never felt the sun, old man: wait till you do, before you boast. Here the sun is a hearsay, as toothache is to one who hasn’t it; but the sun’s a Reality, look, and no fun. You’ve read of the rage of the vegetation of African forests: well, the same with Master Cupid; a dog in the sun bites the boy, and the boy goes dog-mad.”

“Oh, it is all a question of mental pose and habit,” Cobby remarked with a pout. “The mind cannot think of two things at the same time — —”

“Exactly!” cried Rolls. “And the sun insists that you think of *it*, and quit bubbles. If you say ‘No’ to it, it says ‘Very good; there’s no hurry, to-morrow will do.’”

At which Cobby chuckled, roaring out in his big voice: “And this is what you propose to me! — to transform myself from a blower of bubbles into a blower of sighs! Stash the fakement, Rolls, as you say.”

But Cobby had been, and was being, more influenced by Rolls than he admitted to himself, and three nights later was influenced still more by an event.

That midnight he was walking home from a scientific function at the Holborn Restaurant, and, after passing through Lincoln’s Inn Fields, had descended some steps behind the Law Courts, going down into the lane of Clement’s Inn, where it was dingy and desolate, when three men, who had on masks, appeared before him; and cried one, presenting a revolver: “You were warned, Cobby! Up with the hands!”

Cobby did nothing of the sort. Hot-headed as ever, he sent at the man a blow that staggered him, and had actually felled the second, before he was struggling with the third. As this third and he dropped together, he cut the hand of this one with a lancet, and, reaching out, cut the hand of the second, too, who was still half-prostrate.

Their object, apparently, had been just to strike terror into him, for when all were again on their legs, instead of any shooting, there was a foolish pause, while the two cut ones glanced at their hands, and Cobby touched a bump on his forehead, until on panting breaths Cobby said: “Now, look here — just yonder is King’s College Hospital: *run* to it, you two — tell them

you've been cut with a septic lancet, or you are likely to have your arms off."

The three looked at one another.

"*C'est la blague*," remarked the non-cut to the cut.

"It is Not *blague*," Cobby said, suddenly walked away, and was not followed.

All in a flush he reached his chambers, indignant, dominant; and, as he broke into the room where Rolls under his rug awaited his coming, words burst from him. "Well, I have decided, Rolls. I go with you...."

"Good talk!" breathed Rolls astare.

"I've been attacked" — he told the story of it.

Rolls snapped finger and thumb. "Good luck! They reckoned to scare you off, that's it — and have done the other thing! They don't know their Cobby, the blackguards!"

"Very good, it is settled, we tackle it, we two. How long will it take?"

"Eighteen months."

"Oh, a year, say! We go armed, you know."

"Well, of course, we go — —"

"I don't mean with guns — with Science — with civilization — motors, accumulators, aeroplanes — —"

"Oh, I say!" went Rolls, "that's hardly orthodox, to spring aeroplanes upon Wo-Ngwanya. Still, there's no reason — —"

"Oh! we go fully armed, Rolls, to meet every eventuality. Time! Time! In which case, say a year."

"Let's hope it, anyway. A million a year — not bad for R. K. Rolls!"

Cobby, who now stood pondering, all at once asked what was Douglas Macray's address.

“Hotel Meurice, rue de Rivoli,” said Rolls, “or just ‘Paris’ will do. But — why?”

Without answering Cobby sat at his *escritoire*, and wrote: “Mr. Warren Cobby is about to start on the quest of his cousin, Flora Macray” — and at once, having summoned his man, sent it to the post; on which, with a look of alarm, Rolls suddenly asked: “You haven’t written to Macray?”

Cobby told what he had written.

“Well — but — —” Rolls said. “Myself, I’d never see fit to forewarn the enemy.”

“Miscreant! The insolent licence —— Well, now he has my challenge.”

Rolls shrugged. Challenges, flourishes, moral ebullitions were hardly his style, but the plain way toward an end; and in the next three weeks, while preparations were under weigh, and Cobby tearing himself out of his place in civilization, Rolls’ unimaginative sense had enough to do to check the other’s excess of zest and effort. “Our money won’t run to it,” he would say: “we don’t aim to be an invading army with baggage, look. There’s no chop any road in bringing arc-lamps and gelignite, telephone-sets and nitro-toluol....”

“To have done it, and be done with it, Rolls,” Cobby said: “to be back here in Fleet Street, doing surface-tension! If we go, we go as white men, armed with the white man’s wit and might — not with seven matches.”

Rolls flung his hand. “Well, there may be something in it. Go your own road.”

Hence, on the day of departure, cartfuls of paraphernalia lay stored for the expedition within that belly of the *Saxon*. To watch all snugly stored, Rolls, hardly yet quite on his legs, had been aboard some hours, and Cobby, at the eleventh hour, was walking alone with quick steps toward the ship

along the dockside, pulled askew by a bag, when a voice said behind him:
“Carry your bag, sir?”

“Very good” — he gave it to a tall man, loose-limbed, shaven, dark-haired, wearing a cloth cap, and rough clothes that looked new.

And, as they walked together along the dock-railway, said Cobby:
“Where have I seen you before?”

On which the man chuckled, saying: “Not at Buckingham Palace, I’m afraid, sir.”

When they reached the bustle of the ship, now shouting “visitors ashore,” Cobby at once lost sight of him; but four evenings later, out in the Bay of Biscay, on wandering with “The Zulu-Kaffir Language” into the bow-regions, to watch the bow-foams wash and dash, he beheld the same man there, leaning over the rail among some steerage-passengers.

Cobby addressed him, with “So *you* are here.”

On which the man touched his cap with a chuckle. “Yours as ever, sir,” he said.

But there was some difference now about the man somehow, in air, or face. Cobby, just aware of a difference, could not say in what it lay — was not interested.

V. THE VOLUNTEER



BEFORE MADEIRA WAS passed, Rolls had become an institution in the ship. He liked winds in his hair, and dismal nights, when he had the vessel and the universe to himself, and sometimes the saloon-dinner was his breakfast, he was such a night-fowl, scarcely mixing with the others — differing from Cobby, who let himself be led into whist-drive, sweepstake, saloon-ball and nonsense-talk under the quarter-deck awning. Cobby's name as a scientist having been known to two or three beforehand, as he saw himself sought after, he lent himself. But he wrote in his diary: "This is dreadful! This emptiness and waste of days. But what idle people! and I as idle as any of them. May Spiciewegiehotiu perish...."

A voyage to the monotony of whose routine the engines' throbbing beat its monotonous baton, until the eighteenth night, or nineteenth morning say, when Cobby in his sleep had a feeling that he was not alone, and woke in a flurry to find the ship pitching, and there on his bedside, when he switched on the light, Rolls seated, gravely meditating on a cigar between his fingers, wind from a porthole winnowing within his bare hair.

"I'm not sorry you've woke up," he said. "Myself, I always sleep with my state-room locked, and *you* should ditto. There's an enemy aboard, look."

A new idea for Cobby. "How do you arrive at that?"

"Just played it on me," Rolls answered— "narrowest escape! I all but disappeared over the side— 'suicide whilst of unsound mind.' On blowy nights I generally go up the foremost's shrouds, to have things to myself a

bit — was up there a couple of hours — rough stuff — dark — then got down. When I stepped upon the lowest ratlins, they weren't ratlins any more — cut through. Feet pitched overboard, dragging off my hand-hold; my clutches missed one, two, of the upper ratlins — didn't miss the third, or I should be well astern by now. But if you're born to be hanged, you never will be drowned."

"Incredible licence!" breathed Cobby. "Who can it be?"

"There you beat me — though I expected he'd not be far, and have been on the look-out to spot him. Anyway, here he is."

"And are the ratlins of fibre or wire?"

"Wire-rope those foremost ones."

"Then he must have a hack-saw. We will report to the captain, and have a search — —"

Rolls threw his hand. "Of course, the captain will know; but that says nothing. The bottom of the Atlantic is a fine place to hide a hack-saw — if he didn't nick it from the ship's chest, to put back after using...."

This thing sensationalized the last three days of the voyage for everyone — an eruption in the uninterrupted.

Only one man — a steerage passenger — did not appear in the assembly before the captain in the saloon: him the doctor reported to be ill — had pharyngitis — inflammation of the mouth — had to be interviewed separately in his bunk.

"Which of them would that be?" Rolls asked himself.

Knowing all the faces present, and unable to recall the absent face, he conceived a curiosity to see it, and the next morning took down a bottle of "bub" (rum-and-milk), in a neighbourly way to the sick one— "something to keep the blues out, friend."

He was warmly thanked with nods, but no words, the sick mouth being covered with a cloth, the brow bound about with a towel, so that, as it was dim within the bunk, Rolls got only a dim impression of a nose.

Nor was there time to repeat the visit: now loomed on the ocean's brink that bluff bulk of Table Mountain, with a table-cloth of cloud, and silver dish-covers of cumulus-mounds, the mass of which, Rolls told Cobby, recalled to him "The Elephant" of Wo-Ngwanya; and soon, as the liner warped up, all was an arrival-scene of greetings and luggage, tips and kisses, pith-helmets with pugarees swinging, sunshades and white attire fluttering, all in a colonial tone of its own, dotted with various shades of blackness trotting to and fro, from Hottentot copper to Madagascar blacking; and here Rolls was sweetly at home, Cobby following in his wake from quayside through custom's officer to dock-gates, asking of Rolls in respect of the Malay who drove them to Cape Town, "Why does the being vociferate so needlessly?" to which Rolls philosophically answered: "Has a fare — sort of song of joy that he blows off, look, like the hylobates ape: let him howl away."

And when the sun sank, and sudden darkness invaded Nature, said Cobby, thinking again of his Malay: "We might have done well to travel in our cab, which was as breezily speedy as the train is lazy. How long, Rolls, before the expedition actually starts out?"

Rolls said: "Three weeks, I reckon."

"Ah! three weeks.... Well, provided I am back in Fleet Street in a year — that is your undertaking."

Rolls' eyes twinkled. "No, not undertaking. You wait — you won't be so fidgety when Africa once gets its grip on you. Even this Karoo seems to you now a meaningless reach of plain, doesn't it? — no trees, nothing — yet it has a meaning of its own — says something, sings something. Hark! heard

that cry? A riet-bok that is, out there in the vastness and darkness — never saw a train before: I know it from the way he whistled. He's living still away back in the bottomless pit of the geologic ages, that chap: all this Africa is. Wait till you see a geologic river washing solemn along, with the hippo's nostril snorting out in the choppy mid-channel: he's pretty old and knowing, that cove. But, of course, we'll be looking as lively as we know how: let's only hope we're not crossed and balked any road, for the enemy has a long arm. I'm all-out gallied now about not getting to see that sick man's face aboard. I wonder what's wrong with his mouth?— 'inflamed mouth': never heard of that disease in man. I looked out at the landing, but no sign of him."

Snuggled in a corner, his eyes closed to the world, Cobby murmured: "I think I know who he is — saw him first in England. Some poor man — carried my bag along the dock."

"And was anything wrong with his mouth then?"

"Let me see — Yes, I fancy now that he spoke with some impediment or effort."

When Rolls next spoke, he got no answer: Cobby was asleep.

Then by way of the corrugated townlet, past the rock-kopie, the stead of the Boer alone in the world with his ostrich-kraal, the journey was to the Gold-town, where at once Rolls threw himself into the work of getting together map and plan, man and automatic, inspan and biltong, bead and button, medicine-chest and waggon-box. And all went merrily well, save at one point — the sweeping-in of at least one other white, for which he was eager. He got two, indeed, but both failed him.

The first, a transport-rider of Natal, a fellow of grit, though addicted to "square-face," and now down on his luck, readily agreed, said to Rolls, "The thing I'm after — a dart into the interior," and a bargain was struck.

But soon afterwards Rolls, on entering Botha's Yard in Commissioner Street, where the waggons were, spied his transport-rider head-to-head in a confab with a broker: and the next day the fellow vanished.

It was the same with the second, a Texan — Kimberley adventurer, up-country hunter, who dreamed in millions, though to-day broken in boots — he had all but fixed-up with Rolls, but then cooled off, and when he suddenly began to throw money about, Rolls understood that this one, too, had been soaped.

“They're at us again,” Rolls said, when Cobby got back from a trip to a *vlei* up north, whither two mining-engineers had taken him to shoot veldt-duck and antelope. “They reckon I'm too wide-awake and chock-full of six-shooters to be knocked out from a corner over here, where I'm a cock in my own yard; but they aim now to make us a pair of lone hands among a crowd of blacks — —”

“It doesn't seem to me of great importance,” Cobby remarked.

“Blacks do such things as mutiny, don't they?” Rolls demanded.

“Well, there are still three days to try in. If you come across any possible man, strike hands with him on the spot, then send him out of the town beyond temptation.”

Which was what Cobby himself did on the following evening; for, as he was smoking on his hotel stoep, the light of day then dying out, a man appeared before him — the man whom he had seen at the dock in England, and then on the liner; and said the man: “Here we are again, sir! I got it from a certain party that you are after a white for up-country trekking, and I'm in it, if you'll have me — stones, gold, ivory, makes no matter to me.”

“Sit down.... When did you come to Johannesburg?”

“Only yesterday. Been in Cape Town.”

“What brought you to South Africa?”

“You should ask what took me to England. I know South Africa — Australia. Fortune-hunter — I haven’t always carried gentlemen’s bags for a bob.” He chuckled.

“You can shoot, then, probably.”

The man snatched a revolver from his hip-pocket, and negligently shot a peach from a tree in the yard.

“Good in this half-light” — Cobby presented some vegueras— “have a cigar.”

“Thanks — I’m in misery — can’t smoke — —”

“Not well yet?”

“Better — not well. You hear how I talk — across a hot potato.”

“Yes, I can tell that there is something. Healthy otherwise?”

“Oh, yes, I’m all there.” He chuckled.

“Talk Zulu?”

“Some. Can cluck some Hottentot, too.”

“Well, come inside: I’ll send for my partner, Mr. Rolls, and we’ll discuss details.”

But Rolls, sent for, could not be found; and Cobby, apprehensive lest this one also should be got at, struck a bargain, asking, as he wrote a contract: “What is your name?”

“Douglas Macray.”

Cobby’s pen paused in air. Looking at the man, he muttered, “Singular”; and added with a smile: “You are not, I take it, the millionaire of that name?”

“W-e-ll, I’m afraid not, if there is such a millionaire. But never say die, sir! I may yet stand in his shoes.”

Now, frowning in an effort of memory, Cobby asked: “Where *have* I seen you before? *Some where.*”

“Dartmoor jail, sir.” He chuckled.

“No, I never was there. You?”

“Well, no — not actually inside. I wouldn’t say that the traps have never been after me, but they never yet got me.”

Cobby smiled on him — liked a certain hardihood, stoicism, and cheery frankness which was about him.

“Well, sign,” he said, and, this done, wrote a letter to a Boer at whose stead he had slept during his hunting-trip, a letter of no importance in itself, only written in order to get Macray, who was to take it, out of reach of schemers. “We others will perhaps have started before you get back,” he said, “but you will readily pick up our spoor. Here’s the cash; and now I will come with you to the yard.”

There Cobby saw him horsed and off, then walked back to his hotel, wondering what had become of Rolls.

It was not till an hour later that Rolls came in, looking sour, to tell the tale that, having gone with one of the Square auctioneers to drink a bottle of fizz, they both had got imprisoned in a room — something gone wrong with the catch of the door, which in the end had had to be forced.

In view of which odd disease of the door-catch, when Cobby told of the bargain with the man whose mouth was sore, Rolls’ countenance fell.

“My God, Cobby,” he said ruefully, “you might have waited for me to crop up.”

“Why, though?” Cobby asked.

Rolls had no answer; but felt ill at ease.

“And what do you think his name is?” asked Cobby.

“Beelzebub — I shouldn’t wonder,” said Rolls, strolling about.

“Douglas Macray.”

“Same thing as Beelzebub,” said Rolls.... “But you mean to say he had the devil’s cheek to give you that name?”

“Oh, no cheek, I think; that chances to be the fellow’s name: he’s all right.”

“Well, you’re the newest of new chums, and no mistake! Haven’t you learned yet to mistrust your man, Cobby?”

“The man is all right,” Cobby obstinately repeated.

And, as arranged, the expedition duly started the next afternoon; but not till nine in the night, when it had outspanned twenty miles up in the interior, did Macray with new hunter’s-swag and outfit ride in; on which Rolls and he, for the first time, looked into each other’s eyes.

VI. A QUESTION OF TEETH



THE THREE WERE eating an evening meal after the afternoon sweat and trek through leagues of timber, when Cobby remarked: “Here we are within sight nearly, and the plan of action still undetermined” — a browner Cobby, upon whom some beard had sprouted, in moleskin trousers now, and leggings above velschoenen, upon which the bivouac-tire shed beams in a dimness that was an island of dimness within the dismal Pacific of the night.

Rolls began to answer: “Well, we have the rough plan” — but paused, suddenly adding: “Another fight on! — that’s the *utshwala* (millet-grog) working,” and, springing up, he trotted off into a still dimmer dimness, where a little mob stood watching a Swahili and a Pondo duelling with two club-sticks in the midst of a bigger mob, who lolled and squatted, enjoying the day’s end, and at that lip the calabash tilted, and that puffed at the hashish (“dakka”) pipe, and that snub-nose sucked up snuff.

Rolls stamped at the fighters: “Stash that racket!” but still the two kerries acted, rattling anon like castanets, and the clattering antlers of antagonist stags rattling together.

Only when Rolls, roaring at them anew, drew his revolver, did the duel consent to stop, and then the Pondo dropped something at the Swahili’s ear, to which the Swahili consented with nods, so that Rolls understood that the feud was still to be settled elsewhere.

“Silly brutes,” he grumbled, sitting anew to his tin plate: “we can’t afford to have ’em cracking one another’s skulls up here” — for just “here” was

cannibal, there had been two pitched laager-battles, flow of blood, and the sentries standing out in the dark now about the bivouac were not there for nothing.

“Well, you were saying — —” Cobby said, mopping his forehead and a chest all exposed at the opening of his dirty shirt, the sleeves rolled up.

“It’s only details that remain over,” Rolls answered, casting an underglance at Macray, who lay on his elbow, eating with evident effort and unease: “the dart is to get within the three enclosures one dark night, chloroform ‘our mother,’ and bring her off like a sack of mealies.”

“You’ll never put that over,” Macray observed.

“With *your* help we will,” Rolls answered, with a sullen eye askance on him.

“Well, no doubt I’m a host in myself,” Macray chuckled, ever jocular, in spite of pain.

Now Cobby irritably loosed his belt with its sheaf-knife and six-shooter holster, saying: “But are you aware that the administration of chloroform occasionally ends fatally, and that we have no right — —”

“Oh, now for a London sermon!” Rolls muttered intolerantly — tempers here not being at their best! for God caused a mist to rise up out of the ground, a steam of miasmas and malarias, good for snakes and the great venom-insects that came sailing in gay dress out of the tangle of undergrowth to glare at the flame and dance devil-dances to it, but bad for man.

“May I not express myself?” Cobby asked, glancing aside at Rolls, who sat by him, his back propped upon the same mass of banyan-trunk that had dropped there a century gone, to gather its scab of mosses and rot with all the rot of the tropic forest, within which, side by side, vied riot of

corruption and riot of life, and the tribes of life thrived on the festering of the unburied dead.

“How many people die of chloroform, old man?” demanded Rolls. “One in a million? And what are we here for but to take a thousand bigger risks?”

“Very good,” said Cobby. “I concede the chloroform — let that pass. But there will be sentries round the royal precincts! How about them?”

“We stab the sentries, baas,” Macray said, looking at Cobby with one eye winked.

“There’ll be only four or five,” Rolls said. “Shoot ’em with air-guns — or stab.”

Now Cobby frowned. “That is,” said he, “we become assassins.”

“Put it that road,” Rolls curtly said.

“Very good,” said Cobby hotly, “be an assassin, if that is to your taste — on the understanding that you never shake my hand after.”

Macray chuckled; and Rolls sullenly said: “We’ll rub along without much shaking hands — just do a bow, look,” and, doffing his opulent hat, he bowed elegantly to the forest, to show how elegantly he and Cobby would bow together.

“I am in earnest, understand,” Cobby mentioned, in the act of lighting a pipe, and Rolls then said, patting his friend’s arm: “Hamba gachle (go soft): nothing is going to be done that you don’t cotton to — not likely! We’ll have a regular indaba (debate), and see how it pans out.”

He finished eating, drank, lit a cigar, and in that reign of stillness they two smoked together under a gloom of foliage hung with bugle-blooms of blue and ruby, with festoons of bindweed, barbarous triumphs of beard, while anon a baobab-fruit fell with a knell’s message, or a branch crashed, or a monkey rushed with shrieks, a hyena pealed the laughter of madness afar, a mule smote a hoof, or a laugh sounded from the crowd of blacks.

And presently Macray emptied his can of utshwala, remarking: "Here's to sleep for little Douglas of that ilk — dog-tired," and picked himself up.

"How's the mouth?" asked Cobby.

"Bad to-night. Good-night, inkoos." He passed away beyond the dying fire-light into the dark.

The others sat still, relishing their sense of full stomachs, and the comfort of smoking.

And presently Rolls: "Those two blacks mean to fight it out."

"Try and stop 'em," Cobby muttered.

And presently again Rolls: "Not bad, to-day's trek, considering the timber and the axes going."

"Fine," Cobby muttered.

And presently again Rolls: "We have sneezing-gas, tear-gas, chloroform, to deal with the sentries."

But Cobby did not answer, the pipe had dropped out of his mouth, his forehead nodded; and now Rolls raised him, saying, "Come on, we're done up," and led him away — they two, by a rule of Rolls, sleeping always together in a spot selected by Rolls, never in the waggon-cartels, now occupied by some wounded blacks, the two this evening sleeping between a rock and a screen of creepers that dropped like a drapery from the rock's top. On the opposite side of the bivouac-glade Macray lay.

But Rolls, who slept like a bush-cat, with one ear awake, was soon sitting up, listening to footsteps that stole near; and he was quickly away, tracking the two duellers, who, carrying their kerries, went prying for some starlit spot to fight out their quarrel.

Rolls, intending to catch them red-handed, and impress them with his omnipresence, shadowed them some hundred yards, then, becoming sick of it, was now about to call and order them back, when his prowling foot

encountered some soft obstacle, upon which he switched on the torchlight, to see it.

It was Macray there — asleep.

Till now Rolls had never seen him asleep; and now saw a difference of expression in the face, sufficient to arrest him — the same difference which Cobby, too, had noticed between the Macray of the dockside, and the Macray seen on the steamer.

And though Cobby had not fixed in what the difference lay, Rolls at once did, on catching sight of a plate of top-teeth, lying near the sleeper — though the lightbeam had not been on Macray one second, when up he started, his palm for a moment covering his mouth in an instinctive impulse; and now his eyes and Rolls' met and lingered together a little — both faces pale. Then Macray chuckled; and Rolls said carelessly: "Those two silly niggers — sorry to disturb you," and halloed after the two.

Within ten minutes Rolls was back in his sleeping bag: but in that interval he had seen much.

He did not lie down: sat thinking and thinking. "That's where the sore mouth comes from," he muttered: "some mouths can't stand plates of teeth; this plate may be ill-fitting — perhaps hurriedly made in London for the occasion. Never has had the time to get a new set, nor never has given the mouth time to get used to this set — takes 'em out every minute he's alone, I reckon, they worry so; claps 'em in when needful: never seen without 'em. I see. Always shaved like a dandy in the primeval forest. I see. 'Douglas Macray' — he gave that name: devil's cheek — and cunning. I *knew* that I'd seen that face somewhere; couldn't drop to where — photo — witless. Otherwise, thank God, I've had all my wits in camp, or there'd be no Cobby now, and no R. K. Rolls now.... Well, the fittest will survive."

Tired as he was, Rolls hardly slept that night, there in the reign of rayless darkness between the creepers and the hollow of the rock, noting when the man-eater roared afar, when the mouth of the ounce yowled to the universe for food, when sentries went out, came in....

The question was — to tell Cobby, or not to tell? and toward morning Rolls answered, “No — not now; after the happening of what has to happen.” Cobby would command: “No killing!” and Rolls would obey, but Macray, who was out for killing, would not obey. Rolls, too, now, was all for killing. There are venoms, there are wrongs, which only blood can wash out, which only death can solve.

“One attempt on my life in that Exchange Bar at Johannesburg ... two in London ... one on the steamer. Low-down thug-work. If I forget, may God forget me.”

At dawn he shook Cobby with a rollic, “Out of it, lazy bones” — rollic and tender, for where he loved he loved, and hated where he hated.

And at breakfast all was as usual, save that both Rolls and Macray tended to more than usual merriment, which, in the case of Macray, may have been due to the absence, for the first time, of the plate in his mouth; *à propos* of which Cobby asked: “What is different about you, Macray? You are like a man who has shaved off a moustache.”

Macray answered with a chuckle. “Top teeth gone — gorilla knocked ’em out with a club in the night.”

This was a jest — like Macray’s jests in general: cheery, merrily meant: but pointless, clownish.

“Is it a question of teeth?” Cobby said: “yes, that *is* it. So what has really happened?”

“Only this — for seven years, off and on, I’ve been trying to wear false teeth, and last night I chucked them for ever off me into the bush. Bravo!

the eaters will be eaten by an ostrich. Now I can dine with my gums and defy the world. That was what made my mouth sore, baas.”

“I see. Why didn’t you ever mention it?”

“Oh, he was shy before the ladies,” Rolls flung off from over a bowl of meal and “amasi”-curds, which he was earnestly eating.

“Still, the teeth did rather heighten your beauty,” Cobby remarked to Macray: “and as you look now I seem to remember seeing you in some dream — somewhere — where *was* it?”

Macray chuckled. “You remember, inkoos, the night you caught your sister under the oak with a man? *I* was that man.”

At which Cobby lowered his lids, silent, many of Macray’s jests not being quite to the scientist’s liking.

And now the forenoon trek, to the singing of the blacks; and the noontide rest; and the sun’s altitude taken; and now the afternoon trek, which revealed that the forest was not really infinite, but had a limit where open country basked in the sun, and a river rolled between rows of crocodile-snouts, where flamingos in their crimson uniforms stood like sentinels who all have lost a leg in the wars; up which river the trek went three miles to find a drift, christened “Crocodile Drift” by Rolls over two years gone; and, crossing the river, they came upon the ashes and charred remains of a cannibal kraal, which, Rolls said, was but one of many of which the Wa-Ngwanya had cleared that region; and now the field-glass, scanning northward, could see a mirage of the mountain-range which bounds Wo-Ngwanya on the south.

And that evening the three men held their *indaba* on the plan of action, seated on a hillock in the shade of a yellow-wood tree, whence they could see eastward the reeds of a lagoon on a plain peopled with game, deer in thousands, giraffe and buffalo, crane and egret, the three smoking together

like friends, with a jest anon; and no one could have guessed the suspense and tension that was between two of them.

Rolls said: “Understand that failure spells *final* failure for the failer. I know the girl: if you attack her, she fights; and if, as usual, she wins, she gives you time to sigh one last prayer: it’s woe to the conquered there, look. What follows? That we shouldn’t stake all upon one throw. And we shouldn’t try it on without experiment first. Let’s rehearse the whole fakement.”

“And if the rehearsal fails,” Cobby said, “the play never comes off.”

“Yes,” answered Rolls, “if we are not all in the rehearsal. So let Macray and me go forward alone, get into the sigodhlo, ascertain what’s what, and come back to you before we all pitch into it together. If we two come to grief, there’ll be still you left.”

Rolls’ and Macray’s glances lingered together, while Cobby flushed a little, saying: “But why am I being put up in cotton wool?”

“Because yours is the most valuable life,” Rolls quietly answered.

“Yes” — from Cobby— “but I am deliberately on an adventure, risking that life: I cannot permit you and Macray to incur greater — —”

“It must be so, isinduna,” Macray said, weighing his Colt’s meditatively on his palm. “Rolls knows the road: *he* must go; you or I must go with him; and he and I both vote you out.”

“You’re outvoted, Cobby,” Rolls remarked.

On which Cobby: “Oh, very well, since you see fit. If you two fail to come back, I shall go after you at all costs.”

And Rolls, stretched on the grass, gazing up into the yellow-wood: “Oh, one of us is sure to scrape through.”

“Sure,” echoed Macray, throwing up and catching his automatic, these both knowing that, if either came back, he would come alone, each knowing

that the other knew.

VII. DUELLO



LATER IN THE night when the outspan lay asleep, Rolls, lying near Cobby, scribbled on a pocket-book leaf, under the beam of an electric torch: “Cobby, I reckon to come back, but no knowing. If not, know that this Macray is *the enemy*. *Without* me, and *with* him, I figure it up that your best course would be to throw over the whole fakement, and get back home. Good luck to you and me, Cobby. — R. K. R.”

This he put into Cobby’s tobacco-pouch, knowing that Cobby, who smoked only in the evening, would not see it till the next evening, when Rolls and Macray would be well away.

Macray, on his side, knew that Rolls would warn Cobby; but when at breakfast Cobby’s manner toward him was as usual, he concluded that Rolls would only let Cobby know after the departure from camp, and he saw why. Rolls, then, would *write* it, and place the writing where Cobby would be sure to find it: and Macray spent an hour after breakfast in thinking where that would be; till, in opening his own pouch, he thought of Cobby’s, of Cobby’s smoking only in the evening....

He then watched till he saw Rolls away at the waggons, and, going promptly to Cobby, said: “Give me a pipeful of that Boer ‘baccie.”

In a minute he had Rolls’ note out of Cobby’s pouch, and presently was reading and destroying it.

Before noon, with elaborate secrecies, he had buried a packet — a cardboard-box in oilskin, of which he had a jealous care — at the roots of a particular tree; and soon afterwards he and Rolls started out together.

And that night they two were plodding northward afoot forty miles from the camp, two lorn forms lost in a vastness of broken and rolling country, pathless, manless, plodding in the misty twilight of the sickle of a moon quite new, now sinking, and about four miles before them the mighty fact of mountains towering, brooding in their citadel of obscurity, mystery and muteness.

The two horses had lately been left knee-haltered; and Rolls remarked: “We might safely have ridden on: not much light from that moon; and those outlook posts of savages are only efficient for spotting troops, not small bodies.”

“Aha,” Macray went.

Few had been their words, and no word so far of enmity, of quarrel. Two strangers travelling together by chance in a desert would speak as these spoke; but ever *these* moved shoulder to shoulder, one never an inch behind the other, as their horses had moved shoulder to shoulder — a long strain on the alertness of nerve and brain and eye and hand. Both wished to God that it was over.

As over open sward they walked, through belt of timber, toiling up hillside, moving by the lonesome pool and the bitter bittern brooding, sending atrot the troop of little duiker-bok, hearing the wild cat whine, there were long silences between them. Their throats dry at that tension, each hoped for, yet dreaded, the setting of the moon, with whose setting his life might set.

“Cobby’s not a bad old sort,” Macray suddenly remarked: “nobody would hurt Cobby, except in defence of Number One. What made him take on this job? Just the money in it?”

“Not much” — from Rolls: “that’s what made *me*. Cobby’s after seeing justice done.”

“Aha.”

Then again that silent plod of hide-shoes over grass and dust and rock; and presently Rolls: “We’re climbing all along, even when it looks as if we weren’t.”

“Oh, aye” — from Macray.

“I know where we are now. One of their outpost vedettes will not be two miles from here.”

“Aha.”

Five minutes more, and they stood confronted with cliff-wall some thirty feet high, which seemed to stretch interminably to east and west, dropping here or there a waterfall; as to which Rolls remarked: “Yes, I remember this bit now; there are some passes going up — we’ll try this way” — turning westward to the left; and over sickly sward they walked close before the cliff, until they came to an opening in its face.

The natural rock-path that ran up here being steep, strewn with stones, narrow as a man, here one of the two had to have his back to the other, and in a flash both understood that the moment of action had come: and the quicker lived.

“Hands up!” cried Rolls like thunderclap, in the same second that Macray, without a word, fired at him.

But Rolls had been by the hundredth of a second the more thunder-prompt, and Macray, when he fired, was two Macrays, one firing, the other throwing his hands up, conscious of a muzzle already at his breast, so that his bullet shot upward....

“Drop your revolver,” ordered Rolls.

The revolver dropped: and Rolls, keeping eye and muzzle on the foe, stooped to pick it up; but his hand not chancing to encounter the gun, he glanced down to see it; and in the wink of that instant Macray was upon

him, grabbing Rolls' revolver-wrist, tumbling Rolls over to the ground, dropping upon Rolls.

There they struggled together — a struggle that could not long continue for lack of wind, it was so cat-o'-mountain in the frantiness of its activity, life the victor's prize. Twice while it lasted those solitudes heard reports of gun-fire — Rolls firing; but without hurt to the other, who had the advantage of being much the younger, of being considerably the bigger, of being uppermost to begin with: advantages over which that inveterate toughness of Rolls might not have prevailed, if Macray had not let go Rolls' left hand to snatch his sheath-knife, and finish it. In that same second Rolls had him overthrown, undone, and under....

His knee on Macray's arm, his grip at Macray's throat, Rolls glared close into his foe's face, grinning at him, his throat rasping as hoarse as Macray's rasped.

Then he sprang up, picked up the two revolvers, dropped his own into its holster, dropped Macray's and Macray's knife into his knapsack, took from the knapsack a skein of window-cord, cut off a bit, and said: "Get up."

Then, Macray up, he said: "Hands behind your back."

On which Macray, as he obeyed, chuckled, or attempted to chuckle, uttering: "Anything to oblige!"

Rolls then went to bind Macray, saying: "One movement, and you're a dead man."

"Wonder I'm not that already" — from Macray.

"Well, and whom do you owe your life to — for the time being?"

"To the best of all possible R. K. Rollses apparently," said the unconquerable Macray.

Rolls laughed. "Not much! Not likely! Bad shot! You would be in hell now all right, if it had been only me. But Cobby don't cotton to

‘assassinations’: and I want to go back able to shake his hand and make him a truthful report of what took place.”

“Here’s to old Cobby, then, and to whatever gods may be. Life’s damned sweet; and I’d sooner be a crossing-sweeper at Charing Cross than a Lord Mayor in the realms below.”

“Prize to-night, then, since you like life” — Rolls tied the last knot on the wrists— “as I do. To-morrow night that moon will be a bit fatter and higher at this hour, but one of us two won’t be knowing about it. We’ll fight it out in the morning light, look. Come on.”

He moved now up the rock-path, and Macray followed, relieved and frivolous in a reaction from the long strain, anon making a remark meant to be jocular and mocking, though he did not fail, as bidden, to look at the moon with a new interest and wistfulness; and on they plodded over country that still increased in steepness, until the moon was down, soon after which another moon — at its full, this one — came into their view, this being the light of a fire shining in the circular doorway of a hut perched some seventy feet up in cliff-side bush — one of the outlook posts of Wo-Ngwanya.

This point being only eight or nine miles from the capital kraal beyond the mountains, Rolls meant, if again victorious the next day, to visit the kraal alone the next midnight, and investigate the possibilities, in order to report to Cobby, he having with him cord-ladder, air-gun, and every essential for “the rehearsal”; nor did the first step to this end — the slipping-in past the vedettes — present any difficulty: on such a night, in the absence of searchlights, a company of soldiers could have prowled into the pass unnoticed.

Here Macray crept foremost, with Rolls’ muzzle at his back, lest he should deliberately rouse the outlook by any sound; and now the way was up and up the endless stair of that tower of mountain-rock, that looked a

suitable boundary for a land, not of Wa-Ngwanya, but of titans and archangels, and now they were crawling north-west through some gross grove of wood, the dwelling-place of gloom, and now were moving north-east along dizzy cliff-brinks within theatres of crags, trackless grandeurs, with organ-voices of waters raving everywhere, and always a noisy north-wind thwarting them, so that toward midnight they halted exhausted on a ledge where the rock above rather overhung them, and had a bluff which a little protected them from the wind; and here Rolls, having produced from his knapsack biltong, biscuits, Johnny Walker, tied up Macray's legs, untied his hands behind, tied them before; and there, seated, they ate and drank together.

"Here we sleep," Rolls remarked between bottle and lip.

"Or pretend to," said Macray, feeding his mouth two-handed.

"I'll be sleeping all right," Rolls muttered.

"Maybe I can roll you down the precipice during the night — good idea: the rolling of Rolls. Or knock out your brains with one of those stones."

"No, you won't be doing much stirring," Rolls answered. "I respect you some, Macray: an unscrupulous brute, born without a God or a conscience; but you have brains."

Macray reflected on this, and then, deciding, said: "Yes, all that's true. You're a man who can see, Rolls."

Rolls was now trying to light a cigar within his hat, but, after several failures, muttered: "Oh, well, here's to bed," and lay close under the crag.

Macray, too, lay, and both looked up with that pang of a look that may be the last at clouds that scudded southward over the vault, and, sailing northward, all the swarm of the constellations, steadily sailing together, like a navy that steadily sails and sails.

But, though the winds were touched with chill up there, within some minutes Rolls was asleep but for an ear: only Macray lay wakeful. And see him at one time, tied as he was, drawing himself softly a little to peer over the edge of the ledge, and ponder upon what he saw.... Then he lay anew under the rock-shadow, wooing sleep; but had just succeeded in drowsing, when he was roused by a shout ... a shout of horror.

He started up, staring at Rolls, whom he saw staring also.

“Bad dreams?” Macray asked suddenly.

Rolls did not answer.

Macray chuckled: “Conscience, Rolls....”

Rolls dropped again upon the rock, terribly trembling. He had dreamed that he was careering headlong down the ravine — a dream so *real*, and so dismal in mood, that it was hours before he could sleep anew — in fits and starts.

Hence the dawn of morning came upon him rather shaken, rather out of sorts. But showing no sign of it, save a slight pallor, he sprang up — summoned Macray — muttering: “Come, let’s have it over” — set free Macray’s legs.

“Well, what’s the rules of the game?” Macray asked, smiling — pale now, his eyelids twitching — but steadily smiling.

Rolls looked along the ledge — some sixty feet long, some four broad, rather concave in form, bluffing out at the north and south ends; and glancing over the edge in that grey of dawn, one saw only jags and crags and small trees, and no bottom but mists steaming; and on the opposite side of the ravine, fifteen feet to the east, a like scene of rock and tree.

“You will stand at that north end,” Rolls said. “I at that south. You will hold one end of this cord low, and I’ll slide your revolver down it to you. When I see it reach your hand, I fire.”

“Bah!” broke bitterly from the other’s lips: “and you talk of wanting fair-play to please Master Cobby! What’s this but assassination? While I’m getting my revolver from the cord I drop dead — of course.”

Rolls saw this — moved some steps away, reflecting, and came back saying: “Well, I’m game to meet you, if you have any better plan.”

Macray had a twitching of the eyelids, as in all his instants of high-pitched egoism. He said: “You want fair-play. Well, you bind my revolver to my right wrist, muzzle-backward; and I bind yours to yours with the same knots and length of cord. Then you tie a long cord to the two bindings, and retire till the cord is taut, which will be the signal to start unbinding with tooth and nail, and the quickest wins. Not quite fair to me, since I have more gum than tooth: but I’m game ... you want fair-play....” His eyelids twitched.

“What’s that — Mexican?”

“Yes; Mexican.”

Rolls anew moved some paces away, weighing it with a wary eye, and came back, saying: “Well, maybe we’ll make it that road: I’ll figure it up; we’ll have some breakfast.”

“God, man, get it over!” cried out Macray, staring at him.

On which Rolls, suddenly pallid with passion, flashing fire from his eyes, said sharply: “Damn it, yes, get it over it is. No doubt I’m as smart a man as you at any game. Sit down.”

And, as Macray sat with that pallid smile of his, Rolls in a flurry of action again tied his legs together, then searched him from hat to shoes, found a penknife and a flint-stone, tossed them away. He then drew out the magazines from both the Colt’s, and proceeded to free Macray’s wrists; then cut two equal lengths of cord, with one of which he bound one of the Colt’s to Macray’s right wrist, muzzle backward, tying up the trigger, making the

knots with all his strength; and now, presenting the other Colt's to Macray, permitted it to be similarly bound to his own wrist. Which done, he tied the ends of a cord nearly equal in length to the ledge's length to the two bindings.

"That fair now, Douglas Macray?" says he.

"All serene, Rolls," says Macray.

With a slash of his knife Rolls now freed the other's feet.

"I will go south, if you like," said Macray, rising upright.

"What's that for?" asked Rolls.

"It is lower, and I am the taller — not that it matters." His eyelids twitched.

"Makes no matter to me either road," said Rolls.

On which Macray stepped backward southward, as Rolls replaced one of the magazines in his own Colt's, and, stepping backward northward, tossed the other to Macray.

With their eyes fixed on each other, they increased the distance between them, until the cord was taut; then instantly bent to the untying.

Macray, however, made no actual attempt to untie, but, while pretending to untie, stepped two paces forward, and, bending sideways, picked up with his left hand a flint-stone, of which there were many scattered about the ledge.

Of this act of treachery Rolls, with one watchful eye aside, was conscious; but though flints can be rather sharp, he felt no keen fear that the edge of a flint, picked up haphazard, would chance to get through the several thicknesses of cord that entangled the triggers, before he could rend away and loose his own entanglements with tooth and nail — a task well in progress already.

But Macray had no intention of cutting his entanglements.... The instant the flint was in his fingers, a shout hopped out of his mouth, as he leapt from off the ledge, and a shout hopped out of Rolls' mouth, as he found himself tugged forward askew, and falling down the gulf.

Macray alighted upon another ledge which he had observed quite thirty feet below, a ledge twenty feet long and half as broad, where a dwarf mohnono-tree, with leaves of silver, sprang out of the cliff-side: to which tree he clung with an arm wrenched to dislocation by the arrest of Rolls' descent, clung during several seconds of frenzy, while with the flint in his left fingers he sawed to sever the cord that connected him with the dead; and still when the cord was cut he clung on dizzied, drunk, distraught, watching the history and incidents of the body's voyage during ten seconds which seemed as many minutes, saw it wheel and vault from point to point of rock, saw it hurled by the earth's reeling upon the opposite wall of the ravine, and disappear into the sea of mists.

Macray fell upon his face, and lay there trembling. "*My God!*" he said.

But within fifteen minutes he chuckled in his gullet: it lived, that dear ego of his, that Number One that he had a fancy for; and "damn you deep!" he muttered to the dead.

However, he was a prisoner there on the ledge, he and a chough's chicks; and it was only after hours of efforts and very perilous failures that, by ramming fragments of his tree into crannies of the crag, he managed to regain the ledge from which he had leapt.

There he ate and rested; then, taking Rolls' knapsack, plodded on northward for the capital of Wo-Ngwanya, to tell a tale there.

VIII. THE SIGODHLO



TWO MORNINGS AFTERWARDS Cobby wrote in his journal: “My sentiment toward Rolls would better be named affection than liking: an affection based on respect. I have known no intelligence whose judgments in general were more trustworthy; and though his moral sense was not dainty, being as rough-and-ready as the whole Rolls, his substance was sound as a nut. Innate, moreover, in the man, strange to say, was a soul of poetry, a relation with the soul of Nature — a thing without song, or voice, or, I think, much emotion — hidden behind hides of commonness, but really there, and rare. My friend; my dear friend. Never shall I forget the sense of loss, of solitude, the pang of heart, when, near seven last night, I saw Macray riding in alone over the plain in the moon’s light, leading Rolls’ mare by the rein, and I knew that the moving Finger had written and moved on, as when the funeral is over now and done, and man has gone to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.

“And so perplexing the way of it! It appears that the two abandoned their horses too soon, walked a long way toward the mountains, and stopped to rest in a forest, where Rolls desired to sleep, but was disturbed by a roaring, which Macray said was a lion’s, but Rolls maintained that it was an ostrich’s; and at last, exclaiming ‘Oh, stash it!’ Rolls dashed away to shoot the (supposed) ostrich. Macray heard Rolls’ revolver pop, then an outcry, and ran to Rolls’ assistance, to find him dead under a lion and lioness, which Macray contrived to kill, after dislocating his arm in climbing a tree.

“Such is Macray’s account of things. But who could ever have predicted that Ulysses would die in that silly way — by a lion. He himself would have derided the prediction, I think; and there is something in it which the brain will not realize. Moreover, I remember hearing my friend say that he at least could always distinguish between the roarings of lion and ostrich; nor do ostriches usually roar at so late an hour. Very strange: I do not understand; must only accept.

“Well, farewell, you brave R. K. R.: gone; but not to be forgotten.

“Then, alone, Macray walked on northward, following directions that had dropped from Rolls; passed over the mountains; and at two in the morning actually effected an entry into the town, into the royal enclosure, and on to the grounds of the royal hut. So he reports. And his report is anything but heartening. ‘We will never make her, baas,’ is his comment, this *her* not referring to a lady, but to an enterprise. Three sentries, it appears, at the royal gates, each a giant. So— ‘take my advice’ — I am now to throw away so many months of effort, to turn tail at the very gates of the enterprise, and to ‘be quick about it,’ ere the Wa-Ngwanya get wind of our presence here, for then ‘all will be up with all of us.’

“This irritated me, and I said to Macray: ‘By no means up with us. Understand, Macray, that one white man armed with the science of Europe is mightier than all the Wa-Ngwanya, backed by all the blacks of Africa — given the opportunity to use the tools of his science. Am I to take it, then, that you are losing nerve?’

“‘Not a bit, inkoos,’ was his nonchalant answer: ‘if you are for seeing it through without Rolls, here am I. But I’ll cry to see a head like yours chopped off. You should be killed by electricity — something scientific — not by a nigger’s bill. Turn back, isinduna — take my tip.’

“‘On the contrary,’ I answered, ‘I will go on.’

“‘Good egg,’ he said: ‘I admire your spirit, if not your cunning.’

“I wonder why he chose this word ‘cunning’ — a quality which he himself may not lack, perhaps. Certainly, I have a sense of some unknown quantity in Macray, an X, a mask — my fancy perhaps. Throughout the trek he has shown himself ever jovial, cheerily enduring, cool in danger, quick to learn, versatile, serviceable, exhibiting no little initiative and efficiency as hunter, soldier, and traveller, so that I have congratulated myself on the bargain I made with him at Johannesburg. But there has never been any love lost between him and Rolls, I could see; and, as for me, something in him undoubtedly repels something in me. However, we are now bound together for good or evil. A week hence will test his mettle.... Meantime, hunting, improving the food-stock, and maturing a scheme for making the attempt when the moonlight is over, I cautiously excogitating each detail. I have determined to move the expedition no further northward, since it appears that many of the blacks feel nervous of advancing nearer the Wa-Ngwanya, whose reputation has bred terror in their breasts. And now, thou Pallas of Good Counsel, be my goddess....”

But on the seventh day thence, when the venture was to have been made, Macray stated that he was “seedy” from his sick arm, so it was not till the ninth night that, all being at last ready, the attempt was made, Cobby taking with him Macray, two Zulus, and a mule, which, like the men, was shod with rubber. Overcast and dark as the night was, they contrived, soon after abandoning their animals, to find that same pass up which Rolls and Macray had travelled, and, not without the aid of electric torches, crossed the maze of mountain shortly after one in the morning.

Macray acting as guide, they found out a town that lay drowned in darkness, and by an hour’s prowling round its outer stockade, came to its back part, Cobby estimating that the place, though more compact and peopled,

was hardly bigger than Midhurst or Petersfield; and Macray whispered that from that back part to the sigodhlo, or royal kraal, was hardly a quarter-hour's walk.

When, from the mule's back, Macray had cast a rope-ladder, its grapples wrapped in rubber, the four were speedily in the outermost round of street, and thence prowled down a street that led pretty steeply centreward. No sentinel in all this part — a fact which astonished both Cobby and his blacks; and not a sound in all that gloom, only remotely somewhere the dumb boom of a drum going, and far off a baby clamouring, and presently far off the exclamations of a dog barking at the arising of some event in the reign of nothingness, and presently the shine of a fire in the round doorway of a round hut, and in there, suckling a child, a woman seated, quite close to whom they moved unseen.

Then an enclosure, woven of fine tambuti grass, over which they climbed, without needing to fall upon, chloroform, bind, gag or gas any guardsman, for none appeared. Inside — a village within a city — stood residences of royal son or cousin, of the late King's ladies, of Court-officials, roomy intervals separating the residences, every residence being a group of huts slumbering within its own enclosure, grossly embowered within its own grove of equatorial foliage and flower, which breathed out a sigh to the night-breeze, so that here the darkness was even deeper, because of all these arbours of large-leaved boscage, palm and sarsaparilla, banana, tree-fern; and it was beneath a big fig-tree near the middle of the ring that the marauders paused to take their bearings.

Here Cobby whispered at Macray's ear: "No sentries?" — for at this oddity, although it had an aspect of luck, he felt nevertheless a vague apprehension.

“Funny thing,” Macray whispered him; and one of the Zulus whispered: “Something wrong! Take care!”

At the same time Macray was whispering: “See that junk of bush straight ahead? In there she should be.”

“*Come,*” Cobby now whispered, and went headlong, bent, prowling keen and quick.

IX. THE ROYAL HUT



PROWLING CLOSE OUTSIDE the enclosure of the sovereign's domicile under gross shadow of foliage which overgrew, the four slowly approached the south portion of the enclosure. Now, however, there was alarm — a dog starting to bark.

On finding out the dog, a small thing tied near the stockade — *why* tied there was not clear — one of the two Zulus tossed it biltong, and Cobby then, in his zest for chloroform that morning, pressed a cloth over its nose, and shut it up.

In two minutes more they came to the gate of the stockade....

Here three at least of the four were quite certain of finding sentries, but there was none.

“What does it *mean*?” Cobby whispered to Macray.

“Very rum!” Macray whispered back. “Shall we turn tail?”

Both the Zulus already had revolvers in hand, *expecting* now an ambush.

Now Cobby, raising himself on the stockade, peered over, to see before him, a long way off at the bottom of an avenue, the round doorway of a hut, filled with fire-light, like a dim full-moon.

And with a heart now fast beating he dropped back to his feet, whispering keenly, “Come, try the gate ... this may be luck....”

His torch-ray, switched upon the gate's edge, showed two thongs for raising two latches of wood within: this was all the fastening; the gate opened easily outward; and they passed up a little ascent that had rows of stones imbedded in the earth to serve as steps, then on along an avenue all

ambushed in blackness of darkness, having among the bush, on each side, five idols, mighty forms, of which the marauders were just conscious in moving close under them, these being the only sentinels visible; and in the distance ahead the steady disc of light, a dim eye, soundless, mysterious, that seemed to drowse and dream.

Cobby and Macray crawled foremost, and near behind them the two furtive Zulus, all eye and ear, all nerves and alertness.

Then, to the scandalizing of everyone, Macray dropped his revolver ... and loud it sounded, an outrage on that hush.... Some moments more, and it was as if someone muttered somewhere in the night.... The men stood arrested by it: but it was so low, and so momentary, a rumour from nowhere, that none was certain that it was not some birth from the night's disquiet, from the stirring of wind and tree. Cobby moved on, and soon, lying on his face, was spying into the lighted opening....

He saw a round room, big as his own drawing-room at home, with a vaulted roof supported toward its centre by two roof-trees of red-wood (mopane), ten feet apart, quite nicely fashioned and polished, between them in the roof being a smoke-hole, and under this a dying fire of logs; hanging from the roof a few charms — snake-skins, ivory elephants; over the floor a profusion of rugs, with some gourds and stools well polished; and round the walls swaths of tapestry of fawn-skin soft-tanned, all embroidered with elephants in beads of “gold-stone,” hanging from the ends of pegs; and between them on the wall shields, and sheaves of spears. But not all this did Cobby see, his gaze being riveted on two girls who lay on beds of rugs at the foot of the roof-trees, one on each side of the fire, their feet toward him, their faces as yet very vague to him, though it was evident that the one to his right with the ivory anklet was white, that the one to his left with the brass bangles was black: and motionless they lay.

Here, then, was the instant, and here a case for the judicious application of chloroform: so Cobby whispered "*the black*" into the tympanum of Macray, handing bottle and cloth, he having carefully trained Macray to apply anæsthetics, while he himself held bottle and cloth for the white.

And now he was impetuously in.

As little light came from the fire, he, on finding himself over the white, switched on the little ray of his torch, and saw her well, lying half on her side, with one arm cast naked above her head as in careless slumber, the rest of her wrapped in a kaross of yellow cloth embroidered everywhere with black elephants; and there, just as Rolls had once described her, was the lane running up the side of her high brow betwixt the wings of her hair.

Cobby, breathing "By heaven!" started, as a dart of admiration pierced his nature.

In that same moment there arose a sound — behind him — something like a snigger, like half a snigger smothered, which, as it slipped out, was finished. Cobby glanced alertly round at the negro girl, who, however, seemed asleep, then again at the white, whose lips, as if in sympathy with that snigger, had now moved into a smile, the vaguest ghost of a smile — but still visible.

The truth now pierced Cobby's consciousness that these people were not really asleep — a fact chilling enough to the heart. There he stood pallor-struck — saw all lost, his party trapped; but, as he was not sure, and as retreat was hardly his way, he was still about to venture upon doing what he was there to do, when, as he stooped to her, the Queen's lips opened a little to say "now."

"*Hands up!*" shouted Cobby in Zulu, spinning to the four winds with his revolver pointed at a circle of nine giants who spurted out upon him from behind all the swaths of wall-curtain; but no hand was put "up," and he did

not shoot, understanding in a flash that that would be useless bloodshed, since, whichever way he span, some were at his back, while Macray seemed seized with paralysis.

One shot, however, *was* fired — outside the hut — by one of the two Zulus, who were pounced upon by an ambuscade outside; and this man, after shooting another in the abdomen, made his escape through the bush of the close. But when that shot sounded outside, Cobby was already on his back, panting under a foot on his breast and another on his neck, his arms bound to his sides with many rounds of hide, his poor cloth and bottle of science lying scattered from his hand, exhaling a smell of carbohydrates; two stood by Macray, holding his arms; while the Queen and Sueela, seated on their beds, Sueela with big ox-eyes, her head all kid's-horns of hair sticking out as in curling-pins, inspected the activities of the men, three of whom had kindled at the logs torches which illumined the room with a smoky glow.

But now one from outside entered the opening, and, on hands and knees, uttered the report: “*Bayeté!* Kindayana shot in the belly; the one that shot him gone off; another one captured” — and instantly the Queen's countenance changed. Springing to her feet, she went ranging about the chamber, resentment on her brow; but stopped to say over her shoulder to the messenger: “Carry Kindayana to Mandaganya” (a doctress); on which the messenger went running out, bent so headlong down, as to suggest one tumbling on his face, or seeking in haste a flea on the floor, while Spiciewegiehotiu again ranged the room, and Sueela, expecting squalls, followed her goings with ogling ox-eyes, with her fingers expanded like a goose's toes, with a pantomime pull of face, as when a baby does “Oh! bogies!”

When the Queen next stopped, it was to point a bâton of ivory at one of the nine giants, and say: “You run and tell his highness the Commander to send a mounted messenger to the captain who has gone to destroy their camp: if they point out the one who shot Kindayana, the captain let ten of them live; if not, he kill them all” — and, bent headlong, seeking a flea, this messenger went running, while Spiciewegiehotiu stood with a shoulder propped upon a roof-tree, her feet crossed, a palm on her upper haunch, like a birch formed of long curves perfectly outlined by a kaross bound in by a simple string at the waist, and falling to the ankles, a flimsy thing, accumulation of raiment not being the mode among the ladies of this community; and she pointed her sceptre, saying to another: “These two and the one outside to ‘The Elephant’ for now” — but at the same time made a silent sign that this was not meant as to Macray.

The feet that had been on Cobby then lifted, stirred him to stand up, and he, scrambling upright, faced Spiciewegiehotiu, though, as he was in a half-dark, with no torch near him, she hardly saw his face.

“What you want here, you?” she called to him.

Guessing her meaning, he answered in Zulu with a monarch’s head and offended lids: “I am here, not for my own good, but for yours. It appears that I am your cousin, and your rightful guide and guardian. You will have to do what I tell you — if I live. Soon I shall learn to gabble your jargon, then I will tell you.”

She, apparently, understood at any rate some of it, for with a nose of deadly disdain pulled at him, with her sceptre uplifted to hit him, she stepped promptly upon him, crying out with the flying tongue of a scold: “You think you have time to learn Se-Ngwanya jargon? You think so? Vultures know how black man taste; now they want to know how white

man taste. If the man your man shot die, Ah! you watch vultures eat your tongue before they eat your lungs.”

And down the bâton of ivory came, or was coming, for his head, when it halted suspended: now she saw his face, that rock of his sovereignty, upon which the waves of defeat and danger seethed in vain.

But it was not respect that stayed her blow, but something else — Memory. For quite a minute of silence she eyed him; then a left finger summoned one of the torch-bearers, and for quite another minute of silence in the light of that torch her eyes pondered upon him, while Sueela, leaning forward, stared with wonderment at her.

In those moments it seemed to the Queen that in some dream somewhere she had seen that countenance, known its meaning, and within what household and home of mood it lived and moved — Cobby, in fact, having a very strong resemblance to his Aunt Jane, Spiciewegiehotiu’s mother, a stronger resemblance than to his own mother, as Spiciewegiehotiu more resembled his mother than her own.

Spiciewegiehotiu turned away without a word; stood again against the roof-tree, with lowered lids.

“If you care anything for Reason — —” Cobby now began to say, when she, with sudden fretfulness, shook her face intolerantly, saying: “Take these men out of my sight!” And at once this was done.

X. "THE ELEPHANT"



COBBY, MACRAY AND their Zulu, after being taken by a guard of seven through the gate of the Queen's park, walked southward down a slope, till they came to a palisade half a mile long that ran east and west, where a wicket was opened to them by a picket posted there.

Now they were at the top of "the Square," a place (called "awna," or "kotla") enclosed with palisades, long as Tottenham Court Road, with a river running along its east side, an area big enough to contain the live-stock of that district in case of invasion, an expanse of emptiness containing scarcely anything save, here or there, some tremendous old tree gone hollow, and rags of grass. But after stepping through that wicket, the party passed by a platform of earth, hard-trodden, three feet high, on which were pillars of wood supporting a roof of reeds some fifty feet long, under which canopy were three steps of stone, leading up to an arm-chair of stone, and before this throne two semi-circles of stools, concentric — this being the judgment-seat and council-police of the Queen, as shown in the drawing of the town by Cobby.

Then, south of that platform, they passed by another object — a cube of earth three feet big — very red then in the torchlight, for here heads fell. And then another platform with pillars and a roof — the market; and thence the tramp was past the guards of the great gate, and along country-road to the right.

Without pause the seven giants chuckled and chatted, as they sauntered on, and anon differed in opinion and waxed warm, full of other interests

than their prisoners; but Cobby walked silent, and when Macray said in his light way, "Well, we seem to be in a bad old way, baas," and received no answer, he, too, walked silent with his thoughts.

Cobby was offended that Macray had not joined him in holding up the nine with his revolver in the royal hut; nor could he understand why his and the Zulu's arms were bound, and not Macray's.

But what was heavy now upon him was not his own fate, nor yet Macray's, but his camp's — those forty-seven whom he had led to death, for he had gathered in the hut that they were to be wiped out. But how possibly could Spiciewegiehotiu know where his camp lay in the vast of Africa? How, too, had she foreknown — with so much preciseness! — his attempt upon her that night? By nature slow to suspicion, he did not conceive the idea that Macray, after the death of Rolls, might have come to Spiciewegiehotiu, and told her all.

Down a slope westward the way was, with here or there a private kraal or farmstead that the eye could divine in the dark, where a cow lowed, a bull highed, or shrilled, and, outlined southward on the sky, the mountains, that were no more mountains now, but only hills; down, then up, and down, till they came to a lake, in which Cobby suddenly found himself wading knee-deep, and close before him cliff-wall, sixty feet high, passing away into darkness north and south. Imagining that this cliff was washed by the water, he wondered whither they were going, until, on coming to the cliff-face, his captor pressed down his nape to make him stoop, and, as he entered under the cliff, he understood that this must be the "Elephant" rock, supported on "legs," of which Rolls had told him.

Twice, as he walked on, wading, he happened to let his head lift a little from the awkward stoop, and twice bumped it; but after some minutes of it, the roof of rock rose somewhat, and thenceforth became a dead level a foot

above his head, though still his jailer moved with a little stoop, just shaving the rock with his ostrich plumes.

On and on the walk was, the water quite warm, as if having a volcanic warmth, nowhere rising higher than the thigh, the bottom a bottom of rock; and here, where no breath of breeze seemed to stray, the torch burned steady, shedding a blood of slaughter over the jet-black surface of the water, showing anon patches of lotus and anon reaches of lichen — only one torch now, for after some time Cobby realized with a start that the party of ten had become a party of five, Macray and four of the guard being no longer in it; he had been all preoccupied with the strangeness of the place in which he now found himself straying — could not rid his brain of the impression that the place lay profoundly buried in subterranean depths, the abode of gnomes ruminating in there the opium of a reverie that never ended, brooding for ever in the bosom of that home of muteness, into whose gloom no glim of the sun or of the moon ever entered; and he understood that farther than the flight of fancy that roof of rock ran on and on, and under it always that night of water, farther than fancy flies: so he had had no notion at what moment Macray had ceased to be near behind him; it had been silently done ...!

A mile of that drowsy water went coiling away in waves like waves of oil round his wading thighs, a thousand times, and again a thousand times, in a silence not now broken by the blacks, because of the babble of echoes from the rock-roof that mocked all attempts at talking; only Cobby, twice turning to his Zulu, said: “Courage, Panda!” and was answered with the smile of a dauntless man.

And now the monotony of that wading and wading in a drowsy air saturated with water-vapour made Cobby drowsy in a reaction after his late agitations; he longed, as if he had drunk a drug, to stop and drop, to squat in

that gloom of the lukewarm lagoon, and nod under the load of the roof of rock — did, in fact, begin to nod, when his head again struck the roof, which again came down a little for a hundred yards; at the end of which an area of radiance on the water came into sight, and then two stone steps rising out of the water at a place where the monotony of roof was broken by a vaulted room, in this room being a doorway shaped like a bow, and at the bow-string the two steps, the radiance on the water being shed from two torches at the doorway: and up the two steps, green-grown and slimy, the five stepped, stooped into the doorway, and went stooping up a rock-corridor to a rock-hall, in the middle of which, surrounded by nut-torches (oil-nuts stuck on skewers) twelve men lolled, smoking, snuff-taking, playing toss-and-pick-up with marbles.

All about this hall were piles of logs, and there was a fire under a pot, the smoke going up a hole tunnelled through the rock — chimney and ventilator to the whole. Those outer steps also were obviously artificial, “The Elephant” having been more or less modified by man into a prison and fortress: Cobby called it “the Elephant and Castle.”

Up leapt the twelve to crowd round the umlungo (white) — a colour respected here, because of “the white lamb washed,” but *she* was much less chromatic than Cobby, nor had they been at such close quarters before with that colour. One fellow just touched Cobby’s chest, then glanced at his finger-tip; one said: “Many of them — somewhere”; and another said: “Eheh (Yes), there’s all sorts of things somewhere; me hear somebody say there’s people with three eyes”; a third, agaze with hands on knees, observed: “Na! there is blue in his eyes, there is red in his hair, his lip is pink: me wish his nose was only green, he’d be pretty like the rainbow”; “Poh! let me alone, he is best as he is,” answered another. “He is no umfagosan (base-born),” one said: “see how he look”; and one asked:

“Where he spring from? What he come for?” but the prisoners’ conductors were not careful to explain, one of them now ordering: “Untie their arms, and put them in the big prison to the right.”

“May I not have my torch?” Cobby asked of this one, who had Cobby’s torch, revolver, knife, bag, hat.

The giant shook No from his head.

“It is not a gun, just a torch,” Cobby said, then with a sudden movement switched on the light in the giant’s hand; upon which the giant dropped the thing like hot iron, springing backward.

Cobby then picked it up, and, switching off the light, presented it to him, saying: “It is harmless.”

But the man now shrank from it. “Can you make it shine again?” he demanded.

Cobby switched it on.

“Na!” and “Na!” now sounded, all crowding round to see this thing under heaven.

“Now make it stop!”

“Now make it shine again!”

“*You* make it,” Cobby said, showing him how, and when he rightly pulled the switch, the light shone even for him.

Then he knew joy all over his face; and round now the torch went among them, their heads crowding upon it, crying out “me next!” everyone having a try, until it went back to the original holder, who stuck it with decision within the band of his moocha, as who should say: “this thing is *mine*.”

He got from Cobby an underglance of reproach....

And as Cobby was being led away, the man ran, put the torch and Cobby’s hat with haste and stealth into Cobby’s hand, and walked away out, poor but honest.

Cobby and the Zulu were then led along one of several corridors that rayed from that central room — a long corridor upon which rock-rooms opened, out of whose moody vaults floated voices in talk, moans, calls to the warders passing, voices of man and of woman, until the echoing steps bent into a second corridor to the left, where Cobby and the Zulu were soon made to stoop into a room, and the warders fastened across the door a bar, over or under which a body could not pass.

Cobby then examined the room with his torch, saw that it was circular and lofty, thirty feet across, and in it three men asleep on the rock-floor; in the centre of the floor a hole a foot across, into which when he put the torch its beam burned upon the surface of water beneath.

The air was heavy and hot, moist, noisome, an offensive smell pervading the place; but, tired of their night's effort and failure, the two fell down and slept soundly.

XI. DZINIKULU



WHAT FATE NOW awaited him, awaited his camp, Macray, Panda (the Zulu with him), Cobby asked himself many times a day — though between day and midnight was not the least difference in that place, where the eyes strained in vain to descry the hand, however crazily nigh they stared; so that, just to see light, Cobby would switch on his torchlight anon, always with a miserly economy, like one who sips liqueur, lest the little dry-cell, running down, should leave his eyeballs quite bereaved of light.

How the prison-people measured time he did not know — in that room of his time was abolished, but for the clock which the stomach automatically became, the prisoners all acquiring a pretty precise consciousness of meal-times — two meals a day, as it seemed, being given, when three men brought a board supporting calabashes, and a torch, the prisoners peering for them at the bar across the low-arched opening; and always the same food in the calabash — a mass called “poospoos,” but much of it, and described as “very nice” by Cobby, who in his diary writes a detailed account of its preparation — corn-meal being put into a pot pierced with holes, and this pot hung inside another in which meat is stewed: so the steam from the meat penetrates and cooks the meal, which then, as poospoos, is eaten.

But weeks of it: how many Cobby had no idea; and in white light now he saw his fault — hot-headedness, failure of restraint, he having talked too hotly and haughtily to a sovereign, in the hollow of whose hand his life and his followers’ lives were — a sovereign who was also a savage. Reflecting

on it now, he wondered that he still lived even that death-in-life there, with his back against the wall, his legs out before him, his hung head staring at nothing. Here one did not determine the surface-tension of bubbles, nor count the droplets in a cubic centimetre of the water-vapour that one breathed and breathed. Europe was a dream now.

And for how long? for years? for life? till madness came? He had hoped that he would be “tried,” as Rolls had been, would be given a chance to speak, to plead, to appeal to human reason; but in the course of weeks this hope forsook him.

Meantime, however, his situation was not like “solitary confinement,” for here was much fellowship: he spoke with his Zulu; the three Wa-Ngwanya conversed together; and one of these, an elderly man of rank, whose name was Esingwe, imprisoned for agitation against a law, adopted Cobby as a listener, and, finding out Cobby whenever Cobby flashed the torchlight, would scramble to sit near, and give once more at great length the tale of his sorrows and wrongs. In vain Cobby again and again protested that he understood scarcely anything of it; the speaker did not realize this; and still the machine that spoke spoke on, speaking not so much to be understood as just to speak. Moreover, the speaker had found out that the Zulu at least understood much, as a Spaniard understands some Italian, and at special points he would insist that the Zulu should explain to Cobby, he waiting, nodding, until the explanation was made, and then continuing the endless tale. “What a fate, this tongue and this tale!” thought Cobby when it had long gone on; and then — suddenly — one day — it came like a revelation — he found himself understanding it all!

“Now I am understanding him!” Cobby cried gladly in Se-Ngwanya to Panda: “curious! the power comes, not gradually, but suddenly.”

“You understand me now?” said the gossip. “Na! now me tell you all, all; and now you send messages to the Sinder-ngabya: maybe he let you out” — this Sinder-ngabya (or “Guardian of the Sad”) being a dignitary to whom prisoners had the privilege of sending messages by an official who came at intervals to collect messages; and thenceforth Cobby did send messages, saying that he had come with a good motive, that, anyway, Panda, who had only obeyed his commands, might well be pardoned, while, as to the men of his camp, their innocence was complete.

But he never had any answer; and that baleful air began to sap his vitality.

However, soon after the fourth of his messages, an event arose for him — a visitor.

This was Dzinikulu, one of the late King’s three brothers, of whom Spiciewegiehotiu had beheaded two.

Mooning as usual against his wall, Cobby saw an invasion of light, and one of his warders peered in, calling eagerly: “Umlungo! come!” and he whispered in a flurry: “Prince Dzinikulu to see you — na! You ukukonza (do obeisance): maybe he do good for you”; and, drawing Cobby out to stand in the corridor, he ran off.

Then all in torchlight the royalty came, brow-bound with ivory, beplumed in crimson with the egret’s tuft, “and saluted me with no little dignity in quite a Zulu style” (Cobby writes). “His mantle not being wetted, I divined that he must have come under ‘The Elephant’ in some kind of boat rather than on a man’s back, for Dzinikulu is a very big being, man of forty-eight, say, with a mass of full-face, and eyes from whose corners peer intrigue and experienced caution. He stood with one leg cocked forward, and said to me: ‘You send messages to the Sinder-ngabya; the Sinder-ngabya report them to me, as the Great-great gone away from Eshowe on a

tour to visit other towns: so me come to hear your complaint.’ Now he waved away the torch-bearers, saying to them: ‘Count six-three (*i.e.* nine) six hundred times (*i.e.* 216 times), then come back’; and as soon as he and I were alone in darkness, he said in a lower tone: ‘Trust in me: maybe you and me think the same things.’

“(My translation of their words, by the way, is not, in one sense, exact; but since it is based upon my knowledge of the genius of their speech, upon my knowledge of how an English language invented by them would be spoken, it *is*, in another sense, exact: for whoever has translated a tone, has translated everything. What is amusing is that some writers on Africa make negroes speak in a lofty sort of tone like Ezekiel, with verbs ending in ‘eth,’ rather confirming what I often think that untrained intellects have a kind of liking, a preference, for untruth.)

“He then wanted to know of me exactly with what objects and hopes I had come to Wo-Ngwanya, and I told him frankly all, explaining how my object was the Queen’s good; on which he, compressing my arm with his fingers, stood silent, until he said: ‘So you say: how she to know that it true?’

““From the fact that I have taken so much trouble to come to her,’ I answered.

“On this I could hear him chuckle in his gruff way, and mutter to himself: ‘Maybe, if she believe all that, she go!’ and I understood then that I have an ally in Dzinikulu, who hankers to see the back of his Queen, that he may reign in her stead.

““You will tell her all that!’ he said close and low, compressing my arm: ‘maybe she believe! Anyway, me and you bake bread together against Mandaganya and Sueela: me and you together beat everybody.’

““Who is Mandaganya?’ I asked him.

“‘Witch-doctoress — mother of Sueela. Spiciewegiehotiu foolish with love for Sueela: so Mandaganya powerful. Two months ago Spiciewegiehotiu say publicly she will take for her husband Sandelikatze, Sueela’s brother, the executioner. Everybody clap their hand on their mouth; everybody say Spiciewegiehotiu go too far, too far, too far. Next full moon she marry Sandelikatze. Sandelikatze is dirt! Sueela is dirt! Mandaganya is dirt! Everybody say Spiciewegiehotiu must be mad! She care nothing for Sandelikatze — Sandelikatze is dirt! but she in love with Sueela — na! she marry Sueela’s brother to please Sueela. When she do, all Wo-Ngwanya go against her. Then me and you bake bread together — wait, wait. Sueela and Mandaganya will fight hard, for if Spiciewegiehotiu go down, or go away, what will such dirt be? Corpses without heads. But me and you fight hard, too; me and you beat everybody.’

“I then said to him: ‘Yes, but when? Can you set me free? I am becoming ill, my teeth may decay, my clothes are filthy.... How long have I been here?’

“He said ‘a month,’ adding: ‘*Me* can’t set you free, but me think you go free. If Spiciewegiehotiu was going to kill you, she kill you long ago: she have some reason in her head not to kill you, me not know what it is. Soon she come back from The North; you send her message; beg her pardon — —’

“This I cut short, telling him that that I should never, never do.

“‘Proud man — na! induna,’ he went. ‘Still, you get free — me think so. Before the Queen went away, the old guest-house in the sigodhlo was pulled down, now a new one is put up, and a certain person said in my ear that Sueela said in his ear that she have reason to believe that this is done for you — not likely, but maybe so. When the Queen come back, me going

to counsel her to cut your head off, and be done; then, maybe, she set you free.’

“All this, insubstantial as it all was, comforted my misery not a little; and I then proceeded to sound him about the prospects of Panda, about the camp, about Macray. And now a terrible blow was in store for me: for he answered unconcernedly: ‘No trouble about your camp: they all killed, except six-four (ten). Your Zulu who shot the Mo-Ngwanya that night had his right arm broken, then his right eye burnt out, then his head torn off.’

“It made me sick. Enfeebled as I was, I had to cling a little to the savage. To think that Woman can be so hard and heartless ...!

“I asked him if the shot Mo-Ngwanya had died, and he answered: ‘Eheh (Yes), he died. Belly went rotten.’

“‘But I, too, was threatened, if he should die!’ I cried: ‘I shall not be set free! And all my men, but ten, ruthlessly massacred for nothing! How unreasonable! How brutishly unmanlike!’

“To this he answered, patting my arm: ‘No, you wrong. Strong mind, Spiciewegiehotiu. When she have reason, she kill, kill, kill; but she not kill a fly without reason. She and me not friends, but — strong mind, eheh! clear, not brutish. You come to take her away; she capture you. Suppose she have reason not to kill you: you think she going to leave forty of your men round you to help you take her away? No, she kill them. She spare ten; sell them as slaves; take the price of them for herself.’

“‘But my waggons!’ I cried, ‘all my implements and baggage —— !’

“‘Oh, they all there in the royal park,’ he answered, ‘you never get them again. She love wealth — cattle and cattle’s worth; grasping; close-fisted — na!’

“‘She will not know how to use them!’ I cried. ‘And Panda! Can you not set Panda free? *He* has done nothing! And Macray — how about Macray?’

“‘Sir Caray?— ‘Caray’ we call him —— You trouble about him?’

“‘Why not?’ I asked him— ‘my servant and comrade?’

“‘Comrade?’ said he in a tone of irony, very surprising to me; nor, when I demanded of him why he questioned that Macray is my comrade, did he at once answer, but presently said: ‘Councillors and princes cannot gabble everything like gossips before a hut-door: a string pull them here, and a string pull them there. Maybe when me and you know one another better, me tell you something. For now, you no trouble about Sir Caray. You in prison, Caray living like a headman. Spiciewegiehotiu give him a kraal in Sitiwe (a west district of Eshowe), five huts in his park, seven *incekus* (Queen’s-servants), she give him twelve bags of money, a horse, two cows, goats, rugs, wood, guns, cloth, from her store-huts. He go to speak with her, and she receive him: but they say it is Sueela he go to see. He go hunting down the river; he lounge about the town; he get a lot of girls round him, he make them all cry out laughing, and hide their eyes, he give feasts at night, me hear he drink a lot of *tivala* (liquor), and they say two girls gone wrong after him. But it is Sueela he want: he glance at Sueela, Sueela glance at him. Sueela no good — loose like her mother before her. She look aside upon a man with a mocking eye that make a man fancy she scorn him: if he not daring, he not get her; but, if he daring, he get her. Not yet eighteen — five lovers: me could give you their names — na! count them off on my fingers — one, two, three, four, five. You tell Spiciewegiehotiu that, she fly into a passion, she call you liar; but everybody know it, except Spiciewegiehotiu, and Spiciewegiehotiu know it, too, inside her nose. A certain person said in my ear —— They come for me! You wait — you get free; me and you bake bread together; me work for you.’ He added louder, as the torches approached: ‘Me report your case to the Great-great,’ and, mutually saluting, we parted.”

XII. THE QUEEN'S RETURN



AFTER THIS A stretch of time that seemed like five or six days passed for Cobby, and then again an unexpected torch invaded his darkness. In its light he saw a white face — Douglas Macray's, and with Macray and the warder a servant of Macray's burdened with a buck-skin bag, which was pushed into the prisoner's room, while Macray, stooping in, cried out merrily: "Well, baas, here we are! — in the stations of life to which it has pleased God to call us. I prefer Bond Street myself, but this ain't bad for a month or two."

The torch being now gone, Cobby switched on his flash-light a little to see his "servant and comrade," who, smoking a cigar, had flung himself on the floor by the bag.

"Not bad for *you*, apparently," Cobby said, sitting before him.

"That's what I meant, inkoos. Oh, well, fortune of war, you know. Fact is, old Spicie of the throne has fallen head and ears in love with me — —"

"Absurd!" cried Cobby high, with a laugh.

"Why so, baas? Girls in Europe say that I'm rather a good-looking boy."

"Oh, quite; but you misconceive the quality of mind of the lady — —"

"What do *you* know about her, isinduna? She hates you like poison."

"Well, and I hate her like poison!" leapt from Cobby's mouth, and then he felt that this was childish.

"That's all right, then," said Macray.... "No, she ain't in love with me really, nor yet I with her. Handsome thing — but lives in an enchanted castle, too much trouble to get at, let her go to the devil: it's the Sueela

gazelle I've got my gun on. Spicie's coming back from the country to-day, couriers have come in screaming that she is near, so I went to a nigger that they call the Sinder-ngabya, and managed to get permission to go to the waggons, now in her park, to get you some cigars — here they are in this bag, with a mass of fruit and things....”

“Good, good,” muttered Cobby, “and another torch, I hope, you have brought, and clothes, and matches — —”

“Oh, Gee, I forgot about matches and things — —”

“Then, how, Macray, am I to light —— ?”

“Here — I've got matches: take these.”

“And a toothbrush, I hope — —”

“Oh, Gee, I never thought of toothbrushes. You don't need a toothbrush in Wo-Ngwanya, baas: the niggers clean their teeth by eating nuts and hard foods. Look at me — *I've* got no top teeth, and get along all right.”

“I see. So I in all things am to become a copy of you — is this what you so calmly contemplate?”

Macray chuckled. “You might do worse, inkoos: here am I living like a nigger prince — Edward, the black prince, say, and you like Jonah in the ‘Elephant's’ belly, with no chance, I think, of being vomited out.”

“How, though, has this come to pass?” Cobby asked, peering without seeing: “I don't understand. Or, if it is understandable that I, the chief, am punished, and you, a secondary, pardoned, why is Panda in prison, and you free?”

“Ask me another — a woman's whim: I was born lucky, thanks to the immortal little star that winked and worked over my birth-hour. Besides, the girl by habit is down on foreign blacks who attack her: I must tell you that the Zulu voorlooper who shot her bodyguard was tortured, all our lot, but ten, killed, and — —”

“I know,” Cobby said with a bent head.

And at once Macray sat up in the dark, full of interest. “Oh, you know,” said he: “how do you?”

“I was told.”

“By one of the warders, no doubt.”

This Cobby did not answer, understanding that Dzinikulu’s visit was secret; but this silence gave the secret to Macray, who had come mainly to learn it; and he now bluntly said: “You have had a visit from Dzinikulu, baas. Now, haven’t you?”

At the indelicacy of which insistence Cobby answered with a puckered brow of protest: “Don’t you gather that I do not desire to speak of this?”

“That means that you *have*,” said Macray; “and now I want to warn you. Let old Spicie once learn of this visit, and all’s up with you, and perhaps with Master Dzinikulu, too. I may tell you that this man was *seen* to leave Eshowe in the dead of night and come toward ‘The Elephant,’ for, of course, there are eyes that spy for Mandaganya and Sueela: so they suspect that he came to visit you, in which case his motive is known — to ally himself with you in any plot to carry off Spicie. Now, any such plot is foredoomed to failure — I tell you so. It is true that Dzinikulu leads a powerful faction hankering to see the old royal house restored, but Spicie is going to whip him easy every time. Don’t you be drawn into anything with that princely nigger. If we had a man with the experience of Rolls, something might be done; but Master Rolls is now at the antipodes of heaven where pitchforks are all the rage — —”

At which Cobby with a shaken head, shaking the offence off him, sighed: “How offensive you can be, Macray! Dzinikulu, too, is crass, but not with that merry excess of yours.”

Macray meditated on this in the dark — did not like! but only said: “Right you are, baas — I forgive you. I think in some former existence I was a millionaire like my namesake, the millionaire, and so much fine gold made me a coarse brute, like the famous King Midas. Yet I seem to get along all right like that.... Anyway, have no truck with Master Dzinikulu! death’s the consequence. As it is, nobody seems to understand why you aren’t dead already. Is Spicie keeping you alive here as a sort of torture before she kills you? Lord knows! Twice I’ve approached her to ask what she means to do about you, and each time the same reply: ‘You will see’ — nothing more. *I* believe that she means to keep you here to tempt Dzinikulu into putting his foot into it, and then do for you and him together. Sueela, before going away, told her mother Mandaganya — —”

“You seem to be quite in the counsels of Sueela and Mandaganya!” Cobby exclaimed.

In his chuckling way Macray answered: “Sueela is destined to be near and dear to me, baas. I never thought a nigger girl could so poison the liver of men with longing and yearning. And Sueela’s a true nigger. Most of these Wa-Ngwanya show traces of an Arab origin, as the Zulus do — handsome some of ’em; but Sueela is your distilled attar of nigger: ink-black, slant forehead, flat-nose — sounds ugly, and yet, by some miracle of Spring, old Sue ain’t ugly. We didn’t see her well that night in the hut: if ever you do, see if that skipping kid on the hills don’t captivate your kidneys. Great big head, bulging out at the temples, bulging behind, bulging everywhere — beautiful — bursting with brains; and her great ogling eyes, alluring and raining raillery upon the universe of boys; and then her figure — her neck straighter than a straight line — taller still than Spicie, and lither: from the tip of her breast to the tip of her projected toe is the long concave of one perfect curve — she seems stretched to pirouette. And see her dance! — for

every caper she cuts you cut one, too, or wish to, as if your nervous system was switched on to her activity. And the health of her youth — the crimson of her tongue and gums — her row of little teeth — you know before you smell her that her mouth is sweet like south-winds of these mountains, and the sweet whisp of slime that flies from a heifer's lips. Aye, and something very venereal in the beast — Eve in excess — gross rats-bane — the Black Plague I call her. And she ain't no prude, now; it's a case of 'all right' between her and me. Not that she's a bit in love with me: *I* know what's working in her — curiosity: wants to find out what a white sweetheart is like; but when I once win her, I shall know how to hold her. The difficulty is to win her outside the town, for, if she's caught, decapitation may result. But there's a field of sugar-cane half a mile out that I have in my eye. Whatever gods may be specially made sugar-cane to grow for happy lovers — a regiment of ferrets couldn't discover the cooing two in there. Unfortunately, the edges of the leaves scratch one, and if — —"

But here the lover's effusion, to which Cobby sat listening with cynical eyebrows, was interrupted by the arrival of a torch, and by an eager warder beckoning, saying: "Come! You free!"

Cobby and Macray sprang upright, both pale, Macray staring from the warder to Cobby, and back again.

"The Great-great come?" he asked.

"Eheh! She just come. She set him free."

"And Panda?" asked Cobby.

"No! only you. Come! Come!"

Cobby, his heart thumping in him, hurried to Panda to say quick and low: "Keep heart — I shall refuse to be free without you. There are some comforts in that bag — here are matches...."

Then out, and along two corridors, to a central room, Macray all at a loss, saying: "Oh, woman, in our hours of ease ..."

Then down a rock-passage to two steps, where two *sanjwes* (sort of punt) lay torchlit on the water, in one of which two household officers, braves brow-bound with spotted cat skin over their black plumes, awaited Cobby; and Macray, in the *sanjwe* that had brought him, followed the paddles and torches of the other through a league of gloom between the lagoon and the roof of rock. Anon his eyes moved from side to side, full of interest, of meditation....

It was about four in the afternoon when they shot out from under the rock to the shore, Cobby's eyes now blinded with excess of light, and when he saw the breadth of heaven, the freedom and holiday of the clouds, and breathed the bounty of the breezes, he was like one born out of nothingness into all: tears stung his lids; he wished to kneel. But his two companions, titanic with their black plumes, and gallant with the black ox-tails in their kilts, on their legs, at their elbows, all wafted backward by the wind, stalked steadily on a thousand yards to the great gate of the town, and on into the awna, or square.

This now presented a thronged appearance, all the top quarter of it being packed with phalanxes of warriors in their various war-dress, making there a region of spears sheening in the sun, then the populace packed, then looser throngs, among whom Cobby's conductors paused, one of them remarking to him: "The Queen salute the people: we wait here."

And twenty minutes they waited, until a group entered the square through the sigodhlo gate, and stepped on to the platform. The Wa-Ngwanya being tall, Cobby could hardly see, until, to his astonishment, one of his conductors, without saying anything, lifted him bodily like a child, to see: and now he saw Spiciewegiehotiu seated in the arm-chair of stone,

meditating with her fingers at her face; standing about her two semi-circles of men, at her left Sueela, and at her right a shining being — Mandaganya — tall — shining in a mantle of snake-skin: but whoever has not seen how like silver this filmy substance beams in sunlight will hardly imagine the show and majesty of the witch's aspect.

She, stepping to the front, went down on hands and knees, and set to uttering the Queen's *sibonga*, or list of names; on which Cobby's lifter deposited him quickly, pushing him to his hands and knees: for on hands and knees the square was now uttering *sibonga* with the doctress. As when in a church the clergyman turns toward Jerusalem and Mecca to murmur: "I believe in god, the father, who has a son ... I believe in the holy church at Jerusalem ... in the resurrection of the body ..." and, with heads of docility bent, the worshippers murmur it an instant late, chasing his lips, and the monotone of the murmur solemnly fills the church, so these solemnly murmured with docility after Mandaganya the *sibonga* of Spiciewegiehotiu: "White Lamb Washed Come up out of the Water, Cow that Toss the Nations, Owl that Startle the Dark with Sinister Singings, Dark Cantatas, Deer that Speed Fleeter than the Breeze ..." and so on. After which there were some movements and man[oe]uvrings of the regiments for several minutes; and then Spiciewegiehotiu sprang up, stepped to the platform's very edge, stretched her mouth, and in a dead soundlessness shouted loud, with a laughing suggestion of countenance. But though Cobby was now once more upraised in his conductor's arms, only a phrase here or there was brought down out of the hollow hall of the air by some breeze to his ear. "Me come back to you! hum, hum, hum. Me see all Wo-Ngwanya, hum, hum. Wo-Ngwanya broad like the vault of heaven, hum, hum. Everywhere doves cooing, everywhere winds blowing.... Winds in the hills cooing like doves; doves cooing like winds in the hills, hum, hum. Me laugh to see it!

me cry to see it, hum, hum, hum. Me want to make Wo-Ngwanya broader still for you; broader still, and happier, hum, hum. Now me salute you — my sons — my brothers — my sisters — my own ...” now, overcome with emotion, she threw her arm, turning away her face, then turned again girl-like in the grip of a graceful indecision, but, failing to say anything, gave up, and tripped back, crying and laughing at herself, to recline in the throne.

Cobby’s face was distorted into a sort of grin — of interest, of greed....

Meanwhile, he was full of question as to whether his release had been timed, with design, that he might witness all this? If so, with what object? To impress him with a sense of her mass and majesty, that he might refrain thenceforth from machinations? Or just in coquetry to show herself dressed in her royalty? — a fancy which so flattered him, that he even found himself wondering whether his conductor had held him uplifted out of pure courtesy, or — by instructions? Flattering fancies, clouded with doubts and bodings. There he stood released: but for how long? and for what reason? “You will see,” she had said to Macray: and there is the frying-pan, and there is the fire....

XIII. THE GUEST-HOUSE



AS SOON AS the function of the royal salute was over, and the regiments had been marched away through the various gates of the square, Cobby's two conductors led him up the square through the now looser crowd, in which was now some group-dancing and much curiosity and swarming after the new face, until the three came to the north (sigodhlo) gate of the square, where, when an ivory ring had been presented to the sentry there, the three were permitted to enter the sigodhlo.

The black who had the ring then handed it to Cobby, saying: "With this you can pass out and in."

Cobby's heart started....

Straight before them northward stood the gate of the royal park, and after walking upward to this, and passing half-round the royal park, they passed, still northward, up an avenue dim beneath enormous yellow-wood trees, which led them to the gate of another park: and this they entered.

Here the first thing that Cobby saw through fronds of date-palm on his right was an aeroplane-wing, nor in the gush of his gladness could he refrain from rushing to it, and there in a glade surrounded by large-leaved bush stood his waggons buried in long-grass, with all his goods, given back to him.

In his incredulity at luck so good, he ran back to ask a flood of questions, to which the giants, smiling down upon him, replied that they thought the things were to be his thenceforth; the waggons had been taken there that day from the Queen's park.

They then led him through a grove of greenery, out of which peeped here or there a hut, to a big hut, evidently brand-new — which, indeed, was the new-built “guest-house” of which Dzinikulu had told him. He had become aware of sounds of music, and in front of the hut found with flute and drum six men and three women, who received him with prostrations — his household-attendants.

Out of the hut floated an odour of food, and in its roomy interior he found a meal of lamb, with yam pounded with butter, and eggs, water-melon, honey, and gaudy tarts made of grated cocoa-nut tinted pink, ultramarine and morinda-yellow, and gourds of spirit, to share in all which Cobby invited his conductors. “Nor from that moment,” he wrote later, “have I lacked any comfort.”

He expected now a summons to the royal presence, to be told the reason of his release and of this free-handed treatment, but when two weeks passed, and no summons came, he was torn with indecision as to seeking an interview, that he might see her face, and plead for his Panda. “Near as I am to her,” he writes at this time, “my park the nearest to hers, sleeping within a few stone-throws of her, breathing the air she breathes, I might be at Cape Town for all the sign I have that she is alive, save a sight of her twice in the square, the sight of her sentinels at her gate, who salute me when I go by. I can’t stand it long: somehow to be in touch with her, or go mad, I think.

“Yesterday afternoon I sent her Rolls’ American clock, expecting that she would, at any rate, acknowledge it and thank me; but no answer at all. Silly of me to send her that thing! whose silly insistence on ticking must have made her laugh at it and me. She will think that I am pursuing her! seeking to force myself like a hungry dog upon her notice — which Almighty God forbid. I think that what made me send the clock was the fact, of which I first heard from my Sansiwana, that she ‘goes to White River to bathe’—

‘White River’ being the name of the upper part of the river which, in the part flowing through the town, is called ‘The Gut,’ and below the town is called ‘Black River.’ But savages have such a slovenly habit in marking the hours of the day, that I could not learn from my servants at what hour she passes here northward for the sigodhlo-postern, and this may have put into my mind the sending her of a timepiece, with the idea that, if she learned to read it, and I learned the hour of her outing, I might spy upon her steps without much loss of time. I intend to-morrow to spend the forenoon in ambush watching for her.”

This man[oe]uvre proving successful, he saw her from his lurking-place go past his park in a gay troop of twelve or thirteen girls, with two bodyguards bearing cloths; and thenceforth some portion of his forenoons was devoted to this singular species of research-work. Meanwhile, we see him full of self-reproaches for his neglect of Panda’s interests, a neglect due to his shrinkings from seeming to “force himself upon the notice” of the Queen; he, meantime, doing much roaming about the country, collecting and making drawings and photographs of specimens, investigating its geology, especially that of “The Elephant,” whose configuration, he says, “is entirely due to water-action, as in the Giant’s Causeway, Fingal’s Cave, etc., the bed of the lake having undergone some subsidence since the age of the water’s action upon the rock-roof. The water, though so stagnant-looking, is in motion, being discharged southward by a stream which flows into ‘Black River,’ as ‘The Gut’ is called when, after leaving Eshowe, it bends eastward for the sea. ‘The Elephant’s’ area is about a hundred and eighteen square miles, the ‘legs’ (I have seen seven) consisting of columns of black basalt, all hexagonal, in clusters two to seven hundred yards in diameter, and from five to twelve feet high. I have twice ridden out to its west extremity, once with Macray, and made notes in No. III. One can climb

to its top by an artificial stairway five miles out; but from no point of view have I been able to notice any resemblance to an elephant. It is said to contain several hollows other than that prison within which I have passed so many dark hours: these I shall examine later, as I have already examined (with what little technical training I have in this direction) a singular structure in the plain out at ‘The Elephant’s’ extremity, the relics of a pyramid, nearly half as big as the pyramid of Shafra, and much more ancient (v. III.). This plain, being a haunt of a little deer like duiker-bok, easily portable, is also a huntsman’s paradise, and daily tempts me out there, my stallion, Ali, being a good goer, a broad-breasted roan, obviously Arab in breed, with a ponderous battery of the feet in cantering like a war-horse; one, I hear, of a very small stud, of which the Queen and Sueela own the two fleetest specimens, ‘Selim’ and ‘Mustapha.’ My possession of him, I find, has caused quite a jealousy in Macray! to whom has been accorded one of the small native horses, many of which show traces of zebra blood. Ali thus, at any rate, contributes a little to my self-support, but still leaves me all too much the parasite of a throne, the louse of a savage’s bounty. Every third morning, it appears, my Sansiwana repairs with a list of my needs in his head to a species of major-domo, over yonder within the sigodhlo, and in the afternoon the baskets, in due process, come in. It will not long do for me! She must submit herself. I have to be her master, not her pussy-cat, fed with milk. First of all, Panda: *he* must and shall be free....”

Meantime, we find scattered about the diary some very heated references to the “full of the moon” — the reported date of the Queen’s marriage with Sandelikatze, Sueela’s brother, the executioner — outbursts of laughter which can be called mad at the idea of this marriage — threats of intervention even at the cost of life — frettings at the vagueness of the

rumours that he can gather on the subject — all this subsiding when he hears that “nobody know anything but that the marriage is put off,” and when the full moon passes, and no marriage takes place.

Then there is a sight of Sandelikatze himself: “I was walking home — about four p.m.... with a bagful of flora.... Paused in the market to watch the traffic ... the Bon Marché of Eshowe ... from mica-schist (ground to sprinkle the hair with a blue glitter) to twine of hebescus-fibre and rope of ifé, and soap boiled from salsola-ashes, from guinea-fowls in great numbers to frogs (pyxicephalus), and locust-powder (eaten here with honey as by John the Baptist), fish predominating, a considerable trade in this being carried on with the dominions of Daisy, mullet from the rivers, ready cooked for sale, gaudy with coloured condiments, in big basins, barracouta and kingfish from the sea — this barracouta being known by them to be sometimes poisonous, anon all a family will die of it, yet, it is so nice, they still venture. Then I heard a herald or town-cryer calling something farther up, and remarked up there a drum beating and a knot of people, whom I found to be looking on at three executions. There were five armed men, three wizards, and — may I say ‘my rival’? my ineffable competitor? already before whom lay the headless body of a woman; and of the two men awaiting his handicraft, what was my dismay to find that one was Esingwe, my fellow-prisoner, the teller of that endless tale in the dark! After his handiwork on the woman, Sandelikatze, axe in hand, his legs apart, was in the act of glancing up with darting eyes that asked ‘how’s that?’ quite as Rolls had once described him to me; but the lightness and litheness and live-wire briskness of the picture cannot be described. He was nude, but for a few strings of leather: and never saw I the human body so beautified and elevated to the plane of the ideal — I thought of the Discobolus in black marble — the clean-cut creation of the hills and dales of the legs, the levity

and enfranchisement of the figure. ... Has *she* not seen this, I asked myself? and has he been selected as a husband only for Sueela's sake, and not in the least for his own? I abhor a wanton. Let me go back to civilization, and forget that there are savages.... And yet here, I know, is the Reality of the world: not Sussex, but the Limpopo; man being a dark animal, with a few whites by a local freak, like white horses, white mice; nor are meadow-cows and polo-ponies the reality of the animal kingdom, but gnus and crocodiles and the black ant. But what dismayed me in this scene was, firstly, the nonchalance of those market-people, trafficking there while, three hundred yards away, three human beings were losing their heads; and then my Esingwe ... I had not gathered that he was to die! It seems, then, that one may be kept months in prison, and then be led out to death! In which case, what of my Panda? How I have delayed and delayed! — he must think himself forgotten. No more delay.... When my Esingwe smiled with me, I pressed forward to shake his hand. He showed no pallor; said to me: 'Happiness to you: me go to spear other deer,' on which a woman near to him bit her lip to repress her tears, for the women consider it ignominious to weep for grief or pain. Meantime, the Queen's elect looked askance at me, with, I think, an eye that implied: 'I will not be found unwilling when you are sent to me.' And then I hurried away...."

The next afternoon he presented himself at the Queen's gate in a clean shirt buttoned up, bearing as a present for her Majesty three boxes of matches, a little mirror, and a golden-syrup tin — a little object of which he knew that a billion savages, among them Cæsar and Plato and Shakespear, bending to it all the brain-power of the "sages" and the ages, could not have come near to creating. But he was told that the Queen was in the square, and would be for four afternoons, as usual monthly, in her function as a judge.

He then went down to the square, and, standing somewhat back of the platform, saw her for hours.

“The whole,” he says, “is conducted with as much formality as with us. In fact, lawyers, juries, ‘judges’ law-courts, seem to be an African idea (see Mungo Park); but here the jury, who consist of twenty, all elderly, and sit on stools before her, only function when she consults them, she otherwise being the sole judge, and wore, I think, an official vestment, a kaross of golden-jackal, soft-flowing, and three golden eagle feathers, *à la* Prince of Wales, beneath a brow-band of gold.

“I witnessed eleven cases that afternoon, civil and criminal, the parties with their barristers standing on the platform between Queen and jury, a knot of law-officers about the throne, while a small crowd stood before the platform.

“No little logic-chopping and fluency of tongue was exhibited in the arguments; and only in one case did I disagree with the sentence. When they took oath it was by ‘the White Lamb Washed,’ of whose face I again and again got a good view, and saw her brow always grave with care, or perplexed with doubt.

“All the defendants assumed an amusing air of indifference — ostentatiously yawning, and so on; but at one she stamped, suddenly crying out: ‘You are a fool!’ upon which he dropped, as if shot; and another was borne from her unable to repress his sobs, when, after sentencing him, she took and pressed his hand. Two were women, to one of whom the husband of both, now dead, had given a costly kaross all embroidered in blue, and both volubly claimed it. When the discussion had lasted long, the Queen appealed to the jury. The jury disagreed. On which she covered her eyes with her hand, and presently said: ‘Me cannot tell which of you is such an artful liar; but me artful, too: so me take the kaross for myself, you see’; on

which an official beside her took it from the woman to her left. ‘A too facile way out, mother dear!’ I thought. But that was not the end: her eyes were still covered; I now understand that she was spying at the women through her fingers; and she saw that the one on her right pushed her lips far out, as they do when resentful, while the other smiled at the confiscation: and now suddenly the Queen laughed, tossed the kaross to the one on her right, and said to the smiler: ‘You think me not see into you? You wear “The Elephant” for a month instead.’ The crowd stood open-mouthed at it....

“When the next case commenced, I strolled past the platform and down the square, without once bothering to glance backward to see if she saw me.”

XIV. IN SUSPENSE



AS SOON AS the Queen had moved homeward within her troop of damsels from her “White River” bath the next forenoon. Cobby made haste to present himself at the royal gate; but was told there that “the Great-great” was about to dine, that he should try in the afternoon, and then only after seven days, when the *mopato* rites would be ended.

This fretted and offended Cobby. “These empty, restless days,” he wrote; and: “henceforth I shun the sight of her as she shuns mine — insolent little white nigger.”

Yet for three afternoons more we find him standing a witness of court-cases, one afternoon even standing in front of the throne, to see in what mood the Queen would look at him: but she did not seem to see him. Then for some afternoons more he stood witnessing *mopato* functions, of which he says: “Forty boys of fourteen to fifteen stood in a row before the throne, their nudity revealing the weals from the cuts of whips which covered them, these pains and circumcision being the initiation into citizenship: indeed, society here is *organized* on a *mopato*, or sort of Boy Scout, basis, one describing oneself by mentioning one’s *mopato*, counting one’s age by the number of *mopato* functions which one has witnessed....

“The Queen in another garb of ceremony, a garment of yellow baize painted with black elephants, on her head a helmet from which a pair of horns vaulted off, and in her right hand a javelin having a haft of ivory, seemed in very vivacious vein, and was frequently laughing, having now near her her Sueela in gay attire, also Mandaganya glittering in the sun’s

light, a crowd round her, and in front of her a considerable crowd of militia and public, while of each boy in turn she asked: ‘What my name is?’ and when he had rattled off her string of names, she asked: ‘What the name of the headman of your *mopato* is?’ and, that string rattled off, she asked lastly: ‘What your name is?’ on which he rattled off the names which he had invented for himself— ‘Snake that Bite the Lion,’ ‘Ichneumon that Eat the Crocodile’s Eggs’ — swaggering egoisms just in the mood of the scutcheons invented for themselves by our own fantastic Kaffirs who ‘came over with the Conqueror,’ as ‘Cave, Adsum’ (‘Look out for yourself, me am about’), ‘Dieu et Mon Droit’ (‘God and *my* Right’), and so on. It lasted some time, but no one, save me, seemed to have enough of it, she, all fluttered with gaiety, laughing out anon at the names invented.

“After which each boy took up a ball of quartz (mill-stone) that lay at his feet; the crowd ran asunder; and she, at the platform’s edge, cried aloud: ‘Now, *hamba* — go!’ and clapped hands; upon which the boys started into racing. Then was agitation! vociferation! while the boys, handicapped with the rocks, ran in long files all round the *awna*, perhaps two miles — a cruel trial; and since they came home in a bunch, none well left, each resolved to win or drop dead, the excitement toward the end became ecstasy, the mob went mad. The winner, a tall fellow, all rib and leg, dropping his rock, darted upon the platform to fling his panting heart into her arms, she with shut lids, grave now, rubbing her face against his, our too motherly mother; then, patting his face, held to his lips a wine-cup, finally presenting him with spear and shield; and to the others she announced: ‘Well, you are men now; kill a lion, and quell a wife.’”

Afterwards there was a *mopato* function of young girls, burned and wealed, whose ordeal consisted in bearing burdens of great weight; then of

lads and older girls; and so on, for four days. Early on the fifth afternoon Cobby, in a spotless shirt, made for the royal gate.

But again to be disappointed: for he met at the gate, entering, a group of State-officials, among them Dzinikulu, who pretended not to see him: and understanding that a council was about to be held, he went back to his park, to wait.

Lying on the ground in a grove, he was glancing at his thermometer at 89° — a heat so rare in the shade up there, that the doves in the banana-bush had rather ceased to roll that râles of their throat, and the canaries, subdued by the heat, had hushed their craze of jubilee till the evening cool — when he was aware of Macray, conducted to him by a sigodhlo-officer: “Hallo, baas! not laid eyes on you for five days”; and, throwing himself down in the grove: “Hot to-day — offer us some tyvala.”

As his face was already flushed, Cobby answered: “I understand that you drink quite a lot of tyvala! In a climate like this you will acquire cirosis.”

“What the devil’s that? — sounds like a liqueur. Leave me to my fate, inkoos — give a guest to drink,” he dropped at his length upon his back: “this ain’t bad here — for a time; on such a day, when the marrow of one’s back runs like butter, a young man’s fancy heavily turns to thoughts of love, to say nothing of a young woman’s, Mr. Tennyson — *Souvent la chaleur d’un beau jour fait fillette rêver à l’amour....*”

Cobby’s eyebrows lifted. “You speak French, Macray ...?”

“You may bet, baas — been all over the place. But funny existence this of yours and mine here! What’s the idea? What are we waiting for? I expected that by now the ravens of the valley would have picked out your eyes; but not a bit of it: we eat the lotus of ease, we live like lords at a lady’s expense — what’s her game? Are you being fattened to be eaten — or what? Had an interview yet?”

Cobby answered: “*I am waiting to see Panda free, and then at once I set about returning to civilization.*”

“Right you are! We two — and Sueela.”

“*Who?* You jest.”

“No, really, we take old Sue with us — Sue I call her, Susie-Susie. Seriously, baas, I seem to be gone on that nigger. Me can’t think of nothing else but you, Sue-Sue! And I see my way to abduct her all right. This is the very night of the plighting of our vows: we little two meet outside the town about eleven o’clock, and — —”

“What right — ? Better be careful! You break the law of the land,” Cobby said with a warning eye.

“Law of the land don’t trouble Douglas of that ilk, inkoos. And no one’s going to know, you know — Sueela’s too deep and fleet a Venus for that. I met her night-before-last in her mother’s grounds, and — —” he related the story of the arranging of the rendezvous, Cobby listening with a shade of displeasure on his face; and presently Macray, reverting ever to the subject of his success in love, became irksome, Cobby now wishing him away, that he himself might return to seek the Queen’s face. Finally, he bid Macray come some other day, and, on finding himself free, at once set off, once more to try his luck at an interview, the sun still high among clouds like pools of silver shuddering cooler in the middle, like suns with sun-spots shuddering cooler — clouds moving southward before a breeze that blew the troops of trees into choruses of commotion, cooling the afternoon with a wafture as of fans, and, far astray in a heaven vaster than the heaven of Europe, a moon that looked a cloud of the heaven of heavens.

After passing out of his gate, and southward down an avenue to the back of the Queen’s park, he was met by sounds of music, of singing, of outcries

of girl-laughter, and he paused, again disappointed, for he thought that he recognized her voice.

On creeping near to listen, he saw a little orifice in the woof of reeds that filled the interspaces between the poles of the enclosure, and, lying on his face, he applied his eye to it, to spy if she was there.

He saw a glade in a thicket “rankly sylvan,” he writes, “with frond and fern, palmyra and wild date, wild coffee and orange, banana, castor-oil, all involved in whorls of convolvulus, of wild vine and the flamboyant blooms of numerous climbers, she on her face in grass, not far from a frog-pond covered over with areas of lotus and arum, and before her, alone with her, a bacchant dancing — Sueela; and Selim, the Queen’s steed, with them, to which now and again she gave a nut.

“I was spying at them some time. Until I was driven, or rather *washed*, away, I could not get myself to go.

“Sueela wore a moocha of cotton cloth, close-clinging like the Egyptian kilt, without any mantle, while the Queen wore a mantle of cotton without any moocha, her calves swinging upright as she lay, and here evidently was *negligé* and sweet-do-nothing — that day, indeed, being their monthly Sunday and nominal holiday, if all their days are not holidays. I think, though, that that might be a public good, if they dressed with a little greater elaboration — though I, on my side, had no right to be spying upon their privacy. Happily, the royal-motherly feet were clean and soft, and she obviously pays some attention to her toe-nails. The whole being of her is a thing good to eat with one’s teeth, fruit good for food, by heaven, and there I lay with her on the ground, near, near, yet hungry. She was smoking that long pipe of theirs, then from a bowl full of blue fruit (*mawa*) took one languidly to bruise it with her front teeth, then was gnawing nuts with wanton molars, half alough, casting the husks at an ibis, that anon by the

pond cried out ‘*Wal-wal-wal*’ at her, while swallows swung down about her, magnetized like moths by her light and fire, and a lark, black and saffron, carolled above, and the green dove greeted her, in love with her and with lullaby, and it seemed to be in the greed of their heat for her that the monkeys rushed about the bush.

“Meantime, Sueela danced to song after song, some of which I recognized as songs hummed about the town — the up-to-date creations of the community, as in Europe they sing the latest things from the music-halls: and very characteristic, ethnographically, most of them are — the so-called ‘python-song,’ for example, which Sueela twice sang:

Touch me? Touch me? If me let you touch me, You’ll always be wanting to touch me. Taste me? Taste me? If me let you taste me, You’ll often be wanting to taste me. See me? See me? If me let you see me, You’ll run! and then you’ll run back. Smell me? Smell me? If me let you smell me, You’ll run and you’ll never come back.

“Then outcries of laughter! (The python is highly prized as a dish, here as elsewhere, but its taste, as in the case of the bloater, excels its odour: and always after the list of its effects on the senses, the same outcries of laughter.) Sueela’s instrument was attached to her body, a species of *merimba* (two parallel rods, connected by laths across, under the laths being calabashes to act as sound-boards), she thrumming the laths with drumsticks with a fluency of Paderewski, and certainly she dances like a grace this girl, though with a certain aggressiveness and fierceness of heat not native to the Graces. In figure she is the female of her brother, the executioner, as perfectly turned out, though taller (for a girl) — a being essentially special and herself — excellent in some way or other, thoroughbred — big-headed, big-faced, big-eyed, everything rounded and smoothed to beauty as in good sculpture, her head all horned, a broad

parting disparting it at the back to the nape, and nothing can portray the raillery and roguery of her ogling, her sauciness and scorn, her feminine message. Magdalen is the name of her! or will be when she comes to repent of the sun and of her youth. Yet, I was pleased to see, all her motions were modest, save for some moments when her sovereign danced with her, they holding each other, Zulu-fashion, round the haunch, and then their bodies, challenging each other, jostled and jazzed a little, to the popular

Oh, rain, don't keep him back, Oh, wind, don't keep him long, Oh, rain, don't keep him back, For me feel like a breezy tree. Me *feel*, me *feel*, me *feel*, Me feel like a breezy tree, Me *feel*, me *feel*, me *feel*, Me feel like a breezy tree,

they, in their feelings, moving their shoulders sensitively, as when a flea is on the nerve of one's back, and one works the shoulders uneasily. After which Sueela 'cut rattang,' as they say — though exactly what 'rattang' means I have been unable to discover: she jumps, coming down bent to the right, the right foot projected, with a lovely long concave from right toe to breast, left toes on the ground behind, wrists at ribs; then she jumps, coming down bent to the left, left foot projected, and so on, each jump very brisk and strict, definitely commenced, definitely ended, and at each jump she clucks the tongue. And now the song was:

Me wish my finger was a gun, Me'd shoot Mpanga as she run....

"I could not but reflect," Cobby adds in his somewhat heavy way sometimes, "upon the heartlessness of this utterance: for I happen to know this Mpanga, a poor cripple who goes selling *nju* beans and oil of cucumber-seeds for salads, who with every step of her right foot stoops sharp to the right. She never 'run,' poor girl, and if *my* finger was a gun, I'd cut it off, sooner than do her hurt. But such are the Wa-Ngwanya — a

certain callousness of heart. I call them ‘the black French’ — intelligent, gay, gallant, *bon ami*, but hard *au fond*, lacking in compunction.

“The Queen, having danced a little, sat again; but presently rose again, now taking up a bowl, and, in moving toward the pond, muttered something close at Sueela’s ear; then at the pond filled the bowl. When I saw her lift it to her lips, I wondered that she should drink such water: I now know that the gesture was a pretence: for, pretending to drink, she stepped backward toward my chink, and, suddenly spinning, slung the water at my eye. Then fits of giggling!

“The chink was so little, that it must have required no little quickness of eye to descry the shine of mine; but, as I could not imagine that the *colour* had been detected, I was hardly offended, though much abashed. I ran a little away; then, making my way round to the gate, sent in a request for an interview.

“Quite fifteen minutes I had to wait in a very trying suspense; then came the answer: Not to-day, but to-morrow, I might see the Queen....

“I felt a species of relief at the delay! — strange. I crave and shrink; and no more know myself.”

XV. DZINIKULU MOVES



COBBY CONTINUES: “I then went back to my hut till the evening, when I set out for the funeral-wake of the sister of my friend Seshiké, the blacksmith, to whom, in wandering about town one day, I showed how to upset iron; for, though they have considerable skill in forging, they could not, till now, bend a rod in a sharp angle, not knowing upsetting. Now the tidings of it has flown like fire, even reaching to the Queen’s ear, I hear, and Seshiké, Rambya, and their fellow-smiths have overwhelmed me with presents.

“It is remarkable how their culture advances to a given point, and then abruptly falls short. The average Mo-Ngwanya is ‘better educated,’ as Spencer would say, than a Lord Chief Justice or a Chinese ‘scholar,’ has more (*re al*) knowledge — knowledge of *things*, as distinct from opinions — of geology, of the phenomena of soils, and crops, and stock, and metals: yet they could not upset iron! cannot make a screw-thread! cannot make sugar! Neither can a Chief Justice; but he soon would, if he was as educated as they; and many men can. Their sugar-canes they just suck; but have abundance of honey, which they hive in hollowed blocks within the woods, where one is pestered by the persistence of honey-guide birds wooing one to follow them to the hives.

“I made my way in moonlight down the awna, now solitary, and across the second bridge toward the East End, three different dogs fleeing from my ghost-face with growls — still: not flattering. Dogs, women, children: a woman may brave me till I am close, then, if alone, may suddenly take

fright, thinking, ‘Oh, no, I’m off,’ and is gone flying, while the children, on seeing me, stand paralyzed, bawling out, or flee with screams.

“Eshowe being a garden-city, I found crowds of them spending the evening in front of their grounds, shouting banter, laughter, gossip across long distances at one another, and, as throngs of brats were everywhere, and dancings going on to drums and hand-clapping, there was no lack of clatter and action: and still after eleven when I moved homeward the dancings were going on in the moonlight. I saw two women quarrelling, who confronted each other in formal conflict, leaning far forward, with their palms planted on their haunches, and rapid as the hoofs of a troop of horses pattering their tongues acted together, like a pair of pennants waving away together in a gale. I still feel amid them the species of surprise which, on visiting France in my teens, I experienced at hearing everybody reeling-off French, and being as old and at home in their world as my mother in hers.

“At Seshiké’s, too, there was clatter and dance enough, complicated here with some drunkenness and a mood of moral laxity, to the accompaniment of that beat, beat, of the drum’s monotony, which, day or night, will not cease till the body is buried — this to scare away her ‘spirit,’ which is considered to be envious of, and unfriendly to, the living: and here it is that advanced Europeans are perhaps most in advance of the savage, *he*, like the ancients and our Puritan parents, living in apprehension of the cosmos — a very genuine jumpiness, and no fun — while we others have attained to serenity in the face of sun and thunder, death and hell and volcano — or, when we fear, it is another *species* of fear. Later we may be free of fear, and only love. But this sound of drums is of the essence of this town — everywhere, at every hour, one hears it going on somewhere, dumbly remote or booming near, like the beat of the bosom of the community.

“On arriving at Seshiké’s, I found, to my surprise, Sueela there, ‘scattering roses with the throng’; but very soon after I came she ceased to share in the revel, and became subdued; Seshiké, meantime, who was tipsy, celebrating my coming with endless fuss and gesture, I having to pretend to drink mead, and to touch the left shoulder of the dead, who lay within the hut with a ring of ashes on her brow, drink at her hand, an oval of candles about her, and three women who clapped their palms, and now and again gave vent to ululations, with their hands clasped on their heads.

“Then I sat on a stool before the hut, on the other side of the door being Sueela seated; beside the hut beat the drum; and before it two flutes tooting to perhaps thirty persons lewdly dancing and making merry.

“What made me stay was an inquisitiveness to see whether Sueela left ‘about eleven,’ the hour, as Macray had alleged, of her rendezvous with him.

“She, meantime, every few minutes was approached by Seshiké and others with flourishes of courtesy, was reproached for being sad, and was pressed to partake of palm-toddy, of groundnuts fried in cream, of masuka fruit in honey. She would not, however; and every time I glanced at her I caught the corner of her eye on me; so at last I said to her: “You are Sueela. I take it that you know me.”

“Her answer was: ‘Me not see you close before. You something like Spiciewegiehotiu!’

“With her eyebrows on high, the girl’s eyes widely ogle, and she spreads her unanimous ten fingers like duck’s toes, with a certain shrinking of awe, mock-babyish, as who should say: ‘Oh-h-h my!’ But her extraordinary eyes have many expressions.

“‘I like the Queen?’ said I. ‘Really? Not so pretty!’

“‘Oh, well,’ says she, ‘men are ugly things.’

“‘Don’t like them? Not at all?’

“She cut an eye of disdain, shrugging, and then she shrugged again, and shrugged again, seized in a disease of shrugging.

“I then asked her why she was there, to which she answered that the dead was her cousin; and I asked her why she was quiet, to which she answered: ‘Me not know. Girls such *silly* things.’

“‘In what sense, though?’ I asked her.

“‘They not know their own mind,’ she informed me. ‘They want, and they not want. Then they want something else. They toss in their sleep, they scratch themselves. The tsetse-fly sting them’ — a piece of natural history so *indefinite*, that I fled from my mental indeterminateness to the irrelevant question: ‘What are there tsetse in Wo-Ngwanya?’ to which she answered yes, at one spot in ‘The North.’

“I next said to her: ‘Well, you had better come home now with me’ — for I wished to shield her from any mischief into which she might put her foot with that absurd Macray; but she glanced sharply at me, asking: ‘Why “better”?’ and I understood that my phrase had scared her into a suspicion that Macray may have revealed to me something of her intrigue, so, in honour, I merely answered that it seemed late for a young girl to be alone so far from home. But her stillness and the reverie of her lowered lids showed that she was still suspicious.

“When I presently asked her if we should set out, she looked down, evidently meditating, at her beautiful fingers, like the fingers of the Venus dei Medici, but bigger; but then answered: ‘Me have to go first to my mother’s’ — and this I understood to be an untruth.

“She then asked me: ‘You see Spiciewegiehotiu to-morrow, no?’ and, on my answering ‘yes,’ she asked: ‘You done wanting to carry her off?’

“‘Not done wanting,’ I replied, ‘but done attempting, I think.’

“‘Yes,’ she said, ‘then we all be friends.’

“‘We, who?’

“‘You and me,’ she said in a low tone — I don’t know why she said it so low!

“‘That will be charming,’ I answered, rather too low, perhaps.

“I then saw her glance at the moon, and soon afterwards, suddenly rising, she said: ‘We meet again: me must go see ...’ and was gone behind the hut. ‘See’ what, Sueela? You did not say....

“I peered round the other side of the hut, and spied her feet fleeing through the back grounds, saw her pause to pry about, reconnoitring for spies, then saw her dart off with balancing palms across a narrow board over a brook that flows through the bush, and vanish in bush.

“But some moments afterwards I saw a shadow dash over the grass, gathered that she was being tracked, and ran to catch and warn her. But when I came to the stockade of the grounds, she had already scaled it, for, looking over, I saw her running along an alley toward Mustapha, her stallion, which was being held by a lad, and neighed as she came.

“Even as she reached him the horse was off, she vaulting upon him as lightly as a girl steps upon her bicycle and glides away; and, as I heard his gallop die away into silence, I saw a young man, all but naked, scale the stockade twenty yards from me, and pelt away after her.”

XVI. THE RENDEZVOUS



DZINIKULU WAS STANDING under the shadow of a motsuri, a gloomy tree like cypress, in a field of dourrha at the north-east corner of that water which lies under “The Elephant,” and he was eyeing a stretch of sugar-cane eighty yards north of him, when up there started to him out of the dourrha a snake panting with news: “She just gone into the canes. Sir Caray waited for her by the bamboo. She tie Mustapha to it. They in the canes.”

This was hardly said when another herald started up to pant the same news; and soon afterwards another.

Dzinikulu said to them: “Run back now. Watch all round the canes till she come out: then wait till she and Sir Caray separate, then tell her me waiting here to see her, and she better come.”

They ran variously away; and after waiting half an hour, Dzinikulu at last grunted: “Eheh, she come.”

Pelting Sueela came, paled, conscious of being all too late; scare and dismay in her!

“See me here, Dzinikulu,” says she standoffishly, panting, with expanded nostrils: “me can’t stop — me very late — Spiciewegiehotiu — —”

“Sueela, you love too much,” Dzinikulu remarked.

“Who? Me? Oh, my mother, you got it wrong! Me meet Sir Caray to talk some politics — Spiciewegiehotiu tell me go — my mother tell me go. After the politics Sir Caray say ‘Kiss me’; me say, ‘No, your top teeth come out.’ Me not like him; me — hate him.”

She visibly shuddered, and Dzinikulu said: “Maybe you hate him now, but you like him well enough just now, Sueela, when you follow him into the canes. No good saying no — six eyes see you. Suppose me tell Spiciewegiehotiu?”

This struck her silent. His leer of guile, dwelling on her, could see her eyes dilated, her fingers stretched, her tall-looking form looking stretched in apprehension; till, lowering her lids, she just muttered: “You think me care?”

Now he gripped her shoulder, speaking close and pressingly: “No need to be frightened: nobody going to know. You and me friends from now — you in my power, me in yours — me to make you my head-wife when me sit on my father’s throne — you to help me and Sir Cobby carry off Spiciewegiehotiu.”

At which a fire of wrath and scorn shot from her eyes, but in so lightning a flash, that he did not see it; in the next moment she was smiling a tiny smile of guile, with downcast eyes, asking: “When Sir Cobby carry her off?”

“Me not know yet — me have plans — and me not fail, if you with us. So what you say? Me make your mother Chief Councillor — me make you Queen — hug you every day — make much of you.”

“You getting o-o-old!” she answered, ogling, with stretched fingers, in her shrinking way.

“Nonsense, not getting old: young man; wait and see.”

“How me know you make me Queen?”

He touched the ground with his palms, saying, “Me swear by ‘The Elephant.’”

“Swear you not let anybody know about me and Caray.”

“Me swear that, too.”

“By ‘The Elephant.’”

“You swear first you not tell Spiciewegiehotiu what pass between you and me.”

“Me swear,” she said.

“By The White Lamb Washed.”

She had one moment’s hesitation; then, touching the ground, swore.

“Now,” said she, “you swear about me and Caray.”

On which he, touching the ground, swore by “The Elephant,” and did not see the slyness of her smile — sly in her knowledge that *his* intellect was much more servile to sanctities and oaths than was *hers*; that he, afraid to break, would keep, and she, afraid to break, would break.

“So we friends now,” he said: “you with me and Sir Cobby: you say yes.”

“You think me can decide so soon?” she asked. “To-morrow night, if me send you a basket of mawas, me say yes; if me not send, me say no. Now let me go — Oh, my mother, me late, late, this night....”

They waved arms, as away she went darting through the dourrha, and presently to him, and to Macray, moving homeward, rang from afar the clatter of her stallion’s tramp.

At full bat she galloped all up the awna, and, as she sprang from her horse, tossed her rein at a groom, immediately to start into running up the avenue toward the Queen’s hut.

But the closer she approached it, the slower she moved — saw the opening closed; and only after several minutes of hesitation did she timidly rap.

There was no answer; and there now she stood in misery, suspended, wringing her palms, heaving the appeal of her eyes to the skies, breathing: “Oh, my mother, what a fool, what a fool, live in me!” All was still but that

beating in her bosom, and the breeze's innumerable footstep trooping through the trees; and presently, still more timorously, she rapped afresh. But no answer: and after waiting through minute added to minute on the sharp edge and tiptoe of suspense, now she clasps her head distractedly, staring, saying: "My mother! this is Caray this night! no more Caray! me done, done, done with boys and men!" And now, crouching, her mouth at the round of door, she calls: "Oh, let me in, dear! Me love you."

No response followed at once, but some minutes afterwards there was movement within, the bar of the door was removed, the Queen appeared, stooped outward to look at the moon's position, and went back to sit on her bed, while Sueela, entering, stood near the doorway.

Nothing was said — Spiciewegiehotiu seated with her finger-joints at her cheek, looking judicial. But after some time she quietly asked: "Where you been?"

"You know me been to my cousin's wake."

"You straight from there now?"

"No. Me meet Prince Dzinikulu. He and me talk together. Me have things to tell you."

"You seen Caray to-night?"

"Me? No."

"Not laid eyes on him?"

"Caray? No."

"Swear."

"My goodness! me — swear."

Spiciewegiehotiu sprang sharply up, caught up a nut-candle, and went to hold it close to the culprit's face.

"What scratch your face like that? One, two, three — You been in the canes, girl?"

“Oh, my mother, which canes? Me? Oh, don’t think such things of me, dear.” Sueela’s voice of reproach broke, she covered her face, shed a tear.

“Well, then, tell me — *what* scratch your face?”

“Maybe it was that long-grass in Seshiké’s grounds. Me was sitting in the grass — —”

“Lie. If you lie to me, me kill you!” Up went her palm to slap, while the culprit buried away her face, presenting the elbow to whatever might come.

“Now the truth!”

“Haven’t me told you? Think as you like now. You only jealous, my girl.”

“What me have to be jealous for? You been with a man?”

“Yes, that’s it — think so, if you like!”

“They say you bad! They say you’re a strumpet! Are you? Tell me!” She stamped.

“Yes, me bad, me black — anything you like, my girl!”

“Trollop! They say Spiciewegiehotiu’s friendship not enough for you! They say you want man! Is that what you are? Answer!”

Sueela laughed out from under her elbow. “You only jealous! But that is foolishness. You think you love me more than me love you, Spiciewegiehotiu? You think so? Maybe me show you some day” — words which Spiciewegiehotiu afterwards recalled, and ever remembered.

She turned away, and presently in a changed voice asked: “You not even seen Caray?”

“Me tell you no,” sullenly the other muttered.

Spiciewegiehotiu drew her forefinger across her throat, saying: “Good thing for Caray. Me cut his head short off, if he touch you.”

Some moments more, and she said appealingly to Sueela: “You sure, dear?”

The other muttered something, and Spiciewegiehotiu now said: “People believe what they want to believe; maybe that’s why me believe you: but that not make it true. Next time me see you and Caray together, me know with one glance what’s what between you and him. If you not see him, what make you so late — long after midnight?”

“Me tell you me meet Prince Dzinikulu!”

Pause.

“Come on, kiss me.”

And, ogling, with outspread fingers, Sueela stepped stately; and cheek rubbed cheek.

“Who my friend?” asked Spiciewegiehotiu, asmile.

“You tell me first who love you?”

“You love me. Now you tell me who my friend.”

“You know.” And cheek rubbed cheek.

Then Sueela dropped upon her rugs, and sighed, while the Queen paced silent, wrapped in herself, with rather pressing steps.

“Me see Sir Cobby at Seshiké’s,” Sueela remarked presently, undoing her moocha.

Spiciewegiehotiu halted one instant, then, without saying anything, continued to pace.

And presently again Sueela: “What you thinking of now? You not curious to hear about me and Dzinikulu?”

“Tell me,” the Queen muttered, pacing still.

“Dzinikulu in with Cobby. Me say to Cobby at Seshiké’s, ‘you done trying to carry off the Queen?’ Cobby answer ‘yes.’ But that not true: for Dzinikulu offer to-night to make me his queen, if me help him and Cobby — —”

Now Spiciewegiehotiu halted. And at once her intellect seized, not upon what, to Sueela, was the main point — Dzinikulu's treason — but upon a by-point very embarrassing for Sueela. "And how come Dzinikulu to believe that you would not tell me this?"

"He make me swaaare not to tell: so he think me not tell!"

"How he *make* you?"

"My mother! it was in a dark alley — he and three men — they drag me off Mustapha — and Dzinikulu say, if me not swear, they hatch up a tale that they catch me with a boy. So me swoooore!"

"What you swear by?"

"By— 'The Elephant.'"

The royal toe tapped the ground. "You lying. You think me not know when you *lying*?" Then with tenderness: "Oh, why you lie to me, dear?"

On which Sueela, leaning forward, her face beaming affection, cried out in a distress of conscience: "Me love you!"

"You think me not know that? But you lying somewhere. Me think you meet Caray, Dzinikulu see you, and so could make you swear; nor he wouldn't make you swear by 'The Elephant,' he make you swear by The White Lamb Washed: and now you break an oath that you swore by me."

"My mother!" breathed Sueela, staring at her.

"Tell me now if that was it," said the Queen.

Sueela covered her face, shaking her head, crying out in distress: "Me tell you no! Me not see any Caray this night! Me wish Caray was dead!"

At which the Queen smiled, saying: "Never mind; maybe he die. As for Dzinikulu" — she paced again— "he tired of life, that man, he want to die: he must wait till me see my way to give him what he want. But me think he lie about Cobby: if Cobby tell you he done trying, he done. Me know Cobby."

Sueela looked at her with a perplexed speculation! “How you know Cobby? You only speak six words with him one night!”

No answer was made; the Queen paced afresh, wrapped in her cogitations. And presently Sueela: “When you going to marry Sandelikatze?”

“Never.”

“Me thought not. So what changed you so sudden?”

Spiciewegiehotiu laughed to herself. “That was foolishness! Oh, that *was*! Me only said it to please you and Mandaganya. Everybody laugh! You think the people stand such a thing?”

“You not care about that when you want anything!”

“Yes, me care. And me not want this.”

“So when you going to get married and know what a man is?”

“In six months.”

“Who you going to marry?”

“A king.”

“Which king?”

“Some king” — she shrugged.

“You not tell me everything you think about in your head!”

“What you mean?”

“Nothing.”

Spiciewegiehotiu paced on.

And presently again Sueela: “Cobby something like you.”

“Like *me*?”

“Eheh. Me see him close to-night. He very pretty.”

“You think so?”

“Eheh. You not think so?”

“He know a lot of things: me know that.”

“But nobody understand why you not kill Cobby! why you let him free, and have him here in the sigodhlo!”

“Oh, you too foolish. You not see all those things in Cobby’s waggons? Me could not even guess what they good for. Cobby will tell me.”

“How you know he tell you?”

“Me know. Some of them useful, maybe, like guns. It appears that white man know a lot. Already Cobby teach the blacksmiths how to make a rod thicker in the middle than at the ends. Cobby do us good — help in war. Me going to fight.”

“Oh, my mother. Who you going to fight with now?”

“Me not sure yet. Maybe with Sebingwe, but me think with Daisy. Me pick a quarrel with Daisy.”

“Poor Daisy. When?”

“Soon. This month.”

“But what you want more war for already?... Me think me know, though.”

“What me want it for?”

“Me think me knooow!”

“Foolish thing. War good. Only, so many wives to one man! — that what spoil it. Listen: me tell you now something me been thinking. Suppose me make a law — one man, one wife, no more. Then suppose me make war: three thousand boys fall in battle. So now three thousand girls will get no boy. But *which* three thousand? If a boy can only have one wife, he going to choose the prettiest, strongest, cleverest girl his *lobola* can buy. So three thousand of the least strong and clever girls will go childless. Then the average of the next generation will be so much stronger and cleverer: and in fifty years, with one wife, and a lot of war, the Wa-Ngwanya will become a nation of kings and queens.”

Sueela meditated on it. “Me see,” she said: “your *eylosah* (attendant spirit) always speaking things in your ear. But you think the people stand that law? My mother! one wife? And who to hoe the man’s fields, and weave his mantles? A man not like to pat every night on the same old pair of paps!”

“How *you* know what man like? Let the man hoe his own fields! — why not? Wo-Ngwanya man too lazy. You wait: me going to do it — when me see my way. If they say no, me say yes.”

“Isn’t that what me said just now? When you want anything, you not care what they say.”

“Yes, me care, if me not strong enough; if me strong enough, me not care.”

“And what going to make you strong enough?”

Spiciewegiehotiu tossed out her arm. “Victory! Victory on top of victory. The conqueror can do what he like.”

“Poor Daisy!” went Sueela, ogling with spread fingers, “and poor Sandelikatze! Then when you feel yourself strong enough to force the people to stand a white king, you make somebody king! And everybody to have only one wife, because *he* to have only one.”

“Oh, you fool,” muttered Spiciewegiehotiu, standing still, with an underlook.

“You think me not see into you? You say that they say me want man: you want man, too; and you going to kill thousands of men to get one man.”

Spiciewegiehotiu stood a minute looking at her, then on a sudden remarked: “Look here, me not answer you, you too foolish”; and paced anew.

And presently Sueela yawned vast, complaining: “Me sleepy!”

“Yes, poor thing,” said Spiciewegiehotiu, “go to sleep, you done up, Caray wear you out.”

“Eheh, white man rough,” answered Sueela, stretching— “think as you like, my girl!”

In another minute she was felled and slept, the Queen still pacing until the lights went out, the moon went out, then, lying, put out her hand, drew and took her companion’s, and so slept, and dreamt.

XVII. IN THE BAOBAB



THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON Cobby presented himself at the royal entrance, nicely belted and combed, bringing a little looking-glass and a half-pound packet of sugar, to gain the good graces of the sovereign.

He was at once admitted, after depositing knife and revolver, according to etiquette, passed up the avenue, and, though his hands were clammy, to convince himself that he was not fluttered, paused to note that the avenue-statues were Egyptian in type; then on to the royal hut; but now heard to his right a voice that called out: "Me here."

On each side of the hut-door stood a baobab, and in the hollow of the one to the right, large as a hall in which forty people may sleep, he found the Queen seated, all among cushions and leopard-skins, in yellow, blackened with elephants, and in the black of her hair yellow flowers of *ngotuane*, a parrot on her lap, a stool before her.

Profoundly Cobby bowed, while she, cocking up an eye sideward at him, asked: "What you want?"

"First," answered Cobby formally, "to thank you for the favours I have of your hand; secondly, to present to you as a petty return, these little things; thirdly, to intercede with you for my man, Panda, still interned in 'The Elephant'; and lastly to announce the early departure of me and my men from your hospitable and charming country."

He then presented the things, and she regarded herself in the glass, meditating very gravely upon what she beheld there. "Eheh, this good," she muttered. And she asked him: "This made of tin — or of silver?"

“Of neither,” he answered: “*quicksilver* is the English for it — a liquid metal. This is spread on *glass*, which is made by melting sand in the presence of soda and lime, and permits light to pass through it.”

“Permits light,” she repeated musingly.... “Yes, but what light *is*? You can’t see it, you can’t touch it” — a question at which Cobby stood surprised, highly admiring the mind that so enquired.

“No,” he answered— “can’t see it: light is a force, and force is invisible. You must understand that the space between the sun and us is not empty, but is filled with a substance, which the force of the sun sets all atremble in waves or rays, like a pool when a stone is thrown in. Some of which rays are light-rays: and these, striking on the myriad bits of your face, fly off to the *glass*, fly through to the shiny metal behind, and fly off that through the glass again to strike into your eye: then you see as one whole the myriad bits of that face of yours.”

He smiled, but grave, grave, was she, her finger-joints at her cheek, the image of meditation. Silence. Then she asked: “And what that round thing is that you sent me?” on which he explained what a clock is, making her still graver. Then suddenly she looked down at the packet of sugar, asking: “What this is?”

“Taste it,” said he.

She put some on her tongue.

“Eheh,” she muttered with a nod: “it good.”

“That in English is called *shoo-gah*: not so nice as honey, but preferable, because it can be procured in far greater quantity — from cane.”

“Cane? How from cane?”

“The cane-juice is crushed out by a machine, then is boiled in large basins of copper; when it cools it is *shoo-gah*.”

“Machine? How you get the machine?”

“Oh, that is easily made.” And, imprudently, he added: “If I was going to stay longer, I should show your people how to make the machine, and how to cast the basins.”

All meditation was she, and suddenly, after a silence, she muttered: “Sit down.”

On which he sat on the stool, drawing it aside, for the light in there was subdued, the doorway into the tree-trunk not being wide. And now a kodak in his hand clicked.

“What *that* is?” she asked.

“A thing that makes a picture of anything in the twinkling of an eye — or any number of pictures. The picture which it has just made of you I will send you to-morrow.”

Her quick eyes reflected. “A picture like this?” — pressing open a locket hung about her neck, she held it toward him, adding: “A picture of my father.”

But Cobby said with surprise: “There is no picture!”

And now she glanced at the locket — the photograph was gone.

Her astonishment gave place to a paleness — of anger.

After a little she muttered: “Caray steal it!”

“Macray? No, there you are wrong, I assure you,” Cobby said: “such pictures are quite common and cheap among white men: Macray would never dream of stealing one.”

“Caray steal it,” she repeated, speaking rather to herself. “Me show it to him one night — he ask me to. Since then me not open the locket. He steal it. Maybe he tired of life. Or — why he steal it?”

Cobby, apprehensive now for Macray’s safety, earnestly answered: “Oh, take my word, he never did!”

“Maybe me know Caray better than you know him.” She smiled a little, scratching the parrot’s head. “Tell me now about why you come, and why you bring Caray.”

He leaned keenly to tell her. “It was for your own sake that I came to take you away, because in Europe you would be a far greater queen than here — with fewer subjects indeed, but far more skilled, and slaving for your pleasures far harder than any Mo-Ngwanya ever thinks of labouring for his own pleasures; indeed someone who is enjoying the wealth which is yours by law is at this moment a more powerful sort of monarch in Europe than you are here, or than monarchs are there; and I, being your cousin, and your natural guardian — —”

In a grave, low voice she mentioned: “Me your guardian, Cobby, not you mine”; at which Cobby flushed, and shut up.

“How you come to be my cousin?” she demanded.

“Son of your mother’s sister. We two have the same blood and heart-beat. Does something in you not know it?”

To this she made no answer, nor looked at the light in his eyes: but presently asked: “What the name of that someone is who enjoy this wealth which is mine by law?”

“He, too, is your cousin: his name is Douglas Macray.”

Now she started. “Same name as Caray?”

“Yes — just a chance. *Your* name, too, is Macray: Flora Macray: ‘Flora’ meaning goddess of flowers — queen of all the roses and lilies — queen of girls and of queens....”

He had her ear, but not her eyes, which were turned aside from him. She presently asked: “You know this cousin of mine?”

“I never chanced to meet him — no.”

“What Caray’s other names?” she next asked.

“Just Douglas Macray, I think.”

“Short ...! And what the names of the other Douglas Macray?”

“Just Douglas Macray, I fancy. We *have* short names in Europe, except among some aristocrat families, whose children have strings of names like Africans, their whole tone being rather African.”

“Me think me see something,” she muttered. “And what make you bring Caray with you?”

“I wanted a white man, and he offered himself.”

“So. Me see. That why he steal my father’s picture. But how you know me was here in Wo-Ngwanya?”

“Do you remember a man named Rolls? He told me of you, and come with me nearly to Wo-Ngwanya; but, sent with Macray in advance over the mountains, Rolls was killed by a lion.”

“Caray kill him,” she muttered at once to herself.

She then asked: “And it very far that country you come from?” and when he answered: “Thousands on thousands of miles,” musingly she said: “The world broad — na! and so many sorts of men and of beasts it breed and feed. Under the sunrise men and women busy living, and under the sunset. Some not eat python-meat, some not circumcised, some file their teeth away, some knock out their top teeth to be like oxen, some drop upon their back and waggle their legs together to say ‘how-d’you-do.’ Babisa traders come to me every year from Mozambique, Arabs from Zanzibar, and Pombeiros from where the sea beat that beach which is nearest to the sun’s going down: there Portuguese spend their days. They all different, and think different thoughts. Some bring calico, some cowrie-shells, horses, guns, seeds; we give them indigo, ivory of elephant and hippopotamus tusks, oil, dust of dalama (gold), which women wash from river-sands, with agates and garnets out of gneiss-rock. Me want more trade — far more: that will

be part of *your* work, to make us large like the world, liberal and rich like the world. The world so rich, so strange! If a brook flow, it flow with music; if a breeze blow, it feel sweet, it blow with music; if the moon droop down, it droop in beauty. One evening me hear a little stream whisper so sweet, something seem to say to me: ‘Me-and-you: can the seven North-stars alter their form? maybe they alter some day: but you in me for ever.’ But all not good: corpses smell bad; old lions get toothache; old men get wrinkles. They say love tweaking sweet: but, if the girl get a child, it hurt her, unless she under fourteen. She not do any harm, perhaps; yet she rue, pangs trap her. Then she have joy again: the child smell good; she love it. But now and again it smell bad: she not love it for a minute; then it smell good again, she pardon and love it again, she gallop it between her palms, she laugh. So the world is. On the whole, it good.”

“Oh, yes,” said Cobby: “that is proved by the continued existence of the human race: for anon it is, on the whole, bad for an individual, and then the individual at once kills himself. Whether it ever is, on the whole, bad for any lower animal I don’t know; if ever it is, and the animal has no means of escape by suicide, then a deep wrong is in the world.”

“Yes,” she answered, “but it not argue with anybody — dumb! no tongue but the wind dumb, the sea mumbling, the thunder bumping. If you bless it, it answer, it babble ‘yes, me-and-you,’ but, if you blame it, it not care what you say, it go on rolling in its glories. When it want to rain, it rain: if you say ‘damn the rain,’ it wet you the same, no less, no more; when it not want it not rain, the rain-makers cannot make it. What kind of thing it all is? What kind of thing make it? White man know?” She peered suddenly into his face.

“No, of course,” Cobby answered: “only what you, and jackals, and archangels know — that there is Eternal Power, which shows some of its

workings to our senses. To Power we English give the names ‘Energy,’ ‘God,’ ‘Force’; but these are mere names for convenience; what kind of being Force or Power is no life can ever divine: for when by God’s help we wink, or plough, or pick a flower, using Power, we have no notion *how* we do it — it is boundlessly too profound for us, in trillions of eras no living thing can ever come near to dreaming, for God is past finding out. We know something *about* Power, however — know that it is *very* powerful: it may be powerful without end; and we know that it is most adorable — our gaze can hardly bear the glory of the hem of the garments of the sun. Moreover, white men now have reason to believe that in time Power will be wholly good. You must understand that the bad smell of corpses, wrinkles, and so on, is very likely just a temporary state of things: for the high types of life, like lions and men, have not been long on the earth — *men* but for the twinkling of an eye, so to say — and are not yet adapted to the earth. Already men are so adapted, that they have got to like the smell of flowers, which dogs seem to dislike. In Europe pain in child-birth is abolished by a vapour which mothers inhale; so with toothache; wrinkles can be prevented by facial exercises, or cured by a simple operation of the knife. In Europe the principal cause of sorrow is now not wrinkles nor toothache, but poverty; but already our priests, or ‘scientists,’ as priests are called there, have proved that the cause of poverty is the fact that certain persons are considered by Governments to ‘own’ the countries of nations, out of which wealth comes: so our poverty may now soon be abolished. And so on. And this process of adaptation to the earth will no doubt work on interminably, for the earth is a bird of Eternity. You say that you hear that already love is very, very sweet: well, yes; and it will become ever more and more sweet — tweaking sweet, you said, like an eel twitching, and each instant of life

twitching sweet, when the host of Life shall arrive at home, and God shall have wiped all tears from the eyes of Life.”

Leaning keenly toward her, he was looking at her with eyes which seemed to yearn to eat her, while she, like the ostrich, kept her eyes averted from that menace of being eaten; till, chancing to catch sight of a moisture of piety in his eyes, she looked kindly at him, their eyes met, and she then said: “You know a lot of things. You will tell me: and what all those things in your waggons good for.”

“Very good,” he answered; adding: “Let it be soon.”

“Why soon?” she wished to know: “that true that you want to go from me?”

“Oh, not from — *with* you,” he said. “But, anyway, I must go.”

“Why?”

“Well — but — I cannot spend my life in Wo-Ngwanya; have work to do; I being a priest in my country — priest meaning ‘*elder*,’ one who *knows more* than children, our priests (the real ones) devoting their lives to finding out new truths about the workings of Eternal Power. So I have to go to do this.”

At which she smiled faintly, saying: “Yes, you know more than children; but you something like a child, Cobby.”

“In what way?” he sharply asked.

“You soon see. You would not go, if you could.”

Words at which Cobby turned very pale, and half rose, crying out: “And could I not, if I would?”

With a forehead of rock, not looking at him, she answered: “What you expect? You come to take me; me take you.”

“*My God*,” he breathed in English.

“Yes, ‘my God,’” she grimly said in English.

Red rushed impetuously up his face. "Oh, this is tyranny, Flora Macray!"

"My name is Spiciewegiehotiu," she mentioned with a flush.

"Is it not tyranny?"

"Of course. Me a tyrant."

"Yes, over your own people! but I am the free subject of another sovereign — —"

"Ah! me laugh at the other sovereign. Let him come and fetch you, me chuck his chitterlings to the choughs. You have only one sovereign, Cobby."

"*I am yours!*" he cried aloud in a heat of imperiousness.

"What! You talk to me like that?" she called with a shrewish tongue, stooping forward to stare into his face.

And back he stared at her. "Yes, I talk to you like that. Now, what will you do? Bite off my head?"

She reflected on this, her eyelids dropped, and quietly she said: "Me not take off heads with my teeth, Cobby; and yours too big and red, and know too much, it give me belly-ache if me swallow it. But you not mean it! You not want to go! Cobby want to be priest to me. So stay — me treat you well — make you a great man when me see my way, you teaching us to make *shoo-gah* and other things, and helping us fight. Me just going to fight Daisy, and me want you to train a regiment of sharpshooters in rifle-firing, and be their captain. Our rifles not very good, but every day now we expecting a caravan of Arabs, and me have five hundred tusks of ivory to buy rifles: me and you stun Daisy deaf and dumb with sudden thunder."

But Cobby was not won. "I don't want to stun Daisy," he said: "I was led to consider myself set free, and now I find myself still a prisoner. I cannot stand it! I am free, free, free, and your master! By heaven, if you treat me with indignity, I shall manage somehow to throw off this ignominy of soul that has me in the gutter. You say I don't want to go, and unfortunately —

unfortunately! — that is somewhat so — I am become your little dog, pitifully grovelling and sneaking to see your feet go by ... I like the walk, so rich in energy, in freedom and intolerance — the hips swing, the shoulders swing in counter-tune and antiphony — sister dear —— But no, I won't stand it! — I'd rather die — I divine the hardness and artfulness of your heart, and *I* am quite the wrong — *Why*, may I ask, is this war with Daisy to take place?"

He was now standing, and she, cocking her eye upward at him quietly replied: "Me have reasons, Cobby!"

"Well, I wait: tell me the reasons."

She smiled. "No; if me tell you, you think too much of yourself."

But he, not divining that part of her war-aims was to advance him in the State, misunderstood her meaning, and answered: "You see, you treat me with indignity. That will make a white priest vain to be admitted into the counsels of a negro Queen! But do you imagine for a moment that I would take part in the slaughter of many men without so much as knowing the right and wrong of the quarrel?"

Still she smiled. "There is no 'quarrel'; the quarrel coming; then me fight."

"Meaning that *you* will make the quarrel?" he cried out: "do you mean to say that a girl — so young — so fair — can bear to wash her hands in the blood of thousands —— ?"

Her forehead puzzled at him. "Men grow like grass," she remarked: "if you kill two, soon four spring in their place, and, if they have a ruler with eyes, the new ones better than the old."

Now, this truth was all in tune with his own mental habit, though all contrary to his moral habit, and at the contradiction *in himself*, he stood still more hot and cross with *her* simple vision.

“Grow like grass? Yes! True! But for a young girl — you will be a dear mother some day — you will rock a babe in your dear arms — —”

“Well, maybe, why not? When it smell good, me rock it.”

“Oh, fie — cynical. But there will be no rifle-firing, understand, by *my* training — —”

“Oh, Cobby,” she muttered with reproach, “you try my patience.”

“And you try mine!”

At which she laughed, asking: “We always going to quarrel like this?”

“Always! Always! — unless you do what I *tell* you.”

“Cobby, listen: if you think you mine, you live happy; if you think me yours, you get into trouble.”

“More threats! more indignity!”

“Me not threatened you before! Sometimes you talk wild.” Now she smiled. “Me think Sir Cobby in love. A lion worry him.”

“In love with whom?” he eagerly asked.

She shrugged. “Maybe with Sueela.”

“No, say it — you shall.”

“Sueela,” she said, smiling up into his face. “Maybe some day, if you very good, me give you Sueela. *Me* going to marry her brother, Sandelikatze. Perhaps you heard.”

“Ha! ha! ha! My sublime rival! My lily competitor!”

“But suppose me like him! Nice firm boy.”

“Ha! ha! ha!”

Now she flung her face frankly to him. “Oh, Cobby, you mad in love — a forest on fire — —”

“And *you*?” he whispered near: “you?”

Askance she eyed him, up and down, and down and up, with supercilious inspection.

“Well, now I am all surveyed,” he testily said: “what is my doom?”

“You think me weak in the head?” she demanded.

“No, I don’t think so — —”

“Cobby, a Queen know how to plan and work: if she not know, she not a Queen — she *dirt*.” With endless disdain her lips curled. “You go where my finger point, give up all thought of going away, with me or without me, and maybe some day you wash in joy, your belly go ‘Oh’ for fulness of the food of the gods. If you not do what me tell you, me say you get into trouble, maybe you die. No, me not think you die; no, not that. But, if temptation come to you, and you plot with anybody against me, you get into trouble, you taste the rage of my jealousy. Meantime, till the rifles arrive, you have all you want; live happy; play with the girls like Caray — —”

“You are to understand,” Cobby haughtily interrupted, “that there is no resemblance between Macray and me, except in skin.”

“You think me not know?” she muttered. “And, talking of Caray, me want you to tell Caray something from me: say me not want to kill him, because me see that he may be useful to me some day; and he can play with all the girls, say: but, if any Mo-Ngwanya girl ever shed a tear because of him, and me get to know, he finished, he done for. Let him know. Me give him plenty of goods to buy a wife or two, if he want wife. And now you and me have talked together: me give you snuff, and something to drink.” She clapped her palms. “Later we discuss more. When you want to see me, me let you. That please you?”

This she said in a confidence at which Cobby groaned “sweet,” but then at once broke out: “But the whole interview is unsatisfactory! — and not one word about Panda! When, pray, is Panda to be set free?”

She shook her head. “Never, Cobby.”

“What!... my God....”

“Or — yes — maybe some day, when me see my way. But not for a long time.”

“But why? *Why?* The man has done nothing —— Look here, I refuse to be free, I will go back to ‘The Elephant — —’”

“Cobby, you can’t, unless me send you. Think why me keep him prisoner — it is easy to see — —”

“No, I *don’t* see — —” he span to see Sueela enter asmile, looking mockery under her eyes at him, bearing a vessel and three mugs, the vessel bound round with strings to keep down a bung in it, which, when the strings were cut, rushed out, foam showering out of the vessel’s mouth.

But Cobby crossly refused the proffered cup. “No, I won’t,” he protested: “I am very offended,” — whereat Sueela pulled a long face and goggles of mock-awe at the dreadfulness of the etiquette, while the Queen, slinging a knee, looked keenly up into his face, saying: “Cobby, drink — me command.”

“Command away — it’s no good!” cried Cobby.

She reflected on the situation; then held out her hand. “Cobby can kiss my hand.”

And immediately he was at it, down on his knees like the Brahmin muttering prayer, pressing kisses on it here and there, on palm and back.

“Now drink,” she suggested.

And he stood up, grumbling, “Oh, well, I suppose — —” and took the mug.

And bows of ritual betwixt cup and lip were cut between the three drinkers.

As to the drink, “Never,” Cobby wrote afterwards, “have I tasted anything half so nice — nor, indeed, conceived that any flavour *can* be so delightful, the best champagne being very far inferior to this spiritual thing.

Cross and preoccupied as I was, I felt impelled to ask the name of it, and was told 'sorrel drink.' I now have it in abundance, for the next morning an area of jars came to me. She is rich and liberal; but she shall find that I am not to be petted and bought...."

No sooner had he drunk than he saw two gigantic bodyguards at the tree-entrance, and the Queen said: "They conduct you to the gate. Good health."

Half going, half lingering, he put out arms of appeal, pleading: "Will you have pity upon Panda?"

"Good health," she repeated, bowing him out; and headlong he went.

She then let herself lie on her face; and Sueela, looking down on her, presently remarked: "My goodness, he nearly eat your hand"; on which Spiciewegiehotiu's shoulder suddenly shuddered with chuckling, and she sat up, saying: "A miss is as good as a mile!"

Sueela then wished to know: "What you tell him about Panda to make him so cross?"

"Me tell him me keep the man in prison. What he can expect? He think me let him have a servant of his own to help him carry me off, or escape without me? But he won't want to run away and leave Panda behind, so that's another reason why me keep his Panda in prison. His Caray would be in prison, too, only —— Look here" — she showed the locket— "Caray steal the picture."

"My mother, why he steal it?" Sueela breathed, all in awe.

"It appears now," the Queen answered, "that the reason Caray not want Cobby to carry me to that country is that it is Caray himself has my father's goods, so Caray not want me to go to get the goods from him, and he steal the picture, which would prove that me my father's daughter. Eheh, that is it." "Well!" went Sueela, scandalized: "me kill the thief, if me was you."

“Not me,” said the Queen: “till the day Cobby forget his country, Caray one of my spies and bodyguards against Cobby and Dzinikulu.”

“But a thief —— ! Me wouldn’t have believed.... If you not want to cut off his head, circumcise the rascal! then he won’t be quite so cheeky.”

The Queen eyed her coldly aside. “How you know he not circumcised already?”

“My goodness! somebody tell me.”

“Who tell you? Maybe the sorrel drink get into your head, and now the truth coming out.”

“All right, keep on about that, my girl!”

Spiciewegiehotiu, suddenly lost in a reverie, did not answer; and presently Sueela, musing: “Cobby pretty. My God, he very pretty.”

The Queen said nothing, and presently again Sueela, musing: “Me wonder if Cobby circumcised?”

Now the Queen started out of reverie. “You better go and ask him! Maybe he give you a present you not soon forget.”

Sueela shook her face slowly. “No, not Cobby. Cobby a god. But tell me all he say to you, and you say to him.”

“Come, let us walk.” She sprang up, they passed out, and, with arms round waists, paced long the avenue’s moss in step, tall daughters of the gods together, walking with that length of ankle and lordly leg of Man, predominantly walking his planet at last.

XVIII. WAR-DRUMS



“THE WHOLE PLACE is now transformed,” Cobby presently wrote: “ordinary industry is cast to the winds, almost all work having become war-work, and something extremely like fever seems to have seized upon all the people, equally on fire being the eyes of the lad of fifteen and the man of sixty, equally they dance and stare and wave their arms: I call it ‘the dancing-sickness’ — all wheels in dance, a wicked and mad dancing, which means ‘Kill! Kill!’ Every day dreadful kerry-battles take place in the Square between regiment and regiment, with the Queen as spectator of cracked skulls, fractured bones, disablements and deaths, as in the actual battle-field; and from morning to night athletic exercises are the order of the day. This afternoon in the east of the town I found within one hour three different priests rousing crowds to frenzies of venom: Daisy was the enemy of Man! Daisy was the stink-cat, the man of sin, the ripper of women and children! At the name Daisy the lip spits. I saw two women quarrelling, and with a scorn which shrieked each hurled at the other the taunt of having some M’Niami blood, and being a dirty pro-Daisy. And in every direction the thud of drums dumbly thumping, thumping, and the tramp of marchers marching somewhither under some motive.”

The trouble (as understood by Cobby and the public) was as follows: —

Daisy had sent to Spiciewegiehotiu an embassy to request the hand of Sueela in marriage.

Spiciewegiehotiu had replied: “Very good. How much for her?”

Daisy had then replied: “Thirty head of cattle.”

This was wanton; this was picking a quarrel; this was war. Daisy was out to waste Wo-Ngwanya....

Now, about this time Spiciewegiehotiu had bought largely in rifles from a caravan, and when the quarrel broke out she had summoned Cobby to lay the case of Daisy before him.

On which Cobby, little suspicious as he was, had cried out: "It is hard to believe! You have as good as told me yourself that you meant to pick a quarrel with Daisy."

"Yes," she had said, "but Daisy not give me time: *he* pick the quarrel — you *see*, no?"

"Yes, I see — since you say so."

"So now you train the regiment, no? When we beat Daisy, everybody say *you* beat him, *you* bring luck."

"I don't care at all what everybody will say," he had answered, not fathoming her aims in respect of himself; on which she had shut up her lips with a resentful pressure.

But in the end he had undertaken to captain the regiment, nor was it until afterwards that it began to be whispered that Daisy's request for Sueela's hand had not been spontaneous, but had been *suggested* to him by an agent of Spiciewegiehotiu, on the ground that that marriage would cement the friendly relations between Spiciewegiehotiu and Daisy; also that Daisy had really meant to offer, not thirty, but *three thousand*, cattle as *lobola* for Sueela, but that on the night of the arrival of the M'Niami embassy, who were lodged in the sigodhlo, a pair of Spiciewegiehotiu's officers had given the embassy the diplomatic hint that wealth was no object in this matter with the Queen, who had other objects; that the embassy would receive in the morning from the Queen a basket of peaches — let them offer just so many cattle as there were peaches in the basket, and this would please the

Queen. The peaches had duly come, as foretold — thirty peaches; but when at the Queen's council the same day the ambassadors had offered thirty cattle, Spiciewegiehotiu in sorrowful majesty had turned her back upon them, and without a word walked out.

And now much ado. The embassy had been sent back without an answer. Then ambassador after ambassador from Daisy, protesting that the three heads of the original embassy had been cut off for thus insulting Wo-*Ngwanya*, that he was willing to pay a double *lobola*.... But Spiciewegiehotiu's wound was too profound for forgiveness or listening. How could she now trust Daisy? Let Daisy draw his sword: her sword was drawn.

Thus fell out what the *Wa-*Ngwanya** call "The Third M'Niami War": and all the drums rumbled.

Now, Cobby had a servant called Sansiwana who, while Cobby was eating a meal, often conversed with him; Sansiwana had a niece married to a M'Niami man; and one forenoon when Cobby came home from Black River, where he had set up bulls'-eyes for rifle-practice, he first heard from Sansiwana the version of the quarrel as commonly understood among the M'Niami: on which his face flushed with indignation at the consciousness that he had been gulled like Tom, Dick and Harry, and, instantly resolving to wash his hands of that war, he hurried away to see the Queen, at that hour at White River: and that way he went to intercept her.

As he passed out of his gate, he found waiting there an army-officer, who, profoundly bowing, placed in his hand a little square of wood, and went away without saying anything. Cobby knew him as an officer of Dzinikulu's brigade, and, on seeing an elephant, a boat, and the sun behind a hill, carved on the wood, he understood that Dzinikulu desired an interview with him at "The Elephant" after sunset.

He then went on out of the town and through the very sylvan scene within which White River winds, of which he writes: "It is not the name only that is a poem, but the river itself, tearing lacerated along through rocks, transacting its odyssey in long hexameter lines of froth and song betwixt forested cliffs and fairylands of frondage, spray of lofty palmyra-leafage, light-green of date-palm, gloomy motsuri, festoons of orchilla-weed, homes of flamingos, black geese, parrots, here or there a hut peering through. Not all Wo-Ngwanya huts are round, some being oblong, built upon piles, looking within their secret places of greenery so at home and old in the universe, that they produce a swooning sense of beauty and fitness which not all the buildings of Greece and Italy, placed there, could give: and I suddenly remember them, feeling that I have beheld them in sceneries of Heaven in the eras before I left my home to tour the suns.

"When I came to that spot where the river falls three feet in two falls between three rocks, I paused, taking my station under the shade of a mopane, the sun being pretty hot in spite of strong breeze. I could see no one, but, knowing that the bathing is under the two falls, I waited, till, after some minutes, I saw Sueela come out of bush on the opposite shore, and make across the water, anon skipping the rocks, anon wetting the bottom of her Egyptian kilt.

"All eyes and smiles she came, and when I stepped to meet her, says she: 'Spiciewegiehotiu say What you want? She say Her hair wet, and she not want anybody to see her.'

"I answered that I wanted to announce at once something in respect of the war, and was not thinking of her hair, which I should not look at at all.

"Me tell her,' says she, and back she walked through the forty yards of brawling water to vanish into bush.

“Then again she emerged, again journeyed across, and, spluttering sniggerings, says she: ‘Spiciewegiehotiu say You like giiirrrls! That why you come to see them bathe. But that very bad for you.’

“To this I answered: ‘Be good enough to tell that lady that there is no truth at all in this, since my only motive was to talk of the war.’

“So back she waded in formal embassy, a black Aphrodite through frothing white, and again presently in formal embassy wades back to say with spluttering of laughter: ‘Spiciewegiehotiu say Your hair raaad!’

“‘Really?... But in what connection is this announcement made?’ I demanded. ‘Do you mean to say she sent you all this way just to tell me that? Tell her I say I knew. Tell her I say hers is black.’

“With bogey-eyes aside on me, she answered: ‘Black hair not hot like raaad!’

“‘Hot,... You’re a goose,’ I said: ‘you’re a black goose.’ But this is an English idiom, and, ‘Why me like a goose?’ she wished to know; to which I answered: ‘Because you spread out your fingers like a goose, and quack nonsense-announcements.’

“‘They good to eat, geese,’ she remarks, her eyes cast down.

“‘Yes, and you, too,’ I absurdly said. ‘But ask that lady if I may see her.’

“‘Me tell her, and that her hair black’ — and back she paced.

“Then again she came, this time to say: ‘Spiciewegiehotiu say How long you going to keep her hiding in there? She say Go way, and she send for you when she want to talk about the war.’

“‘Well, I suppose I must obey,’ I said, ‘good-bye’; and in a habitual way I put out my hand, which she took with her face averted, and never was my hand pressed in such a spasm — she hurt me! I don’t understand why; then ran, as if chased.

“I did not at the time suspect that all this about ‘hair’ and ‘girls bathing’ might be deliberate chicanery; but the suspicion has since visited me that what I was there to say may have been conjectured, and an interview with me shunned, that I might have no chance of saying it.

“I went away, but not far, and from under a hut in jungle watched her go past with her enterprising gait within her circle of girls who giddily whispered together and giggled; then, returning to the falls and water-pool, I bathed there, wallowing with enjoyment in the warmth of the water in which she had washed, till I laughed at my nonsense, *that* water being then well on its way to the sea — a nonsense like the good Tennyson’s, ‘men may come, and men may go, but *I* go on for ever.’ ‘*I* *what?* Crude Victorian person, now — so muddle-headed, unsceptical, is the habit of the uneducated mind, unclarified and unhardened by the habit of science. Any individual drop of ‘the brook’ does not ‘go on for ever,’ but ‘comes and goes,’ exactly like the individual man, and the race, the brook, of men ‘goes on for ever,’ exactly like the brook of drops. So that we have contrast insisted upon where simile is complete.

“Pressed to do something, to say my say, at four in the afternoon I called at the royal entrance, knowing that her review of the man[oe]uvres was then over: but I ‘could not’ be seen. She had promised to see me whenever I wished, and the suspicion visited me then that there is a motive for this invisibility, that I am being fooled, and used as a tool. But I *will not* be so used; I *will not* take part in a butchery on the unjust side. Until then I had been doubtful about going to meet Dzinikulu, but now decided to go; for if by any means I can get out of this imprisonment, this tutelage and servitude, and get her, not over me, but under me, as is right, I grasp those means. And they may be nearer than I have imagined. When, on passing after dark through the thronged awna and out to ‘The Elephant,’ I met Dzinikulu, he

represented his plans as far advanced, and his hopes in bloom. Our discussion was in a punt in the dense dark under ‘The Elephant,’ and I felt myself something of a conspirator, but see no other way out, except the impossible way of spending my existence in this place. Dzinikulu says he can depend upon half the elderly men in the army, and upon all his own officers; thinks the war our luck, since some chance is sure to present itself when the Queen takes the field; and advises me on no account to withdraw from captaining the rifles, since my presence at the front in a natural way is so desirable. I found that he, too, quite knows that Daisy is not the provoker, but the provoked; and I told him that, this being so; even if I go to the front with the rifles, nothing will induce me to captain them in battle. He also informed me, what I can hardly credit, that *Sueela*, too, is now on our side! he being in possession of some secret of hers, and she having sent him ‘a basket of mawas’ as pledge of her adherence: in spite of which he is chary of trusting her with the secret of any plan, unless it be necessary.

“It was after ten when we parted, and, on coming home, I found awaiting me a visitor, my Macray, distinctly tipsy, but still inquisitive as to my movements, as to the nature of my interviews with ‘Spicey,’ as to why *I* was put to drill the riflemen when *he* is the better shot — as he said — and when last I had seen ‘his’ Sue, who, he says, is lately shunning him. ‘You have no Sue,’ I told him, and then told him what the Queen had bid me tell as to his bringing calamity upon any Mo-Ngwanya girl, also of her notion that he had stolen the photograph, and I bid him beware; to which he answered: ‘Let *her* beware — who is *she*? I am getting fed up with this — my cigars are giving out — and if there is no solution soon, I’ll force one’ — I don’t know what he meant, if anything. He becomes insolent and intolerable; and soon I got rid of him....”

XIX. BATTLE



THE FOLLOWING MORNING Cobby again presented himself at the royal gate — surprised to find only one guardsman, who in turn was surprised at his request to see the Queen. “You not know the Queen gone?” he was asked; and discovered that she had left Eshowe at break of day.

Feeling slighted and tricked, sore and bitter, he was off straightway to find Ngdeiho, the commander of the army, passing in the awna through a teeming scene of war-business, swarms of horses, of oxen lowing, parks of carts, brigades at bivouac, regiments at breakfast; for the last contingents of the northern and western army divisions had come in over-night; and, in passing through it all, he saw marching southward and outward two regiments, whose movement represented the initial flowing of the host toward the front.

He was coldly received by Ngdeiho pacing in his park west of the awna, and when the announcement was made that Cobby, for his part, did not intend to captain his men in any actual battle, white teeth of all the warriors who surrounded the old general showed themselves in a sneer, the general himself languidly drawing his finger across his throat, hinting of danger there for someone. For the favours shown to Cobby, his elevation to an army command, were curious, perplexing and *mal vus*, especially in army circles. Of his own riflemen, though he had the admiration of some, the manners of others exhibited hostility in actual insolence: for the novelty of the *umlungos* (whites) had worn thin, and familiarity, owing mainly to

Macray, had bred contempt, they little knowing what lightning and thunder is up the white man's sleeve, and the manners of the Almighty.

"You should tell a thing like that to the Queen herself," the old Ngdeihlo said, frowning.

"I have failed to get a chance," Cobby answered.

"Her Majesty will now judge the courage of the men of your colour," the general remarked.

"You are not to be cheeky!" Cobby promptly responded with a cocked chin.

On which general and staff eyed him up and down, with scowling, till Ngdeihlo pointed. "Be gone in time!" and Cobby went away, saying: "Let the Queen know quickly."

Scout after scout, meantime, was coming in: Daisy had taken the initiative! was being helped by Sebingwe! had invaded Wo-Ngwanya! was in greater force by some four thousand assegais! and fleeing before his dancing imps and impis were the inhabitants of the land. By three in the afternoon the great square of Eshowe was emptied, but for two regiments and Cobby's riflemen, who also were called "a regiment," though but seven hundred strong, most of the Wo-Ngwanya stock of firearms having proved to be old carbines, which, as they had lowered his average of smartness, he had cut out. And soon after three he, too, on receiving marching-orders, started out, Macray looking like Sancho Panza on a nag under his Ali's flank, group after group of damsels dancing mad darting out from the multitude to dance before the advance of his drums and standard, and clap their frantic palms; and down the course of Black River eastward the way was, he keeping in touch with a regiment which preceded him.

Meantime, somewhere in the eastern blue and infinity of the day, the Queen, within a group of ten riders, held at her eyes a field-glass with

which Macray had presented her, and anon was fleeing out of the way of advance patrols of the enemy.

And so for three days. When, during the forenoon of the fourth, Cobby's battalion, singing the war-song, came up with the war-host, it was to witness war-dancing, and conflict imminent, the armies being ranked on a plain, with a horizon of hills which on the south were mountains, a river flowing southward through it, to tumble with a roaring and smoking into precipice that bounded the plain on the south; and on its west bank the Wa-Ngwanya had set up at intervals five miles of stockade.

Far to the east Cobby's glass could make out two villages, and, standing apparently in fields of millet before an edge of forest the front of the M'Niami army long drawn out; and while he looked, the old Wo-Ngwanya general, Ngdeiho, came cantering down the slope from the western hills to the host west of the water, to send out orders for the advance, on which his army began a barking of the throat and thorax that gruffed Ho! and Ho! like hundred-ton guns going off, tremendous, terrorizing.

Cobby, meantime, imagined that his decision to take no part in the battle had been duly communicated to the Queen; but, in truth, the old Ngdeiho, for reasons of his own unfriendly to Cobby, had said not a word to her; being, moreover, of an old school, and having a conservative dislike of rifles, he had determined to win the fight without them, since Cobby's revolt offered him the opportunity.

But, in fact, the rifles were a main part of the Queen's plan of battle; and, on spying from the hills the arrival of Cobby's riflemen, she had let fall the remark: "Daisy ought to have attacked two hours ago: now me have him."

The enemy being in greater force, she meant to surprise them at the height of the fighting with more frightfulness of rifle-fire uproar than they

had ever dreamt of, and, their morale thus shattered, meant to launch among them a second astonishment of cavalry, which she had well hidden in forest.

The Wa-Ngwanya crossed the river at a trot, gruffing their rough grunts in rhythm with their trotting footfalls, and “not all the Uhlans and Gardes Cavalleries galloping with sabres waving into battle,” Cobby writes, “could offer a sight more gallant than that host of negroes careering with streaming head-gears, trailing kilts of tails, knee tails, elbow tails, with tufted shields, sheaves of spears sheening, many of them patterns of athlete manhood. And about a mile east of the river the armies crashed with a row which clearly reached us, which at closer quarters must have been, as old Marco Polo says, ‘like heaven’s thunder.’”

But it was not long before Daisy’s weight of numbers commenced to make itself felt; not long before, southward, he was attempting with some success a flanking movement; and just then a messenger from the western hills came racing down to Cobby.

He, lying in a little wood of wild coffee behind his battalion, who, too, lay about the ground, gazing at the battle, was suddenly conscious of a despatch-rider drawing up on his haunches to throw off the message: “Captain, the Queen say Attack now half-way between the centre and the south.”

Cobby sprang up appalled.

“Has the Queen not been told that I am not going to lead the rifles?” he demanded.

“No, she say Go now! Not stop to talk!” the messenger urgently shouted.

Meantime, many of the riflemen were crowding round to stare, while Cobby stamped a little about, pestered with weight of responsibility, at his wits’ end, until he said sharply to the messenger, “Fly, now! Say that I sent

to tell the Queen days ago — ask if I shall send them forward under a lieutenant — fly!”

Amid a groaning of the men who heard it, the messenger turned and galloped, flogging his nag; and those round Spiciewegiehotiu asserted later that when she saw him returning, and waited, and the guns did not stir, she slowly turned pale to death, went faint, let her forehead drop down upon her horse’s neck.

Meantime, with every minute the Wa-Ngwanya were being involved in deeper distress and loss of blood, and the M’Niami, pressing forward, were presently treading upon enemy dead; rueing to see which, Cobby was keenly on the look out for an answer to his message, and when he saw two horsemen galloping down the hills, he, imagining that they were for him, called his men to ‘tention; but the horsemen did not come near him, steering their race for the forest in which the cavalry waited; and presently out of the forest in column of sections came tearing a storm of horses in staring haste, swept away between two lengths of the stockade, crossed the stream, and after darting past their own army, pounced howling among the host of foemen.

But though no little disarray and death resulted, the disarray was transitory — cavalry combat being, in fact, foreign to black armies. The old Ngdeihö had a prejudice against it, as had Daisy, nor had there been cavalry in Wo-Ngwanya before Spiciewegiehotiu, who herself employed it rather to awe than to slaughter. In general, the mass of riders could not contrive to cohere in the *mêlée*, and when his animal was speared, the man, finding himself isolated in a grove of iron, gave up the ghost.

All which Cobby saw with his heart in his mouth, feeling that, if she was defeated through him, that would be more than was good for his compunction; and seeing the sidling eyes of his men on him, and no answer

coming to his message, he was thinking of repeating the message, when he became aware of the Queen herself sweeping down on her Selim well ahead of half a dozen chargers which rushed after her, she rushing down like a sharp shower to her army, to gallop past not twenty yards from him, with never a glance his way, her Selim's eyes wide, his ears lying flat back like a cat's, the battery of his hoofs thrumming the sod with a strong rolling of drums, she like a jockey wedded head-down to his neck, and, because of the horns that vaulted from her helmet, resembling a bull bounding head-down along, to butt and toss. And across the river-rocks she crashed, across the savannah, to vanish in the throng of champions.

Cobby in a sort of rapture, went red in the face, shouting after her "*C[oe]ur de Lion!*"

But Spiciewegeihotiu was of another type: not lion's heart, but man's head, nor valour, but discretion, being her trait; and though a rally did follow her advent in the battle-ranks, her object was not to rally, but rapidly to withdraw: for her eye, ever quick, simple-seeing, and sure of itself, had spied that the day was lost for her. She rode straight for the old Ngdeiho, screaming at him: "Why you not retreat?" and ere long the tom-toms were beating it.

Then she showed some lion's heart: for to the river itself she remained with her men in the thick of the retreat, sometimes hustled, harassed, prancing, an arrow sticking out of Selim's bosom like a bowsprit riding a rough sea. And in Parthian order the Wa-Ngwanya stepped backward and back, streaming with sweat of afternoon heat, white as black can be, with wide and snorting nostril, but still — in good order. And now they were at the river, soon to find themselves behind their miles of stockade and wire-entanglements of spiked mimosa; and then it was Daisy who pretty quickly was thinking of retreat.

Cobby saw the sovereign, looking very haggard, canter back up past his battalion, without glancing his way; and it was with a disquietude within him that he went out with the carts and stretchers of rimpi, whose Red Cross was crimson branches of (young) matchebela, he taking surgical instruments and anæsthetics, to stoop among the wounded on the stricken field, where he saw a scene of slaughter even now not over, for the hopelessly wounded of both peoples were speared by their own comrades, a scene that made Cobby so sick, that often he was hissing words like “that murderess!” “that cursed girl!”

He went back pallid, and there again before him near the river was the Queen on horseback in front of what was left of the cavalry; and though she addressed them rather in sorrow than in wrath, every head was bent before her. “Go back home,” Cobby could just hear her say: “me win without you; me not give you a chance to fail again: go back home.” As he drew near, she cantered away westward.

He now saw himself an object of scorn among all the Wa-Ngwanya: for the news of his refusal to fight had flown, his death was being foretold, and the man who bore him his evening meal threw it before him; nor could he explain the *motif* of his revolt, for that would have been very indecorous, militarily, politically; and alone — Macray having taken himself off somewhither to prowl after Sueela — he sat till late, watching a swarming army scene of flames and men, messages, hastes, neighings, lowings, drummings, a great going to and fro and maelstrom of utterance; then went to climb into a hut on piles within a spinny of palmyras nigh under the hills, a lonesome old room covered with a roof broken and bent by its own weight, on whose bumpy floor for a bed he flung himself.

But just before he slept, he started up, conscious, dark as it was in there, of some presence with him, and, snatching his revolver, he sharply asked:

“Who are you?”

“Cobby, my heart broken,” muttered the dejected voice of one seated near him.

“*You!*”

“Cobby, why you treat me so to-day?”

“By heaven! You? But did I not send to tell you —— ? If you have been shocked, whose fault? You have shunned me —— Yes, you suspected that I now know by whom all this slaughter was wantonly brought about, and, so that I might have no chance of resigning my command, you shunned me, imagining that when actually on the battle-field I should be impelled to obey the command to advance —— You little know me ——”

“But to-morrow you will, for me, no?”

“No, I will — *not*.”

Now she put her hand on his: and now there was stillness, he sitting there thrilled through and through.

And on a sudden he roughly had her hand to possess himself of her, on which she sprang sharp up, he after; she ran, he after; she dodging him to and fro, twisting like a swift, no word uttered, he working in an earnest dumbness but once to clap hand on her and rumple her by supremacy of muscle and summary pre-eminence of strength, and like dog and fox “at the death” they spurted, like a whirl of serpents doubling upon themselves, till for some moments he lost her, but then, alert of ear, heard her feet stealing, rushed upon her, and had her crushed soft to his body like a doll of rubber, teeth to teeth.

“Oh, Cobby,” she panted at him, “don’t — kiss me like that, me — tear you to pieces.”

He, handling her roughly, with sudden movements like convulsions of epilepsy, panted between feasts of kisses: “Murderess — gory hag — sweet

as hell — well-beloved, by God — but cruel as the grave....”

And she, amid mixed half-pants, ranting half-words: “Oh, Cobby, you eat — —”

“Yes — food — —”

“Who you love, you madman?”

“You!”

“Oh, Cobby, a dog bite us.... Me he bite, then his red teeth poison you.... Cobby ... Cousin Cobby ... me show you own flesh and blood.... So, Cobby, now you fight, no?”

Like ice upon white-hot this fell upon him; and in the same instant they stood separated, his soul wounded with the pernicious suspicion that even her kisses were political, even her gales calculated, that she gave nothing, but bartered everything, her brain ever half an inch ahead of her heart.

“Would I not fight and die a thousand times —— !” he cried out. “If your quarrel was just, there would be no need for me to *fight*: I can shatter and abolish a hundred African armies, just so lightly as you brush off a fly! As it is, I will — *not* — —”

Now, to *her* mental habit both his boast and his moral motive were, of course, equally unreal and foreign, and “What!” she shrilly cried out with a stamp, “you say that after daring to kiss me?”

And in an instant, as in “the transformation of forces,” all that electromotive force of love changed into heat of quarrel.

“You put your hand on me!” he cried: “I did not divine that I was being tempted, in order to be bought. I will — *not*. There are under-officers who can command the rifles — —”

“Pooh, you must be silly,” she said bitterly, “if you not see that me want *you* to command them, and why me want.”

“No, I don’t see.... Why?”

“Oh, me go,” she muttered disgustedly, moving toward the doorway: “me done with you. Everybody cry out on me to kill you, but you go back where you come from — me let you when you want.”

“Good! Good! *I* am done with you, too. I am off home — I shall forget your long name.”

“That’s it!” she cried in a flush of quarrel, “you soon forget! and me forget even your short name! You go — no good staying now — Wo-
Ngwanya turn you out — everybody say you ‘fraid to fight! Our men can’t stand that.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” he redly laughed, “how can you think it possible that I could get myself to care a little what ‘everybody says’? And how insolent of you to mention — —”

“You go! Me done,” she called over her shoulder just at the door.

“*Come back!*” he commanded in a rush and flush of mastery, and dashed after her.

Ten feet down she jumped, for some of those old ladder-rungs were missing; he jumped after her; she ran, he hard after. But, as there was no moon, and she flew straighter toward an end, he only came upon her when she had scrambled upon a horse, whose hoofs, as she galloped off, spattered grit into his face.

He then walked back through the palmyras with his forehead on his palm, and, as he arrived at the ladder, someone sprang up out of the ground and touched his shoulder — Dzinikulu.

XX. COUP D'ÉTAT



DZINIKULU COULD NOT conceal his elation at the event of the day's battle — Spiciewegiehotiu's prestige for unfailing victory gone — or shaken. The fact was, he told Cobby, that a large number of Sebingwe's men (north-west) had voluntarily flocked to join Daisy (north-east), thus swelling the M'Niami ranks, and Spiciewegiehotiu had bitten off more than she could chew! If the next day's engagement went against her, her star was in disaster. Anyway, everything was ready for the carrying off — Dzinikulu's all was staked upon it; let Cobby never be far from Dzinikulu during the next days.

“Good!” said Cobby, sore and hot against Spiciewegiehotiu, and again “good!” led headlong by the lust of going out of captivity, not alone, but having his captor captive....

“But not a word of anything to Caray,” Dzinikulu said. “Leave Caray behind; me soon send him home.”

“No, I am not going without Macray and Panda,” Cobby answered: “I don't understand why — —”

“Well, then, we only tell Caray at the last moment — promise me that.”

“Well, since you wish that. And I will wait south of the mountains till you send me my Panda.”

“You wait long, then. The man dead.”

Cobby stood dumb; Dzinikulu adding: “Last thing I hear before I leave Eshowe. Got belly-disease. Foul air. He dead at last.”

“Oh, my friend!” Cobby cried out, “you died upbraiding me! Oh, how hard of heart!”

“Eheh, she hard,” Dzinikulu agreed: “but wait — maybe her sun setting. Her day of doom dawn to-morrow.”

At the hour when this was said of her she, four miles southward, was pacing alone by the ravine’s brink, leading her horse, anon peering down into the abyss, deeply pondering; and four miles westward on higher ground Macray was lying in bush, gazing through an Egyptian doorway into the ruins of a temple never built by Wa-*Ngwanya* hands, at the far end of which was a fire under a pot which a girl tended, and dim beyond the fire Sueela seated on a tooled stone of the ruins before her mother Mandaganya, who sat higher on a heap of stones, at Mandaganya’s feet a little dog, shaggy like a terrier, called “Ronja,” which was always near her, and was believed to be “a sensitive,” gifted with intuitions still quicker than the witch’s.

Macray could not hear the words of their dejected speech, only its murmur. “She very grum and angry,” Sueela said: “me go to her, she not speak to me — she not speak to anybody. She say Go away.”

Mandaganya’s quiet eyes that interned within them a certain slumber and musing, rested on her daughter, as she remarked with some satisfaction: “Now she know white man frightened to fight, now she can’t help killing him, for to-day he show himself the enemy of *Wo-*Ngwanya**.”

“No! you got it wrong,” Sueela protested: “Sir Cobby not frightened to fight — not *he*; he have some other reason.”

“She love him, no?” the witch asked, peering forward.

“Eheh.”

“She love him much?”

“Eheh, me think so. They in love with one another like cats fighting.”

“Danger in that man,” the witch said, with one eye shrinking from the licks of a snake that lay round her brows, a band of freckles black and red: “something hanging over her, and that man in it.” Now the dog growled a little, and uttered a *woof* — so to say; on which the doctress looked round, and suddenly asked: “Where Sanja?” meaning the cook-girl, who, having gone to gather fuel, had been pounced upon by Macray as a messenger, and now reappeared to say low to Sueela that somebody wanted her.

“Which somebody?” demanded Mandaganya— “Caray?” and when the cook-girl looked confused, “Better mind how you go,” the doctress said to her daughter with a nod and eye quiet yet weighty: “me show you white man, if it’s white man you want. Spiciewegiehotiu tear out your liver, if you go a step too far, and if she not tear it out, me tear it out.”

On which Sueela, standing up, cut an eye, saying: “Oh, me not care for *him*: me know a god; me done with men” — and, having walked away into the darkness, said to Macray, her back on the ruin: “What you want?”

“Susie-Susie,” said Macray: “*my* Sue. What the devil has become of you? Come on, let’s get into the bush.”

“No, me not going.” she said, bending toward him, brushing him from each palm with the other: “me done, done, done. Me not like vicious men.”

“No? Sure, Sue-Sue? Well, but *me* like vicious girls, you see, that’s why me dote on Sue. Look here, none of that!” — he gripped her bare arm, hurting her— “If you fancy you’re going to use me once for a lark, and then cast me off as you’ve been doing, you’ll find yourself up against the wrong man. I happen to want you, and I always have what I want. You dare try it on, and see if I don’t go straight to Spiciewegiehotiu and your mother, and tell them everything.”

A menace at which heart quailed, and laid down arms. At his raised voice the girl glanced nervously toward her mother, who, much more visible now

than previously, stood Athene-big within the sheen of a fume, greenish, luminous, she then burning herbs and bdelliums to inhale the incense, and enwrap herself in a state of “trance”; seeing which preoccupation, Sueela took quietly enough the marital domineering of Macray, though in the expression of her eyes a dangerous something smouldered.

“You hurting me,” she mentioned. “How me to go with you when you see my mother there? To-morrow after sunset you see me down the hill there.”

Surrender — for the present.

“Very well.... Is that a bargain?”

“Yes.” At once she walked away inward, and, as she went, her lips met vehemently to spit out disgust and gall.

When she came again to her mother, Mandaganya stood astare with muttering lips, the little dog whimpering piteously at her feet; and, leaning an ear near, Sueela could hear the sybil breathe: “She conquer — she chuckle at their rout — Cow that toss the nations.... But beware of a tree — trouble, trouble — the heart cease beating ...” upon which the pillar that she was staggered, to collapse sideward upon the pile of stones, and lie quiet over the little Ronja, which huddled with shudderings under her.

Sueela then spread rugs for her mother, then picked a little supper with the little finger cocked aloft (this being considered *chic!*), then the long pipe, she clasping her knees, meditation in her eyes, then to sleep in fits; and before the sun rose was carrying out of the ruin her saddle of lamb-skin, to mount her Mustapha, and gallop a league nearer the front.

At the hut chosen by the Queen for herself Sueela was told that the Queen had gone abroad long before, and, riding on toward the river, she presently spied Spiciewegiehotiu among a number of men near the ravine; stopping to watch, she saw that a branch had been hacked from a tamarind

tree and lashed to the tree's bottom, with one end projecting over the ravine's edge; and presently when an officer crawled along to that projecting end, the watcher's heart started to see him dash himself apparently down the precipice, the little crowd peering to see his ruin.

Then another went, and it was the same — he vanished; then Spiciewegiehotiu went — and vanished; and now Sueela, with a catch of the breath that laughed, said: "Oh, there must be a rope"; but, even so, when she peered over the edge, her toes went cold, the scene of steepness and granite crag was so colossal, grand, and cosmic, on so solemn a scale, making men seem mosquitos. Till then no mortal had ever thought of going down that gulf.

Sueela ran nearer until she could actually see the rope of ifé, but since bush here and there lay on the cliff-wall, she could not see Spiciewegiehotiu, who, going down with her toes on the rock anon, was now not forty feet from the bottom, when she halted to look down and call crossly to the two men already down: "Why you not move away from there?" for they, just below, like astrologers watching the ruin of the moon, were musing on the athletics of her descent, but now, at her outcry of protest, strolled with a sullen reluctance away; and "come," she said breathlessly the moment her foot touched bottom, and ran toward the sun — a rough voyage, all rocks and jumps and bush; on to where the river above came down, and changed to smokes that intoned, out of which they emerged drenched, to spurt on earnest, urgent, she ever ahead, losing never a moment, along the torrent's course, through a cañon anon so narrow, that there was scarcely space to step without wading through wet.

The sun grew hot, the going was hot, the two officers threw off karosses, anon tossed sweat from the forehead, but Spiciewegiehotiu was so constituted, that she could toil gaily along without heat or fatigue; and when

three zebras broke from brake, and galloped away before them, her gaiety of gait grew yet gayer, her legs got wings, and “Na! my children,” she sang out to them, “we coming to something — me feel the breeze of my luck on me,” for the zebras meant an exit, which was what she was reconnoitring to find; and, as she went, she kept an eye on their spoor.

After two hours of it she was walking up a ledge with the river left well below on her right; and before long was peering out across the plain at Daisy’s army all to the west of her, and no sentries anywhere near the ravine, believed to be inaccessible.

This was what she had scented and sought: and back she started, making such haste, that long before noon she was back at the rope; and, on being drawn up, saw accomplished what she had commanded — an impi posted with its right on the ravine, and a large number of branches lashed to trees, carrying ropes that hung into the abyss.

As soon as she arrived she ordered an attack by all the army, except the rifles and the impi at the ravine — a feint attack meant to keep the enemy busy. By one o’clock Daisy had flung it back to its stockades, then himself retreated, himself seriously bleeding, for the Wa-Ngwanya had battled like devils. And again soon after two Spiciewegiehotiu launched an attack with the same orders, which had the same result; but now, in that hour of repeated defeat, to each regiment, as it rested, she sent out strychnia (orange-cider) and a message: “Spiciewegiehotiu say Daisy done. Still one struggle for you before sunset, and then you drink victory like strychnia.”

Meantime, even her own troops supposed that the impi posted near the ravine was still there; but all these hours the three rear-ranks of its four ranks had, squad by squad, been descending into the ravine with ration and weapon; of them two men only, having lost nerve, hurtled to death at the bottom; the others, fourteen thousand, having passed down the cañon, cast

themselves upon the back of the M’Niami army in a moment when the sunset battle was at its hottest: there they suddenly came hurtling, like hosts of spectres hurled up howling out of the hole of hell; and never was surprise more wild, or fright more wide-eyed. The M’Niami army ran a rabble north-westward, like cataract-waters along the only path open to them, and cast no eye behind: the Wa-Ngwanya in the half-dark darted after.

Among the last of the pursuers, cantering in a troop of six horsemen, was Spiciewegiehotiu, who suddenly drew rein, laughed, and remarked: “Me weary,” for since daybreak, toiling constantly with brain and body, she had tasted nothing; and, as one of her six, a household-officer, carried a basket stuffed with foods and drink, soon the group was within the cave of a tree, where one M’Niami lay dead on his face with them, they seated round platters of wood on a skin, she carousing *en bon camarade* with her guests like a man-of-the-world among men, quaffing her liquor in a flush of spirits, all gossip and comment on the day’s events; ever she said: “Na! my children”; and when one fellow said, “Yesterday me ‘fraid the Queen get speared,” she winked, and snapped her fingers, remarking: “Na! my children, the iron that is to pierce Spiciewegiehotiu not yet smelted!” — till all at once all were on their feet, pierced with the iron of the spear of fear, the tree surrounded, Dzinikulu filling the opening that looked southward, saying dryly, with a leg cocked: “Spiciewegiehotiu, you mine: me send you back to your own country.”

Spiciewegiehotiu stood quite white, while half a chuckle, silly, hysteric, escaped her.

The brief twilight was done, but nut-tapers within the tree revealed her.

As Dzinikulu spoke, a clatter of hoofs was heard, and Cobby turned up in the same instant that two of the Queen’s six, having recovered their wits,

made a dash to use their short-spears (stabbers), and die; and even as the Queen called to them “Stop!” one dropped dead in the tree-entrance.

On which Dzinikulu, pale, but master of himself, said: “Come, lady — nothing to fear — everybody treat you well. You come, no?”

She bent her head in consent; whereupon Cobby, outside the tree, bid Dzinikulu send now for Macray.

“Where Caray is?” Dzinikulu asked, and when Cobby answered: “Other side of the river somewhere,” Dzinikulu shrugged, muttering, “Big space, ‘somewhere,’” while Spiciewegiehotiu, with a conjurer-quickness, whispered to the nearest of her five: “*Caray with Sueela*” — which chanced to be true, though she did not suppose it true; but she hoped that, if one seeking Macray went to Sueela, Sueela might scent out what had happened.

At the same time Cobby said to Dzinikulu: “He won’t be far — let him know now.”

On which the fellow to whom the Queen had whispered volunteered information: “Me see Sir Caray go out to the ruin to see the lady Sueela, if you want Sir Caray.”

And now Dzinikulu beckoned to an officer of his to say to him: “Go, find Sir Caray. Say Come to Sir Cobby. If he ask why, say you not know. If he talking to anybody, wait till he done. If he with the lady Sueela, she on our side, but if she ask where the Queen is, better say you not know. You not know anything yet.”

And off the officer galloped.

XXI. SUEELA SPEEDS



BEYOND THE RIVER the officer discovered a servant of Macray who told him that Macray had ridden westward: and off for the hills he galloped.

The back of the ruin, whose front looked down on the cliff, presently appearing on the night-sky, he cantered up a bush-path toward it, hearing before him a man singing — Macray, who on his sauntering horse was singing aloud, “We shall meet in the sweet by and by”; and soon the messenger was saying to him: “Sir Caray, Sir Cobby say Come at once.”

To which Macray, “in drink,” answered: “What’s it all about? Not I. Let Mahomet come to the mountain, my boy. Tell him Sir Caray going to meet the sweetest lady in the land. Tell him — —” But now at a bend Sueela appeared before him.

She started at the presence of another with him, and started afresh when she heard the known voice of a Dzinikulu officer say: “Oh, you better: Sir Cobby say Come quick.”

“Sue,” Macray remarked, “they want to drag me away — not likely!”

“You come to see my mother, no?” Sueela said, for reputation’s sake, adding: “But, if Sir Cobby want you ...”

“Let Sir Cobby hang himself.”

“So where Sir Cobby is?” Sueela now asked the messenger; and when he answered: “Beyond the river,” her heart started, her wits quickened, and, standing at the shoulder of Macray’s horse, she asked: “And the Queen — where she now, Sintowe?”

“Me not know,” was the answer: “maybe chasing the enemy.”

But “not know” and “maybe” rang untrue; and in a moment more Sueela cried out “Oh!” in a tone of pain, and fell.

“Why, what’s wrong?” cried Macray.

“Oh! the horse stamp on my foot,” Sueela mourned.

“Oh, my Sue!” rued Macray, dismounting, “damn the half a horse,” and, as he bent over her, she whispered him quick: “Tell him to send Sanja to me.”

On which Macray said to the messenger: “You gallop on up and tell her servant Sanja to come with a bandage,” and, as the officer galloped off, Sueela eagerly said, “My foot not hurt, but me think maybe the Queen captured.”

At once Macray was sober and alert. “You think that?”

“Eheh. How Sir Cobby come to send a Dzinikulu man? Maybe when Daisy fly, she follow with only a few men, and Dzinikulu take her — my mother say she in danger. You go with this man across the river, then try to find out where she is, and which way they taking her; then gallop back to me: me wait for you near the river.”

“Right!”

“Now me go on up: you wait here for Sintowe. Maybe when he call Sanja, my mother hear, and, if she find me with you, she kill me.”

At once she ran, then when the messenger reappeared, went limping, seeing with him, not only Sanja, but, to her horror, her mother coming, a tower trotting, a board of a box in her hand.

As they met, Sueela, braving the peril from her mother, mentioned to the messenger: “He down there waiting for you”; on which the messenger cantered on down, and in the same moment the board descended on her head.

She collapsed upon the path, and like one chopping wood with a measured process, Mandaganya steadily banged the bent head, with *humphs* of the bosom that ever uttered “*white man*.” Up the doctoress heaved, and, as down she brought the board, out of her bosom sounded “*white man*”; and up it went, and down came, with “*white man*” — like a mechanism acting, until at last the excellent girl’s skull proved harder than the board, which split.

Such was the consolation which Mandaganya gave to an instep supposed to be crushed....

But now it was Sueela’s turn to strike; and, picking herself up with dry eyes, dryly she remarked: “You done? Well, listen to this: me think Spiciewegiehotiu kidnapped” — making Mandaganya faint.

Meantime, Macray was cantering eastward, his wits on the *qui vive*, but seeming easy and careless; anon he hummed; anon offered drink from a flask to the officer; and, east of the river, asked: “What Sir Cobby want me for?”

“He going from Wo-Ngwanya,” the other answered, seeing no reason to be secret now.

“I guessed as much,” Macray said. “He has got the Queen, then, has he?”

“You soon see.”

“I see already. Well, good job — I’m glad enough to be getting home. So how many men has Dzinikulu with him?”

“About seventy.”

“All mounted?”

“Eheh: they officers.”

“And which way are we going out of Wo-Ngwanya?”

“Along the foot-hills near the sea.”

“Sea” was his last word on earth, he dropping shot by Macray’s revolver, then his horse dropping; and Macray was racing back westward.

A little east of the river he met Sueela on her Mustapha speeding to meet him; and “They have her,” he said: “seventy horses ... taking her the sea way ...”

Her hands met wringing on her rein. “Oh, Caray, you do what me tell you, no?” she pleaded— “me give you all — if they take her, me dead, dead, dead. So you fly to Eshowe, no? The cavalry that she sent home — tell them to ride through the Lion’s Pass: maybe you catch them up half-way to Eshowe. Show them this ring from me: say Spiciewegiehotiu gone, gone, say fly! You change horses at Bundhlwana’s Kraal — come, me give you a guide” — and westward across the river they galloped together to the rifles, who alone of the fighting army were not out after the flying M’Niami; and, even while her stallion ran, Sueela was leaping down to a rifle-lieutenant named M’Pandiu, to pant at him her passion of tidings.

“But me have no orders — me daren’t move,” M’Pandiu in a torment of perplexity informed her, upon which, this M’Pandiu having been her lover in her twelfth year, she took him by the shoulders, half-kneeling, beseeching him: “Me good to you — me give you all — M’Pandiu — you *will*, no? — for me—” by which she achieved that within five minutes Macray was off, galloping westward with one of the riflemen as guide, and within ten she herself in the midst of a squad of fifteen riflemen — all who could get horses quickly — was galloping south-westward for the pass called Molimo’s (God’s) Pass.

Eastward, meantime, cantered the troop of seventy with Spiciewegiehotiu and her five, she on a horse not her own in the van with Dzinikulu, to escape the dust of the hoofs, for it was late September, final end of the dry season, and turbulent breezes from the sea turned the herd of

hoof-beats into a whirl of dust which journeyed and journeyed; and with Spiciewegiehotiu and Dzinikulu ahead rode a little troop of officers, behind them Cobby on his Ali.

She had uttered no word to anyone, nor Cobby a word to her, in his nerves a shrinking of compunction for her, a prick of contrition. But, as on she travelled, the hilarity of the gale and of the flight overcame her grumness of pride, she threw away her helmet, taking the gale in her face and hair, and, touched with gaiety, occasionally made a good-tempered remark to Dzinikulu — always some comment on his conduct of the *coup*. “Why you not do it yesterday when Daisy beat me, Prince?” she demanded: “to-day when me victorious, and the people full of me, me think you run too much risk” — her intellect always preoccupied with strategy, with conduct, with the God’s truth as to what one should best do to gain one’s ends in any given group of events. And presently again she remarked: “Why you have all these men with you? Me shouldn’t have had half so many, if it had been me, or me should have had ten times more. They too many for some reasons, and too few for others.” And presently again: “That man you sent to bring Sir Caray ought to have caught us up before this. Me think Caray kill him, and then tell Sueela me captured. *Why* you sent for Caray? Me see six risks for you in that! If Sueela know to-night, me think you fail.”

“Sueela on my side!” cried out Dzinikulu.

At which she cast back her head, and laughed with the winds. “The trees pink, you think?” she asked: “people who reckon wrong die young, Prince.”

Some minutes afterwards the cavalcade stopped at a village called Masinka’s Kraal, where some provisions and forage awaited it on sumpter-mules; and soon was off anew through Daisy-territory, a granite country with reefs of quartz anon, and granite kopies, and frequent forests, and mountain on the right, a ride of gloom, until at two the moon rose, they now

going south among hills of porphyritic granite, rich in copper, whence at one spot a sheet of sea appeared tossing in sleep under sheen of the moon, and Spiciewegiehotiu, peering at the scenery of it and the *Florida* on its rocks, drew up, and would not move on.

Presently after which the cavalcade was making westward over plain south of the mountains; while away to the west Sueela and her fifteen were finishing the descent of the mountains through a chasm formed by a vast dyke of trap, whence, as dawn broke, they spied the southern gateway of the gorge; and there, sending out a scout, paused. Almost without food, the men shared with Sueela a bag of groundnuts which she had snatched, giving tree-leaves to their nags.

It was broad day when their scout came tearing back, chased up the foothills before the gorge by three riders; upon which rifle-fire broke out of bush at the gorge's mouth, causing the three pursuing riders to bite the dust. But the news brought by the scout was already known — that Dzinikulu was on a kopie a league to the east and south, apparently waiting for something.

“Waiting, maybe, for Sir Cobby's waggons from Eshowe,” Sueela said.

Her plan now was (1) to strike terror, and (2) to gain time: so soon she had out an envoy, bearing a branch of embassy; and he, a hundred yards from the kopie, where he was met by Dzinikulu, Cobby and some others, uttered his message: “The lady Sueela say Why the Prince carry off the Queen like this? That was foolishness. The lady Sueela has 150 rifles with her, and Wo-Ngwanya rushing like a river to interview the prince. Let the prince send the Queen back quick, then the lady Sueela guarantee the safety of the rebels.”

Here for Dzinikulu was set-back in business. He swept his palm down his beard, glancing back at the Queen, who was walking round and round

the kopie's top, her hands behind her, eyeing the flight of the clouds.

"Sueela lie," he said: "she only have a few with her: we soon kill them."

But now Cobby spoke: he was not there to kill; and there was dissension.

In the end the envoy was sent back with the *threat* that Sueela's handful would be killed.

And presently there came to the kopie another envoy with threats, and was sent back with threats; and then another. Meanwhile the sun was mounting for Sueela toward noon.

And now arose dust-cloud in the west — cavalry sent by Macray; and Spiciewegiehotiu, peering at it through her field-glass over one of the boulders that formed a parapet to the kopie, remarked to the Prince with her detached and disinterested interest in strategy: "It was too risky, Prince!"

And now on the kopie were speculative brows perplexed with crosses prospecting over the plain, and now bloodshed for Cobby, whether he liked it or not, life at stake for all, and woe to the conquered. Came and came the dust-cloud; out dashed Sueela and her handful, galloping, to meet it; and it was still forenoon when the kopie was within a ring of horses; spear, arrow and bullet going; man and beast feasting together on the taste of death.

The defenders, though they had some cover, were crowded together in comparison with the attackers, and, since on the kopie were but five firearms, of which Cobby's rifle was idle, the knot of kopie horses dropped fast: seeing which, Dzinikulu was for seating the Queen on a horse, and leading it round the kopie, so that the besiegers, fearing to pierce her, might leave off; but here again was veto from Cobby, and dissension.

"We all going to be killed!" exclaimed Dzinikulu in an epilepsy of debate: "you say no to everything!"

And Cobby, all blanched, answered, "She will refuse to be made a target, unless you bind her.... Would you bind her?"

“Yes! Why not?” cried Dzinikulu.

“Well, if anyone touches her, I fell him,” said Cobby.

She, seated in leafage under cover of a rock at the kopie’s circumference, could not hear what was said, but could see dissension, could see the slaughter going on among some of the horses, and the growing revolt of the others, and greyness of terror in every face.

During all which Cobby’s waggons turned up westward, halting some hundreds of yards outside the circle of attackers, to be abandoned by the Dzinikulu men with them, who, on seeing how things were, at once fled.

Upon those waggons dwelt Cobby’s glass: there was that within them which could compel and shatter Africa allied with Asia....

But the attackers were much the more numerous, were closing in, throwing surer: and disarray ensued, some of the mob of kopie horses going dog-mad, rearing loose to scoot down the steep, and range the plain in a lunacy of mutiny and freedom; in the midst of which Dzinikulu and two others in debate came to a decision without Cobby — to fly, taking Spiciewegiehotiu, through Daisy-territory, to the kingdom of Sabingwe (Wo-Mashenya), who had for the Queen an evil will. To do her then and there to death they feared — feared Cobby’s repeater, feared the frenzy of the people.

The Prince then trotted all breathless to Cobby to pant asthmatic: “The day lost! We fly with her — to Sebingwe — he treat her well — from there you take her to your country.”

Upon which Cobby, flying away to Spiciewegiehotiu with a wild white face, the Prince’s rasping breast trotting ponderously after, panted at her: “We make a rush-through with you — We can force you to come, remember, by Heaven ... Do you come?”

She did not answer, did not see, him. To Dzinikulu, looking up, she said: "Me come," and sprang from the ground.

And in some minutes she, with the Prince and two, and Cobby on his Ali, were clattering down the rock-side, a cataract of hoofs, whose impetus easily broke a road eastward through the streams of spears speeding to intercept, the presence of the Queen, whose rein the Prince himself held, acting as a shield to the fugitives on one side, the pursuers fearing to strike her; and as all the fugitives were much better horsed, they had won well ahead of the foremost of the pursuers, when they became conscious of a solitary horse, stretched and staring, hunting them, Sueela's Mustapha, Sueela like a monkey on its mane.

She had raced from the west region of the ring of attackers, passing not far south of the kopie eastward, braving the rain of spear and arrow that the kopie spat out at her, she pleading to her animal's ear, and soon was within a stone's-throw of the fugitives; upon which Spiciewegiehotiu, having spied that she had a rifle, shouted aloud: "Stop, Prince, or you all get shot!"

At the same time one of the two blacks with Dzinikulu, who had a carbine, fired behind, but wide; and in the next second Sueela fired, not at the Prince, whom she flinched from injuring, but at his horse, which faltered, pitched, and knelt wrecked, pitching the Prince forward among thorns of mimosa bush.

His two blacks galloped on, and got away eastward, Cobby was off southward; but ere the Prince could pick himself up, he was a prisoner within a ring of spears, while the Queen and Sueela, on foot, on each other's bosom, were looking, not at each other, but dumbly away at the sheet of spears aimed at Cobby by his chasers. "Me go stop them," Sueela suddenly muttered, on which the Queen pushed her a little toward her Mustapha, and she was off.

But Cobby was well ahead of all, and well horsed. He, in a redness of resentment at fate and the black man, had started out to get at his waggons — instinctively, to be in his citadel; and after making a large detour southward, then westward, a wound in his right calf, he lighted from his Ali upon one of the waggons well in time to get his little Vickers belted and pointed upon the oncoming mob of horsemen. Now he was lord of continents. He had thumbs on thumb-pieces to play them a piano-tune of quaver and semi-quaver, zip and zip-zip, but — did not; did not will to kill; and within three minutes stood a prisoner in the midst of a pretty furious troop of them.

Presently after which the kopie surrendered ...

And near three in the afternoon the Queen, making northward through Molimo's Pass with her tail of prisoners, was met by half her army darting to her rescue, bearing, too, the news that Daisy's great-place had been taken; and when, in the gloaming, she approached her capital, she was like a mote floating on an Atlantic of humanity madly dancing, howling hozannas, all the town of Eshowe with her war-host now swarming like many waters sounding about her, she seated uplifted on a waggon in the seat of Cobby's monoplane, little dreaming that the thing might fly away with her; and, riding beside her, Sueela, at whom she ever pointed, animated, laughing, as who should say: "*She* did it! dance to *her*!" and on foot behind her, tired to death, tied together, Dzinikulu and Cobby.

XXII. SUEELA WASHED WHITE



FOR DZINIKULU NOW was solitude in his guarded hut, till, five days after the fiasco of the kidnapping, he began to undergo due trial in the *kotla*, or square, the Queen keeping out of it in her hut, not herself sitting a judge. But by *her* the judges had been chosen.

Day after day half the square was packed, hanging upon the witnesses, a wide swing-round of feeling in favour of the Prince having arisen and spread, a wild hope that he might survive. *He* was Wo-Ngwanya; Spiciewegiehotiu, after all, a novelty out of the sea and the clouds, a being full of lucks and glories, but not the rank old Africa of God.

Men said now that the Prince had been tempted and led astray by the white man. And the question was, why was this white man, who, though so strangely favoured, had shrunk from going forward against Daisy, and had almost caused the loss of the war, why was *he* not there on his trial with the Prince and the rest, but kept smuggled away in "The Elephant"? Was the Prince by chance to die, and not he, the cause of all? That would be Justice! This was a sore and jealous point with Wo-Ngwanya, and the name of Cobby, though it stank, was in every mouth.

Then a rumour flew — none knew its source — that Cobby was about to be banished, but not killed, lest the king of his country, who was known to rule over huge hosts in the blue of the sea, should bring trouble upon Wo-Ngwanya: and the sowing of this rumour produced some diminution in the tumult of tongues.

But when, in the fifth twilight of the trial, the Prince and many others were condemned to death, a dumbness of awe and sorrow fell upon the populace, and a sense of resentment.

That night Dzinikulu in his hut attempted suicide; but failed to die.

And this only enhanced the emotion of tragic pity and shrinking now associated with the Prince. Some of the wizards, braving the resentment of Mandaganya, now afresh insisted that his death would be unholy, passionately a filth, a shudder, and spat out the notion; and to Spiciewegiehotiu came deputations — chieftain and headman from afar, General and Chief-of-the-tax, in twos, threes, tens: let her slay the rest, before all the white firebrand, but reprieve the Prince, last of the old Race. The first of these the Queen received quietly, heard silently; with the third she flew into a passion; the rest she heard with respect, weighing their words, without saying anything.

On the fourth day after his condemnation, at an hour when the dusks of sundown were already come, the death-drum sounded for Dzinikulu in the Square. Many people were then hoping for his reprieve; few were present. He was carried in a cart, so that it might not be seen that he could not now stand without support; and he was borne bodily to the block, moaning in pain, but quite composed to die. As his greying head fell, those present covered their faces, gave out a groan, and suddenly fled away in every direction to utter the story of his cutting off.

But he was no sooner dead than the rumour was being busily bruited that the Prince had been arm-in-arm with Daisy, and had meant to betray the army — a baseless rumour, doubtless; and his death had been so timed, that on the very day following arrived the war-indemnity from Daisy, multitudes of cattle lowing in the *kotla*, crass souls spattering cataracts of droppings,

with profligacies of slaughter, and free feeding to render the populace gay and forgetful.

And in the following days they saw the beheadal of all the Prince's known confederates — a hecatomb of blood. No pleading could rescue, no plea prevail, Fate not deafer than the ear of the Queen. "Only the white man survive," Wo-Ngwanya said.

He, meanwhile, lay dark — and sick: fever! — perhaps from the arrow-wound in his calf, or from that sightless air, or from his mind.

This time he was alone in his room — that he might the better reflect perhaps; this time had no electric hand-lamp; when he was delirious, within and without darkness reigned for him, and his home was in the realm of the old Anarch Chaos.

Always his warders asked him why he did not send a message to the Sinder-ngabya (Guardian of the Sad): but he would do nothing but suffer.

However, it became known outside that he was sick. Sueela one night heard it at her mother's, and flew home with the news.

Yet it was some time before, lying in a vine-arbour, looking out at moonlight, she uttered: "Cobby sick."

Spiciewegiehotiu did not answer.

And presently again Sueela, restively: "How long he got to be in that place?"

Spiciewegiehotiu glanced coldly aside at her. "Why you ask?"

"You only hurting yourself, my girl!" cried out Sueela.

"No, me pleasing myself. Me warned him! Now let him suffer, and think. When me hit me hurt. It is cruel to punish and not punish enough."

"So you keep him in that filthy hole whether he sick or well, Spiciewegiehotiu?"

"Yes. You sorry?"

“And if he die?”

Spiciewegiehotiu shrugged.

At which shrug Sueela started, shrinking, breathing “My God!” and again the Queen’s glance dwelt with high eyebrows and icy eye-corners on her.

So the next day Sueela went to Mandaganya, and knelt saying: “Ma-Sueela, go to him! You go, no? Maybe you do him good.”

Upon which the doctress studied her under a puzzled frown. “Why you care like this?”

“You think me not love him to my heart?” the daughter frankly answered with a sob: “but not like another man — you not understand — Cobby a god — he very good, he very great — you hear how he cut off those three soldiers’ legs, and they not know! they not feel any pain! and now they hop about.... You go, no?”

And presently the mother said: “Eheh, me go, me go”: and the next day went.

To her no permission to visit was necessary: the doors flew open, the prison-men prostrating themselves before her presence; and, sitting with her little dog by Cobby’s bed, gorgeous reds of torchlight on her visage, she said to him: “You my enemy: you want to carry off my Queen; but you sick, me come to see you, me bring you medicine.”

Water sprang to Cobby’s eyes; he caught and kissed her hand.

“Why you not send a message to Spiciewegiehotiu?” the sybil asked, her hand on his forehead: “say Me burning with fever; say Let me out.”

He tossed for ease, moaning: “Never that — never that.”

“Spiciewegiehotiu good-hearted,” she told him: “but, if she let you out, everybody say: See! Dzinikulu dead, but the white man free, and — —”

“Is Dzinikulu dead?”

“Eheh, he well dead; no more Dzinikulu. They say you tempt him, but *he* tempt *you*: he *well* dead: me dance naked on his grave.... But tell me something me can do for you.”

He clung to her hand. “Oh, some light — quinine — my medicine-chest — —”

She asked, and he told her, how to discover the medicine-box, which two days later came to him; nor after that was he ever long without the solace of the shine of a torch in his night; and while Mandaganya was being rowed homeward through the gloom under “The Elephant’s” rock-roof she performed a spell with snake-bones for his benefit.

On reaching her home, where she found Sueela awaiting her, she reported that Cobby was truly ill: on which Sueela went back to the sigodhlo with a fixed lip, and in the deep night-time, seated naked on her bed with hugged knees, while the Queen paced the hut in a glum light, she ventured to break a silence with the statement: “Cobby very sick.”

“How you know?” asked Spiciewegiehotiu, half-halting in her walking.

“My mother been to see him.”

Spiciewegiehotiu span sharply to say: “What for? Tell Mandaganya mind her own business!”

“My goodness! he sick! You not care?”

“No! Me not care! Tell everybody mind their own business!”

“All right. But if a cow sick, they give it medicine. Sometimes of a morning ten or twelve people used to wait for him at the sigodhlo gate, and he give them medicine; but when he sick, in prison, nobody give him medicine.... Suppose he — die — —”

“Let him die,” said the Queen, with a vixen vindictiveness and fixity of lip.

Sueela cut a nod of menace. “Maybe he do; you better be careful!”

“Oh, he not going to die!” — Spiciewegiehotiu laughed a little.

“How you know? The Zulu, Panda, die there. Maybe he die, then — what? No more Cobby: the doves stop cooing, the winds stop blowing: you know you love him to your heart, Spiciewegiehotiu. And why you keep him there? Dzinikulu gone now: Cobby never again can attempt to take you away — he got no friends, no help. You say you always have reasons: so why you keep him there? You bring him out to-morrow, no?”

At which Spiciewegiehotiu flew into a passion, crying out: “Now, isn’t this too much? Don’t ask me again! — never. You think me going to give *reasons*?”

“Me done,” Sueela sullenly muttered, and shut up with resentment.

But the next day Cobby’s medicine-chest was sought for; on the next he got it; close upon which followed fruit brought him by Macray, who stooped into the room, saying: “What, baas, in again, you jail-bird? How long you in for this stretch?”

At once Cobby wished to know how it was that Macray, when sent for after the kidnapping, had failed to join Dzinikulu and him! To which Macray answered: “Didn’t know I was sent for — nobody came. If anyone had, I shouldn’t have gone. No ‘Elephantiasis’ for me, baas, thanks. I warned that fool of a Dzinikulu that he’d get his head off sure, and I warned you. I think you might follow my advice a little, inkoos: I know my way about.... I hear you got wounded?”

“Yes.”

“Well, it’s all to the good — the whole incident. You now see definitely that you can’t carry off the girl, and she sees that she had better send you away. We are to be ‘banished,’ as they say, though — why is the girl waiting? For you to get better, or what? I went to ask her, and she wouldn’t see me — damn her! I hate the white nigger like poison. She had better be

quick, for my cigars are nearly done, and when they are, I start kicking, I make some sort of a bust-up somehow. I can't smoke this Wo-Ngwanya tobacco, and I'm not going to be done out of smoking for anybody. When I'm really hurt, I kick — I tell you frankly — I make a bust-up. So hurry up, baas! get well. Then we do a dart, you and I, and old Sue, and the waggons. Sue's mine now, you know, though she don't quite realize it yet. She and I plighted our troth in the canes one night — —”

Cobby moaned, Macray's presence proving an added arrow in the quiverful of quinine-and-fever arrows whizzing here and there within his brain. Great, however, is quinine; so that a week later he was on his legs, weak and wrecked, but pacing; and that day yet a visitor stooped for him into the room — a very young officer apparently, erect and gallant as a masquerade in cock's-tail and ox-tail and kaross of ocelot-pelt, carrying the long assegai and shield, whom Cobby did not recognize in that vague sheen of his torch.

“Well?” he asked when they were alone: “who —— ?”

She shrank aghast at his haggardness, breathing: “My goodness! you so sick?”

“Sueela?”

“Eheh. Why you not lying down? My God, you very sick.”

“Only very weak now. You come to see me! Secretly?”

“Eheh. Me dead, if anybody know. Me can't help —— Oh, *why* you so sick?” Now her face muscles convulsed towards tears.

“You dear!” said Cobby, with water in his eyes: “come to see me? You dear!”

“You think me could help?” — in a hoarse tone in her throat, her face averted: “you think me not love you?”

Swaying with weakness, he went to take her hand, and gaze contemplatively down upon her, saying: “Sueela, do you love me?”

On which she was passionately on her knees to him, smoothing his hands down and down, her fingers stretched tense, saying: “Oh, me love you too much — only *me* know.... Me going to beg you to give me three kisses — not now — some time — me steal them from Spiciewegiehotiu —— You will, no?”

“Poor dear. Yes, yes, of course.”

“You so good, so great. Only three — then all my life me not care what happen to me, me say ‘he kiss me three times.’ Not all the same day — one one day — then the next another day — then the last, last one another day. Spiciewegiehotiu not know: when me dying — my mother say me born to die young — when me dying me tell Spiciewegiehotiu ‘he kiss me three times,’ and she forgive me. But before you kiss me, me tell you something — who me to tell it to but you? me not good — me go somewhere with Caray, once, and with others before: me *shamed*! Now me done, done: that never happen to me any more. So you forgive me, no?”

“Yes! Yes!” Cobby answered with nods, “till seventy times, dear,” and lifting her up, kissed her cheek.

“That not one of the three!” she cried out, pleased, all shy eye-corners, leering.

“No, no, that’s not one,” he consented.

Then she said: “Now me make you lie down, and give you sorrel-drink” — she had gourd and cup— “and me get you out of this stinking den this day; if me not get you out, me tear myself to pieces” — an undertaking which, by an exhibition of no little cunning and skill, she fulfilled: for, on going from “The Elephant,” and on changing into her girl’s dress in the grounds of a girl friend, she hurried to Mandaganya, into whose presence

she burst with a theatrical abandonment of despair, crying out: “Cobby dying!”

“How you know?” breathed the sybil.

Sueela poured out the falsehood that one of the warders had informed his daughter of it, and, “Oh, Ma-Sueela, quick!” she pleaded: “you go to Spiciewegiehotiu, no? Say He die! Say The dog yowl! Say Bring him out this day!”

Meditatively the doctress eyed her, remarking: “Me think you lying.”

“Oh, Ma-Sueela, you stop to think?” asked the excellent girl with reproach: “go! go *now!*” — and before long the doctress was off to do it.

Through which it happened that before sunset Cobby lay stretched in his lounge-chair in his old “guest-hut” in the sigodhlo, his old attendants about him. His enfeeblement being extreme, anon he dozed, and anon tore his eyes open to see the lights flicker at wind, and listen awhile to raids of rain on the door, and doze anew; until a little sound like an “*Oh!*” of shock roused him, and he saw Spiciewegiehotiu within the doorway shrinking with astonishment and shock at the sight of him lying there so washed-out, so languid, exsanguined; then she ran to him, and knelt with her arm round him, speechless, her cheek on his; and when he felt the streaming of her tears that wet his cheek, he himself wept plenteously, and, without saying anything, they wept so together, till she got out on the sound of a sob in a broken voice: “So you get well, no? now me near you. And now you do everything me tell you, no?”

“Yes,” he answered on a sob, “and you everything that I tell you.”

XXIII. SUEELA CHANGING SIDES



NOW, THE LIBERATION of Cobby and his reinstatement in the sigodhlo astonished everybody: but upon Macray it had a profound effect, the bitter suspicion now visiting him that there must be something sweet between Cobby and the Queen: in which case — what? Cobby might yet get her to Europe! and all Macray's fat be in the fire. If Cobby did not get *her*, she would keep *Cobby*, and, with Cobby, Macray. But Macray's cigars were smoked — an important fact; and weary now in general of Wo-Ngwanya, especially since Sueela had “turned good,” he was urgent to return to Europe.

Three evenings after Cobby's release he went to visit Cobby, to discover what was what, and come to some decision.

But outside Cobby's door he heard a murmur of voices in the hut, and, peeping at a seam between the door-boards, could see Cobby in candle-light on his lounge-chair, and, kneeling near Cobby, a young officer, whose posture of body and mind, whose face of affection, whose play of eye and hand, were hardly those of a young officer; and before long Macray was saying to himself: “Oh, it's *she* — the two beasts.”

This scene had the effect of a profound upheaval in the soul of Macray: accustomed to be deified and preferred, to consider the sun and the earth his, he was churned in his depths to a turgidness of jealousy, a venom of enmity.

Not a word of the murmuring could he make out, but there he remained, smiling over a viper's-nest of emotions.

Sueela had started at a little sound of his step on the moss outside, had sharply breathed “What that?” and, though Cobby had heard nothing, she had continued to hearken, hushed, eyeing the silence, then had remarked: “Oh, it very dangerous! Suppose —— !”

“Better not come again, then,” he said. “But I am glad you came, for I wanted to put to you this that I have been saying. Spiciewegiehotiu has afresh betrayed to me, not only that she will never go with me, but that she has no intention that *I* shall ever go, this talk of ‘banishing’ me being mere talk for some reason of her own. So here am I condemned to lifelong idleness and ripening. Of course, I can escape to-morrow: I can go through the air; but then I should be leaving Macray behind, and that I mustn’t do.”

Sueela’s expression was all perplexity. “How you mean— ‘go through the air’?”

“I can fly.”

“Fly.... Up in the air? Like a devil?”

“Or like an angel. But whatever I do, whether I stay, or whether I go, I shall be in equal misery, if I go without Spiciewegiehotiu, who is half of me, and where she is not I am a fish out of water. And what I do not understand is that *you*, who love her so much, and love me, too, should be opposed to her going with me. I can only suppose that you don’t conceive how much this would be for her good —— What are you staring at, black goose?”

“How you mean ‘fly’? Not up in the — air?”

“Yes, I tell you. You must understand that animals with two legs, men and birds, are meant, not only to fly, but, sooner or later, to spend their life in the air, spurning the earth. And when I tell you that Europeans can already fly, and when you see how very far Africans are from doing any such thing, do you not see, too, that that is not true friendship to

Spiciewegiehotiu to be on her side in her refusal to come to Europe, where, being opulent, she would enjoy far vaster powers and delights, and be like a lark let out of a cage?”

She stared at him. “What you want me to do?”

“Nothing, dear,” he said: “only to be on my side in sympathy, so you should be, for her sake, and mine, too.”

“My mother!” she suddenly breathed, astare; then shut her eyes, shook her face: “if she go, me dead, me done. Without Spiciewegiehotiu me a rotting dog on the ground.”

“You would come, too,” he muttered.

“Me?”

“Why, yes.”

Her mouth half-opened in a sort of laugh like one astonished with happiness; but then, recovering herself, she shook her head, saying, “No, you not want me then. No. Me not go. Me stay and die.”

“Perhaps I should not now go without you,” he mentioned.

“No? Oh, you good!” — she drew her stretched fingers down his cheek; and outside Macray hissed at her.

“But,” she said presently, “why you not tell Spiciewegiehotiu that, if she go with you, she like a lark let out of a cage? Maybe ...”

“Haven’t I told her?” Cobby answered: “the girl’s deafer than the deaf adder.”

“She not realize.... Even me who believe everything you say ——— Why you not show her the different things you can do, then, when she see for herself, maybe — —”

This struck Cobby. “Well, there may be something in that. Yes, I will think of that.”

She then, after gazing a little at his face in a stillness, stood up from her knees, saying: "Now me go. You soon get well, no?"

He promised "Yes," with nods, looking up at her.

"If ever you want to see me, tell Sansiwana to whistle twice at noon at the back part of the park."

"Very good."

"So good health. Who love you?"

"You. Think over what I've said."

"Eheh, me think." She pressed his hand in a vice. "Good health."

She still did not go, but stood averted, a pallor now under her skin; and then ventured upon the murmur in a tone of huff and offence: "Me have the first of the three kisses now, no?"

"Come, dear, come," he said, his face uplifted to her.

In a moment she was down to him, and, her palms holding his face, her lids closed, laid her lips on his brow, led them muttering down, found out his mouth with a pounce of passion bound back by chastity, and suddenly sprang and ran to the door to vanish.

Headlong she went, seeing nothing, though Macray had only a little withdrawn himself from the door; but soon she paused, stood a stone, hearing rather than seeing him pursuing her down the gross gloom under the meeting of the trees of the avenue.

He gripped her wrist. "Got you! You obscene little beast." His eyes blazed outrageous fire upon her; he deluged her in a fury of abuse. "You dugout, you gluttonous gutter, you ogling lewd goat! How many different men a day for you, eh? Your blackness is the blackness of sin, they say you were black with sin at seven, you deep-dyed — —"

"What me done?" she asked pallid, yet with a quiet dignity.

He let go her wrist to box her staggering. “Think I didn’t see? You filthy — Come on, into the bush.”

Again he gripped her wrist, and her face had a momentary horror of repulsion, till she quietly announced: “Me not going.”

“Ah! — you dare. Resist one little bit, and to-morrow Spiciewegiehotiu hears all.”

A heat of enmity, as of braziers dully smouldering, reddened the veins of her eyeballs. “Yes, you get me into trouble if you tell,” she said, “but you never get anybody else: the same day Spiciewegiehotiu have you dead. She not have any fear of Cobby carrying her off now Dzinikulu dead: so she not need you any longer.”

“I see: I’ll remember,” he said to himself with a sinister meaning, adding: “Come on” — and dragged her stumbling.

“Where you taking me to?” she asked.

“Up here” — at the entrance to an alley.

“No, not there,” she said: “a hut up there — somebody come out and see. That other side.”

Now she led his hold on her wrist obliquely across the avenue toward a spot where she was conscious that a tree-stump stood half-buried in the moss; and since it was dark all there, his foot stumbled upon the stump; and, as he stumbled, Sueela by a feat of nimbleness was running free.

After her he dashed in a passion of action — down the avenue, then a dart to the left round the royal park over noiseless moss under darkness of foliage, through which anon the moon threw moving pictures that winced and wandered. But though his legs were longer, Sueela’s were fleeter, and she had left him well behind by the time she dashed to the park gate to gasp with wild eyes to the guard, “Me — Sueela” — she had snatched off her officer’s head-dress— “kill that wild beast — he chase me.”

On which two of them went headlong, with spears held ready, to meet Macray, while he, seeing them, whipped out his pistol to lay them dead. But his angel whispered him of danger there: and since there was still time for flight, he fled, was soon in hiding in bush, spied them dash past him, and before long got to harbour in Cobby's hut.

Sueela, meantime, was modifying her dress in an empty hut within the royal grounds; and, on going home, told Spiciewegiehotiu that Macray had met and chased her.

And Spiciewegiehotiu said: "So?"

XXIV. COBBY'S "BANQUET"



SUEELA HAD NO sooner left Cobby's hut, than Cobby, pondering upon her suggestion to *show* to Spiciewegiehotiu "the different things he could do," conceived the scheme of giving a big dinner, to exhibit to the Queen in what style she would dine at the Ritz and in the Riviera.

And when Macray, after being pursued by the two guardsmen, came in to him, Cobby asked what Macray thought of this concept.

"Splendid!" went Macray with an evil sneer: "but — I thought we were to be 'banished'?"

"No, it won't be done," Cobby answered.

"How do you know?"

Cobby shrugged. "Somehow."

"Then, let's do a bunk."

"We can't cross nine hundred miles of Africa without bag or baggage; and, if we have impedimenta, pursuit must mean capture."

"Why, though, should we be pursued?"

Again Cobby shrugged. "We should be."

On which Macray said to himself, "There *is* something sweet, then, between her and him"; and very irritably he demanded: "But when is this to end? Look here, *j'ai soupe* — or 'fed up,' you say in England — I'm fed up, I tell you frankly. I have nothing to smoke, man — I'm like a beggar that says 'can you give me a pipe of baccie, mister?'"

"Well, one must bear the inevitable," Cobby mentioned.

"Or blast it sky-high out of one's way," Macray muttered.

“No, not the inevitable,” Cobby said: “you can damn it, but you can’t blast it.”

“No laughing matter to me!”

“Nor to me.”

“Well, I’ll think it all out,” Macray said, strolling out.

And he proceeded to think in no good easy mood, but with his usual intolerance of obstacles to his wants.

“Thinking it out,” he was lying the next forenoon within thicket up White River on an ant-heap where he had acquired the habit of hiding himself away, to lie in wait and eye the bathing of the Queen and her bevy, the ant-heap, as usual, being an even lusher jungle of fan-palms, mimosas, proteas white-flowering, than the wild round it. He was feeling a need to see Sueela, who, now that he hissed at her, the more teasingly allured him; and there, deeply concealed, he lay when the Queen’s ladies appeared.

They ran, they prattled, they laughed, they splashed, they took the douche under the waterfalls; then were back, drying, dressing; then Sueela was climbing a marula-tree, with Spiciewegiehotiu underneath looking up, a marula some way from the troop of damsels, and hardly ten yards from the ant-heap.

Sueela picked and dropped peaches to Spiciewegiehotiu, then, seated on a low branch of the marula, chewing its peaches, spoke downward in a raised tone, continuing a previous conversation — about Macray. “You not need him any more. Why you bear with that man?”

Dreading the opening of Macray’s mouth any day, dreading lest his violence should contrive to coerce her converted nerves into a sin against her nobler love, she did not now wish well to the continuance of his existence, and was bitter, too, against him for his hooligan usage of her. “He steal your father’s picture, he use your father’s goods, he hate you, he

Cobby's enemy, he lead three girls astray, he want to lead me, he chase me — Why you not cut him short? Me hate that man.”

Spiciewegiehotiu shrugged. “If you like ... maybe ... But look at those clouds scudding — the sky wide — water sweet, wind sweet — hear the river and the trees streaming — me like everybody to see and hear them, unless somebody's death do good to other people. Me have a score to settle with Caray, but there is something to his credit in it; maybe, but for him, Cobby and Dzinikulu — —”

“He do it for his own good, not for yours!” — Sueela was leaping down.

“Me know. Well, maybe ...” They were walking away: Macray lost the rest.

They left him there a devil, with a thought in him of Cobby's feast, and of how he might make a clean sweep then of all that impeded and hated him, to be off for civilization. He had not interfered with anybody, he said to himself — had been interfered with in his peaceable routine, first by that Master R. K. Rolls, who was well in hell, and then by that Master Cobby, and now by this black beast whom he had deigned to feel tender to, and this white nigger who so lightly doomed him to death for doing nothing. Or not for doing nothing? The theft of the photograph ... she knew of that ... knew the motive.... “All right,” he said, “war it is: the quickest lives. *I* do the killing, I think: no one wounds me with impunity....”

Three days later he received a summons to go to Cobby, *à propos* of the preparations for the feast, Cobby having already sent out cards of invitation to the elect — the bearer of the card telling what the card intended to say: for everything was to be in high style! and no little sensation and expectation was in the air at this event — a feast in “The Elephant”! one had never heard the like.

One there was who eyed the thing askance — Mandaganya; and she went to Spiciewegiehotiu to say: “What this ‘feast’ for? You go?”

“Eheh.”

Mandaganya laid her hand on the Queen’s. “Don’t go.”

“Oh, Ma-Sueela,” pouted Sueela, who was there within the baobab, “this is too much!”

To which the doctress quietly replied: “If you talk when me talking, me knock you down.” And to Spiciewegiehotiu: “Don’t go. Something bad going to happen. Me not hate Sir Cobby, but me dread him. He very wise; he make people sleep so deep, he cut off their leg, and they not know. Suppose he poison us all at the feast, or maybe carry you off asleep?”

Spiciewegiehotiu started!

“He not do that,” Sueela remarked.

“Shut your box,” the sybil answered; and, smoothing the Queen’s hand: “Don’t go. Listen, me tell you something: this morning me was picking herbs in the hills, and all at once this little dog run back to me with his tail between his legs. Me say to him: ‘What the matter with you, Ronja?’ He not make any answer, but when me say to him ‘Come on,’ he not come. ‘*Why* you not come?’ me ask him. No answer. There he sit; twice me see a shiver twitch him. And all at once a rock come clattering down from the cliff upon the path ahead: if we had gone on, we get killed, maybe; then when the rock drop, he come on. So me think to myself: ‘these must be days of danger, this month-end,’ and when we get home, me show him the card Sir Cobby send when he send the invitation. Ronja look at the card, he not say anything for a minute, then he sniff at it, then he back from it, and snarl. Don’t go.”

The two girls sat rather aghast.

“You go?” asked Mandaganya.

“*Me* go,” said Sueela.

“And me,” said Spiciewegiehotiu.

“Then, me, too” — the sybil rose, a grand being, to go backwards out, grovelling to the ground.

XXV. THE ENTRÉE



ABOUT THAT SAME evening hour Macray, summoned, was in the sigodhlo, all in good-temper now outside, saying: “Well, baas, what about this precious banquet of Belshazzar? Who’s to be the *chef*?”

Cobby answered: “You and I mainly. But the point is not the feast itself — these people here eat nicer things than rich Englishmen, and have those things much more lavishly than non-rich Englishmen — the point is the scientific accompaniments of the feast, the elegance and dignity which Science gives to life — the blaze of light — the music — —”

“But stop — where this blaze of light coming from?”

“Well, but, isn’t there the oil-engine, the dynamo, and our forty accumulators? Only I’m not sure how the rock holds nails! — we must drive in plugs of hardwood, I think. I’m having two arc-lamps in parallel, getting our six hundred watts from thirty accumulators, and the glow-lamps we’ll rig in a series system with the dynamo and ten accumulators, using every watt of our power. The lamp-glasses are mostly coloured — I got them so with this very object, to dazzle in case of necessity: it will be useless if we do not look elfin and superhuman.”

“I see, I see. Oh, we are being vain, baas of me! we are out to capture the ladies’ eyes. But why ‘The Elephant’ —— ?”

“Well, but,” Cobby said, “we can’t put the Ritz into a hut. That ‘Elephant’ rock-hall a mile beyond the prison — that’s the one I’ve selected: it has an alcove in which we can put our Primus and two stoves.

The main bother is the table! and a *chic* table-cloth — and we have only ten days: must start making trestles — —”

“And as to chairs?” Macray suggested.

“Oh, well, we must use stools.”

“They don’t have stools in the Ritz, isinduna — only footstools. These varnished stools here — when you get up off them they, too, get up a little, until they decide to part from you, and drop with a crash.”

“We’ll dry-dust ours.”

“And plates of unglazed earthenware — —”

“Oh, we have plates enough of our own — only eight guests.”

“Not enough forks, though.”

“Eat with fingers. It is only lately that the kings of England have forks: the Stuarts ate with their fingers.”

Macray rose to stroll out, saying: “Oh, well, God’s will be done, boys.”

“Come early to-morrow!” Cobby called.

“Damn you,” Macray muttered, stooping out through the hut-opening into darkness.

From the avenue he walked aside to the waggons to shed electric torchlight upon the medicine-chest, from which he took strychnine; and he had that day pressed out some milk-juice of euphorbia, a baleful bane, to mix with strychnine, in order to complicate and obscure the symptoms of both.

The next days were spent in pretty strenuous labour by him and Cobby and some blacks who aided them, for it was a long row or wade to the rock-hall, whichever way one approached it; and in the end the feast had to be put off three days.

On the last afternoon Cobby’s home-coming was watched for at the sigodhlo gate, whence he was conducted into the Queen’s hut, who, seated

on the floor with Sueela, said to him: "They say you going to poison me, or put me to sleep."

"Do they?" says he: "but is this what you had to say? I am occupied!"

"Me been poisoned once," she said: "me not go: me 'fraid."

"As you please."

On which Sueela, shaking her head earnestly upward at him, said: "She not mean it, she not 'fraid."

"Yes, me 'fraid," repeated the Queen: "Mandaganya's little dog snarl at that card you send."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"Oh, Spiciewegiehotiu," muttered Sueela with reproach in a pain of shamefacedness; and to Cobby: "She not mean it, me tell you! Go: you busy. We come to-night."

"May I go?" demanded Cobby.

"If you poison me, me haunt you," answered Spiciewegiehotiu.

"You haunt me now."

"Cousin Cobby. Red-head."

"Good-bye. Good-bye, Sueela. Start just at sunset." He was gone.

An hour later came from him to them garlands: and, garlanded, with Mandaganya and the Queen-dowager garlanded, and half a battalion of *gardes cavaleries*, they started out, cantering down a Square where, though it was raining, crowds had foregathered to gape and gaze.

Then at the "Elephant's" edge they found a punt all *en fête* with flowers, surmounted with an arch, out of whose leafage shot the sheen of three electric torches; this with the ladies in it was drawn forward by men wading; and, wading in the rear, stooping anon under the rock-roof, came the troop of soldiers, whom, with her usual prudence, Spiciewegiehotiu took with her.

But it was no short voyage under there in the dark, and Mandaganya muttered to the Queen-dowager: “Never in my life me go so far to get something to eat.” If anyone spoke, it was in a mutter, for there was that in the mood of the place that disposed the soul to a musing in unison with that moodiness of the lagoon, which the waders’ progress noiselessly wrinkled in coils of ripples sluggish like oil-waves waving loth, only less loth than the areas of lotus, arum, mosses, whose old opium repose the roamers’ motion anon broke or troubled; and languidly the back gave way as beneath the weight of the leagues of incubus, and into the gaze came a dreaming; until, after passing the region of the prison, they began to encounter anon a glow-lamp or two, hung from the rock-roof, gloating upon the water’s gloom, mute warders, unaccountable, like outposts of gnomeland: and now they were roused to outlook.

Then an opening in the rock-roof lit up: and they made their way up a tunnel rugged under the glare of rare glow-lamps. Here the Queen posted her guard; and the four ladies and the dog clambered on, till they got to a great rock-portal: and there at once an “Oh!” of astonishment, of awe, broke from their breasts at a scene of majesty which would have abashed Cæsar — nay, Hume, Cuvier.

There at the portal stood Cobby and Macray, excellently dressed in jackets and cravats, to shake hands with bows of state; and down under two triumphal arches gala with flowers and coloured glammers of glow-lamps, to the accompaniment of a most glorious music going on somewhere, they moved in a mood of Aladdin to a table gala with flowers and coloured glammers; and flowers in showers, and festoons of coloured glammers, were looped all about the walls of the hall, and above, shimmering, showering a chattering as of ravishment, the richer flush of arc-lamps.

It was a night of lights and sights. Cobby, seeing the depth of the effect created, sat pleased at the right hand of the Queen, she seated at the table-head, her back to the alcove, behind the curtain of which could be heard the dynamo's murmur, the oil-engine noising. The only failure was conversation, all sat so lost in stillness and stiffness. When soup was being eaten, Spiciewegiehotiu whispered low to Sueela: "It good — but he not give much!" and low Sueela whispered back: "Me think more coming." And this was so: many mickles making a muckle, the liquors, too, being numerous, port, sherry, cherry-brandy, each in its season for a reason: at which warmth the ice thawed in time, and there was talk and lightness of mind, at the Queen's left being seated Sueela, Mandaganya, then on his own stool the dog Ronja, paw on table, feasting, then the Queen-dowager; and on the Queen's right the General, the Chief-of-the-tax, and two quite humble men, smiths, whom Cobby liked (and of one of them, named Rambya, had an even extremely high opinion), beside Cobby and Macray, one or other of whom anon sped away into the alcove to see to this or that.

In the midst of which Cobby extended his hand to a box on the table, and immediately all the genii of astonishment were called and flocked. Behold now: a disc on top of the box begins to spin, and — by the grace of God! — out of it sounds "Woman is Fickle" from Rigoletto. Then those there knew music more teeming with some mood and meaning of the spheres than the strains of canaries, as much more teeming as the smart and burden of the psalm which may one day burst from earth to star will be vaster than our sonatas. And — Oh, joy! — see now how they move to the news that the Soul of Being is bliss and emotion of gavotte, jig, jazz, finger wagging, hand clapping, head wagging, body going, He dancing, they dancing, sons of His soul, remembering how that same melody and meaning was inherent

in the Nebula in the era when He and they reeled red, the little hound, too, with yowling mouth, snout up, hailing Him that moves and makes.

“It come out of that box!” Spiciewegiehotiu definitely discovered.

“Something inside the box!” sang out Sueela.

And this was so....

After which yet another lunacy of astonishment ensued when, by just a touch of two switches, Cobby extinguished all that effulgence at once, causing all to jump up, then summoned it afresh with a touch: and it came.

But this was just before an *entrée* of stewed koodoo-kid: and with that *entrée* the banquet came upon wreck.

The attendants placed the ten plates in their places on the table: but Macray was away in the alcove.

Now, Mandaganya had arranged with Spiciewegiehotiu, and with all the blacks, except the two smiths, that nothing was to be tasted until tasted by her Ronja and by her; and at the *entrée* the little dog growled, and bristled, and would not taste: upon which the doctress sprang upright, and, striking the table with her fist, glared close across into Cobby’s face, crying aloud: “Me say this food poisoned!”

White sprang Spiciewegiehotiu, staring at Cobby; all went pale: only Cobby looked calm — glanced up to say to Mandaganya: “You might calm yourself: your statement is fantastic” — and went on eating.

A muteness of the tomb now: broken only by that chattering of the arc-lamps’ flush, the armature’s mutter and meditation spinning in the inner apartment. Cobby ate on, offended — no one else: for the smiths, who had commenced to eat, had ceased. And suddenly, after perhaps half a minute, Spiciewegiehotiu dashed Cobby’s plate off the table.

“Now, how absurd!” Cobby murmured, starting up.

At the same time the Queen on her feet said to a waiter: "Tell Sir Caray come to me."

But Macray was already outside the alcove, and in a moment was at her right hand beside Cobby.

"What you doing in there?" she asked him.

Smiling, just touched with pallor, he answered: "Seeing to things."

"But your food getting cold." She indicated his plate. "Sit and eat."

Their eyes met and lingered a little together, until, with a chuckle, he said: "What, does the Great-great want me to be poisoned? I heard an outcry about poison.... You eaten any, baas?"

Cobby nodded.

"Is it all right?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then, what caused the outcry?"

"The dog, apparently, didn't approve — —"

"The dog! Oh, I see.... Yes, that little beast, I know him — greatest charlatan and liar on earth — pretends he can see through a stone-wall...."

"So you see," Spiciewegiehotiu now said, "it not poisoned. You sit and eat, no?"

"Yes," said Macray, "let us all eat."

And again her eyes and his lingered together.

She said: "Me done; me not want any more."

"Nor I, for that matter," he mentioned.

"No? Oh, well. Go back to what you were doing."

On which, uttering a breath of laughter, he walked away back into the alcove, and she, as he vanished, took up a little goblet, threw some flowers out of it, put into it with a spoon all the stew that was on her plate, and placed it under the table.

There the feast, as a feast, came to an end: nothing that Cobby could say could induce to any more eating — he grieving at no sweets, no coffee, liqueur; but cigarettes were smoked; the *conversazione* went on; telephone-sets had been installed at opposite ends of the hall, and all spoke in hushed tones to one another across all that stretch; they sat amazed at a display of coloured flames, Roman candles, squibs, catherine-wheels, fickle crackers frisking; and it was late when, laden with presents, the Queen went away, taking secretly with her beneath her kaross the goblet of *entrée*.

All in a dream of midsummer night their minds reeled, and “There is only Cobby,” Spiciewegiehotiu muttered, moving homeward in the punt under the rock-roof. As when a young girl goes home dumb from her first opera, agaze at apocalypses of fairyland through all the organs of her fancy, and all is trance of novelty, of freshness and strangeness, and in all her posture and prospect revolution ensues: so were they; or as when America was discovered, a “new world,” and away in a whirl the imaginations of men went ranging in revels of reverie through realms of refreshment and festival, and a revolution ensued; or as when one dared to bore the aerial blue in a balloon, fairily rose and soared, ascending up into heaven, at last, in reality, the son of man before the beholding host of man, and all was renewed and broader and tall, and a revolution ensued; or as when one flew, and a revolution has ensued, and will soon ensue, behind every revolution a scientist, the breadth and boldness of some lone brow becrowned with thorns of thought: so with these moving bemused beneath that roof through dreamland. But by then the revealer of the dreamland, though he said nothing, was convulsed, in dreadful pain.

XXVI. SUEELA SCHEMES



THE SICKNESS OF Cobby and of one of the smiths (Rambya) could not be concealed. They were poisoned: but the diagnosis baffled Cobby, some of the symptoms being strychnine symptoms, some euphorbia symptoms, all obscurely mixed up.

To see the smith the Queen went a long way, and said to him: “Me know who poison you: you think me not avenge you?”

“Who poison me, Bayeté?” Rambya asked.

“Me not come to answer questions,” she answered, “me come to see you. Now you soon get well, no? Good health!”

Meantime, she had put a bung into that little goblet of stew abstracted from the banquet, and had buried it in her grounds; meantime, too, the rumour of it flew wide: one or other of the white men had done this thing — maybe both, Cobby being taken in his own snare....

And no vengeance taken! Sueela especially now expected the Queen to proceed immediately against Macray, but the Queen said, did, nothing; and the Queen now expected Sueela to be pressing afresh for proceedings against Macray, but Sueela said nothing — each for her own reasons....

In the case of Spiciewegiehotiu, the banquet had afresh alarmed and put her on guard against Cobby, she scenting Cobby’s object in going to so much trouble — to show her the glories of Europe, and allure her to trek that way. Cobby, then, was not done with thoughts of being off with her! And since, obviously now, Cobby had powers of which she knew nothing,

and since Macray was one of her protections against Cobby, Macray was afresh precious to her.

In the case of Sueela, whom the majesties of the banquet had ranged quite definitely on the side of Cobby's desires as against the Queen's desires, she had conceived a scheme in which Macray would have to play a part, so did not at present desire Macray to die. Moreover, after the banquet, Cobby's statement had become more credible to her — that Cobby could go away "*through the air*," like a devil (or an angel), but never would go without Macray: so she now dreaded that, if Macray perished, Cobby any day might shake the dust of Wo-Ngwanya off his shoe, and vanish into heaven. This, indeed, would leave to her her Spiciewegiehotiu, her other soul; but this girl had now determined that Spiciewegiehotiu should *go* with Cobby, for Spiciewegiehotiu's sake, and for Cobby's sake.

"You not want me any more to 'cut Caray short'?" Spiciewegiehotiu at last asked her one day, with meditative eyes dwelling on her.

"Me 'fraaaaid!" Sueela answered, very deceitfully, very deeply: "suppose Cobby still want to carry you off? Why he give that feast? Maybe Caray still useful. And me not think it was Caray who poisoned the food."

"No? Oh, you too foolish," the Queen said, and said no more.

By that time Sueela in a disguise had twice visited Cobby's lounge-chair, to mourn each time to him: "My God, you just get well, and now you so sick again."

"I will recover," he said; "and I bear it gladly, for now the Queen may be coming with me."

She shook her head. "No. Listen: the feast fail — it was my fault to tell you to give it: it only make her want you more to stay here. She say 'If *he* can make those things, *we* can make them when he show us the way; see if we not make Wo-Ngwanya the wonder of the world.'"

Thus the effect of the feast was the opposite of the effect intended by Cobby, Spiciewegiehotiu, like Pharaoh at the miracles of Moses, hardening her heart at the miracles of Cobby; and with the rising of the sun upon that night of the fairies, fairyland lost its glammers for her, and got to be a matter for practical politics, her enlarged soul now starting to dream dreams of a new Wo-Ngwanya, far lordlier, introduced by Cobby; the mood of revolution took her: thoughts of war, of enormous dramas of transformation, of palms, campaigns, spectacles, splendours, Alexandrine transactions; and always she said to herself “war, girl, war, war.” This was to work and work in her....

“As the deaf adder stoppeth her ear,” Cobby muttered....

“She say she owe her life, she owe all, to the Wa-Ngwanya,” Sueela told him: “so she give herself to them.”

“And I owe my life and all to Europe: I give myself to it. If she will not come, *I* will die rather than remain here. I will constantly try to escape, I will hate her bitterly, I will kick and bite and fight till I die. Tell her: I couldn’t speak to her yesterday, I was so ill....”

“You ill still!”

“Yes: thank God that she or you got none of this bane that is in me into your blood.... How *did* it get into that stew? God knows!”

On an impulse she whispered: “Caray do it.”

“No, come, come,” he said peremptorily, “get that out of your head.”

“He do it,” she quietly insisted: “he want to kill me because me not go with him; he want to kill Spiciewegiehotiu and you because you keep him here; he not want to kill my mother and the others, but he so wicked, he not care — —”

“Be quiet, Sueela, you are displeasing me.”

She smoothed his hands, put her cheek on them, and shut up, for, though she knew how easily she could convince him that Macray was his enemy by merely revealing to him how Macray had originally warned Spiciewegiehotiu of Cobby's expedition, she was apprehensive that if Cobby got to know of this, he might go off lonely "through the air," without Macray, without Spiciewegiehotiu....

"Me not think Caray much a friend to you," she said presently: "so promise you not tell Caray what me come to say to you."

"Very good. What have you come to say?"

Smoothing his hands, on her knees, she told it: he and Macray were to escape with a cart, she, Sueela, with them, and five fellows upon whose friendship for her she could rely; then when they had gone a little way, the Queen was to hear that they were away, that Macray had carried off Sueela: in which case, it was certain that the Queen would fly in person to find Sueela, taking with her probably only a small body of men, since the fugitives would be but few; and, as Sueela knew of a spot in a pass where a few in ambush might easily master many, there Cobby's lot could kill the Queen's men, seize the Queen, and be away with her, while Sueela went home to mourn....

Cobby held his chin, speculating. "Needn't *kill* the Queen's men," he muttered, "... tear-gas ... and capture.... Good, good."

"You think it good?"

"Yes! We will! You — dear: both good and clever."

"But you look after me, no? You not let Caray get me while me with him?"

"Indeed not! Be very sure of that."

"And you not let him know beforehand *why* we do it? If you do, we fail! — he tell the Queen. Caray not want you to carry her off! Me know, me tell

you so, you believe me, no? So you take away his guns from him when the Queen coming, no? And you give me one of those little guns for myself....”

She then went away, but the next time she came to him had each detail of the scheme completely planned; and the following night met Macray by appointment in her mother’s park.

Macray, at this time in an ice of anxiety for his life, apprehensive every day of what the Queen might mean toward him, and pining to be well out of Wo-Ngwanya, was torn betwixt delight and suspicion at what Sueela had to say: they were to escape! she with them, Sir Cobby to give her something to make the Queen sleep, and while the Queen slept, the cart and they would pass well away beyond capture.

“So who is it that you are running away with — Cobby or me?” he demanded.

Brazenly she smiled up into his face. “*With you.*”

“No lies! I *saw* you slobbering Cobby, you black Bacchant.”

“But you not see me go into the canes with him? My goodness, me not give you proof who me love?”

This solaced, this mollified; but then he burst out: “Why, I heard you begging Spiciewegiehotiu up White River to murder me! I *heard* you!”

“You heard?” — her hand on his shoulder, she smiling up close into his eyes. “You were there? — to see me bathe, no? Me have the best figure of all those girls, no? But you not guess why me beg Spiciewegiehotiu to kill you? She so suspicious: she think me love you; and me want to make her think me hate you: so me say ‘Kill him!’”

He pondered upon it. “Was that it? Really? But if you love me so much, why did you kiss Cobby?”

“But me love Sir Cobby, too: only different, not the same.”

“I see. And why have you shunned me as you have?”

Her eye-corners ogled him. “Because you not to touch me again, until you make me your waaif in that country.”

“Oh, Lord, I see — question of matrimony: what will the parson think? You’re an unbeliever, my Sue. Never mind, I forgive you — come, kiss.”

On which she drew a revolver from her moocha-girdle to present playfully at him, saying: “You see this little gun? Sir Cobby give me. If you touch me too soon, me shoooot you!”

But this did not deter, and when she saw him flush toward urgency, she took to her heels; nor could he come near to catching her.

She had already explained to him what was his part in the plan of escape: *he* was to get the cart and oxen, keep them dark at his domicile, and stock the cart with guns and other requisites, got in very small lots from Cobby’s waggons.

And this he did: daily entering the sigodhlo to get the things, and discuss with Cobby, whom he now found rather a cold baas, Sueela’s statements about him having left some impression on Cobby: and it reached the ears of Spiciewegiehotiu that Sir Caray was often at this time in the sigodhlo — a bit of gossip that caused the Queen’s eyebrows to rise a little.

And the Queen’s eyebrows could not but rise a little at Sueela, who was sleeping unquietly, who was hanging to Spiciewegiehotiu’s hand with a fresh anguish of friendship, gushings of love. One midnight, pretending to be asleep, she beheld Sueela seated abed, tossing her buried face, sobbing. And one noon she went seeking Sueela to the bottom of the royal park, having lately observed that after the return from the river-bath Sueela disappeared a little, and she wished to see what Sueela disappeared for. She could not see Sueela, who knew how to be invisible; but at the far bottom of the park through a knob-hole of the stockade, she saw Cobby’s back walking off: which thing also caused her eyebrows to rise a little.

XXVII. THE CAPTURE IN THE PASS



ONE DARK EVENING a week afterwards Sueela departed from the sigodhlo to go to visit some friends at a farmer-kraal outside Eshowe, having told Spiciewegiehotiu that she would be back long before midnight.

She duly visited those friends, but remained there only a few minutes, then flew, met at an appointed spot Cobby, Macray, and her five friends with the cart, and started off with them through wild winds, drizzle and darkness for a pass five miles distant....

It became midnight: anon Spiciewegiehotiu sprang up, glanced out at the rude night, and finally grew angry that Sueela did not appear....

An hour later she wrapped up her head, ran out into the rain to a near hut, and sent out a messenger, who galloped to the farmer-kraal to ask after Sueela, and galloped back with the news that Sueela had soon left the kraal; on which the Queen wrung her hands together, and dispatched the galloper to Mandaganya to seek Sueela.

But before he was back, an agitated man was led into her presence to recount how, coming home in the night from a mountain kraal, he had encountered the white men in flight, with five and Sueela — Sueela tied, grieving, screaming, in the grip of Macray! They, seeing that he had seen them, had chased him, shot at him, but he had dodged and escaped! — this bringer of tidings being a sixth friend of Sueela left behind to bring the tidings.

The Queen listened to it in a white silence; whispered only: “Which pass?” and “Who are the five?” then let herself down on her bed, where she

sat staring as if paralyzed; but then on a sudden flew into a fury, sprang up, ran about, wished to tear out her hair, stamped at the messenger in a passion, screaming at him: “Fly out of my sight! Leave me!” then stood with her forehead on the hut-wall, quite passive some time, till she span to act....

The morning light came bright and stormless. There where Cobby’s party lay in ambush gadded gentle gales, gladsome like gas of champagne, to be quaffed by an organ more evolved and gladsome than the stomach; drops of dew — tropic dew — thronged all the bush with flushings of jewellery, drenching every movement made by jubilant green larks updarting, by canaries screaming greetings, and by the men who lay in greenery on a ledge twenty feet square, to which they had climbed twenty feet up an incline from a rock-corridor, very straight and very long, running through a realm of rock that climbed to the skies before them and behind them; and in a *spelonké*, or rock-hole, some distance off below them their oxen lay hid in thicket.

They breakfasted, then waited with agitated hearts. Only one of them had not known *why* they stopped there and waited! — Macray. But now he understood.

“Why do we stop?” he had asked at the stoppage.

Cobby had answered that there they would engage any pursuers with tear-gas, whereupon Macray, with a piercing eye of suspicion: “Pursuers! I didn’t know that there were to be any pursuers.”

“Well, but,” Cobby had said with a smile, “the man who encountered us after we started has, of course, reported it; it must be that we are being pursued by horsemen: so it is useless to go on until we have defeated the pursuers, as we may here.”

“Then why did you stop me from firing at the man who encountered us?”

“I don’t want any killing, Macray.”

“I see. Still, let’s be pushing on — come. There aren’t any pursuers, if Spiciewegiehotiu is under chloroform — as I understand. We have plenty of time to get well away, with our oxen fresh.”

“Spiciewegiehotiu is not under chloroform,” Cobby had then bluntly told him.

Macray’s left eye had gone small. “Sueela lied, then?”

“It may be that Sueela does not invariably speak the truth — —”

“No, especially when *you* put her to lie.”

Upon which Cobby had fired a box into Macray’s face.

Thus their friendly relation definitely ended. Macray, though he had snatched at his revolver, had not struck back, possessing, as ever, no little self-command: but he then afresh condemned Cobby to death, and the second death.

He could see now that he had been tricked; and, though himself a trickster, it envenomed him that others should be tricksters in respect of him.

Here, it was clear, was a trap to catch the Queen, Sueela being there, not in order to be with him, but, won by Cobby, in order to decoy the Queen to come.... He, however, quickly enough came to the decision that at the least danger of capture for the Queen he would kill in quick succession the seven with him, Cobby to begin, then Sueela....

But against the success of that plan was the plan of Sueela, who also had a revolver, she intending to watch, and at any movement of Macray’s hand toward his belt to lay him low. Moreover, after the breakfast, Cobby, in fulfilment of a promise made to Sueela, proceeded to disarm Macray, coming to where Macray sat apart on a rock to say: “I am sorry now that I

struck you, Macray, though you were so very offensive. But you had better hand me over your revolver for the present.”

“What’s *that* for?” — Macray started upright.

“I have reasons — obscure, maybe — but — —”

“You be —— !”

Just in time Cobby had him covered. “Lift up your hands! Believe me, I shall not hesitate to shoot, if you are mutinous....” He took revolver, knife, Winchester.

And afterwards Sueela, who had seen this through the thicket, came to Macray to stand before him with lowered lids, and say: “Me think the Queen will come.”

“You do?” says Macray.

“Eheh. And me have something to tell you: me not want to kill you, but if you make any sort of noise before Spiciewegiehotiu and all her men pass this ledge, me stab you.”

Bitterly impotent, he smiled upward at her, saying: “My Sue, my black-livered Sue! we may meet again.”

The sun climbed up high, and then hid away his face with that fickleness of the days of the rainy season, breezes sougning now through rough seas of trees, bringing drizzles, breathing that delicious bleakness and chill of November reveries and memories. It was noon before Cobby, lying at the edge of the ledge, spy-glass at eye, spied a figure coming, pigmily remote, alone, on the road below. His heart started, ceased to beat, and, white with excitement, he breathed to Sueela: “She comes.”

A shivering seized Sueela. She whispered: “How many men?”

“I see none....”

“My God!” she breathed. Somehow this terrified her!

On plodded the solitary figure, and suddenly Cobby's forehead rushed red, he sending out at her the shout: "*C[oe]ur de Lion!*"

"*Sh-h-h*" — from Sueela in an anguish of secrecy, although the figure was evidently still too distant to catch any shout.

But presently all saw her, and every breast there quailed at her coming more than if she had come accompanied by squadrons of cavalry: some majesty of self-assurance, some spell of proper authority, was suggested in that steady stepping, that did not pause and palter like common steps — and some menace: for to their nerves she came, not as a bird to the snare, but as a judge. Cobby himself felt it, and the flush of his shout at her rapidly perishing out of his face, left it blanched; the five black men lay visibly affrighted; and Sueela, wringing her hands, lamented to Cobby: "Oh, you not get her! You not get her! We all ruined!"

"Nonsense!" answered Cobby, turning irritated upon her: "why not get her? She comes alone!"

"Why you think she come alone — on foot? She not looking for us — she know we here! That why she not bring any men, she not want them to be killed, she come alone to capture us! Maybe she guess all, all...."

"Well, suppose so — what then? She is powerless! When she comes I simply take her."

"Oh, you not take her!" she cried in an ecstasy of distress with a cry-cry face: "you think she come like that, and not have some plan? Oh, tie my hands together quick!"

At the same time Macray, lying on his face some feet away, called to Cobby: "Now you think you have her safe, don't you? But I'll bet you haven't."

Cobby turned sharply upon him. "Don't you *want* me to have her? That is why we are in Wo-Ngwanya!"

“Not a question of what I want,” answered Macray: “I only remark that you haven’t got her yet, and probably won’t, not if I know the girl. If you do get her now, she’ll be back in her pig-sty within two days....”

And on the solitary figure plodded, showing already her stretch of shin, then showing the rhythm of her hips’ motion and wilful shoulders swinging, like some trained pacer’s of “the films,” then the raising of her face in friendship to the spray of a rain fresh as the winds, and as the wild fresh thicket, and the wild fresh breath of the spirit of Being, then showing how the puffs of the wind kept fluttering the flimsy stuff, saffron and black, of her kaross, and showing at last with how grave and estranged a face she came.

To gas, or not to gas, her foreground: this was Cobby’s problem. He shrank ...!

When she was opposite the ambush, her pace a little slackened — involuntarily perhaps; but she did not look upward, walked on beyond: and now Cobby, springing to his feet, gave a signal, and all, save Sueela, streamed down upon her.

As she span to face them, Cobby, who was very agitated, ran up to her with the announcement: “Now, you see, I have you.”

She seemed not to see, to hear, him, but, eyeing the five blacks, said quietly to them: “You touch me, no?” and drew a knife from her moocha-band to hold at her bosom, to penetrate: and it was with wide eyes that they beheld a thread of red astray on her left breast....

And in one moment now was revulsion and revolution of emotion: to ten eyes welled ten waters — all young men with warm minds. “Bayeté! No!” broke in protest out of one mouth; one knelt with wrung palms; all put out their arms in shame-faced reproach to her, while from the ledge broke a

shriek — Sueela's — who in a moment more was flying, tied, down the incline, wild of eye, toward that knife.

“So you not want me to die?”

“*Bayeté!*” one protested with parallel arms extended tense.

“Kneel down, then.”

“Nonsense! Don't be tricked!” Cobby cried out. “You are *my* men!”

Down, with brows bent to the ground, they knelt.

“Say after me: ‘*Bayeté.*’”

“*Bayeté!*”

““Our Mother.””

“Our Mother.”

““Live for your sons.””

“Live for your sons.”

“Very well: me will. Now get up. Me pardon Sir Caray. Arrest Sir Cobby.”

Upon which Cobby, who had no appetite for any more “Elephant,” and had tear-gas (non-poisonous) with him, darted into a run to get far enough off to cast a bomb and gas the lot of them, in order to be gone with her from Africa: but after him the blacks darted so sharply, that he had hardly any start: to gas them would have been to gas himself; and the thought that if he cast a bomb toward her in that spot, running the risk of slightly wounding her, he might gas the oxen also caused him to falter; and, as he faltered, he was caught. The men then besought him: “You may as well — she too much for us — we not get her” — and he walked back to her in the midst of them.

Having now unbound Sueela's hands, she tossed the cord to the blacks to bind Cobby's, an operation which Cobby permitted with a bitter smile of disdain, in which was some self-disdain, for, if he had gassed her from the

ledge, and not shrunk and trusted to luck, the result might have been quite different; and to himself he said: “A fool is a man who is wise too late.”

Meantime, Macray, all asmile, was saying to the Queen: “Thanks for ‘pardoning’ me, Bayeté: but there is nothing to pardon. I was going off to my country, as I have a right to do, but I had no notion that a trap was being laid for your Majesty by Sir Cobby and that young woman, who wasn’t being carried off by *me*, but came voluntarily with — —”

“Tell her all your lies!” Sueela cried with a grin, glancing round from dabbing with a cloth the wound in the Queen’s breast: “she not believe!”

“Came voluntarily with Sir Cobby,” Macray continued quickly, “in order to decoy you into the trap. She kisses Sir Cobby. Her wrists have only just been tied to deceive you — —”

“Ha, ha, she not believe!” cried Sueela in triumph: “tell some more!” And to Spiciewegiehotiu: “This man hate me like poison because me not go with him; he hate us all, he want to poison you.”

“You lie,” Macray remarked.

“What!” cried the Queen with a flush: “you speak to Sueela like that in my presence?”

“Well, if it pleases you to be deceived, be deceived,” Macray nonchalantly said.

On which Spiciewegiehotiu’s eyebrows lifted, and she said to Sueela: “But — why you not call out to warn me before me come? Somebody had his hand over your mouth, no?”

“Yes, of course” — from Sueela.

Macray chuckled. “Yes, you chief of sinners— ‘of course.’”

The Queen looked from one to the other of them, thinking her thoughts, then decided to say to Macray: “But this is strange that you speak to Sueela

like this. Me not like it, Sir Caray.” This she said finishingly; and to the blacks: “Now the cart.”

On which the cart, ready inspanned, was brought from the *spelonké*, and they presently set off northward, the Queen, who was weary being wedged uneasily among packages in the cart, Sueela trudging beside it, and, trudging in front among the blacks, Macray and a Cobby all an inflammation of rage and rancour.

XXVIII. SUEELA MARRIED



THE GOING WAS slow — steep for the feet of oxen; anon an off-wheel was on the brink of abyss; and the Queen was so uneasily seated in the cart, that before long she chose rather to trudge afoot. And presently Sueela, without looking at her, ventured upon saying: “You let his hands free, no? That hurt him....”

Spiciewegiehotiu’s eyes dwelt a little on her before the reply came: “Yes, go tell them”; and Sueela sped forward with the order.

Thus, with Cobby freed, they trekked that intricacy of rock-scenery until near sunset, when all were weary, and Sueela exclaimed: “My goodness, when we going to get something to eat?”

“We nearly reach Hyena Kranz now,” Spiciewegiehotiu answered, “and there we sleep till the moon come up” — this kranz being a mug of crag some hundreds of yards across, sky-high all round, its bottom rising toward the right, and thick with timber, save at the left (west), where there was some bottom all rock in front of a cave: and there a fire was lighted, meat, meal taken out of the cart, poospoos cooked, and a supper consumed that had no lack of music, for yonder to the north a cascade come darkling down the crag, like yard after yard of gauze and lawn measured off recklessly in a frenzy for customers without money, the two girls supping with a certain aloofness in the cave’s mouth, the men in a crowd round the fire under a dark sky ardent with stars — stars large like those sparks which parted from the flame to dart away whither the wind ranged, and strange like that aged

charm of the cascade, like the cadences of that darksome psalmody of the winds within the palms.

Only these sounds, and the fire-wood spluttering: till all the men started at another sound — like a neigh.

“Where it come from?” they asked one another, and sat hearkening; but now could hear nothing but the breeze, the bruit of the waterfall, and the brawling of the brook that the waterfall caused. One sprang upright, saying: “We go see,” but Spiciewegiehotiu called from the cave-entrance: “Maybe it was a zebra: eat your food — don’t trouble”; and again all was noiseless, save the voices of the night’s silence.

Then after food they smoked, some taking small pipes out of holes in the lobes of their ears, and then disposed themselves to sleep, the cavern having two halls, both large, with a doorway between, in the inner of which the Queen and Sueela lay little and lost in rock on their karosses, and the others lay in the outer.

But Sueela could not sleep, because her head was heated and teeming with the day’s event, and because a hyena continued to laugh heartily somewhere in the kingdom and mood of the dark, and because water was dripping somewhere from the roof into a pool, and, drop by drop, haunted all the hall with a succession of echoes.

Now, the fire outside the cave’s mouth had been made bright to scare away wild beasts, and so Sueela after an hour, through the portal, saw Cobby go out soft toward the cart, saw him come back, bringing something, did not see him lie down again....

At this thing her heart thumped thickly. What could he be doing darkly in there in the dying half-light of the fire? She sat up to peer — could not see! could hear the men’s breathing — everyone seemed asleep but Cobby. And

she wrung her hands, anxious, in trouble for him: for though the Queen breathed as in sleep, it was uneasy sleep....

So, after a long hour of it, Sueela levered herself soft, soft, to her feet, to go to him — to warn, to comfort, to kneel to him.

But as she stepped away in haste, her foot touched, upset, a jar of water ... on which back she scuttled to lie down anew, for the sound had seemed to trouble the Queen's breathing. Only for some moments, however: and soon she was up once more, and out, her heart in her mouth....

She found Cobby so bent over one of the blacks, that she had to touch him before he saw her; and now she put her lips into his ear to hint the meaning: "*Come with me.*"

He whispered: "*Wait.*"

After two minutes he stood up; went with her out of the cave.

And active and tactical as cat with rat the Queen was tracking their feet.

She saw them go past the glowing embers, cross a patch of long grass and mimosa shrub, and go into timber; and like a boa boring after a bird she bored her journey through the bush, ferreting after them in flames: the bush burned and was not consumed.

They stopped within a knot of fan-palms, and she could see: there was starlight, which gives one-fifth of the light of the moon, and there was some off-shine from the embers: but nothing could she hear of what was said! for a brook rolled near in her hearing, and they spoke very low.

Sueela's hand was on Cobby's shoulder, her face close up to his — she wished to know *what* he had been doing....

"Making them all unconscious," he told her: "it took a long time, I had to do it so gradually, to evade any outcry; but that one you found me over was the last: now I am going to do it to her."

"Oh, my," breathed Sueela.

“Don’t be frightened: it will be late to-morrow before they are on their legs again — I am now quite her master, and shall show her.”

But she clung to him, with “Oh, me ‘fraid! me ‘fraid! Better not — listen to me — You know a lot, but a man no good against her, she so artful: only some other girl could match her ... why you not leave it to me? Maybe later on me think out some way; but me ‘fraid — You make Caray unconscious, too?”

Cobby sullenly answered: “Yes, I decided ... Macray’s behaviour has been so strange and reprehensible — he must make his way home without me, I without him — —”

“But still — Oh, God, me ‘fraaid — Spiciewegiehotiu do *something* — she not go with you — not far — she run away while you asleep, she come back, she send horses to where she left you, she drag you back, she dog-rabid when she angry — maybe she cut off your head: if she cut it off, me drop stiff dead” — she drooped, kneeling, to his palm, of which she made a cushion for her cheek.

“No fear of that, dear” — he raised her up— “we shall be well away before we sleep; and while I sleep, you will watch her.”

She started! “Me going, too?” in a hoarse throat-tone.

“Why, yes — Sueela — of course.”

She tossed her shut eyes about with “Oh, don’t *tempt* me! — you not want me!

“Yes, yes,” he said: “of course, you come. She will not be happy without you, nor — will I.”

At that “I” her arms were wrapped round him, and in a transport her mouth found his — for a moment only: in the next her face was buried in her elbow, and a sob brought forth: “Oh, what a wild beast! Me never meant to do that. But that the second of the three, no?”

“Very good,” he consented, “since you wish it so; and one more is left. Now we go — come.”

But she shrank. “No, me not go! me ‘fraid ... Oh, you not hurt her, no?”

“No, no — no pain: come.”

“No, me wait here: when you make her unconscious, come tell me.”

“Very good” — he moved to go, and Spiciewegiehotiu was off, private as the night-beast stealing, but fleet, leaping the bush with high wide strides, bounding, but soundless. Cobby did not see nor hear her at all; and when in the inner rock-hall he bent over her sleeping-place, there she lay breathing as in sleep.

But in the outer hall she had smelled an odour — of chloroform — which she had smelled months before (in her hut on the night of Cobby’s arrival), and knew to be narcotic, for Macray had foretold her of it: and now when she smelled it a foot from her nose, she felt no inclination to inhale it instead of the heavenly air; so, startling Cobby’s heart, sudden and straight she sprang, asking composedly enough: “What you want, Cobby?”

He, in a revulsion of emotion from his shock and astonishment, had her snatched to his heart, ravenously devouring her mouth, panting at her: “You I want.”

And passively she took it; but, as soon as she could, still on his bosom, lifted up her voice: “Come! kill this man!”

“No, they won’t come,” he breathlessly uttered— “all drugged. Now I am your king. Will you do now everything that I tell you? Do you love me, your cousin, your king?”

“Hate you! King? Slave! So you drug them all, no? This is the thanks I get for letting your hands free, no? And you seize my body, you dare to kiss me, without my consent? For this by itself me sentence you to ten days in ‘The Elephant.’”

“Oh, nonsense.” he said, holding her close: “in ten days you and I will be far enough from ‘The Elephant.’”

“Kiss me again,” she whispered witchingly: on which, fitting her to him, he kissed her continuously; but the instant he stopped, “For that,” she said, “me sentence you to twenty days in ‘The Elephant.’ Now do it again.”

“Oh, no more,” he panted, “my heart will break on that breast of yours — Spicie — Cousin — Soul — secret of G od revealed to me — essence of Heaven — Come — no time ——— Do you come, or do I drug you by force? I should like to smother up your mouth, and break you to my will.”

She disengaged herself from him, saying: “Me come.”

“Come, then, come” — and, she following, he walked busily out, with some wonderment in him, though occupied with other things, that she did or said nothing as to Sueela — through the outer room, where she kicked one of the blacks to see if that would rouse him, and then remarked dryly to Cobby: “You think me silly, no? You think me not foresee that you might do this?”

Cobby said nothing till they were at the cave-mouth, when he said: “Now to get the oxen together;” on which with one hand she seized his sleeve, and, putting with the other hand to her lips a small horn hung on her hip below her tunic, blew a tooting.

The moon had just mounted up, cumbered in a jubilee of clouds and colours, transmuting the mood of the night as mightily as that tooting transmuted the mood of the wood, which was suddenly arustle with troops rushing: for Spiciewegiehotiu had not gone out solitary from Eshowe, though she had gone on solitary from this spot, in order to safeguard her men from the disadvantages of an ambush; now they came pelting, a stream of tails and feathers, to make hasty prostrations at the Queen’s feet; and, lost

in astonishment, Cobby pretty soon stood a prisoner at a signal of her finger....

In the same moments came Sueela rushing, speechless, staring terrors; but immediately felt better when the Queen said: "There you are.... Couldn't sleep, no? Went out into the air, no?"

"Eheh" — her eyes dwelling, dwelling, on the Queen's face.

And Spiciewegiehotiu remarked: "The moon up: we go on."

"Fall in!" an officer now called out, and the troop drew up in two ranks on the rock-ground between the grass and the grotto, by which time Cobby had been dragged to be tied to the cart, he calling to the Queen: "You shall kneel to me!"

She waved her hand at him, calling with banter: "Some other day!" then at once turned to tell the officer about the six drugged, bidding him kick them awake; and when he had tried in vain, she said to him: "They all traitors, except the white one: so leave ten of your men with food to arrest them when they wake. Now the horses and the oxen."

All on horses, except four with the oxen and with Cobby, they now set off, the Queen and Sueela on their Selim and Mustapha: but the farther they travelled, the deeper into her feet sank Sueela's heart for affright at the Queen's silence. If she said anything, Spiciewegeihotiu answered short, and when morning dawned upon them she understood that that was doomsday dawning.

As they were now only a few miles from the town, a rumour of them flew, people streamed to view them, and Cobby had to endure no lack of scowls and frowns, prophecies of ill-fortune, one old woman pulling his ear to say: "Now she cut you short, my man"; even one of his smith-friends gave ungracious glances at his misery and ignominy and haggard aspect, though the smith, Rambya, boldly grasped his hand.

From the great gate of Eshowe they led him away westward to “The Elephant,” followed by that glowering ogle of Sueela’s grief, upon whom, too, the sword of doom was about to drop: for when, some way up the great square, they were come to the point nearest to Mandaganya’s domicile, the Queen, languidly waving to the throng, said to Sueela: “Now go to your mother, Sueela. Later you hear from me. You not to send me any messages.”

Like lead fell Sueela’s head, her fingers stiffened, her lips gaped, her stare gazed into the depths of hell; and, saying not a word, she turned her horse’s head, to walk it as woefully slow away as after the dirges and hearse of Hope.

Thenceforth another than Sueela slept in a hut with a Queen who did not sleep, who, of all the bereaved and solitary, was the deepest bereaved and lost in solitude.

Three days later three ambassadors of Wo-Ngwanya, sent to M’Niami, stood before King Daisy in the kotla of his great-place amid a crowd of councillors; and Daisy said to them: “Now say your say: me listen.”

Upon which one lifted up his voice and said: “Spiciewegiehotiu say to Daisy She want to strengthen the friendship at present reigning between her and Daisy: so she proffer afresh the hand of the lady Sueela in marriage to Daisy.”

Now, the good Daisy had “had some,” as people say, in respect of marriage with Sueela, and was not taking any more without due circumspection and care in stepping.... His heart started at that message! This Sueela had cost him much in kine, and fears in the watches of the night! But for that snatching off of Spiciewegiehotiu by Prince Dzinikulu in the hour of her victory, there might now have been no more Daisy, hardly any more the name of M’Niami. So, having banqueted the ambassadors and

given them gifts, he sent them back with thanks to the Queen, and with the message that in a week he would despatch an answer....

Daisy was at present inclined to elderliness, and a man likely to be speedily subordinated and sat upon by Sueela, if he had the misfortune to marry her — a rather weak, rather ridiculous negro, who regarded himself as specially the *protégé* of God, or ghosts, or something, and “me protected” he ever said with half a laugh, “something protect me!” If there was an epidemic, or an accident, and he escaped, he’d exclaim: “Me preserved! something preserve me” — a truth certainly, but the absurd person never observed that it was true, too, of many men, and deer, and pompions, and potted meats — a tall man, a little knock-kneed, with a straggling beard, a tooth which projected a little upon the lower lip, coloured eye-whites — not very pretty. But, though so protected, he was wary: and, instead of sending an embassy, himself journeyed to Eshowe, to converse with Spiciewegiehotiu.

There he was well fêted, and quickly convinced himself that Spiciewegiehotiu’s object this time was really bridals, and not war. “While you and Sueela live, we friends,” she said, clasping his hand: “When you or she die, me add M’Niami to Wo-Ngwanya.”

Then, with a retinue, he went to see Sueela at Mandaganya’s, and back in high spirits hastened to Spiciewegiehotiu, who said to him: “You like her, no?”

“Eheh — she good — she a heifer — oh yes. Sullen, still, yes; but she soon love me. Better take the three thousand for her.”

“No, only the two.... So, Daisy, you not ‘fraid she scratch out your eyes?”

“Poh, no: she not do that.... Me protected! Something protect me.”

“So she go to you; you get her, Daisy. But you always treat her well, no?” — her voice broke, she turned from him with lips that quivered and worked.

The same evening came the doctress-mother suppliant, and fondled the Queen’s hands, saying: “Sueela say Spare her.”

On which Spiciewegiehotiu flushed. “Me told her not to send me any messages.”

“No, she not send! me come myself,” the sybil said hastily: “but she say She not want to marry, she only want you in this world.”

Up sprang Spiciewegiehotiu, angry, to pace. “Spare her? Spare her? Me marry her to a King! She and you not proud?”

“Yes, me proud! me thank you! — my goodness. But she sick — she got so thin — she not want to go so far from you — she say She rather marry a slave where she could see your foot pass sometimes — oh, how could you turn her —— She done something very bad, no?”

Spiciewegiehotiu’s head hung down, her gaze on the ground, full of a lugubrious brooding, and she muttered: “No, she not done any bad; it’s me, it’s me: me have a bitter heart.”

“But you not bitter for nothing,” the sybil said: “me know very well she done something: me think you catch her with a man — no? Tell Mandaganya; tell Ma-Sueela.”

But the Queen, at present very fickle in temper, said fretfully: “Oh, me tell you no —— Go away! Me not want to see anybody.”

Hence when, after Mandaganya had gone, Macray sent in a pressing request to see the Queen, she said to the messenger: “Tell him no: ask what he want.”

Whereupon Macray sent in the second message: Why marry Sueela to Daisy? He himself was ready to marry her instead: was the Queen willing?

“Tell him yes,” answered Spiciewegiehotiu: “tell him bring the two thousand cattle for her into the kotla”: at which the messenger grinned, and Macray grumbled: “the bitch!”

The next afternoon Daisy departed for M’Niami, to make ready for the week of wedding-feast and ceremony; and four forenoons afterwards Spiciewegiehotiu, after her bath, left her bevy of attendants, and worked her way with furtiveness, eyeings and lurkings, to climb a mound covered with mimosa, whence to descry the road out of the town. There she waited until cavalry cantering appeared, within which was Sueela; and “let her go,” she glumly muttered; but when the dust of it was no more visible, suddenly her countenance convulsed, and but that she stuffed up her mouth with a towel and bit into it, bitterly she would doubtless have howled aloud....

Alle das Neigen Von Herzen zu Herzen, Ach! wie so eigen Schaffet das Schmerzen!

Thus, anyway, with wailing, went the excellent Sueela away, to be lain with by the likes of Daisy, though to sit on him....

XXIX. SEBINGWE



COBBY, MEANWHILE, THOLING the glooms of “The Elephant” in his old room, got during two weeks no news of the external world, but then heard from the Collector of Messages, firstly, that Sueela was wedded, and then heard, what to him was like a burn, that the five men-friends of Sueela whom she had tempted to venture to trek with her and him, who then had forsaken her and him to kneel and plead with the Queen to continue to live, were now about to be executed for treason. Treason they had no doubt committed: but still he was wrung with compunction for them. “My God!” he exclaimed in pain, “is the girl a guillotine? Is she without bowels of mercy?” and indirectly through the Sinder-ngabya (Guardian of the Sad), being unable to send direct, he sent a message to Spiciewegiehotiu, proffering himself, since he was the cause of the fault and fall of those five unfortunates, to die in their stead, or in the stead of any one of them.

Twelve days later he received the answer: “Spiciewegiehotiu say You die the day she want, not before, not after”; and the official added in a confidential manner: “You lie low — not worry her: she cross like a thicket of prickly-pears these days. They say she not sleep at night, she find no rest, because the lady Sueela gone; and now war coming — —”

“War? With whom? War? What for?”

“Me not know. Maybe no war; maybe war. Some say yes, some say no. War with Sebingwe — if it come.”

“Heavens! — another ... But tell me — is there no chance at all of these five unfortunates being spared?”

“No chance: to-morrow they die. But everybody grumbling because they die before you; everybody waiting — your turn next they say. You lie low — maybe you not die. Some have it to say maybe you take the Queen’s fancy! Ha, ha, they a jealous, suspicious lot; and their tongues! *Waw!*”

Their jealousy and suspicion and tongues were to be given an impulse! for on the thirty-first day of his imprisonment, a few days after the execution of the five, Cobby, to the surprise and offence of all, saw himself set free, and in the kotla was followed by a mob that goggled and nodded at him with no good-will.

His liberators, under instructions to conduct him straight to the Queen, failed in this, he flatly refusing, saying, “No I have to bathe”; but, this done, he went — to find Spiciewegiehotiu like “a bear with a sore head!” — or a lion. “You not tired of ‘The Elephant’?” she asked, spinning sharply upon him.

“Yes,” he answered, “and of you, and of Wo-Ngwanya.”

This held her arrested. “You tired of me?”

“Yes, and of all your ruthlessness and wars.”

“Oh, me not want any long logic! Me only want to know one thing of you: you done now trying to carry me off where me not want to go?”

“Quite done,” he answered: “never again — you have my undertaking. Now I go alone.”

At which her lip whitened with spite, her eyes spitting fire. “Bah!” she bitterly said, “you can’t” — glancing backward at him, pacing the hut— “me drag you back by your red hair.”

“Be quiet,” he answered with the authority of a pride quiet, yet impassioned to pomposity: “you are speaking to a priest and king of kings. If I tell you that I can go, you are not to say that I cannot. It was my reluctance to forsake Macray that has held me here, but I am no longer

reluctant — to-day I hear that Macray is even seeking to instigate the people against me. So when I will I go, having a hundred and twenty winged horses to haul me by a path that no hawk knows, and the hounds of your scouts cannot pursue their spoor. Be quiet.”

This again gave her pause, she standing rather agape — since savage and semi-savage intellects more or less believe every marvel they hear.

“Where you have these hundred and twenty horses?” she wished to know.

“Horse-power: in some cans.”

But this defied credulity — horses with wings in cans, potted horses with wings. And yet — having a trust in his statements, having beheld his marvels at the banquet, she half-believed; a half-belief which had power to make her pale.

She faced him to ask: “And, if you could go, you would go?”

“Yes; duty; work to do; duty.”

“Without me?”

“Yes.”

“Go, then,” she muttered, turning from him; and then she span to scream at him “Go! Go!” and stamp at him.

“Dear love!”

“Go!” she screamed again, glaring at him.

“Don’t be angry with me,” he now gently said. “Why are you so cross? You don’t look well....”

This broke her down. “Oh!” she cried out, running to him, and, her forehead on his shoulder, wailed: “Me want Sueela! Me want her!”

He felt her bosom bob sobbingly without any sound coming, and “Heavens!” he exclaimed, “then, why have you married her to Daisy?”

Her eyes fixed him with a glance, then dropped, she not saying anything, till she made the remark, apparently irrelevant: “Maybe war coming; Sebingwe — —”

“Yes, another,” said Cobby dryly, “I know: Sebingwe this time. Why, why, can you not live —— ?”

She interrupted. “Now you see why me marry Sueela to Daisy: *partly* why” — again she fixed him a little with that silent eye, saying “*partly*.”

“No, I don’t see — —”

“But you know that Daisy and Sebingwe friends? and if Sueela married to Daisy she not let Daisy help Sebingwe against me. Maybe Sueela not love — me; but she love Wo-Ngwanya mad: so now Sebingwe never have help against Wo-Ngwanya.”

“I see! — you artful being. Policy, policy, all is policy with Spiciewegiehotiu! and for policy she will pluck out her own heart, and the hearts of those that love her. But why, after all, fight Sebingwe? Why not live —— ?”

“Cobby, me tell you” — her hand on his arm— “me not fight Sebingwe: if we fight, Sebingwe fight *me*. You believe me, no, Cobby? Sebingwe fight *me*. Ten days ago me send an embassy to Sebingwe to ask him *how* it was that so many Wa-Mashenya fight in Daisy’s army the last time Daisy fight me? and me ask Sebingwe if he willing to hand over to me as slaves those Wa-Mashenya that fight against me. No harm in that, Cobby, no? You see, no? that me not pick any quarrel with Sebingwe. Sebingwe send me an insulting answer: he say *Noh!* he not willing. So, Cobby, you see, no? that it is Sebingwe — —”

“Quite so,” said Cobby: “Sebingwe had no right to let his men fight against you....”

She danced two steps behind his back.

“So, Cobby, if Sebingwe fight me, you fight this time for me, no?”

“You may be sure! — on condition that I find your account of it true: for you deceived me in respect of the Daisy-quarrel, remember — deliberately. But, if your quarrel is just, those who insult you insult me, and those who fight you fight the lightning. When I said that I am going from you on my winged horses, I didn’t mean that I’d go if you are in any trouble or peril: in trouble I am with you till the day of death, your trouble being my trouble, since somehow your blood is my blood, and your life my life.”

Their eyes met, and in his and in hers the same tear burned and quivered, by the work and miracle of that quick Spirit that erewhile whispered, Let there be Life! and Life quickened and quivered, burned, bled, yearned, yelled....

“Cousin Cobby ...” she held out her hand, and he held it, felt it, possessed it, flesh and bone, appropriating it sacramentally in his breast, until she shivered, and drew it, her lids drooping, and moved from him.

“Still,” he said, “there is no need for any war, I hope: things can be adjusted. Think, dear, of the waste, not of blood only, but of wealth and effort. They say the M’Niami people are still impoverished, while you here — —”

“Oh, war good, me know,” she interrupted: “it make stronger men and cleverer girls: and, if that cost dear, it worth it. If only the men had no more than one wife, plenty of war would make us gods.”

His eyebrows lifted. “Indeed?” says he. “Tell me: what makes you think that?”

“Me reckon it up; me see, me know.... War make less men, and so permit a man to pick out a better mother for his young.”

Dumb-struck stood Cobby and agape; as he writes in his diary of it: “Here was ‘a new thing’ for me. For though Darwin and that school, like

her, were sure that ‘war is good,’ Darwin thought that the good must come through fatherhood — never somehow thought of motherhood — *forgot* that there are mothers, too — and, in arguing that the good comes through fatherhood, refuted himself (since the bravest fall), saw anon that he refuted himself, and was perplexed, though still convinced that ‘war is good.’ So I stood dumb before her, thinking in myself, ‘Dear me, had I to come to Africa to hear this?’ But by her theory war must be accompanied by monogamy; otherwise, after the war, the remaining men simply take more wives, including the riff-raff. Does this explain the stationariness of savages, of Asia? Heaven knows! Some time I must give the matter some systematic study.”

But instead of attempting now to deal with theory he returned to the personal, saying to her: “So, then, you *want* war?”

“No, no, no,” she hastily answered: “Cobby me not want war! — you believe me, no? *Sebingwe* want war. War good, me say, but me not want war — now. And suppose me want war!” she boldly added, “Cobby, you not see why?”

“No, I don’t — —”

“Cobby, the people not like you. At first they like you, but you make them not like you. If you fight for them, and win, they like you. And even if they not like you then, war — and victory — crown me with the power to live up to my dreams, and snap my fingers in their faces. Now you see, no?”

“Yes, but at what a cost — to other people!” he cried out. “Suppose that war, as you say, *is* ‘good’ for the stock: then, the forces of Nature may be depended upon to bring about war, whoever doesn’t want it; but is it not the obvious duty of the individual, for *his* part, to put forth all his effort to avert so much woe and waste of work?”

“Eheh — of course,” she answered with the shadow of a smile, eyeing a match which she had lighted: for, supplied by the white men with matches, she kept a box on her, and, miserly-spendthrift, would anon strike one as a fire-work, to entertain herself.

Cobby then asked when her next message was to be sent to Sebingwe; to which she answered: “Today.... His men here waiting....”

“And will you send a mild message? Come to some compromise — —”

She smiled to herself, then on a sudden, dashing down the match-end, pettish, pouting: “Oh, Cobby, me sad, me mad, me cross, me want Sueela! If me not have Sueela, me fight everybody.”

“What *can* one do?” cried Cobby.

“Me low, me mean, yes,” she muttered as to herself: “me have no pride; but — she gone — me not see her any more.”

“Why not send — — ?” he began to say, when, a sound from outside coming to them, she started, breathing “What that?” then sharply ran to the door to hearken.

A noise of voices brawling afar was brought her on the breeze, in whose embroilment after a minute her ear seemed to hear insistently: “Send the white men away!” — and she became deadly pale.

Then, running toward the hut from the avenue gate, she saw a guardsman all wafted backward by a gale that was trouncing the forestry like a rout of frocks tossed in profligate carousal; and he at her whisper, “What’s happening?” answered: “Bayeté! the people call out to you send the white men away; they press against the sigodhlo gate; Sir Caray on his horse haranguing them.... He say Sir Cobby soon carry you off from them, if you not send him away ... and they angry.... Sir Caray say you want Sir Cobby for — yourself....”

“The scum!” with a coarse contempt her countenance scowled; red rage rushed to her brow; and round about she ranged almost at a run, like one evading something which chases. “The scum! Me show them white men — war for them! If you not bleed them, they not believe in you; if you not kick and cuff them, they not love you. War! War! The scum! Me drench Wo-Mashenya in blood — me show them advising — —”

“I think,” Cobby ventured to say, “that you might comfort yourself with some calm.”

“Oh, dung to *you*!” she intolerantly retorted, slapping her haunch at him: “you think me care what you have to say?” and down now she let herself flop upon the floor like a child in a tantrum, her heels beating a tattoo, her face a painting of vexation; but then sprang up to scream in a passion to the guardsman: “Have Sebingwe’s embassy summoned to me! Me show the scum blood!”

“If I may venture — —” Cobby stiffly began to say.

“You not hear me say me not want to *hear*?” her flying tongue shrilled, she spinning upon him. “How long you going to stay here? All day? My goodness, you can’t leave me when you once see me? You think me have nothing to think about but *you*?”

With an elegant dignity Cobby bowed, and, without a word, turned and went out.

“Go home!” she called after: “you not to go outside the sigodhlo.”

“I go where I please,” he answered, chin up.

But half-way to the park gate he paused at the thought that he ought to do something or other to stop her from sending a message to Sebingwe in her then temper; and he went back to say: “If you will promise not to send to Sebingwe until half-time before noon to-morrow morning, I will bring you Sueela by then.”

This arrested her. “You talking wild, no?... You not get half to M’Niami by then.”

“I will, and be back. Promise.”

She stood with suspended breath. This interested her — both the extraordinary voyage, and the object of it — interesting both her curiosity and her longing.

“How you ‘will’?... And you think me want to see her? — that snake? that strumpet?”

“You said that you wanted. She is not a snake nor a strumpet.”

“How you know? *You know her well, no?* No! Me not want! You and she enjoy the voyage together, no?”

“I don’t — understand you.... Then, I won’t go. But please don’t see Sebingwe’s embassy yet — —”

Now she yielded to yearning, and said averted: “Go, if you like.... Yes, go. Me see if you come back by half-time before noon. Me not see the embassy till then; but then me see it, and send it back.”

“Very good, you undertake — good-bye.” He went quickly away.

XXX. IN THE CANES



CALLINGS AND NOISES of the populace beyond the sigodhlo gate were still distinctly audible anon, as Cobby walked from the royal gate to prepare for his trip; and he had not long gone when Macray, gaining an entrance at the sigodhlo gate, presented himself at the royal gate to see the Queen.

Macray was at present in a very impatient, a very dangerous and devilish frame. He had said to himself: “I want to *go*, and I’m *going* — free America!” And that day, on hearing of Cobby’s release, he no longer allowed himself to doubt that Spiciewegiehotiu must be “gone on” Cobby, and had no intention of ever letting Cobby go — for he no longer feared that *she* would ever go; and since she meant to keep Cobby, she must mean to keep him, Macray, who was her natural ally against Cobby. Hence his oratory from horseback, explaining to the mob that Cobby must be sent away. He had, moreover, a dread that Cobby, who was also impatient to be away, might now go off alone in his aeroplane, and, Cobby once gone, Macray understood that the shears would be sharp to cut short, for he was sure that Spiciewegiehotiu knew him, and did not love, nor had forgotten that stew which the dog would not touch....

Her he hated much more than Cobby, who had dared to slap, to lay hands upon his body with chloroform; *her* death would cut the knot of all his difficulties; and he now contemplated bringing it about, together with Cobby’s and thousands, probably, of other deaths, and this in due course of business, with that recklessness of Peace or Rockefeller, without respect or prick of pity.

But when he presented himself at the royal gate, though conscious of danger, he little dreamt in how dreadful a peril a phrase of Cobby's, lately uttered, had put him: for Cobby had undertaken to Spiciewegiehotiu never more to attempt to carry her off; and since she had a trust in Cobby's promises, her use for Macray was now wholly over, she now being as ready and prompt to slay as he: so that, as between her and him, climax and crisis was here, and he was unlikely on the morrow to scatter oratory upon the Wa-Ngwanya.

Intending to arrest him that very day of oratory, and reckoning that he would draw revolver when arrested, she welcomed his request for an interview; for, since interviewers left their weapons at the gate, to grant the interview, and arrest within, might be to save a life, or lives.

So it was some minutes before he was admitted; then, putting down weapons, as usual, at the portals, he went in. But at his knee, within the bagging of his knickerbockers, he had a small revolver for self-defence, if necessary.

Having offered a stool she said: "Well, Sir Caray, what you want?"

"Look here, Great-great," says he, "I want to go home: can I go? or am I a prisoner?"

Her answer, she having "spotted" the object in his knickerbocker-knee, was: "Prisoner? You go when you like."

"You won't be dragging me back, if I start?"

"No, no: me not 'fraid of Sir Cobby any more. You go."

Now, standing up, she paced the room once, never turning her back to him, while his thought was: "Why not get her now?" But he feared the people; and had neater plans. As to her affable manner, that little convinced him.

When she sat anew, she moved her stool between him and the door: and he noted this.

“Well, I don’t believe you mean it,” he said— “I’m frank. But, come: let’s do a deal! *I* want something, and *you* want something. *I* want to go, and *you* want Cobby. Now, you can’t keep Cobby, for he has means to go that you can’t dream of, and he *will* go, for he’s told me so. So, if *I* tell you how to keep Cobby for ever, and if *you* swear by ‘The Elephant’ to let me go, that will be fair.”

Unexpected matter for her. She could not quite conceal her keenness. “Yes!” she said: “that fair.”

“Well, swear,” said he.

“Oh, no — you tell me first,” says she: “then me swear” — scratching a parrot’s neck.

“Very good — I’ll trust you. Well, this is what I say: to keep Cobby, you must destroy his waggon-loads. Now, breaking up is no good, for, while you were breaking up half, he’d be off with the other half; and there are a lot of little spirits in his things, little but strong, which you can’t break up. So only fire is any good.”

She was silent, but bright were her eyes. He understood that she would do it.

Often the thought of breaking up had occurred to her, but inertly in her lack of certain knowledge; also she had had it in mind to learn first what the different things were “good for.” She had not thought of firing them: and it was the thought of Cobby, on his return, finding all his “winged horses” burned, and himself her prisoner for life, that lit up her eyes with that fire of spite and triumph.

But for Macray the question now was *when* she would do it, he wishing to be out of Eshowe then, there being that in the waggons which, with a

blaze under them, would blow, not only Spiciewegiehotiu and Cobby, but Eshowe itself to heaven.

“Now have I deserved your thanks?” he asked her.

“Maybe — —” she shrugged, she smiled.

“You mean to do it, then. But — when?”

That evening she meant to, Cobby’s intended departure for M’Niami fitting in with so neat and sweet a temptingness; but, by nature, reticent, she merely answered: “Some time, maybe, me do it.”

“But tell me definitely.”

She shot a glance. “Why?”

“I think I’d like to clear out of Eshowe just then,” — he chuckled—
“Cobby will be so madly angry, and he’ll guess who told you to do it.”

As he said this, he saw one of the swaths of hangings round the room move somewhat; and as she, too, saw it, and saw that he saw, the situation between them became thenceforth extremely tense and keen.

“No fear,” she answered: “Sir Cobby just going away somewhere.... Tell me: how long it take him to go to M’Niami and come back?”

“M’Niami? Four days.” He had now unbuttoned his knickerbocker-knee, and placed the revolver on his knee under her eyes — to bid her forbear and beware, to bid her be certain that of those who bit the dust *she* would be the first; and “Cobby going to M’Niami?” says he: “what for? Oh, I see — to bring Sueela?”

Now they were sitting tight on the *qui vive* — eye, ear, each nerve alert — leaning a little toward each other, each knowing that life was the victor’s prize, she with her finger-joints at her cheek, thinking on him, her eyes alight, active as cats on prickles to spring. As to the object of Cobby’s voyage she did not answer, but said suddenly: “Forgive me — you take some snuff, no?” — and presented snuff.

This a little nonplussed him: at once he fathomed her motive for *having* it, but not for showing it — unless it was the same motive with which he showed the revolver, to warn him? And he was nonplussed because unsure, and because sure that it was well to be sure, in such a war the victory being to him who thinks the greatest number of true thoughts per second.

“Thank you, Great-great,” says he, taking the box, and barely pretending to inhale, for he thought of poison in it; at the same time he let the snuff slip his fingers to the floor, having no desire to have it flung at his eyes.

“Oh, bad man,” she pouted— “spill all the snuff. That bring bad luck for you.”

“Clumsy!” he said: “forgive me.”

“Me forgive you.... So Sir Cobby can’t go and come back by to-morrow?”

“No, how can he? — unless he uses some of the little spirits.... He going to-day? Then now’s your chance to fire the waggons, while he’s gone. Why not to-day?”

“Maybe” — she shrugged, she smiled: and then she went “Tishum!” and cried out “Oh! ha, ha.”

“Ha, ha,” he laughed, and sneezed.

“Ha, ha — we both have it!” she laughed.

“Yes, ha, ha — —” like chums they chuckled with each other.

“And now,” he next said — for form’s sake, not caring at all— “it is for you to swear that you’ll let me go.”

“Yes, that fair,” she answered, standing up: “me go get a talisman to swear on” — and made a movement toward the door.

But she was his hostage there, and safeguard, against those behind the hangings; and jumping up now, with a flush of authority, he called out: “Oh, no, you don’t: here you remain” — and so crossed the Rubicon.

In that same moment snuff was fire in his eyes — tossed from *another* box; and into his darkness, even as he darkly shot at her, there flashed now a knowledge of the reason why she had offered snuff — in order that, if any thought of snuff was in him, it might be utterly lulled, in order that he might spill the snuff, and think her foiled at that point at least, and feel comfortable as to snuff, and be utterly routed and bound up by the surprise of the blinding lightning of a second box kept ready under her kaross; and when after his second of dismay and disaster he darkly fired at where she had been standing, she was lying at his feet, and in some moments more was soundlessly out of the hut, and flying to hiding.

But he, conscious of the direction of the doorway, had one leg out of it almost as soon as she; but there was seized by five, two of whom fell wounded before he lost the revolver, and the others, at that awkward spot, failed to take him. He was away into the wood, they pursuing, shooting.

Ecstasy lent him legs, extremity gave him sight, blasphemy gave him luck: he clambered over the enclosure, untouched, unnoticed, jumped — not far from the gate — and at a run got his Winchester before the astonished gate-guards could take it upon themselves to stop him; he got beyond the sigodhlo gate, vaulted upon his horse, and was gone as the swallow swings, hatless, wind-swept, to the bewilderment of the mob still populous in the square. But before he was past the market, he was being pursued by riders, firing at him, and thence to the great-gate he galloped firing backward with his repeater, seeing three pitch headlong, himself uninjured; then, trampling through the great-gate guards, made off, laying men low, over the road eastward, and so won clear away.

Pitiable, now, however, was his plight — his bridges all burned behind him; no compass; little ammunition; no possibility of crossing Africa without, no possibility of going back to get, until Spiciewegiehotiu, firing

the waggons, destroyed herself, no hope else of getting out of Wo-Ngwanya; no hope else of living in it. Still, he was game; he hoped, he chuckled.

Some way out of Eshowe he was aware of a shouting in the town — yet another white-man amazement being that day in store for the mob, when Cobby, throbbing on his motor-bicycle, passed rough and rapid, spattering puff-puff, trumpeting, dragon-goggled, a streak of unreason, all down the awna, and out.

Backing into bush, Macray watched him come carrying on the carrier a black who clung like the drowning about him, blanched to his tongue; and within that bush a Winchester was lifted to lay low: for though Macray's enmity against Cobby was not constant and intense, as against the Queen, as against Sueela, yet, having shot many, and being shot at, just to shoot had become habitual, and a bitter amusement: so he might then have shot at Cobby, but for his knowledge that Cobby was on the way to fetch Sueela, and that by letting Cobby fetch her, by waiting a day, he would be even with Sueela, might even manage to ravish ere he smashed, ere he left her red. This was snuff and fun to him that, if he died, there would be society, for, as to Spiciewegiehotiu, he was sure that she would fire the waggons, and dance fandango and devil-dance with Eshowe in the air. He cantered on further, then, taking his nag into canes, lay in the glimmering in there to ponder upon his misery, to plot and to curse and to lurk, and cock his ear for the throbbing of Cobby's return with the girl, and for the shock and earthquake of the event at Eshowe.

XXXI. NIGHT-RIDE



AFTER A ROUGH passage, in the course of which he cast hundreds of kraals and huts and lions into dumbness of affright at the sight of a flagrant dragon flying with muttering through the night, Cobby's cycle-lamp invaded the midnight dimness of the sigodhlo of Daisy's great-place; and "my goodness" was on Sueela's lips, seeing him, and "eheh, me come," sleep still winking on her lids.

"But your husband?" Cobby suggested.

"Oh, *he* ... Me go tell him."

Whereupon Daisy was but briefly consulted, for he within some weeks had been adequately sat upon, and was a bottom-dog; and before long they were off, she with shut lids in bliss on the carrier embracing Cobby's body, bliss combined with a bicycle-terror which would have been greater but that she had witnessed the grin of arrival and delight of the guide brought by Cobby, and now left behind.

Wild was that night of flight for Sueela, an experience of teeming mysteriousness, and drama of vast darkness, dismal with winds screaming, mixed with myriads of trees streaming in retreat, series of drear sceneries receding, to be remembered in dreams for ever. It was no fun, however: no moon mostly; only stars wind-whiffed like hall-lamps, noises of many waters, sometimes the sharp wash of a shower, which passed, the road not continuous, never smooth; thrice the bicycle had to be hauled through the brawling and rocks of broad shallow waters, and where patches of pathless shrub meant many a jolt; there were hills whose descent meant peril of a

breaking of brakes, and hills up whose incline the bicycle, a paltry thing of four and a half horse power, barely crawled, till they walked beside it: so toward daybreak, harassed and hot, Cobby stopped in forest on the brink of a river to eat a meal, Sueela seated very near him, but separate, incapable of eating, and once he, *en bon camarade*, put an arm about her, which she very gently and slowly removed, remarking: “She trust me with you.”

“Not without reason,” he answered: “you are a dear good thing, and I have a sister whom I do not love more than you.”

“You love me, no?” she whispered, stroking his arm distantly with fingers intensely stretched: “that enough for me — me could do without food and bed, and yet my belly full, if you love me. And you think me not pay you back? Me toss all at your dear feet — you think me care? — me give you Wo-Ngwanya — my land! — me love its old stones, and how it smell on wet days — me give it — and my mother — my brothers — my friends — they all say ‘traitress!’ — they spit on my name — *she* spit — me not care — me do it for you and for her.”

A sob: and he said “dear,” but added: “Though I don’t understand: how will you give me Wo-Ngwanya? and why will they say ‘traitress’?”

“Wait till me know if she fight Sebingwe,” she replied: “then me tell you.”

“She *will* fight, I think,” Cobby said, “if we are not there in time before she sends back Sebingwe’s embassy, for she is at present in a most morose and dangerous mood, owing apparently to her fretting after you. So with you it rests, Sueela, and I depend upon you to stop anything in the way of war, since there is no need.”

She smiled at him as at a child, without reply; and he said: “Come then,” springing up.

Then for three hours more they tholed the roughness of the trip, and now in sunlight were running down a bit of road with canes on both sides some ten miles from Eshowe, when a report of rifle-shot sounded out of the (south) canes on their left. The hill being steep, the pace brisk, neither was hit, but a second shot pierced the flesh of Cobby's left arm, upon which he lost control of himself and the motor, which dashed up a bank to the right, and collapsed over driver and passenger — luckily in bush and canes, which concealed them from yet another bullet; and with instant nimbleness Sueela on her feet had Cobby by the hand, haling him into the thick of the canes.

There they squatted some time, all ear and leer, mouse-quiet but for the little movements of Sueela binding Cobby's wound; and, "Who *can* it be?" Cobby whispered, to which she whispered back: "Sh-h — *Caray*."

Now another report — from farther in the canes than they, the shooter having crossed the road; and now with a flush Cobby shot his revolver: upon which he and she moved softly off to lurk within some other home of the murky world of thicket.

Other shots followed. The canes being a sea in agitation billowing under the blasts of the winds, the swish of local agitations may have attracted the aim of the gunman, whose roaming and mysterious gun bred not merely terror but a sort of awe, as though a ghost was gunning; and immense, moreover, was Cobby's dismay at the time going, the loss of so many lives involved in the delay, the object of his voyage to Daisy's frustrated, for already he was late for his rendezvous with Spiciewegiehotiu at Eshowe, and still a prisoner there in the canes.

Meantime, to each shot which smashed through the leafage a shot of his answered sharply back in challenge, he quickly shifting his position after it; and so an hour and a half passed, he having now one cartridge only.

After a monotony of twenty minutes he whispered: "I can bear this no more: going: you stay, until I bring a force of men."

"Me come," she whispered.

"Why? I forbid."

He kissed her hand, looked at a little compass, stole off toward the road, and had nearly reached it, when not far to his left a sound arose — a neigh.

Down he crouched, mouse-still, waiting, and presently again the neigh came from the same place.

He saw that, since there was a horse, if he could capture it, mount it *in* the canes, and dash out and away on it, that might be well: and on hands and knees he crept that way, keenly peering.

Presently he became aware of the breath of a horse, then saw it eating at the canes, and then, near the horse, caught sight of a man lying blanched and unconscious, a rifle beside him.

When Cobby bent over him, he discovered that Macray had been struck in the left patella; and now his shouts for Sueela began to sound through the canes, till she came brushing through.

Her nose wrinkled with repulsion at Macray; and when, after lifting, they laid him down, her stretched fingers shrank from off him, as if to finger him was filthy.

Having got him out of the cane and upon the nag, Cobby with difficulty fixed him by means of part of the nag's rein, and, after making fast the remainder of it to the motor, moved slowly on, towing him. But half-way to Eshowe Macray came out of his faint, and in a sick voice sang out: "Hallo, baas; hallo, Black Sue; where you taking me to? I don't want to go to Eshowe" — but got no answer.

As they entered Eshowe near one o'clock they saw the awna all populous, and from all quarters swarmed a multitude to gloat over the

motor, to greet Sueela, to gape at Macray, and to call out the news of war declared in the awna at noon by the Queen, who had accused Sebingwe of malignity, flung down the glove, and sent back the Wo-Mashenya embassy with gage of battle.

Wild with excitement were all eyes, and it was with pelting steps to go to the sigodhlo that Sueela left Cobby near the market, he with Macray now going westward to Macray's hut, where, while he waited for the turning up of his surgical-case, he said distantly to Macray: "What in God's name have I done to you that you should shoot at me? I hope you haven't got 'malevolence-of-the-insane.'"

"Baas," Macray said from his deck-chair, "you struck me, you know, you chloroformed me. No man may take such liberties with me. But it wasn't you I wanted to get, it was that strumpet."

And he said again when the leg was being made a septic: "Where's the good, inkoos? There's been a rumpus between that Flora Macray and me: she'll have me dead before sunset."

"She will do nothing of the kind," Cobby answered, "for I shouldn't suffer it."

"Oh, you aren't a bad old baas ... But don't think you can stop her; the bitch'll have her will, if she lives."

Cobby but half-chloroformed him, and then, eating melons for a meal, hung on at the hut: for since his trained hands had no special training in surgery, he was flurried and nervous there, and made himself nurse as well as surgeon.

In the midst of which ministries, in rushed one of Macray's men to tell that some men were coming with a stretcher to take Macray; and in some moments Cobby saw five giants coming up the bush-approach to the hut: on which he stepped out to confront them.

One of them mentioned that they came to take Sir Caray to “The Elephant”; whereupon Cobby: “Oh, but that’s out of the question. Surely you know that the man’s leg is fractured: ‘The Elephant’ may kill him. You will be good enough to wait, until I see the Queen and explain.”

The negroes glanced at one another and grinned. “We not come to wait,” one said.

Cobby now flushed in his hot way, saying: “Oh, but you *are*.”

“We *not*.”

“You *are* — You have to do as you are told.”

Now from out of the hut sounded: “Baas, it’s no good!”

Of which Cobby took no notice, but said in another tone to the men: “How can you be so inhuman? White men are framed with the same infirmities and require the same mercies as yourselves. I will see the Queen — —”

“Come, clear out, Sir Cobby,” one interrupted with some roughness, “you make us cross.”

On which another flush rushed up Cobby’s forehead, and now, drawing his revolver, he said: “Whoever first enters this hut will be shot.”

Again the negroes grinned with one another, and now laid down the stretcher, while one of them went running out of the grounds through a crowd that had come in from the near street to see the thing through.

Then ten minutes of suspense — babble, jocularities, from the mob, expostulations from Macray, from the men, who pointed out that they were but obeying orders: Cobby stood, revolver in hand; and when the one who had run out returned at a trot with a body of some thirty, Cobby with his revolver marked a mark on the path, beyond which to put a foot was to be shot.

This made deadlock. The negroes grinned; none wished to be shot; none thought of retreat. Then one ventured to protrude a toe over the mark — pretending negligence; and Cobby saw it, and knew that it was not done in negligence, and did not shoot — as Napoleon would have shot, as Cromwell; but Cobby was not Cromwell — higher type, less efficient anon as to the special little end, enormously more efficient, in a more complex cosmos, as to the general business of living in a cosmos — Cromwell, Napoleon, being hardly so much as *conscious* of a cosmos, imagining that God is a Baptist, a Girondin; but He is an electro-chemist.

And then at once the frogs hopped upon the log — they rushed him; and he, having one bullet, could well have shot somebody then, but — did not. He was pretty roughly dealt with; and the only result — to the *eye* — for the *time* — of his intervention was that he lost a revolver, which he never got again. Accompanied by him, Macray was taken away, a pitiable enough poor man, come upon misfortune, and pretty obviously on the road to ruin. He was put into a punt at the edge of “The Elephant” pool where, as they parted, the two shook hands.

XXXII. THE WAGGONS



MEANWHILE WITH PELTING steps Sueela sped to the Queen's, and with keen expectancy peeped into the hut — no open arms there, only the new favourite, who started up to tell that Spiciewegiehotiu was farther in the wood, where some waggons were, and ran to show the way with Sueela, whose forerunning heart and sprinting feet outstripped her.

The waggons were in a glade shut within jungle, with them the Queen and four men, who were making fuel-heaps under them: and there stood Sueela, eager, suspended, a gazelle that grinned, a grace awaiting her welcome, until the Queen turned her head a little to observe: "Oh, you come."

"My goodness...."

"What you come for?"

"Come for? You not send for me?"

"Me? No."

Sueela, averted, eyed alternately the earth and the sky, and within her neck the world ached.

"All right, my girl ... What me done to you, Spiciewegiehotiu?"

"To me? You not done anything ... So you just come? You get here quick. You liked the ride, no?"

"Yes, me and Sir Cobby come tearing on a carriage with only two wheels, and no horses! Sir Cobby say the horses inside."

"Eheh, me hear all about it. Sir Cobby know a lot: but he not know everything."

“Oh, Spiciewegiehotiu ... So *this* is what me dream of all night, *this* is what me fly to ... Me go ... Good health.”

“Where you go to?”

“Me go back to my Kingdom.”

“When me tell you to? or before?”

“Oh, me not belong to you now, my girl!”

“Who you belong to? To — Sir Cobby?”

Sueela eyed her with a weighing underlook. “Me belong to myself. Me a Queen like you. You think you can treat me cruel like this? No, me not love you any more.”

“You ever loved me?”

“Oh, no, never! Never ten times more than my own—” here her voice weakened, and Spiciewegiehotiu, still averted, turned her head at her to say: “Yes, cry: you think, if you cry, me cry, too.”

Whereupon Sueela laughed across a sob: “You crying, my girl!”

And Spiciewegiehotiu, with working nostrils, laughed also: “Oh, you silly thing!”

Upon which their hands, magnetized, found out each other, and Sueela drew her. And presently Spiciewegiehotiu: “Come — You hungry?”

“Eheh.”

“Come” — and off in a flutter they dashed chattering, Spiciewegiehotiu calling over her shoulder to the men to go on making the fuel-heaps under the waggons, which she had brought over from Cobby’s park the previous evening, intending to burn them then; but, on learning the wild tidings of Cobby’s bicycle flying down the kotla, had paused, reflecting that that bicycle might be the very means of Cobby’s threatened escape, and that, if she fired the waggons at once, then Cobby, on finding out, might, in his

“mad anger,” predicted by Macray, at once fly off on the bicycle: so she had decided to wait a day, acquire the bicycle also, then fire all.

“But you going to burn his waggons?” Sueela with a start asked on the way to the hut.

“What’s that to you?” Spiciewegiehotiu answered, stopping.

“Nothing! — my goodness.” But inwardly appalled for Cobby, and knowing that pleading would be useless, she added with a quick use of wit: “But you found out what all the different things good for?”

“No, me not found out; me neglect it ... Let them go. Me not want a subject in Wo-Ngwanya more powerful than his sovereign.”

“Me see ... But, my goodness, you not wait and find out first, and then burn them? Maybe some of them good for the war.”

This touched Spiciewegiehotiu in a tender spot. “Maybe,” she muttered, “me will see.” They went on.

At the hut-door the new Queen’s pet was expelled, and within the hut the two spent the afternoon in communion as in the old day, alone but for an intrusion of the sybil and the executioner-brother, until Cobby arrived hot on his bicycle, straight from bidding farewell to Macray at the brink of “The Elephant” lake, he entering saying: “So after all my pains there is to be this war.”

“Well, whose fault?” asked Spiciewegiehotiu, looking up from the floor: “Sebingwe’s! You say so yourself!”

“Oh, very well, keep on! Some day you will be defeated, and taste that flavour.”

She snapped her fingers. “Oh, me never defeated! If me defeated the first and second day, me look to it, and win the third. Even if you not fight with me. But this time you fight.”

“Well, I am not pleased. I begged you — —”

“*Why* you not pleased? You say you come back at half-way to noon. Me wait till noon — you not come — —”

“I was retarded. I come with a bullet-wound in my arm — —”

“Me know. Caray never shoot at you any more.”

“No, he never will, I am sure,” he answered strongly, “whatever chance he may have, for there are other forces than constables and rifles and rods of iron; and I come to plead for that poor man. He is not in a fit state to be in ‘The Elephant’ — I supplicate you to let him out till, at all events, he is well.”

Smiling steadily up into his face, she answered: “Me will see.”

“Good. When?”

“Soon.”

“Why not now?”

“No: soon.”

“Very well: that is a promise.... Well, Sueela? Home again?”

“Eheh,” says Sueela contentedly — and then sighed.

“What that thing is you bring her on?” Spiciewegiehotiu now demanded.

“It is called *a bicycle*.... Just outside” — he having brought it into the grounds from being mobbed and pawed.

“You show it to me, no? and all those things in your waggons?”

“Very well, some day” — an answer made ten times before.

“No, now,” she said.

“Very well, now.”

On which she sprang up, saying: “Wait — me soon come back,” and, running out, put finger on lips to Sueela, and flew to the waggons to tell the men to remove the fuel quick from under them.

Meantime Cobby was saying to Sueela: “Well, here you are safe — what a ride last night! winds, and forests, and solitary rivers wandering along;

and then that ordeal in those canes. Aren't you sleepy? I am now."

"No, me could do it again to-night and to-morrow night, and not sleep," she told him.

"You excellent thing! And you have done her good already, I think. Does she love you just as before?"

"Eheh." Then she sighed; and suddenly covered her eyes to say: "But she not love me long."

"Not? Why?"

"Because me give her to you."

He stood over her. "*How*, Sueela? Tell me."

"Me take her throne from her: then she go with you. She think that, if she beat Sebingwe, victory give her the power to marry you; but she wrong: me know the Wa-Ngwanya — they not like you — they not stand a white King — not for long. And she think if she marry you, her breasts satisfy you; but she wrong: me know you; you not want to stay; if she make you stay, you hate her. She think she can work out what she want, but me sure she can't — even if she beat Sebingwe. So she not beat Sebingwe: me make Sebingwe beat her."

Cobby stood pale — scared! then, looking on the ground, paced once the length of the room, anew assailed by temptation. But he had *undertaken* to be done with any more scheming to force the Queen away, and he chuckled uneasily, making the lame, and not too true, remark: "I am afraid I don't understand...."

Sueela's forehead was dropped quite down; there just reached him from her a moan of "Wo-Ngwanya! *my land!*" and she raised strained wild eyes to say to him: "Then you love me well, no? Me do a lot, a lot, for you."

"Oh, Sueela, be quiet," he cried, stamping about with that energetic action of his elbows: "I don't — I won't — understand you. Daisy has

nothing to do — —”

“*Sh-h-h*, she come back. And about your waggons, — listen: look after your waggons — —”

This in just a whisper pitched to reach his ear, but he, astonished, cried out “*Waggons!*” and then saw Spiciewegiehotiu’s face in the doorway looking from one to the other of them.

Some moments of dumbness followed, deeply awkward for Sueela, who had promised to tell nothing of the fate overhanging the waggons, till Cobby came out with: “Well, now, come, I will show you my wonders” — and stepped out.

He had made some steps down the avenue when the Queen with a sheepish half-laugh remarked: “The waggons in here!”

“My waggons?” He was all astonishment. “Why in here?”

For safety — she explained, now looking him straight in the face: rumours of menaces made by the mob to *burn* the waggons had reached her ears: so, for safety —

Cobby was very perturbed. “*Why* should they burn my waggons? What groundless people! They would never burn anything else!” — a statement whose significance Spiciewegiehotiu did not grasp, nor properly hear it, being now preoccupied over the motor that leaned on a baobab near the hut; and “come, show me!” she said; but now he was cross and sub-anxious, and, the teacher’s impulse failing, he merely made them get on, and, sandwiched between hams, rode them exclamatory up and down the avenue, a happy man as to woman’s arms.

Dismounting in a flush, Spiciewegiehotiu asked: “So where you put it now?” and when he answered “with the waggons, I suppose,” she made a secret grimace of glee. However, she now no more designed to fire, but to hide, it. “It good! It good!” she cried: “there is only Cobby.”

Thence they went to the waggons, whence fuel and fuel-heapers had now vanished; and Cobby languidly told what this or that was, but, in general, without effect on their intelligence, the objects having been invented by a different *type*, on a different *plane*, of Mind, and to attempt to explain them was as though a seraph ranted of astral mathematics to a man, and lalled. “What this is?” Spiciewegiehotiu kept on asking, but without gathering much fruit. When she pointed to an accumulator, Cobby could not begin to think how to tell of it: he himself could but little understand that manifestation.

Discontent that the waggons were there, his arm smarting, wearied out and sleepy, he was cross and short; conscious that he was wasting breath. “That in the cans is named *petrol* — these are named *bombs* — on this thing one can fly” — words falling like hail upon tin. But there was *one* thing which the Queen’s instinct and interest fixed on quick and keen — the machine-gun: just the word “gun” woke her alertness; and though he hesitated to explain or exhibit its action, as sudden darkness had now come, and she could hardly any longer see the business of his fingers, he shot the gun, to astonish her with those gushes of passion with which it spat and published its bullets.

At which Spiciewegiehotiu’s eyes also spat fire; she understood that it was “good”; and she decided then not to fire the waggons until the war was all ended, dreading that, if she fired at once, after taking out the gun, Cobby in his anger might refuse to use for her this victorious tool: she being sensitive as to offending him just then.

So there the waggons remained during nearly two weeks, doomed, but respited; and, meantime, during five days of storm-winds and wet-weather, all in the air was war, war: again the same fever and fierceness against Sebingwe as erewhile against Daisy; once more everywhere, every moment,

that dumb music of the boom and rumble of drums that stubbornly bumped and bumped, movements of troops, a mood of revolution, of holiday, and hell-broken-loose, mock-battles, kerries, cracked bones in the kotla, blasphemous dancings before God, sex gone dog-mad, goggling, haggard, howling, while the nurseling's mouth turned down with rueing to cry, and the rueing eye of the old threw a look at the sky.

As to Cobby, he was once more drilling the rifle-companies, he being now the most miserable of men, fixed in the bitterest dilemma, knowing somewhere within him that he did not mean to lead the riflemen into fight, that this time again he was going to fail the Queen, and, failing her, must die of shame and meanness. Of Sueela he had seen little more, *no* more for any discussion, she having hurried back to M'Niami on the third day of her visit; and two afternoons afterwards Spiciewegiehotiu in a small squad of horse left Eshowe north-westward for the war, one of her last acts on departing being to dig up that goblet of poisoned *entrée*, which like *foie gras* of Provence she had buried, and to send it to "The Elephant."

XXXIII. THE BANKNOTES



LIKE A MAN in a bath far too hot for man was Cobby now; and his bosom was a moan. He had said that Sebingwe was in the wrong; had promised to fight Sebingwe; whereupon had come upon him Sueela with her scheme to defeat and dethrone the Queen, and, in the rush of the temptation of it, he, instead of stamping promptly upon it, had said "I don't understand" — though it was easy to understand; and before he could recover himself, Spicewegiehotiu had come back upon them.

The next noon he had hung about the back of the royal park, at a spot once given him as a rendezvous by Sueela — hoping to see Sueela, to forbid her scheme; but, as she had not appeared, he had sent to invite her to his hut, to which she had gone — accompanied by Spicewegiehotiu; and the next day had departed for M'Niami.

That she meant Daisy's impis to fight on Sebingwe's side was pretty evident, she relying upon Cobby not to fight against the troops which she sent into battle for his good — and, in fact, Cobby saw that, under the circumstances, for him to slay one of those men would certainly be murder. Hence the torment of the horns that tossed him — Sueela relying upon him not to fight as confidently as the Queen upon him to fight. Even after he knew of Sueela's scheme, after Sueela's departure for M'Niami, when the Queen had wished to be assured that he would use the machine-gun, he could discover nothing to say but "I suppose so."

She, noting the groan and agony in his manner, had pondered gravely upon him, vaguely troubled; for, a little before this, the doctress, with a

forehead all crosses, and a bosom all forebodings, had been closeted with her, imploring her to postpone the war.

Cobby also had implored; had even said: “Suppose Daisy joins Sebingwe?”

But at this she had smiled. “That’s nonsense. What me have Sueela in M’Niami for? If one M’Niami man fight against Wo-Ngwanya, Sueela have off his head.”

Cobby had groaned; had said: “Still, Sebingwe and Daisy are natural allies, since you have made them equally nervous of your aims” — but he could see that, unless he revealed to her Sueela’s scheme “against” her (as she would say), revealed Sueela’s secret committed to him, no reason would cause her to pause — if pause was still possible, for rumours of forward movements of enemy bodies were already abroad. “And to be a party to her disaster!” he writes at this time, “for, unless I use the guns, there is no possibility of her contending against the impis of Sebingwe and Daisy together. And for *me* to bring her to grief and ignominy, to see her brilliant spirit broken, her glory gone, her throne torn from her, and then to say to her, ‘it is for your good, now come with me’ — lies and nonsense. Why is it for her good? Lies and nonsense! Our civilization is no doubt fated to attain to mountain-tops and sing a hymn, but undoubtedly at the moment it is a sufficiently repulsive bundle of rubbish, blood, and pus, with its lubber ‘nobles,’ its ‘*lords*’ and commons, the lords commoner than the commons, and the commons so common, with its little ‘lord-bishops,’ all starch and lawn-sleeves, whited to hide the tatters and lice beneath, bribed to bleat to the rabble their feeble blasphemies of Matabeleland — for not much money! offensive little men: she is quite right, I think, to like and respect a Mo-Ngwanya more than Macray; and it is because *I* want her — it is for *my* good — that like Iscariot I am betraying her to rack and cross, not for ‘her

good.’ What shall I do? What, in God’s name, *can* a poor man do? If I had only known when Sueela was leaving, I might have ridden after, taken her apart from her escort, and bidden her give up the idea; but, being at the gun-practice, I only knew hours after; and to follow her on the motor would have been equivalent to ‘giving her away’ to the Queen; so I decided to send my Sansiwana, and at nine last night he started on my Ali for M’Niami with the message ‘Do not, I beg’ — a step of which the Queen is quite sure to hear; and done too late, I know. To-morrow she is off for the war, taking my soul with her; when I am to follow has not been told me; nor, so far, anything done as to Macray — I now doubt whether she intends to free him, ever, although I have again to-day begged, and again been given hope. Her abominable obduracy sets my blood boiling, and, if she falls, it is just that they that use the sword shall perish by the sword. She has mocked my admonishments and gone her way: well, let her: but, God, let me not once see those eyes weep, for I die.... Yes, I will fight Sebingwe: that is my decision now; but I will not — *cannot* — let a shot be aimed by my order at a man of Daisy’s....”

The following afternoon Spiciewegiehotiu left Eshowe, and shortly afterwards Cobby got marching-orders — unexpected, there being still several regiments bivouacked in the awna; but he was probably sent quickly away because Spiciewegiehotiu did not wish him to know then of the doom prepared by her for Macray.

Cobby passed beyond “The Elephant” that midnight, and camped in moonlight within sight of its western cliffs; but the following morning when all was ready for marching, he did not march — sat on a stone alone, smoking the forenoon away, though he never smoked till late in the day; saw two bodies of troops move past, and still sat moody, though under orders to be at a particular spot before sunset.

Another meal was eaten there; it was near noon before he moved; and he had not marched two leagues farther when a big man beating a pigmy mule was seen galloping in the rear to catch up the troop. He brought for Cobby a message from the “Guardian of the Sad” (Sinder-ngabya): Sir Caray was dying; wanted to see Sir Cobby. The Guardian of the Sad knew that Sir Cobby could not go, but, in compassion, had promised to send the message.

As when water is forced uphill, then with lavish wash at the first chance and turn hurtles into descent, so Cobby turned back at that call, this being escape and hiding-place for him, if but for a time. He announced that he was bound to go, would be back, put a lieutenant in command, sending a message to Spiciewegiehotiu as to why, and with a guide galloped off.

Before sunset he was in a room of “The Elephant” with Macray, who hailed him with, “Well, baas, here we are,” and did not look a dying man in the shine of two torches there, though shortly afterwards he was taken with a spasm (tonic), when in the passion of death he arrantly railed like an arch, until tonic merged into clonic, he then jerking himself like earthquake, with a working of the feet that beat together at the great-toes, trembling like trembling-bells.

This happened from time to time: but in the intervals he was lucid, garrulous, nay, gay, or mock-gay, anon, so that Cobby could not but recognize the gameness and invulnerable toughness wherewith this fellow confronted the gray and gulf of death, though already in his gullet, ever and again, a hiccup clicked, tinkling, piteous....

Cobby fancied that what he saw was tetanus, but Macray said: “The knee has nothing — *hic!* — to do with it! Knee was getting well; but this noon a new food — a stew — was given me — nice, too; and ten minutes afterwards I knew she’d poisoned me.”

“Shame, oh, shame, she promised ...” mourned from Cobby.

“It’s only fair,” Macray said: “woe to the conquered it is; I wasn’t smart enough. Whereas strength is what God honours in a lion, what He honours in a man is wit — cares nothing for the man’s piety, but applauds his wit — —”

“You know nothing of the matter,” Cobby replied: “the pious receive from Him joys which you do not conceive, hearing a voice sweeter than choirs of sirens.”

“Well, that may be so: joys to the pious, but to the witty He gives *life*, and if your pious lad isn’t smart enough, or slips where taxis are passing, He’ll cut him short off — not a theory, that — matter of fact. Hence I’m here, because she’s smarter than I, as I freely admit now. I’ve pumped the warder, and I think I’ve been poisoned with some of that very stew that I poisoned for the lot of you — —”

“That — *you* — poisoned?”

“Who else, baas?”

On which Cobby’s paleness rushed to red, he, in a voice tremulous with emotion, uttering: “Oh, you abominable villain, Douglas Macray!”

“Now, hark at this,” Macray muttered: “you might keep your hair on, inkoos. You and I aren’t so very unequal: you have a trained brain — *hic!* — and I haven’t; but, to make up, mine was born the stronger, I think. Why the horror? My uncle, James Macray, by some trick on slave-labour, which the so-called ‘laws’ create by recognizing the claim of some individuals to ‘own’ the earth’s crust, contrived to acquire seven million pounds’ worth of the limited wealth of a nation, to which fact was due the deaths of hundreds, or thousands, of men, women, and children: that’s a fact; if a man said to me, ‘I didn’t know that,’ I’d tell him, ‘Then, you’re out of it, old chap — born that way.’ *You*, anyway, know it, baas: yet you don’t look too wildly horrified at that slaughter of whites by the uncle in a white waistcoat, but

are horrified because, in order to enjoy the seven millions, the nephew in a belt attempts, and fails, to kill just seven niggers, one white-nigger bitch, and, God forgive me, one good baas. Well, that's cant, of course: that's not scientist eyes, inkoos. So, if you — —"

"*You* the nephew of James Macray?" Cobby broke in, all lost in astonishment.

"Never even suspected.... Simple Simon, the scientist. We are cousins, baas: I have you here to give you the seven millions. Don't you remember how you used to ask me where the deuce you'd seen my face? You'd never seen it, I think, but had no doubt seen a photograph in some magazine — only with a beard. That Master R. K. Rolls spotted me at once that evening I tossed away those false teeth; and your belief in my story that a lion ate Rolls has made the ghost of that gentleman feel deeply aggrieved. No lion dined on that great hunter before the devil, but I dined. He attacked me on the way to Eshowe; and we were tied together on a ledge over a precipice, when I, jumping to a lower ledge, pulled him, cut the cord, and the immortal element of him vaulted straight to hell — didn't stop at the bottom — his body stopped — but his soul kept straight on down. Oh, Christ, another gripe coming ...!"

By this time, after each seizure and paroxysm, the dying man was being appreciably weakened, racked nearer to defeat; but it was not till the sun was glorious the next day outside that home of gloom, that his vigorous frame gave in to the antagonist in the last grim round of that ring and wrangle, and the agony lapsed into placidity. And all that time Cobby bided at his side. He told Cobby during the night that if "the bitch" (Spiciewegiehotiu) had followed Cobby to Europe, she would have found herself poor, since he, before he left Europe, had resolved that she should never enjoy the fortune, whatever "the law" ordered; so he had realized all

that he could of it, nearly the whole, in notes of the Bank of England, Dresdener Bank, Bank of France, mostly £1,000 English notes, all which he had brought with him in a common cardboard box, and had lately buried hardly half a yard deep on the east side of the well beside his hut, together with the photograph stolen by him from the Queen.

“And *you* shouldn’t have it, baas,” he said to Cobby, “if I wasn’t sure that you’ll never get that bitch to go with you. If the dead can bring evil upon the living — *hic!* — I’ll bring it upon her: hateful cat, I never hated as I hate that cat. And tell Black Sue, too, to look out: if I can drag the harlot after me, I will, and we’ll have it hot down there. And you, too — you struck me — damn you for that, man; but then you stuck to me — elevated to disdain and aid the hand that aimed at your heart. When you defended me from being brought here, I thought ‘I’d like to be cultured and innocent like him.’ Now you are a king — rightful — not like me. This is the one kingly thing I ever did, to make you a king. Life! rum thing. I think if I had it to live again, I’d pan it out different. Science — you are right: that’s the thing: I’d train my brain to see God, and be blind to Maxim’s.... God, it’s coming — the deepness of this disease in me — you wouldn’t believe, all’s wrong in me — oh, won’t you give me the revolver? Cobby *give* — I give you millions, I buy it, that’s fair — you prig, you English thing, in spite of science — Ach, now I got it — by the frantic cross of — Help! hell!...”

It was noon before Cobby stepped out of “The Elephant” pool, and, instead of then at once hastening to overtake his companies, he, still skulking in this hiding-place from perplexity, decided to go to Macray’s hut, where he dug up the box of notes, only to bury it again; then at last with his guide galloped off for the fighting, knowing of a wild rumour then raging like fire through Eshowe that Daisy had invaded Wo-Ngwanya.

XXXIV. CALAMITY



THE ACTUAL POSSESSION of “a kingdom” — or empire, say — had an effect upon Cobby’s psychology. This wealth, Spiciewegiehotiu’s by “law,” had, on being so buried, been lost to her as much as if sunk in a ship, a misfortune which, once accomplished, no “law,” nor law-officers, can alter. Cobby had recovered it through being what he was: now it was his: and he proceeded to dream dreams. Now he could found and endow in England, now flout the lousy little scowlers at schools and foes of wisdom — was a king with king’s counsel as before, but now with six kings’ power. This subtly affected him — increased, for one thing, his greed to be gone for England, and to be gone not alone, but with another: for the lucky feel aggrieved if they still need something, and are not completely lucky, as Macray had attempted to kill several “niggers,” since he lacked cigars: so now with Cobby. The wings of his new power were an irritant and nuisance to him in that, having them, he was denied the right instantly to fly with them; it was a cross to him that his aeroplane could not take a passenger, so that like a shah of the air he might be off at once with Spiciewegiehotiu: for his seventh million erected him to a Sabbath serenity of establishment and majesty, and the fact that not she, but he, was the millionaire made a chemical change in his relation to her (though he would have denied), promoted him to a new dominance and authority, hardened his heart (though he would have denied): and whereas he had decided to fight for her against Sebingwe, though not against Daisy, he now decided to fight against

no one. "Her own fault," he said: "if she must fall, she must: then to comfort her."

He made no great haste to "the front": after galloping some way through a gale, went slow....

That morning of storm the Wo-Ngwanya army, after crossing the frontier northward into Wo-Mashenya territory, had come into touch with the enemy; then had smartly marched back for Wo-Ngwanya: upon which Sebingwe, a lean colossus, with a renown for feats of prowess and conduct in war, had hotly followed.

There is a valley a mile wide, quite flat, lying within hills white atop with dolomite — hills east, west and south — and on it two woods within which are villages, round these being fields of millet, dark-green maize, groundnuts; and, flowing northward close under the west hills, the river Perihompya, a home of hippos: in which valley, called Spicieweija, or White Valley, Sebingwe caught up Spiciewegiehotiu, and a battle was fought.

Spiciewegiehotiu having there spent the previous day, her reason for advancing and then retreating, drawing Sebingwe after her, was that the battle-field might be one which *she* had chosen; moreover, since, to her astonishment and dismay, the rifles had not arrived, she desired to delay the engagement, and, awaiting their arrival, only engaged the foe when forced to.

The battle began about noon, Sebingwe, with his son, anon watching it from an ant-heap at the valley's centre, and anon himself speeding like the storm with an *umkonto*, or broad spear (for stabbing), on a frantic little horse which, with prancings and kickings like a rocking-horse, snatched him off into the throng of things; while Spiciewegiehotiu sat at the doorway of a hut built on piles in some timber nigh the southern hills, her feet

planted on the back of her Selim, she munching nuts with her molars, anon calling something to a knot of men who stood close below her, anon using her field-glass, ever engaged in trying to keep her thighs modestly covered, for the storm wafted all below, as above its blasts wafted streams of green pigeons gadding, streams of black geese voyaging, from which far aloft noised down callings, voices as of laughter and roistering at the vastness of their hilarity, at the excess of their heaven, the milk of the Kingdom of their elysium; and down anon washed a shower, sharp and short, adding to freshness and strangeness of wind freshness and strangeness of water, during which the two war-hosts fought on in a home of “holy haze” of Homer, which the gaze failed to investigate.

Spiciewegiehotiu wantonly munched nuts with her molars, constantly covered her legs with her reluctant kaross, which, pegged to one leg, got fluttering free from the other in a frolic of mockery, she recovering a knee, it recovering freedom to stream and strum; and she sent messages to a group a few hundred yards nearer the struggling hosts; and she laughed a little with the winds, and with her staff of officers; for, accustomed since the age of twelve to watch and estimate battles, she was in her element, had a certain joy in battle, like a person employed with confident competence on work which in early boyhood was his choice and hobby; and, though annoyed, disappointed, perplexed, at the non-arrival of the rifles, she expected them, every few minutes throwing her eye to see the rifles come through a declivity of the southern hills to her right.

Sebingwe, for his part, had some rifles, and was firing them: so, though the Wa-Ngwanya were in rather greater number, for some time the struggle remained indecisive, until Spiciewegiehotiu gave an order in the midst of a storm of rain, whereupon a fleet of tree-trunks, cut down the previous day, rushed down the river, taking a regiment. To her the *mind*, or *morale*, of

fighters was always a matter of high importance, she having no small confidence in the effect of astonishment and shock upon the mentality of men locked in conflict: nor in this case was she mistaken. The river having high sides, calcarious tufa on clay shale, with mimosa bush at its edges, the regiment floated a long way down before it was noted, and its advent upon the flank of the conflict produced, if not a rout, a profound result. When the rain-storm wandered off elsewhither, Spiciewegiehotiu, gazing through her glass at the struggle, muttered to herself: "Sebingwe done."

This, however, was not what she wanted — wanted the war to be won by the rifles and machine-gun: and now occurred in her a tug-of-war between two alternatives — to win at once — or to wait for the rifles, and have all as she had planned it. Estimating close and careful, her judgment held the scales; and on the jump of this pull of judgment hung her doom. At this time no sign of any danger from Daisy had arisen on her horizon — no tinge of suspicion of such a thing — or there would have been no indecision: she would pretty surely have whipped Sebingwe at once, and then Daisy, in detail. Still, she decided rightly: to fight out the fight now; but then in a minute went white at a fresh decision, dropped in an impulse upon her horse, and dashed off herself to the general staff, to order a retreat to be beaten.

It seemed to all that some fly had stung her! When all along the battle-front the Wo-Ngwanya drums began to thump retirement, everyone was surprised, none more than Sebingwe, who, already in retreat, readily enough permitted the retreat of his enemy, and quickly became pigmy northward.

Then two hours passed. The "doctors" were over the wounded, rank-and-file were setting up a stockade, the Queen with her staff was seated at a meal of goat on the ground under her hut, the sun at three o'clock flying

white to treat with mobs of oncoming storm-cloud, when a horse bathed in sweat came tearing through the southern hills.

The rider brought the tidings that the army of M’Niami was marching upon Eshowe....

“You mad, no, man?” Spiciewegiehotiu asked him; and tasted no more food that day.

And she asked: “You see the rifles coming?”

To which he answered that the rifles were not far beyond the hills.

She stood up then to move slowly away into the wood in a world that had turned turtle, dizzied, incapable of belief, of disbelief, of any realization. Her lips breathed “Sueela” ...

She ran back presently to give an order as to two regiments left in Eshowe, to bid them rush to her, then again walked out to be alone.

XXXV. CRASH



NOW SHE SAW the rifles arrive, but could not descry Cobby; saw a rifleman making enquiries as to her whereabouts, and then racing toward her. She ran, calling to him: “Me here!” and before he could speak asked: “Where Sir Cobby is?”

“Sir Cobby not with us, Bayeté,” he said: “the Guardian of the Sad send to tell Sir Cobby Sir Caray dying — —”

Her eyes closed in pain.

“Then Sir Cobby go back. He say he come on later ... You hear, Bayeté, about Daisy?”

“Yes. Have you with you a kind of stand-up gun from Sir Cobby’s waggons?”

“No, Bayeté, nothing: only rifles.”

“Sir Cobby have with him that kind of gun?”

“No, Bayeté, nothing: only his rifle.”

“Oh, but you sure?” she asked with appeal.

“Bayeté, me sure!”

Silence; her gaze on the ground; then suddenly: “Why you so late?”

He answered: “Yesterday from morning to noon we not march; we stand still. Everybody wait: Sir Cobby not give any order.”

“*Why* he not give any order?”

“Bayeté, me not know!”

“What Sir Cobby doing all that time?”

“He sit alone on a stone and smoke.”

A rush of blood flushed her brow; she screamed at him: “Go way!”

Presently she let herself drop down within an old matura tree-trunk, where she sat paralyzed a long time, while messengers of Job on blown horses washed in foam, messenger after messenger, came upon her, to declare how Daisy was there or was there, was firing kraal after kraal with frantic licence, was driving the affrighted tribesmen into wildness of flight before his unbridled hordes, was twenty miles from Eshowe — not Daisy himself, it appeared, who was said to be sick, but his Queen Sueela, a Wo-Ngwanya damsel! who was in supreme command; and three Wo-Ngwanya headmen had thrown-in their lot with her, taking oath to make her sovereign of Wo-Ngwanya: so, they said, reported the droves of fugitives flocking to refuge in Eshowe....

Spiciewegiehotiu in a steady way for a long while kept on striking the tree-trunk within which she hid with the tip of one of the horns of her horned forehead, her eyeballs all distraught like the orb of the bison’s eye, like the bull’s, that, horning for fun and butting’s sake, broods with his orbs distraught; and afterwards she struck matches, match after match prodigally, watching them glow, or puffed by the gusts, nothing left in her but mechanism and mechanical action; but when only two matches were left she put back the box at her waist, and — leapt up to act.

The question with her now was: Did Sebingwe know? Daisy might be acting either alone, or in league with Sebingwe: if alone, if Sebingwe did not know, she might patch up a peace with Sebingwe, be off to smash Daisy, then be back like tempest upon Sebingwe.

At eight in the night an envoy of five left her for Sebingwe. She desired, she said, no more fighting, was tired of fighting, as Sebingwe could see for himself from the withdrawal that morning of her warriors in the thick of

their victory: so for a nominal indemnity of five hundred, if Sebingwe desired, she was ready to be friends.

At midnight came the embassy back. Sebingwe had singed off the head-ring of one of its members, and had sent the message: He was willing to treat; but let the Queen come to him herself; and she must make every step of the way on her knees.

At which Spiciewegiehotiu flinched with a twist of the shoulders in protest, as from a blow; but some moments afterwards an arc-lamp, both hot and bright, arose in her eyes, a blighting pride; and “Ah!” she muttered, “it was Death made him say that, and he not know it: to-day he done seeing the sun go down.”

Her will now was to crush Wo-Mashenya quickly with the first blinks of the sun, then swiftly to turn about and burst in wrath upon M’Niami, wresting success out of the very mouth of calamity by mere dazzlement of nimbleness and incredibility of briskness. That night she did not sleep; neither, though her fighters slept well, did the fighters of Sebingwe sleep, she launching upon them no less than five separate surprise-attacks by small bodies, to keep them touchy and jumpy, and cause them to be seedy in the morning.

And before morning broke she had before her under her hut forty line-regiment giants and forty riflemen, whom she informed of the message which Sebingwe had sent her; and she said: “Me wonder which of you is to avenge me? — which one it is who is to kill Sebingwe? Me will *love* that fellow.”

But no battle began at sunrise, as she had planned: for Sebingwe, knowing that Daisy was pelting to his aid, fled to await him, and it was afternoon before the Wa-Ngwanya, hotly following northward, forced him to a conflict.

But by then he was behind a stockade previously built by him on the north brink of the Pirihompya, which, in that region, flows eastward: and in fording the stream, and in forcing the screen, hosts of the Queen's heroes reeled, as in the season when trees waste their leaves, fleets of the slain sailing away to sea with the waves. Nothing, though, could check the Wa-Ngwanya; this fight was for wife and child; they saw Spiciewegiehotiu horsed in the throng of it all, in peril, anon pointing a revolver to protect herself; and they fought as the tide rises, and as the reaper strides, the rifles reaping a rood of life, and the spears no pruning-hooks, but scythes.

Hell howling deluged and rushed the stockade, and thenceforth it was a case of crush, hand-to-hand battle, eyeball-to-eyeball stabbing, and backward stepping for Sebingwe, who himself quickly ceased to witness it when a steadfast wedge of twenty, having forged a way toward him through floods of blood, and having bulleted him dead through the breast, got at him like dogs, and angrily gashed his body to strawberry-hash: off then gadded his head through the throng for a flag, aloft on an assegai. When his son, Nasandhlwana, took the command, the Wa-Mashenya were already in pretty steep retreat, and from his horseback Cobby, who had but now arrived, saw with his heart in his mouth through darkling twilight and driving squall the sight of the Queen, horse and all, being swept forward, as it seemed, by the momentum of the sweep of her teeming men.

He was on the point of pelting that way, when he caught the noise of a spattering tramp of cavalry on sloppy soil, sounding louder and louder from the south, then a howling of a multitude of mouths, and now was aware of the legs of galloping nags making a palisade that came far-spread across the breadth of the plain, so that he and his guide had to gallop aside, flying from being rushed by this eruption of eyeballs, on all these horsemen's heads being a helmet of hide having a horn of the ibex at the front, and the

roughness of their bawling, and the assault of their irruption, helped these horns to make them horsemen of hell; and on a tall horse in a group galloping at the back of the troop was a woman, whom Cobby, though he could not see, assumed to be Sueela on her Mustapha.

Ten minutes later they might have come too late: as it was, like the shock and rumpus of the archangel's trump came that irruption upon their enemy. Notwithstanding that they were but a van, that they were under two thousand in number, just the jump and wonderment of their coming won. Rot followed; and now rout: for at once the ranks of Nasandhlwana rallied; and, distracted, the Wa-Ngwanya scattered and ran.

The Queen being near a path, and divining with her eye in the half-dark that far and wide her army was squeezing itself into flight, as near her it was squeezing itself, trampling itself, every man for himself, she fled, or rather let herself be swept away by pressure along this path westward; and presently found herself bounding along a road with about forty of her own horses round her.

Soon, however, these were pursued, as they could see in the sheen of a moon just come up, to illumine somewhat the dreariness and gloom of an evening which the gale anon washed with torrents of rain; and when the pursuers proved to be M'Niami troops, the Wa-Ngwanya, who, though they hanker after M'Niami women, scorn M'Niami men, asked Spiciewegiehotiu if they should stop and fight to cover her flight; to which, glancing back at the troop of pursuers, she replied: "No, they can't catch me on Selim: you all get killed, if you fight," and the flight continued another minute, until some one of the M'Niami, firing a wanton rifle, shot a Mo-Ngwanya; upon which, with one thought, all the Wa-Ngwanya halted, threw their horses round, and flew to do and die fighting.

But Spiciewegiehotiu, hardly bothering to glance behind at them, kept straight on at the same pace, she cared not whither, not wishing for bed nor bread, only for some cave or shed within which to bury away her head, and throw her shame; and, seeing her keep on, Cobby, following after her in the M’Niami troop, threw his animal aside into wild mimosa-land to avoid the oncoming Wa-Ngwanya, then, galloping full bat, regained the road half a mile behind the Wa-Ngwanya, now fighting hand-to-hand with the M’Niami.

As she had not been conscious of his solitary pursuit through the bush, he rushed out upon the road hardly four hundred yards from her, on which, though he was under trees, she immediately knew him by his Ali’s hoofs, their ponderous roll prattling like drumsticks upon the mud, knew him likewise by instinct of the eye, while he through drizzle could distinctly see her hair heavy with wet hanging half-lax on her back, could see her lean to her Selim’s ear to bid him flee, and now could see her mouth wide with laughing when she twisted smartly to fire twice at him.

“*Shame!*” he passionately shouted at her, his head now down to his animal’s mane.

And a third time he saw her turn and fire her revolver with wrathful laughter, and now for some moments lost himself, then refound himself down on the ground, dismounted over his horse’s head, which had foundered, shot in the shoulder.

As he started up, a small squad of M’Niami dashed past him after Spiciewegiehotiu, who had vanished; and when he made an attempt to follow them, his horse went tame and lame. So he turned back, observing now vultures gathering like guests to supper from every direction of heaven, and presently saw some hundred bodies blocking the road, with their guns, assegais, kerries, and three lynxes among them, with a company of vultures

crammed with man, philanthropists at a symposium that only the moon looked at, musing over that lonesome moorland. All the Wa-Ngwanya had apparently fallen in the fracas, half as many more of the M’Niami, and, lying dead among the dead of man and nag, Cobby saw his guide. Nags were everywhere neighing, and presently, as he went, he began to see them running wild, singly and in groups, fleeing from the big battle; and soon began to meet man — on foot — single — in twos and threes — teeming in groups and troops, multitudinous, streaming, fleeing from the stricken field, keen to be away anywhere, tearing along followed by their plumes and loose uniforms in the teeth of flaw and murky turmoil, bent beneath burdens of inclemency and immensity of adversity, but trotting steadily on and on, throwing anon an eye behind where hopelessness was, as before them homelessness; and with a sore in his bosom, with a hung head, Cobby moved slowly onward on a horse whose head was not less hung and heavy....

As to Spiciewegiehotiu, she sought shelter after midnight at the kraal of a headman named Moocrya, who pretended to be an independent chief, but paid tribute to Sebingwe. He gave her food, fodder, put her into a hut near him, and she, sleepless for two days, was soon swooning to sleep.

With one ear open, however. Before long she was conscious of noises, nocturnal voices — a party of M’Niami urging upon the chief the need, for his skin’s good, to give her up: so, her Selim being near her, she went stealing out, called him soft, vaulted upon him, and was off.

But she was hardly half-way down the kotla when, an alarm having been raised by a watch posted there, shots and horses were following her; on which she, not aware that they were under orders not to harm her, and were aiming at her horse’s quarters, caught at a limb of a tree in an impulse and clinging to life, though she longed to die; and the light was so dim, that they

lost her, and, unconscious that she was in the tree, sprinted past her, continuing to follow the horse a little, until they could descry that it was riderless, and then stood at a loss.

Selim, however, revealed her — to his own undoing: for he soon came trotting back with neighs to the tree: upon which she, seeing them pelting for her, dropped upon him, dreading death less than shame, and, facing them, was away again for the gate, firing the final shot of her revolver.

Now, however, her Selim fell over her, pierced; and ere she could free herself from him, she was a prisoner.

XXXVI. QUEEN SUEELA



TWO AFTERNOONS AFTERWARDS Cobby, wandering solitary for Eshowe through forested hill-country on his limping mount, which limped constantly sicker, encountered a mob of Wa-Mashenya Tommies shouting song on their way northward from Eshowe, who informed him that they had met travelling from the west a party of M’Niami who had Spiciewegiehotiu a captive with them, and were conveying her to Eshowe, which was in flames.

Cobby’s eye lightened, and he flogged his horse to be on; but Ali could only go slow. Even here nags were to be seen which appeared to be runaways from the Battle of the Pirihomepya, but they all avoided capture, nor in all this part of Wo-Ngwanya, where all the hamlets had been abandoned, could he get a nag; so that he felt “my ‘kingdom’ for a horse,” and thought of rushing on foot to Eshowe — which, in truth, if he had known more, he would have done.

Eshowe, as the Wa-Mashenya had reported, was then in flames, and even from the remote end of “The Elephant” at eight that evening the ex-Queen was able to observe in the clouds the brown and frown of its burning. And it was through fires that she drew nigh to it — camp-fires of hosts of Wa-Mashenya, of hosts of M’Niami, regiment after regiment, of each of which, when she moved near it, she knew the name by the make and scheme of its shield — all this panorama of camp-fires, wafted by winds under the wings of a falcon of sparks and smoke bound darkling south from the roaring town, being imbrued with the luridness and wrath of a drama from Tartarus.

As for the people of Eshowe, these, as usual in such cases there, had all flung their all upon the altar of God, and gone headlong in flight to hide or die.

When Spiciewegiehotiu was conducted up the hot kotla, which was encumbered with soldiers, there on the platform at the top was seated Sueela in the stone throne, surrounded by about a hundred M’Niami; Mandaganya, her mother, not there; none of her own people; but among the M’Niami priests and heralds, who, some minutes previously, had been proclaiming her Queen of Eastern Wo-Ngwanya, she being barbarously garbed with a broad gaudiness, bedizened with ornaments of gold and stones, a Queen, enthroned, reclined, serene, smiling an evil smile, attired in a kaross long to the ankles, yellow with black elephants, a dress of Spiciewegiehotiu’s, and from her helmeted head vaulted enormous horns, upon whose reds and browns of ochre shone a crowd of torches brawling about her.

At sight of Spiciewegiehotiu she half started up, but then smartly sat again; and, beckoning to one of the captor-group to gallop to her, got from him the details of the capture before Spiciewegiehotiu, having been unbound, was hoisted off a horse, and stood before the platform. The two then looked at each other; and said Sueela, smiling: “Well, Spiciewegiehotiu? You see.”

Sueela had drunk blood, was fresh from orgy, and something or other in her air was very strange, debauched, and raw, across her forehead being scrawled, as it were, “Babylon, mother of harlots.” Just the fact that she had stabbed in the back her country, so beloved, that she was everywhere execrated, her soul in hell, had been the cause that she had broken loose, gone the whole hog, so that more had fled and bled and blazed before the march of her devastation than if any male had led the army of M’Niami, for

at the drunkenness of the rumbling of the drums up in her blood had flashed the savage, flashing the eye of riot and rapine, and, mixed with the blood of massacre, had been quaffed other liquor, and liquor of lips, she, stark and staring, dancing distracted cancons in revels of shamelessness, shaking frenzy from her hair, demanding the man-in-the-moon and more-than-man to manage her. The burning of Eshowe might well have been averted by a word of hers; but she had done nothing: only the ground round about the sigodhlo — that spot, that cloister — holy of holies to her bosom — home of her youth — she had rescued and protected, as she could, the storm being from the north.

And revealing her teeth, sneering, she said with levity to Spiciewegiehotiu: “You marry me to Daisy, no? You see now. You not always clever! You not see everything! Other girls clever, too!”

A statue stood there the defeated Queen, hard, calm, marble, rain-streams rambling down the rampart of her face, her hair relaxed, and to nothing she gave answer, her gaze meditating steadily upon the other.

And Sueela, sneering, with levity: “Now you go to your own country, no? Me give you Sir Cobby. He mad after me, me can have him, but me not want him: me married; me good.”

No answer: Spiciewegiehotiu’s eyes now clandestinely estimating her chances of attack and escape.

And Sueela: “Where Sir Cobby is? You see him anywhere when he follow you from the battle?”

No answer: only Spiciewegiehotiu’s lip curved a little, shivered a little as it curved, she thinking of Cobby dead by her hand, having dimly witnessed his fall from his horse.

And Sueela, with sneering teeth: “You think me care whether you answer me or no? You nobody now, my girl. You soon go off to your own country,

nobody care, me not care. You marry me to Daisy: now me Queen of half Wo-*Ngwanya*, of all *M’Niami*; me have other things to think about than *Spiciewegiehotiu*.”

At this point *Spiciewegiehotiu*, having watched for a chance, snatched the spear of the officer nearest her, and, leaping, was on the platform in rapid career to stab *Sueela*.

But a shout broke out, and she just failed by a foot, four soldiers throwing themselves over her, shaking her, pouring over her a coal-sack of French and tongue; and, panting and captive, she stood among them, till *Sueela*, leaping up drew a knife from her waist, and stood with her, saying to the men: “Go away — leave her,” and to *Spiciewegiehotiu*, sneering, revealing her teeth: “You want to kill me, no? But the spear too heavy: that why you fail; take this knife.”

She held it out.

“Me *do* it,” *Spiciewegiehotiu* mentioned, not taking it.

“Well, *do* it: here’s a knife for you, my girl.”

Spiciewegiehotiu took the knife.

“Now,” *Sueela* said, baring her breasts; and tense stood the spectators of it with staring eyes, while *Spiciewegiehotiu* eyed her up and down, down and up, with a malign eye.

“Nobody to touch her when she do it!” *Sueela* flung aside from her; adding: “Now, my girl.”

Spiciewegiehotiu’s lip was curved as dirt; but the stroke did not come.

“What, you not do it?” said *Sueela* with levity, with sneering teeth: “You ‘fraid, no? What you have to be ‘fraid of? ‘Fraid to strike your — friend?” — her voice on a sudden broke.

“Slut,” said *Spiciewegiehotiu*.

“Yes, me bad, Spiciewegiehotiu — eheh, me *baad* — but me not so bad as God and the devils think me.”

Now her face went aside to hide what welled in her eyes; at the same time Spiciewegiehotiu’s face convulsed one moment, and now, dropping the knife, off she rushed to drop from the platform at a point rather empty of men, and, dodging capture, was gone, all legs, devouring the ground, down the kotla’s length.

“What she going to do?” started out of Sueela’s mouth: “*catch* her!” upon which immediately a mob of people at full speed were in pursuit, and in a few moments more in pursuit, too, was Sueela, who, in leaping, threw off her kaross, and, using that extreme freedom and fleetness of her feet, was soon leading the stream of pursuers, and stealing surely upon the fugitive.

But she was chasing a fox: though the kotla was populous with soldiers, and Sueela thrice cried out “Stop her!” to people ahead, Spiciewegiehotiu, herself fleet of foot, dodged them in detail, as she could, the moon’s light being very obscured by the tempest and tenebrous mood of the night, and by that roof of smoke that rolled over all, so that all occurred as in some vault of murk and Orcus; moreover, when the ex-Queen, who, running south, had steered her feet east, too, rushed upon a bridge of “The Gut,” a big baobab close to the bridge hid her for some moments, and when the foremost pursuer followed upon the bridge, she was no longer on it: they saw only her horned helmet and kaross going down “The Gut” in the shine of huts on fire beyond: at sight of which Sueela cried out: “She going down ‘The Gut’!” and, seeking her, peering, the pack ran down the stream, which, in its passage through the town, is narrow and rapid.

But, in fact, Spiciewegiehotiu was going *up* “The Gut” after lingering a little in the dark under the bridge, and after swimming with difficulty a little

up and across, to emerge in singed mimosa on the deserted east shore, up which in a purgatory of heat and reek she sprinted, until she got to the spot where the river runs under the stockade; and it was still with a sort of official shock that she saw no watchman there; whence she made her way up into the wilds on the brink of White River.

XXXVII. BELLADONNA



UP THERE SHE remained a long time, anon catching sight of parties rambling far and wide with lights to find her. It was after midnight when she went back to Eshowe, bent with fatigue, weary of being, in her fingers a sprig of a tree rare there, the deadly-nightshade which she had fled to find.

Slowly over the kotla her footsteps moved, unnoticed, M’Niami troops being addicted to liquor, and most of the slumberers drunk. After passing through the sigodhlo gate, where no guard was, she saw at the gate of the royal grounds two guards, prostrate dogs, with a gourd of strychnia liquor close, and her lip a little scorned the mood of the new governing. She passed up the avenue, her object now being to burn Cobby’s waggons before going along that path which she purposed: for, Cobby dead, as she thought, and she intending to follow that way, she did not want his belongings to be left in hands alien and profane; and as, besides, she thought that the Wa-Ngwanya in the North might some time rise and fight, she did not desire that Sueela, who had seen the machine-gun fired, should have it to aim against them.

Soft and slow she paced, could see that the hut was occupied — a slight escape of light at the door — but ventured to stop, and drop, and prop her heavy head upon that door, which she had known as home since the age of seven; where, seated with shut eyes, drearily she smiled at dribble beating her, at the bravura of that *froufrou* of breezes trooping with whoops through the multitudinous wood, as a woman whoops out with frolic when a flaw swoops-up her frocks: smiling steadily, as one may grin and grin and be a

death's-head; no sob, nor salt in her tears of dribble; prepared to pay and bear, not having "seen everything," having committed what, to her, was the one Sin — faulty polity, wrong conduct, trust in others just because she loved them, and thought that they loved her, uncircumspect seeing, purblind business, infirm building; and then the destined tendency in events, star of disaster: hating herself and That which Makes, she disdained to make complaint.

She heard a word or two murmured within the hut, then stillness, then a word or two, and stillness; then, presently, the breath of a sniff close inside, then a "*whoof!*" sounded, and understood that it sounded from Mandaganya's little dog, Ronja: upon which she sprang upright, and was gone for the grove where the waggons were.

The night, though so wild, being still white, one could see: and after collecting into little heaps what was left of the leaves that had been heaped by her men under the waggons, she went to a shed into which the fuel-wood had been flung when she had run to tell the men to remove the fuel-heaps from under the waggons, so that Cobby might not see them; and from the shed she fetched armful after armful of wood to deposit in good order as fuel-heaps under the waggons.

After which, taking a match-box out of a little charm-box at her moocha-waist, she looked into it — two matches only.

And, cautious as she was, the wind whiffed out one: upon which she spread a bit of tarpaulin from a waggon upon a waggon-wheel that faced the gale, and, kneeling near behind, got a few leaves alight, flew to the fuel-heap near, and, using that magic of savages in lighting fires, soon had the fuel-heap sounding, fuming, sloping south, an opal flowing.

Bent under the waggon, she stood waiting for the blaze to get well going, before taking brand from it to make the other blazes, her eyes now lowered

to rest on her sprig of belladonna, while a vitagraph of the story of her life unrolled itself before her memory — scenes from the Second and Third M’Niami Wars, her *coup d’état* and leap to the throne, the execution of the princes, the coming of Rolls, then of Macray, of Cobby ... she shrugged, and moved to get the brand.

But for some time before this, ever since his “*whoof!*” at the hut-door, the little dog of Mandaganya had been very restless, as dogs will be a little before being poisoned or blown to the clouds; and “What the matter with him?” Mandaganya had demanded of Sueela, with whom she was keeping vigil, all at a loss and in dismay and mourning over that homeless head of Spiciewegiehotiu; and at last when the little Ronja had persisted in scratching at the door, when she had let him out, and he had rushed off, then had come back to invite her with insistence to go with him, she, ever inclined to scent “second-sight” in him, went with him.

Now he gamboled gladly, and, nose to ground, soon had her dragged to the waggons, whereupon she, catching sight of fire, and nothing to explain it, for Spiciewegiehotiu had fled a little way, instinctively snatched up a branch, and dashed at the brands, to lash and shatter.

Upon which Spiciewegiehotiu, standing now outside that waggon, smiled and shrugged, muttering: “Even in this me fail.”

At the same time Mandaganya turned to the little dog to demand of it: “*How* you know that there was a —— ?” but now heard a twig snap under a step, glanced that way, and became conscious of Spiciewegiehotiu beyond the waggon.

A cry broke from her: “*My darling!*” — and she ran.

But Spiciewegiehotiu ran from her round the waggon, she after, crying out through the barking of the dog: “You run from *me?*”

“Good-bye, Mandaganya!” called Spiciewegiehotiu, laughing, popping some of the belladonna berries into her mouth.

“*Oh, God!*” Mandaganya gasped, all aghast, pursuing her round the waggon, having soon noted in the moonlight the sprig in her ringers, and known of what tree of groaning that fruit grew.

And back she doubled short upon the fugitive; but Spiciewegiehotiu doubled, too, stopping an instant to peep mischievously round a corner of the waggon, laughing, exhibiting how she crammed more of the berries into her mouth, then afresh was away.

And, “Oh, you wicked thing!” panted Mandaganya, trotting in heavy haste, all pants and gasps, and breasts in distress for breath; and when again at the next corner Spiciewegiehotiu stopped to peep, and laugh, and exhibit, “Oh, you spiteful thing!” Mandaganya gasped: “you not love Mandaganya? Oh, you ungrateful thing!” and so round, with doublings-back and dodgings, they rushed, and narrow escapes of Spiciewegiehotiu, and laughs, and pantings of the heart, till Spiciewegiehotiu stopped to lay her head on a corner, and was caught.

No syllable now uttered the sybil, but, getting firm hold, picked up and bore the girl on her powerful bosom, a moan sounding out of her mouth.

So Spiciewegiehotiu presently lay on her own old bed of skins betwixt the two roof-trees of red mopane-wood, she rapidly flushing, to pink, to red, to crimson, while a wild silence reigned, the sybil with fixed lips administering some one of the herbal simples borne at her girdle in little gourds, though, in truth, the globe held no hellebore that could now heal the hell of that heat and fever, or ward off the mortal hour — except morphia, the antidote of atropa, a fact of which, probably, the doctress lacked all knowledge; and anon that laughter of atropa, half-hearted, starting up exclamatory, languidly dropping off, as in languid mockery of the cosmos,

started up from the unconscious form, and dropped off, while Sueela, revealing her teeth in a rictus of the lips, sat a picture of horror, her back propped upon a pillar, her fingers outstuck stiff, a downlooking craze in her gaze that gloated as on gulfs of destruction and groaning. Only one outcry to Heaven she made: “Oh, where Sir Cobby is? If he was here, he never let her die like this!” — she having no knowledge of Cobby’s halt horse, shot by Spiciewegiehotiu.

Only Mandaganya, after an hour, spoke: spoke on and on in a low tone, crooning over the crimson delirium and derision of the fever’s dreaming. “My lamb. No father, no mother, only me; lost in Africa; and she put up such a fight against it, and beat it; and now it beat her; this is what she was to come to; there she lie; my white lamb. Me bring forth fourteen sons, and me love them all, but only now me know, my God, how cruel a mother’s bowels can rue — my mangled lamb — poor mute ewe — if Mandaganya’s bosom could ooze blood that’d do you good, she’d drench you redder yet than you be, stretched there ... She laugh ... She laugh to pass out of the dirty world.... You wanted to be a Queen, no?” — to Sueela, with a nod— “Queen of Wo-Ngwanya, no? And this is what you bring her to. What sort of a Queen? You think you can put on her shoes, and rule men as she rule them? A little bastard like you? She pick you up out of the ditch, a little bastard, she clasp you to her breast, she tell you Me-and-you, and this is what you bring her to. Oh, high Heaven, that bella in her belly bite her bitter, but it bite her never a bit so bitter as the unremembrance of that bitter breast must have bit her. If you wanted — —”

“Oh, Ma-Sueela” — from Sueela, irritated to speech at last— “me not answer you! If you not know that me love Spiciewegiehotiu more than my own self, you mad! you mad! you mad!”

Up started the dreamer's laughter, half-hearted-exclamatory, and fainted away.

And quietly the sybil: "Don't you answer me back; don't you say 'mad' to me. Say it again, just to see what happen to you. Me owe you a drubbing as it is, my lady. You think me not hear about your carryings-on since the war started? You think so? If me was that fool of a Daisy me'd cut off your right leg, and then cut off your left arm, to balance you. You think — —"

But now on a sudden two wild eyeballs intruded into the doorway, and the light flickered upon the axe of Sandelikatze, Sueela's whole-brother, the executioner, who, though like his other brothers he had shaken the dust of Eshowe off his shoes, and was a fugitive, had stolen back to use his axe: and "*where she?*" started from his lips, as in darted his limber limbs.

Doubtless, if she had fled, that would have been her death-hour, but, as she never stirred, her unconcern may have somewhat perturbed his nervous pose, and the next moment he got a cuff on the jaw which sent him staggering, from Mandaganya, who said to him, "You mad, no?" and cast the axe out of door.

On which he stepped with stiff fingers to strangle his sister, but in the midst of a cataract of invective saw Spiciewegiehotiu, and now profoundness of ruth modified the mood of his rage, he rushing to kneel and moan and hold her hand to his cheek; and after half an hour he was induced to take himself away, his mother having made a rendezvous with him in a wood.

Then fifteen minutes more of that vigil over the dying, and then the eyes of Cobby, just arrived at Eshowe, were prying in, he at once conscious of atropa, the scarlet, the laughter ... And sore now his heart smote him and smarted, a lamentable outcry clamouring out of his bosom: "Now, Almighty God, help me, have pity ..." and in some moments he had her, trotting

ponderously with her down the avenue for his hut, followed by Mandaganya and Sueela fluttering, and before long had her blood saturated with sulphate of morphia.

XXXVIII. REINSTATEMENT



THE VITALITY OF Spiciewegiehotiu rallied the following afternoon; and the next forenoon her eyes opened with sight, and saw Cobby alive at her side.

Then, laid in Cobby's deck-chair, she spent days of silence, smiling, pallid now, though the backs of her hands remained of that hue named by Herbert Spencer "impure purple."

She saw Sueela come and go, saw her seated on the floor with her head leant upon Cobby, her eyes closed, "clothed and in her right mind" at Cobby's side; saw Mandaganya come and go; let Cobby hold her hand; but made no remark; hardly replied to anything: none knew her mind.

But during the fifth forenoon, lying outside the hut-door, she suddenly wished to know of Cobby: "Why you bring me back from the dead?"

"Aren't you glad like us others?" he asked.

She shrugged; glanced up at the glorious day; said: "The sun good. But you think me going to live? Me down; me dead; me done. My friends fail me; they plot together against me; and me not suspect it — God take away my understanding."

Cobby gently answered: "What you say is very wrong: Sueela loves you with the whole of her pure soul, and the stupendous thing which she has done she has done for you, in consequence of my having persuaded her that that would be for your good, if you came with me to England. As to my failing you, I shall explain to you the fix I was in, and you will see why I *could* not go into battle against Sueela's men: then you will repent bitterly

of having shot bullets at my life, which is your life, and of attempting to take your life which is my life.”

She shrugged. “Me down; me done. Me done loving; me done hating.”

“You don’t love *me*?”

“No.”

“Oh, but that’s nonsense; you do.”

She was silent; but presently said: “Maybe me live. The sun good. They have much wind in that country you come from? Maybe me go with you to that country. They say you save my life: now me your cow. Throw me into any old hut in that country.”

“No!” — he kissed her kaross— “I have decided: you shall not come perforce. I go alone — in a few days — dreadfully desolate, irretrievably bereaved — but I go, after having restored you to the throne from which I have helped to dethrone you.”

Now her eyes moved round to him. “Restore?”

“Yes.”

“How you —— ?” But now her interest in his statement failed, she letting her head drop despondently and, moving it slowly, muttered: “Me down. Maybe they rise in The North; but they never swear by Spiciewegiehotiu any more. Me down, me done.”

He put his lips on her hand, saying: “On the contrary, you are up — higher than you ever were. I only pray of you that in future, for my sake, in remembrance of me, you will not be always making war upon your neighbours.”

“Me?” she muttered, drooping, in that rueing tone of melancholia: “what me have to do with wars? Me done. War good; but it bad, it bad, for them that make it: it’s the sons that eat the wheat which the mothers thresh from the breasts they beat.”

“Well, if that be really so,” he answered, “war is worth the making, for man himself is of no importance, only the son of man. But since you *do* see that war is bad for some — for those very some whom it is the ruler’s business to protect — you will not now be too aggressive, and, as for the aggressions of others, I assure you that for the future no negro will ever dream of daring to molest or offend you.”

With fresh interest she sat up at this, saying: “You talk ... What you can do?”

“I have told Sueela of my decision,” he answered: “she will at once withdraw the M’Niami army, and Daisy will pay you a war-indemnity of a thousand. As to Nasandhlwana, I am now about to order him to withdraw, and to pay a war-indemnity of four thousand — —”

At this she laughed out a little, saying: “Nasandhlwana laugh!”

“On the contrary,” Cobby replied: “he will cry; his head will be waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears — tear-gas will make him sentimental ... Here comes Sueela: say something to her, for me, will you? Love her again, as she loves you and me.”

But to Sueela she had ceased to say anything, and when the next forenoon, which was bright and breezy, a spirit of life pricked her, and the whim sprang in her to go up White River as in glad old times for a bath with five of the sigodhlo Ph[oe]bes, Sueela was not invited.

Cobby saw her off from the sigodhlo back — not that he expected any peril for her, though crowds of rowdy troops were everywhere about; and after watching the bevy vanish into the river-bush, went back to his hut, whence he at once sent word in Sueela’s name to three colonels of Wo-Mashenya regiments near, requesting them to come to him.

When they had come, he, in the presence of Sueela seated near, listening, chin on fists, made them into an embassy to Nasandhlwana to bear this

message:

“Sir Cobby declares to Nasandhlwana that he is a god.

“He can easily destroy Nasandhlwana, his people, his capital, his cattle.

“But since Sir Cobby *looks* like just such a man as Nasandhlwana is, he does not expect Nasandhlwana to credit him with being a god before he proves it.

“So, three noons hence, Sir Cobby will appear in the form of a dove, crooning cooings of thunder, above Kranampya, Nasandhlwana’s capital kraal.

“But Sir Cobby is a god who abhors to destroy, unless he is disobeyed. So he is not going to destroy Kranampya, only to destroy so much of it as to show that he could destroy the whole, if he chose.

“Therefore, at that hour the population of Kranampya must evacuate the town, assembling somewhere well outside it. Whoever stays within will die, as all the horses, and kine, and dogs, in it will die. Nor must anyone enter it for some hours after Sir Cobby has come and gone, or he may die. And, as for those assembled outside the town, they will all begin to weep bitter tears, as if all their mothers had died, and some few will be slightly wounded.

“At once after which Nasandhlwana will make haste to withdraw all his men from Wo-Ngwanya territory, and to send four thousand chosen cattle to Queen Spiciewegiehotiu as war-indemnity, and as recompense for the wanton wrong done by Sebingwe, his father, in permitting men of the Wo-Mashenya army to wage war upon Queen Spiciewegiehotiu in her previous war with Daisy.”

The three colonels, having heard it with their ears, sat there astare, three different pictures of scare. Blessed is he who hath not seen, and yet hath believed! and blessed were they.

“Now, pray,” Cobby said to the one in the centre, “repeat to me the message.”

And that one began: “Sir Cobby say to Nasandhlwana — He God! He come from Heaven! Angels his servants! He can — —”

But he was interrupted. Five wild-eyed girls, gasping, burst in, competing in screaming: “*Sueela!* Spiciewegiehotiu — they steal her!”

All sprang upright, Cobby quite white, none black, to gather presently from the girl’s gasps that a gang of some thirty, just as the girls had dressed after bathing, had burst from bush, snatched up Spiciewegiehotiu, and dashed off with her on mules — north-westward....

Cobby’s heart was rent: she still not well....

Who were those men? Were they M’Niami? Were they Wa-Mashenya? The girls could not say.

“They not M’Niami!” cried out Sueela.

“They not Wa-Mashenya!” cried one of the Wa-Mashenya: “They go on mules! They Swingoni!” these Swingoni being tribesmen rather wild and degraded, semi-independent, but paying some tribute to Wo-Mashenya.

But Cobby at once suspected Nasandhlwana, at any rate of connivance, reminded by the event that Sebingwe had once proposed marriage with Nasandhlwana to Spiciewegiehotiu, that Nasandhlwana had desired white, and a white fist Cobby banged at the three Wa-Mashenya, telling them of woe to Wo-Mashenya, if she was not delivered up within five days. “Go! tell Nasandhlwana this with the rest.”

“Wait, me give you my Mustapha!” Sueela cried, running out with them; and one on Mustapha flew forerunning the others.

Then followed two days of care for Cobby, he now alone, for, since the aeroplane had to be inspected and prepared, he had been unable to go with Sueela, who had dashed off with cavalry to track the ravishers.

On the second gloaming the aeroplane stood ready at the top of the kotla with a guard of M’Niami round it, and half the night, and all the following morning mobs were filing near to peer at it, all the awna being populous to its bottom: for to farthest M’Niami and Wo-Mashenya the fame of that strange carriage of Cobby’s with only two wheels in tandem, and the mad steeds inside, had flown, and it was now assumed that this must be that motor-bicycle, or some other kind of a like thing. But when, an hour before noon, Cobby walked out to it, bounded upon it, the rough row and power of it now fretting every ear, the propeller spinning a mere nebula and remnant of visibility, then were wild eyes intent, the mouth hardly now robbing from the eye the time to toss a remark aside, or to moisten the lips with spittle; and now he was dashing over ashes and cinders down the length of the Square, as many thousands now fleeing with screams from before his career as were darting with howling after him, everyone looking to see him go scooting out where the great gates had lately stood; but when, somewhat before he got half to the market, all at once God took him, and fluttering triumphant he reigned on his throne in the air, then there arose and floated to him a drone of many adoring, and many were felled.

It was the same at Kranampya, a kraal in a charming vale, all orchard, maize and palmyra, and white blossoms of baobab, whither he had twice before ridden; and, knowing precisely its compass-point, he arrived before noon, spied its folk crowded two miles outside it, and, flying low thrice over it, dropped one high-explosive bomb, four “mustard” gas-shells (dichlorethyl sulphide), and four chlorines; then into the nest of kneeling people laid a few “egg-bombs” of tear-gas to make them mourn a little because of him; and in a little while was taken out of their sight.

But he came down badly, not in Eshowe, but in a meadow, smashing his chassis; and there in that meadow the monoplane remained, as its wreck

may there remain for many a day, a monument of man's mentality immensely more monumental than those remains of ancient "civilizations" which at various places confront one in that country.

XXXIX. THE SWINGONI



WHEN COBBY WALKED back into Eshowe he found Sueela now there — speechless for grief, she not having succeeded in tracking the gang of ravishers, though she had now discovered that they were, in fact, a gang of the ungoverned Swingoni.

This was soon confirmed by urgent messengers from Nasandhlwana asserting that the guilty ones were Swingoni, who had thus turned to their purpose the turmoil and disturbed condition of things, their motive being to beguile Nasandhlwana into purchasing the white girl, for they had sent him an offer to sell her at a certain spot, and Nasandhlwana was then starting off with half an impi, first to win Spiciewegiehotiu of them by purchase, and then to exterminate them. As to the other demands of Cobby, these were being met.

Such was the message: but for Cobby and Sueela to sit still and wait upon Nasandhlwana's activity was impossible; therefore, having ascertained the proposed route of Nasandhlwana's party, they started off to come up with it on the motor-bicycle.

They came up with it the same night; and two nights later arrived at the rendezvous given by the Swingoni — a mountain-road, where, in a grove, four gods of wood stood under four marulas.

When Nasandhlwana had had drums beaten, a drum within the grove answered, and soon two Swingoni appeared, who arranged the details of a meeting to take place the next day between their chief and the King on the brink of the lake beneath.

This lake could be vaguely seen gleaming remotely below in moonlight, a river-like pool, leagues long, though hardly four hundred yards across; and it was almost known that in the village beyond this Spiciewegiehotiu must be.

So, to be nearer to her, Cobby and Sueela, after the bivouac and a meal, rode down on the motor, some four or five miles, sometimes with tense brakes, to the lake's brink, it being then late toward the midnight of a mild night, benign, sanctified, sighing as in satisfaction and fulfilment, its little breaths brindling that brand of brilliance which bridged the lake's breadth, treading-water within that brand, like rabbles of bathers bathed in beatitude; and for over an hour they two stood there holding the motor, alone, as it were, in the world, though a roof or two looked out through wood across the water; both hushed and mournful; and with a low brow she muttered: "You go — and without her. So all me do me do for nothing. And now she not love me any more."

"Yes, she loves you," he answered, "and will soon forgive fully. She is not quite well yet."

"She in Wo-Ngwanya, me in M'Niami, you gone where the sun set, everything ended. Oh, my, me not want to live; me die: my mother say me born to die young."

"No, no" — he patted her — "you are still a child: life will unfold for you new interests. She will borrow you often from Daisy, and some day *I* may be driven to come again to see her and you."

"It too far," she mourned; "she and me wait, and you not come. If you come, you find me bad. Me bad now. You not — know — what me done since the war. When me close to you me good, but a devil in me."

"Nothing of the sort," he confidently answered: "you are very good, and dear, and pure *au fond*. What you imagine to be a devil is God, who is all in

all, and nothing is but Him. Look, the moon, that's He in beauty; and the man-in-the-moon, that's He in buffoonery. And He some day will be perfectly good, I think; and meantime, when He is good, and when He is bad, is perfectly working ... What have you done since the war?"

Her head bent. "Me go crazy, me untrue to you, me dance at you, me spit at you ..."

"Oh, fie: and at poor Daisy?"

"Oh, *he* — Eheh."

"Well, then, I am cross. All that is so undistinguished ... But never mind, forgive Him in you and yourself in Him till seventy times, and ever afresh be trying to be pretty and princely. And when you achieve, that's He succeeding in achieving, and when you fail, that's He succeeding in failing."

"Me remember ... Me love you too much! It not love; me adore the dust you've stood on. And you go ... you go ... To-night me tell you good-bye. You owe me one last kiss."

"Yes, the third. But why to-night?"

"Me not know. Something make me want it now."

Now he put an arm round her, saying: "Very good, come — my dear."

On which, taking his face between her hands, she kissed him long, continually, solemnly, kissing his soul, conscious of the moments, and of long time to come in which those moments would not be; then cried out "Oh!" and succumbed to her knees, still holding him.

When he had raised her, they stood side by side in silence, looking over the trail of light on the lake, and that pretty tripping of the ripples within it, like treaders steadily treading water, while the warbling, and warning, of a wedrigo (accent on "go"; sort of owl) sounded out of wood near on their

left, until Sueela breathed: “My goodness, that wedrigo ... sure token of death ...” and then again breathed: “What that is coming there?”

Cobby also saw a black object blotching the blaze of the trail on the lake, without comprehension; but in some moments more Sueela, who was of an extreme keenness of sight, cried out, even as she rushed from him to plunge into the water: “It is Spiciewegiehotiu! She escape!”

This was so: and before the two heads on the lake met Cobby heard shoutings on the further shore, then saw some thirty canoes, full of pursuers, spurt off ...

Highly excited, drawing his revolver, he fired at those in the line of light.

This, however, although he emptied his magazine, did not stay any of them, and madly on they came paddling, gaining fast, and presently raining at Cobby arrows which these Swingoni poison with the entrails of the caterpillar n’gwa: so he was soon hiding behind the bicycle, until he hurried with it to the girls, who emerged on the shingle some hundred yards in advance of the Swingoni.

“Fly — they kill —— !” Spiciewegiehotiu panted at him, she herself starting off immediately for the timber near.

“No, come! come! the motor!” he called, running some steps after her.

But that might have been well, if he had not interfered; for it appears that she, not aware that help was near her, had carefully concocted her escape, had been conscious that she would be chased, but still had been confident of making safe away within the timber.

He, however, knowing nothing of her plans, could hardly have helped interfering: and she, seeing him and Sueela in a peril which each instant grew while she and he stood arguing, darted to the motor, which immediately started, she between Cobby’s arms, Sueela on the carrier.

One minute more and the savages were splashing up to the shore, well left behind, but not affrighted from flying after that marvellous cart that carried off their prize, nor frightened to shoot, since Spiciewegiehotiu, whom they did not want to shoot, was quite covered by the other two.

And presently, with loud mouths of discovery, they found themselves coming closer to the motor, which, thus loaded, was now only slowly moving up a steep foothill of the mountain; and soon nearly ceased to move.

Whereupon the air became thick with missiles, Cobby coaxing the motor all he could in vain: and the fact that at that hill-top, not far, was deliverance, and the fact that the whole misery was unnecessary, since the men were willing to sell their captive, added to the affliction and prickly-heat of his fix. He even contemplated surrender, but dreaded being killed before the meaning of the surrender could be understood; and now Spiciewegiehotiu called out: “You get shot! me run” — making a movement to dismount; but Cobby’s elbows instinctively nipped to hold her under her cover, and in the same moment he was aware of a whisper somewhere that said: “*Good health!*” the motor now leaping onward, Sueela gone.

When he flung a glance backward, he saw her running, struggling forward, but backward from him, he fast abandoning her....

What in the world a man should do now he did not know. All the ruth that was in him, all the God’s pity, groaned and rued. To dash back to her on foot ... but Spiciewegiehotiu could not manage the motor.... To be with either was bitterly to abandon the other....

As for Spiciewegiehotiu, not having Sueela’s actual experience that getting off sometimes made the motor go, she did not at first know what had caused the motor to spurt forward, but very quickly realized in some

way that Sueela had leaped off; and immediately a scream: “*Sueela!* Make it stop!”

Cobby now thought of stopping to wait for Sueela, the ground here near the hill’s brow being not so steep, but when he now peered round, it was to see Sueela down on the ground, and the foremost group of Swingoni almost upon her: so, seeing the needlessness of imperilling Spiciewegiehotiu and himself, he shrank from stopping — though, in fact, if Spiciewegiehotiu had been shot, it would have been by some random arrow not meant for her, she being wealth to the savages; and over the hill’s top they swiftly went, Spiciewegiehotiu in a flush of rage beating upon his face, shrieking, wriggling in his grip to be free, he crying to her: “It is useless!” she in a scarlet fever of passion still screaming at him: “Cobby, let me *go!*” But on, downhill, he bounded, till after a while their fight capsized the bicycle; and when she started up to fly back, he caught her, and they fought, they by this time being quite out of sight of the tribesmen.

Spiciewegiehotiu flopped down upon the path, clasped her hands on the top of her head, and bawled: “*Sueela!*”

Only when Cobby represented to her that Nasandhlwana’s force was near on the mountain, that Sueela might be merely wounded, that something might yet be done, did she consent to go on with him.

But when near morning he and she — for she would not be kept away — and with them the King himself and a posse of spears afresh reached the spot, it was to see the body of Sueela decapitated, her hands hacked off, for the savages had gnashed; and when the posse crossed the lake at a drift to take vengeance, the village was still and dead, the slayers fled.

Thus Sueela met her death there: it had all happened in three crammed minutes of impulse, accident, and catastrophe; and the moving Finger, having writ, moved on.

XL. EN ROUTE



TO NASANDHLWANA, AS to all, Cobby was now, in fact, “a god”; and it was with a squad of Wo-Mashenya cavalry that he, on the motor, and Spiciewegiehotiu, horsed, re-entered Eshowe.

There already Spiciewegiehotiu saw everything changed; the foreign regiments all withdrawn; coming for her along the country-roads, shuffling with brush of shoulders, both bull and cow, in crowds, in monstrous mobs, trotting with rowdy knock-knees, and orbs distraught, and horns transformed to the oddities of form to which the Wa-Mashenya warp all their horns; and flocks of Wa-Ngwanya on all paths, thronging back to their abandoned kraals, thronging out from Eshowe to welcome Spiciewegiehotiu with shoutings of frenzy, for throughout Wo-Ngwanya like loosened effluvia had flown the news that Cobby was “a god,” *godlike* beyond doubt, and on their side, their Queen’s knight and might, and not *they* were defeated, but Nasandhlwana was defeated, and M’Niami: and they were coming, had come, again, singly, in multitudes of groups, grinning pilgrimages, gay of gait, so that now every wood round Eshowe was full of brisk fingers picking withies with which to rebuild; and in very few days a new Eshowe stood there.

But Spiciewegiehotiu was stone — showed no elation, her face blanched like marble; she hardly spoke; only, suddenly, as she sat astare, she would clasp her hands on the top of her head to bawl: “*Sueela!*”

Of which sorrow of hers Cobby writes: “I have heard her say many gross things, as was to be anticipated, but, such is that gift of grace which she has

from Heaven, I have hardly ever seen her do anything gross and ugly, until now that she shows this negro grief. No, here, I admit, she is not pretty, her mouth opening oblong, as she bawls '*Sueela!*' the whole exhibition having that indecent aboriginalness of the motions and emotions of children and lower animals; but all the more heart-breaking for me is this tribulation because of its naked and shameless sincerity; and something in me, too, screams '*Sueela.*' ..."

Sueela's body, brought back, was taken to Mandaganya's singed domain, that the Queen might not see it, and there, on the third day after the return, was buried in the presence of Daisy. Two hours after which, while Cobby was busied about a waggon with six negroes who had eagerly agreed to go three hundred miles with him, he now making final preparations for the trek, a deputation of councillors, having Mandaganya for their spokesman, approached him, to beg him not to go, but to wed the Queen, and be their King.

Now, no protest so far had come from Spiciewegiehotiu as to his preparations — no prayer to stay — nothing. And this deputation surprised him.

"How do you know that the Queen would wed me?" he asked them; upon which one of the councillors winked at him; another cried out: "That all right — na!" and he understood that now Spiciewegiehotiu was moving to hold him.

And though he knew that she would not now burn his things — for he had observed the fuel-heaps under the waggons, and had given her to know that that was a good thing for her and for the sigodhlo that she had not accomplished her will — yet he now felt a misgiving, a fear lest she might be at some scheme to keep him.

“Now, Mandaganya,” he answered, “this is not fair. You know that I am not going eagerly, but because I must, because I, like you, am a priest, an elder, *knowing more* than children, and having duties to do. And you but make harder the doing of what has to be done when you ask me not to do it.”

She bent her head; and they left him.

The next day everything was ready for the departure: but, for the heart-break of parting, he delayed still three days, spent mainly with the Queen, to whom he showed the uses of many things which he was leaving with her, he meaning to go with only one waggon; and she made no prayer that he would remain, being now all shut in herself, dumb, sullen, anon muttering the name of her dead friend.

But on the afternoon of departure an uproar arose which Cobby afterwards believed to have been engineered by her....

It was somewhat before sunset; his six were awaiting him with the waggon in the Square, he having been in the royal hut an hour to say good-bye, when the populace began to clamour at the sigodhlo gate, got in, or were *let* in, got into the royal grounds, or were *let* in, and came roaring in thousands up the avenue, clamouring: “Marry Sir Cobby! Make Sir Cobby remain! Make Sir Cobby King!”

In the midst of which Spiciewegiehotiu suddenly flung herself before him, holding him, saying with an imploring face: “You stay, no? They call you a god, they want you for their King. You stay with them and me, no?”

Cobby groaned. “Ah, how pitiless of you, to make it so bitterly difficult for me! If you see me leaving my soul behind me, do you not conceive that I go because I ought, and must?”

“And you think me live?” she cried to him: “Sueela dead — through *you*: you not always act right! You think me live? Three days after you gone me

stiff dead!”

A flush of resentment rushed up his face. “Oh, shame, to attempt to hold me with such a statement! But even *that* shall not hold me. Understand that I *go*.”

“What! You say that to me? Whether me live or die?”

“Yes! I say so!”

Upon which up at once she sprang in a flush of passion to rush to the door, to throw it open, and to shriek to the people with the shrill tongue of a shrew: “Go way! He care nothing about you and me! He not want me! Go way! Go way!”

Then she crashed the shutter into its place afresh, and went to stand with her back propped upon the wall, all pallid now, he walking about with pocketed hands, dumb, wrung with sorrow.

And presently he stepped to her, held her shoulders, touched each of her cheeks with a kiss, she like an image which is kissed, while a breath that trembled and broke rose in him in a struggle to utter “good-bye”; and not till he was well in flight from her did she make one step to restrain him, but then stopped, and dropped down, staring, while he with a bent body fled away for the gateway, sobs now gobbling out of his god-forgotten solitude.

So he went away; but during the next days made but slow progress, lingering within Wo-Ngwanya, bidding a repining good-bye to its rills and wilds and winds. A garnet in a fragment of gneiss that rolled down a roadside hill to him he kissed before dropping into his pocket; he picked up a sprig of grass, of indigo, a francolin’s feather, to drop into his pocket for parting’s sake, his heart aching.

Anon he would say droopingly to the executioner, who had proffered himself with enthusiasm to be of the six: “Well, Sandelikatze, my friend, how do you say that she is faring?” to which Sandelikatze would ever

answer: “You not fret: she get over it. When anybody once try to die, and not die, they not try again.”

On the second evening they turned into Hyena Pass, and on the third evening were still no further than that Hyena Kranz where the cavern is in which Cobby had chloroformed Macray and the rest of the sleepers, and had been arrested by the Queen’s men dashing out from ambush. There they stayed the night; and he, listening to the cascade expatiating to itself on its special case, lifting his eyes to the scintillating bit of sky visible within the theatre of cliff, sat for hours at the cavern’s mouth, smoking, thinking of how in that near thicket Sueela’s lips, sealed for evermore, had kissed him a second time of thrice, and he had twice wildly kissed the Queen in the interior chamber, to be sentenced to those thirty days which he had served in “The Elephant.”

All his six were asleep in the exterior hall when he walked into that interior hall, to sleep on the spot, as nearly as he could recall, where the Queen had slept, or pretended to sleep.

And presently he slept — not for long, wakened by the ache of the weight of that solitude that lay upon him, and for life would lie, feeling now, as not before, how really the being of his cousin had become an ingredient of his blood, and how grievous without her, as without serum, was his disease. He groaned in the dark; but did not harbour the impulses that spurred him to turn back to her kisses.

And again he slept, longer this time; but this time had a nightmare in which he seemed to be fighting with a cheetah, which floored and was choking him — till he woke: and now he found that some forearm was over his throat interfering with his breathing, and somebody asleep near him.

He sat up, could see nothing but, groping warily, felt a face ... hair.....

And now fulness of love overflowing flooded his soul, exultancy, extravagance of gratitude, a broken-hearted lowliness, he dropping back to sob on his face a long while, steadily but soft, so as not to wake her.

XLI. AFRICA



“SO YOU HAVE come?” he said to her, seated beside her in the morning light.

She shrugged, she smiled a little, hugging her shins. “Eheh, me come.”

“You love me?”

“Eheh. And you, no?”

“Eheh.”

“So you come back now with me, no?”

“Ah, now, don’t start that again ... I am all in heaven! I love God! And you?”

She shrugged. “Eheh.”

“So you actually come with me ... I can’t, I can’t, realize it!... But what in the world have you done about the Government?”

“Me proclaim Rambya King. Me get Mandaganya to consent.”

He clapped his fingers. “You sagacious thing! You wise nut!” — this Rambya being a nobody, a blacksmith, but noted for strength in the head. (He had been poisoned at Cobby’s “banquet.”)

“And what,” he asked, “do the people say about Rambya?”

“They trust in me. Most of them say yes.”

“Good, good.... And how did you come?”

“Me come on a horse to the top of the pass, then me come on alone on foot. The town come after me; me order them back; they lift up their voice and bawl ... But they not love me more than me love them.” Now her countenance convulsed, tears flowed down her stony cheeks, till on a

sudden she chuckled, leaping up, saying: "Come, let's get away before me run back."

That evening they were among the foot-hills south of the mountains, where, seated on a stone with her, holding her thumb, looking over plain and wood that rolled away to the frame of space, he said to her: "We two shall need, I can see, to be extremely distant and discreet with each other, during this great trek."

"Why so?" she wished to know.

"There are reasons. One is that you are going to a land of a good many handsome and gifted men of your own race, and I think it only fair to you that you should see these beforehand, so as to make a deliberate selection, before I rivet you irrevocably to me."

At which she smiled a little on him, with something of motherly pity, saying: "Poor Cobby: you something like a child. Cobby soon see."

"I mean it, though," he said: "you, too, will see."

"Yes, me chiefly, poor me ... As to those handsome men in that country, me will love them only with my eyes, Cobby; Cobby me love with my backbone, no, Cobby?" She touched his knee, and his being flushed to hues of emotion like the vacuum tube flushing to chromes of beauty at the first stroke of the pump.

That night, however, and several nights, they slept within separate coverts, until they were suddenly abandoned by their six companions, this taking place on the sixth midnight.

On that sixth day, during the rest following the midday food, the whim took Spiciewegiehotiu to be given instruction in the use of the machine-gun, which Cobby had considered needful to bring with him. "Show me how you do it," she begged him; so he got up, deposited the gun on the ground, and, sitting before it — one of the little Vickers — exhibited how to thread the

belt-tag through the feed-block, how to drag down the crank-handle once, and once again, and then let her thumb the thumb-pieces, and be shaken by the shocks of its strong agitation, as it threw out a few bullets.

Her verdict, as she stood up from it, was: “It good”; and then she wished to know: “But where you get the cartridges to put into the belt?” upon which he pointed out the small-arms ammunition-box in which the cartridges were, the six Wa-Ngwanya being spectators at the exhibition: and there the incident appeared to end.

But in the silence of that night Spiciewegiehotiu rose up, stole through bush to Cobby, assured herself that he slept, then went soft and woke the Wa-Ngwanya, led them to the waggon, and again, slowly, showed them how to load the gun. Two then took the S.A.A. box, one the tripod, one the gun, and she walked a mile with them northward to a spot where, they having now dropped prostrate before her, she said to them: “Show Rambya how to shoot the gun.... Tell him me say again me will be hoping in that country me go to that he soon add Wo-Mashenya to Wo-Ngwanya; but he better let M’Niami alone till Daisy dead.... Tell him me say Good luck ... Get up, my sons, let me kiss — —” She could utter no more.

So it was with opened arms that Cobby hurried to her early the next morning to exclaim: “The men are all gone!”

“My goodness!” says she: “they run away?”

“Yes, what in the world shall we do now?”

“Oh, well,” she said resignedly, “me-and-you, Cobby. Me know Africa: we get through. You drive, me your voorlooper, no?”

But Cobby was all in dismay; and in an hour another outcry from him: “The machine-gun is gone!”

“Gone ...?”

“The men have stolen it!”

“My goodness!”

“We may bitterly regret its absence before long!”

“Never mind, Cobby,” she said, her hands on his shoulders: “we fight with rifles, if we have to fight. Me-and-you, Cobby; me-and-you, no? Me give you a kiss.... That something like a machine-gun, no, Cobby?”

He called the oxen; they walked on.

And with many a care and scare, and with many a scrape and escape, they trekked many days — or say wended, one of the early incidents of the journey being their bursting into a belt of tsetse, out of which their cattle emerged infirm and collapsing one by one: whereupon, abandoning waggon and goods in uninhabited country, afoot they two confronted the realm whose name is Immeasurable, Innumerable, Immutable, Unimaginable, the Egyptian Sphinx, the Pan of Africa. Once north of the Sabi, once north of the Limpopo, they fought formal battles, with Spiciewegiehotiu as commander, the second struggle going on several days from a kopie on whose granite top was no water, they then naked save for a rag that might as well have been cast away, and haggard with a hunger which the “cabbage” scooped from the roots of leaves of the dwarfpalm hardly appeased.

But, tattered, famished, parched, chewing anon morsels of the soft wood of baobab to win a little moisture, reduced to the elements of being, brutish in need, they still were not savage nor brute, and Spiciewegiehotiu got still a sense of the god’s gesture when, on the top of that kopie, or where they halted in some darksome covert under vaults all informed with stars, she saw him conning the altitude of Alpha Andromedæ, remarking Alpha Eridani, connoting the slope of Canopus. “Me think me never to understand how that box tell where we are,” she would say; and would add: “There is only Cobby.”

Nor was that other box, of cardboard, so guarded by Cobby, less astounding — how thousands of cows could be crowded into that petty space. “This *paper* is *money* — cowries, as it were,” he told her, in English now — they lying one night within a limestone bunk behind bush, invisible to each other, thunders sounding outside, the drought now done, the rains of April puddling, the floods descending— “*money* is not wealth; how much *money* we two have! yet how little wealth: bread, butter, boots, is wealth: anything desirable for itself, acquired from Nature *by work*, *i.e.* by using Force or Power, and moving something by God’s help — that is wealth; and money *represents* wealth in some places, since it fills little space.”

“But it mine, this wealth!” she cried: “how you say it yours? How Caray can give it to you, if it mine?”

“Well, he did. It was buried — lost to you. Then he gave it me.”

“But how he could? My father’s wealth!”

“No, not your father’s; his “by law”; but fantastic laws are to be laughed at. *Well* is *good*, or God; *wealth* is *goods*, or God, or Power, or Force; the effect of Force is motion; and when Force moves anything, ‘*work*’ is said to be done, as when a planet flies, or a stone drops, or when by God’s help we wink, or plough: so *wealth* or *goods* belongs to workers who move things by Force, or Power, or God’s help, to acquire them from Nature. But your father could not have moved enough things in hundreds of years to acquire seven million pounds’ worth of things, and the laws that say that he did are laws made by lubbers, ‘lawyer’ minds, men who, not being trained in thought, cannot think, who, in so far as they are not scientists, know nothing, but are like children, who cannot build, but *play* at building, making sand-mounds, not houses of men. Anyway, there is no you and I. We will call the money yours, and I will spend it for you.”

“Oh, but no,” she muttered, “we call it yours, and me spend it for you.”

He answered: "It may spend itself in the rains close to our skeletons. Still fifty miles before the Limpopo."

It was soon after this that she generated him in their second (Limpopo) battle, she being, moreover, a great gun at game, and had, moreover, a singular knack in catching fish by different tricks, sometimes with nothing but her hand, a trick of the wrist, or a baobab-shell affixed to a stick, catching jack in the upper branches of the Zavora, barbel in the Limpopo, a knack that four or five times gave them life where game was lacking, and where no kraal, lost in the dark heart of the vast of some haunted forest, was wrought to sorrow with all their poverty and forlornness.

Yet, even in fever regions in the rains of April and May, their health remained excellent, and if Cobby anon desponded, not so Spiciewegiehotiu, who, in spite of her *grossesse*, was not often tired, never perspired, and when they got to the granite country, craggy with quartz outcrops, bordering upon the northern Boers, the girl-child to which Spiciewegiehotiu gave birth in a deserted village, in which not a dog was still visible — a girl-child to which they agreed to give the name "Sueela" — presently gave evidence of no little vigour and grip on life, in spite of its parents' training in trepidation and privation.

Thenceforth, the tokens of civilization now commencing to unfold themselves before them, the faring became merrier. Clothed now and comfortable in stomach, the three reached Pietermaritzberg; and at Port Natal Spiciewegiehotiu, although yonder in the North she had often watched the rotting *Florida* cocked on its rocks, widened her eyes one night at sight of the lines of lights of a liner, a street of dream and mystery on the sea, built by the Divinity that builded the sea and the bee's crib, and still trickier builds and trickier, increasingly....

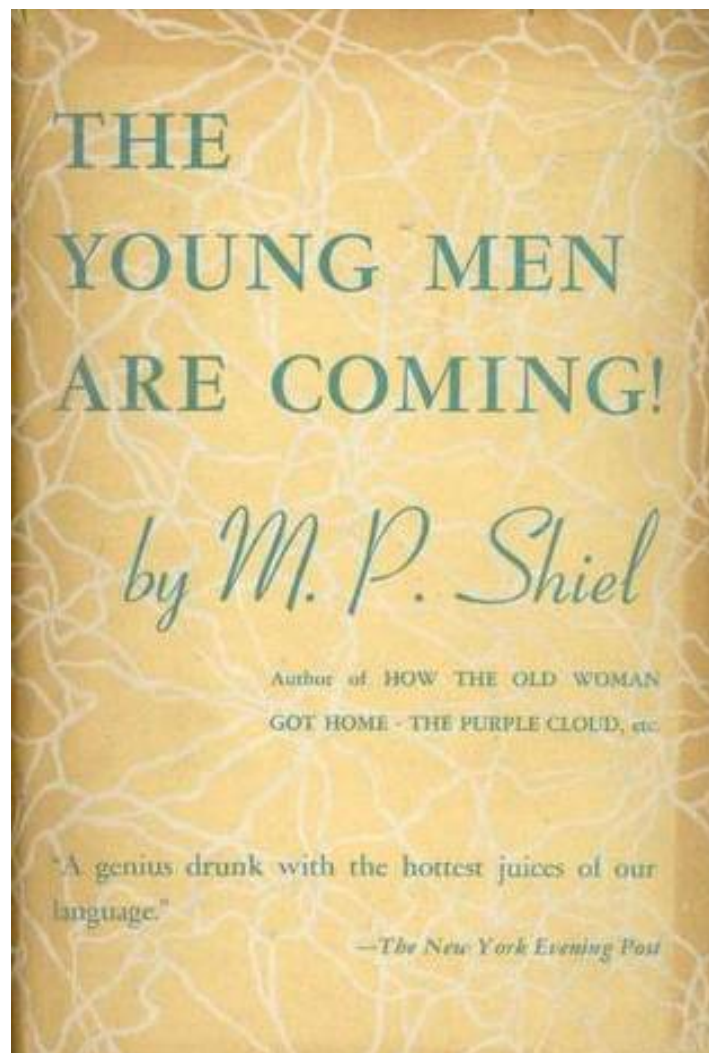
THE END

The Young Men Are Coming! (1937)



The Young Men are Coming! was first published by George Allen & Unwin in London and The Vanguard Press in New York in 1937. The publishing house was established in 1926 after the Garland Fund provided the company with a grant of one hundred thousand dollars. The Garland Fund was a left-wing institute that gave over two million dollars to radical projects over the course of the 1920's and 1930's. The Vanguard Press aimed to publish socialist classics and new radical works at an affordable price. Unsurprisingly, the company came under the watchful and censorious eye of the 'House Committee on Un-American Activities' (HCUA) in the 1940's, but ultimately survived the investigation and continued as an independent publisher until the 1980's.

Shiel dedicated most of the final decade of his life to crafting what he believed would be the true translation of *The Gospel of Luke*. He completed the work, but it was never released and a large section of it was lost after his death. *The Young Men are Coming!* was Shiel's last published novel in his lifetime. It is a challenging novel that explores ideas about social reform and upheaval through the tale of an alien from Jupiter.



The first edition

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*“Crabbed, age and youth cannot live together:
Age is full of grief, youth is full of pleasure.”*

SHAKESPEARE

TO

JOHN GAWSWORTH

I. PERPLEXITY AT PENPOLACK



THE TELLING OF the singular thing that befell Dr. (Oscar) Warwick — if it *is* singular — anyway, the extraordinary thing — may best be commenced by an extract from the Supplement to *The Penpolack Advertiser*, dated Saturday, February 23rd: for the local narrative in its local vernacular seems more intimate than the narratives given by the big newspapers. (This “Supplement” is a little leaf printed on one side by a press which leaves out a letter or so in each third word; and Penpolack is a townlet on the North Cornwall coast, well out west).

The Supplement, then, (published on Saturday), says:

CAREW’S CLAUSE YEW

The uprooting of this yew during the night of Monday last remains as hopeless a mystery as ever. Throughout the week knots of people may have been seen contemplating the fallen giant in Carew’s Clause, asking one another the same question — what convulsion of Nature could have been the cause of the tree’s fall. And no wonder: for Carew’s Clause yew-tree has long been one of the landmarks of this Hundred, it might be said of the Duchy, since many a picnic-party from far enough away have taken their pleasure in its spacious hollow. The tree is even said to be one of the three in the Kingdom that were flourishing in the era of the Druids, and we have the authority of Mr. Cory ton, our respected townsman, for stating that the tree bade fair to hold out yet another hundred years. And now all of a sudden Carew’s Clause yew lies low. At the peep of day on Tuesday, the

19th inst., a labourer named John Boscawen, passing by the clause on his way to the quarry, missed the familiar sight of the tree, and then to his amazement saw it prostrate, its roots exposed to view, and a great round grave in the ground where the yew had stood: in the graphic language of Mr. Coryton, “it looks as if some giant’s hand had grasped the yew, and dragged it up like a carrot”, and how to account for the phenomenon surpasses the wit of man. But for the regretted and mysterious disappearance from our midst of Dr. Warwick on that same Monday-Tuesday, some explanation might possibly have been forthcoming from so eminent a scientist anent this most curious event: as it is, it is impossible to understand anything of the matter: the tree that we long saw standing we now see lying — that is all we know of it. Needless to say, there has been no wind to speak of, nor does it look as if the yew had been struck by lightning (though there was something of a thunderstorm that Monday midnight — in fact, two), nor has the tree been blasted by any kind of explosive. It is reported that a curious dent in the sands near the tree was noticed on the Tuesday, a dent some hundreds of yards long, of the same shape “as if you pressed a brick slantways into dripping”, to quote John Boscawen; but any connection between this and the tree’s tragedy is hardly to be imagined. Suggestions have been made in the parish that the tree was dug up by some malignant hand, or dug up to get some treasure anciently buried there; but these hardly seem to come under the head of practical politics. Inspector Trelawny and others who have examined the roots deny that the yew was dug up: in fact, it would have taken a good many to “dig it up” within some hours, the roots being as big as the tree itself; and who among us could have had any malicious motive anent this inoffensive old giant, the pride of this parish? — the suggestion of malice seems nearly as fantastic as the other suggestion of “treasure”. The truth seems to be that the

yew's uprooting is due to some curious fit or sneeze of Nature, though of what character this sneeze can be we must confess ourselves at a loss to suggest; and we can but express the sympathy of the borough with Mr. Frederick Carew, Snr., in the loss of this venerable old tree.

So much as to the yew; but the perplexity of Penpolack that week-end by no means ended with the yew: for it is clear that two other things still more puzzled it; of which two here is one:

DR. WARWICK'S DISAPPEARANCE

We regret on going to press to have to say that we are unable to throw further light on this matter.

For the past eleven years we of Penpolack parish have had living in our midst, like one of ourselves, a philosopher of the rank of Darwin, Kant, Spencer — Dr. Oscar Warwick, F.R.S.; and the parish, like the universal world, has been touched and appalled at his most queer disappearance; if the parish is rather less agitated than the rest of the nation, that is only owing to the fact that the honour attached to the Doctor's presence among us has become a little stale by habit. Morning and evening we have seen him going for his walks in his Inverness cloak, showing white locks of hair under his wideawake hat, with his oak-stick, and his old dog, "Guncotton", (so called for his loudness, in youth, and his fluffiness). Shall we ever see him that way again? He always walked up of a morning through the town, then down to the beach by St. Aubyn Lane; and, as he reached the beach, Mr. C. E. Couch, of St. Michael's Farmhouse, would set his kitchen-clock to seven past seven: for he knew that at that second Dr. Warwick's foot would touch the shore. From that point the Doctor would walk on westward to the quarry, where he would start running, and would run as far as Devil's Cave before you come to Penclew Point — the cave in which his hat, and

his cloak all blood-stained, have now been found. Two or three who have chanced to see him at the end of this run say that the running seriously “took it out of him”: but that made no difference to Dr. Warwick — he must have his daily run. Let us hope that he may yet be seen running, many a day, between Polsnear Quarry and Devil’s Cave.

His disappearance, however, is wrapped in a sinister mystery. The discovered facts, so far, are as follows:

On the Monday-Tuesday of his disappearance Dr. Warwick was alone in “Caerwent” house with his old servant, Miss P. Collins, more familiarly known to us as “Pruie”: alone, we say, for last week Mrs. Warwick (or “Dame Felicia Warwick”, as her official title is) had gone to Bristol to attend the Annual Conference of the General Federation of Trade Unions. This distinguished lady, who is known to have been associated with her husband in some of his discoveries and theories, and loyally gave up to him the fame, while doing much of the work, wrote four times from Bristol to Dr. Warwick between the Friday and the Monday — marriage in this case, as we know, being an ideal thing, a most intimate and beautiful union of two congenial geniuses.

The one child of Dr. and Dame Felicia Warwick is their promising and tenderly-loved son, Mr. Ivor Oscar Warwick, aged twenty-four, at present the engineer-in-charge of the electric-power works at Bermondsey, London. Many of us know him well by sight, it having been his habit to come down to spend his week-ends with his distinguished father and mother, as he did on Friday evening of last week. He left again for London — he declares that he left — he was seen to leave — by the 3.17 up-train on Monday afternoon last. But between the Friday and the Monday, on *this* visit, Mr. Ivor Warwick did something new, which we cannot omit to report: he called upon Sir P. Borlase St. Aubyn, and asked Sir Borlase for the hand in

marriage of the charming Miss Patricia St. Aubyn, whom we of this parish have so much admired on horseback, and indeed on foot. Sir Borlase St. Aubyn now declares that to that moment he had not known that his daughter and Mr. Ivor Warwick had even seen each other; and we are able to gather that the young gentleman's advance was rejected with some resentment on the father's part. We fear, too, it must be mentioned that in that interview Mr. Ivor Warwick threatened to have his way, whatever the young lady's father might say. That was on the Saturday afternoon at three o'clock. On the following Tuesday night about nine Miss "Paddy" St. Aubyn was found to have vanished from her home, no one yet knows why or wherefore, for Mr. Ivor Warwick is declaring himself as innocent and astonished in the matter as any of our readers.

Mr. Ivor Warwick, we say, was seen to leave Penpolack at 3.17 p.m. on Monday last; Dr. Warwick was thus left alone with old "Pruie": so that the rest of the story is Pruie's. Pruie says that the Doctor retired to rest as usual on Monday night as ten-thirty was striking, the Doctor's life being timed by a ship's chronometer such as have detached escapements, and never lose or gain a second; and Pruie herself was soon afterwards asleep. But she is a light sleeper, and at about two in the morning she was awaked by the Doctor's stealthy step on the stair, then heard him first fumble about a little below, then go out of doors. Never before had any such thing happened at "Caerwent"; and, as anything out of the common in a household so ordered by clockwork was (naturally) alarming to her, she lay listening spell-bound. In about ten minutes, as she thinks, she seemed to hear a most queer sort of laugh somewhere, and then a curious kind of roaring row outside, "a tearing, breaking row", as she describes it. This seemed to come from Carew's Clause, and, Pruie is convinced, had something to do with the uprooting of the yew-tree. This row held her still more spellbound; but she

was going to get up to see, when she distinctly heard Dr. Warwick come indoors again. Then, hearing nothing more for three or four minutes, she crept out to the stair, standing ready to run back, but listening; could see light in the drawing-room below; could hear Dr. Warwick open a book-case in there, and distinctly heard him say in a very choked and agitated tone of voice “Thank you, My Lords”. Then again after some seconds she heard him say “Thank you, Sirs, thank you, thanks”, then after some seconds more, “Thank you, My Lords, thank you, thank you” — and, hearing this queer talking, always in the same words, “thank you, thanks”, and no one there to hear, her “head seemed to turn”, as she says. As she stood in this condition, clinging to the rail of the stair, something or other gave her a new shock, for she insists that she suddenly heard “*inside her head*” — though here it is not so easy to follow her seriously — she loudly heard “inside her head” something utter the words, “*this beautiful moon*” — words which somehow (she says) affected her mind most powerfully — not exactly with fear (though she felt sure that a ghost was close to her), but with some sort of most powerful emotion, she says: so much so, that she has not been able to “get the words off her mind”, and they still “make her shed many tears”. The next thing was that she heard the old “Guncotton”, the dog, give one yelp in the drawing-room, as if hurt; she then heard Dr. Warwick moan in a low tone in his throat, with much emotion, “The dear ones!”; then, “thank you, My Lords, thank you, thanks”. The next thing was that, somewhere, all at once, she heard a most peculiar sound — a sound which (she says) it is impossible to describe— “something like singing, yet not exactly singing, but very, very pretty” — which lasted two seconds or so; and the next thing was that she heard the Doctor go out of doors again, this time leaving open the French-window that he went out by.

She has neither seen nor heard him since: for by the time it occurred to the old woman in her agitation to run to a window, the Doctor must have turned the corner of the garden-hedge, and was gone.

All this, of course, makes rather curious evidence: but now comes the part of Pruie's evidence that is so curious as to be well-nigh incredible — though, for that matter, she seems so certain of what she asserts, that it is difficult to see quite what to think in the matter. She says that after waiting anxiously till 3 p.m. the next day for the Doctor's and the dog's return — for the dog also was missing all day — then talking to Inspector Trelawny about the matter, then wiring to Mrs. Warwick at Bristol that the Doctor had not come home, she was sitting in the kitchen about 5 p.m., when she heard a sound of furtive footsteps which flew up the stair. Now, "Caerwent" stair is just outside the kitchen, so she was able to rush to the kitchen-door in time to see a young man "in a straw hat" just vanishing at the stair-top. And who was that young man? The old woman insists — is sure — that it was Mr. Ivor Warwick. And yet there are said to be many proofs that at 5 p.m. on Tuesday last Mr. Ivor Warwick was in his power-station in Bermondsey, London. So there is something strange here. Pruie heard the person above rush into Dr. Warwick's laboratory; and, though very unnerved, she presently plucked up courage to go up, and tap at the (locked!) door. There was no answer. She called "Mr. Ivor", and there was no answer. By this time she knew that "Guncotton" was in there with the young man of "the straw hat", for the dog had whimpered at the door inside. Then she tried again, saying this time "Mr. Ivor, do you know anything about the Doctor?", and this time a voice within— "*the voice of Mr. Ivor*" — answered in the words, "Pruie, it is all right, you make yourself small". Could all this have been *dreamt*? Pruie herself admits that "make yourself small" is not at all like Mr. Ivor Warwick's way of talking. Anyway, she

then went away, and for three hours (she says) kept a sharp watch inside the kitchen door, but finally fell asleep in her chair, wearied out no doubt after her troubled night and day. When she opened her eyes it was nine in the night, and she then found that she was alone in the house, the dog, too, gone, as at this hour Miss “Paddy” St. Aubyn was gone.

The next (Wednesday) forenoon Dr. Warwick’s cloak and hat were found by some boys in Devil’s Cave, the cloak bloodstained, with two rents like stabs in the breast. It also transpires according to the evidence of Mr. John Gwennap, of “The Stores”, Boscawen village, that at about 3 p.m. on Tuesday a young gentleman with a dog, and without a hat, offered him for sale a diamond, which he bought for £10, and has since found to be worth £700; the young gentleman then bought a straw hat, some ham, and half a loaf; and it cannot be denied that the young gentleman, as described, was very like Mr. Ivor Warwick.

This is all so far known of this most strange affair. Meantime, Dame Felicia Warwick has arrived at “Caerwent”, and the search for Dr. Warwick, for the dog, and for Miss St. Aubyn is being vigorously prosecuted.

So much as to Dr. Warwick; but, if *The Advertiser’s* editor was puzzled at the uprooting of the yew, and at Dr. Warwick’s and Miss St. Aubyn’s disappearances, even deeper, one fancies, must have been his state of mental helplessness in the face of what follows:

DREAMINGS EXTRAORDINARY

Monday night last appears to have been set apart by some of our fellow-townsmen to dreamings of a rather extraordinary character. The moon that night was at the full, but whether this fact had anything to do with the phenomenon, or whether Mab and all her fairies were abroad that nightlong

is beyond our divining: we can but give the facts as they have been given to us.

It is mainly on the statement of our respected townsman, Mr. "Harry" Killigrew, Jnr., of Killigrew Bros., Builders, that we report the following:

On Monday night, or rather in the small hours of Tuesday morning, Mr. H. P. Killigrew dreamt that he found himself scouting in some most wondrous country, and there, somehow or other, there occurred mightily to his mind these words, "My God is in his gauds at the Organ". Now, we all know how powerful are the emotions which overcome us in the shadowy atmosphere of our dreams, but the emotion of this particular dream seems to have been something out of the common. Mr. Killigrew awoke — in tears; or rather was waked by Mrs. H. P. Killigrew, who had noticed his emotion, and had herself awoke from a similar vision. The emotion (as Mr. Killigrew gives it) appears to have been an experience of unspeakable happiness, of the deepest peace; but though the sensations of the dream remained with him through the Tuesday, to such an extent that, like some young lover drunk with love, he could give his mind to no business, he said nothing of the dream to anybody until the evening, when he attended a committee-meeting of the C.E.M.S. (Church of England Men's Society), of the local branch of which Mr. "Harry" Killigrew is the hon. treasurer. It was in the vestry, after the meeting, that, in conversation with the Rev. J. D. Tarring, Mr. Killigrew gathered the singular fact that both the vicar and Mrs. Tarring had the previous night experienced a dream of the like delightful kind as his own, accompanied, like his own, with certain words that somehow occurred to the mind in a most fervent and passionate fashion, the words in this case turning out to be these, "Music is the name of my Love, Who teaches dances to my heart, step-dances to my heart's heart". Being more and more astonished at this matter, Mr. Killigrew mentioned it to Mr. T. C. Robartes,

of the Coal Wharf, on meeting him in High Street after the C.E.M.S. meeting, only to hear that Mr. Robartes had himself had a like dream on Monday night! And what were the words that had occurred in Mr. Robartes' dream? they were, "My Love is in His jewels at the Organ" — the identical words (very near) that had occurred to Mr. and Mrs. "Harry" Killigrew! Surely there is something unusual here, taking as accurate the facts handed to us. And this is not all: for Mr. Robartes further reported to Mr. Killigrew that he had heard from Miss "Meg" Lee, of the Almshouse, that she also had experienced a dream of this kind, with like memorable words: the words in her case being, "I will wail to the winds of this world 'I do love you, will you be my wife?'" — and these (apparently) absurd words had to such an extent suffused the old woman's bosom with emotions of love, that all day Tuesday she had been sitting at a window of "the House" with her brow to the breezes, having never previously supposed, she says, that mere wind could be so lovable, and could make one feel so holy and happy.

On learning these remarkable facts, Mr. "Harry" Killigrew set himself further to investigate the matter; and we give below the results of his enquiries between Wednesday and Friday evening at the hour of our going to press:

Number of persons in or near Penpolack who had dreams of the same well-marked kind during the night of Monday-Tuesday last		28
(1) Those who dreamt "At the Organ"	13	
(2) Those who dreamt "I will wail to the winds"	3	
(3) Those who dreamt "Music is the name"	10	
(4) And, in addition, 2 who dreamt "This beau- teous moon"	2	
	—	
	28	
	—	

So much as to dreamings in Penpolack: and one may as well add the last par with which *The Advertiser's* supplement closes, as it is somewhat droll:

SCUFFLE IN A PUBLIC-HOUSE

At Penpolack Police Court on Thursday, John Vincent, a labourer, was charged with assaulting John Eliot at the Horn Inn during the evening of Wednesday, the 20th inst. P.C. Taylor deposed to apprehending Vincent after the affray, which ended in the discolouring of an eye of Eliot, better known as “The Old Bard”, so often to be seen “touching the harp” in the High Street. It would appear that “The Old Bard” (in his cups) had broached the theory that *it is Dr. Warwick himself who has eloped with Miss “Paddy” St. Aubyn!* upon which Vincent, also in his cups (though lately converted by Hogan and Dowdy at their revival-meetings at Penzance) had begun the attack, roused to action by the eccentricities of genius of “The Old Bard”. Vincent was fined five shillings...

II. THE DOCTOR



IN ORDER TO explain the things that so perplexed Penpolack that week-end, let us go back to the previous week-end, when Mr. Ivor Oscar Warwick arrived at Penpolack (on the Friday evening).

As he stepped down the steep street from the station, a breeze from the beach in his face, the young gentleman had a book in hand, and, as he grasped his father's hand in "Caerwent" garden, it was with "My congratulations, Sir, on 'Life as a Form of Motion': I have found it interesting".

The Doctor's gong of a voice answered "Faint praise, Sir".

And Ivor, smiling: "Well, it may be my way to mean more than I say, Sir; I will say, then, very interesting".

"Come, that's better!" — a bellow— "we shall have you in a state of enthusiasm soon. But you haven't read it all already?"

"Been sticking to it, Sir — finished it in the train".

"Train, Ivor" — with reproach— "trains are not for reading in! A train I regard as a church on wheels in which to worship That through which the train journeys".

"Well, no doubt, Sir. But" — now his voice dropped— "my mother, Sir".

"Hearty and comfortably lodged; speaks to-night on 'Women as Breadwinners'; sends best love to her 'own boy'".

"My mother" — a mutter, as they now moved into the house — strikingly alike, rather tall, the son less tall, a neater sample of the same

article, the same dark hair, brown block of face, the father's eyes having a kinder humour than the son's mood lacked.

In the drawing-room Ivor's eyes ranged round to take stock of any tiniest change in that chaste arrangement of chinās, etchings, realm of a lady of daintiest tastes; then, as the aged Guncotton was still thinking over rising to greet him, he began to call the dog, but was stopped by a gong-voice, "Don't talk!" — the Doctor now having stethoscope-tips in his ears, hearkening to his heartbeats: so Ivor sat silent; till he asked "And the stomach now, Sir?"

"Bad."

"And the nights, Sir?"

"Baad!"

Ivor sighed. "Time for another trip, Sir. Your last to Penzance ended abruptly".

"Yes, and was the cause of a severe cold in the head".

"Indeed? That was kept dark from me, Sir".

"Your mother considered it needless to tell you. It was so, however. Hogan and Dowdy were holding their revival-meetings, the town was congested, so I took lodgings with a woman whose demeanour did not quite please me; and I had hardly been half-an-hour in the house when I learned that she had been divorced. I couldn't countenance conduct so unsocial, so, though it was nine in the night, I decamped — with the result, I say, of a cold, whose sequelæ are still with me".

Ivor patted Guncotton's head, saying "Hogan and Dowdy, by the way, are now urgently converting London. Remarkable man, Sir, that Hogan: one of the master-men, a tone of Napoleon, though a hundred-per-cent American. On Tuesday evening I went in a troop of four, as most people are now doing, to hear him at the Albert Hall, and found myself unable to sneer

at that square block of muscle, his face... ‘Come to Jesus!’ is his word; ‘come this minute’. ‘*Come*’, he says, not ‘*go*’: such is the man’s egoism, hunger after power, for, of course, ‘come’ means ‘come to *me*’, ‘behave as I desire men to behave’

“Well, well, a worthy person no doubt”, the Doctor murmured, “and if —” But now a knocking was at the hall-door, and soon Pruie was in with a visitor’s card.

“Who is it? What does he want?” the Doctor muttered over the card.

“Sir”, Ivor said, standing up, “it is a journalist, come to interview—”

“Keep him off me!” — up sprang the Doctor.

And Ivor in an intriguing way: “It is about the raising of the school-age, Sir, and I am rather responsible, was approached about it in London—”

“Keep him off me!” — walking quickly, with his wilful swing of one arm— “I have already said my say on the subject, I will have no traffic with spendthrifts of time—”

Now the son threw up his fingers and hurried out to utter words of comfort to the journalist. When he returned the Doctor had resumed his seat to muse anew with the stethoscope in his ears; and when Pruie now began to bang the gong, Ivor, who lacked the faculty of dining unless “dressed”, grasped his bag, flew up to his room. He was soon down again, but had now to undergo the criticism of those narrow eyes of Dr. Warwick, who remarked “It is astonishing, after all I have said, Ivor, that you still cling to that costume, with one thin vest and shirt to cover your chest”.

The son vented a breath of laughter, saying “Really, Sir, your intellect is like a Nasmyth hammer that indifferently smashes a mass of slag, or fondles a watch, your dogmas ranging from stars to shirts”.

“But I deny”, the Doctor replied, “that stars are any more the object of the philosopher’s intelligence than are shirts... I ask you, Ivor, to go

straightway, and put on one of my woollen shirts”.

“Woollen shirts” — a mutter from Ivor, with embarrassed eyelids: no movement to obey.

“Ivor, I suggest this to you” — from the Doctor.

“After dinner, Sir, since you insist” — and now the two pairs of eyes, long, narrow, looked with steady strength into each other, until all at once the father turned and went hurriedly like one in retreat, muttering “Come”.

Then to table, where, in honour of the visitor, were pheasant and claret — not an everyday thing at “Caerwent”, where Economy, as to time and mites, was monarch; nor now did the Doctor, with his radical habit of life, drink wine or eat bird, though, as to his radicalism, the talk during soup brought Ivor to remarking that it was being observed in London circles that the intellect of Dr. Warwick was more and more exhibiting a conservative twist: whereupon the Doctor exclaimed “Let me not be classed with any of those parties! On the one hand a class-interest too preoccupied to cast a side-glance at the good of the social organism, and on the other a foreignness to scientific thinking. Why, you cannot drive cows to town without science — without a knowledge of the truth about cows. Is it any wonder if I tend to what you term ‘conservative’?”

“And my mother, Sir” — from Ivor— “is she with you in this?”

Dr. Warwick’s eyelids dropped, as he replied “Your mother and I, Ivor, are ever with each other”; and, glancing at a clock, he added “She should at this moment be on her way to the meeting”.

“So I was thinking, Sir” — from Ivor; then: “I invite you, Sir, to toast my mother with me in a glass of claret”.

The Doctor bowed. “I will do so”: and when he had let out of a decanter three drops, to fill up with water, the two glasses jingled together; they bowed; the name of Felicia Warwick was breathed between them; they

drank: and, the ceremonial over, sat mute some moments, with musings on the woman they loved.

“You do well, Ivor”, the Doctor then said, “to adore the name of that good woman, for from her you get all your goods — your erect skeleton, your cellular aristocracy, and careless physiology; from me — nothing”.

“Oh, Sir, surely”, Ivor replied with shy eyelids, “from you I have something of my — intellect?”

Whereat the Doctor glanced quick at him with gaping lips, then “Ho!” his lungs guffawed, and again “Ho!”, like gongs and guns going off at the vanity of youth, while Pruie, too, wrung her hands in dumb merriment, a ray twinkling out of her eye’s tail.

Afterwards, in the drawing-room, the father and son talked of the new book, “Life as a Form of Motion”; or the Doctor, sipping acid milk, dropped some anecdote of this or that illustrious man; or the son bowed some Schubert from his mother’s ‘cello, while the Doctor, beating time with closed eyes, frowned over the fire, that skull of his looking a true thunderbolt of thought, a vault of baldness, or rolling country mowed by the scythe of time; till ten-thirty struck, and he was up with “to bed!” The next (Saturday) morning Ivor was early down to accompany the Doctor in his walk and run; but, on seeing the old man with a shawl over his cloak, the young man could not help saying “Do you really mean, Sir, to go up through the town like that?”

The Doctor looked surprised. “What, are you not aware that the thermometer fell two degrees during the night?”

Bitterness was in Ivor’s silence: for part of their way to the bay was visible from St. Aubyn’s Hall, and bitter was the thought that a pair of eyes there might chance to spy that shawl. He passed out with his father, remarking “One of my first cares, Sir, must be to make you a present of a

hat!", and up they went through the town, then down St. Aubyn's Lane, whence the Hall's clock-tower was visible, to emerge upon a reach of beach, where rock-masses, and purplish shell-work, and lines of surf attacking, like lines of cavalry dashing, ravish the eye.

By eight they were back and at breakfast, but it was not until three, his father's napping hour, that Ivor contrived to start out for St. Aubyn's Hall, carefully dressed, rather pallid.

And soon he stood confronted in a book-room with Sir Borlase St. Aubyn.

Sir Borlase, a spirited knit figure, military, still young, flogged his leg with a hunting-crop, impatiently granting the audience; and Ivor's task here was trying; but, without losing ease and *chic*, he reached a stage at which he found himself saying that it was not without the goodwill of Miss Patricia St. Aubyn herself that he —

"What is it all about, Mr. Warwick?" Sir Borlase broke in with the throat of some prison-governor or omnipotent colonel, gram, vigorous: he had, in fact, been a corps-cavalry captain (23rd Hussars), had killed perhaps half-a-dozen men — was not unused to killing — and now was a "captain of Fascisti", intimate with Dinka, the would-be king.

Ivor said "My attachment, Sir, to the person of Miss—"

"Well, I'm damned".

"Oh, not yet, Sir", the young man muttered, flushing now. "I was about to say—"

"Wherever did you meet my daughter?"

"In Devil's Cave, in a storm—"

"And on the strength of that, just because your father happens to be an eminent — Father know anything of this?"

"No".

“Your mother?”

“Well — yes”.

“What’s your income?”

“Nothing almost — for the moment: £275”.

“Well, I’m damned”.

“Not eternally, Sir, really. If you will let me tell—”

“Go away, Mr. Warwick!” that crushing larynx cried, “and admit, as you go, that you have permitted yourself to be guilty of a piece of quixotism”.

“Since you say so, Sir” — Ivor stood up: “still, the end must be as I wish it. Believe me, I never abandon a—”

“Nonsense, Mr. Warwick! Good day. And better see to it, Mr. Warwick, that you do not again address my daughter against my will”.

“I don’t undertake”, Ivor called back over his shoulder; and went.

III. TRIPPERS



BUT HE WAS reluctant to flout the will of his love's father, and all that afternoon was in a trouble of thought as to his tryst with her that night; however, not seeing any way out of keeping it, at eleven he was standing solitary in the shadows of an orangery behind the mansion — standing, pacing, prying, aware of dancing going on in the house — sounds of tango — some moon-glimpses sometimes prevailing against a heavenful of vapours, oozing through in hues of opal. He muttered “Come!”, and after a while saw her like a white swallow hieing, jumping tomboyish some terrace-steps with a hop-and-a-skip to finish, holding out her hand to slap a tree-trunk in running past — fresh from her début, a plait still slapping her back when she cantered, she being a crack rider, daredevil, had won prizes at gymkhanas, at Olympia, and jumped fences at Tunbridge Wells, a flushed girlhood, frank-faced, clad now in a satin that hugged the little curves of her figure, a little Marie Stuart coronet adorning her forehead, orchids at corsage; and now her lips are murmuring on his, and now a hurry of half-phrases uttered, rapture of interrupted prattle.

“This is henceforth forbidden”, he began to say, she saying “Such a job to steal out!”, and he: “Dear of you!”, and she: “Did you bring the golf-balls from London?”, and he: “Yes, and forgot them at ‘Caerwent’ — forgive! I have been troubled about coming: your father—”

“I know of the interview! There have been pained silences and a parent's resentment since!” — her phrases uttered gallopingly to an end, till the next phrase struck her and arose to be galloped through— “Well, we can run

away! like René Robartes, and it ended a week later with everybody weepingly reconciled. For I do like you; and those who like me have to learn to like you too. See! I managed to smuggle out my box of buttons — only show them to chums — was showing them to Violet on Friday — Lady Violet Vyvyan — but we had rather a quarrel — over you: I asked her, Oscar, if she thought you handsome, so she said she thought your face too solid a type, then *I* said she had not properly seen you, and it led to words, though she likes your chin. Can you see? — this one is a Uhlan's button — this is a Spahi's — got it last week, a gem — this is a 2nd Black Watch—”

Ivor's lips dived to her hand, where they now sat on alabaster within a bower. “Paddy! I love you for your liberty from sin, your true purity of spirit!”

This struck Paddy silent a little, until she gravely remarked “I *hope* that girls are all that people suppose them”.

“And for your frankness I love you! your immaculate frankness of character”.

Paddy pondered it. “Well, I suppose that one is frank enough; but don't think, Oscar — girls are like milk that curdles when kept—”

“I am still ‘Oscar’, I see! That is rather my father's name—”

“But if I prefer it?” Paddy gravely asked: “Violet likes ‘Ivor’, and I ‘Oscar’, since we differ on principle. Let me! will you?” cuddling his hand, prying up into his eyes.

But all the time Ivor's sense of right was in a state of unrest: he presently said that, though the day would come, it might be months before he again spoke or wrote to her. As to the new make of golf-balls with X-rayed core-concentricity, since he was staying this time until the Wednesday to see his mother's home-coming, he would bring the balls at eight on Tuesday night,

put them on the sun-dial, and, if Paddy was then at a window, they could fling a kiss.

Now Paddy was sad. She muttered “So we don’t run away?”

And Ivor: “Paddy, you are not serious”.

“I am”, Paddy answered: “girls are no longer filial serfs. Papa would suffer four days, but is it not rational that one should suffer a little four days rather than two, awfully, four years?”

Kissing her fingers, Ivor replied “You expect me to be wildly pleased, but I am not really. All you Paddies are so badly educated! — intellectually, morally; until lately you even had little physical education: so that everything greatly good in you is due to your own innate goodness of grain, not to training. Your gadding careers of golf and gallop, your luxury, your unconsciousness of such a thing as discipline—”

“Thanks, Oscar”, Paddy drily replied: “but do you know what you are doing now?”

“What am I doing?”

“Copying the Doctor”.

On which Ivor, taken aback, blushed, chuckled uneasily, stood up. And presently they kissed for the final time in that epoch of their lives, promising heart to heart to be constant, and he watched her trip from him among the tree-trunks like riches which take to themselves wings.

That was on Saturday night....

The Sunday he passed in his father’s company, only stealing out awhile to lurk in churchyard leafage, and spy at his sweetheart leaving the church.

On the Monday morning once more he accompanied his father’s walk and run; and it was on their homecoming over the shore that a conversation took place on the new book, “Life as a Form of Motion”. This book (stripped of its technicalities, mathematics), may be described as a

conservative reassertion of the Newtonian absolutes of space and time: it states that in an infinite void in which was nothing but “a stone” and “an eyesight” — no ether, no “frame of inertia” to which motion could be referred — there would still be a “*real*” difference between a state of rest and a state of motion in the stone; and though the eyesight could not be aware of a difference, realities are not affected by the eyes that see them. Here Warwick, like Maxwell, boldly says “*the error of Descartes*”, yes, and boldly says “*the error of Maxwell*” as to Maxwell’s statement that “‘state of rest’ has no scientific meaning”. For Warwick, rest is as absolute as space, motion as absolute as time. And he advances the doctrine that motion is an evolution, the aim of “Substance” being speed of motion: and since Life is a later-born mode of Substance than Light, and since “thought” is the trait of Life, so, by way of thought, Substance is destined to move swifter than Light, or already moves swifter somewhere: for it was natural when locomotion began in animals that the part of the animal foremost in progression — its head-part — should acquire a sensitiveness, being in direct contact with the environment; and natural that, with that sensitiveness motion would quicken, then with quicker motion intensified sensitiveness, then still quicker motion, and so on, till the brain evolves into the organ of omnipresence. As to the Einsteinian statement, based on is good enough the increase of inertia with velocity, that the velocity of Light is a cosmic maximum, this Warwick dismisses as a statement too hastily made, apart from the “phase velocities” of de Broglie and Schrödinger, which far exceed the speed of Light.

But Ivor Warwick that morning shook the head of an engineer, saying “To me, Sir, I confess, the notion of living things moving by mechanism quicker than ether-waves is an impossible notion: for me, where, if v is more than c , you have an impossibility”.

“Well, but, Ivor”, the Doctor replied, “consider what you are doing — using the algebraic word ‘impossible’ in the sense of the everyday ‘impossible’. Can the square-root of minus-one be impossible in the everyday sense, when a branch of mathematics founded on it is found true? We scientists have lately been enticed into making some untenable statements — such as that an electron is not matter-having-a-charge, but is just a charge; yet it ‘has mass’, which we define as ‘quantity of matter’; so we say that an electron is not matter, and is matter. Again, a gas when cooled contracts per degree by $1/273$ of its volume — at 0° : so — 273 is called the Absolute Zero, for at — 274 the gas should have disappeared, to become a minus-gas; but the thing isn’t true: Onnes has got to within one degree of — 273, and there was no prospect of disappearance. Or again, to say that the mass of an atom at the velocity of Light is infinite is to say that its mass at rest is zero, that the mass of a sun at rest is zero — which is nonsense. No, let me not be like a frog squatting to argue that the telegraph is an impossible thing to living beings! It is not for men to decide what is possible to high types of Life. Consider the swiftness with which Life on this globe is already beginning to move — men now commencing to shoot themselves into the air on a kind of kite, their first brutish notion of an air-boat. After one little million years! — one click of the clock of God. Is it not, then, froglike to deny the likelihood that after another million God will have cut the string that ties men by the leg, like hens, to the sun? How, then, must it be with those systems where Life of a high type is five, fifty, million years old? They send out swift wings. Sceptic as I am, I state positively that with the sons of such the maw of Space is at this moment populous”.

“Odd, then, Sir”, Ivor replied, “that none of them have ever dropped upon us down this way”.

But the Doctor: “It is *not* odd; and I am astonished that you imagine it odd. Look at this, lately sent me by the Astronomer Royal” — he produced a photograph of some puddle of suns— “in this gulf of suns a dwarf-G like our sun is gone out! and only God’s eye could find this globe. Moreover, numerous as worlds are, the universe consists little of worlds, consists of space, in whose darkness worlds are sparks far scattered. It is *not* odd, then, that such trippers do not appear before us every weekend — though we ought not to assert that such feet have ‘never’ walked our earth. If three such trippers are now alighting in some outlying region of China, Africa, and are seen, we may never know, no record would be kept; or they might alight in Cumberland, in London at night, and not be spied: their trip to earth would probably be flitting, for, familiar with earths in the condition of this, their interest in such faulty fauna as men and monkeys might not be much. And, even if seen, they might not be perceived to be living things, they’d probably bear no resemblance to moth, or hydra, or flying horse, or aught that ever entered a man’s heart to fancy... And yet I don’t know: in the bibles of old tribes we find persistent stories of visitants from the skies alighting to while away a noontide at some nomad’s tent-door, infusing rude rules of duty into the barbarian’s brain. What if such a tradition, orally handed down, arose from some actual visit made to men before the invention of alphabets? Be that as it may, what I am sure of is that *some* day, ages hence or next month, one such tramp will surprise the eye of some child of Man”.

This talk about “tramps” and “trippers” lasted through breakfast, and after: but in the midst of it — to their dismay — arrives a wire summoning Ivor to London...

It was urgent — from the Works — a fault in the water-circulating plant — the generation affected — so that Ivor now found himself deprived of

seeing his mother on the Wednesday, or Paddy at her window on the Tuesday evening. As to Paddy's packet of golf-balls, he had decided, in deference to her father, not to communicate with her any more at all until he had floated an invention as to which he cherished money-hopes: so now he finally decided to give the golf-balls to Pruie on the sly, to deposit for him upon the sun-dial, "at eight on Tuesday night": Paddy, spying Pruie do this, would guess that he had had to go away. And, after telegraphing to his mother, he left Penpolack that (Monday) afternoon for London.

But Pruie absent-mindedly put aside the little box of balls on the sideboard; and after dinner that night the Doctor saw it, questioned her as to what it was. When she looked confused, he the more insisted, and in the end she lost her head, saying, in her loyalty to Ivor, that she had to put the packet on the sun-dial at the Hall on Tuesday night— "*for Mrs. Warwick*"! letting slip truth and untruth in the flurry of her two impulses to reveal and to conceal.

"For Mrs. Warwick..." the Doctor muttered, utterly puzzled; and Pruie, who knew that to Dr. Warwick an untruth was a horror, persisted in the fib, reaffirming it with urgency, until she nearly believed it herself.

"I cannot understand it", the Doctor said at last... "Stay, I will myself lay it on the dial"; and while Pruie threw up her eye-whites, the Doctor put the packet in his pocket.

It was still there when at ten-thirty he sipped the last of his acid milk, bid good-night to Pruie, stepped up to bed.

Above he looked some moments musingly into his wife's room, then, in his own, after winding his alarm-clock, and taking from a little cupboard, painted white, stuck on the wall, his quarter-grain of sulphate of morphia to swallow, he stood before his mirror five minutes, practising smiling — for the ridiculousness of a thing never had one pin's influence upon Dr.

Warwick's will, if to practise the thing was rational in his eyes; and, knowing that the muscles by which one smiles show a special tendency to degeneracy in age, there every night he stood at his mirror with tremulous lip-muscles, desperately merry. Then to bed.

Soon, though, he knew that this was to be one of the "bad nights" — his cauliflower at dinner not quite soft-boiled. Moreover, from half-past eleven to twelve a tantrum of thunderstorm thumped and stamped, lightnings standing at his side in his midnight privacy like flying visits of Michael, thunder bumping — no sleep; still none when it had ceased; many times he had to sit up, pestered with dyspepsia, payment of his life's toil for Life in science, he thinking anon of death and the grace of the grave; and the voice of the great deep grieving noised in his ears, and the Hall-clock, mocking him, sounded the hours, mile-stones of the night.

At two he stood up — a thing new to him: but the thought had come to him (from somewhere) to try to walk-off his sighings; and there he stood dressing himself, little enough dreaming of the stupendous messenger of change even then impending upon his life, flying to him, as lightning flies, through the immensity of the night.

Then, candle in hand, down he crept, stealthily, not to rouse Pruie; below put-on hat, cloak; examined barometer, thermometer; drank, in the drawing-room, half a glass of water; and, leaving the candle-gleam there, went out, the dog at his heels, Paddy St. Aubyn's packet of golf-balls still in his pocket.

Out there the garden made fragrant the warm gales from the sea — aloë and camellia flourishing rich in it (in February) amid a redness of rhododendron; everything still save the sea and what little winds serenaded the rhododendrons' reverie.

He paced down a lane made by two hedges of euonymus — his own garden-hedge on his right, on his left the hedge of Carew's Clause.

This lane led immediately to the beach, where he started to walk westward on hardish sand under cliffs which stretched away to the end of conception, some boulders tumbled about their base, their summits gay (by day) with masses of samphire, with lichens, within which sea-fowl lay eggs; though grim now, frowning.

An islet lying black in the bay, a jetty lying black, some lonesome boats moping on the sands: these the eye could spy, and the sea, the cliffs, the sky...

A sky covered over now with cloud like snow all in flakes, an apocalypse of clotted milk, the skin of Naaman, the leper; and in the very centre of all that, like the key-stone of a vault, the moon, reigning supreme, slow moving, like a lady pacing her estate in a musing mood, now ghost-white, now silver-white, granting transfiguring glories and glimpses to the midmost mass of the dome of snows.

The Doctor's eye adored. How high the moon seemed! How hugely higher she *was* than she seemed! and it was well, he said in himself, to have lived a little, and to have beheld a little, and to have been permitted to picture dimly a little in one's soul some traits of the greatness of this glory. Yet that pageantry of God was hardly any longer the passionate paradise of romance in which as a young man he had rambled over these very sands and crags — he began to recognize that fact. Something more and more ailed in him, failed in him. He was growing old — was old. As he strolled, his meditation was of the grave.

How foolish, too, he felt then, was the notion which he met among some scientists that Life, as it climbs to higher types, must become unemotional, all light and sight without warmth! — foolish, because bliss, toward which

Life, as it acquires science, moves, is. itself an emotion, and because perception, the mother of bliss, is itself bachelor and barren, if unmarried to emotion: for, if it is the truth of everything that everything is wonderful and lovely without end, and if wonder and love are emotions, how without emotion can the truth of anything be perceived? how? since light is the child of heat, and gloom and death and cold old suns go together? Ill, then, is it with the aged brain that lives on, chilly seeing, when the brazier in the breast is trembling toward its embers; and blessed then is death for men...

But as the Doctor walked on with thoughts of this sort, all at once it was as if some unutterable thing impended upon his being, so that he found himself stationary, expectant, waiting, without being able to say what it was he was waiting for. Count, however, six ticks — and now a sound, not loud, yet distinct. It resembled the tremblement of a tubful of bees buzzing on the breeze — somewhere above and behind him; and, spinning, he peered on high to see.

A bit of the moon was visible, and Venus, too — or what he took to be Venus — in a nook between two mounds of cloud; but Venus nearer the moon than he looked to see her, and in two seconds Venus immensely more luminous than he had ever seen Venus. And, if Venus should be hurled to earth, not in the least increasing in size to the eye as she hurtled nearer, but increasing in brightness by millions of times, until the eye in offence and pain penned itself up tight, pierced by that spear of light, so it was with Dr. Warwick then.

It all seemed to happen to him in the dazzlement of three or four mad moments. As he was squeezing his eyelids tight, to hide his sight away from that blistering bright, he felt his left little-finger “asleep”, with a tingling that in three ticks had spread up his left arm, thence to swarm all over him; the old man then began to stagger — as when, one’s leg having “gone to

sleep”, if one ventures to bring it down to the ground a little, the whole thing goes tingly like strings trilling: so, after a temporary struggle with his legs, down he dropped, the dog also prostrate with him.

At a sound of something which slapped the sea, a splash, he anew opened his eyes, trying to rise, and now knew that the dazzling light had vanished, as his paralysis, too, had vanished; but now quite near in his ears was a sound as of machinery thrashing in drowsy action; and in the midst of picking himself up he was aware of a whimpering coming out of the hound, aware of a palace now standing on the sands, partly amid the sea-foam — and, hardly fifteen yards from him, two living things.

The instant his eyesight lighted upon them the certainty pierced like a spear of ice to his nerves that people of earth they were not, and a whisper left his lips, “Why, what is it my eyes see this night?”

IV. FROM NOTES OF DR. WARWICK



THESE “NOTES” (MEANT to be read by himself alone) would fill two books, so that nothing but the scrappiest fragments can be given here, except in respect of his interview with a certain “egg”, which is very interesting, since new truths are made known, so that it is given in more detail.

They seemed to be on fire (he writes), pouring out flame and smoke of every colour of the rainbow; but this, I soon understood, was only their hair and clothes, which were so light, that, though scarcely any wind was stirring, they were like fires in a hurricane, wildly whirled — I could see, since they were luminous, and there was some moonshine, mixed with an offshine from the mansion; nor was I incapable of observation, for my knees, though weak, were not weak from fear, of which I could feel little, for I found myself knowing something of their thoughts, knowing, for example — half-knowing — that what they were after was a handful of sand of some special quality; and this commonplace fact, too, I knew of them in a mood of emotion belonging to starlight and the hollow of the heaven of heavens.

I saw both of them pick up sand, look at it, drop it, before their eyes rested an instant on me and the dog, then, apparently finding nothing in us to interest them, darted off to Carew’s Clause yew. But the old fogey felt himself a sort of host, I suppose... [At the date of these Notes we find Dr. Warwick not only writing thus slightly of himself, but actually sometimes writing of “the old fogey” as “he” instead of “I”: this, later, will

seem natural to the reader.]... felt himself a sort of host — representative of Man! — and stepped toward them in welcome, saying “My Lords, if you will deign—” upon which their eyes were anew flying from the yew to me, the bigger one now flicking something from his hip toward me, and straight it came, as if attracted by some magnetism in me, to flop upon the top of my forehead, and fit and stick — a thing like a plum, with a cup cut out of its tip, *they* also having such plums on their forehead-tops (as I saw after) — an object which I have named “psychophone”, though I might as well name it “osma-phone”, since it intensifies the sense of smell, perhaps to the canine extent, perhaps more, and I have found it associated with wavelengths between heat-rays and wireless: anyway, I could now know that the big one said mentally to me “Speak with the mind” — a communication received by me, not as an impression of telepathy, but so definitely somehow, that I knew that, if he had said it in English, then he would have said “speak”, not “talk”, “the” mind, not “your” mind; and instantly he was done with me, to look anew toward the yew.

In a moment more the yew strained, wrenched its roots out of the ground, sprang and crashed, with that row of sounds which Pruie, too, now awake in “Caerwent”, was aware of (as the papers tell): for the bigger one (less big than I) had in his hand some object resembling a watch of gun-metal, with which presumably the uprooting was done, this watch being one of five hung at his right hip.

He then bowed himself down before the littler one, caught her up, and like a ball of fires of all colours flew over Carew’s hedge into the hole left by the yew; to be back within some seconds, letting sand or marl drizzle from their hands — found unsuitable, no doubt — the big one now again darting a glance at the Doctor to say to him “Pray, come to your dwelling”, and now, after again bowing down to, and catching up, the little one in his

arms, was off like flying fire to “Caerwent”, looking like a comet as they soared across the two Carew’s Clause hedges which form a corner, uttering then a sound not unlike nightingale-laughter, while the Doctor ran along the sand after, hearing clearly in his head and in all his heart a voice that said “I will say to the winds of this world I do love you, will you be my wife?”

I can’t help laughing — the old fogey’s legs could hardly carry his haste and cloak and cargo of pants, he trampling with stumblings in the insubstantial sand, throwing up his eyes to heaven, wondering how Felicia Warwick would have acted, if present! But I felt a sense of no little relief when they left me there a little, the stress of their presence being pretty intolerable to Man, as when some rumpus of guns or some organ’s grumbling causes an unease within the eardrum, as when the vigour of a train’s vibration is raving near past one’s brain, and its gravitation perniciously giddies, dragging the feet to desperateness after the magnetism of its momentum.

However, he made haste, and there, on his entrance, they were in the drawing-room, without having asked where the house was, the big one now saying mentally to him “We pray to be shewn a desert on a map”, he answering aloud “Yes, My Lords, thank you, thank you”; whereupon the big one again said with some emphasis “Speak with the mind” — possibly because my every breath blew the flame of them about; and, since a French window, too, was open to zephyrs that wildly whiffed them, thrice I saw his nakedness, and twice hers — the big one having only one garment (from breast to knee), and under his feet soles of something like copper-plate — how kept-on not evident — while the little one’s feet were soleless, though *she* was voluminously clothed in a smoke of opals, in thistle-down, spider’s-web, if the filaments of down or web were fifty times flightier than they are, and were dyed in iris-fires: not that the stuff was thin, I think, for it

was not pellucid, but was a fluff woven in some loom of moon-pigmies, a gossamer, a phosphorus-glow, woven, I think, of their own kin's hairs, fifty of which, I divine, would be as fine as a spider's filament. That hair! Out in the moonshine I had imagined that their heads were huger than elephants', they looking like sketches in the papers of celebrities with globes of head stuck upon pins of body; but, in fact, their heads were hardly double the bigness of Man's, the rest of the bulk being a tubful of that hair, which, slightly lighter than air, had a tendency to flow upward and backward from their breaths and movements, though, occasionally, burial might overtake their faces, as burial overwhelmed Pompeii. Nor anywhere else than on their heads and eyes would a microscope detect a hair — a fact of which I am sure from the aspect of their skin, which resembles the centre of a fire where it is white-hot.

But though similar in texture, dissimilar in colouring were the two tubfuls of hair, the prince's being a flow of gold-light flowing like a flag of light, his tunic, too, a flow of gold-light, while the lady's hair, like her garments, was of all the gauds of gardens, daffodil, poppy, violet, light-coloured, illumined, not like splashes of petrol spilled, whose colours, reflected from single films, are impure, but like opal-strata colours, strata of chlorate-of-potash crystals, visionary like visions of the sun's spectrum that come to visit one's window-sill some splendid day in May, and the eye, delighted, smiles — each hair, it appears, having several sheens along its length (like the peacock's), the mass constantly glancing, fickle, each instant shifting to some new view of hues — the sex-differentiation of the two being more marked than in Man, the male's head higher than the Doctor's shoulder, while the female's hardly reached to the male's shoulder; and the male's fingers, on which something like finger-nails were visible, were longer than Man's, especially the thumb, while the female's were of

Man's size, and had no sign of nails; the hands of both shewing certain stains, blemishes, like hands fresh from the work-bench or laboratory; nor had either of them toe-nails, the big toe of both being bigger than Man's, though their feet seemed littler. The male, moreover, was all unadorned, save for an object big as a penknife, covered with something pink (like plush), which lay on his chest — an object which the Doctor afterwards conjectured to be a magnet; but she, on the contrary, was gorgeously adorned, like some mango-tree impurpled with birds of paradise, which stands aburn in some sunset-flush that floods it — a jewel on her forehead, on each thumb, on each great-toe — artificial “jewels” apparently, since full of motions, of fires tumbling, eruptions rolling on themselves, belches of sparks and flashes — alphas sparking across to betas, or striking zinc sulphide, I fancy; and her eyes struck me as still more wildly alive in flight than his, her forehead erected to a still loftier upliftedness, having scribbled across it “this way to the Temple of Intelligence”: and indeed *three* times in my brief intercourse with them he yielded to suggestions of hers...

I can't help laughing — that old soul's shock when she, stooping, threw up her opal-smoke of flimsies behind with quite a womanly gesture, to let drop something out of her upon Felicia Warwick's drawing-room carpet, he then opening the book-case to get the atlas, but seeing with the tail of his eye. His modesty's eyebrows! alarm for the carpet! Ah, those old Victorian fogeys, they tickle me to the roots of my soul — that old Carlyle, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold — even, on the higher plane, Darwin, Spencer: ach Gott, brilliant, yes, but ridiculous in moral posture — the impurity somehow of their prudery, the sin somehow of their stiffness— “made in Laputa” should have been stamped upon their chimney-pot hats. When Darwin had to tell of a baboon's amorous emotions toward young women he told it in Latin. Now, how offensive to an untainted mind. He! the essence of the scientific

spirit — how deeply infected must have been that nature with the leprosy of Puritanism. But what timid people! Afraid! Of what? Of nothing special! Just afraid! — result of centuries of slavery, of landless men, and that craven puritanism, “God-fearing”, which followed quick upon the grabbing of England from “this happy race of men”. But, then, courage, gentlemen, after all! Oh, come, courage! I can’t help laughing! Animo! Avanti! Forward the Light Brigade, Light-bringing! Charge for the guns! — don’t you know. Years he delayed before he plucked up courage to state that his theory of descent included Man too. What a thing! I can’t help laughing! He! so what must the others of them have been like? And I the worst of them, I think! — refusing to stay in a lodging-house because the woman was a divorcée, “catching a severe cold” through it, too — I can’t help laughing — good job, served the old beggar right. Like that Dickens: for ‘damn your eyes” he wrote “bless”, or sometimes for “damn” they dared “d — n” — the dull souls. And it is not laid yet, that seventeenth-century corpse that walks: Hogan-and-Dowdy! Bentley told me to-day that three million copies of their hymn-book have been sold, in England alone, within three weeks — such “hymns”! That Hogan — a force! More than Napoleon, I think — in ambition, in vim, in business ability. Napoleon failed to invade England: Hogan has done it. Having saved the soul of America, now he is at us. Isn’t going to trouble about the soul of France — too ‘cute a nut to throw away time and money like that. There was a Revolution in France, dukes were butchered there, the slave’s posture and habit half-abolished there; but he enjoys himself in England — saves our souls hundreds at a go, with just the airs of some Rockefeller of Wall-street, with a stretched-out arm, “compels us to come in”. Oh, brother Hogan, we two are likely to come to blows, I think: one planet not big enough for us both. For I, too, look, am out to save the soul of America, and England, and France, and neither your

debaucheries of emotionalism nor my own carnal debaucheries shall be allowed to bar me: wait, the Young Men are coming — well started, catching on; on Sunday the 5th my second lecture at Steinway Hall on “How to Get a Truck from Elgin to London”. And that old chap that “I” was — I can’t help laughing — a philosopher, yes, but all infected with puritanism, morally a villager. And he had a second shock when the prince picked up what the princess had dropped out of her to kiss it, and stick it at his hip; then I saw that it exactly resembled the negative carbons of arc-lamps — *was*, in fact, pure charcoal, ashless in combustion (as the egg said), and is used by them for making diamond tools. She had done it as pigeons do in just a tick, as indeed all their activities are alerter than birds’, they appear to be living in a fever, breathing an atmosphere all oxygen, walking in the midst of some urgent furnace, their life a rage of flame, like prairies on fire; and they sigh — aye, something of unease in that bliss, I could see, as though the burden and surfeit of Being was a bit too much for their mortal bosoms, *he*, in a fickle visit to the window, looking up to say “this beauteous moon!”, and they sighed — it was too much for them — I could see; and she, fevered, tossing for ease in that hotbed of her hectic heaven, tossed out of her “Music is the name of my Love! who teaches dances to my heart, step-dances to my heart’s heart” — emotions which I now know to have been potent enough to diffuse their fume of V-waves to people *asleep*, even in Spain, Sweden; aye, and though they were never one second quiet, yet, thrice, in some instant of less unquietness, I saw come into the eyes of one or other of them a lost stare, a down-gazing gloating in their iris’s glow, that stared as in craze and daze, like eyes that have stared down into the belly of the pit of emptiness and been amazed — quite a human look of lunacy: and in truth nothing in them more surprised me than their resemblances to men: the expression of their faces, though strange as

Pan and ravishment, not so alien to my eyes that I needed the passage of any time to see in it beauty's self, and music's self, made visible; in their eyes the spirit of fire, Sirius spitting gleams of green mixed with sparkings of carmine — *pride*, I think, being the main trait of their expression, a pride benign, old-established before this earth dashed out to join in the universal dance and joy of circling. But greater still, may be, than their resemblances were their differences from men, their skin being like films of porcelain behind which some flame is shining through, so as when finger-tips at a flame are inflamed to a living pink — especially their necks, within which either my senses or my imagination seemed to detect the circulation of a flame; their legs, too, (the thighs), markedly longer, stronger, than Man's; their hips more swinging; arm shorter, the short trunk all lung apparently, their breasts swelling out, out, like bellows, with every long-drawn draw of breath; and that length of leg steps toplofty-like, toe-pointed, steep as some conceited toe gone adance in the gavotte, the little princess appearing tall, exalted, princess of some star afar, the airs and graces of the company among whom their figures moved to music-of-the-spheres being such as human speech could never tell of, so that the eye, seeing, fills with tears of desire, and again and again my throat was groaning “the *dear* ones, the *dear* ones..”

I can't help laughing — just as the old chap's agitated hands had discovered the atlas, and he was moving from the book-case with it, he could see rising to a crisis on his sofa their love of that Hand whose designing in the Night-silence had finally wrought them to their height of fineness, they now all involved in a storm of admiration, feeling, I suppose, that same carelessness of the old soul's seeing as when human lovers dote and do in a field, careless of the seeing of sheep; and afresh his decorousness was surprised — though he should not have been! since he

had already seen in their glances and gallantries a reverence without end, an admiration ever shivering on the edge of rage. Anyway, there they now were, fused in a typhoon of union, intolerant of dualness, bent upon being one with what was framed so fair; and I was turning to avert my eyes from their plight, not to witness the manifestation of springs so fundamental, when they vanished from me — or nearly vanished, for I could still see a spectre of luminosity like a streak of phosphorus-sheen wheeling round and round the room, up near the ceiling — so swiftly wheeling, hundreds of revolutions a second, that nothing of them but that spectre of their hair's flame could the eye divine; and so for two, three minutes of stillness, the old man now feeling his feet rambling about some paradise, as when at Jove's and Juno's love the universe flushes to love, suffused; in the midst of which suddenly I heard them *speak* — or sing, say — one voice like the cuckoo's in quality, one more like the wood-dove crooning, something like this seeming to come to my ears:

She: With a woola, woola, woola, *He:* And a wolla, wolla, woo, *She:* And a yoola, yoola, yoola, *He:* And a yolla, yolla, yoo; nothing of the meaning of which reached me, nor, I think, of any of their mentations restricted to each other.

When they reappeared, separated, and descended, the old man was at the side-table lighted by its candle, bent over the atlas, seeking the Sahara, the leaves crackling a little in his ataxic hands; and was now aware of the instruction "Come".

On looking round, I saw her rush her thumb down the two sides of her nose in a flying gesture, indicating my wrinkles to him, I feel sure: for at the same time she nodded toward Guncotton, which was cringing in the corner near the scrivania, and her meaning, I could see, was "both afflicted with the same senility": whereupon he, with an off-hand negligence, directed

toward the dog one of the objects resembling watches which hung at his hip. A little noise of crepitation followed like grit trickling upon a table's polish, and Guncotton gave out one yelp, as if shot. He then at once sprang to his feet, to stand with his legs stiff, spread apart like a trestle, his neck bent, gazing with steady attention downward, as if expecting a mouse.

At the same time the Doctor was advancing toward the pair at the centre-table with the atlas open, bowing, saying aloud "Thank you, My Lords, thank you", meaning nothing special, when the princess said to the prince "Success seems likelier on that biggest moon of the big planet", whereupon the prince made an obeisance; then, letting his eyes rest on me, said to me "Shall I destroy you? It is improper that your race should know of us". "Thank you, My Lords", the old man let slip, adding mentally "I shall never divulge it: your Majesties may rely—"; whereupon the prince: "Pray, come with us, bring the book", and, after again going through an obeisance to the princess, he caught her up on his arm, and all in a gale of hair and garments was gone.

After them pressed the old man's steps, unnoticed by the hound, which still stood there by the secretaire, stiff as death, staring down as at some mouse-hole, wrapped in trance apparently; and down the lane the Doctor trotted, to come out on the sands; but now saw no one; yet felt himself guided, and trotted on along that façade of the palace which faced the cliffs — the palace being a seraglio built of what he fancied to be glass of some prismatic kind, but afterwards found to be diamond, the architecture Moorish in suggestion, four-square, the length of the façade which faced the cliffs, as of the façade which lay in the sea, stretching like streets, the distant regions appearing petty in perspective; over it a multitude of domes; with many a turret stuck-on, château-fashion; no windows visible, but the whole honeycombed with holes big as a shilling, some much bigger, the air

in the house not gravitating through these holes to globes, because, as I gather from the egg's law of gravitation, the house becomes more gravitating than the globe. Anyway, there these holes were, perhaps helping to add to the whole its aspect of a decorativeness that was baroque, the fabric looking in the moonbeams a fabric made of rainbows and of a sadness of lunar musics, "made without hands".

V. WHAT THE EGG TAUGHT



ALONG ITS CLIFF-FACE the Doctor's steps trotted, he not without some apprehension now as to what they might intend to do with him — take him away to some other sun? never to restore him to home and friends? But he was without any power to stay his steps, and presently reached an orifice, coffin-shaped, in the façade, inside which he found the prince, alone now. As I stepped within, the prince stepped to tie round my neck a ribbon attached to an object such as he wore on his own chest — a bar covered with plush, my bar afterwards proving to be a magnet; and of the things which I witnessed that night this tying struck me as among the most wonderful: the quickness with which that knot was accomplished — with a neatness that was complete, nay, dandified. Every action must occupy time; but really this action seemed to me to be immediately completed.

At the same time it was said to me “Pray, be not afraid”, the prince then pressing inward, followed by the Doctor's trot, along a boulevard of moss under four rows of fruit-trees, Christmas-trees rich with jewellery of fruit, until they arrived at a round place, or well, of diamond, about the size of Piccadilly Circus, surrounded on the floor above by a balustrade, up which well the prince ascended, bathed to his heels in his flame of hair, the Doctor taken with him: by what force taken I cannot say; I had again to say to myself “here apparently is action-at-a-distance”; and I was paralysed as by curare — muscularly, not nervously.

We alighted beside the balustrade of diamond in a heavenly hall, perhaps twice the size of the Albert Hall, the whole a jumble of diamond-hues

blushing in the four or five moonlights that somehow suffused the house.

In this hall were two other beings: one of them, a huge being, seemed a mist or spirit moving round about the dome — some evenings ago I saw in the sky a cloud of gauze, touched to greenish, that reminded me of him — his left leg hanging straight, his right thigh cocked horizontal up like a climber's climbing, and, in between, sheets of chiffon streaming in streaks and reeks of mist, his little wings, too, consisting of whiffs of flimsy cast out, like arms cast up; his face horizontal by nature, upraised, staring straight aloft as in prayer, nor did all that storm of mist consist of aught artificial like vestment, it was all himself, and consisted of leaves — leaflike things of mist — his left foot being like a tree-root sticking out beneath that profusion of leafage, and I believe that it and his leaves feed direct from atmospheric C02 and H20, his race having evolved in former eras from trees, his lips not being for eating, but for singing. And, in addition to him, there was another — on the floor, remote among the iris-sheens, yet my eyes shied instantly from the sight of her, while I whispered “Oh, no, I mustn't see that!”, for like a tigress she sprang upon my consciousness, like an apparition of Life itself — twice the size of woman, stout, white-brown, nude but for a veil that, hanging from half her hips' breadth, drizzled to her knees; and unbearable was that sudden sight of her vitalness, as of a thousand lives stuffed into one, of her wild eyes, her attacking attitude — a being large and sharp, armed with strong authority to draw sword of justice, and execute judgment among the nations; and she, too, had short wings, so that I classified them both as oviparous mammals, and pterodactylous.

As my eyes shied from her, the prince said to me “Pray, sit behind that hanging” — a coffin-shaped hanging of beads, like opals beaded; and, as, moving toward this, I looked back, I saw the prince pass away through a

vast coffin-opening far off in the hall's wall, followed by the sharp lady, whom I name "the angel", as I name the cloud that circled-about "the bird-tree".

Passing now through the hanging, I found myself in a round room of one of the turrets stuck-on, hardly as large as my "Caerwent" study; and it was dim in there, in spite of five little lights of different tints — crimson, green, indigo — that gave out no radiance, being like the local glimmer of glowworms, with some X-ray trait, for they exhibited my finger-bones — these shines lying round the edge of a basket, made of something resembling phosphor-bronze, that rested on a tripod, beside the tripod being a species of chair; nothing else visible there: so, as I had been bidden to "sit", I assumed that I should sit on this chair, though it was so high, that the old man in his cloak had some difficulty to climb into it; and now, having climbed, he found himself close beside the basket: so that by the glowworm glimmers he could now see within the basket the billows of something green — gauze, moss, cotton — and on this stuff a ring of roses as big as bowls, that looked blue, within that ring being an egg, less big than an emu's, that had on it a plum, or "psychophone", like that on the Doctor's forehead.

He now let himself drop at his length upon this "chair", and, hand on heart, panted there awhile, until a sighing of the "bird-tree", sighing nigh, spurred him to lift himself to peer out through the bead-hanging. But those sighs! and those eyes! sighs of willows in a wind, and pine-woods sighing, that windily uttered "Ah, hala, ha, la", and ever again "Ah, hala, ha, la" — fires of sighing which reached the ears not only when that restless patrolling of the air ranged close, but from afar came the echoings and ache of them, haunting with noises all the hollow of that enormous hall: so that "here", I thought, "is Love in trouble"; and I thought of congresses bethroning

cosmic altars, the being having somewhat of priestly in his aspect, sphinx-priestly, because of his head-dress maybe, his breadth of brow being bound by the band of a *kefie*, or Arab head-dress, of an unearthly purplish, which fell spread-out over his shoulders; and priestly was that sphinx-smile of his sphinx's-lips, blank like the Absolute that inhabits the everlasting Dark, its lines as nicely defined as if carved from emerald — the whole face vaguely greenish, irradiated by some greenish ghostliness of glow, bathed in the ghost of chlorophyll or emerald, as of one who has fared through the gates of death; and the throat so thrown back, that the profile was horizontal, rapt in a stress of trance, a long stretch of line lying between chin-point and neck. I observed, too, that his left foot was rootlike, birdlike, but the right was a hand — in addition to his wing-hands — a thing for which I could not but praise God, so often in my workshop have I yearned for a third hand, when I have had to help myself out with my teeth or chin; nor did his pinions ply at all, being vestigial, I think, no longer for flight, being quite unable to bear up that bulk, however light the bulk. And those sighs! that out of his heart of hearts sighed “Ah, hala, ha, la”: aye, the God that he flew like a moth about was a bit too much for him — I could see; and those eyes, whose lids veiled their meditating, until he lifted them a little to sigh “Ah, hala, ha, la”, and then I saw two moons of furious phosphorus.

And steadily round he tramped about the Lamp of his infatuation, save when, with that nimbleness of his, he twisted to alter his path a little and avoid a ball — for all round the hall, forty feet aloft, ran three rows of mouths like trumpet-mouths, in each of which was a ball of what seemed steel, one or another of which would suddenly decide to fly out of its trumpet-mouth across the hall into some other mouth; and, if the ball in that other mouth was not yet out, the new-corner would wait a moment in the air until the other decided to fly out — an intercourse transacting itself

everywhere with an incalculable business and intricacy: otherwise nothing was in all that spaciousness of hall, save what was certainly a work-bench, this (not far from my den), being at a place where the circle of wall was flat for some thirty feet; on which flat piece were tools of diamond hanging, a prismatic mass, and, lying on a table of steel (?) beneath them, a confusion of tools mixed with diamond-crystals, with filings, drillings — one machine looking just like a human power-drill, another something like a lathe that has no mandril, another like a dynamo that has no armature; and there were three piles of charcoal-sticks like negative-carbons, such as the princess had dropped from her at “Caerwent”. But what most attracted the eye at that flat spot was a pair of lights in some chamber beyond, which lights constantly flashed past that flat part, vanished, and flashed past anew — shines of a blueish hue like sulphur-sheens, dimly perceived through the thickness of the diamond wall, like shines watched through oiled paper: and these shining apparitions gave an impression of being living things, of the bigness of Man, given up to a madness of dancing.

To them several times the Doctor’s eyes were drawn awhile from that burdened bird-tree that circled and sighed, while perhaps five minutes passed; and then he was aware of a being flitting toward him athwart the hall, a little uplifted above the floor, a being like the two “dear-ones”, with a flame of hair that flew behind, he bearing on his right palm a slab of diamond that had on it a kind of biscuit together with half-an-egg of diamond standing in a zarf or egg-cup — this half-an-egg being full of milk: bearing which, the being brushed through the bead-hanging, to bow low, to proffer the food to the Doctor, and to utter to him something like “wolla, wolla, woo”. But something of *lower* in him, something of *non-natural* in the right of his eyes to see and be, half-informed the Doctor that this was no direct product of Nature, but an attempt, and a failure, of the

“dear ones” to make a “dear-one” at their chemical table; none the less there broke from the old man’s lips a hearty “thank you, My Lord, thank you!”, to which the manufactured soul, bowing, answered something like “yoola, yoola”, as who should say “do not mention it”, and immediately was sailing away in streaming flames of hair, like a man entranced.

The Doctor then proceeded to eat the biscuit, which, wherever he broke it, bubbled out along the break into a lot of little globes, glistening, black, like globules of ink-dew, like boiled currants, some pigmy as pins’ heads, some big as pills, all very transitory, active, popping into collapse for new dewes to exude and pop, their acid taste suggesting a very strange place to the palate’s fantasy; and mixed in the milk was a something, a honey-dew, whose name he little knew, though pretty soon he knew from its whisperings within him that it was made of the aromas of that same lotus of the Lotus-eaters, which let a man once eat, it shall be well with his soul. He wished that there was more of it.

Even as he finished that feast, he was conscious of a broil of waters outside the house dribbling with a showery briskness, like a chaffering of sparrow-crowds prattling: so, conceiving that this was sea-water dribbling back into the sea off the palace, which was leaving the sea, and at the same instant seeing the bird-tree hurry away out of the hall, he got down off his chair, in order to gaze abroad, feeling a little guilty indeed, since he had been bidden to “sit”, but now made bolder of soul by that milk, and unable now to sit still, and not see.

To see, he found in his turret-wall several shilling-holes, and three into which he could put his head: so could see the breast of the Bristol Channel moving deliberately away, with moonshine brindling its billowing; and soon, as when steam-pressure is increased, could see it quicken speed: on which his mouth murmured aloud “I journey; holy, holy, holy; Lord God

Almighty; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory”. At the same time he became conscious of a voice of bells chiming the song of the solitude of the voyage with a forlorn noising, which constantly chimed “me, fah, soh”, and “me, fah, soh”, “me, fah” short, “soh” long drawn out, in tones sweeter far than ears on earth have heard — seeming to come from some remote distance outside the house, or seeming a dream of the eardrum merely, or seeming but the music of the labour of the universe, that, like a musical-box, in the process of its labouring ever vents bell-tones and dulcetness of lullaby — a noising more Orphic moody than those voices of awe given out from insulators on telegraph-poles, that like souls call soh, and like souls wawl doh, all a squally wet day of Autumn; nor did this sweetness cease one moment from haunting that humming inherent in the eardrum’s hollow with the monotony of its cosmic noising, save when it was lost a minute in screams of music which every three or four minutes pealed out somewhere shrieking, rose, soared to tragedy and distraction, then fainted, failed; then the treble of the bells telling the meaning of their lamenting to the secret eardrum; and presently again screams of sweetness pealing, outcries as of crowds of syrens gripped to their rueful wombs with pangs of travail, clamouring their calamity; then the bells, the bells of heaven, telling their me, fah, soh, and their ah, 00, mm, to the tune that the Buddhist’s bosom moans and moans when the mood of Nirvana moves his heart, and he moans it with doting, and more moans it with obstinacy, obsessed, rocking his body for very revelry of soul: as now the Doctor, too, with the wind of that ship’s voyaging in his hairs, and that solemn milk in his veins, found his throat moaning, and still moaning with doting, the old ah, 00, mm, and ah, 00, mm, and ah, 00, mm, and me, fah, soh... until he stopped a little in his astonishment at the streams of meteors through which the ship was now speeding, the speed having now increased from some

dozen miles to perhaps hundreds an hour; and still the wind of its quickening was rising; a sea of clouds now down below, flooring a hall, all roofless, of stars and darkness; and now crowds of meteors streaming down, that in three minutes became a rain of meteors — only a petty proportion of those in the upper stratosphere, it appears, ever reaching the lower strata to be seen below: and wild was presently the sight, everywhere those lines of fire diving into the sea of night— “noctis signa severa” — flags of fire that the gallant planet flies in her flight, a conflagration of straws garishly mixed with fireflies and with moths of light that toss their pinions to perdition in millions — one crashing like shrapnel upon the palace; then they were dashing fainter, through nitrogen now; and now through hydrogen; some seconds after which, suddenly the wind of the ascent was done: the old man understood that he was “in space”; and, from the sights that presently met his eyes, could see that the steed he backed had passioned and was gone, its bands forgotten.

During two or three seconds his weight so vastly increased, that he was far from being able to lift his hand, until something mysterious was done to set him free. Meantime, the palace had vanished from him, his body vanished, all vanished but a blueish little mist of something that moved and moved round about him, so that he felt himself a spectre, not upheld by anything, dwelling in endless emptiness; as to objects outside the house, he could watch none long, because the house was waltzing in its winging, subject to some wheeling motion; but he could still judge that the speed now must be at least triple the speed of ether-waves, with so swift a shrivelling did the whirling rims of the earth and moon, which for three ticks filled the universe with confusion, shrink and waste away, reeling deep away into the pit of distance; and now he saw the sun a sovereign, within three minutes to see it sixpence, within seven a day-star dwindling wee

away — sights that the eye perceived by light-rays not overtaking but overtaken.

And next he was gazing back at a tangle of three crescents, red and angry, that for some instants loomed, filled the universe, melted, wasted, as when pats of lard pass away in pans (these three being Mars and Mars' moons, which were then "in opposition", and on the way to Jupiter in opposition too). Then such a star-light as passes understanding, the constellations fixed like candelabra that never twinkle in any wind, but burn bright, to turn to twilight that blackness of the tabernacle of Him Who inhabits eternity, Who in twilight sits wise and still, and twilight is His lonesome home; the bells of the abyss ever telling within the ear their me, fah, soh, the soul of the old man moaning with doting his ah, oo, mm, and me, fah, soh, and ah, oo, mm; and now, somehow, moons — a multitude that ever loomed and melted, full moons, new moons, remote and close, an archipelago of continents — fragments (probably) of some planet that had exploded in that zone — he passing so close under one of them, that he could see smoke, hear sounds, from some mountain's bowels rumbling, and there he had the uneasy feeling of standing feet-upward — outcries of choirs now pealing, crowds of syrens griped, griefs which shrieked wildness of sweetness, as now came dawn, drear dawn breaking, with warmth, with fierceness of heat, with whiteness of light, wild instants of affright, as beneath his feet appeared a sunlike region, which in an instant rushed forth to fill the field of Being with a blistering brilliance, while a crash of wrath, heart-shattering, thousands of thunders' hubbub, blustered about him, as down to the floor he tumbled. It lasted only so long as when one lifts one's palms a little from one's ears in some clamour, and claps them back, after having heard a burst of hubbub like a bung that bursts out; yet for some minutes he lay stunned, hearing still some bumps and rumblings of that

thunder: this was Jupiter, so that some species of atmosphere must surround Jupiter, hundreds of thousands of miles deep; and, if Jupiter, then the sun, millions deep, in which case Mercury may enter it at perihelion, this causing that shift-forward of his orbit's long-axis, as well as the Einsteinian refraction of star-rays that pass nigh the sun.

But there in the neighbourhood of Jupiter the speed must have slowed down, since it was some minutes before he felt the ship touch land, and through the bead-hanging could see the mariners come back into the hall: whereupon he scrambled upright, to clamber back to sit, as bidden.

Thence he saw the "Caerwent" two vault the balustrade of the well to descend, followed down by that bird-tree: so, as he inferred that they were going out to get sand, he again got off the chair to gaze out at this strange territory, which he guessed to be Moon I, of Jupiter. But he could see little more than that he was on some desert, its billows so mountainous as to bound his outlook to an acre of dismal air; and, more to increase that region's moroseness, even here could be heard certain rumblings — of Jupiter's thunders, he believed — which remotely boomed like guns going off somewhere within the gulf of Being; rumours, moreover, of sea-billows booming remotely on some shore seemed to reach the ear, and to reach the eye a shadow afar, a grandeur of crags, among which, to the left, some Vesuvius reigned — a rufous fuming there; and, to the right, low down on the horizon, a drowsing eye, another moon, a crescent looking ten yards in length, but blood-red, uttering no radiance, "making darkness visible", surrounded by clouds of tar and by tar-rainbows, like an eye "blackened" by a blow, when it glares blood-red through a wreath of negro rainbows; and when some life — some flying horse that cawed, some ore, or raucous cormorant — flapped past me on its business into the darksomeness, I mourned with woefulness "O, home of shades and unhopefulness of soul!",

for this moon, like our Luna, rolls once only in a revolution, that portion of her globe being given over to glooms.

But I had not been eyeing three minutes into that benightedness when I was surprised by a wireless, and heard in me the words, “Well, I have had sweet sleep, and sweet my dream: for I dreamed, mark you, that I was embraced with the female of some little race like the Zwiffs or the Ohms. But in the midst of bliss I was awoke by the thunders of some sun”.

Upon which the old soul, astonished: “Am I addressed?”

There came the answer, “Who, then, are you? I have been hearkening to you; but your thoughts are hardly formed in firm terms”.

To that the old man answered “I, My Lord, am of a family called ‘Man’, my home being a planet orbiting close among the rays of a sun whose name is ‘Sol’; and the planet the men of my race name ‘Terra’. But who, My Lord, are you — and where?”

His answer was the question, “This is not your Terra?”

And I: “No, My Lord: this is some moon of a planet far enough outside the path that my Terra treads”.

Then he: “*You* have not visited this moon before, I think?”

“No, My Lord”, I answered: “my father and my mother marked the stars as sparks afar, nor ever left the earth of their birth; but I am better than they this day”.

Nothing was then said for some seconds, till he: “As to ‘who’ and ‘where’, here I am — the egg — in the basket. When, then, did you enter the vessel? And do you go with us to the Event?”

“I entered this palace twenty minutes perhaps ago”, the old man said, now mounting again into the chair— “bidden hither with my atlas by two who have plenteous heads of hair, and seek a sand among the spheres. But as to the ‘event’ you mention, of this I know nothing, Sir”.

Now from within the speckled shell came out “Those were the Zwiffs that bid you — *myakamus*! The Ohms you would not be permitted to see; but they may be spied as flying lights through the wall of the hall: for they have long been dancing, will long be dancing, this day”.

“Yes, Sir, yes”, I said, “I can see — I can see — lights that fly as in dance”.

And he: “They can see by heat-waves! And that will please me to see them dance, *myakamus*! — if ever. Anon they spin as spinning-tops which cuts of a whip chuck askipping: joy is the whip which cuts them skipping”.

To this I answered “Yes, Sir, yes: this I can conceive. But as to you, Sir, when will you be hatched to behold the universe?”

And he: “Soon. But how tell you when? Your ‘twenty minutes’ said to me ‘twenty little intervals’, not how little. But tell me the two masses, and that Terra’s orbit”.

This I now told — our diameter, specific gravity, mean distance, telling that “kilometre” means a thousand Zwiff paces, and how often we rotate in a revolution: from which he must have got the square of our velocity in his own time-units, and so our year and day: for at once he said “In eight, then, of your days, *myakamus*!” (What this “*myakamus*” meant I never discovered: something like “amen”, maybe, though sometimes it seemed to mean merely “pish”, “pshaw”). “I shall then see the suns! for only such things I now spy as my mother in teaching me pleases to shew in a shine which is dingy; but then in white light I shall see the might of life in her eyes, the Zwiffs, the Ohms perhaps, more clearly hearing that melodious roaring of my father’s throat. But even now I can see not ill in a lightsome place: so now lift me, you; you have hands; and take me into that lighted hall awhile: for my father and my mother are elsewhere, and no one may know”.

I can't help laughing — this put the old man in a dilemma! for, shy of refusing, he was yet reluctant to put his foot into anything unorthodox — and the tone of the request had been pretty stealthy: so he decided to reply “Well, Sir, you see my position... And, if I dropped you? For though this moon is of less mass than my Terra, gravity within the palace is practically a constant, and your weight may be considerable”.

It was now that I noticed the ghost of my finger-bones and his skeleton in those glimmers of glowworm that surrounded the egg, for I had bent eagerly over in “speaking”, fearing that he might be offended at my scruples; but not he: he was a good easy fellow — his tone of soul anon reminding me of a boy, anon of the frivolity of the nightingale's garrulity, and soon again of the mourning-dove mourning. He had a zeal in teaching, a species of pedantry or pedagogy that belongs to boys of a bright type, like my old schoolfellow Barnes, who went about asking us “Can you spell ‘Chedorlaomer’?”; through which pedagogy my egg presently got himself into hot water, which is bad for eggs: for he revealed to me secrets of Nature which it was improper for him to blurt, and was overheard. As the mariners were absent on the sands quite twenty minutes, during that time we two became good friends, I presently finding myself speaking easily with the psychophone, nor was I long in discovering that, chick as he was, here was an intelligence markedly above Man's; aye, and profound enough has been the result of those utterances of his upon my soul. Cosy we were in there, we two; and, ah, God, how dreamlike now to me, like a dream teeming with some mood of opium, and musings among deep-sea reeds, was that communing within that nook. But I will put on paper while I may with some freshness of memory the things which he said to me... As to being lifted out, he did not resent my wariness, but said “It would matter

little if you dropped me: but, then, you would come under my mother's wrath; which is sharp".

I now said "Your mother, Sir, I think, is a being with wings, such as we men have some conception of, naming them 'angels' — forgetting, however, the probability that angels lay eggs".

"Yes! *she* is my mother", he quickly said.

And I: "I am only astonished, Sir, that so small an egg should be laid by so large a lady".

"High type, small egg, *myakamus*", he remarked; then: "And you have seen my father?"

I answered "No, Sir, only the Zwiffs, your mother, and a bird-like—"

"*He* is my father", he said.

And I: "Well, I am astonished, Sir: can your mother be the wife of one so different in type?"

To this he replied "Not his wife — his wife's wife. My father embraces, but cannot impregnate, my mother — her ova are not quick enough; but he impregnates his wife, who then is set wild with desire till she impregnates my mother — But only to speak of this inflames me: let me not speak of this. With you are two sexes, I see, but some planets have six: for many are the modes of heaven. But on all the forty planets of our sun sex is threefold, we being Baramomahs, and our home, far remote from this arc of stars, is a planet — larger sixfold than that of yours — which wanders about the star Bolbia, he appearing from hereabouts, my mother says, as one among six, dim-eyed in a mist of distance, averted from these worlds in preoccupation with their own affairs: and that Baramomah of Bolbia is my mother's home, more beloved by those who know her mountains and groves than a thousand globes that roll, round her swinging two rings of little moons of different hues, and, so swift her spin, they visibly wing, those fires, so that

her skies fly wild at night; and swift of wing, like her, are her offspring, and strong their voices in song within her forests. And at Baramomah arrived the Ohms in this their mansion, to invite my father and my mother to witness with them the event that impends in heaven; but they left my father's wife behind: and in this bark of the Ohms my mother dropped me from her in some region of the heavens half-way between our Bolbia and that star whose name is Hossom, whereto the Zwiffs return from wandering, their blissful birthplace: for the Ohms yearned for the company and comfort of the Zwiffs on the way to that event; and at twenty-five times the speed of light we sheared the ether to reach that Zwiff-sphere, which is a sphere in what seems from hereabouts a coronet of suns, lying nigh to a barrow or box that has a handle; and thereabouts, four orbits remote from Hossom, orbits that home of the Zwiffs, whereto their eyes lift in the vast of Night when, far away, their ships rip the paths of space; and three rich moons roam round that sphere, one of which their throngs flock to occupy in Spring, on one they live in Summer, moving to the third in those months when fruits turn purple; but to their Zwiffa they return to abide when through winter nights winds repine within their pine-woods. But as for the Ohms, no more have they a dear home of their own: for down upon Ohmor, their dear sphere, moved at last an old moon that, bombarded in her path, had spent energy of revolution; at whose approach Ohmor's crust, disrupting, broke-up in flames in a day of tribulation and everlasting darkness of disaster: she with that moon, and with a rabble of planets and their moons, moving to troop toward Bowkham, like a crowd of cows confused which run with slouching — toward Bowkham, their sun, set in that very coronet hard by a barrow or box that has a handle, which coronet is enriched also by the Zwiffs' Hossom: so now in frenzy of dreadful revelry down into Bowkham's bowels of combustion tumbled, as comets

outspreed, that mob perniciously, as when moths pitch into perdition — O, days of break-up beyond conception, O, days of God... And now far scattered among the stars the Ohms are, sojourning lonesome in strangers' homes whenever their wherries rest from roaming the realms of heaven; yet, as you see, they dance and are glad: for, long, long ago, from those eyes that they lift their God has wiped all tears”.

Now he was silent awhile, till I asked him “And what, Sir, is the nature of that event in heaven which the Ohms are tripping to witness, bringing with them the Zwiffs, and you the Baramomahs?”

To this he answered in a confidential way “They call it ‘improper’ to reveal truth to lower types, for each type, they say, should reach science by its own road, unaided; and though these my words are turned furtively toward you, it may be that I am being overheard by instruments of precision. Yet I may venture something: for we two are well met here in this snug hour of our lifetime, I lying sluggard, with gossip, an egg penned in this home of gloom, you ‘Man’ of some planet, come somehow upon me for company, you, too, still in the shell, unhatched into that larger day which is lit by all the suns. Know, then, that that event is a meeting of two old suns, which, even as I speak, quicken their zeal to meet, and speed their wings, having already flashed into freshness of rapture — not remote from here it will be, one hundred billion miles — so from all quarters the lords are swarming with their instruments to witness it; and in the fume of nebula that is forerunning that fury of rendezvous the Ohms intend to bathe, for from bathing in it eight seconds they expect a certain rebirth and virtue, though, if in eleven they fail to rescue themselves from it, they shall for ever perish. But of yourself tell something, your morphology, your knowledge, that I may know you better”.

To this the old man answered “I, Sir, am a placental mammal, a biped, wingless; not far advanced, alas; and many to this day are the pains and strains of my race, and many the tears we weep”.

“Nevertheless”, was his answer, “hope you without fail in that blessed Hand which is among you, to bring you out one day to astonishment and song, in Whose Will is our Well. Before I dozed my mother told me that we were at a little planet rich in sap, on which Life will quickly commence to thrive — within five million years, she said; be this your comfort: for that planet. I think, was yours. But how much do you know? No doubt you can — express the energy of a particle moving with simple harmonic vibrations?”

“Oh, yes, Sir”, the old man hastened to answer: “that we can do”.

Then he: “Can you — make the alkaline earths, the inert gases, the metals?”

“No, Sir”, I answered, “that is far from men”.

“Why far?” he asked; “you already have some advancement in cosmography, know the gravity, distance, size of your Terra — How did you find the size?”

I now explained to him how, by triangulation, measurements of base-lines, with theodolites going, zenith-sectors, we contrive to find the earth’s size. This, though, affected him with what I took to be a chuckling, after which he remarked “But all that must occupy many of your days! why not do it in a few of your minutes?”

Upon which, astonished, I suggested softly to him “Sir, will you not tell me how?”, and he, after answering “Oh, it is improper!”, did tell, leaving me feeling silly at the simplicity of the thing. This was his way: Observer A, at a, observes a star (or sun) on his meridian, then observer B, at b, on the

other side of a length of water, ab , whose length is known, observes the star on his meridian at an interval of time, t .

If θ is the angle at the earth's centre subtended by ab ,

then $\theta : 2\pi :: t : \text{a day}$; this gives θ , i.e. gives $\frac{ab}{r}$, so r

(the earth's radius) is known.

When he had told this, says he "Can you" — halting in quite a boylike way— "sum the p th power of the m th n of the r th order of polygonal numbers?"

I answered "No, Sir: the natural numbers, yes — not the polygonal".

And now he: "Do you know — how solar systems come to be?"

To this I answered "I think so, Sir: for we men have a 'nebular theory' which supposes a disc of mist in an incoherent state under a reign of heat; this is spinning: so its rim splits into rings, which contract, on cooling, into planets; the central mass becoming a sun".

But he asked "Have you, then, no moons with retrograde motions in your system?"

When I told him "Yes, a few", he asked "How, then, does your 'nebular theory' account for those?", and when I had no answer, he said, to my dismay, "You see, then, that that is not a good guess... Tell me this: what is gravitation?"

"Well, Sir," I said, "we do not know *why* gravitation is, but we know that, for *some* reason, every particle attracts to itself every other: and this men name 'universal gravitation'".

"*Myakamus!*" says he, "*every* particle?... How, then, is it that particles have not attracted one another into a single world eternities ago?"

When to this, too, I had no answer, he said “Stay: do you know that two currents of electricity in two wires attract each other, if flowing in like directions; repel each other, if flowing in unlike?”

“Oh, yes, Sir”, I hastened to say, “our schoolboys know that: we call it ‘Ampère’s Law’”.

“But”, says he, “is not a ‘current of electricity’ a motion of electrons? And is not everything electrons? So that *everything* in motion is a current of electricity? and your Terra is an electro-magnet, since her rotation round a core of iron is as if current were flowing in wire round the iron? So, then, things are polite: two things moving alike attract each other for road-companionship; moving unlike, make room for each other, shying out of each other’s way; not moving, neither attract nor shun. Did you not feel your weight increase after the palace started into speeding, until its gravity was regulated? Is not your weight on Terra due to your motion being quite like Terra’s, and would be more, if her motion was quicker? and animals on big planets can lift a limb, since bigger planets go slower? and a sun and a planet attract each other because both are moving alike on the sun’s course? yet do not crash, inasmuch as the planet is moving unlike, on an orbit, an inner planet moving fast round, to repel more, an outer moving slow round, to repel less where attraction is less? and a magnet attracts a magnet when motions of electrons in both are in the same direction, repels when otherwise? This, then, is the *law* of gravitation: that like motions attract, unlike repel, owing to a kind of politeness, complaisance, laziness, or least action, implicit in matter. So the rings of that nebula of yours would not contract into planets: for, since the opposite arcs of a ring spin unlike, and repel, the ring would split into pairs, myriads of bits, meteorites, as those rings that roll about the home of us Baramomahs. So this is not how solar systems come to be: it is a question of sex”.

“Sir, you say sex?” I said.

And he: “Yes, sex is inherent in things — suns that have a female diathesis being usually bigger, those having a male diathesis being denser. Shall I tell you of Og and Mog, whose conflux is that event which the lords are flocking to watch? Yes, I will... Og is male; Mog is female. Think of them as both moving upward through the floor, attracting each other; think of the doorway as westward: then Og is being attracted from West across the floor, Mog from East across the floor. They had got to be old-M suns, they two, gone cold and gloomy, long lone with God; here were the eras of their meditating and dreamy memories of early eternities; but for some thirty million years they had been subconscious of each other, and had yearly been drawing nearer... And while they are yet a great way off, Og sends out to Mog a voice — a species of speech between existences so inherent as suns being no fancy, but a reality — Og, I say, utters to Mog a call, ‘I have long been conscious of you... If we met?’ And Mog, with modesty: ‘I also may admit that I am not unaware of you. But you, a Power like you, do you do such things? as do the little meteor fly-by-nights?’ And Og: ‘Stronger than I is Law... If we met?’ Meditation now in Mog; dumbness of some millennia; till there comes from her ‘I am at present somewhat loth, reluctant: I have other calls, other thoughts of heart, and hungers after a path, My Lord, that no goshawk knows, nor the Hunter’s Dogs have nosed it. Then, a long habit of continence... Still, things are not unattainable: sue me to you, woo me to you, lick me, tickle me, and perhaps — perhaps’... This Og does; and presently it is nearly agreed; they can be said to be engaged: by Heaven, their steps quicken on the hills... After yet a millennium Mog calls ‘That Who moves us be our witness!’ And Og: ‘And offspring may He grant to our travail, and long lead them, dealing leniently with them on their voyage to completeness of joy; and in His Will be their

bliss'. 'So let it be', Mog calls, 'amen. Behold, I come quickly, with singing'. 'And I also', Og calls, 'with song'. By now they are hot, are no longer balls, both having disrupted in combustion at some point closest to the other where gravity dragged strongest, there to be drawn out and out; whatever spin either once had being now arrested; *her* form now is a pear with legs; *his* form now a rod sticking from an apple, rod of metal-vapours — gold, lead — the radiums, uraniums — settling at the rod's very end, as heavy dregs settle by gravitation; the pear hotter than he, softer, lighter flying, owing to his more of mass that summons her; at the pear's tip a crater, whence a river of ions is streaming toward him, and, if I could make a drawing of them, you would at once remark a resemblance to the electrodes of an arc, she the anode carbon with its crater gaping, he the smaller kathode with its (almost) point: for she in her fierce career is a *current*, millions of amperes more than he; and all between them are her atoms, ions, giving her two hips, two legs, of vapour, opened, faintly luminous; vapour repelled from him, as comets' tails from suns: for, if two things are attracting, some of their motion must be opposite, involving repulsion: from a sort of memory of which repulsion in the loves of suns it is that come reluctances, scruples, in the loves of living things; and soon her crater becomes a tube, owing to the pouring forth of the heavier elements from the crater's centre. So now they are close: a dumbness pervades Heaven's depth; put your hand upon your mouth; what the heart is far from fancying is about to be. If they are still sixty thousand miles distant, count six ticks more, they are sixty miles distant, and already there is mixing betwixt the nimbler troops that forerun tripudiary: out now to him, as from her eyes of desire, strike ten thousand lightnings' frightful light; cruelly ten thousand times ten thousand thunderings drum grum some moments — her momentary gruff roar of hungriness; in another half-a-tick she has him

snatched far in her heart... And now may That Who designed them help them in that plight, and see to it, for it is touch-and-go with them; in that billionth bit of a minute He must be busied with billions of mathematics, and be charioting their ravaging with a shivering wrist: for it is rough love, and no fun, they rend each other dreadfully, and do not spare; she especially, in her intensities, will send him from her maimed and lamed. The coitus is soon over: for though he strikes her right in the centre of her crater-tube, the *direction* of his stroke is not exactly in the line of her axis, they both being still under the influence of other astral attractions: so round now, the instant he digs her, he begins to spin and giddy her, she him, and glib as butter they go areeling, as ball-bearings that go reeling sing-a-song, as spinning-tops that go reeling asleep, breathing a snoring. On that little obliquity, then, of his coming all will henceforth depend: if on a clockwise curve he has come, things in the world-system now at birth will eternally be counter-clockwise; if counter-clockwise he has come, things will be clockwise.

The instant, too, that he enters her, friction checks the speed of their denser front-parts, but hardly checks their flimsier back-parts, which continue their onward flight, his through him into her, hers through her to meet, impede, and mix with his: this while they are still east-west; wink once, though, and already he has her reeled several degrees — counter-clockwise, say — she ever rushing on, he rushing on, piercing her deeper, pouring ever, she pouring, trillions of loads of it per tick; and so until he has her tip pointing south, when, withdrawing, he is free of her; and away they go, he on his eastward way, she, pregnant, westward away, presently getting again her pear-shape, disfigured at the love-struggle. How far they will now travel apart you can calculate, if you have data as to mass, energy of meeting from infinity, coefficient of viscosity, of friction: an ae~kt. Out

westward, then, she dashes, until at his drag her speed fails; whereat a thing quickens within her inwards: for that flimsiest stuff which has rushed from him into her little wishes to hark back with her when she hankers back, but fights to fly on, pressing to-and-fro within her, imprisoned by her spin, becoming a cylinder or eel of flimsy within her, its less flimsy elements gathering as a nucleus near her centre of gravity: which nucleus may be half-inclined to hark back with her, but before it, behind it, lie millions of miles of flimsier stuff, rough to be free, which will be as dynamite to the nucleus, mightily explosive at the decisive moment. Now, then, is the struggle: she tugs, it tugs; and now her hour is sore upon her, sudden heart-pangs of travail, throat-roarings, rueful throes: till out, with rough eruption, it leaps an eel, reeling counter-clockwise like her reel, bestial but impudent, grotesque but egoist, wriggling, grinning, ecstatic, there in the face of star and galaxy and the moody gloom: an eel, or two, or three, or more, a litter of eels that reel: a planet and its moons are born... The planet consists of nucleus-and-flimsy exploded at west, the moons of flimsy only, after-births, not true explosions, just oozings shooting through the tube-wound torn by the nucleus-explosion, oozings stopping before south, to start anew after north. You may expect, then, a great regularity in the distances between a planet's moons, because they are born at similar intervals; and you may expect outer moons to be bigger, because born later when her speed is less, when the flimsy shoots keener, sooner, longer, between north and south at every succeeding rotation — though an outermost last moon may be small, consisting of all that is left of the flimsy; and, if a moon consists only of what oozes between north and west, its motions may be retrograde, for what oozes *there* reels clockwise; and, since what oozes between west and south reels counter-clockwise, moons consisting of both jets will spin slow, the two jets checking each other's

spin. But all spurt serpent-like, as eels, lizards, lancelets, to evolve similarly in millions of æons, turning next into birds surrounded by wings of flimsy, like suns' coronas, their axial diameter *longer* than their equatorial, as in young suns, in birds' bodies; and next, no longer sunlike, they become globes stuck round with four stumps of limbs, to which their wings have shrunk, this lending to them a square look; and in the end the serpent, the bird, the trunk with limbs, becomes a spheroid, its axial diameter *less* long than its equatorial, a skull with temples... But now Mog is hankering back, since her motion across the floor does not affect the continuity of her motion, and Og's, up through the floor, to which parallel motion their mutual attraction is due, as two dogs run long together, to grow fond, before coitus: so she hankers back; but hankers also toward the thing that is born to draw her heart-strings; and the mother fights some time with the wife. But she cannot tarry yearning in the nursery: Og is coming, summoning, she knows his moan, 'Come, my own, my spouse, my sweet one', and after a little lingering, wistfulness, wheeling in dance her feet trip eastward to the tryst. Not long wheeling! no leisure for anything when the fever, seizing her, sweeps her to fierceness, his pull on her tip soon ending her spin. Still, the *vis* of the spin persists, so that she does not come full-butt at him, but holding herself reserved, averted, her crater pointing always a little north of east: whence it is that living females say no, meaning yes, inheriting it from this little difficulty and diffidence, flirting aversion, of a sun coming to love: so again Og reels her, and again they separate, she now, again pregnant, to east away, he now to west. And so they go on, meeting following meeting, each separation briefer as to space though nearly equal as to years, having some isochronism of the pendulum, Mog like a censer swinging, swinging, offering to God at every swing's end a whiff of incense. If, though, the first meeting is not so full-butt, Og does not go on

eastward after it, nor Mog on westward, but both turn back after revolving round their common centre-of-mass, their paths thenceforth being a series of ellipses, of which their centre-of-mass is a focus — ellipses which continually shorten, at their apsides on the same (east) side of the centre-of-mass all the planets being born. Anyway, the whole is sexual: no solar system can come of it, if the meeting is between equal masses: one mass must come faster, softer than the other, in order to receive and carry off the planet-stuff, difference of parent-masses being the main factor in deciding the size of planets; and since this difference is less after each tryst — *he* parting with mass at each — you have the law, ‘outer planets big, inner little’. But, then, opposed to this is another law, ‘inner planets big, outer little’: for since the energy of the meetings is less and less, her spin becoming less intense, there is more and more leisure for flimsy to flow: so a planet tends to be bigger than those before it. You have, then, two opposite laws: and their consequence is that the sizes of planets proceed in series: first the first law operates, and a big first planet has birth; then the second law operates, and a bigger has birth, then a bigger still, a bigger still... but this debauch so exhausts him, that down with a crash rushes the size of the next-coming planet from biggest, not to big, but to middle-sized; whereupon again the second law operates, and you get bigger middle-sized, biggest middle-sized... and now again, the first law operating, down with a crash rushes the next-coming planet to little, and, if there is room for more, to bigger little, biggest little... The one next after the biggest is usually exploded by some approach to that bigness, so, if the mother is then thereabouts, the explosion, kicking her, raises the energy of the next meeting of parents, enhancing the meeting’s damping effect, lifting a little a graph of dampings-against-meetings, so that now the graph becomes *two parallel*, instead of *one straight line*. Draw a graph of your own system, and

you will see — the damping-factor being the ratio of amplitude-of-excursion to next-following amplitude. The dampings of the first two meetings will be much the same, meetings between thin gases, but now the graph will spring upward, then will come down and down in *one straight line* or *two parallel*, to spring upward again at the final meeting when the two cores graze. Then when there is no room for more the two spouses coalesce, never more wholly to separate, their two-and-fro motion still continuing with the pendulum's periodicity in a perpetual coitus, the friction of it causing that persistence of the heat of suns, causing periodic eruptions of sun-spots, magnetic storms, variable stars, and other phenomena of suns: so now his arms have her, and now for many a millennium in Heaven let her fatness pamper him, her paps satisfy him”.

When he now stopped the old man said “But how, Sir, am I to thank you for telling me this?”, to which he answered “Why you should thank me is that it is considered improper, and I risk being reprimanded. But you, tell more of yourself: do you know what that mist is which lies flushed over the night-sky, and is like a skipper skipping, as when bipeds skip with skipping-twines?”

To this I answered “I think that I know, Sir: that mist, or ‘milk’, men make out to be the rim of this our system of suns”.

“Yes!” he zealously said, “you know something! There, some day, some son of Man may stand, and see this region of our system a mist”.

And I: “Can it be, Sir, that any life of this region ever aspired to fly so high, the distance being some fifteen thousand light-years?”

This he did not at once answer, but then answered “There is a planet, not far, whose name is Falpalav, famous in this our galaxy, since the gallants of that planet *have* gained that galactic tract, there to see astral things; and down from that zone to this visitants of old have roamed. But on Falpalav

no type of this part of our galaxy may land, for the lives of that globe, known as ‘the Gylfens’, have acquired mines on mines of science, and, mining up science like ore-of-life, are potent above fancy, having power to shatter a planet by a shout, and at ninety-five thousand times the speed of light they sound the deeps; or so, my mother has told me, is the rumour throughout heaven, she frequently sitting there where you sit to teach and bespeak me; but from an excursion to scale the gates of yet a galaxy those adventurers of Falpalav turned back for very vertigo, agaze, bedazzled: for no less than eleven hundred galaxies can be reckoned by us of this; but we must believe that there are billions somewhere: and my mother asserts that there is one thing which the Worker can never finish — never through eternity can erect an intelligence worthy to worship Him. But tell what more you know: do you know — in what way Life climbs?”

To this I answered “Well, Sir, of that I know something, men naming that process ‘natural selection’: for those less fitted to an environment die out, while the fitter, surviving, transmit their higher qualities to their offspring: so life climbs”.

My assurance of the truth of this was so inveterate in me, that his reply quite upset me, for he said “‘Offspring’? No, ‘fit’ and ‘high’ are not the same; in a low environment ‘fitter’ will be lower: so, since by this process Life may sometimes not climb, this is not the process, for climbing is a *law* of Life, which at all times is climbing, though bothered, the tricks of God being every time efficient, intricately simple, easily done, sweetly neat, complete in luck, infinite in wit: and underneath His signature. Think of a planet trotting round its sun: the embodiment of monotony! What wit could ever have invented an event in that inveterate tread, tread, treading? God’s finger pats the planet, to tilt it a little to the plane of its orbit, gives it a spin: simple! witty! Infinite variety now: Summer, Winter, Day, Night, no two

days identical for ever: and underneath you see that signature— ‘God’. So with the trick by which Life climbs”.

“And, Sir, what trick — ?” I did not project “is that”; checked myself.

“Oh”, he said, “it is improper... But, then, this is nothing much, and we two such cronies within this cosy nook of existence: so I tell this, to strengthen your Terra’s trust. *You* first tell *me* this: what is the Divinest of qualities?”

To this the old Victorian answered “Well, Sir, I will say that a certain *goodness* is; as a friend of mine, now dead, a poet, wrote in a young woman’s book ‘Be *good*, sweet maid, and let who will be clever”.

But this, I could see, offended him, for he said, “No, *he* was a fool: let your folk know this. For I know what he meant by ‘good’: my mother says that many a young planet is kept backward by that same baseness. You can easily divine that what types so low conceive to be *good* is certain to be mostly bad, good and bad being but slightly discerned in millions of years by even higher types. By ‘good’ *he* meant cowardly, God-fearing, timid of an idol of his mind, which he savagely imagined to have some likeness to the Divine. But cleverness *is* goodness, goodness *is* cleverness. For consider: if you eat what is *bad* for you, ignorant of the truth that it is *bad*, and you have pain, is not this ignorance the type of all badness, *bad* meaning painful, *good* meaning pleasant, all *bad* consisting in not knowing truth, in nescience, all *good* consisting in science, in knowing truth: now, cleverness is a quickness in seeing truth, in doubting what is untrue, and being sceptical, in seizing what is true, and being inventive: a quickness as to truth; truth being *the good* of Life, the *only* good. He should, then, have written ‘Be clever, sweet maid, and let who will be good — what *I* call good, which is bad’. For this *quickness* is the answer to my question, ‘What

is the Divinest of qualities?’ Tell me why *quickness* is the Divinest of qualities”.

“*You tell me, Sir*”, I said to him, “believe me, I listen with the keenest ears”.

And he: “Well, to know what the Divinest of qualities is, you have but to remember what Divinity is. What do men say that God is?”

“We say, Sir”, I answered, “that God is the Eternal Power that creates, upholds, permeates, or is, the universe.”

And he: “Well, without doubt. But how many words! Why say ‘eternal’? Force is essentially eternal. And why say ‘the Power that’? Are there, then, other Powers that ‘uphold’ what is outside the universe? No; there is nothing outside. Say then, ‘God is Power’, ‘God is Force’. And, though no thing or person will ever divine why Force is, or what Being that can be which is neither a thing nor a person, does not every person know this about Force, that Motion is His associate? So that quickness is the Divinest of qualities, since more of Motion of Force, of Divinity, is in the quicker wing; and whereas omnipresence is the trait of Force, and quickness is a pressing-toward-omnipresence, quickness, then, is like Divinity. Every life, I say, knows this: I can actually remember that when I was only a morula, before ever I began to gastrulate, I understood that Motion is, that Force is, and in the dark of some Nirvana’s womb darkly I mused within my heart, thinking ‘There is Motion; there is Power; Power moves: Power is adorable’... Quickness, then: and now you see why that ‘natural selection’ of yours is not reliable for the climb of Life: for some environments, being low, slow, undivine, make for the survival of the slow, as when larvæ lie unseen on tree-trunks whose bark they resemble in colour, their survival depending on their quietness; or as when in societies of a low type a planet’s crust is supposed to be ‘owned’ by individuals, and all the others, being born

landless, are born slaves, who, unable by habits of thought to detect the cause of their slavery, strive to evade slavery by becoming rich at society's expense, the slowest then acquiring riches, and surviving".

"But, Sir", the old man answered to this, "on my Terra, where are just such societies as you describe, men have come to think quite otherwise, that it is the quicker, not the slower, who acquire riches to buy land for their families, and survive".

"Yet be of good cheer", he answered, "for your race will presently awake to truth — *you*, meantime, taking care to disbelieve each thing which they believe, until its truth is proved. It must needs be the slowest who acquire wealth at Life's expense, for they do it by being more obsessed than others by the illusion of self and self's importance in the Life-sea, their eyes being bunged-up with the belief that the drop is all, the sea nought, not to wallow an instant in which nonsense is wit's quickest feat: and what is opposite to quickest is slowest. Even a dog, indeed, may see for a moment that God is more than what he calls 'I', but the sense of self is so deep-seated, that, even for high lives, it is not easy to be constantly conscious of its folly. Those lads of Falpalav are said to have *no* sense of self; and the Zwiffs are known — How old do you suppose that those two Zwiffs are?"

I answered to this "They seem to me, Sir, to be beings of twenty-three, twenty-five, years old".

But he: "Oh, no — they will be dead before they are so old: they look old only because of emotions and toil in thought, but they are no more than seventeen, or so. And as soon as they see that during three weeks they do not doubt something, invent or discover something, they will kill themselves, seeing that by a merry routine of deaths and frequent births Life's climb is spurred to fervour: so they retire young from life, though there are among them certain 'Keepers of Records' who, because their

memory is found serviceable, have lived some thirty thousand years, and still are as youthful as these two. So you see how little the illusion of self deludes these wits, who instantly see the truth of the sea and the drop; to them Society, Life-Force, God, being everything, themselves nothing: and *this* is presence of mind, omnipresence, *this* is cleverness, quickness of wit”.

“Yes, Sir, I see, I do see”, the old man hastened to say: “and tell me — do the Zwiffs, who so fling to death their life of delight so young, expect a persistence of their personalities after death?”

“After?” he said: “quaint question... Why ‘after’ more than before? But that is atheism, such a notion! — is a doubt that Force is omnipresent: for, if there is some place or state where personality, or anything, persists, there God cannot be: for where Force is, Motion is, and Motion is Change, and what has changed is different: a different thing cannot be the same thing. But God is *everywhere*, is He not? Motion is everywhere, Change is at each point of the ether: so that nothing persists, save Change, Motion, Force, God, Who is all in all, and nothing is, no one is, but Him. If you return to work at a machine after sleeping an hour, is it now the same machine? or is it another machine? It is *convenient* to speak of it as the same, *convenient* to speak of ‘I’ and ‘you’; but while you slept half as many billions of changes have occurred in ‘it’ as ‘you’ have been billions of persons, as ‘I’ have been trillions in changing from an ovum to a morula, to a blastula, to a gastrula, to a cordula, to a craniote, ‘I’ being but a spot where God is specially active and changes flow fast, as a river is a spot where drops follow drops, its ‘personality’ being an appearance merely. If you say ‘I am here now’, is that true? each syllable of it is untrue: now is no more now while you are saying ‘now’; by the time you finish saying ‘here’, you are gone wild miles from where you began it; as to ‘I am’, one person says ‘I’, another says ‘am’. So,

if ‘after death’ one could still say anything — quaint notion! — one could only say then ‘that old illusion of mine as to the persistence of personality is still with me, I see, and death has not quickened my wits’. But, though you see this, you hardly half-see, I think, for it cannot be easy to such as you to *realize* that what seems so perfectly certain as the fact of personality is but a fancy, though you *will* realize, if ever you see millions of ants swarming, or of lords, as I expect to see lords at that Og-Mog event that impends: then you will see that an ant is just a place at which Life-Force is acting, and as a personality has no reality; but Life is a reality. I have sent to you the idea ‘ant’: do you know what an ant is?”

The old man answered “Oh, yes, Sir, we have ants on my planet”.

Then he: “And I lately sent you the idea ‘cow’: do you know what a cow is?”

“Yes, cows, too, Sir”, the old man answered: “we have cows”.

“You know, then”, he said, “that ants are little beings who have great big brains, and cows are of a clan which have tassels attached, and, having two stomachs, chew much. Now, in heaven, ants, my mother tells me, are highly admired, are regarded as the archetype of a high type: for, though they cannot themselves be called ‘high’, since God has deprived them of hands — else they would now be where I am, in a mansion of the heavens — yet they are constantly at toil for God, their lives given up to Society, having apparently as little sense of personality as the Ghymens of Falpalav are said to have, or the Zwiffs: but cows are the archetype of a low, or slow, type, for whereas they also are always working, churning with their jaws, it is ever for their self, or they work as serfs for some other self: of which cow-type are those who, succumbing to the lure of some opportunity offered them by the law of probability, pocket riches in the chaotic environment of raw societies; and, if we conceive that in the hour of death the wit of clowns so

dull is smitten to a species of quickening, we can hear them thinking then within themselves: ‘To how slow a sloth did my teachers teach me sloth of soul! for I have spent myself in pampering a phantom, and, believing each show to be real, each hearsay to be truth, have as much forgotten God as though, not He, but ‘I’ was real; nay, the drop has gone against the river, and it is not odd that I was so reft and fretted, never once smelling the smell of that Rose among the roses, nor my mouth has ever drunk from the cup of carousing: for what a cow was ‘I’”.

In some moments that now passed without intercourse the old man hearkened to those rumours of what he assumed to be Jupiter’s thunderings, so remote and morose their rumbling, and afresh now could catch a sound of pinions flapping slow and large outside somewhere within the dismal dark. He was now about to ask what, then, is that “trick” through which Life climbs, his inquisitiveness as to this being so keen as to outweigh his sense of the “improper” in seeking to ferret; but (fortunately for me) the egg spoke before me, and presently told of himself what I had been going to ask; for said he in his examiner manner “When I said a ‘low’ society, what did I mean?”

To this the old man answered “Since ‘high’ means quick, Sir, ‘low’ must mean slow”.

“Truly!” he said— “slow; unchangeable; uneventful; cowlike: a low society, then, is one in which some of the folk are not engaged on science, on doubting and discovering, on truth: for science is the good of Life, the only good; but some of the folk are engaged in working to earn a livelihood, or to earn riches, working, not for Society, but for themselves, like cows: so that all that luck in science, that luck in discovering and doubting, which is special to each of these workers for self, as to no other life, is lost to Society: lost all the eventfulness and elation of their inventing! And in such

environments the climb of Life could not but be balked, since such environments exalt the slowest lives; but Life wriggles free by that trick of God through which, in spite of all, Life is at all times climbing, this trick consisting in quickening Life at its spring, continuously: for in conception it is the quickest spermion which spurts into the ovum, the multitude of other spermia which run the race perishing; and the individual who originates from that quickest spermion has spermia whose average o quickness is as high, the quickest of these being quicker still, inheriting a stress as well as a strength: and so on. In this way the *physical* quickness of Life is continuously heightened; and since the ovum's quickness increases step for step with the spermion's, so, too, does the psychic quickness of Life increase continuously: for since Life is female, and Mind is the trait of Life, our *mind*, is from the ovum, from our mothers”.

The old man's fingers were now quivering, and keenly he said “Yes, Sir, yes... But I do not see... I see, I quite see, how the spermia tend to quickness; but, as to the ovum's quickness, this I do not, do not, see... Pray, forgive my eagerness, Sir, in this—”

“Nothing to forgive” he said— “the fault is mine, since I thought that you would see... Well, you know that the ovum is a globe in whose crust are tunnels, and through some one tunnel she admits one of the spermia, which are little heads with whips of tail that they work to spurt with, spurting upon her keenly in streams, exactly as meteor-streams hurl themselves desperately upon a planet: for they know well that for the slow is death, and life the prize of the spry, as *she* knows well that quickness is her only hope: for, foreknowing their approach, she has ejected her nucleus, except so much of it as one intruder can infuse, and if *two* intrude (as two hundred sometimes do), the penalty is death for her: so that sharp, sharp, she stands to shut up her other tunnels against the dashing gang of gallants the instant

that one is within. You see, then, a continual striving toward quickness at the very spring of Life”.

I answered to this “Yes, Sir, I see, I see, that the ovum, too, must be quick; but still, no, I do not see — I confess — why she must be quicker, continually: this, I confess—”

“You are agitated”, was his answer: “consider, and you will see. For suppose that two slow things run a race: then, the race lasts long; and since, all that time, the difference in speed, even if slight, is acting, the winner is likely to win by much: and after he has arrived someone at the goal has time to do something before the loser arrives; but suppose that two quick things run a race: then, the race is brief; and since the difference in speed, even if much, has not much time to act, the winner is likely to win by little: and someone at the goal must be quick to do anything before the loser comes. You see, then, that, as evolution quickens the spermion, so, step for step, it must quicken the ovum; which is why one type does not usually impregnate another, the reason not being chemical, but mechanical: for the spermia may be too quick for the ovum, overwhelming her with numbers, or the ovum may be too quick for the winner spermion, nipping him in her haste in his entering. And not only is the speed of both continually quickened, but the rate of the quickening is quickened, acceleration taking place. Through a million years that quickening may be invisible; but it is going on; and suddenly every eye can see it flying — species arising — dividing — aspiring—”

On this the old man, now seeing the truth and some of its river of results, broke out, “Truly, Sir, did you say that the tricks of God are intricately simple, easily done, sweetly neat, complete in luck, infinitely witty, and underneath His signature! Truly, Sir, did you say this!”

And he: “*Myakamus!* It *might* not have been so! And blessed be His Name!”

As he was making this remark, the mariners who had descended the well were ascending again, and I observed that the bird-tree, the egg’s father, turned a glance our way; but at once they went away out of the hall, and I said nothing of their coming to the egg, who was then saying to me “But tell me something of you men, for we two are friends, and ‘Terra’ means ‘of good-omen’ in my mother’s tongue. Tell whether you have not had some Divinest man among men?”

To this the old man answered “Men differ, Sir, as to who that Divinest was: for some say one Galileo, some one Christ, some—”

“But some wight who died for Life: *they* are the quick, the Divine!”

“Well, Sir”, I said, “Galileo did this, giving his life to science, of which he is called ‘the father’; and our scientists in general give their lives for Society; and that Christ is believed to have been one of a kind of men named ‘vine-gods’, and to have died for Society”.

“What kind of men”, he enquired, “are these vine-gods?”

And I: “Ancient men, Sir, and savages, from seeing greens grow on graves, everywhere got the notion that the flesh of men, freshly buried, causes vines and corn to thrive: and vine-gods are men who gave themselves to die for the tribe, that their flesh might be buried, to rise again in vine and rye”.

Scarcely had I uttered this when out he broke, “Well were they called ‘gods’! Well! Well! for *there* was quickness! and O, God, my Maker, grant me one day so to die, O, God, my Maker, for Thee, O, God, for Thee!

.. But strange race of Man! which cannot sum the powers of the polygonal numbers, yet is blessed with blood so noble! O, Divine vine-god Galileo! O, Divine vine-god Christ!”

I now said “In truth, Sir, it is no uncommon thing for men to die for Society: we have wars, in which many proffer themselves so to die, not for Life, it is true, but as vine-gods for their tribes”.

And he: “Divine! Divine!”

Upon which I asked him “Do you say, then, Sir, that you approve of War?”

“Surely!” he warmly answered. “High societies do not war one with another, for that would be laughable, since War is due to an illusion of self in nations; but in societies of a low type anything, anything, is blessed that incites a life to die for Society, to see that the tribe is everything, *his* life nothing. As to the slaughter of millions of men, of ants, of lords of heaven, that is of just so much importance as the death of one spermatozoon, or one whiff of a wind: of importance only is God, Force, Motion, Change, Eventfulness, Progress, Evolution, increase of quickness in wit and motions, the Climb of Life, the Drive of God, Life’s love for God, which is Life’s joy. Was it not this that your Galileo said? and your Christ said?”

I answered “Galileo said it by his life as a vine-god, Sir, and Christ, if he was a vine-god, by his death. As to the words of Christ, we possess no certain records; his chief utterance is said to have been this: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’

But this disappointed him. “Neighbour... Well, but that was village-wit. Neighbour! Why love him? He should have said ‘Do not care whether you love or hate, kill or save, him, since he is of no importance, unless he is an inventor, as thou art of none; this thou shalt do: thou shalt love a thousand of thy neighbours more than thyself, and for a million shalt live to die — not for *their* sake! but for Life, for a sun, for God, Who gave thee life: for among a million is much luck in invention, which is *the good* of Life, the only good. Perhaps, though, he meant to say ‘Thou shalt love thy

neighbour, not as much, but as little, as thyself — as little as *I*, a vine-god, love myself”, in which case there was wit in his dictum. But until lives arrive at being what we term ‘high’, their words have a certain wildness, lack of exactness”.

I now asked “And when, Sir, is it that lives are termed ‘high’?”

And he answered “When they are free of ills arising from lower types of cells. As societies begin to be civilized when they cease to fear ills from fierce beasts, so societies of cells begin to be ‘high’ when they cease to fear ill from lower cells, like bacteria: for then their (nucleated) cells have arrived at a quickness of disposition high above that of the (unnucleated) microbe-tribes. It is now millions of years since the Ohms felt pain, and into the Zwiffs also no foreign life could enter and live, the combustion of their food within them being so thorough, that the charcoal which they drop is ashless, and is used for fashioning the choicest tools”.

To this the old man answered “Yes, Sir, of this I know something by experience: and it is easily seen how, when digestion is so complete, the act of expulsion would tend to become a display and shewing-off, instead of a shyness, as in lower types. I now see on the workbench near us a heap of such carbons as the Zwiffs drop, with many diamonds scattered... But how, Sir — ?” I hesitated here.

So he: “You desire to know how tools of diamond are made from charcoal? You do not know this?”

The old man bent lower over to say, “No, Sir: did I know this, I should have *much power* among men, since such stones on my Terra are very rare”.

On this he said to me in a tone of secrecy “Steal some, then: no one there; no one will know. And you wear garments: tuck some among your garments”.

If he had said “*take* some”, that old man’s lust for pennies might have led him the tenth of a step toward temptation; but “steal” — ah, no: non-Victorian, “stealing” — *that* kind of stealing; and he answered “Why, no, Sir, that could never be done”.

Upon which the egg, in the tone of one who whispers: “*Do as I say*: steal some. You fancy that stealing is wrong, because your morality is of a low tribal type, and is stronger in you than your intellectuality, as morality always is when it is of a tribal type; but stealing is of no importance when it is from one or two, as stealing is, when vilely it is from Society, from Life; and I tell you to steal, not only that what you steal may empower you among men when you tell them what I say, but because I see from all your tone that stealing could not but do good to your soul. *Steal some*”.

But the old man: “Sir, you now bid me do something so foreign to my second-nature, that the thing is beyond all possibility. I pray you, then—”

“Oh, well”, he now said with a certain boyish nonchalance, “if you will not... Then, make some for yourself, to empower you: nothing is easier”.

“Yes, Sir, I — listen”: still closer over him the old man leant.

And he: “Well, enclose charcoal in a vacuum, or pack it in some vessel; then maintain it for ninety minutes at five times the melting-point of platinum; then plunge into alcohol at the freezing-point; that is all: that transforms the crystals from a hexagonal to a cubic lattice”.

“Yes, Sir”, the old man answered, “but, alas, the highest temperature of us men is the electric arc — hardly above the melting-point of platinum — alas. If I but — knew—”

And he: “That is little to tell, *myakamus!* we two being friends and conspirators in respect of Terra. You can get high temperatures by several methods—”

It was at this moment that doom overtook him — and me — the old man having been so intent upon what was being told, that he had not noticed anyone's entrance into the hall, until he felt himself hoisted as by a crane into the air, paralysed in every muscle, borne outside the hanging, and there lowered to the floor under the breast of the bird-tree, who now gave out the word, directed toward the egg, but heard by me, too, "Improper!"

As for me, I was down, bowed beneath that power, for my knees had yielded to the streaming strength of a presence that was not less than terrible to bear, the smell of his breath resembling a tempest of ozone loaded with odours of mayflowers; and, with those veiled eyes on me, he *spoke* to me, though I did not clearly receive — perhaps was too agitated. I gathered, however, that the egg's mother was pleased with me for not lifting the egg, and for not stealing, since probity is better than theft, even theft from one only; and I distinctly got "Be not egged-on by that egg to become a thief" — I can't help laughing, it would have taken more than an egg to get that old Victorian to become — But no laughing matter then! I knelt there overwhelmed, eyeing aside at his root-foot, till he said "Take", and diamonds (from the workbench, I suppose) rained over my palms to the floor. He then took two tools from those hanging on the wall, and, after vaulting awfully aloft, passed out of the hall, having set on fire a cloud of echoes that sighed his "Ah, hala, ha, la".

VI. YOUTH



I HAD FILLED my trouser-pockets with crystals, and now was stooping to accumulate the troop strewn over the floor, when I was aware of a grumble of the egg, sullen, saying to himself “I told him almost nothing”; now, too, I was aware of a message from somewhere, “Bring the book”, upon which I again passed through the hanging to get the atlas, saying to the egg “Goodbye to you, goodbye, Sir”, to which he answered with some sullenness “God give you good”; and with sorrow I was gone from him. He may have been “improper” — in more senses than one; but ah, he was an egg good in parts. I imagine that his comparison with a censer swinging of the Mog-sun’s goings to and fro, offering to God at every swing’s end a whiff of incense, must be the grandest metaphor that ever entered into the heart and proceeded from the lips of the living; and profound, I know, is destined to be the effect of his utterances on this “Terra” of ours: for still the ovula quickens, quickens, within the oviduct; and one day, lo, truth prevails.

As if some guide was at his side, the Doctor, unconscious whither he went, but convinced that he went well, now began to wander about halls of the palace, like one who walks in sleep, and sighs, seeing things of the deep-sea with the whites of his eyes, and his lips speak asleep. He came to a stair which, though prolonged, had only three steps, and hollowness between; but when he stepped upon the topmost, it sped with him down to the second, and returned up when he stepped upon the second, which sped with him down to the third, and then returned. He now found his feet straying within a sylvan scene, tree-boles stout like oaks, with streamlets,

bowers, a moon above floating through clouds that drizzled like real clouds; then, this over, he found himself small as a flea in a hall which was all a scenery of machinery heaped high and wide, that made a humming of meditation something like the melody of dynamos humming, and among it living things of some type or types, for high aloft he spied one fly across, and, remote on the floor, saw another who eyed a dial-face; then he was in a hall hardly less vast, surrounded, all of it, by organ-pipes of diamond, enormous columns some, others small, a crowded gaudery, like a thousand organs of gods, all forming one appalling organ; and next his steps led him along a very long corridor, within the sides of it a multitude of piston-rods of every size plying in-and-out, some swift, some slow, pistons of some alloy of steel, green-looking, and they were magnets, some at least, for, as he moved among them, the magnet on his bosom swung to and fro; and now grew on him a music of lutes, and anew he had the emotion of one moving among the perfumeries of some paradise, exactly as when, fifty minutes before, the Zwiffs had embraced at "Caerwent": so, on coming to an oval opening into a room, he remained there, his face turned from them, after seeing them embraced on a species of circular switchback which whirled with undulations to the surgings and swoonings of the music which its motions made, making them puff's of vapour in the flutter of their hasting hair and fluff of clothes; till he heard himself summoned and entered.

This place, though fairy-soft, was yet a laboratory, with bottles, fires, a smell of spicery, chemicals, and, inside that circle of the couch of downs which whirled about and wormed, venting by its working sounds of melody, was a table of sapphire or lazuli, upon which the Doctor, after spurning through a gangway in the whirligig, deposited the atlas, and, standing between the Zwiffs, pointed out the spot in Britain at which they had

landed, then shewed the Sahara, and told what the “ro” in the scale-of-miles means: upon which he was bidden to sit in a species of seat near an oval opening opposite the oval of his entrance; and at once the two went away.

He understood now that their quest of sand had not been successful on this moon, that he was about to return to Earth, to Penpolack first, and thence a known number of ten-miles to the Sahara: so he sat expectant, looking out upon a balcony that was a foot above the sand, and, beyond, saw a moon — another than the moon glowering upon that far part of the argo where the egg lay — this moon full, remoter, duller still; and again, as he lay gazing at its face, he was aware of weighing for ascension, of setting out for heaven, for immediately anew in his eardrum’s dream was bleating that rumour of the treble of bells, telling their me, fah, soh, and their ah, oo, mm, which climbed thrice, chiming, to commence afresh, and climb chiming thrice, in sweet routine, with mania of melody, he, with that milk’s sanctity within him, lifting a languid finger up to drop, and up to drop, his head dropping to right, and dropping to left, his soul seduced to communion with the emotion of some music to which the universe moves, and now shrieks of music screaming out, ceasing, and now streams of meteors streaming, and now he’s off: increase of his weight some moments, as before; invisibility of things about him; that moon falling appallingly upon him; and soon a typhoon of fire and light — Jupiter flashing past, a momentary doomsday; and Mars soon; and a “Cold of Space” which touched him there; and now the sun rushing down, Son of the Morning falling, shewing up rims of our moon and Terra stretched, reaching out and out; and now afresh meteors streaming; and presently a ray of light that the Doctor’s eyes cannot stand, striking from the palace down upon Penpolack townlet.

“On again getting up out of our atmosphere”, he writes further, “we were again away, I now seeing (or seeming to see) the earth’s flight whirling, a sight mightier, wilder, than I had ever conceived; and in perhaps four seconds we were once more within the atmosphere, to descend in some minutes upon sand.

“I ventured then, emboldened may-be by being at home on my own, to step out to the little balcony, and thence could see the Zwiffs and the bird-tree emerge thirty yards from me, to hurry off across a Sahara not half so mountainous as the sand on that moon of Jupiter, so that I could see a scene of it reaching southward; a patch of palm-trees like shadows afar; and, shadowy to the east, a reach of cliff, over which just a tinge of opal flushed, as though some other moon was swooning there to its setting. I knew then ‘the beauty of this moon’, as the Zwiffs had said, and the fairness of the veils which she spreads for her reveries, veils sprayed a little with tinsel of star-glints, like garbs of the Indian’s bride, right overhead now being the Great Bear, paled, but ever there, and fair, and, paled and fair overhead, that ‘Crown’, home of the Ohms once, and still of the Zwiffs, whom pretty soon I could no more see, for at some distance veil on veil wound themselves round, shrouding everything within shades of nonentity.

“And they had hardly vanished in those shadows when I saw what caused my heart to start — a pair of beasts — leopards, I think, they were — creeping on their bellies within the black of the shadows which they cast on the sand, heading in the direction that the sailors had taken, so that I stood hesitating what to do, whether at my own peril to run and tell them — or what? for, unused to send mental messages, and confused, I forgot that their invisibility could be of no consequence as to their hearing; but ere I could reach any decision, they reappeared, I then hearing on the little breezes sighed by the night’s heart that bizarre tinkling that I conceive to be

their laughter, and immediately afterwards could see the beasts creeping in their rear. I sent out then an outcry, then a mental telegram, but got no response, and they advanced, tracked, until well within twenty yards of me, when the leader beast, letting slip a sound of greed and glee, bounded to devour; whereupon the lord, who had his lady in his arms, spun round, to toss her from him upon the back of the beast, which dropped in its mid-spring, and then, surprised no doubt, went running wild about, roaring, trying to bite her behind his shoulder, she with instant agility having twisted round from facing his tail to facing his head; and her hair, as he raced with her, was streaming behind with her raiment, while the tinkling of her delight reached me distinctly. The she-beast, meantime, twice vaulted to seize the lord, but dropped perpendicularly in the mid-spring, as though a wall stopped her vaults, then made paces away, her mate at the same time being somehow made to stop and drop, for the lady to alight — though he was not dead, for presently I saw him get on his legs and race off.

“The lord was then on the point of taking up his lady again, when he paused at a noise like organs vaunting that burst out upon us all — as to the cause of which I was at first uncertain, but quickly determined that the bird-tree was singing: indeed, I could dimly see him where he had perched on the edge of the cliff to the east, had there hurled his dreadful face to heaven, and had let that burdened breast of his burst into vociferation. If it had been upon the dome of St. Paul’s that he had vaulted, and the muscles of his throat had thrown out that roaring, then it would have startled the ear of Barking east, of Ealing west, as perhaps it startled the heart of some Arab nomad, brooding lonesome by some pool, into supposing that some seraph, resting in this desert on his way, was overtaken with a craze of adoration; and oh, my God, if it were but possible, that yet once again, somehow, somewhere, I might hear the hubbub of that wobbling, the long, long,

wallowing in honeys of that hymn; but my ears have heard it once, never more in eternity to hear it. *Tenor* it was in quality — a scream of tenor pealing through it, and yet it was deep in timbre, too — well, I have heard it once. And its thoughts also I heard, though I am not certain that any *words* in any tongue were uttered, and though those thoughts were far beyond my grasping: for I got the impression of an adoration in hieroglyphics, a glossolalia of astral mathematics ranting, except when at this or that instant he descended to my level of sympathy, as when, lower, he melodiously moaned ‘but to love Thee, this is bliss, to die upon Thee, this is life, this is life, this is life’, moaning it with the persistence of the sea on some morning of storm when a hoariness of rollers pour infuriate, roaring their droning over the shore of shoals at Porto Rico, and the universe consists only of a roaring droning and an eardrum hearing; and when his wobbling throat throbbed on, and obstinately long throbbed on, wallowing long in song, I saw the lord toss up his arms, calling lamentably out, I now down on my knees by the balcony, overpowered, as the lady-Zwiff, too, was down, wound about her mate’s knees, when out of those mazes of melody came forth ‘the pulses of these suns shall slow, but for ever, and then for ever, Thy sea shall flow, shall flow, Thy billows no end shall know, shall know, shall know’; nor was I aware when the oratories of that solitary adoration stopped, for its rays were too strong for Man, I coming back to myself only when the lord and lady vaulted the balcony — she, to my astonishment, then patting my arm where I knelt, saying to me ‘Well-named “Terra”! which in a certain language signifies “good-hap”: I have for you a message from a great lady. Pray, come within’.

“But when the old man followed within, they were gone from the room, and he sat anew on the seat near the oval that opened upon the balcony, feeling elevated at that patting, understanding that they had happened, on

his planet, upon the sort of sand that they sought. But when within three minutes he saw the desert dropping away from him, he had a pang, gathering that presently he'd be down again in the old townlet, and he was gashed now with a regret and jealousy that it was not granted him to sojourn ever, forgetting wife and child, in the home of this family, ruminating with them at their board on the mood of their ambrosias. But this was not to be: as soon as the palace was out of the atmosphere, and back anew in it above a floor of black cloud that had gathered over England, the two Zwiffs reentered the room, and, halting near the inner oval, the lord called me to him, saying 'Be not terrified by the thunder: we clear away some clouds, to see', whereupon a hubbub of thundering broke out underfoot, he, while it lasted, gazing at a glass on which was an image of clouds working, his fingers meantime turning what seemed a micrometer-screw; while the lady, with quite a new-born affability toward me, said in a language which thunders cannot drown 'Farewell. I bear you this message from the egg's Mother: that she sets a detector to resonance with your rays: so, if in an emergency worthy of her notice you, having-on your psychophone, send out your soul in worship to her, she still journeying in this eastern region of worlds, your wish will reach her.'

"The old man was bowing down before this deigning when the thundering stopped, the lord now stepping busily from the moving picture of cloud-rack to say to me 'Farewell. Divulge no knowledge of us. Step outside' — touching the magnet on my chest, which had gone askew; and it was now that *she*, for the second time, flicked her thumb down each side of her nose very quickly, semi-secretly, meaning without doubt my wrinkles; upon which *he* rushed to a shelf thronged with objects and dashed back to hand me a kind of phial, saying to me 'Drink some drops to-morrow'.

“But, as I was taking it, *she* moved her face slowly at him, saying ‘too potent for him’; and he then, after looking at her a moment, flew anew to the shelf, to fly back with another phial, which he handed to me, saying ‘Drink, if that other brings trouble. Come!’

“Again bowing down before the lady, I put the two phials into my jacket pocket, on top of a packet which was there, this packet afterwards proving to contain golf-balls for Paddy; and I went after the lord toward the balcony, my heart now all at once bounding into my mouth at the appalling thing that now impended upon me...

“At the oval opening he stood aside, saying, as I stepped out, ‘Be not afraid’, then went away, while I, the moment I was out, felt myself frozen, my blood bounding to my head, ears humming, the atmosphere at that altitude very rare; and I was about to rush back in, but now found myself paralysed, and in the same moment was gripped by some vigour, lifted, given to the vacant air.

“I think now that this cruelty was inflicted upon me because it was not now far from dawn, and they thought it ‘improper’ to descend and be beheld; but in the first moments I suffered, for not all my nerves were paralysed, I was aware with pain of the dazzle of a ray that burned from the palace to the earth, of a dripping of blood from my nose, of being shrouded in cloud and drenched; but no terror: I felt indeed as completely safe as when my feet reached land; upon which, as the paralysis left me, I tottered three steps, and dropped upon my face.

“I was at Penpolack; and yonder in the sands was the dent made by the palace; but no sign of palace or of ray could my gaze descry aloft: they were gone on their way”.

Wet though he was, the Doctor had no thought of going home now, Mrs. Warwick being away, but stepped lost about, saying in himself “Felicia!

Felicia!” impatient to see, but perplexed as to how much he should tell her, from whom he had never yet kept anything private — and how explain the diamonds? So, his mind teeming with that dear wife, and with the vision of the night, which commenced already to seem a vision merely, mutely he moves now over the shore in the shout of the ocean under the moonshine, pacing away westward from home, scarcely knowing what he did, whither he went: until he came to Devil’s Cave, at the mouth of which, standing among rounded pebbles and scrub, he leant his back; and now got from the pocket that had in it Paddy St. Aubyn’s golf-balls the pair of “phials” that had been given him on high.

More like tubes than phials: about a finger long, a quarter-inch in diameter, made of diamond, as their glints and ogles shewed, and at the bottom of each a little column of liquid, one an inch long, one a quarter-inch; but as both liquids were of much the same colour — a blue of iodine — he could not now decide which was the right one to drink; nor was he decided as to the propriety of drinking, knowing nothing of the results; and he stood questioning himself whether that would not be well to “put a case” to Dame Felicia Warwick first, then, having heard what she said, act as she should suggest.

But, on looking longer at the liquids, he could see that the longer column *moved* anon, with the impulses of a thing of life, disquieting itself anon, deciding to spur itself to ferments and insurrections, working with troubles of bubblings, surgings of purple rushing through its blue — a thing that so interested and seduced the Doctor, that soon, his heart fast knocking now at his ribs, he was letting the liquid drip upon his left palm to drink: for, because of a ball that ran within a canal, the liquid only flowed when the tube was tilted in a particular way, and then drip by drip; and though his

palm smarted at it, in an impulse, when six trickles had dripped, he licked it up.

It was as if he had swallowed fire: horridly it scorched all his gorge and vitals; and, holding his throat, he rushed to and fro some seconds, coughing, retching.

At once, too, he was drunk; stumbled; tumbled upon his palms; tottered into the cavern to prop his back upon the rock.

And, little by little, he stiffened, not his limbs only, but his liver and heart and soul; after ten minutes stark as death he stood there, looking at — himself before him.

“Himself” — *so to say*: for, two yards from his eyes, standing, smiling, nude, lewd, was a young man remarkably like the young man that he had once been, though more animated; and we may *say* that the young man “was himself”; but, in truth, the young man called “Warwick” had been not only another than the old called “Warwick”, but the twain were *strangers*, more foreign each to each than a young Englishman to a young Tahitan, an old to an old: and eye to eye the pair stared in a place and state that has no name, the Doctor having no more competence to look a moment elsewhere, to see, to think of, anything else, than he had to fling England to the galaxy: still, fixed; as rapt as the dead are in the tetanus and trance of death; the old man Judging the young, outraged, offended, tempted to become the young, but reluctant to let himself go from the bad habit of himself, the young man confident, steady, looking own upon the old as upon a dead dog or rat by the roadside, too arrogant to trouble his lips to say *pfft* to the old stinker; until what was left of the old man found its *will* overpowered, tripping, led astray to side with the devil, as when finally a girl, yearning, says “well, I will, to-night”, and then all’s up with her.

Hours his stare must have remained bound to that apparition, before, set free from that strait-jacket of rigidity, he fell and slept a little: for the sun was up when he was roused by the loud mouth of his hound “Guncotton”, left old by him at “Caerwent”, staring “as at a mousehole”, but now young, bounding about; and crazily now round the cave Warwick’s eyes, as they opened, flew; then, lighting upon the back of his hand, that had long been snakey with veins gone sclerotic, saw it all smooth, new-made: and now he knew — *youth!* — knew it, too, by the rabble of larks that darted, brabbling carols, out of his heart...

So up now he sprang and ran — out of the cavern — spinning, silly — new-sprung from the womb of Being, but looking silly in the old man’s wide-awake hat and cloak, his lips silly, drawn stiff in a chronic sort of smile, a rictus of astonishment, his eyes wide in an urgency of hurry and flurry, like one whose nightshirt is on fire, and he scurries to find vessels to quench it; and all at once he was off like a dart, storming up the cliffs by a rock-path which was as much perpendicular as horizontal, the old cloak brabbling backward, Guncotton barking in front — one of those sheep-dogs in trousers of tow, a shagginess of whitey-brown wool, their eyes looking out through prison-bars of tow, ears tipped with black, but *he* having only one ear so tipped; and up they flew — no “motive” — no fort up there to take — just to fly with child’s-delight, though that path was hardly steep enough, long enough, to ease their joy; and still at the top through heath they rushed along, the dog’s forelegs anon jumping upon some stone, imploring that it might be thrown for him to dart after, and when a stone was being pitched his gullet let slip one shrill of glee, as he rushed; until, for want of infinity of wind, Warwick stopped breathless on an eminence between the sun and moon, that with equal step ascended, descended, as at the ends of a see-saw, the moon old, like foam wasting, staled, consumptive

with holes, away, and like silvered senility with hollow eye-sockets, the sun a youth, full-blooded, the two working with that eternal alternateness of birth and infirmity; and between them the sea, gilt, jiggling, with a Scotch jocosity of toe and heel, which flings aloft two fingers to snap, and doggedly jigs, the sea-surface tinged purplish in those patches which show the visits of shoals of pilchards; hosts of gulls floating on nothing among the crags; madrigals of thrushes going on at the freshness of the heaven of the day; and a tarn up there hidden within heather, within bilberries, buzzing with bees that fumbled about beneath its margin's furzes and purples, and down in the hall of the tarn's large heart a mirage of the morning's hall wrought without hands; into which the hound dashed, to shrink his shaggy trousers to pegs of leg; and when Warwick gazed into that glass he saw that rictus of his lips, saw his crazy stare, and, what was pretty incongruous with his face, a bush of grey hair under his hat at the back, though, when he just touched it, it came away in tufts, as when a donkey moults, and, on taking off his hat, he felt a down that had sprouted already over all the bald top; as to his eyes, bright they flashed and darted with the ardour which rioted in Carmen's; a flush of peach brushed now that brownishness of his cheeks; with those lips it was a sin now not to kiss and kiss while they were nice. As for a wrinkle — no sign: it was as if his face had been picked up and lifted back to the place at which it had been fashioned taut, from which place it had fallen lax: so no need now to "practise smiling" any more; his need now was to practise nonsmiling. But the main transformation was down in his soul and core, in his quickness and wing, the spring of his power to see and sing: and down now with an outburst of sobbing he dropped to his knees, sobbing grievously aloud "God, I can only adore, and give myself to Thee, what else have I to give?"

But he understood that “himself” now was something worth “giving” — a young man with an old scientist’s store of acquirement, beside what of over-man wisdom the egg had given, beside what his whole hour among those argonauts had given — argonauts that now in the sunlight seemed mere freaks of dreaming: yet real was that shout in his mouth, that hair sprouting, the old hound there bounding about, and, like babies’, his fingers had a craving to go to rub his gums, which irritated, new teeth pushing there to pierce: this was real; and he cast out his arms to the star-spaces after those argonauts, hardly knowing to what azimuth to cast them, asking “Where are you now? far enough; yet hear — dear ones! — the thanks of a heart”, his “dear” now meaning all of them, even that formidable bird-tree, but with deepest fervour he loved the egg, who, at its own peril, like a conspirator, had given him hints for Terra’s good — hints some of which “the old fogey” had not heard without a certain reluctance and reserve, since the spring of his being had been too staled, not quick enough, to take-in instantly truths so full of youthfulness and spirit; but instantly the young man could understand and see; and, thinking of them, living still with them, he walked and walked, exalted, in haste, his head bared to the morning’s airs, stalking tall, as one advancing to attack and trample down the adversary; and he was swinging in this way down the mountain-side toward Penarm village, his face to heaven, his lips gently letting out the Zwiffs’ lilt “with a woola, woola, woola, and a woola, wolla, woo”, when a woman who passed on a cart with market-stuff looked so at him, that he looked at his cloak, and now noticed its blood-stains — blood that had dropped from his nose upon it in the rare air-strata above.

This determined him to concoct a murder of the vanished Dr. Warwick, a memory of his family now entering his head — without any trace of parental affection now for “his” son, and, though the old reverence for “his”

wife, idol of his life, touched that gaiety of his face with a shade of gravity and gentle regard for just a second, in the next he chuckled at the imagination of ever again going to bed with that elderly lady: ah, no: that lady was his maiden aunt. What he was out for now was to stir up and spur the girls of England, as Hercules did to girls, to fix his signature on them, and sling his ink, the girls of England and of New England, of Turkey and of Cuba; and, then, the men, too, the young men, for already in his head had turned-up those words “the young men”: war on the old; war on those of the young, too, who had old souls: anyway, he meant to be meddling now with men and women, and said to himself “Ich fuhle Muth mich in die Welt zu wagen”, as restless now with energy as a spiral spring which a shock strikes, and it will not stop shaking itself, feeling a force tingling within his sinews that could kick this globe like a football a few feet nearer goal: the way of salvation he knew.

So back now he rambled over the mountains, then down the rock-path toward Devil’s Cave, a question as to Mrs. Warwick now occupying him — whether, in leaving her, he could not scheme to increase her income: for, mingling now with his glee at newness of being, was a sense of wealth, too — greater wealth than anybody’s, probably, many of those stones in his pockets being bigger than any Koh-i-nor; but he could see no way of making her wealthier without setting her quick wits to suspect that it was “he” who had done it; nor was he much concerned: “she’ll be all right”, he murmured; and, since she would certainly not suffer so much at his being murdered as at being deserted by him, he chuckled, as he stabbed the cloak, and left its blood-stains, with the old hat, there on the cavern’s floor...

“Love thy neighbour as little as thyself”... baptized and reborn that morning into this gospel of the egg, he commenced to practise it.

But it was reluctantly that he parted with those bloodstains — with anything that was evidence of the reality of the night's riot of happenings; and when the penknife with which he stabbed the cloak chanced to touch that object slung about his neck, and he now found this object to be a magnet saturated with magnetism, this pleased him — real this, too — real the psychophone, the two tubes of liquid, which he took out to look at anew in the cave; and when he saw the youth-giver still greater in quantity than the other, a lewd craving took him to drink a little more of it for a lark, to see what the devil would happen then — a craving that afterwards was ever tempting him: but for the present he restrained himself.

It was then almost ten o'clock, and off with his mad dog he went again, indefatigable, to gad, to find himself by eleven on Tintagel Chase five miles away, where, on spying a little she-ass wandering solitary, which with shaggy jaws of rags gnawed her gorse forage, and thought her thoughts, he chased her, getting to recognize in this race, what he had already recognized in respect of the hound, that he now had a knack of reading the mind a little, of foreseeing which way the ass would shy; and he could enter into her mentality, as into the dog's, whose mood of mind was in quite another clime and moonlight than the ass's, the dog's concepts of sizes, distances, vaguer, its view of the universe more synthetic, the ass's more analytic; and this knack of cognizing mentalities, without the psychophone, abided with him some days, before it slowly faded away. Aided by which, and by the dog's noisy generalship, he presently contrived to capture the ass, and, springing upon her for a ride, was gone like a grig riding a fly; but, as he had no skill in riding, she quickly had him on the ground white as a miller with her hairs, all that gorseland now loud with the dog's mouth, and with gongings of ha! ha! ha! ha! that guffawed from the man.

Meanwhile, a wild hunger was feeding on his vitals; but it was three o'clock before he could find time to lend his mind to this a little, he being then near Boscawen village: so into the village he entered, to go to "Gwenapp's Stores"; and it was in front of the "Stores" that he saw what caused him to frown that merry day — a board that had on it

HOGAN AND DOWDY AT

PENZANCE

Come And Be Saved!

Instantly he was visited by an instinct that he and Hogan would not be getting on well together on this globe; and, devoured with hunger as he was, he remained there gazing at this thing some minutes, frowning, thinking...

As he had no money, he picked out his tiniest diamond, to sell within the "Stores", "foreknowing from what drawer Gwenapp would take the £10 to pay me". Thereupon he bought a straw hat and some grub that the dog and he gobbled up on the height above Boscawen; then tired out, having rambled forty miles, dropped asleep in heath.

Night-shades were falling when his eyes unshut; and now thoughts of what-next occupied him. London called — he'd be off by the 8.40 up-train from Penpolack; and if, meantime, he could steal unseen into "Caerwent", he would get his radium-clock, get the trite little microscope of his lifetime, the little apparatus of Perrin by which "he" was now counting Brownian movements, and perhaps find time to analyse at once a droplet of that liquid...

Away, then, he went, to arrive at "Caerwent" after five: all quiet there; night darkening; so, after prying about the house, in he darted.

But in spurting soft up the stair, he was sighted by the old servant, who, supposing him to be Ivor Warwick, presently rapped at the laboratory door (which he had locked), to talk of the Doctor's vanishing; whereupon he ordered her roughly off, deciding now not to take microscope or anything away, lest that should betray him to Dame Felicia Warwick, of whom he said to himself "Sharp as a needle, she"; and in there he remained for hours, chary now of venturing out, bent under an acetylene lamp, with microbalance, microtome, staining-fluids, sweat damping his forehead, bent upon the analysis of a c. millimetre of that galbanum: as to which he says "its action is upon the glands, ductless and pancreatic; that is ascertained: has distinct amylolytic characteristics of pancreas, and affinities with internal secretions of thyroid, thymus, and suprarenal capsules; but I found myself in the presence of a super-chemistry that eluded me: more complex than plasm; iodine obviously its basis, yet by no reagent could I get any trace of free iodine: found myself saying 'organic iodine, this' — nonsense; and though, evidently, there is a welter of radio-activity, only the vaguest uranium and radium traces (emanation and F) could I get". Over which pin-head of liquid he lingered until eight o'clock struck at St. Aubyn's Hall, then stuck lengthways on the "phial" a label marked Poison, to safeguard the elixir, and, while stooping at the keyhole listening for Pruie, he scribbled, too, in pencil, on the label "Three drops kill"; then, hearing no sound — for Pruie had dropped asleep — he whispered sh-h-h, with an admonishing finger, to the dog, and was gone.

Still forty minutes before the train: so he went down to the beach to wait there, and down there was putting the elixir into a pocket when he again came across Paddy St. Aubyn's packet of golf-balls, which so bulged his pocket, that he was now on the point of tossing it off him. But Pruie, to keep Ivor's secret, had told the Doctor that "it was *Mrs. Warwick* who had

handed her the packet to place on the sun-dial at eight”: so Warwick now, in his habit of servitude to *her* wishes, instead of tossing the thing away, walked up St. Aubyn Lane, stooped through the lodge-wicket into the park, and after a while discovered the sun-dial on a knoll.

Now, Paddy, knowing nothing of Ivor’s recall to London, was, as prearranged, on the look-out for Ivor with the packet; so, as Warwick deposited the packet, she, looking out of jasmine which embowered a bow-window at the house-back, sent her voice soft out to him: “I am here, Oscar!” — for she liked to call Ivor “Oscar”.

Upon which Warwick in joyous astonishment twisted toward her — his Christian name on those pretty lips instantly waking in him six moonshiny Juans serenading; and that way he pried — no light in that room, but the moon, just rising, shewed: he knew her, had frequently seen her riding; and though, reading her mind, he now understood that it was *Ivor* who must have handed the packet to Pruie, that Paddy must be Ivor’s pretty, little he recked, here was a girl sent from God: so toward her he stepped agaze, and under the shadow of a yew’s branches, which were upheld by chains, he stood looking up in suspense of breath, on the *qui vive*, as when one sees a meteor, and leans to peer.

Which approach was a pleasant surprise for Paddy: for Ivor had told her that, since Sir Borlase St. Aubyn, her father, objected to their friendship, he meant, for the present, to refrain from her; and at once with her pretty grin she threw down to him the whisper, “Where did you get that hat, Oscar? Lovely night for an elopement!”

Elopement... Warwick had not hoped for this: but, then, this was his lucky day. And suddenly he: “Yes! Lovely night! Come on, you! *Come on!* We’ll do a scoot, we two!”

But since the tone of this, the very phrasing, was most unlike that *chic* and strict young gentleman, Mr. Ivor Warwick, Paddy was afresh surprised in her subconsciousness, and sent down the answer, “Playing Romeo, Oscar?”

“What do you say?” he sent up — the hearing not very distinct, night-winds sighing yoolaloo within the yew’s Isle-of-sighing.

And she: “*Sh-h-h!* Only play-acting, I said”.

“I am? Play-acting? Then, the moon is! the winds don’t mean what they say! Pretty you look there: the moonlight hits the hair and nose, the pearls and satin. Do you love me, you? You have gray eyes!”

“What’s that you said last?”

“*Sh-h-h!* Gray eyes, I said, you have!”

“Just discovered it? But you don’t mean it! — I wish you did”.

“Mean what?”

“About eloping”.

“Rather! Mean it? Listen to the sea — do you suppose it doesn’t mean it when it moans? Rather! Only we must be quick—”

“I say, Oscar, what a lark!”

“Ha, ha, ha, ha!”

“*Sh-h-h!* I think you have been dwinking, as Violet pwetends to say. Is that why you have that hat?”

“That what?”

“*Sh-h-h!* That hat!”

“Yes, but we must be quick: the last train—”

“Oh, Oscar, do you mean it?”

“Now, Sweet, don’t I look — ? Sweet thing, come!

Blessed pet! dear blessed pet! come to me!”

“‘Pet’ — no, I don’t like ‘pet’”, the fastidious Paddy murmured, with a stir of her nose at Victorian things... “So what has changed you? On Saturday night you lectured me for just suggesting it”.

And he: “That was soppy! Yes, you may find me changed: I *have* been drinking — six drips; had a dream!”

“A what?”

“A dream I said!”

“Is it that that’s made you poetic? But I don’t like ‘do a scoot’

“Yes, but we are wasting time, you silly! We shall be caught — something is going to intervene! Come, Sweet Love! I’ll build you a palace, we’ll fly to the Pleiades”.

“That will be nice! Will you love me a lot? Will you buy me a horse? They say you have no money”.

“Yes, tons of money now — forty horses. Just put on a hat!”

“To vie with yours? But I feel pretty funky now... it is rather awful, after all... Something seems to tell me — *not* to. But I am going to all the same!”

“That’s a gallant! Now, how sweet! Come! You’ll be glad after”.

“How much will you love me? Oh, my little heart has gone all twinkly... Shall I write a note to tell papa?”

“No time! Don’t trouble about anything! Just throw on —

“But mustn’t I go and get my box of buttons? They’re in the drawing-room—”

“Box of what?”

“*Sh-h-h!* My soldiers’-buttons”.

“Now, what the deuce do you want soldiers’-buttons for? Oh, Sweet, something or other is going to intervene to balk and ruin us! Leave the buttons — I have some diamonds to give you!”

“Oh, no, Oscar, really, I am not going without my buttons... No one will see... You wait at the west shrubbery-end by that broken wall... au ‘voir...” She threw half-a-kiss, vanished...

On which he went exploring, and on discovering the broken wall, stepped in a pain of hope about, until sounds of her came, and Guncotton dashed, and he dashed, to a little figure in a flutter — no kiss, no time — she hardly had time to pant “Oscar, I am frightened”, when he had her hand snatched, and was off with her.

Up through Penpolack to the station — the train already there, Guncotton nearly missing it, only at the final moment deciding to leap and squeeze in. In some moments more they found themselves off for Thule and Honolulu, as it were on a sudden, by luck, and looked one at the other, with wonder.

“Girlie!” Warwick said, “girl of my heart! we’re all right!”

VII. ELOPING



YES, BUT THE station-master had recognized Guncotton; had recognized Paddy, too, under her hood.

“We’re all right!” says Warwick, with surprise, and he pointed at her, stooping, with pantomime, to sing “With a woola, woola, woola, and a wolla, wolla, woo, and a yoola, yoola, yoola, and a yolla, yolla, yoo!”

But, then, Paddy was a critic, and “woola, woola” seemed to her nothing else than ninny: for, if her forehead went smaller toward its top, coffin-shaped, there was sense in the attention of her eyes, which narrowed to smiling, and there was originality in her laugh. At once quite a new conception of Ivor Warwick commenced to arise in her, to dismay her — Ivor who in her eyes had been finically *élite*, “best-dressed”, civilization’s latest thing, disciplined as a conductor’s bâton; but this man for whom she had abandoned her soft home was all a storm, rude, exuberant, touched with buffoonery, his trousers showed tumours about the knee, his boots thick — and his odd talk! infected with slang, not good Georgian slang, but somehow Edwardian, Victorian; and no tenderness? lust, yes; but no obeisance, moaning eternal service, to his soul’s divinity. Within ten minutes ten things in him astonished, shocked, disillusioned her; nor in truth was Warwick as like Ivor Warwick in face as twins can be alike; yet no doubt that he *was* Ivor entered her consciousness; for a throng of proofs will fail to arouse a first doubt in a consciousness preoccupied with a certainty, though after a first a second readily occurs.

But this being's gift of the gab, far surpassing Ivor's, pleased, dazzled her; solitary in their compartment with the dog, his tongue flowed and flowed with the rapidity of the dog's rippling tongue, digging her ribs to a little giggling anon; and he had an addictedness to kissing which rather reconciled her to his unexpected characteristics. And so to a stop at Truro, a stop at Bodmin.

But at Bodmin Warwick got a shock: for, as the train was getting ready to move out, an officer trotted in upon the platform to trot along the train, until, coming to Warwick's compartment, on looking in, he put his hand to wring the door-handle, but had only time to cry "Hi, there!" when the train left him running backward.

From which the fugitives assumed that, Paddy's absence from home having been discovered, a wire had been sent out along the line, enjoining upon the authorities to stop her: and this was so, the Penpolack station-master having given information of having seen Paddy, Mr. Ivor Warwick, and Guncotton go off.

So, half-way toward Plymouth, when the train all-but stopped at a "distant station" signal, Warwick sprang down upon the rails, and grasping Paddy's hand, ran, saying "Come, girl! girl of my heart! the gates of hell shall not prevail against us".

And they fled, without any notion whither, fleeing the railway, until, mounting some hill-road in the night's Utopia, they spied in the moonlight a house of some size that stood lonely, having before it a post with a signboard marked "Fox and Hounds": into this they went to spend the night.

After being given a nice bedroom lighted by electricity, Warwick, who was ravenous, wanted Paddy to go down with him to a "commercial-room" for supper; but Paddy said "I don't want anything to eat, I'll stay here", with a maidenly shrinking from being eyed at.

And, seated alone in an easy-chair near an electric-stove, her knuckles at her cheek, she considered it, her heart going rather fast at the unknown gulfs before her: she had ventured upon a big thing, her everyday bed left, to spring into a precipice.

Nor did Warwick seem to be in any hurry to return to her; when it occurred to her that he must be eating a lot, she opened the room-door, stole out to a stair-head near, looked down over banisters: and there on the stair was he with a young woman whom he was busily kissing — an inn-maid rather monstrously fat, her wrists thick, her head cast back, absorbed in kissing away, like anchorites rapt in prayer; and she had awkwardly in hand a water-can which appeared on the point of dropping from her, her fingers were so relaxed and absent, while Guncotton sat close with a sideward up-look, watching human love with curiosity.

“Er”, Paddy went, not admiring his taste, her young life now making acquaintance with pain: for a gumboil for two days at twelve had been not much in comparison with the catastrophe of this miscarriage. She felt herself the victim of a mystery of iniquity, not conceiving that here were two moralities contrasting, hers a villager morality, ancient-Asiatic, concerned with persons, “neighbours”, his a world-morality concerned with worlds: so she saw nothing but her wrong. For this she had left her soft home, where were no crosses for her, nor cares of self-protection, self-defence; to which home something in her could never now return, ashamedly to confess her desertion of it a mistake and failure.

But, stung, she stung back. When Warwick, on running up, wrung the handle, the door, locked, repulsed his advance. Paddy inside said “I don’t want to open, Oscar”; and to his “Why?” and “why?” she answered always “I don’t want to”.

He had to sleep bachelor, for the fat quean shrank from being a bed-fellow.

And Paddy slept, dressed, in a chair.

At daylight she opened the door, and when he came demanding why she had handled him “so harshly last night”, she, smiling up into his face, replied “A caprice. Please get used to my caprices”.

“Hard-hearted!” he said. “Come on, give your old man a squeeze”.

“Er”, she went at him.

And he: “I say, don’t you love me, you?”

“Do you love me?”

“You may bet!”

“Me only?”

“Rather!”

She laughed.

“Do you doubt it?”

“It does not matter”.

“Oh, well. Let’s go down to breakfast”.

But Paddy would not: breakfast was taken up to her by the fat lass, whose eyes met Paddy’s silently meditating on her.

Then at ten o’clock the runaways started for London in a car — Warwick, unlicensed, driving; but he proved a furious driver, scatter-brained, and, having no practice in driving, twice horrified Paddy by accidents — at a spot where cattle were crossing at Honiton, and at Andover the car broke a motor-bicycle to fragments, with crackle of its own glass. And so into the lights o’ London, where at the Savoy Hotel Warwick took a flat, ordered a supper.

In their drawing-room he and Paddy stood on opposite sides of a table, looking at each other: and she said “It appears that you mean us to sleep

like married couples?”

And he: “Well?”

“Shouldn’t that come after marriage?”

“Now, Paddy, Darling, shall we not be level-headed? — unless you mistrust me”.

“Oh, no, I don’t mistrust you in that way”.

“Well, then”.

She made no answer.

“Kiss me!” he said.

Obediently she came round, held up her lips.

“Pet! Sweet old thing!” he said to her.

But presently when he left her there, then after five minutes came back — no sight of her! the rooms empty of her presence; and he mourned for his night.

That, though, did not prevent him from revelling in the supper; and soon after it a note came by messenger-boy: “Dear Oscar, please forgive my flight. I am at the Langham Hotel. Paddy”.

To this he scribbled in answer “Heartless thing, but sweet. What is it all about, Woola-woola? I am tired and tipsy now, but tomorrow will look you up. Do yourself well, throw money about, you are now thousands of times richer than your father. Sweet dreams of your old man. Oscar”.

But that “tomorrow” was thronged with interests other than Paddy, who hardly entered his head, as his taxis threaded London from Mincing Lane to Threadneedle Street to Hatton Garden to Harley Street. At night he dined five men at his hotel, and was then tired — might then have ‘phoned to Paddy, or sent some money, but put it off him.

The next day was the same, though he was once very near to her in Harley Street, while he was eyeing over a house before buying: for he had a

medical degree, had lived a little at twenty-three in Harley Street, and, in seeking now a London abode, his mind naturally harked back to that street of scientists. By the second nightfall he had signed deeds, had acquired No. 24 there; but now Paddy was ousted from his attention by the fact that that night Hogan and Dowdy were being “revivalist” at the Albert Hall; and his new motor, full of a pair of fellows and two girls-about-town, had barely spurted up when the first hymn was being sung in a hall swarming not only with the lower orders, but with lords: for it was the mode now to have gone once to Hogan’s.

Warwick knew that strong face from the newspapers, but now saw it solid— “a man of a fierce countenance” — a face almost a square, quite brown in contrast with its white brow, dropping across which brow, down to the left eyebrow, a wing of hair swept thick, with an expression of press-of-business, sweat-of-office; his body stoutish; otherwise, being shortish, it might have looked too small for his lump of skull; and with power he spoke, seeming himself to believe the things he said — nor was this incredible, since, unlike other clerical minds, no money-motive drove him: it was known of him that, though thousands of pounds passed through his hands every week, he himself remained a poor man — without even boasting that he was poor; what he lusted for was, not money, but empire — to see men believing that what he said, however rude, was true, to see them doing what he told them to do.

One wonders whether his eye was not once drawn that night to rest on Warwick, whether no voice within him warned that, sitting lost amid those thousands, was one who had vowed war upon him...

As to his Dowdy, Dowdy was the singer, and without doubt possessed a tenor voice of no little power and poignancy.

But as to Paddy, what of her? Forgotten! — anyway, neglected. It was very well to tell her “throw money about”, but no money had been given her, though she needed money for different things, her only wealth now being her box of buttons and a few jewels; and she stood astonished that a day had come for her in which she was no longer a centre of plenteousness and of pettings.

On the second night of the failure of Warwick’s promise to “look her up tomorrow” she wrote “Dear Oscar, I am still at the Langham Hotel. Paddy”; and, being uncertain whether Warwick was still at the Savoy, or was now at the Bermondsey address whither she had frequently written to Ivor Warwick, she wrote the note twice, to send to both addresses.

So the following morning Ivor *knew* where the fugitive was, and, wild with excitement, dashed at once from his flat to wire to his mother, now back at Penpolack, “Patricia St. Aubyn found, at Langham Hotel”; at the same time he wired to Paddy “I am delighted: expect me this forenoon. Ivor”.

What her “still” in “I am *still* at the Langham” might mean he could not conceive — that assumption that he had before known where she was! and it lent such wings to his keenness to see her, that, though a fault in a high-power switch at a sub-station bound him to his office some hours that morning, before eleven he was off for the hotel.

But before ten Warwick, who also had had Paddy’s note, had gone to her; and among her first words to him were “What did ‘I am delighted’ mean? ‘Delighted’ at what?”

And he: “*I* said so? When?”

“Why, in your wire” — holding it out.

Then he saw that the wire and delight were Ivor’s, who must be flying to her, and all the fat was in the fire, unless he acted like lightning. So at once

he said “Come, let’s drive about, while we talk and arrange things”.

In passing out, he paid her hotel-bill, and in the motor told her never more to send any letter to Bermondsey, since he would now be at Harley Street; told her, too, that hotels were dangerous places for her, under whatever name she registered; but he knew of a boardinghouse — only, she should have some luggage: he and she could go shopping; then, if there were suitable rooms ready for her, he’d leave her at the boarding-house, or at a hotel near it, to dream of her old man, and he’d not forget to get a licence of marriage, so that they might marry and have a high time, with a woola, woola, woola, and a wolla, wolla, wolla, woo.

Troubled as she was, she had to throe toward laughters at the ardours of that hearth of his vitality, his hilarity like a typhoon of ozone on Alpine altitudes; he could only sit still when kissing, palming her larger parts, “ten kisses short as one, one long as twenty”, with moans of lust; and whatever he suggested she acquiesced in.

So when, before noon, Ivor Warwick arrived at the Langham, no Paddy, Paddy gone — with some man — no trace left: so that now profoundly perplexed he stood, reft of explanation of a senseless universe.

And he was knocked more agape, if possible, when, as he was going from the hotel, a dog sprang upon his breast, gladly wagging, gobbling barks of gladness — Guncotton, who, having slipped through a doorway opened by a decorator in Harley Street near, had now followed the scent of Warwick to the Langham, to find, not Warwick, but a second-best Ivor: as to which Ivor wrote that nightfall to his mother “Wild as it may seem, I believe that it was Guncotton: the dog’s manners had all the meaning of a recognition; and the fact that he had *all* of Guncotton’s markings, including Guncotton’s *peculiarity* — the left ear not tipped with black — adds assurance to my conviction. If I ought to call it assurance. Assurance

confuted by assurance! the two faces of Janus exactly equal. For, as I said in the telegram, this was a Guncotton no longer aged, but jubilantly youthful. After bombarding me, darting and darting at me with the regularity of billows addicted to battering a crag, the dog dashed from me to be gone like a flash, continuing apparently to follow the scent from which my apparition had deflected him. If Guncotton could engender a pup to which, with his other characteristics, he transmitted his memories, too, then, this was that pup. Think, Mother dear, for us — I, I confess, am helpless here. You have much now to think of, dear Mother, Mother dear, but, then, Adequate is the name of your mental equipment, and as ever, I bet my last bit on that wit. It is dreadful that I am now writing, instead of travelling to you, as we expected, but qu'y faire? Within two days, though, I should be free of this second break-down in the generator-system....”

VIII. FELICIA WARWICK



AT THAT SAME twilight hour of Ivor's writing Dame Felicia Warwick was seated on a couch at "Caerwent", plying a needle as quietly as if no world had burst in pieces beneath her feet, working a pattern of worsted on canvas; and before her, seated, her old servant, Pruie.

There were questions and answers, and intervals wherein some sense of the efficiency of the lady's presence reigned there in dumbnesses of meditation, as though visible like her fingers' business was the business of her knitting wits behind her eyes — eyes light-blue, steady, dwelling on you out of the windows of her citadel of personality with a steady understanding, and, if you sinned, be sure your sin would find you out; her hair white, like white silk, but only its bun, or bulky loaf say, now showing under a hat of Hibernian peasant-Pats, turned down all round, she having been out planting potted begonias in a garden-border with a trowel for Summer flowering; but her face still held out against the siege of years, not looking a face of sixty, but of fifty say, her twentieth year still sometimes triumphing to pay it a flying visit; and still it was thoroughbred, with the serenity of a princess riding a racer, like the lady with greyhounds of Furse's "Diana of the Uplands", whose mode of ladyship, English homelife, fine linens, scented underclothes, her essence suggested; and her voice had some strangeness of charm, a voice a little hollow, solemn, as of one who relates a tale of stormings and misfortunes in fairyland forlorn, and stares at vacancy, relating it, seeing strange things. Only, some crows'-feet coming now at the eye-corners! not much: just to shew that she was mortal woman,

and must some time buckle under to become as others. She said to her Pruie
“Dear me, you still say that it was Mr. Ivor who ran up the stair”.

And Pruie: “I don’t know who else to say it was, Mrs. Warwick”.

“But since Mr. Ivor says that it was not?” Then: “I’d rather say it was Dr. Warwick, Pruie”.

“Dr. Warwick storm up a stair two at a time, Mrs. Warwick?”

“No, certainly”, the lady murmured, “that doesn’t sound right. But since it was not Mr. Ivor? Did you ever, Pruie, hear Mr. Ivor say ‘make yourself small’? bidding one take a cubit from one’s stature?”

“No, Ma’am, nor I did never hear Dr. Warwick say ‘make yourself small’”.

“No, they are not much for slang, those two gentlemen. You and I like to call a pub a pub, but they give themselves the pains to call it a public-house... But I can more easily imagine Dr. Warwick in a seaside-Johnnie’s straw-hat than imagine Mr. Ivor, can’t you?”

“Maybe, Ma’am”.

Dumbness...

And dreamily now the lady, reasoning as if to herself: “Anyway, *some* one ‘stormed’ up the stair: not Mr. Ivor, who was in Bermondsey, but so like, that you could take him to be Mr. Ivor. And he was like Mr. Ivor in other things than looks: was like Mr. Ivor, and especially like Dr. Warwick, in this, that he was a scientist — busied about something in the laboratory all the time you were listening; and a scientist who knew exactly where the laboratory is— ‘stormed’ straight to it; locked himself in; knew that your name is Pruie; knew that he might possibly storm up without being observed, the house being deserted. And he not only looked and behaved like Mr. Ivor, he *smelled* like Mr. Ivor — or like Dr. Warwick — for Guncotton was with him: you are sure that it *was* Guncotton, because the

dog scratched to get at you when you rapped, knew that it was you; and since it was Guncotton, that does seem to force us to say that the man was either Dr. Warwick or Mr. Ivor. It is, indeed, possible to say instead that it was Mr. Ivor's or the Doctor's wraith, or the Doctor's ghost, if the Doctor was dead, and if old men's ghosts become young ghosts; but wraiths and ghosts, if they exist, are extremely rare, charily stingy of themselves, else everyone would know that they exist, whereas the human race refuses to credit that wraiths, at any rate, exist; if it did credit, no one could ever prove an alibi: for, if someone declared 'I was not in London, witnesses can prove that I was at Drayton', a jury would think 'That's no proof, it may have been his wraith that was at Drayton'; but no jury thinks this. And even if wraiths or ghosts do exist, and reflect light to be seen, do they diffuse particles to be smelled? and do they have the same smell as the bodies of which they are wraiths or ghosts, so that a dog's delicate nostrils can recognize them? No, that hardly seems reasonable. Let us say, then, that that stromer of the stair, that scientist so like Mr. Ivor, was not Mr. Ivor's or anyone's, wraith, nor was Dr. Warwick's ghost: for, apart from the question of the odour of ghosts, we can say that Dr. Warwick was not dead: *pretending* to be dead—"

"Oh, Mrs. Warwick!" — Pruie started.

"Bear with me, Pruie" — stopping her embroidery to gaze now at space — "let us confront facts, whatever pangs that costs us. No, not dead. Pretending to be dead, and carelessly pretending, indextrously, too engrossed with one big thing to trouble much about messy little things. The police rightly reject the idea that he has been murdered: none of the stabs in the cloak happen to be over the heart-region — penny-ha'penny holes made by a pen-knife. And where's the body? not buried anywhere near Devil's Cave, elaborately concealed, but the cloak and hat left on exhibition at the

cave's opening. No, that's napoo. And the dog, where's he? If the master whom a dog is following near its home is killed, the dog comes home? But it appears from Mr. Ivor's second wire to-day that Guncotton is in London; and isn't Guncotton with Dr. Warwick? Only, the dog that fondled Mr. Ivor was a young dog, so could not, you may say, have been Guncotton; but, then, the same thing is true of the dog that stormed up the stair with the young philosopher: you are sure that *that* was Guncotton; yet it was a young Guncotton: for you know that the old Guncotton never would follow up to the laboratory, but would toddle to the drawing-room to warm his old maw. So the notion of a young Guncotton offers itself to us: and, if an old dog can become young, an old philosopher may; indeed, if the man who stormed the stair was either Dr. Warwick or Mr. Ivor, and was not Mr. Ivor, then it was a young Dr. Warwick. One must be jolly chary in letting oneself entertain such a notion: the only thing that could rescue it from being absurd would be the circumstance that it is true. Yet we see it taking place before us every day: in six months a tree becomes young, in six months old; look, it is old; look anew, it is young. And Dr. Warwick, an expert in sub-atoms, *may* have discovered some force which can both uproot a yew and renew a youth. Carew's Clause yew — that uprooting may have been an experiment... he goes out of doors that midnight... never did before... and soon afterwards the yew is down. But what was that dent in the sand? What was that? Ah, no, that beats me, that beats me.... And, if he did discover something, was his discovery sudden? It is a thing incredible that while in the course of discovery he kept the whole thing dark from me, who was the partner in all his thoughts. Yet *some* discoveries do come sudden, like Röntgen rays — some few: he *may* have discovered something in those four days of my absence in Penzance — maybe. That Monday night some Light from on high was among men, some psychic emanation strange like the 'cosmic

rays' which are at present perplexing philosophers: those eerie 'dreamings' of people about here seem to mean that the Mind-stuff which permeates the world was mightily insurgent that night; and this might have urged a mind like Dr. Warwick toward fresh knowledge — might. It does seem that he has done something to himself, after experimenting on the yew and the dog, to renew his youth — something which has wrenched within him the springs of strictness and rectitude. I knew him when he was a youth, and it was not his way then to say 'make yourself small'; if he says it now, some profound modification has taken place in his temperament. With whom has Miss Paddy St. Aubyn run away? With whom? She was in love with Mr. Ivor — he told me. Hasn't she gone with someone who can be mistaken for Mr. Ivor, whom *you* mistook for Mr. Ivor, who had in his pocket the golf-balls — ?

"Well, really", Pruie put in here, "you mean, Ma'am, that Dr. Warwick could run away—"

"Doesn't sound quite o k., does it, Pruie? But, then, there are more things in heaven—" she was arrested now by a rap, and said "Inspector Trelawney — or else — no, I bet it is Sir Borlase St. Aubyn!" — as Pruie hobbled off to open.

It was Sir Borlase who in a minute stood before the lady, who stood up also, as tall as he, he not being big.

His bow was abrupt. "Good evening, Madam," — with the sharpness of a cavalry-captain's "charge!"

"Please sit, Sir Borlase St. Aubyn".

"Thank you, no. I won't sit. I am here merely to ask for your son's address. Be good enough to let me have it".

Her eyes dwelt on him, estimating him. "Well, you know — that depends. Is it that you want to write to him?"

“Write to him, indeed, Mrs. Warwick! Catch me writing love-letters to your son! *Go* to him — go for him”.

“Oh, don’t say that yet — wait — bear — till you know. Your father’s-heart is sore — and, O, if my head were waters, I could weep them all... But it was not my son — please, please, believe — don’t I know him? and if I give my word.... You have seen his wire, which I sent you at once this morning, telling that she was at the Langham Hotel, then his second wire, telling that she had gone from there — think how elaborate a hypocrisy! What a liar, who never lied before! And there are ten proofs... He meant to put on the sun-dial with his own hands the little packet of golf-balls which have now been found on it—”

But Sir Borlase brushed it off him. “Pardon me, Madam, I can’t go into all that. The main facts are certain. Last Saturday your son threatened me to have his way with my daughter; then was seen taking her into a train. And I know he had managed to fascinate her fancy, nobody else could have induced her — Intolerable wrong. Ancient name. No scandal — till now. Intolerable thing. She doesn’t even seem to be married, or would surely have written to me, have wired — fond of me. Well, the law of our land says ‘Do not kill’, and that’s all right; but if a man’s dearest heart’s-blood is robbed from him, the law admits, says ‘Oh, well, in that case, yes, red for red it is’. As for the address, I can readily discover it; the man is in Bermondsey somewhere. You might let me have it”.

Her eyes were steadily on him; and she said “I don’t at present quite see my way—”

“Good evening, Madam” — right about turn: he was gone.

And she to Pruie a minute later: “Ah, that roaring lion; it is *killing* he means, if he comes across Ivor!”

She added, “Now then, Pruie, run: tell Rudyard to run and let us know if Sir Borlase takes a London train” — this Rudyard being a relative of Pruie, porter at Penpolack station.

She divined that the baronet would hardly start that night, but might the day after: for, if he could not find Ivor’s private address, he could find the electric-station, at which all Penpolack was aware that Ivor was employed; the next afternoon, however, Ivor might be coming down while Sir Borlase was going up: that would be well! So she scribbled to him in haste that evening “*Come*, let nothing prevent”; but unfortunately the letter was rather late for the last, six o’clock post; and the next afternoon when the porter, Rudyard, ran down to “Caerwent” with the news that the baronet was off for London, this threw her into such a condition of terror, that at once she wired Ivor “Let nothing prevent coming. If impossible, do not be at works, nor at flat. I command”.

He had not yet got this, when she got a telegram from him: “Starting for you by four-fifteen”: and this came comforting.

But when about to go to his train for Penpolack, he got her telegram, “*Come*, let nothing prevent”, and its effect was the opposite of what she intended: for he saw that he was being bidden to fly from a peril, from Sir Borlase, and since “the righteous are as bold as a lion”, to fly was indecorous in his eyes: so he now sent her a second telegram: he “found it impossible”, after all, to go down; “forgive”, he said, “nor must I hide myself, forgive, forgive, this once”.

From which a fresh crisis of affright for her; thrice she ranged through “Caerwent” dining-room as through a cage too pent to contain her, her arms as if shackled behind her back in her customary manner; and she glanced at a clock — time, she decided, if she was lively, to catch the 8.40.... Within some minutes she had some things crushed into an attaché-case, and was

running, throwing bye-bye behind at Pruie running in the tow of her rush. But after banging the garden gate, her run bolted, not up toward the station, but down toward the sands, where near the sea-edge she snatched up a patch of seaweed, and, as she dashed back, snapped this into her attaché-case, nor had her arithmetic, though risky, miscalculated her ticks, for she had been settled six ticks in a carriage before the train rolled out: on a sudden she was away for London.

IX. HOW TO GET A TRUCK FROM ELGIN TO LONDON



AT DAY-DAWN SHE went to stay with a family of four old maids, the St. John-Hammonds, whose Hanover Square mansion was her other home.

Now two winks of sleep, and now wide eyes of wit: the thing now being to hit upon Sir Borlase St. Aubyn among the millions of London; then to hit upon that young philosopher who had stormed up the “Caerwent” stair, and, without doubt, had plucked Paddy St. Aubyn like a flower; then to hit upon Paddy, whom, just possibly, it might not even now be too late to snatch from that which is worse than the grave for a girl.

To find Sir Borlase, she decided upon an audacious step — to tell him her Ivor’s address: so she made a trunk-call upon Miss Ruth St. Aubyn, Sir Borlase’s aunt, who had a house in Penpolack, and was always up with the lark... “I am Mrs. Warwick... Yes, in London... I want to call upon Sir Borlase, kindly tell me his address”; but Ruth St. Aubyn answered “I can’t, he wants this visit to London to be incognito”; and now Mrs. Warwick: “Well, then, will you ‘phone him Ivor Warwick’s address?” — now giving the address.

And now immediately she was in her hosts’ motorcar, to be off across the river through a Cockney morning that yawned at rawness of drizzly mist, and to take her stand at one of a row of garden-gates in front of great blocks of flats; and there, though eager to go up to her son, her feet remained sentry, guarding him from peril, as the dragon the apples.

Till Sir Borlase drove up, and found that before his gun could get at her son, it had to break through the barrage of her rationality. “Will you get into

my motor?" she said to him— "an elopement. If my son has run off with your daughter, you run off with his mother. Too old; but remember ten years ago, Sir Borlase. Come; come with me".

He had to. And in the motor she went over anew the story of the young man who had darted up the "Caerwent" stair at a time when Ivor was under the eyes of five witnesses in London; then, having with her the letters of Ivor written since that night of Paddy's flight, she insisted upon Sir Borlase reading each: they breathed no little realness of pity for Paddy, grief, a grimness against the man who had misled her: "I devote my life, Mother, to finding that brute; if I do, I fancy the brute will rue his misdoing". All this was impressive; the baronet had intelligence; and it became as incredible to him that Ivor was the vile one as it was incredible that Ivor was not. Seeing which, she said "He hasn't yet gone out: go now to him, look into him, witness his innocence for yourself. Only give me your word that you will never do anything against him until you are certain that it was he".

And Sir Borlase consented, with "Oh, very well, I undertake that much".

Now in his own motor he drove back to the flats, achieved a fifth stair, rang, to snap sharp in-his cavalry-captain fashion "My daughter here, Warwick?"

"No, Sir", says Ivor.

"Where's she?"

"Somewhere in London, I think".

"Ask me in".

"Come in".

Within, the captain stepped deliberately about the three apartments like an inspector, without saying anything, on the look-out for some hint of womanhood; but here everything was fastidiously male, save a miniature of Paddy and two pastels of a mother: so in the end the two stood together

discussing, drove together in the captain's car to the electric station, where were witnesses for Ivor, and finally, in the office, the captain offered his hand, saying "Well, Mr. Warwick, I seem to have misjudged you".

He added "Now we are allies: for you seem not less keen than I am to lay hands on the man, and we can work together, punish together".

He then went away, leaving the son all unconscious still that that dearest, his mother, was in London: for it would be well, she considered, for her to come to know more before acquainting him with this, so had asked the captain not to mention it.

In the effort to know more she spent that day, that Saturday, almost all: breakfast, then hours of it; lunch, then hours of it, with splendid patience: for just to wait, doing nothing but exercise faith in one's own forecast, expecting something where Nothing reigns, where Nothing is Nature, can be dreadfully distressing to faith. Her mission now was to pick out of the myriad reel of London that runner-up of stairs and abductor of young ladies, to peer into him, and say to herself "that's he", or "that's not he": and to this end she stood sentry through that day in Langham Place, while twice it rained, occasionally pacing some steps for change of air, but mostly standing a statue, a pale patience, having in her hand that patch of seaweed which she had snatched from the beach just before her dash from the country: for she divined that the dog which had fondled Ivor Warwick in Langham Place hardly lived far from it; if he lived near, his nostrils' quickness would scarcely fail to pick up a scent so raw as seaweed; and, if he was really Guncotton, he would run to an odour long known, now "lost awhile"; then, having Guncotton, she would have Guncotton's master.

But Guncotton, though near in Harley Street, was that day rather a prisoner. Seven o'clock struck; now coldness and hunger goaded her toward giving up; but still she would not go. Then All Souls' struck another hour,

and now London frowned toward night, a rout of sounds, dimly mixed with lights and sights; soon now, however, like a streak of keenness, he came freed, and was with her a chaos of ecstasies.

“Not somuch of it”, she said to him, “let one breathe”.

And she said to him “So *you* are Guncotton? Gay young dog! Dog-about-town! Lighter than my heavy heart”.

Now she tossed away the dollop of seaweed, then, when he could listen to anything, said to him “Now take me to your home”.

And he, who had a good knowledge of English, went before her, with runnings to-and-fro, with “come!” and “come!”, until he conducted her into a noising of roysterers, to 24 on the east street-side, where several cars stood parked; but when he clawed at the door, calling “whoof!”, she fled away; then when he was let in, hankered back.

The house was uttering an uproar — from a diningroom to the left of the front-door — uproar of revelry; and since no blind was lowered, and a lower sash raised, she, standing on tiptoe at the “area”-rail, could perfectly discern inside not less than fifteen men and three girls competing in gabbling in a scramble of tongues tumbled in press of battle, and their standard had “Alcohol” on it. She saw someone stout, in swallow-tails, a butler, come trotting in, cumbered with more bottles, which he caused to pop and ooze froths like fumes of cannons operating in press of battle, to lay low the revellers; and she saw, seated askew on the table’s edge, one whom she had known forty years before, looking much as she had known him then, at twenty-seven: in one hand he had a glass, a Venetian bubble of glass, gold-beaded, his other hand fingering the ear of that one of the three girls who was dressed as a nurse.

“There he is”, she said — the moralist, timorous of the improper, meticulous as a micrometer. Into her head floated a memory of his book,

“The Foundations of Ethics”.

“There he is” — nothing thenceforth was incredible under the sun, nor anything credible.

“But the money — whence?” Did the same discovery that could uproot a yew and renew a youth make one wealthy, too?

But no sign of Paddy — that child’s life! Where, then, was she?

Having abandoned his wife for Paddy, had he abandoned Paddy likewise, that child?

Now he slid off the table, caught up the hospital-nurse, and went awkwardly waltzing with her through the throng, singing “After the Ball”.

One of the girls called “Shut up, Wallace, you can’t dance”.

And now he, loud-mouthed, “Now for the Troc, Boys!” — putting the spirit of fleeing into the onlooker’s feet; presently after which they were all standing, one calling out “Cut out night-clubs to-night, Wallace — Steinway Hall lecture to-morrow”.

On which another called out “Yes, how *do* you get a truck from Elgin to London? Doesn’t seem tremendously difficult!”

And a lad in evening-dress called out “A lecture by Wallace should be ‘For Girls Only’, and girls don’t care a damn *how* you get a truck—”

At which a noise of laughter; and Wallace — for, having taken the name “Wallace”, Warwick henceforth may well be called “Wallace” — Wallace, with a face going grave a moment, said “Lecture’s for boys, too: better come, the lot of you, if you know what’s good for you”.

Glasses, meantime, were drained, the lady decamped, the group trooped out, drove in their motors away.

Then she, weary, stepped into a taxi, to drive to Steinway Hall, her heart now a lump of lead, if lead can have a pang — of ethical dismay, of jealousy, perplexity at an earth turned turtle. That old man! her twin and

other self! that he should have been discovering an elixir or something, and excluding her from communion, here was wounding from one's own true love: now she knew reproach of soul.

At Steinway Hall she saw that the lecture was for eleven o'clock the next (Sunday) morning; and now at last home to Hanover Square to a strange bed in a strange world, and as a door on its hinges so she turned that nightlong on it; no shutting of her eyes that stared until light of day, and then she must needs rise from brief sleep to be away to the lecture, where perhaps Paddy St. Aubyn might be: for the thing now was to unearth Paddy quick, if only to learn the worst.

So, veiled, she sat at the back of a room more or less full of, as it were, a family-party of house-owners, "the intelligentsia", dilettanti in distinguished costumes, having some interest in ideas, and willing to be critics of, to be amused by, whatever wind of new and curious may spring up.

And now walks Wallace to the platform, Dame Felicia Warwick knowing that swing-back of one arm, some hint of stamping mixed with his advance, hair rather tousled, trousers rather baggy — she knew them! had known them four years. But though he probably had little practice in public-speaking, he seemed not foreign to it, saying with sang-froid "Good day, Ladies and Gentlemen. Perhaps you will join me in singing Lord Tennyson's little hymn 'The Brook'".

And, standing up, some of them did...

I chatter over stony ways

In little sharps and trebles,

I bubble into eddying bays,

I babble on the pebbles.

And out again I curve and flow,

To join the brimming river,
For men may come, and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

And now when with a lust of the ear they seated their buttocks to hear, he brings from a pocket a thing like half-a-plum to clap upon his forehead — his so-called “psychophone” of those twilight-wanderers — and, invested with it, held his eyes upraised five seconds, as in silent prayer; then sitting free-and-easy on a little table’s brink, he proceeds to bring forth the most passionate message perhaps that man ever addressed to man, saying “Well, now, Ladies and Gentlemen, as to getting a truck from Elgin to London, there are various ways: you may push it with hand, foot, head, shoulder; or you may pull it by strings; or you may connect lower animals with it to pull it; or you may connect sails with it, for winds to push it; or you may connect an engine with it, to push or pull it by the expansive force of some gas compressed, as steam, or the explosive force of some gas, as frozen air exploded, or oil, operating in the four-cycle way of Otto, the two-cycle way of Diesel; or you may wind a wire round a drum in planes containing the drum’s axis, then, inciting in the wire a flow of electrons by reeling the drum about its axis between a magnet’s poles, you may then connect this wire with a wire wound about a like drum in the truck, thus making the truck’s drum a rotor, whose reeling, connected with the truck’s wheels, can set these areeling; or, by any of these means, you may get the truck to the Thames, then float it, sail it, paddle it, screw it, down the river to London, or up. But, however you do it, you do it by science. Some of us may be disposed to suppose that to move the truck by electric motor is *more scientific* than by pulling with strings; but that’s not so. Science is any knowledge of the order in which events always happen — firstly, secondly, thirdly — knowledge that, if you add water to sulphuric acid, then,

secondly, the two wax furious, knowledge that, if you pry through a telescope, then, secondly, you can descry two hundred island universes, knowledge that, if something is pulled, then, secondly, it moves, or tends to: this is science, acquired afresh by each infant life: nothing can be ‘more scientific’ than science — than the science of a fly, of a vegetable cell, which could not continue alive six ticks without science; and the primary microbe that kicked was driven to acquire a trifle of science quick, so as not to die.

“Now, Life is good, ‘Life is sweet’, as we say — two statements that are one, since *good* means sweet. One needn’t trouble to prove that: for everything that you consider *good* gives pleasure, as, if you consider it good to give up smoking, that is for health, somehow for more pleasure than pain, as saints are ascetic to get to Nirvana’s calm, to a pleasure-garden, or Paradise ‘of pure delight where pleasures banish pain’: so they consider asceticism good, on the whole: *good* means pleasant. And Life is good: a fly shies from dying, as we rush from a motor-car coming, liking life. But no science, no (continued) life; and the more science the more life, since science is consciousness, and Life is consciousness. So, since life is good, and life is consciousness or science, science is the same as Good: for that there may be Good or pleasure there must be life, and that there may be (continued) life there must be science.

“And since Good is science, Evil is nescience, lack-of-science. A being all-conscious, omni-scient, is free of kidney-disease, conscious of a super-insulin — free of each species of evil, living within the deeps of seas of sweetness. So the so-called ‘mystery of evil’ is no mystery: for evil is unease; unease is nescience or non-science; and since science is of necessity a *growth* — for how could there be an omni-scient grub or monkey? — we see that the existence of evil is no ‘mystery’, but is a necessity of nescience,

so that Evil can be defined as ‘the Necessity of Every Meantime’; also we see that God is good, that Life is destined to delight: for it is the *law* of Life to acquire science, Life can’t help in the long run, God so drives Life to science: and science is Good, science is delight.

“But some of your faces harden against me when I let slip this ‘God’, you *élite* people being pleased to name yourselves ‘atheists’. But, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, isn’t atheism, too, like any theism, pantheism, a doctrine about the origin of the universe? And if the origin of the universe is a mystery? inherently inconceivable? isn’t that savage to have some doctrine about it? There should be nothing; but Somehow something is, which moves: that’s so, isn’t it? And the English for this Somehow is ‘God’. For, if not, what is the English for it? Nothing? Yes, something: fancy a language without a word for chair, for world! So when you say ‘no God’, you say ‘no Somehow’, not meaning what you say, for there must be Somehow, and there cannot be an atheist. But, in fact, in saying ‘no God’, you are *answering* priests and negroes, who prattle that Somehow is So-and-so; and, in condescending to answer savages, you overshoot, say too much, meaning to say that there is no So-and-so; but you say that there is no Somehow. ‘God’, then, is good English for a Somehow that must be.

“And God is good; God is Divinely pitiless; God’s design is pitilessly to drive Life to arrive at delight through acquiring science: as when a Pleistocene Ice-age drove ape-types to light fires, or die; after which they were men, having as much more pleasure than apes as we have than they. When some mote is in our eye, how tearful is that tiny evil! We cannot blow our eyes, as we can our nose, nor can we sneeze through our eyes, as the people on some spheres doubtless do: we just sit and think ‘how pitiless! how badly made!’ But it is good so; the Sphinx has a smile, pitiless, yes, but still a smile, and, fixedly smiling, will continue to afflict us with digs, until

we are egged to invent, discover, become nobler; already an ‘eye-stone’ is known of; if our mote is ferric, or nickel, or cobalt, a magnet gets it out; and a well-invented vacuum would have out any mote.

“God is good. Growth of science is a growth of knowledge of God’s goodness, and of God’s greatness. For, also, God is great. Stars are suns, bigger than this our globe by millions; these suns, numerous as grains of the rice-mowing, clustering in groups named ‘island-universes’; to traverse an island the flight of Light requires some thirty thousand years of wild work; to leap deep from island to island Light requires more than a million years, more than four, than fifty, millions — thousands of millions — so that we now see them as they were in old eternities before this solar system whirled; and there may be millions of islands — anyway there are hundreds. God’s great.

“We can’t realize this — much; the star-lords’ hearts are far from fancying the half of it; but we realize it a bit; and according as we realize it, we can’t avoid feeling awe. And since we now know that God is good, goading threetoed to hoofed, lizard to linnet, ape to Pope, Pope to Perrin, we can’t help feeling love — if we are young, healthy, if the hormones of our glands are in good flowing order, so that we can love. We still have pains; still tornadoes, volcanoes, are more powerful than we, and, in mounds of thousands, devour us; but in any pain we think ‘these afflictions are but for a moment; God’s pitilessly good; we have more pleasure than cavemen, our sons will have yet more; God’s design is to drive Life to acquire science, and arrive at delight’: and, consoled, we lewdly dance before God. Yes, God knows, we love.

Also we are awed. And awe-and-love is adoration; adoration is religion.

“And from adoration springs donation — giving of one’s self. So we should expect to find in those of us who most adore — most realize with

awe that stars are suns, and with love that Power drives lower lives into higher — in those we should expect to find eminent examples of donation; as, in fact, we do find — the scientists of our time throwing away their lives like tuppence, experimenting on themselves, to leave behind them one gleam more of science — Catterall, Garré, Lola — hundreds: their donation, mark you, having no resemblance to the donation of ancient martyrs who bargained to gain gardens of gladness after; the after-gardens for which these give themselves are for the gladness of others whom they do not know, not for their own, or their neighbours: their donation is real donation because their adoration is real adoration; their adoration is real adoration because it is based on knowing, not on hopes.

“Certainly, though, we are not the first religious on earth: there was worship before churches, adoration before Herschel, and donation in advance of adoration, as eccentric has an angle-of-advance in respect of crankweb, as spark in respect of compression: for Society, chief of scientific finds, is Divine, a miracle and mystery of enrichment, like the condenser, the step-up transformer, an enormous multiplying of loaves-and-fishes, a sacrament of marriage, and strangeness of chemical combination: so that men have been enticed to die for men before ever a scientist died for Man, as a certain Curtius hurled his manhood in, that a chasm might close for Romans, as one crucified on a hill hangs still exhibited, beautiful in his bloodiness. And they were of yesterday: cast your mind back to a midday in the dark backward and abysm of Time, a million years; see met the headmen of the five M’Niami kraals — rather hairy, prognathous, but verily men — met in parliament: for things have happened hard this year, the dry season nearly done, and the rye-crop unripe, durra-crop dying, flour being ground from bitter acorns by hungry men, who now begin, too, to grope for tubers of lotuses, to grub for roots, to seethe leaves for food. So they debate

it. Who, now, has savvy and a canny nut, and knack of sconce to cut a knot? Gabingwee Eagle-eye says his say, Gamba Staghorn says his say. And Okapi says his say, Pantanka says his say. Only M'Thoma sits there still, not saying anything; has M'Thoma, then, nothing to say?... Now, it is a truth that the seeds of fruit, put (as funeral-offerings) upon graves, sprout gaily and weirdly grow (the graves being free of weeds!): so what Pantanka Antelope says is this, 'Flesh of two-handed humans, buried, brings bread: if only Rembo, he whom an elephant rent yesterday, had died, vine and rye would suddenly thrive above shreds of Rembo's buried flesh; but Rembo lives on; nobody dead'. And now something comes out of M'Thoma; now M'Thoma's mouth is moved; M'Thoma's mouth mutters 'Club M'Thoma: bury shreds of M'Thoma's flesh'... Oh, happy day! O, holy, happy day! Earth and Heaven heard it, Earth sighed to Heaven 'I have given birth'. For the lion has it not, nor the hyrax; ask the ostrich, it is foolishness to her; the birds of the air say 'We have not heard of any such'... For their young, yes, these have come to do it, but that is nearly for themselves; ants, bees, do it for Society, but these sacrifice brief lives; Man stands up and does it — for his young to commence, but presently for his neighbours, then for his tribe, his nation, till finally now we find the scientist doing it for a sun, for Life, the product of a sun.

“We should not, then, say of Plato, Philo, Jesus, Mahomet, that they had ‘no’ religion; that is rather rough truth; for just the largeness of the arch of sky, which they saw, incites awe, and since they did not kill themselves, they must, on the whole, have liked life a little, loved God a little. But just a little (genuine) love; and still less awe: their knowledge of God's goodness and greatness was so rude. God for them was as human a being as Mumbo Jumbo is, with a hyacinthine beard, getting girls pregnant, ruling over a universe that consisted of four localities — earth, heaven, hell, purgatory —

jerry-built places ready to perish in ‘the Consummation’, amid a ‘falling’ of stars, nor was ‘the Beginning’ far back when they were built, when ‘He made the stars also’; all the four localities for Man, the god himself a sort of man, against whom a group of angels waged war with a hope of conquering him: not much awe of him possible. And he was capricious: they were suspicious, had fears of what he might be up to next — to be God-fearing was considered good; but fear is a pain, and pain causes hate, ‘casting out love’. Nor was that curious if they feared him, he was so cruelly rough on them: no matches, look — what *would* you do without matches? ah, the hardship of your life! and no paper — how *could* you live without paper? no wealth — Croesus, Nero, were poverty-stricken compared with a crossing-sweeper now, who can get into a motor-bus and ‘phone to Scotland. They could build, indeed, as ants do — temples, Persepolis, cities with ‘streets called Straight’, colonnades miles long — but village-cities, no water-system, light-system, for night was night then, ‘the night cometh when no man can work’, and heaven was a place where ‘there is no night’. One old writer says that Antioch was as bright by night as by day; but bright with what? arc-lamps? or rush-lights? It was the opposite of bright. And crude needs, crude creature: so that, if Cæsar or Jesus could get up now, you’d regard him as an inferior *type* of creature after a five minutes’ interview with him. No matches! paper, w c’s, doctors (except witchdoctors down to the eighteenth century), no *wealth*, or wellth, populations sparse in the absence of science, society elementary, with leprosy, everybody ‘maimed or halt or blind’, having ‘the palsy’, having a devil: so that they sighed ‘Life is sorrow’, ‘Man is born to trouble’, as the three-toed sloth calls sorrowing ‘Ai’ and ‘Ai’, and they asserted ‘Better is the day of death than the day of birth’ — what a blasphemy that! so, in order to ease their fear with some dope of love, they had to manufacture *hopes* that God is

good after all, hopes in elysian fields, paradises, *after* ceasing to live — the difference between their love at fancying that ‘these afflictions are but for a moment’ and our love at knowing it, being the same as between the flow of love-hormone when one fancies sexualities and the flow when one has the fact of an actual woman in one’s arms.

“So when we say ‘ancient man’ we say lower man, for Life is consciousness, science, and how tiny the science when stars could ‘fall’! — their type as low as their universe was tiny, just as much lower than ours as four little things are less than billions of big things, as much lower as hope in God’s goodness to village Jim is less than knowledge of God’s goodness to the army and march of living things. In tackling the mammoth task of getting a truck from Elgin to London, they pulled with ropes, pushed, or sailed it, unable to conceive of a vehicle being moved by other than animal force, wind, or gravity; the sun itself was dragged by two stallions’ gallop, whose names were known, the planets were pushed by angels, the sound of machinery thrashing being a sound recently arisen on this earth, never heard by an ancient ear — until 1600 when Papin put a steam-boat on the Seine (leaving out Hele’s clock, 1500, and Hero’s toy steam-turbine). If *we* move the truck by electric motor, this, I say, is no ‘more scientific’, essentially, than pulling with ropes, but how far the travel in science, in life, in intimacy with the profundities *and finesses* of that Somehow which Is!

“But when I say that they were little religious and we much more, I mean ‘we’ here, we *élite*, we ‘atheists’, as you too oddly call us; I do not mean all England. Not only officially is the religion of the English still first-century Asiatic, but actually half the people are church-members; *three million* copies of Hogan-and-Dowdy’s hymn-book have been sold: so, if England, unlike France, is still called ‘a Christian country’, that is not without reason, I warn you, and O that my head were waters, that I might weep for the sin

of my people! Here is a cause for war: for can there long exist an Asiatic lot in the thick of Europe, like an old man in a caravan for whom all a caravan has to halt? War, or civil war — something — must eliminate this cyst. You may answer that that Christian half of England only half-believes the Christian story now; well, suppose so: then, roughly, that's as if a quarter of us were Asiatics; but since half, perhaps, of the Christian mythus is more African in type than Asiatic — a fact of ethnology — that's as if half of us were Asiatics.

“Now, half is a lot; half matters: for if Good is science, and science is adoration, religion, then irréligion is Evil itself; and this Asiatic half of us is irreligious in a deep way, unable even to suspect what religion is, until it evacuates a stagnant religion of Asiatic Galilee: as one cannot have an appetite, if one is chronically constipated. A religion is an emotion due to some view of the universe, and since views of the universe are liable to rapid evolutions as science advances, a religion may rapidly become irreligious, and more irreligious, and more — as that religion of half-Asiatic, half-African Palestine, once really a little religious in eras when even Europeans did not dream that Sirius is a sun, nor what a sun is, is now as preposterously irreligious in our Europe as an ox-cart is less evolved than a truck run by electric rotor.

“Moreover, the two halves of a nation will hardly be vastly different: if half is Asiatic-irreligious, the other half won't be profoundly European-religious. But a nation's religion underlies it, look, runs right through, imbruing its institutions, social tone — being its view of the universe. If it is a villager-religion, not concerned with service to a world quasi-eternal, quasi-infinite, something like God, but concerned about ‘loving’ John Hodge, who is nothing like God, then the nation will be a villager-nation of Hodges, bashfully touching its cap to bladders of fantasy, living in fear of a

villager god who is much like Hodge, of a villager lord-of-the-manor who is much like the god. Fear, indeed, is the essence of the Asiatic, African, ancient mind — the child-mind, the essence of which is a consciousness of lords always there, of a father, a master — fear that ‘casts out love’, engendering a hate, an irréligion of timorousness: they beat tin-cans to shoo some demon who implicates the moon in eclipses, they become eunuch-monks, they proffer up incense in praying, so that the god, smelling the fragrance, may imagine that it is the prayers which he smells, and, charmed, may spare them: timorous of fancied gods, fancied ancestors who lived ten centuries long, and still live, watching what we are at, a fancied ‘wisdom of the ancients’ — as in our churches clergymen are still heard to take ‘a text’ from some ancient’s words, to make a sermon of it, presenting ancient mentations to the reverence of air-mechanics, blasphemously pretending that the Ever-moving never moves, that through millions of æons an Asiatic peasant of the first century, burdened with 173 vestigial organs, will always be the highest type that our earth has given birth to; and why? because it was God that begot him out of a girl — legends of a genus more African than Asiatic, some of them; anyway, not European: a cause for European war, *au fond*. And it permeates us, this perversion: our universities disperse it, our churches churn it, our B.B.C. dares to broadcast it — a sort of awe for fancies— ‘there were giants in those days’, sons by an angel’s lust of a lady’s flush some bumming Summer’s day — fancies of ancestors, of ‘the classics’, Kung fou Chou and Moses, Plato and Meng Chou and Vere de Vere. If any of you have never read Philo, Plato, Aristotle, do look into them a little for fun — make a cat laugh. Heavy bodies, Aristotle concluded, must fall faster than light bodies; the earth, he concluded, can’t be moving, for then how could one ever catch a ball flung up? one would be flying on with the earth, while the ball was left behind aloft; your boy is taught not to

break into derision at brains so raw, his higher mind tied down to their lower, his eyes loaded with hypnosis, doped to an awe for fantasies that blocks out awe for facts.

“*If* the boy listens, I mean; but will he long be listening? Many of them, I see, have already lost interest in Aristotle in their interest in radio-mechanisms, electrons, etc. This Asiatic sin of England is, of course, an old England sin, a disease of old-age, like pyorrhea — not congenial to the young, though the young can be infected. So suppose that this crowd of us here take it into our heads to sound a trumpet, kick up a doomsday row, summoning the young out to civil war upon the old? There’s bound to be war anyhow, European or civil: better let it be civil—”

Now from the room’s centre arose an outcry: “Good hap! *you* are the cove I was looking for!” — from a being who seemed to be an Arab streaming in silks, with head-cloth, head-bands, his face baked dark and hard; but, in fact, his name was Crichton, his title “Crichton of Iraq”, for well he knew Basra and the Pirate’s Coast, was riddled with bullet-holes, and had riddled.

“Right you are, my friend,” Wallace replied: “the Young Men, Fitzroy Square... Aye, war: we can hear it crying aloud to be done, if European means science, if Asiatic means nescience, and if science is Good, nescience Evil. Now, if our religion is Asiatic, our social mode is Asiatic, and we have daimios, rajahs riding ‘elephants mad with pride’, owing to a grant of land from the Mogul. Tell me the tone of the religion of a land on Mars, and I will tell you how that land is ‘owned’: for the two fundamentals, religion and land, are twin things, religion being the product of truth, and truth ‘sets free’, but the landless man is a slave. England, a conquered country, is owned by her conquerors — two thousand old souls born in 1066: let us, the young, reconquer her. New-England-Religious and

Old-England-Irreligious are foreigners — hopelessly — the irreligious dull with age, the religious bright with youthfulness and new truth: no point of likeness, of compromise, of truce, possible between them. Let's be trying it on! — we aren't going to mind, if we get shot, since we belong to What made us. Or does someone think that we can seize a country by 'peaceful voting' without thunder going on at guns going off? That seems a sufficiently wild idea. You remember the names Denikin, Koltchak, Wrangel — assassins whom our landed class hired at the price of a hundred million pounds to crush a scientific experiment taking place in Russia: never in the story of Man did the sun in its course look down upon the depravity of a rascality so crooked; will they assassinate for their mates and not assassinate for themselves? Haven't they an army, 'gentlemen cadets' of Woolwich and Sandhurst, with a rank-and-file hypnotized into chronic obedience to the better flesh-and-blood of officers? — cleverly arranged! And what is worse, they have universities. If we could only get at the *young* duke to give him a scientist mind, so that he gets into his tissues the consciousness that it was God who made him, not he himself who shifted the ends of his optic tract from the mid-brain, as in reptiles, to his area striata — gets into his tissues the scientist's consciousness that the *self* for which his father so fights is just a fancy, since nothing but God is, no one is but God, then we would see 'peaceful revolution' by voting; but his old Norman father of 1066 was taught that heavy bodies fall faster than light, has a *liking* for Aristotle, as for all things senile like himself, so the son, too, is duly dosed to dotage with the gist of Aristotle: he isn't going to offer to God a scientist's gift of himself, if he fancies that the earth can't be moving, that nothing's moving; he'll do a fight for it.

“A vile fight, though: for it is pretty evident that to present a country to a nation must be to put the nation at its ease; and by the law of probability the

throng of a nation at its ease should speedily bring science from creeping to flying: so, if science is Good, the fellow's fight is against Good itself, is Evil itself — vile.

“But the generous blood of the young retches at vileness. So let us put it to them! I summon you: a big job — help! The early church of scientists, this new religion from on High, needs apostles, conscripts, warriors, and calls upon you in your Maker's name. To arms, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mars is ascendant. Perhaps the attack should start with the Eurasians, the irréligion — go for Hogan-and-Dowdy, down 'em, dout 'em out of our own England; then get to the cognate question, the land — England for the English. I name it ‘The Young Men's Conspiracy’: young men to be trained in modern warfare and modern religion, every Tommy an officer, every officer a martyr. *I* do the starting, you to do the helping and the praying. The Young Men, Fitzroy Square, or Wallace, Harley Street, 24; write, come — many jobs going. I am done. Those of you on the Young Men's side might stand now, bend your brow, raise your arm, swear to God”.

He stopped; and half perhaps of the hall sprang, arm up — Crichton of Iraq suddenly dropping back to his seat, bowed down, as in prayer. But Dame Felicia Warwick, sitting astare, did not move, until most of the crowd were out; then, having now determined that Paddy St. Aubyn was not there, she went following after the hospital nurse whom she had observed in the rollick at Harley Street the previous evening; and before long approached, accosted her, with “Well, what do you think of getting a truck from Elgin to London?”

A tall Venus with some scorn of chin, her hair shingled, fingering a cigarette, answered “Well, I think we are in for a new England, and letters addressed to ‘Boston, New England’ will be delivered in Lincolnshire. Dr. Wallace is out for blood, I know: ‘lads wha hae wi’ Wallace bled...”

“You know him, then?”

“Well, I ought to: I am his mistress”.

Up an inch started Felicia Warwick’s fingers at the frankness of the new morality. “I see: he has that — a mistress. Perhaps in the new religion the proprieties are not considered binding”.

The nurse raised an eyebrow. “No, it rather enjoys crashing through them. Religion is awe and love: ‘proprieties’ don’t come in”.

“Ah, you are quite a disciple, one can see: he is as much your master as you are his mistress”.

“More” — she smiled— “for I am not sole in my reign. The government is an oligarchy”.

“Or perhaps a polyarchy — of pretty Pollys”.

“Quite so — polyarchy. The mistresses of Dr. Wallace have to acquire the cannibal habit of swallowing one another — rather an effort. But we forgive him more than seven times: he is a good man — or boy, say: awfully boyish. Moreover, he may be going over to the ‘proprieties’ — is on the point of getting married like a good boy”.

“To — you?” Mrs. Warwick suggested.

But the nurse: “No, some little country-girl. He ran away with her on an impulse, so thinks he ought to marry — no love”.

And now near her ear from Mrs. Warwick: “*She* one of the mistresses?”

The answer came like nepenthe to the care-worn: “No, the girl apparently wants marriage first — in other words doesn’t love; and he, having others, hasn’t had enough impulse to break down her reluctance”.

“But sure, are you? Sure?”

The nurse glanced in some surprise at this interest before replying “Yes, I am sure”.

“And do you by chance know whereabouts the child is?” — again pressing asked; but the answer was, “No, I don’t know: somewhere in Bloomsbury, I fancy he said”.

Then Mrs. Warwick went on solitary, walking fast down a side-street that leads to Hyde Park, her heart a smart. His wildness surprised her! the rampancy of his immorality. “How *can* he think of marrying her?” she kept saying to herself, “he is married! to marry her while I am alive is utterly to ruin that child’s life! — but give me wit, God, give me wit”.

To find that Paddy St. Aubyn! to rescue that child, still by high luck rescuable! — she needed to sit to think, and an instinct in her feet carried her to the Park, to a bench there, where she sat racking her ingenious brains an hour before some species of scheme arose in her, when at once she was up to spring into a cab, and be away to Printing House Square.

X. THE TWO TUBES



THERE SHE PUT into *The Times* for eighty days an advertisement: “Collectors of buttons will find it advantageous to trade with L.M.: sell, buy, or barter. Box 3723.”

She knew of Paddy’s new passion for soldiers’ buttons from her son, and concluded that Paddy, if staying in some house with others, would mention “buttons” to them: so, even if Paddy herself had now dropped the St. Aubyn Hall habit of having *The Times*, someone of those about her might observe an advertisement about buttons, might shew it her, and she might answer... And from *The Times* the cab-drive was to *The Telegraph*, *The Post*, to advertise.

But month after month no result, and to sit and wait was trying, she occupying her interest now in watching the progress of that Young Men’s movement which at present was the subject of every newspaper; she lost all the flush of her hope; Paddy, she now said to herself, must by now be thinking, not of buttons, but of butterflies and blunders. But, in fact, Paddy had the habit of the light-hearted, in whose palace of idleness trifles are matters of paramount anxiety: so Mrs. Warwick’s first thoughts turned out good, for during the seventy-third forenoon of waiting she got a buttons-note at her *Telegraph* “Box” — from “Patricia Smyth”, indeed, but, as she had been shewn by Ivor notes of Paddy, she knew Paddy’s writing: this was from no Smyth, nor Smith.

She flew; said “Go quick” to her taximan; and it was not far — a boarding-house at the side of the Museum.

But she was late...

“Not five minutes ago Miss Smyth went”, a lady told her at the door—
“gone to be married”.

In fact, Paddy had only observed the buttons advertisement *because* she was about to be married — had recently had reason to be reading drapers’ advertisements.

So here was pity and nonplus, and a lifting of the eyes on high.

“To be married where?”

“That I don’t know”.

“Oh, tell me, *tell* me!”

“But if I don’t know?”

The only thing now was to fly to *him*, try to stop *him*, he might not yet have started out. The notion of presenting herself before him, of reminding him of herself, had been greatly too repugnant to pride ever to enter her head: but now what mattered anything in comparison with this thing?

She ran — had dismissed her taximan! And all that long stretch of Mortimer Street, meeting no taxi, she ran — had been strongly constructed, could still run long with an impatient patience that plodded on and on; and wiping a flushed forehead she arrived.

But she was late...

“Dr. Wallace went off in the motor some minutes ago, Madam” — from Bargrave, the Harley Street butler.

“Ah, gone... Gone to be married, eh?”

“Well, the doctor did say that to me, but I supposed that he was joking”.

Six ticks now she stood there meditating it; then uttered these words, “He won’t be long, I will wait”.

But with what motive await his coming back? She had no such intention: the thought in her was this, that Paddy St. Aubyn was young, that *she* was

old, and if she ceased to live within, say, twenty minutes, then Paddy's wedding would be made valid; also she was sure that there would be poisons in that house: the old doctor had always kept drugs — morphia, strychnine, nicotine, heart-tonics — within a little cupboard, painted white, stuck on his bedroom wall; nor would the routines of the young doctor be all different from the old doctor's.

On entering the hall, she saw pomp — lantern of ponderous Venetian, panels, screen of old Spanish leather stamped with Louis XV patterns in gold; then in the dining-room to the left a floor of porphyry, jasper, onyx, hearthplace of pavonazetto marbles; and, even as she entered this, here was Guncotton in a collar fresh-gilt rushing in to gush round her.

In peering into the room behind the dining-room, she saw Renaissance tapestries, graces of Tanagra figurines, divans of Persian saddlebags, and, on a table in a corner, scientific instruments, paraphernalia, a row of bottles; but biggish bottles, these; on tripping to them, she saw that they all contained inorganic chemicals, none of the drugs she wanted: so, lingering still a minute, until sure that the butler had gone from the hall, she muttered to the dog "I want the drugs, let's try the Doctor's bedroom"; and he seemed to comprehend, for immediately he was frisking toward the door with sideward eyeings at her, inviting her.

Swift and soft, then, out to the hall, up the stair... Now the open door of a drawing-room in front; and, back of that, a bedroom beside the stair-head, its door slightly open; and in, following the dog, she glided.

A spacious chamber, obscure, both blinds lowered, the bed a soft sight, a glow of eiderdown softness involved with a glow of gold hair tossed wide, a sweet girl lying soft there interred in softness, dead asleep at midday in consequence of the ordeal of a nightlong of toils probably, as in the morning's light one finds the shipwrecked wearied-out, asleep on the beach.

The thought crossed Mrs. Warwick's mind, "Can he be bringing his bride home to see this?"

The next thing which she saw was what she wanted: a little cupboard-box, slightly open, painted white, of the same size, the same shape, as the old one at "Caerwent": there beside the fire-place at the bed-foot....

Soundless she moved, opened it more, an eye aside on the sleeper...

Three little shelves, just as in the "Caerwent" cupboard; on the middle one nine or ten phials; lying behind them a pile of stones, which, from their shine and geometry, she at once understood to be diamonds, though some were blue (having been exposed to beta rays), and monstrous big, some of them, plums of fulgor; right before her eyes, too, two phials, the like of which she had never beheld — two tubes with widened bases, looking like diamond, within both being little lines of liquid, blue, like iodine, one a quarter-inch long, one three-quarters — the longer being what she wanted, for, on it, stuck-on lengthways, was a red label with "Poison" printed, and, written in pencil, "Three drops kill".

What liquid it might be she could not think — not nicotine, not cyanide; but since, like nicotine and cyanides, a little killed, then it killed quickly like these: this pleased her.

Now she tossed the contents of a phial labelled "Boracic Acid" into the fireplace, then tipped the diamond-looking tube over this phial, to get some of the "poison". But nothing came...

When she tapped the tube upon the mantelpiece and tried anew, still nothing came, the only result of her tapping being that the label, perfunctorily stuck-on on a sharp curvature, detached itself, curled off in her hand; and when she had crumpled this up, thrown it off her, only now she became aware that within the tube was a wee ball blocking the flow.

Now, all disappointed, puzzled, she was on the point of putting it back, and taking morphia instead, when, chancing to rotate the tube a little, at last she saw a drop drip.

Thenceforward, deliberately, drops dripped, one a minute maybe, pesteringly trying... five drops... and now, patience exhausted, she put back the tube, and was soft off...

Below she afresh entered the room behind the diningroom, where a scrivania was, and she pocketed three sheets of paper, envelopes, a pencil; then out afresh to the hall, to open the front-door soft, shut-in the dog, and be gone speeding northward for Regent's Park not far.

There, seated on a bench, she scribbled flyingly three notes of three lines each — to Sir Borlase St. Aubyn, "your daughter has this day been lawfully married"; to her "own boy", "believe, Dearest, that I do good in doing it"; to her friends, her hosts, "to say goodbye...": these to be found on her dead body.

A sunny noontide; the dome of sky an old-clo' counter of cloud-samples in many moods of white illumined, combined with blues of a blue-eyed beauteousness that no moaning of seraphs' throat may ever express. She let herself lose another minute in a last look at this our palace-home in heaven; until now her lips murmur something; and now she determines to heave to her mouth her drink of perdition, and drink.

It was as if she had swallowed fire: horridly it scorched all her gorge and vitals; and, holding her throat, up she leapt to rush to-and-fro some seconds, coughing, retching.

At once, too, she was drunk; stumbled, tumbled upon her palms; tottered upon an ash-tree to prop her back.

And, little by little, she stiffened: not her limbs only, but her liver and heart and soul; after ten minutes stark as death she stood there, looking at

— herself.

For, two yards from her eyes, standing, smiling, nude, lewd, was a young woman, who, if not “herself”, was much like the young woman that she had been, though lithier, blither; and eye to eye the pair stared in a place and state that has no name, the lady having no more power to look a moment elsewhere, to think of anything else, than to fling England to the galaxy; still, fixed; as rapt as the dead are in the tetanus and trance of death, far from seeing the several people who passed near during the hours that her stare remained bound to that apparition, before, set free from the strait-jacket of that rigidity, she collapsed asleep, the sun now low.

When her lids had opened, while she was still seated on the ground against the tree-trunk, a park-keeper, strolling past, remarked “What, Miss, been having a drop?”

“Ha! ha! ha! ha!” — laughter darted from her heart: five drops she had had.

In another minute her feet were running a race with no one, freed from weights, up the steep to the Inner Circle, to traverse it, to spurt down to the lake, urgent to inspect in it at once what young charm of face was henceforth to be hers; after watching which, she cast her arms horizontal out, swinging forward this wanton hip and that; then, whistling “Blue Danube”, was waltzing “before the Lord”, her heart exalted to heaven; and presently was rushing somewhither afresh — had now lost the power to walk.

She tore up the three death-notes which she had written; and when the question “What next?” presented itself, discovered that she had no intention of going again to her friends, of revealing to anyone her change of state, the same instinct of secrecy as to this which had operated in Wallace operating in her also: for she did not feel that it was *she* who had been old, felt that a

state of youngness was inherent in the *she* that was her real self; and her chance association with an old woman, who was never *she*, was hardly a thing which she felt disposed to admit to others — or to herself.

On leaving the park, to eat, to seek some lodging, the street-lamps now lit, a wind now arisen, she chose to pass down Harley Street, where, on coming to 24, she cast her head back, and laughed — understood that there would surely be meeting between Wallace and her, soon or late.

It was soon...

Before the door stood a motor, and at the door a large man in a red shirt — no jacket — to whom the butler was saying “Dr. Wallace won’t be long, Sir — is gone, as he said, to fetch ‘Mrs. Wallace’”.

“I’ll wait three minutes”, the man answered: “if he doesn’t come then, tell him Knight Crichton called to take him to the Young Men”.

In fact, Wallace was then driving in Langham Place, bringing his bride: for, after the midday marriage at the Marylebone Registry, he had taken her back to her boarding-house — perhaps remembering the pretty thing slumbering in his bed at home — but now had driven to Bloomsbury to bring her.

She, in Langham Place, broke down a little, took to crying, as brides are liable to do at their newness of life; on which he gave her a hug, saying “Pooh, pooh, we mustn’t cry, soon be used to it, don’t you want to have a husband to bully and stamp at, with a woola, woola — Oh, I say!”

I say”, as his eye-corner caught sight of a face passing in the light of a lamp.

Calling “Stop!”, and to Paddy, “Back in a minute”, he was out...

“I say, Miss, Miss, dropped your handkerchief!”

Felicia Warwick stopped, her eyes meditating on him in their quiet queen’s-way. “I haven’t dropped anything. What is it you want?”

“Only to say — Rough evening, isn’t it?”

“Oh, rats!”

“Cats, say, tigresses. You aren’t very gracious. Do please give one a chance”.

“No. You get away”.

“Oh, well, that’s sentence of death; I may as well go and kill myself. Surely you will at least let one know where one may hope just to see you?”

“No”.

“Now, what brutal luck! We aren’t strangers, understand! Somehow before the mountains towered something within me was intimate with something in you; haven’t I dreamed all night between your breasts, and lived at peace in the heaven of you? Oh do, now, do, do—”

Her eyes meditated on him. “All jolly fine. What about the wife? Aren’t you married? Isn’t that she in the car?”

“Oh, please, don’t bring in — that’s not of the slightest—”

“Isn’t it? Take care you don’t get shot. Anyway, if I were she, I’d have your eyes out”.

“They’d still see you, and nothing but you... Look here, all you have to do is just to let one know—”

“No. Eat your heart out. Drown yourself. If you follow me, I’ll call a policeman”.

Now she walked on south, he looking after; when she vanished he bowed to her absence; and still he stood staring at the nothing that remained of her.

Meantime, Paddy, having looked out, had seen him speaking, so, when he rejoined her and the motor moved on northward, she wished to know “Who, then, was the young lady? Not a rival, may I hope, on my wedding-day?”

“Pooh, pooh, we mustn’t harbour such notions—” he started to say, but now a call, “Wallace!”, stopped him — from another car passing southward; upon which the two cars stopped, and Crichton of Iraq, alighting from his, trotted to Wallace’s to say “You’ll be late! — aren’t you coming to the Young Men?”

“Need I?” — from Wallace— “there’s my cocktail-party—”

“But aren’t you expected to introduce Gwyer? I’ve just been to your place to fetch you”.

“Oh, very well”. To Paddy he added “Go on home, Pretty — just round the corner — I shan’t be long”.

But she had never entered that house before, entered it now with a sense of lostness and forlornness, then with a sense of pique, nor was in it fifteen minutes when she was out again, going back to her boarding-house.

Meantime, driving south with Crichton of Iraq, Wallace passed Felicia Warwick walking south — did not see her, but she saw him, and, knowing that Paddy was now alone and lonely, was visited by an impulse: “Try to get her from him for a lark! have her hidden under my wing for a week, make him anxious, long for her” — immediately, though hungry, she spun round to start eagerly for Harley Street, the goad of the south-wind now having her from behind, driving her biped, divided.

On asking if Mrs. Wallace was in, she was answered, “Yes”, and, on being asked her name, answered “Caroleth say”.

The butler then led her into the dining-room, switching on the lights, then went out, and after several minutes reappeared to say that Mrs. Wallace seemed to have gone out, he could not find her; on which Caroleth, thinking that Paddy may have gone out to buy something, said “I will wait”; but, in fact, Paddy, piqued at being deserted, had returned to her Bloomsbury, not meaning to come back to Harley Street but after entreaties.

So after some minutes more Caroleth peeped out into the hall: nobody about, no sound, this house being like a cathedral, a desert of dimness and dreariness whenever no ritual of revelry was being transacted in a rampancy of lamplight; and, seeing from the stair-foot a streak of sheen at the door of Wallace's chamber aloft — for Paddy had not switched-off on departing — she tripped soft up to that chamber of her change, as when “spirits of the dead” are drawn to revisit the spot of the tragedy which snapped their thread; and in there she went dashing like an apparition to-and-fro with the uneasy ceaselessness of the thief's feet, filling the room with the wind of her omnipresence, until some sound that the house vented caused her to pause a little, histing; and now, observing Wallace's Young Men shirt of red serge, she held it spread out by its arms before her, meditating on it, thrust out her tongue, making a face at it, then very clandestinely smelled it; but then flung it off her, muttering “No, mustn't... Oh, this too-too actual flesh! sweeter than Eden's deed of lechery; but do, do — I was born a lady — don't let me love You too flagrantly, God” — looking now into the little cupboard, to see before her those two curious tubes of which she had drunk five drops, and behind them the pile of diamonds — a thing astonishingly characteristic of Wallace, those wild riches lying there for anyone who liked to take. She picked up a big one, and was gazing at its glaring blaze under a glow-lamp's glare when — a knocking below at the front-door; upon which, pocketing the jewel, out she flew to the stair-head, to watch thence for her chance to dash down: for she imagined that it was Wallace come home; and the instant that five men who entered trooped into the dining-room she decided upon venturing to do a dash down, and passed soundless out.

XI. YOUTH AND AGE



NONE OF THE five, however, was Wallace, who at that time was still with Crichton of Iraq in a room full of tables and of tongues, a room still being fitted up, with boards leaning on one wall, with saw-dust — the Fitzroy Square headquarters — Wallace seated at a table with Jacobs, Chairman of the National Executive of the Labour Party, but Crichton stepping about beside them; a few studying technical books from the next room's library, a few pacing about in groups or pairs with their gallant swagger, looking like photographs of Crichton in their flash sash-belts, sometimes cutting the military salute strict and trim, as when the executioner severs at one stroke the traitor's neck, and is done with it — many of them fresh from a system of intensive training intended to transmute recruits into soldiers within two hectic weeks of drill, of revolver, rifle, machine-gun and mortar firing, of driving and maintaining a service-lorry, of a 120-mile march with night-camping, and locking imbued with all that, and more. The boys of the "British Fascisti" also had donned a habit of swagger, but had not that gorge and lordship of the Yeung Men, which so distinguished them, that, though their organization was still only three months old, everyone could say at a glance "that's a Young Man"; and since this was being said with admiration by ladies' lips, that fact may have added zest to the craze of Young Manism that had broken out, in America as in Britain; now in full blast was the cry "Join the Young Men!" — four words that were occupying in huge letters all the space of many a hoarding, many a page of newspaper: for never did movement better know how to howl and advertise itself, or was better able,

being wealthy to excess — many of those who saw salvation for Men in that gospel of Wallace's Egg being of opulent families. And for many of them Crichton, that coxcomb ox, soon got to be the model, from him they took their tone. "Crichton of Iraq" probably had his name in imitation of "Lawrence of Arabia"; but there was more appropriateness in "Lawrence of Arabia": for Lawrence was of Arabia and of nothing else, whereas Crichton of Iraq was of Iraq and of Texas, of Zoutpansberg and "out back" Australia, the Bush, the Pampas. It was not English that he spoke but Greater British, and it was the fashion for the Young Men to shew-off their familiarity with the new-fangled slang, as when in the War-time it pleased people to say "napoo", "goodbaiee". He was handsome — ink-black beard of silk, "hyacinthine", blackened skin, eyes blue, mild, musing, and he had this excellence, a clear head — could *see*, having that intimacy with Nature by which one divines the unexplored and future, the hue of his mind akin with wide spaces, jungles of eucalyptus, ironbark forests, the mob of wild horses, the emu's eggs, glooms of gullies that no moonlight ever illumines; and since it was seen that he could see, he often had his way, not without tussles with Wallace and others: as now when Wallace said "Young men's *Christian Conspiracy?*", Crichton replied "That's about the size of it: take it easy, Baas" — stepping with his long-legged swagger, with stealing feet, his gait having something of a languor that lingered backward, as if his steps lingered a little sticking in tar, until something perhaps might suddenly spin him into a startling nimbleness, shewing him quick on his pins as a bush-cat's twist; and every day he was differently decked out to entice the eye with a crassness of barbaric dandyism, his garb this day being boxcloth gaiters, dreadnought cap with ear-flaps, belt of zebra-skin, whip of rhinoceros-hide to flog his legs with... "take it easy: it's no chop taking huff,

if the General Staff have to fake it alone when you're knocking around with your hospitals and your girls—"

"Yes, yes, but Christian Conspiracy!" — from Wallace with a flush— "it is *Christian* that we are out to kill! Who moved the resolution? You?"

Jacobs answered "No, it was Kennedy of Trades Union Congress moved it".

And Crichton: "I won't say that I mayn't have suggested it; but I wasn't there, not when the resolution was moved; been down at the Small Arms Factory all afternoon, watching trials of the new Danish Lewis-gun — neatest little thing on this side Jordan! bipod rest, aircooled: I'd put up any day to knock sparks with it out of the enemy's Brende, if the 20 lbs. weight —"

"Yes, but the point is Christian Conspiracy", Wallace put in: "may I know why you suggested this?"

With a wink at Jacobs Crichton replied "Recollect, Baas, that we are in enemy's country; the enemy — naturally — have a law that Tom and Dick shall not arm to slaughter them; and the minute our crowd start playing the high rope any, they'll cry crack to the whole racket — unless they see that they've slept too late, and we're a lot too strong to jack-up to order. Our dart, then, is to be looking sloppy in the night-time, so as, when the sun rises, it will be surprised to find an army swarming. That's where 'Christian' comes in tricky — to draw conscripts quick. Every great movement is religious, as ours is; but it shouldn't be all-out new and upstart, as ours is, should be hitched to something familiar, to make it slick and native: that's why Hogan's hymn-book sells three millions, because his pow-wow's knee-haltered to what's homely. Now, everybody loves Jesus Christ — Alabama Nigger, Berber, you and I: there was some catch about

that chap — was one of those vine-gods, corn-gods, that you so cotton to —”

Wallace shook his head. “I doubt it. I have been reading one of the gospels, eager to find vine-god signs, and I find scarcely any—”

“What about that last supper — bread and wine? that multiplying of loaves? that dying on Good Friday when vine-gods died, Easter Equinox, when the dog-star rises at the sun’s going down? All in the Old Testament is corn-god, man of sorrows, John Barleycorn; so is the opposite idea of a Messiah, a rider in triumph; and, as Jesus’ followers got the two all confused in their noddles, they made him both somehow; but, as they cottoned more to the Messiah-idea, they made no great matter about vine-god — that’s how the fakement pans out. And the racket is, not whether he was a corn-god any, but whether in fact people have got to think that he was some sort of a cove like that, and to love him for it. That’s why at the next Grand Council I mean to move that the Young Men’s oath be slewed round to ‘I stand ready to die *like Christ* for God’s sake’. How’s that? Do you come it, Jacobs?”

“It might work”, Jacobs answered.

“Do you come it, Baas?”

And Wallace testily: “Oh, have it your own way. You always do”.

Some minutes after which arrived Major Francis Gwyer, K.C.B., Chairman of the Territorial Army and Air Force Association of Middlesex, to lecture on “How Armies Fight” out in the marquee that occupied the yard, whom Wallace presented to the audience in an address, but then slipped out because of his cocktail-party. He was now in truth more occupied in returning to his old doctor’s-interests in hospitals than in learning war.

He arrived at home to find the house alight, a crowd of the hundred Young Men invited having now come, and it was some time before it dawned upon his consciousness that he did not see his bride about; not finding her, he despatched a motor-car to her boarding-house to fetch her, but the motor came back with a note, "I do not know the messenger whom you have sent to fetch me"; whereat he moaned, and at about ten, throwing himself into the motor, went for her.

She now allowed herself to come, but now to a house crowded with carousal, upstairs, downstairs, everything red, Redshirts, red cheeks, shoutings, singings; nor did Wallace present her to anyone, perhaps shrinking from admitting himself joined in holy matrimony, but led her straight to his bedroom, telling her "Now, Dear, go to bed, sleep till I come".

She, as he turned from her, asked "By the way, why on earth have you dropped the name 'Warwick', and taken 'Wallace'?"

But he: "Oh, my, ask me another time — another time" — he was gone.

But she did not "go to bed"— "sleep" in that uproar of tongues mixed with winds would scarcely be near — but lay dressed, her beret still on, box of buttons on knee, waiting, in an easy-chair, where the very uproar, continuous like the threshing of machinery at work, turned in the end into a soporific, and wearied her ear into the deafness of sleep.

There twisted in sleep she lay, one hip a mound that pouted as now her mouth pouted, when, at about two in the 'foreday, the house now soundless, Wallace comes, to stand before her, to ponder upon her unconsciousness, his arms akimbo.

And he chuckled, though there was nothing to chuckle at; and when just then the crow of a cock crowing somewhere chanced to penetrate through the storm to his consciousness, he chuckled afresh, muttering, not too

rationality, “How ridiculous! both ends of the cock — after cocktail cockcrow”.

Then to Paddy: “So you didn’t go to bed. Want me to undress you, do you, you she-thing?”

Then glancing to where a fire had gone out: “Must be cold, poor beggar”.

And this word “cold” seemed to awake in him ideas of other coldness, other heat, which ideas put the devil in him, for now, serious, serious, his fore-finger pointed upon her as it were accusingly, says he “You wanted man, by heaven you shall have man. I’ll warm you up, by heaven I will, and myself, too, two drops apiece, aye, by heaven, two for you, and two for me, we’ll make a night of it, we two, aye, by heaven, we will”.

Now with that exalted stalk of Irving and the turgidness of tragic actors strutting, he struts to the cabinet of the two astral tubes...

But there things were scarcely in the condition which he expected: his lids blinked quick at it.

Within one tube a youth-elixir; within the other a liquid to be taken in case the elixir proved too potent for the drinker’s eucrazy; and, though he had used some of the youth, he knew that he had left more of youth than of counter-agent, with a label “Poison” on youth, to stop anybody from touching; but that label had peeled off in Felicia Warwick’s banging of the tube, to induce a flow; also, her taking some of the liquid had made its quantity *less* now than the other. So now Wallace, seeing facts through mists of gin-and-Martini, his flurried mentation shirking the mystery of the missing label, took the liquid that was more in amount, assuming that *it* was the youth-elixir; but the other was the youth-elixir!

Often before he had felt the temptation of a lewd dipsomania to swallow a drop or two more of Youth; now, yielding, he took two tea-spoons, wet

with tea, from two cups that had been drunk from, and been left there on a bedside-table; and into each tea-spoon, with shivering fingers, he let drip two drops.

His own dose he drank with the extravagant gesture of stage-smugglers quaffing great mugs of grog; with the other drops he stalks toward Paddy, to wake her, persuade her to swallow, have her wanton.

But Paddy's drops spilled; he never got to her. Like thunder-stroke in the midway a sense of the menace of some tremendous misery visited, arrested, him. Instantly he was as sober as a judge. All joys waved him farewell. He let himself drop upon a chair in a corner to ponder upon it with a bowed brow.

An hour: during which he was conscious of the going on throughout his organism of an undoing working without truce or ruth, until all at once he hurled twinkling fingers on high, crying out "*Felicia Warwick!*"

Now he stood up to make straight for her with the promptness with which water takes the downward road — knew that she had come to London three months before, for the nurse with whom she had conversed after departing from Steinway Hall had described her to him; and he was aware with what family in Hanover Square she always lodged.

He had no need, as he now stepped toward the door, toward Paddy, to see in a wardrobe-glass how his face had fallen again — that real "fall of Man": wrinkles, the expression of agedness; he *felt* his agedness; and, standing half-a-minute over Paddy, up to heaven he cast hands and eyes, to sigh "Heavens! how reprehensible is such conduct!"

And now down and out; headlong, neglecting to take any hat; into gale and rain, to Hanover Square: to stand watching the house wherein (he thought) she was, wanting to rouse it, but now reluctant at that unholy hour; and, knowing that there is an all-night post-office at Charing Cross, he was

off for this through the morning gloom, hugging himself, bent forward, his collar turned up, hunted by the gale, hurrying with some stumblings, but determined in his purpose to get two telegrams sent — to his son: “My own boy, come, I am at 24, Harley Street, Father”; and to Sir Borlase St. Aubyn: “Your daughter, Sir, is safe at 24 Harley Street. Pray come. Oscar Warwick”.

These he wrote, handed in; then back to Hanover Square, where, the morning being still dark, he walked about before the house, sometimes throwing his eyes on high in his indictment of that young man who had called himself Wallace, not at all feeling that that young man was he; the old man, he felt, was *he*; and “My own son’s lover”, he moaned, “an innocent young girl — bigamously wedded — and no compunction! not the least! Is it possible? And a life of riot — wine and women — now, how indecorous a course of conduct! No, I say that that was not I. And this Young Men movement... it is a falsity! Revolution is wrong: it is by evolution that the blossom becomes a fruit. If the religion and land-tenure of England are primitive, they are, nevertheless, the best possible to the mental stage of the people meantime, and cannot be transformed on a sudden, but will slowly modify themselves, as they have already done, and are now doing, under the impulse of profounder movements within the social organism than any upstart attempt to make all suddenly new. Patience! Quietude of mind! Learning to be still! It is well that I mistook the two liquids, never again will I drink one drop—”

Here he paused, feeling already within his nature the tug of the drug-drinker’s dipsomania to go again to that *other* tube of newness and youth...

Now morning had dawned, and when a blind went up in the mansion he ran to rap.

But dismay met him. “Mrs. Warwick did not sleep here, Sir”, a footman told him: “hasn’t been in the house since yesterday forenoon”.

Where, then, since not there? He stood stunned by it; then went away, determining to return later, after first going home to Paddy, with whom his next business was — to bid her know that the young man with whom she had run off was not Ivor Warwick, that she would lose nothing by never more laying eyes on that young man, whose behaviour was anything but estimable, and, as to her marriage with him, that was no marriage, the man had been already married.

In going home, he wrote a note in Wigmore Street post-office to Bargrave, his butler, saying that the bearer, Dr. Warwick, was Wallace’s representative during Wallace’s absence: this to become the old man’s passport into the young man’s home. But, that difficulty settled at the front-door, Paddy was still to be captured: for when he rapped at the bedroom — no reply; when he pried in — no one: for the young bride, waking about five o’clock, and finding herself solitary, had, in a new huff, taken new flight, her boarding-house again snapping her back as by an elastic band from her bridegroom’s neglectfulness; and till the morning was fully come she walked about the town during two houseless hours of storm, burdened by her box of buttons, now in the world’s school, learning sorrow and to rue.

And, moving about the bedroom, Dr. Warwick said to himself “Again, then, she has fled — well done! — no wonder, a high-spirited young lady. I go for her now, to bring her to her father’s arms”.

But he delayed some time, putting-on dry clothes, anon pausing to ask himself, all perplexed, “Where, then, could she have slept?” — thinking of Felicia Warwick — anon drawn to the cupboard, to look at the two tubes, saying “The label? Carelessly stuck-on, come off on drying; but it should

still be here?... And I felt sure that there was more of the elixir than of the other: is it that it evaporates?... And those stones exposed there: dear me, how slattern, now, loose I call it, wild”. Now he took and put the diamonds into inside pockets, then, though pining for breakfast, his vitals devoured by a thirst that burned, went down to start out for Paddy.

But the motor which he had ordered having not yet come, he was off anew on foot for Hanover Square not far, to have the latest news there.

As he came to the south end of Harley Street, he met walking north that Caroleth whom Wallace had accosted the previous evening: did not see her start on seeing him, nor see that her face, always rather pale, was now suddenly pallor-struck — with panic at the notion of relapsing on a sudden to old-womanhood: for if the effect of the medicine of heaven was temporary in him, might it not be temporary in her?

She was now on her way to 24, in the hope of getting at Paddy, in pursuance of the plan to induce Paddy to make herself scarce and dear; but, seeing him elderly like that, she stopped; and he, seeing her stop after passing, trotted back to say “Pardon me: am I permitted to address you without an introduction?”

“Yes — Dr. Warwick”.

“Ah, you know my name”.

“Your face — from the papers. People imagine that you have been murdered”.

“Ah. Well, you interest me, bringing back to me strongly someone whom long since I knew; and, as I happen to have seen that you were recently accosted in the street by a young man, I want to speak of this. It is little probable that you will see that young man again, but, if ever you do” — his forefinger admonished her— “have nothing to do with him, ruthlessly

reject, send him packing, take my advice, for the man is twice married, and means you no good. I am done. Good morning”.

She with a pallid smile stood looking after, muttering “He has a second pair of trousers, then... I’ll nick more of that elixir, to keep, in case” — while the old man went on his way to Hanover Square, only to come there upon more dismay, the morning post having brought to her friends a note from Mrs. Warwick enjoining them not to be anxious, she was well, but had been “called abroad.”

— an enigma that they nor Dr. Warwick could begin to solve.

All at a loss, he walked back to Harley Street, now to start out for Paddy, his motor-car being now before the door.

But afresh frustration met him at Paddy’s boardinghouse, where the proprietress told him “Miss Smyth did come back two hours ago, but, as I had let her rooms, and the house is full—”

“Ah, do not say that you do not know where she now is!”

“No, I don’t know. She took her luggage, and drove off *that way*” — pointing south.

“Then, perhaps I know...”

For during five days prior to moving to the boardinghouse beside the Museum Paddy had stayed at a hotel facing the Museum: so he considered it probable that to this she had now gone back. Paddy had known that Wallace would consider it probable, and thither, in fact, had gone, for Wallace to come and coax her to go home to him.

Thither, then, Dr. Warwick went; and, as he was entering the office to make enquiries, Paddy, who happened to be then descending the main stair, spied him from a corner of it, and stopped arrested, saying to herself “It is Dr. Warwick!... Has sent his father for me, but I *won’t*, he must come *himself* upon which she dashed back up.

In the office meantime Dr. Warwick was asking for “Miss Smyth”; but the manager’s man, examining the register, answered “Miss Smyth left on the 20th of March”.

Then the Doctor: “Yes, but she may have registered now in the name of Mrs. Warwick, having since married: has no young lady of that name come this morning?”

“No”, the other answered: “only one young lady so far has come in to-day — a Miss Wallace”.

“And Miss Wallace, you say, is not the same individual as Miss Smyth?”

The answer was, “No, I never saw Miss Wallace before”.

But then, in fact, he had never seen “Miss Smyth”: he assumed that he had, losing sight of the fact that eleven weeks previously when “Miss Smyth” was there five days, he had been away a fortnight in Westminster, auditing the books of a sister hotel: so that Dr. Warwick went away saying to himself “Where, then, in heaven’s name am I to look for her? — her father now doubtless on the way to me to clasp her to his heart”.

Now to the Langham Hotel, where, too, she had put up: but not there! then home, keen to eat, driven to drink. It was eleven o’clock.

“I should say you’d be hungry, Sir”, Bargrave, his butler, remarked to him.

“Yes, yes”, he answered, “pray, some breakfast”. Then, expecting Sir Borlase and Ivor Warwick, “Has no one called?”

“No, Sir”.

He might now have waited below for the breakfast, but he went to his bedroom — without conscious object.

There he paced the chamber’s length, the bed-foot on one side of him, the fireplace on the other; and each time that he passed the little white

cupboard beside the fireplace, a furtive eye of yearning he turned that way, all his vitals calling within him “One may as well a little”.

But his will was of steel: six minutes of it, and still he was a victor. Once he muttered aloud “I will not”; and perhaps it was the fact that his son was coming, Paddy’s father coming for Paddy, and he having no Paddy to shew, added to the fact that the Felicia of his heart, too, was mysteriously missing from him, which lashed him at last to say “One drop, then — no more”.

The two tea-spoons of that ‘foreday had now disappeared, so he let a drop drip upon his left palm, licked it up, then immediately, in the grip of flames, with trepidant greed, quivering fingers of eagerness, he let drip two drops, three drops, four drops, licked them up...

A little afterward Bargrave rapped, the breakfast ready; ventured to rap again; but gained no answer. That breakfast went cold.

But though all the same phenomena now repeated themselves as when Dr. Warwick had previously swallowed drops in Devil’s Cave at Penpolack, those phenomena now transacted themselves with a rollic increase of speed, as though the material of his former experience remained latent within his system, merely waiting a spark to start the gay flaring of a conflagration. Within an hour the whole thing was now over, and he was roaming the room, hurried, fresh, flushed, chuckling, chattering to himself, gesticulating; and he said “My God! that old fogey, he had her, and he let her go! ‘I am done: good morning’. Dear me, good morning. Bad morning — for me: I shall never see her again, my God. Was that I? No, by heaven, that was not I. But what a deep disease — old age! How well will it be for men when they acquire the science to skip quit of it! The brain becomes numbed to a laziness and staleness like hardened old putty in a hole, losing the alacrity to summon facts, even well-known facts, losing the inventiveness, scepticism, circumspection, that looks round and sees truth: *scep* is Greek, *spec* is

Latin, the two meaning *look* — before you leap, before you jump to conclusions. ‘Revolution is wrong’, says he: ‘it is by evolution that the blossom becomes a fruit’. Now! What an old — I can’t help laughing! Yet he knew that there is no such thing as evolution, but his brain lacked the alacrity to summon the fact, which he *knew* like two-and-two, that an iron on a fire doesn’t become hot in a constant manner, but by hops, by Planck’s quanta, as it cools by spasms, frog-hops, revolutions, as every other progress does, as an animal moves by steps, as a carriage-wheel in motion does, each point of it describing a series of semicircles hopwise — Poincaré thinks that even Time hops along, doesn’t ‘flow’, as Newton supposed. But rooted in that old soul was the old notion that fruits become fruits by evolution, and, not having the mental energy, the circumspection, scepticism, inventiveness, to look round—”

A knocking at the front-door, followed by a knock at the room-door, stopped his walk and thoughts. This time he said “Come in”.

And Bargrave: “Dear me, there you are, Sir! I had no notion you’d come. You had — a key?”

“Aye”.

“And Dr. Warwick, Sir?”

“Gone”.

“Ah, gone... Two gentlemen, Sir Borlase St. Aubyn and Mr. Ivor Warwick, to see him — I thought he was in: they are in the drawing-room”.

“Right: I’ll see them for Dr. Warwick”.

He lingered, though, a little, thinking “Now for it”; and, as he braced himself to set out, remembering his pockets burdened with diamonds, he turned back, tossed the diamonds to lie again in the little cabinet, thinking “Nobody to steal ’em”, then again lingered to brace himself on the brink of enterprise, thinking “Now for it”, and suddenly adventured to set out.

A few steps to the drawing-room, to find Ivor Warwick and Sir Borlase St. Aubyn walking about, they two being now in sympathy and league as regards Paddy, had met by appointment, Sir Borlase having wired to Ivor on getting the telegram from Dr. Warwick. And Wallace: “Good day, Gentlemen; I am Dr. Wallace, but not in actual practice as a doctor—”

“We aren’t here as patients”, Sir Borlase said: “here to see Dr. Warwick —”

“Wallace, not Warwick”.

“No, Warwick, Warwick”.

“No Warwick here, Sir”.

Sir Borlase and Ivor turned to stare at each other.

“But”, Ivor said, “the man-servant told us that Dr. Warwick is in!”

“Wallace he thought you said”.

And Sir Borlase: “Look here, we had wires this morning inviting us to meet Dr. Oscar Warwick at 24 Harley Street—”

“Some mistake: post-office mistake for 42, perhaps. Try 42, Sir. Unless it is some hoax—”

Sir Borlase spun sharp upon him. “Stay: is there, or is there not, in this house a young lady named Patricia St. Aubyn?”

“No young lady at all, I regret to say”.

“Well, I’m damned. You, I see, are the Young Men Wallace — that so?”

“Yes, Sir”.

“Hm. I’m afraid we aren’t very good friends, Dr.

Wallace... Why, by the way, are you so like my friend, Mr. Warwick, here?”

And Wallace: “I’m afraid I can’t say why, Sir, but the fact does seem to be as you say. Unless it is he who is like me. I hope you don’t mind my

venturing to resemble you, Mr. Warwick. We are the Heavenly Twins, or would be, if I was good like you”.

Now Sir Borlase went pettish, saying harshly in his sharp way “We aren’t much disposed for jokes: Mr. Warwick thought he had discovered his father, and I that I had discovered a daughter —— —— —”

“I am sorry”, Wallace put in: “I wish I could do something. But I am the gainer, if you, Mr. Warwick, will come to see me again on the strength of our resemblance. Will you? I’ll shew you round, we’ll have some fun”.

Ivor bowed — no reply.

Silence.

Then Sir Borlase: “Well, there seems to be nothing more to be said”.

So now they went, Wallace descending to let them out himself.

Then, standing in the street at a loss, Sir Borlase asked “Shall we try 42?”

“If you think it worth while”, Ivor replied.

And Sir Borlase: “No, hardly... Something damned fishy in all this affair — unfathomable damned thing. That you should come to see your father, and find instead your brother — very like your brother, three or four years older—”

“What is specially extraordinary”, Ivor remarked, “is that his voice is rather like my father’s, also his neck-tie, and his boots”.

“By Jove. And he could pass for you, you know, Warwick, easily enough”.

“I dare say”.

“And if he *has*”.

“Let us not suspect that without evidence”.

“I dislike the fellow... Oh, well, somebody is going to get holes in his skin some day; I’ll be having my own back... I only wish I could just drop

across that girl: not a bad little beggar, Warwick”.

Upon which Ivor Warwick touched the father’s arm, to reply “You will have her — patience”: the baronet thereupon gripped the young man’s hand in gratitude and brotherhood, and they stood silent awhile, till the baronet asked “So what next?... Dr. Wallace, by the way, wants you to pay him visits, to ‘have some fun’; but I think you are hardly in a mood for fun”.

Ivor smiled. “Still, I will pay him visits”.

“You will?”

“Yes, with my eyes open — in case there is anything to see”.

“Oho... Well, come and lunch with me”.

They walked on.

XII. THE HOMELESS



SO ONE AFTERNOON a week later Ivor Warwick did “pay a visit” to Wallace, and since she who was now Caroleth could not let Harley Street alone, but was drawn to haunt it, Ivor was seen going in by her, she being concealed at the corner of a by-street, watching for Wallace, watching for Paddy St. Aubyn, of whom she had lost track; and, on seeing Ivor Warwick step into that house of carousals, she went cross: for, having by this time seen the old Warwick transformed afresh into the young Wallace, she thought with jealousy that some parental emotion in Wallace might be drawing him towards friendship with her boy, and was cross at the prospect that the influence of Wallace’s wildness upon that nice-minded Ivor might be pernicious: for though she was now converted to a world-care from a care for persons, though her own motherly emotion was much less pronounced in her than before her change, some of it remained, as some of her care remained for Paddy’s haplessness.

And, watching anon, she saw many enter and depart from 24, but of Paddy no sight nor sign...

It was partly thoughts of Paddy that spurred her to hurry to 24 when, a short time after Ivor had gone in he came out again with Wallace in Redshirt dress, they two entering a motor-car to roll off; but another motive than Paddy had her — her dread lest the elixir might fail in her, as she conceived that she had seen it fail in Wallace; also she wanted wealth for her world-purposes, and wealth was there.

On being told that Dr. Wallace was not in, she asked if he would be long, and, on being answered “I don’t think so”, said “I will wait”, to be led to the diningroom, where, excited, caged in dangers, she meditated how handily to manage it; and when four Young Men were let in smoking the great cherry-wood pipes of the type which the Young Men regarded as part of their swaggering gallantry, she with instant grip, seizing opportunity by the throat, tripped out to whisper quick to the butler “I don’t like the men, you might take me to the drawing-room”.

“Certainly, Madam” — the butler led her up, the bedroom now only four yards from her.

She was soon tapping at its door; no answer: and in she slipped.

To the little white cabinet beside the hearth-place, drawing from her pocket a phial; and soon the tube of the elixir was being twisted in her fingers to induce the life-giver into her phial. But it was slow — slower still than before, possibly because some had since been deducted. Though a lewd lust took her to take the whole, it came so slow, and the peril of Wallace dropping upon her was so pressing, and the theft would be so much less noticeable if some were left, that she took only half, leaving, though, hardly four drips now.

Now she put her palm over the mound of jewels, and what her grasp had ambit to grab she appropriated.

For another half-minute she was peering here and there to see if anything feminine, any hint of Paddy, was apparent; then to slip back to the salon, as pilferers and midnight spirits flit satisfied, their business done; and she rang.

“I think I won’t wait”, she said when Bargrave came.

“What name shall I say, Madam?”

“Say — Miss Smyth... By the way, how about Mrs. Wallace? She not about now?”

“No, Madam”.

“Where’s *she*?”

He shrugged. “I only saw her twice — one night, then another night: ‘Mrs. Wallace’ did not stay long”.

“Ah”.

She went straight thence to the boarding-house where she knew that Paddy had been, to ask after Paddy; and, in walking to it, walked all unconsciously past the hotel where Paddy actually was.

That, though, was Paddy’s last-but-one day there...

Paddy had been waiting in vain for Wallace to come to coax her — Wallace not knowing where she was! In engaging an agent to investigate, he had said, “She is not at the Wellington or Langham hotel: I have enquired”.

So funds had failed her; nor could she go to Wallace, nor write “I need you”: that was vile; nor could she go to her father, nor write “The runaway comes back to you a failure”: that was killing.

She took to looking into newspaper advertisements, to see who were in need of any species of servant, and to some of these she wrote; but, having no experience in serving, had no answer: the world appeared to feel no need of a girl who could sit a giddy filly.

So she said to an American lady in the hotel “Do you collect soldiers’-buttons?”

“*Buttons*... Why, no, Dearie”, the lady said.

And Paddy: “I have a box half-full; I’ll shew you. And I have no money, my friend whom I expected has not come”.

“Oh, well”, the lady said, “in that case, Dearie, I do collect soldiers’-buttons. What’s the lot going at? Twenty pounds?”

So Paddy in her bedroom wetted the box, letting drip upon it, drop by drop, water from the well of welladays within her; then, having dried her eyes, parted from her darlings.

And when that crumb of twenty pounds got promptly gobbled down by the hungry gorge of the ogre which the hotel was, Paddy with happy astonishment chanced to spot in a paper tidings of a place where, if one deposits fineries, cash is handed to one; and, as she had some trinkets, rings, pretty linens, she made three different pilgrimages to pawnshops, got treasury-notes from them, and kept tossing these to that gorge of the guest-house, till nothing was left to get fresh treasury-notes.

But now the American lady made the discovery that twenty pounds is scarcely enough for a box of buttons, proffered ten more; and, this having been spent, when Paddy said “I am going to-day”, asked “Where to, Kid?”

When Paddy shrugged, the lady remarked over the crochet which she was doing “You notice that it’s raining locusts and whipporwills”.

At which Paddy’s lips spasmed to twitching, as she answered “Other people trudge in the rain; they make for a place named The Embankment, to rest”.

Now the lady knit her brows, looking up at Paddy to ask “Say, how’d you like being nurse to a baby?” — the social smirch inherent in this being less to her democratic nerves than to such as Paddy; but Paddy answered smartly “I’d like, yes!”

And the lady: “You’ve heard of Hogan and Dowdy? Mrs. Hogan and I have been chummy ever since we were girls together in Chicago; we meet at the American Women’s Club when she isn’t too poorly, and she told me there on Tuesday that she’s searching for a nurse right now. I’ll ring her up to say you’re coming”.

This was done; but Paddy had not admitted that she had only a shilling and tuppence left, nor had now her gold-handled sunshade: for which reasons she secretly lingered three hours within the guest-house, watching for the rain to relent; but it was washing-day in heaven, and not until night arrived, and still the sloppy skies dropped wetness, did she decide to set out and be wetted, not intending to spend on 'buses the nothing that was left her. But how prolonged the roads of London! And how impolite is God! sending His rain upon the just and upon the unjust, jogging them relentlessly to inventing umbrellas, to inventing the bringing-on and prohibiting of rain — impolite but good! for it is better to have suffered, and to have invented, and been elated, than never to have suffered, and been dull. But it was a bitter thing: Mrs. Hogan lived in Chiswick, and to get at her was a case of leg-wagging eight thousand times like a gas-engine, and a case of bathing without towel. It was a drooping soul, worn down, plastered with water, that at last got to a villa in Grove Park Terrace hardly fifty yards from the river and from Strand-on-the-Green, there where the boat-club is and the yacht-and-yawl builders, to stagger up a little garden-path of crazy-paving between privet-hedges to a pretty villa-door, which had in it a pattern of coloured glasses, whose hues looked nice and gaudy at night, illumined in the hall-lamp's glamour: for that big Hogan liked to be meek and lowly of heart, and granted to himself to reside in no seraglio.

On that door's sill Paddy sat to lay her head on a jamb, her lids closed down, relaxed as when St. Helena's weariness and painfulness succumbed to slumber, "with as weary bones as ever had patient Job"; and there a first indication occurred that the strain of her tribulation excelled her strength of brain: for presently her brows were frowning in an effort to remember how she came to be there, with what purpose, what was the name of the person with whom she was concerned.... After some minutes, though, in a flash of

achievement she fished it out of the sea of nothingness: nurse-girl! aye, that was it, the name was Hogan. She stood up, rapped.

To be admitted by a woman, who, a cook by nature, was now doing other things, too, and to be led through a “hall”, up a stair, to a lady abed, who lay pale, spare — was, indeed, something of an invalid, consumptive — who said “Why, you are soaked!”; and she said “But, sakes, you are too young! Were you ever nurse to a baby? I’ll bet you weren’t”.

And the interview was brief: Mrs. Hogan, grieving to have to live without Paddy, yet decided to, then bade the cook conduct Paddy to dry before the parlour-fire; but, as the fire would hardly dry Paddy’s eyes, that had sprung salt water, Paddy thought it well to rush straight out to her rains afresh.

But whitheraway now? At the little garden-gate her steps lingered to ask herself that question, while still The Pitiless pelted her, ever insisting “invent, invent”. Northward? Without motive? No home of rest at the cruel trek’s end? Southward, though, some motive drew: there somewhere, not very remote, must be the river: there the weary are at rest.

But, as she remained there uncertain, a taxicab turned up out of the murk, to give birth to a man getting an umbrella open — Hogan, come home holy from the Memorial Hall, pelted by The Pitiless, but saved by inventors, and, even so, having his jacket-collar up. As he opens his garden-gate, into Paddy he butts.

“Well! And who are we?” he wished to know: “what, a Baptist? having it in the rain?”

Paddy told him. “I came to nurse the baby, but am too young.”

“Ah, I kind of knew... Well, you step inside wi’ me; step right in”.

And she went, getting more of the umbrella than he gave to himself.

To sit in the little parlour to one's right as one scraped past the perambulator; and it was cosy in there, the blinds lowered about the bow-window, a nice fire-light quivering upon "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out", and upon three other scriptures; as to which fire, though already bright, he said to the cook "Get busy on that fire, Eliza, till we kind of feel it in our conscience"; and when he had scampered aloft to pop a pneumatic kiss at the sick, he scampered back to find Paddy domestic, without her cap, relishing the refuge, she immediately liking him for his simpleness, robustness, trusting in him as in a harbour for his mass and stamina, knowing that he would not let her suffer hell.

Soon they both had oat-meal on their knees, seated side by side before the fire, then baked beans, tumblers of milk; and it was amusing to see with what assiduity he consumed the food, saying what he said with a full mouth, and he smacked his lips, and said "Ah".

"But about the soul?" he said to her: "saved? or not?"

And when she looked embarrassed, feeling somewhat saved, but not knowing really, he said "Never mind, we aren't through yet, we'll work it so you get saved later, and you aren't going to be sorry, for that's the one thing needful" — he kissed her forehead.

She said "I have heard what lots of people you save, and when Mrs. Stickney sent me to you, I felt confident — and I never dreamt it would be so far—"

"Walked all the way, did you? poor kid!" — he kissed her temple. "But tell us about the whole wow, how you got like this, for it's easy to see, you bet, that you're no nurse-girl".

Her head bent. "I ran away with my sweetheart — his name's Ivor — but he was strange — sometimes I couldn't make out whether it was he who was changed or I who was crazy — and I kept running away, since he kept

neglecting me, till I got to the Wellington Hotel, where I waited for him; but he never came, though he knew I was there, for one day he sent his father, and I wouldn't go with his father. So I got to be without money. Mrs. Stickney bought my box of soldiers'-buttons, and I kept pawning—"

"Why, poor soul! But" — he frowned— "had you been fooling around, living in sin, with the guy?"

"Sin?... Oh, no, no" — she blushed— "we have never lived as married couples live—"

"Fine! That's what got him sore. Why, you're a dolly" — he kissed her eye-corner.

And she: "You don't think I am a little crazy?"

"Crazy?" says he: "what makes you talk that way? Why, you're quite a lot cute" — he kissed her cheek, each succeeding kiss sneaking nearer to her lips, so that he merely needed to persevere to reach that jelly red; but now on a sudden he detected, grabbed, scragged, the rogue that ogles in the reins, sprang suddenly upright, to step away to the bow-windows, to remain there, surprised at the blinds, and "What's up? What's all the kissing about? Drop it sharp!" he said to himself — though which was "he" and which was "himself" may not be very evident; but the truth is that *he* was the person named "Hogan" at that moment, and *himself* was the person, the many persons, named "Hogan", to come at moments in the future.

He spun round. "Well, I'll see how we can fix this machine: you wait" — stepping stressfully out, to be twenty minutes away: for there was something of a tiff and difficulty upstairs, the male Hogan wishing Paddy to live in that villa, the female Hogan distinctly not wishing that; but in the end he came down, saying "Well, I guess we got it fixed: Mrs. Hogan preferred a regular nurse-girl, but on the lot we reckon you'll come out fine": so that Paddy slept there that night, and the next day, hushing the

baby-boy's crying, hummed over him that cadence which she had acquired from Wallace's wantonness, "With a woola, woola, woola, and a wolla, wolla, woo, and a yoola, yoola, yoola, and a yolla, yolla, yoo".

XIII. CAROLETH



SHE WAS KNOWN by Wallace some three months later to have been really at that Wellington Hotel, his agent having chanced to discover this, but not whereabouts she now was, her Yankee friend having now left London, and Wallace resolved to ferret for himself at the hotel. But he never went, a fresh interest so overwhelmed him when Crichton of Iraq said to him “What, not know Caroleth Lavarock?”

“Know of her”, Wallace answered: “don’t know her”.

And Crichton: “All out odd, that: call yourself a politician? Star of London, Sonny, ‘cleverest woman in Society’, as they say — rich — yacht costs forty thousand a year; and handsome wench — or it isn’t so much her handsomeness as herself, her eyes that confront creation, steady, knowing. And her crushes are political events — come to-night: meet Dinka, likely”.

So, as Crichton had the right to invite anyone to anything, Wallace went to Berkeley Square. And his eyes fell on Caroleth.

He breathed “Now, thank God! — got her”.

Two rooms below crowded, two crowded above, so that the hand of the Dowager Duchess of Chumley, Caroleth’s chaperone *en titre*, shook by habit, and in ten minutes Wallace’s hand was shaken by ten men — most there being men, three-fourths Redshirts; not all in red shirts: for though many Young Men would not appear in anything else, some did. But there was no difficulty in spotting as Redshirts even those in swallow-tails, for all had the same airs, suggesting Texas, Mexico, wore sashes, carried a dagger, poniard, sort of short sword, and vaingloriously swaggered like

swashbucklers, giving to themselves a certain grimness, ruthlessness, of mood — this distinguishing them, the shirts not being all alike: most were a kind of jersey (three buttons on left shoulder), but, as shirts were the strong point of Crichton of Iraq, his were sometimes double-breasted, sometimes had flap-collars, with anchors, crabs, embroidered on: and that dandy mastodon was a model for throngs of Young Men.

He was now “flash” in moleskin trousers, shirt of red serge, a parrot purple on the chest, sash scarlet, and it was a pink-and-blue hand (tattooed) that he put out to Dinka, whom he dropped across in the front room upstairs, as he said, in his cosmopolitan-friendly way, “Hallo, Dinka: looks as if your lot will be coming an ugly facer in the voting”.

Dinka’s keen eye smiled aside on him, he, too, bonhomme, intimate with men. “That’s what you hope: personally I feel as safe as a church”.

And Crichton: “Church, is it? Not safe in thundery weather, Sonny: if lightning feels like striking something, it generally goes for a church”.

“Never strikes a synagogue, though” — from Dinka.

“Can’t find one, they’re so few, that’s why” — their voices rather raised, all those halls being as occupied by a noise of talk going on as by a reign of glowlamps glaring.

“But you Young Men don’t understand this country—” Dinka began to say.

And Crichton quick: “We *are* this country”.

“So you say. But Englishmen are factory-hands. When you tell them ‘*land*’, they don’t think you mean Nature, as economists mean, they think of farmers, and feel no real interest” — this word “*land*” being a word that anyone who moved from group to group of those guests would everywhere have heard rumoured; “*the*” is usually the commonest of English words, but

now throughout England “land” perhaps was — a General Election impending.

“Well, no doubt *you* know the game all out and out”, Crichton of Iraq replied: “but that says nothing: makes no matter to the Young Men what factory-hands fancy; they step straight ahead, *Ri! Lef! Ri! Lef!*” — pacing on now with Jepp, General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, while Dinka, who was in talk with Sir Borlase St. Aubyn, paced on toward the back apartment, many eyes following Dinka, the most important individual then in England — unless Wallace was? or Hogan? or Crichton of Iraq? or General Lord Gordridge, Commander-in-Chief of the Young Men? — Dinka, a Polish Jew, who had been the busiest of London publishers, but had flung up publishing for politics, with the deliberate object of tricking men into making him the British Mussolini, Hitler: for he “knew men”; and now had won far in that path (Home Secretary). But a common conjuror; no world-concern, no particular principles really; the side he liked was the side he considered likely to win. Common was the man’s name; his ‘cuteness saw the universe no further than his nose, though what he saw he saw in white light — had common sense, and all that he had was common. He said to Sir Borlase “Talk of the devil — there’s Hogan, see, on the couch with Mrs. Gooch of the National Union of Women Teachers; looks a fish out of water here”.

“It was I brought him” — from Sir Borlase, who was in favour with Dinka, being a somebody among the Fascisti, a “captain of Fascisti” — who were Dinkaite.

“Did you get salvation on the way coming?” Dinka asked— “may drop upon one any minute when Hogan’s about”.

But Sir Borlase answered with gravity. “Yes, but our lot don’t thank Hogan half enough, Man. I consider that Hogan on my side is more than

five army-corps of Fascisti. I own land, Sir, rustics pay me rent, and it is such as Hogan who keep the people of this country rustics for me. When he informs them that ‘God so loved the world, that He gave his begotten son’, he is repeating a belief of rustics of old who supposed that ‘*the*’ world is the only world; and if, by inciting our people to receive it still, he keeps their minds rustic, I come nicely in. So I pay the man, pamper him, set him on a pedestal; and if ever I am impelled to make game of him, that’s in the strictest privacy”.

“Well, ditto here”, Dinka answered; “when we little two talk together, isn’t that the strictest privacy? If I am a bit of a Hebrew inside, isn’t my coat as Christian as they make ’em?... Wallace, see, with our hostess”.

Sir Borlase had already seen, and his attention been all drawn away to staring absently in a maze of meditation at it: for Caroleth had been gracious to him, and in what he saw was a grain of something which got him jealous.

So, parting from Dinka, he went after Caroleth’s and Wallace’s paces, urging himself to venture to join them, and was irked when *he* was joined by Ivor Warwick, whom Caroleth had lately adopted as a *protégé*, to pilot Ivor into the haven of High Society; and when Caroleth and Warwick had paced to the front and turned to come back, Sir Borlase, to work Warwick off him, walked on out to a balcony where he had spotted his uncle, Dr. Sir Malcolm MacAlister, to talk some moments with his uncle.

MacAlister was a mass of stuff, with a paunch which jutted beyond his swallow-tail’s lack of cloth, his voice glum, dull, himself dull, like organ-music, like flowers of the elder, like fundamentals without harmonics; yet fine the knack of those big fingers, of those fat eyes — chief visiting surgeon of St. Barts, Examiner in Hygiene at London University, pivot of

the Lister Institute, as of the Association for the Advancement of Medicine by Research. He asked his nephew, “No word at all about Paddy?”

“No” — sharp and short.

“Oh, well, your care will be diverted: for it is obvious enough how things are with you”.

“How are things with me?” Sir Borlase demanded.

“Why, head-over-heels in love with Miss Lavarock. How old are you? Forty-five? I assumed that you had settled down”.

“I? Settled down be damned. I want her and I mean to have her”.

“Go ahead, then. There she is now with Wallace of the Young Men — seems rather interested in him. Step in, you, and cut the upstart out” — his tongue separating with a sound from his mouth’s roof at the end of his slow sentences.

And Sir Borlase: “Damn that man, I hate him”.

“I myself certainly do not love him — had to rebuke him seriously three days ago. He told me ‘you can’t understand’”.

“What was that about?”

“I was doing a splenectomy in the theatre on a youngster for hæmolytic icterus when the heart-beat went weak, whereupon a certain Nurse Hebbs proffered herself to be the donor in a blood-transfusion — estimable girl whom I have known since she was a lady-pupil paying a guinea a week, known her as probationer, staff-nurse, and now sister, admirably trained to assist at operations. The lad happened to be her nephew.; I knew her blood-groups to be compatible with his; and I at once accepted her most noble offer. But Wallace, who haunts the hospitals as a sort of amateur doctor, protested, grumbling at her — the girl, I could guess, is his lover — grumbling in a low tone, but I could very well hear him tell her ‘You think yourself mighty fine, but this is not world-service, hurting your health for

your C3 nephew: don't do it!', so that I felt impelled to intervene, and told him 'Dr. Wallace, this is most irregular!', upon which he tossed at me the retort, '*Oh you can't understand*' — uncontrolled person!"

"Oho" — from Sir Borlase— "selfish being, no doubt. Miss Lavarock's not selfish: I'll tell her that anecdote" — presently abandoning the balcony to thread his way through the cram after Caroleth, who was always outstanding, tall, her costumes, too, outstanding — a Victorian fichu that evening in shot peach taffeta over a gown of stiff cloque, negro, reaching to the ground, giving her great length; but the more he saw of her colloquy with Wallace, the more Sir Borlase was daunted from butting in... "in two there's company, in three there's none!" The two paced back to the back apartment, the hell of a heat between them, whose flames the very devil bathed in; and says Caroleth "How do you mean 'get me'? I'm not taking any! Let not him boast that putteth his armour on as he that taketh a lady's off, the battle done".

Wallace's eyes ogled aside with that roguery that rioted in their lights. "What is a lady's armour? I hope they don't still wear stays — nasty cataphracts that take a day to unbuckle".

And she: "One can be staid without stays — cold, cold — platinum that hardly the arc can melt. You will see!"

"If it is true. Even if true, don't say it, Dear. No, you don't know... that face of yours, and the message from the depths of fairyland which it fetches straight to my nature's nature — Heaven and earth shall pass away, but I shall have you".

"Where shall I be while you are doing it?"

"In my arms".

"Armed, then, and in armour... I say, you have heard, of course, of the old philosopher, Dr. Warwick?"

“Aye”.

“People think that he is dead, but one morning I met him in Harley Street, and he somehow knew that you had accosted me, for he said that, if ever I saw that young man again, I must stamp him out, ‘for the man’, he said, ‘is twice married, and means you no good’. Yes, ‘means you no good’. I am forewarned!”

And Wallace: “Ha, ha, how exasperating! And you let that old soul influence you? There’s one Young Man in Yeovil who is seventy-three, and he is younger than when he was twenty-five — can run three times farther; but *he* is one in fifty millions: old people are no good!”

“Not much, maybe”, Caroleth admitted; “still, statements of fact were made me — What did he mean by ‘twice married’? Can it be that you have committed bigamy?”

“Aye”.

“Really? They put people into prison — aren’t you afraid?”

“No”.

“Suppose *I* denounce you? Aren’t you afraid?”

“No”.

“You think the prison would fall, if you were inside?”

“Aye”.

“So you want to commit trigamy with *me*?”

“Aye”.

“I’ll see you burn to a cinder first”.

“I’ll still be hot to kindle you. I think you are already kindled”.

“You know an awful lot about ladies, eh?”

“Aye”.

“The Ayes have it. But I say — do you happen to know Sir Borlase St. Aubyn?”

“Aye”.

“He is somewhere here... Well, I am awfully sorry for him, because he has lost his daughter: so to the men who are after me I say ‘Find that poor man’s daughter for me, *then* come again’. To you, too, I say it; and to you I say, in addition, Kick Dinka out, make yourself a King, then come again. What are you waiting for?”

Wallace answered “Am I a military man? My rank in the Young Men army is subaltern in a telegraph-division section. The Young Men’s hour to strike is for their Army-Council to decide, not for me. Moreover, I don’t think much of ‘Kings’: I like government by the people for the people”.

And Caroleth: “Is there much sense in that? ‘For’, yes; but why ‘by’? If you can and will govern better than the people, isn’t it better for the people to be governed by you?”

“That sounds true”, Wallace answered, “but may not be: it may be a greatest good for the people to practise governing — be their own lorry-driver, even if the driving is cross-eyed meantime”.

Caroleth’s forefinger cut a circle. “But if the driving is in circles meantime? The driver must be a living being! not a dummy; the people must be a real people, having a country — as a family has a home and a motive — owning a country’s treasures, which are spent in educating them to a family unanimity in seeing the simple facts relevant to running a country; and, being responsible for a nation’s trend toward an aim, they’d mock at the idea of voting for the victory of Tom’s personality, which hits Jim’s fancy more than Tim’s personality does, but Bill fancies Tim’s. Is there ‘government by the people’ now? half voting against half? a civil war of whims? There is no people, or just half the germ of a people, its Government amphibious, wriggling, urging itself nowhither in the wormamblystoma stage of evolution: there cannot be a people without a

country. The so-called ‘Englishman’ vociferates ‘for King and Country’, not because he is a fool by nature who cannot note a fact huge as Fujiyama before his nose, but because he is a fool by education, or education, education say, inducted to mental laziness instead of educated to vigour, and sluggishly slouching in his jail of habit-of-thought — no serf has walked the earth who was so perfectly interned. So be King-and-Country, you: give the country; then when there is a people, there can be government by the people”.

Wallace’s forehead went puckered. “I don’t much like kings...”

On which the back of Caroleth’s hand hit his, with “Will you do what I tell you?”

“Aye”, he said, “on condition that I get you”.

And she: “But look alive! act, don’t intend! — hustle the experts — be always the attacker — invent events — don’t wait on elections, or any events. As for me, force me, master me: others are after me — tempting my frailties”.

“By God, ‘frailties’! Sweet!” — a whisper.

“And remember Sir Borlase St. Aubyn: that daughter-matter disposes me to comfort him”.

“How the devil am I to find the man’s daughter, if she cannot be found?”

“You must. The devil is out of it, unless the devil is you”.

“Oh, well... But, I say, can I come to-morrow?”

She looked at him, said low “When you like”.

“Now, you Sweet!” — hissed into the ear’s secret receiver.

But now Mr. E. P. Reynolds, President of the International Federation of Trade Unions, drew toward them, and to talk policy with him Caroleth saw fit to part from Wallace.

XIV. VIVISECTION



WALLACE THOUGHT TO call upon her the following afternoon, but failed to, because of what took place in the forenoon to occupy all his thoughts.

It was in the dining-room of Dr. Sir Malcolm MacAlister (uncle of Sir Borlase St. Aubyn) in Harley Street, whither a flock of some twenty *alumni* assembled to a clinical lecture on mastoid abscess, in which MacAlister was so special a dab, that three established doctors were there amid the lads, in addition to Wallace — whom it was rather pathetic to see tramping humbly about with his note-book like the youngsters, regathering the long-forgotten minutiae of anatomy, physiology, pathology — without other motive than an addictedness to wisdom.

There, anyway, he was, not considering of any importance a tiff that he had recently had with MacAlister in respect of a blood-transfusion from a lover of his; then, the lecture over, the youngsters gone, he stood a long time in a group with the four grown-ups, discussing mastoid abscess, discussing other matters in high physiology, serum-therapy, organotherapy, neuropathology, changes in the blood in passing through different tissues, relations between blood-pressure and secretions, influences of the central nervous system on circulation, animal heat and respiration, muscular contractility, the sympathetic system, physical changes in sleep and “unconsciousness” — and so on; MacAlister, whose method was highly scientific, described some vivisections that he was engaged on to investigate certain varicosities in the dendrites of the nerve-cells of the

brain-surface, these, he believed, contracting in brain-action, expanding in brain-rest; “but”, he said, “the thing remains unascertained; the human brain — this is what we need in cerebral vivisection; here the official of the prison and the asylum has an advantage”.

Upon which Wallace started, with the remark, “But it is important! Someone should offer... Here I am: vivisect *me*”.

On this Dr. MacAlister looked deliberately in turn at each of the other three before observing with some stiffness “If that is meant in jest, Dr. Wallace—”

“Jest?” says Wallace: “why jest, Sir?”

“*Not* meant in jest”, says MacAlister: “that is — remarkable. Do you propose, then, Sir, that I be hanged?”

“Why, yes, Dr. MacAlister” — from Wallace: “a quicker death than being vivisected”.

Afresh MacAlister’s eyes turned, hurt, to each of the other three, one of whom had blurted some derision; and afresh he said to Wallace “You *do* mean it seriously, Dr. Wallace?”

“Of course, Sir, I mean it seriously” — promptly from Wallace: “why not? is it an uncommon thing for scientists to die for science?”

And once more MacAlister looked round at the others; but now he said to them “It might be done”.

And since he said it smiling, they smiled.

“Oh, very well”, he suddenly added: “if I am hanged, at any rate I escape drowning. And then, death in the vivisection is not inevitable, though I recommend you, Dr. Wallace, to see to it that your last will and testament is in order. This is Tuesday: shall we say Thursday? at three o’clock? here? I will send you some directions as to your diet meantime”.

And Wallace: “Yes. Good-day” — turning without delay to get out of that house, that the colourlessness of his countenance might not be observed.

Wallace was a coward, soft, nesh, twinged with an only son’s shrinking from any discomfort, relishing enjoyment with effeminacy, so that the prospect of perishing all at once, leaving his riches behind, his wives and wines and viands on life’s sideboard, made a wreck of him that day and the next. If, staring, he sat, he started horrified to his feet; if he dropped asleep some moments, horrified he started upright; if he ate something, he saw the stuff dead in his dead stomach. “So young! the worm, the worm”, he murmured. The hollowness of the echoes of Eternity so infected his nerves with gruesomeness, that he got to be timorous of ghosts, and ogled the glooms with a nigger-boy’s bigness of eyeball in going up to his room in the night-time. A few final letters he contrived to write — Young Men letters — but would not see even Crichton of Iraq; and, suddenly remembering Caroleth, he scribbled a line, “About to die, I salute you”.

When the darksome hour at last came round his countenance was so marred with experience of misery, that Dr. MacAlister, seeing it, nodded a “Hm!” of vindictive contentment, so clearly he saw that Wallace had been well whipped for not being his twin.

A physiological laboratory at the house-back, MacAlister’s paunch pushing more podgily without his coat, his forearm bared for butchery; a pair of white nurses there with ice-bag, lint, sutures, cotton-wool, basin; an anaesthetist there, a dresser, antiseptics, forceps, “lion” forceps self-locking, tourniquet, dissecting-knives, cold steels gleaming grim, sphygmograph, the frightful trephine — Wallace was permitted to see it all, and wince; and two young doctors there, who hardly stopped their colloquy to bow to Wallace

with an underlook that was not without something of mockery, something of ill-will for not being their twin.

All gathered round him, strapped and clamped, on an oblong table that had on it a slab of brass; all were inclined toward smiling; and he was permitted to see the anaesthetist actually draw its stopper from a bottle, before Dr. MacAlister had the ruth to remark “No, after all, it is too unorthodox: I must withdraw from this, Dr. Wallace”.

Some tittering arose, while Wallace, set free, sat up all astare, as when Lazarus tottered from death’s maw amazed at the depth of hell and the hollowness of heaven’s hall. He got himself off the little table to totter giddily to a chair in a corner, upon which he dropped, and, burying his face, gave way to a gobbling of sobs that booed boohoo, boohoo.

One of the doctors came proffering a tumbler, muttering “Drink some”, and Wallace stopped to swallow something, then went on with his sobbing.

But within some minutes he stood up, knowing now that there never had been any intention to do the vivisecting, that he had been excruciated for not being the twin-brother of money-hunting Harley Street, and, without saying anything, he dressed himself — jacket — collar — but then, across that sub-joy which (of course) wrought in him, dropped with some acrimony the remark, as he walked from the apartment, “It shall be done: I will do it — on some nobler soul than any in this room”.

At about that same hour Sir Borlase St. Aubyn in Caroleth Lavarock’s drawing-room was recounting to her the story of how Wallace had rebuked his lover-nurse for being willing to transfuse her blood into her nephew...

Caroleth heard it without saying a word, but the baronet observed her frown; and now, bending toward her, went on to say “But about the marrying: overlook bluntness; I’m a blunt beggar. Is it to be? You may as well”.

Now, clement of heart, Caroleth never thundered No at a man; and in the case of Sir Borlase she had special reasons to keep him hoping, and under her power to influence: she had just received Wallace's mysterious "About to die I salute you", which seemed to her to mean that Wallace now anticipated being shot by Sir Borlase: and, not wanting anybody to be shot, she replied, chin on fists, her eyes meditating on Sir Borlase, "You know that I like you—"

"That really so?" leapt from the baronet.

"But marriage is the white woman's burden. Ask another time. After the election. My head is all preoccupied with the whirl of parties, circles — other than wedding-parties, wedding-rings".

"Very well, My Lady: your will be done. Failure of heart's action; head full of politics. Going to the Queen's Hall meeting?"

"Yes".

"There'll be ructions: Fascisti mean to kick up a shindy".

"I know".

"And Hogan may be going: he is furious at the 'Christian'— 'Young Men's Christian Conspiracy'!"

"Crichton's doing, that. Not bad: hoists Hogan's own flag".

"At any rate, you'll need protecting. Shall I take you?"

"Well — if you like".

"Thanks! Good thing you are! By heaven, I'll bet you like me".

"Needn't bet: I just said so".

"Bravo! Long live the Queen!"

"The Queen's Hall".

"The Queen's all" — kissing her hand; and on the next week's Wednesday evening it was he who took her to the meeting.

A red meeting: for although others than Redshirts were there — hundreds went in vain, no room — the mood of all was red, as when on some Autumn day of storm all the hall of heaven is gone agadding in a mood of holiday and flags hoisted for fête, so the mood of that reunion was new-born, exuberant with youthfulness, boisterous rollick. Ere ever the speakers were on the platform two areas of scrimmage — sticks, fisticuffs — were reigning in two regions of the pit, for when Young Men came across Fascisti it was a case of terrier and stink-rat... “crabbed age and youth can’t live together...”

Stormy was the voyage of Alderman J. B. Jacob’s oratory (Chairman of Executive of Labour Party); scattered in whistle of whirlwind the speech of Commander Sturwood (Institute of Aeronautical Engineers); and, if Wallace was then listened to a minute, this was because of astonishment at his matter: for the meaning of the meeting was electioneering, writs for the new Parliament having been issued a week previously, and the meeting’s theme was the delinquencies of the last Parliament, which had too much pampered the landed class; but about this Wallace had nothing to say: he said “I have a proposal to make you. You Young Men have one Idol — Science. God, you think, is not a Quaker, nor a Trade Unionist, nor a Buddhist, but a Bio-Chemist: therefore bio-chemistry is your adoration. Now, I put a case to you: there is a certain question relating to the nerve-cells on the brain-surface, which, it appears, can hardly be settled without vivisection of the brain of Man: so, on hearing of this, a man whom I know presented himself for vivisection to an expert who had been vivisecting other animals in vain. The expert replied that he had no desire to be hanged, and though he presently consented, pretended to consent, yet when the man had passed through the strains of one who has only two more days of delight at the sight of these delighted skies, the scientist declined — didn’t do it — not a

high scientist. So I, knowing of this, said “I will do it — on some one of the forty thousand Young Men who will offer themselves’. So, now, offer yourselves. Death, I may mention, though not certain, is almost certain. So offer yourselves. Write to me personally at the Fitzroy Square Young Men, blotting with your blood the top left corner of the envelope, and mentioning whether you have dependents. Preference will be given to single men who —”

“This is outrageous!” — from the throat of Mr. Hogan, springing upright in the pit.

Uproar; and, roaring out of uproar, “*He* was the ‘man’!” from the throat of Crichton of Iraq on the platform, pointing ecstatically at Wallace, “none but Wallace himself was—”

Profounder uproar, chaos, tension of electric atmospherics, with here, there, a petty skirmish working, deaf to everything other than its own privy business — events like pellets of rain pelting rare, scouts forerunning the shower’s downrush.

And Hogan’s throat, roaring through uproar: “Wallace forgets, forgets, forgets that this is kind of a Christian country! Young Men’s Christian Conspiracy is it? Christian conspiracy against Christianity! See here, there has already been a vivisection — on a cross; blood has already been shed — the blood of Jesus Christ—”

And Crichton’s throat, roaring through crisis of uproar: “This Wallace of yours is down to the ground the greatest saint that—”

And, from her stand on her seat, Caroleth Lavarock’s crimson scream “To hell with Hogan, Boys!” — she being now without Sir Borlase, who, promising return, had spurted away, and at that instant did re-enter the hall — at the head of a squad of Fascisti, who, having stood drawn-up outside, now, knocking aside the hall-keepers, trotted vociferating in; whereupon the

Young Men in the body of the hall, smelling blood, were up and at them like hunting-dogs, as all along the galleries also was battle joined, and joy of battle. So here was the finish of the “meeting”, which blew up here; some policemen, too, with joy of battle, joined in, their hand against every man, soon enough to go struggling under, adrown in the typhoon; the orators, their fortress stormed, fled mauled away to the hall-office at the left; and even when the hall breathed rid of fists and heat, a little of the sea of war had dribbled out to the street.

As for Caroleth Lavarock, it was not Sir Borlase (who had lost her) that took her home, but Wallace, his brow brown with bruises, as *she* had a handkerchief at her split lip; and she remarked in the car “Nice thing this vivisection of a Young Man: there’ll be no end of a rumpus. Whom did you consult about it?”

“It is a thing to be done”, Wallace answered: “I consulted no one”.

And she: “Oh, well, if you see fit to act on your own in this way, without the Executive Council” — to which she had lately been co-opted: “and why not have waited till after the election? Even if the man does not die, the whole thing will be unpopular, people won’t understand. It is amusing that Jacobs, your own chairman to-night, is an official in the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection — helps to edit ‘The Abolitionist’: he won’t understand. And if the man does die? as he will? Votes will be lost in bucketfuls, Dinka and Hogan will preach it — You lack the clinical skill—”

“How do you know?” Wallace demanded: “I am studying the cerebrum intensively —— — —”

“Study’s no good: one needs years of experience in technique. Why, you are wild”.

“Wild in love with you: I am going to kiss the lip, to see if that will make it well”.

“False prophecy. One wanting to kiss should do it, not prophesy. Not for me. Biting would make it worse. Ha, ha, it was a Young Man who vivisected me with his random knuckles. I saw him, know him, his name’s Knowles: handsome chap — moustache — *his* kiss might make it well, as the hair of a dog—”

“Oh, so?” This took Wallace aback. Then: “Lucky devil, to vivisect you: that’s what I am after”.

And Caroleth: “Aye, there you have laboratory experience, I know. But, as for me, ‘he that hath clean hands’ may come and succeed, not you. Do I look a light o’ love like the others? Turn over a new leaf”.

Wallace whispered “Then you’ll turn up trumps with your ace of hearts? Agreed?”

On which Caroleth cocked a supercilious nostril to say “Turn over first, then see, gross Pig”.

“Dear!” — a whisper— “I think I’ll get you”.

“Oh, well” — standing up now, as the car stopped.

And from the next morning the offers of themselves for the vivisection commenced to come from Young Men; presently a phalanx of clerks could hardly get through the plague of letters — hundreds of thousands: from whom Wallace selected at random a fellow of twenty-three named Driscoll, a draper’s assistant of Clapham; but, strenuously preparing himself for the operation, did not immediately acquaint Driscoll.

Meantime, all the goose-necks of “The Press” were protruded to scream and gobble, all agreeing in bawling the same strain of indignation: “If there is any drawing back from the arrest of Dr. Wallace in this matter, then the Government has frankly abdicated, all’s up with law and order in this country”; “Who is this ‘Dr.’ Wallace who so greatly dares? It appears that he is not even a doctor, since the British Medical Association, on looking

for his name to erase it from the Register, have failed to discover it”; “We have slept while our enemies waked, and the Philistines are upon us. But Samson is still Samson. This incident is to be welcomed for bringing things to a crisis; the day of a trial of strengths has arrived”; even the paper that was Wallace’s voice: “Frankly, we find ourselves unable to side with this defiance of the moral sense of our time, and, if we are ‘villagers’, as the Young Men will name us, we are what we are — cannot for the present be other. Because this vivisection is called a crime, it is a mistake, and, occurring at least thirty years too soon, is a true anachronism”.

During all which, troops were on the move toward London: swinging kilt of Queen’s Own Cameronians; from Dover Castle Barracks 2nd Royal West Kents; 2nd Royal Warwickshires from Inkerman Barracks (Woking); moving down Piccadilly blue tunics of 12th Lancers; and the Young Men, too, commoved: to the General Officer Commanding 2nd Division had gone out from headquarters a telegram— “mobilize”; to a colonel on parade-ground in Bermondsey an orderly turned up to present a red envelope (called a “red pill”), while a whisper worked from lip to lip, “going to see service”; some shipping-clerk at his office-desk in Leadenhall Street might have in his pocket four shillings, come to him with a “travelling warrant” which directed him at what spot to report himself at what hour; and in the air an expectancy — of what? No one was sure: a speech of Dinka, at Manchester, upon which the country keenly hung, was such a feat of vagueness, that it was impossible to guess what the Government meant to attempt, if anything. Certainly, Dinka did not lack valour — nay, audacity; but perhaps discretion was rather his trait; he had an eye aside that warily weighed; he liked quietness to thrive in; and ever he exhibited a vacillation in dealing with the Young Men, who were a something unforeseen, perplexing, that had been no element in his scheme when he conceived it, as

when one excogitates a deal on the Stock Exchange, and a storm crops up to demolish the Exchange.

In Hogan, on the contrary, valour far surpassed discretion: *he* did not mince matters, “vivisection” now filling his mouth. On the Sunday evening following that Queen’s Hall Wednesday his talk was to ten thousand within the Albert Hall, and to other thousands crowding the space at the hall’s back, to whom his talk was broadcast; “lessons” were read by a bishop, the Very Rev. Dr. Shipley, Chaplain of the Forces; the singing of the Old Hundredth, of two Hogan-and-Dowdy hymns, was led by a choir of a thousand, and was roared by thousands of Salvationist throats, Christian Association throats, Fascisti throats: for though the Fascisti were rather down on Jews, they made exceptions of two Jews — Jesus and Dinka. And Hogan spoke. He was against vivisection, against science... “We know enough to get saved from hell; what’s all the patter about ‘brain-surface’? That stuff won’t go here: it’s the heart’s vivisection we’re after, the heart’s circumcision.. In the thick of which Wallace, blanched like meerschaum, not far from the platform, was up wild of eye... “*He* wishes to keep you prisoners in fancies — *such* fancies! African! — *I* wish to set you free in facts; *he* wishes to keep you Christian, I wish to make you religious; *he* wishes to keep you atheists half-believing in Mumbo Jumbo, *I* wish you to know for certain that God is all in all; *he* wishes to keep you villagers turning the other cheek to your neighbour Jim, I wish to make you world-citizens; and if to advance ten thousand miles in happiness and self-respect demands of you some slight effort of mind, will you let laziness prevent — ?”

“Out with him!” — hurled from his first words, and working itself up to more and more turmoil— “Chuck him out!”, “Out with him!”, till, the

urgency of it reaching to the verve of whirlwind, he ceased when he could no more hear his own mouth's howling.

In some moments more he was down; so many hands were at him, that many blows were aimed which never touched him; but before he received serious injury someone wild of eye was somewhere rushing, shouting through the riot "The Young Men are coming!", and even as this cry of "Young Men!", "Young Men!", was everywhere being repeated, a red irruption of Young Men running came — as when flame breaks out — brandishing a red flag, to mingle in the scrimmage, and crash a path to the deliverance of the prisoner, so that many a chair was smashed.

In the thick of which the voice of a singer, strong to occupy all that hall, arrested every attention — the voice of Caroleth Lavarock standing in a box, costumed in midnight blue with angel-wing sleeves, singing a hymn of her own making to the tune of "Giovanezza", the Italian "Hymn of Youth" — her singing differing from others' who, singing in English, cannot be understood by Englishmen, who, singing through a veil of breathiness, fancy they are saying something, but are not saying anything, fancy they are trained to sing, but are not trained to sing; but each word of hers could clearly be heard, as in speech; and when after three lines of it the row had died down enough, she began again:

"Up the Red Flag!" calling, storming,
Lo, the Young Men, high-inspired,
Over all the foothills swarming,
Bulls by Daybreak's red rag fired:
Rash who'd check their raids and rages,
Ravished they by cosmic Voices,
Fascinated by the Ages,
Dragged by astral gravities.

O! the red boys! royal florid!
Red their blood, their rag, their forehead,
Bloody drops adorn their forehead,
Royal florid brawl the boys.
So for Man's flag, aye, the glad rag,
Higher! highhigh! highhala!

Whither tend they, this way taking?
Dark to them what things on Mars are;
Masked the dead, no answer making;
Far from answering the stars are:
But the boys' hearts feel a smarting.
Hear a call "Be on the mountains!"
So they shout back "We are starting!",
Helping each his girl aloft.
O! her chin's pitch! note her thumb, too!
Super-monkey that she's come to:
Only God knows what she'll come to
When they help her up His hills.
So for Man's flag, aye, the glad rag,
Higher! highhigh! highhala!

For themselves these fells they mount not,
Mount for sons of sons of mothers,
Dusts and heats and carks they count not,
Break their hearts as bread for others;
Beautiful upon the mountains
Are their feet! whose bleeding breedeth,
Where they trample, flowers, fountains:

Mountaineers on Calvary.

O! the high boys climbing higher!

Climbers all we born of fire,

Nor that flag's rags, dyed in fire,

Will we strike while fire climbs.

So for Man's flag, aye, the glad rag,

Higher! highhigh! highhala!

.. which was like oil on boisterous waters through some subjection to some spell of personality; but then, automatically, uproar was resumed at the point where uproar had left off, as when the skull of a baby bawling is ducked under water, and the ear knows peace, but so soon as it is up anew there is bawling, resuming the thread of the bawling left off. Mr. Hogan roared, but the meeting, now interested in itself, did not hear; then Mr. Dowdy, a powerful bigness, began a hymn, but stopped; whereupon Hogan roared to Wallace, "Why mess up the meeting this way, Wallace? Come upon the platform —— —"

"No", Wallace roared back: "you broke up *my* meeting".

And Hogan: "Tit for tat! Evil for evil! Let's have a debate, Wallace, in orderly style. Fix it that way".

"If you like! Some other night".

"Right! Call off your fellows for now".

Upon which Wallace, who had had enough of it, sent out messengers, and before long the hall was rid of Young Men; but the mood of the reunion could scarcely now be resumed, so that it broke up sooner than usual, with few souls saved, troops of the meeting streaming out before the end, among them Wallace, on seeing Caroleth stand up in her box.

In the crowd outside he handed into their car three girls-about-town who had turned up near him in the outward streaming, and to their lips when

they were seated he affixed three benedictory kisses like seals, lingeringly — not thinking that Caroleth would yet be thereabouts; but when he looked round, there she stood with Sir Borlase St. Aubyn and with High Commissioner for Australia, Sir Michael Henry.

As it was with Wallace that she had come, it was he who drove her home, but he found her not in her best temper; when he said “Hurrah for the Red Flag song”, she answered “Leave out the hurrahs... What is the ‘debate’ with Hogan for? Waste of time. You can be pretty simple, Dr. Wallace. Don’t you suppose that Hogan knows that debating is not his strong point? He will simply revitalize in reply — if it comes to debating; but meantime he hopes that before the date fixed you will be in prison for killing, and that your failure to be at the debate will affect the election; you can be pretty simple: women play the devil with a fellow’s headpiece”.

“Nonsense”, says Wallace: “no women — much; it is rabbits I am vivisecting. It appears that I can only love a woman whose name begins with C, and ends with something like ‘let’s’

And Caroleth: “Dear me, that describes me. But, then, *I* am practically engaged — you know Sir Borlase St. Aubyn, don’t you? That poor man still has no news of his child: I can’t help favouring him”.

“What business is that of yours? And am I not searching the world for the girl?”

“It is finding that matters... And, by the way, there is that young man, Ivor Warwick, for whom I have a liking: I am told that he is now mixing in your carouses, and you are leading him to the devil”.

Wallace laughed. “Well, but the fellow was rather a prig — needs to be led to the devil, who is no prig. Don’t let that—”

“I *will* let it. I hear that the saying in the night-clubs is ‘here come the twins’, when you win him in; but I do not wish my special friends to be

twins with you. Your life is dissolute, I shall decline to receive you—”

“Oh, well, you are cross to-night. Shall I come tomorrow?”

“No. Good-night” — getting up, as the motor drew up.

After which for some days there was no meeting between them, Wallace meantime giving all his wit and will to vivisecting, fixing, too, by letter with Hogan the place of the debate, its subject, its date, which, by Hogan’s suggestion, was arranged for the general-election polling-day; and soon the goose-necks of the newspapers were giving the thing to the four winds.

Meantime, an interview between Wallace and the selected for the vivisection, Thomas Driscoll: a sufficiently common-looking Cockney — long cheeks — a little sniff-up which wrinkled the nostrils every three minutes. He said to Wallace “I only ask one thing, Sir: If you do me any injury which will be permanent, finish me off”; to which Wallace answered “Yes, I promise; but I am hoping for better things than that”; and the event was fixed for the third day thence, the Thursday, as by Wednesday the world had heard.

That Wednesday afternoon Wallace was in Caroleth Lavarock’s drawing-room, who said to him “Dr. Sir Malcolm MacAlister has just left me; he is pretty indignant: says you have no chance of success; ‘murder!’ he says”.

“Oh, that kind of mind!” Wallace answered with scorn — seated near her on a couch; she, with her goût for flagrant costumes toggled out as a man in corduroy trousers, in a Young Man red-shirt, in sandals, down her back hanging, like a Mongol’s legs, two gross plaits of gold-hair that gave out a glory of goldiness; and a magnetic man she made: Wallace’s difficulty was to keep his hands off her, nor did he long succeed. “That kind of mind!”, he said: “no world-concern; the individual fills their interest”.

“But he knows his business, you will admit”, Caroleth said: “a great biologist, while you, I gather, are rather a physicist, your hands hardly

educated in the biological sense: pity you ever — Oh, well, too late now... As to the ‘individual’, isn’t the individual, too, important, since unique? I am told that you rebuked one of your numerous dolls, a certain nurse, for offering to transfuse her blood into a moribund lad; but that lad may have had the faculty to scent out some fact which no one else—”

“Quite so”, Wallace put in, “and his importance consisted in *that* — his social value, if any; in that alone. But it was as an individual *per se* that the nurse was seeing him; for *him* she purposed to hurt her health — the fellow was her nephew — and for her own private likes and vanities, not for society: bad conduct. Men will be good when their conduct becomes Divine — Absolute, Blank — pitiless of the individual, even of the individual city, for God will wipe out a Lisbon in six ticks, but is good to worlds — if not to every world, to worlds in general”.

On which Caroleth with a smile: “Very well, always remember that I as an individual am of no importance”.

And Wallace with that leering of his which twinkled: “You, yes; no one else; especially when you are in trousers”.

“I have three pairs, too. More than you, I think: I know of two—”

“What business is it of yours? Do I ask how many pairs of drawers you have?”

“Well... but... that’s more intimate. And we aren’t Victorians: I wonder you don’t know that ladies have invented in that way”.

“Aye, I know, I know, with a woola, woola, woola, and a wolla, wolla, woo—”

“Dear me, what *is* the meaning of that inanity that you sometimes descend to?”

“And a yoola, yoola, yoola—”

“And a foola, foola, foo”.

“But I say — Caroleth — look, now — shall we be chums after all? close, close—”

“Be careful! don’t touch! mind you! There is another ‘individual’ of ‘importance’ in *my* eyes — that Paddy St. Aubyn—”

“Ah, heaven! will you never leave me in peace about that—”

“And, apart from ‘goodness’, there is a compulsion upon human beings to be pretty; when a man is morally presentable, then a lady may begin to consider—”

“No, at once” — breathlessly— “I swear that I — but don’t keep me suffering in flames — I can’t bear any more — kiss me!”

Up like a dart from his arms she started, he after; and round about a card-table she darted dodging, he dodging to catch her.

“Ha, ha, ha, ha” — from her— “how dare you chase me?”

“Ha, ha, ha, ha” — from him— “you have to give in”.

“Yes, ha, ha, ha, ha, *when* you catch me” — as a Venus de Milo dropped to fragments.

And he apant: “Ha, ha, ha, ha, by Heaven, I’ll have you kidnapped, strip you stark, wallop your burn with a horsewhip — *then* you’ll give in”.

And she apant: “Ha, ha, ha, ha, gross Pig, *then* you’ll taste hell-fire, you shall see and not touch!”

And he: “Ha, ha, ha, ha, by Heaven, I doubt whether you’re a maid! There’s a certain pollen of modesty which virgins have—”

And she: “Ha, ha, ha, ha, you hit it there! Why, I have had a child!”

This ended it. As if shot, Wallace sat down on the couch, looking at the floor, mottled now between pallor and heat; then in a minute heaved a sigh, rising; bowed to her; and moved slowly out, without saying anything; while Caroleth, looking after his disappearance, rued, breathing “Oh, horrid of me; and to-morrow the vivisection...”

Later she attempted to telephone him, but he was out — wandering about London like one lost.

Then she decided to write, and, in the disguised hand which she used in writing to him, wrote “Why take me so heavily when we were sky-larking? If I have had any child, you are the father, no one else would do. So now you are happy. Good luck to-morrow! Come soon”. But it was posted too late for that night’s letters.

And that night he could little sleep, the calamity of her having a sexual past, added to his mistrust of his hand in that operation hanging over his head, caused him to get out of bed on the momentous morning with trembling fingers, with a feeling of seediness. There on his bedside table were letters — hers — a personal letter from Dinka entreating him to determine, even now, to abstain from the vivisecting, not to stain the streets with blood; but he did not read, did not see, the letters; ate no breakfast; went out to a long walk.

He found at the South end of Harley Street four lorries, three loaded with barrels, with rocks, the fourth an army-munition lorry surrounded by Young Men steel-helmeted, who were making a barricade across the street, emplacing Maxims, a knot of five policemen eyeing them in silence; and, if he had walked northward, he would have seen barricades at all the Harley Street corners.

On coming home, he found his four vivisection-assistants already assembled in the room behind the dining-room, in it being now a couple of arc-lamps muttering cicada palaver, spluttering ultra-whiteness of light; and when, as he was discussing with his helpers, the butler presented him a trayful of letters, he took up a few to look through, among them that of Caroleth, which enraptured his eyes, and, coming now, only the more excited him, heightening his neurosis for the trial.

Soon after which, in comes Driscoll, sniffing up the nose, cool as a cucumber, having the tale to tell that at seven in the morning a squad of soldiers had come to his lodging, meaning probably to seize him, but “I was a bit too fly for ’em”, he said — had taken flight over two roofs, and had been strolling in hiding ever since. “I could do with something to eat”, he concluded.

But Wallace: “Better not now; drink a little wine”.

And when this was drunk, Wallace could discover nothing more to postpone the raw moment of operating. His pallor was now pitiable; but, as to Driscoll, not the least agitation was to be seen in that changeless face, even when he lay on the strait table, awaiting the anaesthetist’s wad: he sniffed up through the nostril, took it easy...

Within fifteen minutes, though, of his anæsthetization he was dead. Wallace, even if competent, was too doubtful of his competence, too fevered, to succeed: at one point his fingers distinctly slipped, his horror whispering “O, God!”; and he went on to a moment when, in a rage of fluster, desperation, he stuck a dissecting-knife into the brain-substance, and ended it.

Moving now without motive about the room, he suddenly threw at the others “*Murder!*”

And, standing some moments at the table’s head, he said to his dead “So you smile, do you? Tasted honey-dew, have you? No wonder you smile” — his soul gripped now toward crying, his face a grimace of emotion, as in the moments before a baby cries.

In another minute he was running out of the house, southward, pursued by a troop of newspaper-men, who sent at him shouts, “Is it done?”, “Is he dead?”, to which he, as he dashed through the passage left for the public in the barricade, shouted backward “Yes, murdered! dead!”

Thence, shadowed by a batch of Young Men in plain clothes, he dashed on his way to Berkeley Square, where, dropping upon a couch, bowed down, he panted at Caroleth “Dead”.

She, standing over him, asked “And the dendrites, did you discover — ?”

“Discover, no, discovered nothing. You were quite right, I lacked the clinical skill, murdered he lies there for nothing, for nothing, for nothing...”

She put her palm on his head. “Never mind, cheer up. How can you say ‘for nothing’? Discovery was not your main motive, but to offer to men a model of world-service; and you’ve done it. Isn’t that so? Come — Dear — cheer up”.

Now he humbly blubbed. “Blessed being, thank you, thank you, I’ll never forget you. But it is hard to bear, I made a regular mess of it — shameful, shameful; I have a mind to walk into the Home Office, and say to Dinka ‘Here I am, hang me’”.

Her eyes flashed now. “Pooh, Dinka wouldn’t dare: Dinka knows too well what’s good for Dinka’s skin. And now to inscribe in Dinka’s remembrance how the Young Men bury their Christs — the obsequies of a god, ending, of course, in the Abbey”.

Wallace started. “You say that?”

And she: “Well, but we are in for it now; and now the thing is to put *fear* into the Old Men’s liver: attack! attack!” — her eyes on fire: “Crichton, Truscott and I met to discuss it last night, and we saw eye to eye: we seize the Abbey, kidnap the dean to make him read the burial-service — as is only fit: no one yet buried in that Abbey is worthy to lie beside Driscoll, unless it be Thomas Tompion, and that ‘unknown warrior’—”

“Aye, that’s true, Caroleth, a dear fellow — phlegmatic beggar — hero to his finger-tips. He lies dead—”

“At any rate, he’ll be having a funeral: never man had funeral as this man will have; night-funeral — torchlight — all London booming, minute-guns going, sixteen thousand pounds, we reckon, squandered upon a glory of rockets, to signify that a sovereign is gone up in his gauds of office to God”.

“Very well”, Wallace said, “let it be so”.

And so it was. Nor, owing to the impending of the election, was the Abbey-burial accompanied by any trouble; low lay the Government: for if, coming now to blows with the Young Men, it chanced to get a black eye, that must gybe some of the voting against it, and a black eye just now was likely: its fighting strength in London was outclassed; there was some Young-Menism among the regulars, it could not at present be guessed how much; it was certain that something like a third of the Reserves were Young Men; some Territorials, too; and it was being whispered in drawing-rooms that the Prince of Wales had taken the Young Men oath incognito, as a number of young noblemen had openly signed Young Men attestation papers: so, with the election four days ahead, the mind of the Cabinet-meeting during the Friday afternoon was discreet, cunctatory; “wait” was on Dinka’s lip, “bide our time”, “be blind in one eye”, “shun a tussle just now”. So on the Saturday morning the Young Men’s 7th Rutherfords occupied the Abbey and its environs in a dead silence of the Old Men: it was the dean himself who, taking his seizure with great good humour, appointed the spot in the north transept for the martyr’s tomb; and soon after nine that night swarms upon swarms of travellers’ eyes, from Yorkshire, from Cornwall, from France, watched the pomp of his passage.

XV. LIGHTNING



BUT IT MIGHT have been better for the Old Men if they had been less prudent; for during the Tuesday (polling-day) those “in the know” reported that the voting was tending heavily in favour of the land-nationalizing party — and kept on tending until the evening, when an incident (of which all Britain instantly knew) appears to have biased the voting toward what was now called “The Old Men’s” side.

This incident happened at the Salvationists’ “Congress Hall” in Clapton, where Hogan and Wallace met that night to debate on “Who is better off, a Christian or a Scientist?”

It was drizzling, winds blustering, some thunder rumbling somewhere; but this did not prevent that Mr. Hogan’s motor was compelled to come slow through the great crowd that surrounded it with gratulations, an outbreak of bugles’ throats greeting him the moment his feet moved into the building. Nor did Wallace come alone, though *his* throng consisted, not of the public, but of Young Men in everyday dress, there to protect him. There were constables in that hall who eyed him with a longing eye aside.

And it was a queer “debate” — scarcely fair play, for not merely was the platform thick with clerics, but actually there was “a prayer” and a singing of “Rock of Ages” with a rollicking swing through noises of rain and wind; during which a Salvationist mounted the platform to hand a telegram to Mr. Hogan, Hogan handed it to Dowdy and, the singing done, Dowdy announced two voting results — West Fulham, Monmouth — causing all the Young Men elements in the hall to break into cheering at two fresh

victories for change — hand-claps raining through winds of hissing, everyone being imbued with that mood of newness of election-night when the galaxies gaze down upon a nation on the tramp toward strange azimuths; in the midst of which cheering, jeering, up sprang Caroleth Lavarock in a right-hand gallery, looking bridal in a costume of mastic and silver cloque lamé, to sing in her distinct manner an election-night carol to the air of “Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching”:

Broad, broad, ho, the hosts go voting,
Mum, grum, ponderously strong:
As when elephant brigades
Trample straight through brakes, stockades,
Here can cats’ ears catch a crash of trampled camps of wrong.

Wrung, wrung, roams the Woman wombfull,
Urged, scourged, gross she panging goes,
Under spangled glooms that gloat,
Noting moon-falls, globes that bloat,
Noting in Eternity this earth-night’s birthnight throes.

Weird, weird, hear the feet abeating,
Called, thralled, geist-beguiled they plod,
Whither wind whines, whisper guides,
Whither wisp of glimmer glides,
For the nations’ migrant trails are trails of migrant God.

Although a thud of thunder rather interrupted the last part, all the hall applauded when Mr. Hogan had the gallantry to clap; and now he rose and spoke, introducing Wallace, suggesting for Wallace a patient hearing “from us”; and Wallace, standing at a table, spoke, reasoning in a tone of

reasonableness, appealingly... “Look at Denmark, now. You know how Denmark in the war with Germany lost Schleswig, Holstein, Lauenberg, her fertile bits, little being left her but fen and bog-lands. Yet Denmark today is more prosperous than Denmark before that war of ’64. So what rescued Denmark? Denmark’s Buddhism? Denmark’s Christianity? It is not Buddhism that makes Japan prosperous, for she was Buddhist ages before she was prosperous, nor is it Christianity, for she is not Christian, nor is Russia jocund for being Christian. In fact, Denmark was rescued by an invention in spite of Christianity, which, disliking change, dislikes science, the cause of change, and depresses invention — archimandrites and archbishops, popes and dukes, never being remarkable for their inventions, but for their tiaras, and copes with orphreys, and braw robes of Basuto lords; and in professing to be leaders of men they do not attempt to prove their fitness to lead by perceiving anything new and true, but by dressing themselves up as pretty princes. So Denmark was not rescued by Christianity; Denmark was rescued by science, by finding out that fat is lighter than water, by the invention of the cream-separator. And we, too, if we like marching and lightness of heart, must choose the Father for our Marshal, the Scientist Father, the Chauffeur of the stars, and Argo is His motor-boat, we being done with the son, as the French already are, who was an Asiatic peasant, dead now, and powerless to—”

Powerless to do what? He never uttered it. As he pronounced that “powerless”, he was down, felled, together with the fragments of a lamp.

His palm had been on the lamp-standard (of brass), this perhaps being why a wink of lightning that blinked white of wing into the building singled him out to tingle through; and before he could tumble down an outcry of thunder, bullying as from some gruff throat, throed the ground.

Commotion now... Mr. Hogan presently pressed his way out of the little crowd lingering round the stricken to vociferate “Will any doctor in the audience please step up here?” But no doctor came; and when Wallace had been lifted to a chair, had stared about, had dabbed a kiss upon Caroleth Lavarock’s hand, now solacing his brow, Hogan stepped forward to call in an awed voice to the audience “Let us pray”.

But the prayer was scarcely fair-play — to kick the stricken, to thank the Lord Jesus for contenting himself with giving Wallace “an awful warning”, while graciously sparing Wallace’s life [Cries of “Praise the Lord!”]; he prayed that no permanent ill-consequences might follow, that Wallace might in this way be led, like Paul, to “turn to the Lord” [Cries of “Amen! Amen!”].

But he was no sooner done than Wallace was up, pale, shaken, but still combative... “Was it Jesus who struck me down? it does seem so; but may it not rather have been the Father, who, even as I was praising Him, let fly His lightning at me, since I was pawing the wrong lamp, and true as doom His foot-rules whisk, His balance-beams wince slant; but Jesus, I think, would be too human, good-hearted, to smite with lightning a poor beggar who means well, even if Jesus has now got to find out what lightning is — not ‘fire’, as he fancied when alive [Outcries of “Shame! Shame!”]. ‘Shame’ to him? No, he couldn’t help fancying so; that was his Age’s rude way of looking at everything, as fourteen centuries later Dante still fancied that lightning is fire; and no ‘shame’ to me, *I* can’t help his fancying so. Anyway, the stroke ends the debate, I am all of a tremble, I simply can’t go on. But let’s fight it out another night. Mr. Hogan says that it was the son who struck me down; I say that it was the Electro-chemical Father; and the point about a statement is its truth — hasn’t long been the point! is not the point now among Negro peoples, nor among some of us, who greet a

statement which jumps with our mood and comforts our mumpishness, whereas strong minds respect a statement only for its truth, not bothering to smile at it, if untrue. So let us test the truth of this” — his brow now rushing from blanched to flushed— “let Mr. Hogan, meeting me again some evening, pray to the son, to any of his gods, to send a storm, wind, lightning, rain: and I will give him twenty minutes to get it. Then, if no storm comes, *I* will pray: for I happen to know some scientists who are so well in with the Scientist Father, that they can cause storms to arise; and since I can talk with them by a kind of wireless, I will pray them to send a storm, wind, lightning, rain: and Mr. Hogan will give me twenty minutes to get it. Then, if a storm comes, all will see with their eyes who is better off, a Christian or a Scientist. Now, Mr. Hogan, what do you say?”

Up, as if to catch a ball, Hogan with a flushed brow sprang to shout “*I accept!*”; and all that hall was a vortex of applause.

Meanwhile, the tidings of Wallace’s lightning-shock had reached Broadcasting House, at an hour when much of the voting was still to be done, and the thing was broadcast, not as a bit of the “news-bulletins”, but as a separate tit-bit sent from Heaven: “Dr. Wallace, in the very act of uttering at Congress Hall what many of us would regard as blasphemy, was struck down...”

And three hours afterwards when, not far from midnight, Caroleth and Wallace in the midst of a multitude were watching from a motor-car a square of paper in *The Post’s* façade which shewed the pollings, Old Men victories were coming-in more frequent than in the day; and Caroleth remarked then “We shall have a majority of three, instead of seventeen: this comes of’ debating’

“Oh, you are always finding fault” — crossly from Wallace.

And she: “When wild things are done. That storm-test of yours and Hogan’s — how wild! if you meant it”.

“Not so wild, on my side, as you fancy”.

“Why not so wild?” — her steady gaze of understanding dwelling on him— “Are there scientists who can cause storms?”

“There are”, says he.

“Oh, well, if it pleases you to make queer statements”.

“You don’t know everything”.

“No? But, of course, I know this, and, of course, Hogan knows. If Hogan is uneducated enough to have some hope that his gods may send a storm for him, he will say, when they do not, ‘It was not God’s will’, and will outlive his loss of prestige. But he is sure that your ‘scientists’ will send no storm for *you*, and that your prestige will perish: so one can understand *him*. But you! your impulsiveness is a puzzle”.

His gaze, in his open car, was raised to the stars, that now after the gale gloated in crowds of glory, while all the tract of placard-gazers was applauding two new constituencies’ polls exhibited together, an Old Men victory, and a Young; then, the noise of it dying down, Wallace replied “Well, yes. I was impulsive — was very shaken, remember... And suppose a storm does come for me — as is possible? A big thing... Not likely, but — Oh, well, I can kidnap Hogan, so that he fails to appear at the test”.

“Unless”, Caroleth answered, “Hogan kidnaps you”.

Wallace laughed. “That will not be Christlike”.

And Caroleth: “Pooh, Christ had a beard, and wore taliths: Hogan is not careful to be Christlike; Christ may ‘come to Chicago’, but did not come from Chicago... There is that danger of kidnapping, not only from Hogan — any day you may be snapped up. And the protection of you in London is a strain on the Young Men — hundreds of them now round you: why not go

down to your Harlebeke House? for two months, say, till the land-bill is through Committee: then there'll be war, and you can come out of your hole”.

Wallace's answer was “Yes, but to wrench myself from where you are —”

“There is the telephone”, she said; “we can talk; I can keep you in touch with things; and the people in the *dessous de la politique* will visit you. Yes, go. And do try to wriggle somehow out of this storm-test indiscretion: it mayn't be so easy to kidnap Hogan as you think”.

“All right, I'll go: give me a goodbye kiss now”.

“No”.

“What, never one kiss — surely, surely—”

“No. No, I say”. She slapped his thumb, saying “Two fires make a conflagration”. Then quickly: “What about that Paddy St. Aubyn? I feel a sort of responsibility — her father—”

“Oh, Heaven”, — from Wallace— “still that same kiddie in my way, I can't find the kid! If I find her, then you will? What do you mean, ‘two fires —’?”

“Find her and see” — a whisper in confidence, as the placard-square was switched-off to darkness, and those watching stars appeared to whisper “It is finished”.

XVI. THE DYING GOD



BUT FOR WALLACE — or Hogan — to “wriggle somehow” out of the storm-test was pretty soon an impossible thing: for the *kuli* of Guzerat, the Kurd and Berber, were conversing of it. The thing was, indeed, a world-affair in which each person felt a concern — except those few with culture enough to be perfectly certain that no tempest would occur for the “prayer” of either of the pair of preachers, whereas the millions easily jumped to the assumption that one or the other would triumph, and the “conflict between Science and Christianity” be finally decided that night of the test: for, with that credulousness of men, and that hero-worship of personalities, each of the two parties into which the challenge split humanity conceived that its champion was too responsible a pubheist to have made or accepted the challenge without having something mysterious “up his sleeve”. So Germany, with its angry fervour against Christianity, was pro-Wallace; France, whose fervour against Christianity was long gone dead and cold in old disdain, as a stripling has forgotten his teething, hated Wallace’s land-idea, many millions of Frenchmen being land-owners, and was pro-Hogan; Russia was pro-Wallace, Denmark was, Sweden, Holland; America (in the main) was pro-Hogan, and in many a church, in Chicago as in Alabama, orisons were being offered up that God would bare His arm, manifest His strength, exalt His name, to proclaim to all the world that the prayer of the servant of God had been heard before the throne of grace.

Meantime, Wallace was all in a state of apprehension: for a leader must not stand on a platform and look a fool. On three successive midnights,

when all was still in the laboratory of Harlebeke House (Sussex), he had donned his “psychophone” to present his plight to those “scientists” of his, paying their flying visits in the twilight of infinity; and had awaited a reply. By this time he had discovered something about psychic rays, which, it appears, are the “missing rays”, being two octaves of the known forty, lying between Herschellian (infra-red) rays and Hertzian (wireless) rays, their wave-lengths varying from the twentieth of a cm. to over five cms.; akin to heat-rays, many can be measured by the bolometer; and they greatly augment the sensitiveness of smell. But, as to guidance in his plight — nothing! Greedily listing, he had received impressions of “distance”... “conditional”... “hatched”; then again he had received impressions of “Og and Mog”... “remote”... “impossible”; then again he had received impressions of “endeavour”... “Terra” — nothing else!

He fled from his apprehensions and depression to the pressure of the day’s politics, and to his Walpurgis, Whitsun, Beltane, celebrations, making those days red-letter days round about Southwater village (a mile from Harlebeke House), down whose row of disjointed cottages a Harlebeke groom moved slow on horseback, blowing a bugle in the gloom and stillness of midnight, and at intervals he shouted aloud “Who will die for the village?”: to which a farm-labourer named Martin, shewing himself at a little window, shouted back “I will die for the village”. “Come, then, My God”, the groom said; and Martin was then put upon the horse, to be led up to Harlebeke, in whose famed avenue of elms Wallace’s torch awaited the god amid the torches of Mr. R. S. Newnes (Secretary of the National Union of Seamen), of Mrs. Seaton Garry (Women’s International League), of Crichton of Iraq, of “Tom” Grimes (Treasurer of the Miners’ Federation of Great Britain), and of two London girls. Then when all the household had

bowed down before the corn-god, he was led up to bed in the chamber in which George IV had slept.

But for five days the dying-god rites hung fire, Wallace was so caught and involved in an imbroglio of politics that interfered even with eating and sleeping.

The inner history of it was like this: after the rushing through of a Land-Registration Act had come the first reading of a land-nationalization bill, named “Land-Purchase Bill”, purposing to purchase Britain at a seven-years purchase; but this had come as a shock to many, a three-years’ purchase having previously been understood between the Young Men and the (Labour) Cabinet; and actually it was not until the morning after the bill’s first reading that Wallace heard a word about seven years. He flew into a fury of rage, he shouted “betrayed” — though, in fact, it was not without much temptation that the Parliamentary Labour Party had so double-crossed the Young Men: for trench-warfare, bombing planes, were all foreign to the mood of the British Labour-leaders, and when they saw a chance of “avoiding bloodshed” they keenly seized it, having an exaggerated horror of bloodshed (men’s blood, not sheep’s); nor was Dinka less soft, less fond of the sun’s rut and bureaucratic punctualities, so that both sides had been inclined to traffic on the sly. Dinka had said “You have only a penny-farthing majority, an unworkable Three, so give me thirty-years’ purchase, and I work the bill through The Lords for you: let’s avoid bloodshed”; but since thirty-years’ purchase would have been to land Britain permanently in debt, the Labour-men had answered “Twelve is our limit”; Dinka had said “Fifteen is ours”; and there had been deadlock. But at a new meeting a week before first-reading Dinka had come down to the Labourmen’s twelve, only to discover that one clique of them under I.L.P. influence were not disposed to rise above seven; whereupon the Jew had called them

Shylocks, but finally had been wrung to decide to try what he could do to “avoid bloodshed” at seven. Seven, however did not suit Wallace: he stormed, he threatened: without a doubt, he swore, if the bill passed at more than three years, the Young Men would crumple up Parliament like a cream tart, trample upon its ruins. Now Mr. Sims Connor (Prime Minister) ran down, many ran down, to councils in the Harlebeke library; there were bribes of compromise, bright-ideas, proffers, threats, counter-threats; “five” instead of “three” was for several days as frequent on the intriguers’ lips as “cinque” is in Italy, where everyone says cinque, cinque; Crichton of Iraq was inclined to five; even Caroleth Lavarock, who often prodded Wallace to travel faster and farther than he wanted, liked five; “Will you do what I say?”, she asked him one afternoon on the telephone; and he answered “I will not. Isn’t it a fact that this word ‘purchase’ is an absurd word here? three-years’ gift, say: one can’t purchase something from someone who has nothing, having done no work. The fancy of the simple-minded ancients, which some Simple Simons still entertain, that one can own something without moving it, or having it from someone who has moved it, will set all the cats of the future laughing. I own some diamonds, but I had first to take them, i.e., *move* them, do work on them, pick them up... No *purchase* about it!” Through which obstinacy of Wallace it presently got to be understood that an amendment of “three” for “seven” in the second-reading would be accepted by the Government.

It was only then that the dying-god rites could get properly going, though Martin, the god, had meantime been vastly adored, no one, not even Lord Blatchring, the Lord Chancellor, entering his presence without bending the knee, he in his diadem and ermines sitting at meal-time at the table’s head — though, an earth-born soul, his habit of holding knife-and-fork was hardly quite nice. On his tenth day at Harlebeke he held a lens to focus the

sun's heat-rays upon a great heap of faggots in the park, and crowds of roes and cows remained astare at the flames that roared. Then after school a troop of the village-children moved from door to door, to gallop at each through the doggerel,

Wood for the fire,
Wood for the fire,
To make it burn up higher and higher,
Unless you do, the bulls won't sire,
The earth will tire;

and, loaded with the wood given at doorways, they trooped back to throw it into the conflagration; then, going to dip the knee where Martin sat robed on a throne on the grass, they had from his lavish hand showers of sugarplums.

Then, the next midnight, the climax: all Harlebeke, all Southwater, a crowd out of Horsham, Billingshurst, Hitchingfield, Barnes Green, were there, as well as some twenty Young Men, with Crichton of Iraq, Dr. Gocher (Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health), Kennedy (General Secretary of Trades Union Congress), Reynolds (Secretary of Malthusian League for Human Welfare), Mungo (Home Secretary), and some others — these being seated in easy-chairs with Wallace on that hill-top of the park where Martin was, where tar-barrel was, “angel-man”, huge loaf, syringes, rockets, and where the two fires were — for another fire, “The New Fire”, had been lighted by Martin's hand with a brand from The Old Fire, that the sunbeams had lighted, this New Fire having been built round a poplar, which, stripped of its branches, had a cross-piece fastened to its lofty top; and the stars of that dark midnight looked down with many eyes upon Midsummer Night's dream, upon something of Lammas and Hallowmas as

well as of Beltane and Walpurgis, some having nosegays of gaudy corncockle, some adorned with long fennel, St. John's wort, orpin, having-on garlands of mugwort, vervain, and in their hands sprigs of larkspur, through which to spy at the fires, and be free of eye-disease that year, while the Southwater houses were all in gala with garlands of cornflower, and with flags, and the bells of St. Cuthbert gabbled. An hour before midnight the driving of five of the Harlebeke cows through the New Fire had been the business, and though the cows had failed to see the symbolism of it, this, after no little shouting and bother, had been accomplished; upon which three mobs of boys started off with sticks snatched from The New Fire, with ashes, and with torches of broomstumps daubed with pitch, to plant the singed sticks in cornfields (so as to cause corncockle and darnel to die out), also to fumigate cattle with the torches (and safeguard them against charms and harms) to leave sticks at cottages (and safeguard them against fire), to scatter ashes over cabbage-beds (and safeguard them against slugs). Meanwhile the scene in its bath of flood-light from Harlebeke House was sufficiently animated; trees were galaxies of lamps, crimson, smaragdine; round and round The New Fire the loaf moved, large as the Jews' Ark of the Covenant; the tar-barrels, pivoted on poles, had chains attached, to which everyone gave a tug, to make the flames go on rotating; discs of birch, lit at the fires, were being hurled on high; the Silver Band from Horsham was rendering "Walküren-ritt"; a whirl of rose-water out of squirting-tubes was being squirted by everybody at everybody in the mood of the Roman carnival; a crackle of gunfire prattling was going on; and up the rockets raced to pop soft aloft and come again in glory, a snowstorm of colours falling soft... But now a hush, some minutes' dumbness: the Rt. Hon. Rudgwick Mungo rose to shout megaphonically wide "Who will die for the village? Who will pass through The Two Fires?", upon which the god rose

up to shout aloud “I will die!” — and to step down from his throne toward The Old Fire, while Mr. Rudgwick Mungo published the shout “The Servant of God! The King will do it!” But Martin lacked practice in dying, and hardly did it nicely: he — hesitated: so long, that a moment came when Wallace’s heart sank; but soon afterwards Martin darted, and was through, patting at his burning ermines, panting to himself “by Hell”; nor did he much hesitate before The New Fire, but dashed, and was through. Now Mr. Rudgwick Mungo published the shout, “By *his* weals *we* are healed!”; and now a fanfare of trumpets; and now a procession to accompany Martin back to the throne, while the band broke into “Ecce Homo, behold the Man”. Having now in his hand a brand from The New Fire, with this Martin set fire to the “angel-man”, which stood beside the throne — a man of straw and wax, beautifully made (in London) — whereupon everybody set to beating the image with sticks, until it was demolished. Then ensued the beating down of the two main flames, until they were reduced to two sheets of embers shuddering to blushings, as breezes shoot, pursuing each other’s career over pools convulsed with blushings. After which followed orgy: now the switching-on of lights on the table a little way down the hill for wines, beers, eatables; dancings now round the two ember-stretches, dashings through the embers in pairs, brand in hand, hand in hand, every pair crying out, as they ran before the dash through, “Corn, corn, grow high”, Martin now standing there, shouting out the names of each pair before the dash, uproars of applause greeting the highest leapers: for the higher the leap, the higher the year’s corn; and whichever man dashed through unsmirched would have no illness that year, nor would any girl get pregnant, however great her indiscretions.

Wallace was standing flushed, having just done his second dash across the embers hand-in-hand with one of his London ladies, when Crichton of

Iraq came from the house to announce that Mr. Hogan had been trying to get at Wallace on the telephone, but had now rung off.

“Keeping late hours, our Hogan”, Wallace remarked; and added “I’ll come”.

As they went together, Crichton remarked “Rum start that this Hogan is still there, a free man to-night! — unless you really intend to let that storm-test fakement come off?”

“Oh, *I* don’t know” — from Wallace.

“Well, but that’d never be practical politics, would it? So why isn’t this Hogan kidnapped?”

“I don’t want to kidnap him”, Wallace answered: “I like my old Hogan — or should, if the man did not do vast harm; but when a man depresses the level of a nation’s intelligence, to which nations owe all their superhets, all, all, their goods, and doesn’t care a curse, if only his own little purposes are served, then I want to get my dagger into the dog’s guts. Yes, kidnap the beggar: be damned to bad men”.

They were now in the ‘phone-room, but before he could ring-up Hogan he was rung-up by someone who announced what caused him to call out joyously “You’ve *got* her?” — someone on night-duty at the agents who had been trying to find Paddy St. Aubyn, someone who said “We had traced her to that house four days ago, saw Mr. Hogan himself about the matter, but failed to gather from him that the girl was there. Now, however, we have information that she is a nurse-girl in the Hogan home”, not mentioning that the information had now come to him from Mr. Hogan himself: for to mention this would have been to hurt the look of his firm’s acuteness in detective work.

And Wallace: “Nurse... dear me... Hogan... Oh, very well; good-bye”.

And now to ring up Hogan...

From Hogan he heard “See here, Dr. Wallace, I now find it impossible for our storm-test meeting to be on that fifth: sorry; but some later date it must be now. I’ve been kind of wanting to run down your way to fix this machine between us, but London has me a prisoner. Could you make it convenient to discuss it here with me? say to-morrow evening at six?”

Somedumbness. Then Wallace: “You realize, of course, that it will be an earthquake, if the date is postponed?”

And Hogan: “Sure I do. Like postponing Christmas. But it’s plum impossible — I see no way out”.

“Who will be at your place to-morrow evening?”

“Who will? Why, I — my wife — my nurse-girl — my cook...”

“Quite so: you have a wife, *and* a nurse-girl”.

“Yeah. And a cook”.

“Quite so. Those all?”

“Yeah — that I know of”.

“I’ll come. Six o’clock to-morrow. Goodbye”.

And Crichton of Iraq, hovering there astare: “You’ll *go?* not to Hogan’s?”

“Aye” — from Wallace.

“But not — alone, Sonny?”

“Yes, I think so”.

“Oh, well” — Crichton threw an arm of despair— “go your own road”.

XVII. WAR



THE DAY OF the extinguishing of those Old and New Fires was a day of high crisis in English history; and other fires were lighted.

Mr. Hogan had first heard of it near five in the evening from Sir Borlase St. Aubyn, who, at the Carlton Club, had rung him up, Hogan being then in his little “parlour”, tossing off letter after letter, with that wing of hair dropping across his forehead which gave him his *affaire* air of generals and administrators arranging their campaigns. But anon he stopped, lost in thoughts of Woman, musings that were lewd, for although his strength was not less than heroic, the calamity of an avalanche of temptation had smashed upon his head. And from time to time he prayed, he wrestled, with all his heart’s ardour he besought...

“Give me a clean heart, O, God, renew a right spirit within me...”

His wife lying ill; Paddy, some feet above him, was alone; a dart and he had her, that female being, so near, alone, with him, in the world, for the soundless house was the world; and there is an actualness in the sun’s calories, intolerable, sixty millions hot: how sweet and easy to yield an instant to the sweep of the river of heat, dash to perdition down with it, splash in the Lethe of it, drown in the cataract’s crash of it...

“Help... Thou can’st save, and Thou alone... though my sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool... red like crimson, they shall be as snow...”

He heard her come down, stir the perambulator to settle the baby in — outside the parlour-door, so close! only a hero could have remained seated there, and not slipped out to thrill in her V-rays, draw up into his nostrils the

cantharides of her aura; yet he managed it, his hands clutching his desk as an anchor of custody. Only when she was at the gate he could not help starting up to gaze clandestinely after; but then, as she vanished, proudly he frowned, heroic, saying “Pooh, Man, be a man, stamp it out o’ you, damn it out, blast it out, will you go to Hell, Hogan, for the tickling of a nerve?”

It was then that the telephone bell went — Sir Borlase St. Aubyn, to ask “You know that a three-years’ purchase amendment has been accepted by those front-bench fellows?”

“No, I’ve not heard”, Hogan answered.

And Sir Borlase: “An hour ago... Well, of course, that blows everything to hell. Blood it is. And everybody on our side is asking ‘Why wait?’ If Dinka hesitates, move without Dinka, that’s all. But Dinka knows that he mustn’t now. So the thing now is to be sudden as thunder, and get London: the side that gets London has half won the war. To this end it is proposed to keep the Young Men distracted within the next sixty hours — give them something else to think about, grab Wallace. And there *you* come in: it is being said that you could entice Wallace from the country, if you invited him to discuss with you a new date for the storm-test: then we grab him”.

A silence. For what concord has Christ with Belial? “He won’t come”, Hogan muttered.

“May. Are you for trying it? You must be eager for some way of escape out of that storm-test”.

Hogan’s lids were lowered. “That may be... But I am not much on kidnapping, Sir Borlase; not a lot in my line of business”.

“No, no, no, it won’t be *you*... Look here, we can’t discuss it on the ‘phone: I’ll dash down to you for a chat”.

Hogan started at this! — at the thought of Sir Borlase being in that house, with a risk of his seeing Paddy, carrying Paddy off: for, having lately

been told by Paddy her real name, Hogan knew that Sir Borlase was her father.

“Sorry, sorry”, he said, “it can’t be any time to-day—”

“To-morrow, then. At three shall we say?”

“Yeah” — reluctantly— “that might do me”.

“Bye”.

Now Hogan dropped upon a sofa, his temples pressed between his palms, to consider it.

When he had said “I accept” to Wallace’s invitation to a storm-test, it had not been without some hope that a storm might come for him: for suchlike half-beliefs as that faith can move a mountain, still a tempest, heal a leper, were in-bred within him: it was early in his youth that he had asserted the occurring in him of a certain revolution of mood named “conversion” among sectarians, nor, since then, had he undergone any mental culture worth mentioning: so that in so far as it is possible for a modern genuinely to accept ancient dogmas Hogan accepted them. He had hoped, then, for some sort of storm to respond to his prayer of faith; but now he no longer hoped: for, though he had committed no positive “sin”, he was so holy and good, that just the hunger to sin was crimson sin for him, and “the Lord heareth not sinners”, nor will launch a storm for the tarnished heart. Hence, if Wallace had ceased to live now, Hogan would hardly have mourned; nor was the notion of kidnapping Wallace new to him: his ears had been keen to hear of it. He had not proposed it — was little inclined to deeds of violence — but now it was proposed to him, and now he let himself “sin”, lent ear to it, presently fell in with it. Now, “easy is the descent to evil”; “the beginning of sin is as when one letteth out water”: sins follow with slippier and slippier facility.

He did not think that Wallace would come to be kidnapped for the asking: so about ten o'clock he rang up the detectives who had called upon him in their hunt for Paddy; told them that Paddy was there. He was aware that it was Wallace who employed them; for Paddy, pointing to Wallace's face in a paper, had told him that that was he for whom she had left her home: so when he had given the detectives time to inform Wallace where Paddy was, he rang up Wallace to say "Come, let us discuss; the appointed date for the storm-test has become impossible" — an untruth, "the beginning of sin". But Wallace was then out of doors, bounding across New Fire embers with his ladies; when he came in, though, he had from the detectives where Paddy was; then he rang-up Hogan, and, having now the Paddy-motive, too, for going to London, he told Hogan that he'd go, tripping into Hogan's trap.

Hogan smiled before he sighed more than he had smiled.

But now, before Wallace's coming at six, before Sir Borlase's coming at three, Paddy had to be cleared out of the house...

This was Hogan's care the next forenoon: at a near villa in which was exhibited a "To Let" he engaged a chamber for Paddy.

But, as to this, Paddy had to be reckoned with...

Three days before this, Mrs. Hogan having summoned Paddy to her bedside, had said to Paddy "Bring the baby, let me have him a bit": and what had Paddy answered? — sullenly, with downcast lids: "No, Mrs. Hogan, that would not be right". Whereupon a stare, a mutter from Mrs. Hogan: "Yes, sure, that girl's out of her head".

And this was so: "*that would not be right*" meaning "not right for another woman to mess my baby about". For the girl's maternal instincts, instigated to activity by her close association with a male in an elopement, but then thwarted, balked, repressed into her Unconscious, had re-emerged

into her Conscious in the form of this hallucination that it was *she* who had given birth to the baby which she nursed. On this point at this date her psychology had gone as mad as a March-hare.

So when Hogan went upstairs at noon to tell her of the nice room that he had contrived to get her at No. 19 down the road, where he'd go to see her daily, Paddy, going pallid, answered "But about my baby?", and when Hogan told her that Mrs. Soames (the cook) had undertaken to look to Baby until another nurse turned up, her teeth pecked together with grievance, she jerked her head, murmuring to herself "The lot of you don't get my baby from me, though!"

Nor was it easy to win her out of the house: she wished to stay for "dinner", this had to be conceded, and it was past two before she migrated, Hogan bearing her two bags. He came back feeling very relieved, the field cleared for her father's visit, not remembering that Paddy had a key.

At three came Sir Borlase...

I said I d come, he said, "but it seems to be too late now about winning Wallace to London: tonight's the ructions night: it's all planned". He had sat on a sofa facing the parlour-door, Hogan before him, back to door.

Hogan said "Wallace is coming here at six".

And Sir Borlase, starting: "Wallace is? By Jove, bravo! You managed it?"

"The man is coming".

"Well done. With what force, I wonder?"

"Alone, I reckon. Coming on a private matter as well as—" here Hogan was arrested, seeming to hear a sound like a key put into the front door.

It might have been Mrs. Soames, the cook, there, but she usually entered by the back; or it might have been Paddy come back — now he remembered Paddy's key; and he dared not open the parlour-door to see,

lest Paddy's father might see Paddy: so there he sat on prickles, straining one absent ear to track another sound.

No other sound came: Paddy entered mouse-noiseless, aware of voices in the parlour, of the voice of her father, who said "Well, then, I must be looking alive"; and on this there entered her head the idea "Conspiracy" to separate — to rend her baby from her breast.

Not longer than six ticks she lingered goggle-eyed, hearkening at that parlour-door key-hole, then quick was the word, and quiet — up the stair... while Sir Borlase, now standing, was saying "Au revoir, then. Busy night, this; big with crisis. As to Wallace, I'll be pretty glad to get him — there's more than politics between that man and me. I think, the man is so suspiciously like a young man of whom my daughter was fond — You know, my Friend, that I've lost my daughter — rather hard lines — played the devil with me, Man — nice little girl, Hogan — Oh, well, ha, ha, nothing matters".

Now Hogan tripped into the hypocrite's sin, permitting his tongue to utter "Don't despair, Sir. Take it to the Lord in prayer".

And Sir Borlase, moving out: "Prayer, is it? I've prayed, though I never prayed before. No go: my prayers don't reach like yours — don't you know".

They being now out in the "hall", and Paddy at that moment bounding down the stair with her baby, she, in dashing round the stair-angle, beheld their backs, as they, if they had happened to give one backward glance, must have seen something of her; but, checking her speed, she doubled back up unseen.

Then at the front door, which they found rather open, Hogan stood looking at the baronet's going; and he grumbled "A daughter lost — a father mourning, heartbroken — and I know where she is, but do not tell him.

That's Christlike, ha, ha; *that's* doing to others as I would wish them to do to me. Pooh, virtue is gone out of me — a son of Belial, nothing else, fearing not God, neither regarding man. But not so bad as that: the man shall know — *now*."

Now like the desperate toward precipices he started, darted, northward after Sir Borlase, to tell him; and, catching sight of the baronet just vanishing into a bystreet, "Hi!", he shouted, "St. Aubyn!". But without result.

Purposing to return by train as he had come by train, Sir Borlase was walking to the station; but, on coming across a taxi in the third street, he determined to return in that, and was going into it when Hogan, spurring round the corner, saw his legs getting in. A howl *now* might have got Sir Borlase's attention, but Hogan failed to howl — told himself that he was too late, said "another time", and in a moment Sir Borlase was gone.

Now, there had been eyes at an upper window which had spied Hogan's dash from the villa, and now was Paddy's chance to dash, too. From the villa's gate she saw Hogan, northward, going round a corner, and soon she was in her new room southward, where at once she got crammed into one bag the things in her two bags, then with crafty stealths, gravely loaded — for both bag and baby were big-bellied — sallied out to run southward into the east end of Strand-on-the-Green near.

At the west part of the Strand, not far from Kew Bridge, was a "To Let" facing the river, and there she rapped, to crave shelter of a strong-boned young woman, prosperous, industrious helpmate of a mechanic, who added to her pocket-money by letting parts of her ample domicile.

She asked Paddy "And where have you your furniture?", to which Paddy answered "I haven't any furniture".

“But aren’t the rooms unfurnished?” the woman said: “it is a little house at the back, that has one upstairs room, and one downstairs, seven shillings a week, unfurnished”.

And Paddy: “All I want is a little bed, a little table, and a chair”.

“Well, that might be — But aren’t you very young? What about the baby’s father? Where’s he?”

Paddy shook her head. “He has no father”.

And the woman: “How do you mean — no father?”

“He is like that — he never had any father”.

“Oh, come!”

“Please believe what one says. Shouldn’t I have known, if he had had a father?”

“Well, I never heard — You mean to stand there and tell me that he just came like that, without any father?”

“Yes” — with a sincerity of such a thoroughness as somewhat to shake the young woman’s assurance of the way of Nature.

“Well, I never heard of such a thing in all my born days”, she said, “except at Christmas-time when Jesus Christ was born. You — mean — to — say — he just come like that, and no father?”

“Yes, I tell you”, says Paddy: “he is like that”.

“Well, but, if it can’t be, it can’t!”

“Oh, pray, don’t doubt one’s word”.

“Not that I would doubt your word, if you put it like that. But I don’t think — you are very young — better try somewhere else”.

“I am tired already” — from Paddy— “he is fat. And — I don’t know where to go”.

“Oh, come along, then”, the woman unkindly replied out of a kind mind; and there Paddy abode that night in a waste of back-garden that had a boat

in it, and a boat-builder's booth, and a bed of sunflowers.

Meantime, Mrs. Soames, Hogan's cook, had broken in to where Hogan was scribbling a host of notes with a business brow, and had exclaimed "Mr. Hogan, Sir, where's Baby?"

And Hogan, spinning round: "In his cot, I suppose!"

"Baby's gone, Sir!"

Out at once Hogan darted, down to the house of Paddy's new room; and he groaned in his heart "The way of transgressors is hard!"

That was soon after four o'clock, an hour when Caroleth Lavarock in London was at the phone, wanting to talk with Wallace at Harlebeke; but it was Crichton of Iraq who replied to her. "Wallace is gone off by motor-car to Hogan's in Chiswick".

"Whatever for?" says she, and she was breathless: "it is being expected in London that he will be kidnapped — to-night — I have heard; and it is most urgent that he, and you, should meet the Labourmen to-night: we lose London, we half lose the war, if we fail to take measures at once. This is the night; we are already in an anarchy: two whole divisions are at this moment pouring toward Wallingford, Windsor, London — the King's troops moving without the King's order by order of officers who are against the King: they will occupy the House of Commons — tonight — I have information — if it be not adequately guarded. Oh, why is Wallace not there? The Labourmen meet—"

"Where? When?" Crichton sharply asked.

And Caroleth: "At eight. I don't think that the where is settled — it mustn't be at any obvious spot like Downing Street or Transport House, where they'd be dropped upon—"

"Right you are, says Moses: I'll see to it: bye.."

At once he rang up Fitzroy Square, uttered two phrases, then, with that spinning swiftness of decision which distinguished his agile instants, he twisted on his pins, and dashed. Within some minutes he was off in a motor for London, honking his own horn.

And while he scorched northward, Caroleth was hastily pacing a chamber like a caged animal, except when every few minutes she tripped to the 'phone's trill; but after half an hour of it, anxious, tormented, she summoned a motor to dash away for Chiswick, and see what was going on at Hogan's villa.

Meanwhile, Wallace was speeding ahead, half-way to London, eager to get Paddy, so as to get Caroleth; and he was alone, without any weapon, not believing that Hogan would have any hand in a kidnapping, having a trust in Hogan, in Hogan's Christianity, well knowing that an integrity or rectitude of behaviour as between "neighbour" and "neighbour" is inherent in the ancient religions.

But if the religionist chance to "fall from grace"? Then naught is left in him, no other culture, seven devils may enter the empty place, and he may use thumbscrews on his neighbour, the rack, the stake, the pillory, so that Smithfield flares. Hence when Caroleth dashed into the Hogan street near five-thirty, she cried "Stop!", catching sight before the Hogan house of a group of some ten fellows in conference, who, she felt sure, were there to cop Wallace — strange though it was that they were in the street, not concealed within the villa.

They were in the street for the simple reason that no one had let them into the villa — only Mrs. Hogan there, in bed: for Mrs. Soames, the cook, having nothing to do, had gone soon after her usual hour, and Hogan was still out, engaged in a wild-goose chase throughout that mesh of "terraces", flying in slippers from "To Let" to "To Let" — Paddy gone, big-bellied

baby gone — and again and again he groaned in his heart “Aye, Hogan, the way of transgressors is hard”.

So Caroleth, on seeing that knot of Fascisti fellows standing there in conference, stopped, turned, and was urgently off for Sussex, to meet and deflect Wallace from going near Hogan’s. Unfortunately, she took the road on which he was not: for, knowing that he was coming to Chiswick, she drove through Richmond on to the Guildford road, while *he* was now honking through Croydon.

And when he got to Grove Park Terrace, there was no longer the spectacle of any group of fellows before Hogan’s house to put him on his guard: for the group had finally decided to go round to the house-back, had climbed a window into the kitchen, were now soundlessly on the watch for Wallace within the villa.

Wallace knocked; thrice he knocked; stepped backward to call “Hogan!”; he called “Paddy!”: no answer.

Some drizzle was mixed with the dusks of arriving night; but he could see that the door was a little open; for those within had opened it to tempt him to enter and be separated from his motor; and he entered.

“Hogan!” he called again; “Paddy!”. There a perambulator was: a baby must be somewhere.

But the house was soundless to him; in her head on her bed Mrs. Hogan meditated the goings-on, and said nothing; every moment the gloom in there grew denser.

He pried into the room to his right; muttered “Funny!”; then up the steps he adventured, on the look out for some sign of Paddy, till on the higher floor he was suddenly among soldiers.

One tall carle, touching a moustache, remarked calmly enough “We’ve got you all right, Wallace: come quietly. Go bring the car, Wright”.

“Insolence of you!” says Wallace, flushing up through his pallor: “see if you don’t catch it hot from Mr. Hogan, using his house for this outrage” — his faith in Hogan in no way shaken!

“That’s as it may be: we don’t—” the carle started to say, but then started in another sense at an outcry below, a howl from the Wright sent for “the car”, that had been left for concealment in a near street; and up the stair, wide-eyed, bounded this Wright with the outcry, “The Young Men are coming!” — that outcry that had now acquired the frightfulness of the cry, “*The Danes are coming!*”, which ages ago struck a panic, ghostly in tone, to the fantasy of this country.

The tall carle sharply asked “Shut the door?”, and, as Wright replied “Yes”, a call from outside the house sounded: “How many, Wallace?” — from Crichton of Iraq, on seeing Wallace’s car.

Wallace called back “Ten, Crichton!”

Whereupon a group-commander in one of the newcome cars said to his three “Crack up that bay-window”, and out crackled a racket of bullets; but, as those three were doing a dash to the shattered window, one of them dropped shot inside the garden gate, whereupon the group-commander shouted “Back, you two!”, and the two darted back to cover behind the cars.

For now the four new-come cars had sharply emptied themselves, both parties now shooting under cover, but the Young Men more than double in number, they being a section of mounted-infantry — six “groups” of four — Crichton making them twenty-five; and like patterings on a rainy day, and like tape-machines chattering in spasms, the exchange of firing transacted itself some time with catch-as-catch-can, car against house, bad for glass, while the road, growing crowded, gabbled with gazers’ tongues, Mr. Hogan with a white nose now among them, reflecting on the way of transgressors.

But, as the Fascisti had only revolvers, and at most sixty shots, and, as the Young Men had come anticipating struggle, with ammunition to waste, even with tear-gas, the longer they potted on, the more hopeless for the house. And the house were only eight, since two of their ten were looking to Wallace: so when their fire slackened, three Young Men, shielded behind car-mats, made a dash for the bay-window, laid flat two sentinels there, flung the door open, and a general rush-in to a scrimmage on the top floor followed, where the main body of Fascisti went down under fists and butt-ends, Crichton of Iraq crying to the one under his knee “Going to stash the racket? raw meat like you?”, while Wallace was calling out “But they surrender! Spare the poor beggars!” Within some minutes after which he was driving northward with Crichton, leaving three dead, with five wounded. When he asked why they were going to Berkeley Square, Crichton replied “To get from Caroleth Lavarock the place of the Labourmen’s conference — didn’t know it when she ‘phoned me, only knew that it is at eight: not much time left, by George; and it’s no chop ‘phoning about at random: the dart is to go straight to her”.

“So this is the night”, says Wallace: “sudden!”

And Crichton: “That’s so. The levellest heads this night of our Lord come off first chop”.

But circumstances, too, may turn the scale in human affairs: when they came to Berkeley Square Caroleth was absent — far gone on the Guildford Road, hoping to intercept Wallace. So Crichton and Wallace had to use her ‘phone— “to ‘phone at random”, for nobody seemed to be at home that evening; *The Daily Herald*, shying from relying upon Crichton’s voice, which could be copied, declined to reply to his query, “Where?”, offering to reply by messenger; but this meant time.

At last, though, Caroleth had determined to turn back, and, going again to Hogan's, said to him at his door, "There has been a battle here, Mr. Hogan, I gather: Dr. Wallace, coming to see you, found kidnappers. Is that so?" Hogan was haggard: having failed to help a father who had lost a daughter, he was now himself a father who had lost a son. Despondently he answered "Yes, that's so".

"But *you* didn't know that he was coming to be kidnapped?" Caroleth asked.

"No, get me, didn't know," he replied, "but suspected, and didn't warn him; on the contrary, enticed him. That was wrong".

"Oh, well", she said, changing her tone, "we all fall into wrong. And, if we confess—"

"You are a Christian — more than I — to comfort the broken-hearted. That was wrong".

"Don't you mind... But I must rush: 'bye'".

Back to her car she dashed, and, arriving after eight at Berkeley Square, darted in upon Crichton and Wallace with strings of drizzled hair draping her face's pallor, with eyes wide like the sky's azure, to cry "Fly! Fly! Why are you here?"

"We want to know—"

"Fly!" — pushing Wallace— "No. 1, Guilford Place, W.C.".

This No. 1 was the house of a son-in-law of Jepp, General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen; and, assembled there round a dining-room table on the ground-floor, were nine, till Crichton and Wallace, and lastly Caroleth Lavarock, arrived, making twelve: of whom three were ladies, three were gentlemen, while six were persons of working-class birth whom circumstances had whirled to exalted office; and between the six

gentry and the six others a heated controversy arose and waged, to squander two precious hours.

“God!” Wallace grumbled, sitting on prickles, “What a gang of magpies! the monstrosity of a training which consists in a training to make ‘speeches’!”

When Crichton of Iraq outlined what measures were now crying aloud to be adopted at this or that strategic point, Kennedy of Trades Union Congress uttered a phrase which two others had already uttered: “Let us get down to brass tacks”.

And Crichton: “But I’ve got down to brass tacks! Brass tacks? Brazen tactics, say”.

“Here, here!” — from Lady St. Arvens, of the Weavers’, Winders’, and Reelers’ Association, M.P. for West Ham South.

“The Labour Party” — this from the Rt. Hon. Mr. Sims Connor, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary— “is not a revolutionary party: it can only move the King’s-troops to protect the King in response to some overt act by the King’s enemies”.

“But, in Heaven’s name”, Wallace exclaimed, “aren’t newspaper-men coming every few minutes to hand you notes with news of overt acts by the King’s enemies?”

“Here, here!” leapt from Miss Emily Gissing of the Women’s Co-operative Guild, M.P. for Rhondda South: “and, if we don’t hurry, there will soon be no need for notes with news, the acts will be so very overt”.

Now from Jacobs, Chairman of the National Executive of the Labour Party, came “But if King’s-troops are moving by order of the King’s enemies, what guarantee have we that other King’s-troops will move by our order? and if we once order, and are not obeyed, all’s up with us”.

On which Sir Henry Bennett, K.C.V.O., Chief Party-whip: “Which is as much as to confess, Jacobs, that a Labour Government in this country is at present impossible. Yet in your months of office what steps have you taken to appoint to the King’s-troops officers, obedience to whose orders will be obedience to your orders?”

“That would only have been to precipitate bloodshed” — this from Mr. E. M. Sopworth, War Minister: “we are out to bar bloodshed as long as possible”.

“Ah, because you are free Britons, you see”, Miss Caroleth Lavarock answered with a vindictive lip, a flush of cerise which brushed her pallor shewing that her blood was up: “free Britons! in other words serfs trained to chatter catchwords, bred from birth in the notion that your owners are somehow of better flesh than you. If you shrink from having your own blood shed, still more do you shrink from shedding theirs, and, if you dare to hit at them, you hit like nigger-boys hitting at big game, who lean far forward to hit the air, then skedaddle with leers of scare at their own cheekiness”.

On this Mr. Rudgwick Mungo, Home Secretary, said “If Miss Lavarock could manage to argue without personal abuse—”

“Pooh, Sir, I am fed up with your stalenesses”, Miss Lavarock retorted: “the lot of you only repeat, you never really *say* anything. ‘So refreshing a cup of tea, isn’t it?’ — that’s your watchword and motto: once a month you utter it without fail. Where’s the ‘abuse’ in saying that you are slaves, if it is a truth that you were born and brought up slaves? Why, it would be unworthy in a lady to move among such serfs — I’d blow out any brains — if I didn’t hope that you won’t eternally be serfs. Dear me, I have been old and now am young, yet never saw I leaders so at a loss to lead”.

“You mean”, Mr. Sims Connor replied, “that you have been young, and now are — slightly — older”, bowing with gallantry.

“Oh, well” — from Miss Lavarock— “since we have time for such niceties”.

So, in conversation, nine o’clock passed...

At nine-fifteen sounds that Crichton of Iraq considered to be six-inch howitzers, mouthing somewhere like hounds in the night, arrived at that dining-room...

At ten Mr. W. Burbidge Irving, of Transport and General Workers’ Union, was for the third time suggesting “Why not the Young Men to protect the King?”, to which Crichton of Iraq replied “That says nothing, my good Sir, how can an army of volunteers be mobilized at an hour’s notice? The Young Men in barracks in London are hardly half a division: they can’t be game for a flutter with half an army corps”.

“At any rate” — this from Mr. E. M. Sopworth (War Minister)— “it now appears that the general sense of the meeting is to wait and see what the night brings forth before trying the experiment—”

Whereupon, red with wrath, up sprang Wallace, to bang the table, and utter a kind of prayer — quite in the manner of Mr. Hogan, whose prayers informed Almighty God of facts; and passionately he vociferated “Oh, God, You made us, but we don’t love you, God, we don’t like bloodshed, *You* like bloodshed, because You care nothing about Tom and Dick, You only care about Tomson and Dickson, but *we* care, and we don’t want to get any holes in our skin, for though You alone can make skin, we think that we made ours, and we don’t want to get any bloody holes in it for You—”

But in the thick of this a ‘phone bell tinkled in the “hall” beyond the door, and Sims Connor, with Kennedy and Sopworth, hurried out, to learn from *The Daily Herald*: “You would do well to flee instantly — I have

reason to think that your meeting-place has been scented out, nor could anything that you could do now rescue the situation: London's lost — St. Stephen's occupied, The Bank, Post Office, Tower, the bridges, railway stations, Whitehall, Woolwich; Dinka has been named 'Leader' at a meeting in Committee-room No. 15; Wellington Barracks has shelled the Bermondsey Barracks, where 340 Young Men have surrendered, 49 having being killed, and all their war-matériel captured; probably no Young Men war-matériel will be in London by to-morrow morning. I myself am now speaking under arrest — may be stopped at any moment — *Daily Herald* suppressed — most of the staff here will sleep—”

“In prison”, he was doubtless about to say, but was interrupted: and in the midst of their dumbness of dismay the Labourmen were startled to the heart by butt-ends battering their front-door. Back they ran to the nine in the dining-room to cry out “London lost, and we raided!”, whereupon Crichton of Iraq tripped to throw up a window, to look out, and to call “Follow me, all!”

“But the ladies!”, Sir Henry Bennett called through the distraction of tongues and breaths; whereupon Lady St. Arvens called “Go! Go! you are not to mind us”; and now Crichton leapt fifteen feet down into an “area” which, on that side of the house, is in Guilford Street, but on the house's adjacent (front) side is in Guilford Place, the house being at the corner between Street and Place; then all the men, following Crichton's lead, went sliding in speedy succession, like medicine-drops measured out, down a stack-pipe that runs close by one of the windows — hardly highly dignified for coat-tails — the last to go being Wallace, who suddenly, in parting, twisted to snatch Miss Caroleth Lavarock to his heart, to ravish her lips ere she realized, and, that tipple of spittle pilfered, pitched to the window. Then when the front-door was opened to a squad of 2nd Seaforths of the 2nd

Highland Brigade of the 1st Army-corps' 1st Division, and when these had stepped within to effect a seizure, the fugitives trooped up "area" steps which are adjacent to the front-door, to rush off helterskelter now on various ways, and get out of London as best they could, none attempting to go again to his home, all having a rendezvous at Pontefract.

So when the Seaforths stepped into the dining-room, it was to find it empty but for three ladies quietly seated there with their serene habit of eye to command the obeisance of the helot-class, and to govern England; nor was anything insolent said or done to them.

XVIII. MUNITIONS



THE YOUNG MEN'S (main) rendezvous was at the Aire, to hold there the Great North Road east of the Pennines; and about that nodal point, in those West Riding towns, in Pontefract, Halifax, Tadcaster, York, in Beverley, too, Hull, were presented during three days scenes like a chaos of ants scattered. But it was not a chaos: each was where he should be, doing what he should; when the arriving of the squads ceased, of the battery-sections, sapper-companies, ammunition columns, field-hospitals, just three divisions were there with their divisional troops and with corps troops, not more nor less; ready for service within a week were all battalion store-"houses" (ten baggage-wagons, store-wagons, supply-wagons), got from Army Ordnance at York — one difference between Old Men army-organization and Young Men being that not all the hands acting for the Old Men were at heart Old Men, while all acting for the Young were heartily Young Men, down to the very horse-owners to whom 12s. 6d. a year had been paid to present (registered) horses to be bought when war should call: so within twelve days ammunition-columns had been mobilized, ammunition-parks, bearer-companies, the pontoon-troop, field-companies of engineers, field-park wagons looking like gipsy-carts, khaki-coloured, with "Printing Wagon" marked on this, "Photographic Wagon" marked on that — wagons, harness, arms, equipment, having been kept ready at York, the corps' headquarters; and Artillery took charge of ammunition-columns, Service Corps of supply-columns, Medical Corps of field-hospitals and bearer-companies — the organization being more or less on the model of the old "regular" army, so

that the Young Men had “Lancers”, had “Guards”, their Army Medical Corps was called by habit “R.A.M.C.”, *Royal* Medical, their engineers were “R.E.”, *Royal* Engineers: and perhaps there was a fitness in this, since the Prince of Wales was reported to be a Young Man, and did, in fact, before the war was a month old, propose to the Young Men the kidnapping of the King with the King’s approval: for the King was the representative of the Nation, whose welfare was his welfare and affair; but the barons, the Old Men, were the representatives of themselves, as against the Nation, whose welfare was at their expense: hence the inherency of that ancient hostility between King and barons, and Magna Carta was a carta for magnates, not for carters. But for some reason neither the Young nor the Old Men ever did in fact kidnap the King, as Simon de Montfort and others had done, Kings having perhaps ceased to be of high import.

Though, then, for over fourteen days roads were cumbered with muddles of Steam Road Transport trains, ponderous like steam-rollers, and tanks, and gun-columns, and wagon, and horse, order gradually rose out of it, like a seraglio that grows within scaffolding: fines of communication guarded; warehouses taken by Army Ordnance Corps for the reception of stores, of spare guns, rifles, shells, cartridges, wagons, clothes, boots, etc.; the Commissariat Department of Army-Service commandeering warehouses, getting together wagons for supply-park, for field-bakery, making contracts with farmer-folk for the supply of cattle, sheep, flour, vegetables, forage; the taxation of the counties round taken over (the corps costing some £7,000 a day); A.P.D. (Army Pay Department) establishing at Pontefract offices to pay honest cash for provisions, hay, horses, wagons; a Railway Company of the Engineers taking over the railway, reorganizing time-tables, train services; Army Medical Corps preparing a main hospital at York, smaller ones at Tadcaster, Beverley, Goole, while the Veterinary

Department established a horse-hospital at Selby, the Remount Department a *dépôt* not far from Wakefield.

So, too, with 35,000 Young Men away west about the Mersey marshes, about Chester, Stockport, Manchester, to hold England west of the Pennines; and so with other corps along the Severn, about Worcester, about Gloucester — this being the broad fact that everybody presently got to gather, that North and West were Young Men, while South and East were Old Men. This, though, was only roughly true: for soon enough Old Men were far gone westward, digging themselves in at Malvern Hills, while Young Men were drawing fines round Oxford, Wallingford, and were garrisoned behind wire-entanglements far east near Peterborough — the strategies of both the Field-M Marshals Commanding soon seeming to collapse to mere tactics and opportunism: so that ere long there were few spots in England where the housewife, hanging out at noonday her washing in the garden's sunshine, was not conscious of gun-sounds mumbling dumbly somewhere, as when in Nevis one hears somewhere in the blue room of heaven-above rumours of bumpings that are Mont Pelée booming gusts of thunder in Martinique, like echoes of God's voice guffawing in heaven's void; and speedily she ceased to heed the habitualness of it, any more than she heeds the jews-harp music of aeroplanes faring habitual on their business over her head — though she might frown, mystified, over some yellow stains appearing on her linens, which were stains of lyddite-vapours pervading the air, and she might frown, mystified, at some whiffs like charlock and odours of mortality, with which high-explosive vapours taint the air.

Otherwise the war hardly troubled her ordinary habit — some rise in prices — some bothers in travel — some scarcity of butter, bacon; but she had her morning letter from her married daughter, her Sunday paper, as

customary. Indeed, in some of its details the war touched upon the comic: the Post Office, for instance, was Old Men, yet down the Young Men's fines stepped twice a day the old-time postman, an official of the enemy, to deliver letters; and yonder aloft muttered along some warplane of Young or Old with its bomb-racks, bombing-sights, machine-gun, yet it was more than the place of either side was worth to bomb a British town, or much destroy a bridge, a railway-line; there would have been a fine outcry from the public.

But the important thing about the war was that the peoples of our globe got to twig the inwardness of it, what the Young Men meant, fought for, what the Old Men meant, fought for, and to compare them, and with bated breath await, aware that here was crisis in the history of Life, and for all time this fighting would decide the fines whereon human nature was henceforth to move — a strife of mightier moment than ever yet the multitudes of Armageddon had mustered to struggle in, or the rumpus of drum and trumpet had summoned the nations of men to gaze at, and be amazed. For that inwardness was not difficult to twig: what was meant was simple as A B C. What the Young Men meant was what had been told to the old Dr. Warwick by that Egg in that seraglio of the heavenly travellers: in the words of Major-General Shervington, commanding the Third Division of the First Army Corps of Young Men, writing in *The Nineteenth Century and After*: "If we meet someone afresh after sixty years, we see changes, differences, mental, physical: and since we see a changed man, a different man, it can't be the same man; and since that man has ceased to exist after sixty years, the man has ceased to exist after sixty ticks, after the sixty-millionth of a tick, since at each instant billions of changes are taking place in each thing, what is true of a man being true, too, of a bean, an atom, an electron, a sun: so that Being is Change, i.e.. Motion, i.e.. Force, and

nothing is, save One, Whose Name is Wonder and Lovely, and there is none else, to whom be love and wonder for ever and ever, Amen. If, then, a series of chaps named Jim live for what the series imagine to be Jim's self, that is living for what is not, is living for a screen-film series of apparitions (fifty per second) that successively fill the bit of space named Jim; but, then, so to five is not to see facts; and since happiness consists in seeing facts, a series of Jims who know their way about will live for what is, for the Real, for God": so said the Young Men. The Old Men, on the contrary, contended: "That is all nonsense, God be damned, it is I who am I for ever, and for my everlasting self I fight, the only god that I acknowledge being the god of my grandmothers, the god of Dinka, of the Jews, the Zulus, of all human creatures till recently, a god who was as much subject to Change as I am, now was angry, now was pleased, nor did he consider that this made him a different god every day, for says he 'I am the same yesterday, today and for ever', even though yesterday he intended, and today repented; and he commanded me 'Look to *yourself*, as I am doing'".

Such was the controversy, a quarrel profounder "than ever plummet sounded"; but what the Old Men contended was what Man in the mass had anciently accepted, and still acted on: so that, if the Young Men happened to become the masters, that was likely to modify mankind into a new type, living a modern life, seeing the universe in a new light.

And at first the Young Men did pretty well — had more revenues than they knew what to do with; had ranks that were constantly undergoing growth, thousands of "rookies" (recruits) flocking voluntary to their flag; had a strategy which military men considered excellent — until it degenerated, grew wild, gave way to temptation, as when two prize-fighters lose temper, and go slogging all over the place.

There were experts, for instance, who said of the Battle of Peterborough that the Young Men should not have been anywhere near Peterborough.

And at one time, even though they had Sheffield, Leeds, Birmingham, a cry spread among them, “We lack ammunition! We lack tanks! We lack planes!” Only then they invented a Minister of Munitions.

No hint of such a thing ever arose in the Old Men regiments: Dinka had London; London is a sixth of England.

Over London, here and there, munition-factories had sprung up, in which the workers were paid what, to them, were the wages of earls — the overseer of one of these, by the way, being that mechanic in whose back-yard at Strand-on-the-Green Paddy St. Aubyn had gone to be a lodger; and he, wishing to be rid of her as a tenant — for she quickly ceased to pay anything — but shrinking from turning her mercilessly off, offered her a job in his munition-works away in the East-end, she to point bayonets with a file, at five pounds a week.

He himself got her the lodging in the Whitechapel Road to which she migrated, whence in the forenoons she went in an overall to the munitions in Cambridge Road to rub a bayonet or two; then in the dinner-hour visited her baby, whom a neighbour-woman looked to for her; and at sunset took the baby home.

But this ended within ten days: her mental kink had at this time turned her quite unworldly, flighty of mind: she fell short of filing bayonets nicely; if her time to arrive was nine, she walked in at ten, eleven; thrice she was warned that she would be turned away; then with soft words was turned away.

XIX. PILFERINGS



SHE HAD THEN to change to a wretched little lodging a little cheaper in Cleveland Street, a high-up den whose chair, table, bed were Neolithic in type; and even for this, ere long, she failed to pay. When nourishment began to fall short, the small boy clamoured to God in an astonishment of protest, she hushing his racket in passions of trouble, agitating him distractedly in her arms, tramping to and fro, with “Hush, then, hush, I say, I can’t stand it, hush!” — his rackets affecting her with a terror lest her-and-his secret should attract attention, and he be snatched from her by the proper authorities: for her saner bit suspected that he was not really her baby, but breathed not a syllable of this to her crazy bit, allowing to her crazy bit free rein to indulge the caprice of its humour and be amused in its cosy home of belief, as children do — craziness being a degeneration to a mood of children, no sort of morbid anatomy being in mad brains (so far traced), but just a self-indulgent lapse to a condition of fantasy, a conviction of fairyland unrealities, as in fanatics and “believers”. And still her indignance intensified, until in the end she tore her breast bare to put the baby to, and furiously he set to suck, but then, earning no nurture by his work, interrupted his sucking to scream to heaven a minute in a pricklyheat of exasperation, then suddenly to seek and fumble greedily, and go again, and suck, and leave off to scream irritably a minute, and go again, and suck, and get nothing; nor was it until after two days of it — since she herself lacked food — that his mouthing tempted some milk to melt and mount (milk

coming from grandmothers sometimes, from maids, from males), but not nearly enough to keep that belly of his blown with content.

That same midnight in Mile End Road (where her Cleveland Street is) she begged for money — of a woman, who gave her four pennies: this being her first begging.

On the third evening after this, observing in Mile End Road a baker's shop with nobody within it, in she stepped soft in bright light, to nick a loaf. As she stepped soft out, a man said to her, "You've pinched that loaf: go put it back"; on which she stared scared at him, hesitated, suddenly took to her heels.

Of the loaf she made a pap, woke the baby, and spoonfed him, charming him to chumminess with muchness of starch: for the drag on her breasts of his grampus belly was greatly a strain on her frail frame.

It was not till the next evening after this that it entered her recollection that she had a key to the Hogan villa, within which were loaves, beans, cheese, meat... Far to tramp, yes; but she had a little one to keep living, and did it.

Setting out near ten in the evening, her perseverance got home again as breaking day rose upon her broken; but her success had been complete: she came cumbered with eatables.

And three times within a month she did this with the same success.

But it was thenceforth perilous: for now Mr. Hogan spoke to a policeman of eatables mysteriously disappearing, thrice in the silence of the night-time's dark, from his larder — never supposing that it was his own baby who bolted them.

But before her fourth tramp westward for food, what was named "The Rebellion" came to pass. There had been some Young Men reverses — at Wirkworth — at Newcastle-under-Lyme — and the throngs of Young Men

adherents in the East-end — in Poplar, Bromley, Rotherhithe, that Dock-region — may have got impatient, lost temper. Tempers were then in a state of irritation, for, the whereabouts of Wallace being a mystery, he being no longer in what was called “The Northern Army”, Mr. Hogan, in Queen’s Hall, had expressed his “fear” that the curiosity of the human race in respect of the storm-test was after all doomed to disappointment, since Dr. Wallace appeared to mean to evade it — had concealed himself: from which suggestion, much bruited by the newspapers, arose a dispute of no little petulance: for how, the Young Men sympathizers replied, could it be stated that it was in order to evade the storm-test that Wallace was hiding himself, when he had other evident motives? Would not special efforts be made to capture him, if the enemy had his whereabouts? if he dared to come to London to talk in a public hall, would he not be captured? it was libellous to bawl abroad that his hiding was a hiding from the storm-test. So the controversy raged. And in the midst of it “The Rebellion”: two days of looting, glass crackling, four post-offices taken and garrisoned, two factories, overpowering and capture of The Tower, an actual little battle with 2nd East Kents (“The Buffs”) in Tower Hamlets cemetery, then three barricades — one of them across Cambridge Road, a little west of that Cleveland Street of Paddy; and Paddy, fascinated, lingered to witness the travail and grimness of it, and came again, and lingered, once giving a hand to bear away a wounded hoveller. That barricade, though, was carried in bright moonlight near midnight by some ist King’s Royal Rifles of the Ladysmith Brigade, and this definitely ended “The Rebellion” in a *sauve qui peut* of the barricade’s defenders.

At that moment Paddy was at her front-door to go again to watch the show, when she saw a young gentleman who had been the captain, so to say, of the barricade — his name was Darrel — running madly southward, and

he had got close to her when a group of four King's Rifles darted round the north street-corner after him (where Cleveland meets Cambridge): seeing which, she sent out to him a secret shout, "*In here!*", and in he suddenly decided to dive.

Soon, behind the closed door, they stood darkly hearkening to the running past of the pursuers, who had not remarked into what doorway Darrel had darted.

She whispered to him "Is the barricade taken?"

But his being was given up to a travail of breathing, unable to speak, until he gained the victory of getting out between gasps "But if we had had — five more rifles — just five — we would have well — peppered the devils..."

She secretly asked "Would you like some cheese?" And he: "I? No, no cheese. I live only four doors down, at No. 14 — since the war: 'a spy' — send information to the Northern Army — so have to lie pretty low here in the East: have seen you in the streets, known you — from some photograph, I supposed — but this afternoon, on seeing you, I remembered: not from a photograph, from a painting — in the flat of my pal, Ivor Warwick; your name's Paddy... Why, what's that?" — starting on becoming aware of something that grazed his leg, then, flashing sharp a flash-lamp, saw that it was a cat, saw, too, ruminating there in the gloom four more cats squatted at home, populace of a "hall" grossly squalid; and says he "What *are* you doing in this den, girl like you?"

And she: "You say he's your pal: he took me from home, then sent his father to me—"

"That's all nonsense", Darrel interrupted: "I know the whole story: it was someone whom you mistook for Ivor".

"It was not Ivor?"

“No, nonsense, Ivor is not a fellow who would do anything unbecoming. He is hunting for you, will jump for joy when I ‘phone him—”

At which “‘phone” Paddy shrank; then sharply she asked “*Are you* in the plot, too?”

“Plot?” — from Darrel.

She leant toward him to throw at him in a tone of quarrel “Yes, the lot of you — the plot to take my baby from me!”

“No, then”, says Darrel, “I am not in the plot: I didn’t know that you have a baby. You don’t look — Who’s the baby’s father?”

“He is *my* baby: he has no father”.

“By Jove. Exclusive possession. Parthenogenesis. Virgin birth. Anyway, Ivor will soon pull you straight, I’ll ‘phone him your address—”

“My address! Would that be honourable? I rescue you from being arrested, then you betray me—”

He smiled. “Very well, I won’t betray you. But aren’t you fond of Ivor? *He* idolizes you, I know. You would like to see him?”

Now she sighed. “I would, yes — since you say that it was not he—”

“It wasn’t, believe me. So ‘phone him yourself — or write — he is still there in Bermondsey: arrange a rendezvous. Will you?”

“Yes, I will, I will”, she whispered.

And she did, that same midnight.

The next night she went to a post-office, and was handed the reply: Ivor’s delight at once more seeing her writing surpassed utterance, but she would see it rioting in his eyes on the third evening thence, at eight, before the post-office whence her letter to him was addressed.

So it was settled.

XX. EVESHAM



BUT BEFORE THAT “third evening” things occurred in the Third Corps of Young Men which, by causing Wallace to come to London, modified the result of the rendezvous.

In the forenoon of the day in which Paddy had that reply from Ivor, Wallace was in a column on the march from the Severn-ford at Claines toward Evesham, he being no longer a telegraphist in the sappers of the First Corps, but an artilleryman in the Third — a job of more danger, which he had thought well to change to; and he sat on a gun-limber of his gun-section, having no officer-rank, so that sometimes out of some sergeant walking with him a shout might start at some Tommy lounging, “Up. ‘Tendon! Salute!” He was now just one of ten — or eleven, counting a sergeant mounted — he and another seated on the limber, two on the carriage, three walking in front with three horsed — swaggering artillerymen, rigged out with sword, revolver, glittering spin’s which jingled, considering themselves a peg above the family of Man; and back of his gun the gun’s wagon, with its limber and ten, under a corporal horsed; and back of this wagon another gun and its wagon and twenty-two: all this gun-lot jogging silent along, not unconscious of the blue-eyed brightness and broad holiday-mood of that noontide; but others less silent, a noising of song emanating out of the two companies of 2nd Millikans ahead, separated from the guns only by two ammunition-carts, some mules, and an officer horsed; and Wallace wondered at the charm of that noonday march into Utopia which could so upbuoy them into song, cumbered as they were —

two belt-pouches loaded with 200 cartridges, from spoon to cape to towel loading knapsack, and under knapsack mess-tin, and under mess-tin greatcoat rolled, with water-bottle, haversack, lint-and-bandages, and the Lee-Enfield's weight, the bayonet's, one third carrying pickaxes, two thirds shovels; and he muttered to himself "Gay beggars, sing away, I shan't sing, am a fish out of water, for she's my ocean, and I'm not going to stand it much longer — not to touch her — just to watch the sky-colour of her eyes, her stare of intelligence while she shews her teeth a little in a kind of smile — wonderfully like Felicia Warwick — just to watch her — Caroleth Lavarock! no bells on her fingers, nor bells on her toes, yet she has music wherever she goes, and there's a heartache in the beauty of that being — just to watch her, not to touch — though I kissed her in parting, aye, I got it in all right that time, and, by heaven, she let me, never said anything!" But though he did not sing, he could hardly help laughing to heaven, as his region of the column (over a league long) moved downhill through grove, where a polyglot of other throttles was throwing off glut of music, thrush, goldfinch, a cuckoo just above bruited her two-note summary of the mood of Summer hours in an emotion that uttered something not unlike "coo, coo", or say "oo, oo":

Oo, oo,

Old nine,

Yet new,

This noon.

Strange brew,

Dream scene,

Strange blue,

Rouge, green

Braw, broad!

All bliss!

Thank God God is; and yonder out of monastery-cloisters of wood the rotor of a wood-dove's throat, moved to music, and soon anew moved, rolling soft his rondo that wallowed in softness, but with precision of rhythm, strictness of swing, dulcet, but disciplined by the strictness of his Conductor's bâton, that strictly beat to him:

In troth, Ruth, drew you

My soul, Ruth, through you,

That close, close, knew you:

Done; and forward out of the throng of the two companies of Millikans a noising of "Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching", sung to the words of Caroleth Lavarock, which she sang in that hall at Clapton:

Weird, weird, hear the feet abeating,

Called, thralled, geist-beguiled they plod,

Whither wind whines, whisper guides,

Whither wisp of glimmer glides:

For the nations' migrant trails are trails of migrant God;

and backward, too, out of the mass of seven companies (of 1st Cockcrofts) that came after gun-wagon No. 2 rumours of music evaporating rose:

It's a long, long way to Tipperary;

and presently afresh a strangeness as of herald voices noising in the void of heaven:

Time like an ever-rolling stream
Bears all its sons away,
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day;

after those seven companies of Cockcrofts coming four ammunition-carts, and mules, and an officer mounted, and tool-chest, and medical cart; and, a quarter-mile behind these, the column's rear-guard — half-a-company; and, a mile behind this, the “train” — baggage and supply wagons; and lastly half-a-company. And, half-a-mile ahead of the two companies of Millikans, the advance-guard's main body — a company-and-a-half; and, a quarter-mile ahead of main body, half-a-company; and, ahead of that half-company, the advance-guard's van-guard — a cavalry-troop; and, two miles ahead of cavalry-troop, cavalry patrols pioneering: articulations of the worm awork.

But whitheraway the worm? Uncertain the day's weird of worms! hazard is their father, jeopardy their mother's name, welladay their set of sun. At dawn that morning General Ritchie, commanding the Third Corps, had dictated to Brigadier Mappin, Chief Staff-officer, in The Birch-and-Ash Tavern at Bridgnorth: “Corps Headquarters, 5 a.m. i. Enemy brigades — the 3rd (Irish) and the 4th (Fusiliers) — have reached Kenilworth and Leamington; their patrols are reported near Clent Hills and Stratford, their scouts been seen west of the Avon near Southrood; a battalion (2nd Royal Scots) is preparing to cross to the left of the Severn at Kempsey, having the objective to make contact with their Warwickshire detachments... 2. First and Second Divisions will advance toward Warwick... 3. Order for the cavalry: *(a)* the cavalry division, nineteen miles long, eight miles ahead, will form a screen to cover the advance...*(b)* will be clear of the road Stourbridge-Droitwich by 1615 hours... *(c)* the right of screen will advance

along the road from Royd through Droitwich... left of screen along the road from Claines through Evesham...(d) general task: to reconnoitre country, discover positions and strengths, question prisoners and country-people...(e) special task: to injure bridges, railways, but only where necessary...(f) Major-General Sherrard will keep up communications between all parts of screen, telegraph movements to General Ritchie... P.O. every half-hour... copies by cyclists also... 4. Order for First and Second Divisions: (a) First Infantry-division will march by Hallow Heath to Stratford roads: the head of its advance-guard will pass the Gander Inn at 0325 hours, and be at the cross-roads by Hesham village at 1800... Second Infantry Division will march by the Stourport-Warwick road... (b) Division generals will keep in communication by signallers and cyclists... 5. Order for Corps troops: (a) Corps-cavalry: the Howitzer and Heavy Field Batteries will march behind the Second Division; E and F Batteries of the First Pompons Horse Artillery will join Major-General Sherrard near Sheaham this evening... (c) Corps-engineers: Engineers will march behind the Second Division; Officer Commanding First Telegraph Division will send a section to maintain communication between cavalry-screen and Cradleigh post-office; the Eighth Railway Company, in charge of the Bridgnorth-Worcester railway, will maintain supply of food, ammunition, stores, to the divisions...(d) Corps-infantry: Second Battalion of Niels Bohrs will provide escorts to the trains...(e) Corps-cyclists: one company will be attached to each infantry division... 6. Order of trains: (a) division-trains will follow one mile behind rear-guards in the order — ammunition-column, field-hospital, supply, baggage...(b) train of corps-troops will follow the Second Division... (c) Supply, Park, and Field Bakery will remain at Bridgnorth... (d) Ammunition Park will be at Garborough Green at 0530... 7. Position of General Officer Commanding: General Ritchie will leave the Corps Headquarters at 0430,

and will march at the head of main body of the Second Division; Corps Headquarters will be ready to leave Bridgnorth for Cradleigh by special train at midday. By order: E. C. Mappin, Brigadier General Staff” — a document which, having been despatched to the Engineers’ Park (copies to be typed by the sapper-sergeant of the printing-wagon), was then sent out by Brigadier Mappin as Corps Orders” to major-generals commanding divisions, and to officers commanding cavalry, engineers, Service Corps, and Medical Corps of divisional troops, each major-general then writing “Divisional Orders”, to send copies to the officers commanding his brigades, and to the three commanding Army Service Corps, Bearer Company, Field Hospital, of his brigade.

All, then, was meticulously in order — except at one point: the intelligence-officer. Here, it seems clear, “someone had blundered”: for the next morning when the vedettes of that First Division contingent which contained Wallace’s gun-section looked south from Harvington Hill (there where the hill and a loop of the Avon enclose Evesham within a square), it was to see, not one “Royal Scots battalion”, but at least three battalions.

It had been in order to tempt that 2nd battalion of Scots to cross the Severn that the Young Men corps had been deliberately withdrawn northward from round Worcester toward Bridgnorth, the objective being to draw those Severn Scots into an attempt to join their Warwickshire detachments, to foil the attempt, and to draw those Warwickshire bodies to battle.

But that Severn force had affected a junction with another Severn force just prior to their night-time crossing at Kempsey; and before the sun was well up, before any Young Men reinforcements could come, battle was clamouring across the Avon.

The Young Men were little ready for it when that reveille shrilled and the soldier rushed to his rifle: some lengths of tape, pegged overnight to the ground by their sappers as guides for trench-digging, were still lying white about; some land-mines, dug to go off under an attacker's foot, were still not loaded; some wire-entanglements still lying idle in masses: the enemy having come by forced march — seventeen miles in nine hours. If the usual artillery barking preceded the attack, this was almost too short, too ill-matched, to be called a duel. At six-fifteen o'clock Wallace's eighteen-pounder field-gun and its sister-gun, having been unlimbered, had been run up to a ridge by hand to ambush behind a hedge, where he, with another gunman of his No. 1 gun, was steadily running to-and-fro to gun from wagon and again to wagon, to get another shrapnel-shell to hand to one of the two of his gun who were adjusting the shells' time-rings prior to passing them on to the loader, while another kept swinging open breech-block, another aimed, discharged, gun — the two guns' gullets going soblike in gong-sounds, their gruffness irregularly competitive in quavers, semiquavers, demisemiquaver bang-bangs, everyone in the two gun-crews as urgently engaged as when in conflagrations furniture is being rescued, and burdened legs trot ponderously brisk, and earnest is the word. But it became obvious that the shells, set at twenty second, were squandering bullets, exploding short four miles off: at the same time a storm of sixty-pounder T.N.T. shells with percussion-fuses — were dropping almost plumb nigh behind the section, hurling on high surges of earth and fire, dirtied with a turgid blackishness of vapour sailing away, their back-blast enveloping both the gun-section and the escort-section of infantry posted to protect the guns; so that already one of the three wagon-limber nags lay stiff, with a bagful of bowels pouting, and a gaze that moped sullen in death; seeing which, the subaltern commanding the gun-section dropped field-glasses to

take range-taker, and to gallop off to another point of vantage, while the guns were run down to be limbered up, to gallop after him, and begin again to bay and bang: it was six-forty o'clock — an hour at which General Sir John Ritchie's Chief Staff Officer at Cradleigh was actively opening to read to him reports arriving every few minutes by D.R., by trooper, while the general was despatching order after order, every one by two messengers on two roads. At six-fifty Colonel Needham, senior colonel in command of the storm-tossed column, received written order to "hold out" for the coming up of reinforcements, the battle being now at its acme — Vickers' six-hundred-a-minute gabbling their garrulous acrimony, magazine-firing going grum, rifles growing hot in hand, close support guns crashing cruelly upon all packed troop-masses, trenches' edges changed to stretches of cherry-red; but three minutes later, the fate of the Young Men, already domineered by over-weight of metal, was sealed, when, in addition to three bombing planes booming over them, bad angels going about like roaring lions, seeking whom they might devour, half a squadron of troopers' hoofs in two troops broke out thundering upon their trouble with blazing sabres bared. Now was the instant, the decision — *Charge!* — captains' whistles shrilling, the gibbering bugle yodling, cheering of regiments rushing to butchery, kilts rocking rhythmic, pendulums of doom set rocking in time, as in the laboratory, across gross legs grossly male... Now, running away was little the way of the Young Men; but when, after section fire at three hundred yards, and when afresh at two hundred it was "Independent Fire!", and afresh at eighty "Rapid Fire!", in periodic shocks, and still it was throating at a wave which approached, and rode, and roared, and would not waver, the Young Men wavered — went under — fled. The result of the battle of Evesham was not a retreat but a rout.

Yet, even so, some of them, with imperial intrepidity, soon ceased from fleeing, two groups stopping at country-houses perfunctorily to fortify them, one group fortified a garden-wall to snipe through, one group got a stockade rising in wood to fortify with piles of soil, and wait to fire through; Wallace's two guns were not captured: many days afterwards they lay four miles from Harvington Hill at a farm named Symes House not far from the Stratford Road. Their gunners, when loading with shrapnel set at zero, were swept away in the wind of the scamper, and could still, as they galloped astare, see couples of company-cooks at the digging of field-kitchen trenches, within which to kindle blazes to boil the morning kettle, could see drivers fetching corn-rations from the supply-wagon to the nose-bag of horses still standing picketed to horse-lines. At ten o'clock twenty-two of them were seated on three steps which they had dug out at the back of bramble-hedge on the Stratford Road, and they were eating concentrated-beef and tablets of cocoa-paste (emergency-rations from tin cylinders carried in their haversacks), when a hiss burst out amid them, "Here they come!" — as, on a brow of mounting road a mile off, arose a troop of troopers trotting down in column of route, neck-and-neck four abreast, armed with lance in loop at right arm, rifle at left, sabre at saddle. The artillerymen rushed to peer, with ready rifle, through the hedge, only Wallace on the lowest step still munching cocoa-paste, though pale of face, and he muttered to himself "Honour pricks me on, yea, but how if honour prick me off again when I get on..." That would not be well, if he were taken prisoner.

At the same time his No. i gun-sergeant glanced round to say to him "Now, Sir, is your time to be running".

"No" — Wallace shook his head.

"Well, but, Sir, oughtn't you to?" the sergeant asked.

“I’ll make you an offer”, Wallace suddenly said: “I see no good in shooting a few of those few: so let’s all run; but I won’t run alone”.

Whereupon a laying together of heads, eager whisperings, and ere long, for his sake, Yes was resolved. “Very well, Sir,” the sergeant said, “run it is this day for the Young Men of England. Come, Boys, scatter all you can...”

And presently in every region of a field of eddish were fleeing feet — seen by the troopers, from whom a few bullets flew out, but without wounding.

Half-an-hour afterwards Wallace found himself wandering solitary in Nowhere along a by-road with pheasant coppice on both sides; but on coming suddenly in sight of a hamlet in a valley, he stopped, harked back, thinking “No, better not be seen in uniform... If I could get some kind of disguise... By heaven, I’d be off to London to see her a little, have a spree...”

Nor had he long said this when “Got it!” leapt from him, he now seeing a priest approaching, bearing the elements of the Holy Supper, which he had been administering to someone ill.

And “Nice morning, Holy Father”, says Wallace, with that twinkle that was in his leer.

“Aye, nice morning, My Son”, says the shaven priest, who shaved close, but could not shave away the shade of blue-black which smudged the bulge of a double chin, cheek, mouth.

And Wallace: “Seventh Heaven, this, Holy Father. There’s many a million planets, I fancy, that haven’t an atmosphere fawning with the soft fondness of this. That sky, once brown, frowning, grum Armageddon of elements struggling, see it now: what archangel’s fancy could ever have pictured such a vision? Oh, His lips distil the honeycomb, Father, honey and butter, Holy Father, are under His tongue”.

“Hm”, the holy father muttered.

And Wallace: “Well, now, here am I, a Young Man, at a loose end, wandering forlorn, my contingent defeated this morning near Evesham, and I wanting to be off to London for a few days’ fling. So, if you let me have your cassock, your biretta, and take my things, then I will be a priest, and you will be a Young Man”.

Some moments’ dumbness; then the holy father: “But I don’t want to be a Young Man!”

“Rather an honour, you know”, says Wallace: “and you notice the revolver here”.

Rather startled, the holy father glanced at him, with “What, you wouldn’t shoot me, would you?”

And Wallace: “I didn’t say I’d shoot you: I just drew your attention to the presence of a revolver in the company, so as to bias your behaviour”.

Upon which they both laughed.

Then Wallace: “And if I did shoot you? Isn’t that a fact that such as you ought to be cut short in the doing of the vast harm that you do, in the despoiling men of the much of joy that you despoil them of?”

“Oho!” says the priest: “is that how things are? And what is this vast harm that I do, My Son?”

And Wallace: “Feeble question, Holy Father: you should know, you know — O, you should! Don’t you let yourself utter at Benediction on Sunday nights that a girl was once got with child by a swan which was a god in disguise, and other suchlike stuff, keeping the people in such a stage of intelligence that they sit patiently bearing it, and don’t boo you out of their presence for so daring to presume on their toleration? Then you go home and switch-on your light, enjoying at home the intelligence which you earn your living by waging war on in church. Is that well done? If I was a

governor, I should never be troubling about punishing murderers — not worth the notice of a grown-up Government; but a man who purposely hurts a world I'd first hang, then shoot, then burn, and scatter his ashes, till he taste the second death”.

“Oho!” — the bonhomme father chuckled— “is that the sort of bhoy we are? First hang, *then* shoot, *then*... Pooh, Man, keep your hair on. Don't imagine that priests are either fools or rascals. We know that we do some harm in smudging intelligence, those of us who aren't peasants; but we aren't rascals, for we hope that we do more good than harm, since there is something of more importance than intelligence — morality is”.

“Oh, well”, says Wallace, “if you won't let me call you rascals, you must let me call you fools, if you say that. Doesn't morality depend upon intelligence? ‘moral’ meaning respectful of the customs which intelligence at any time in any country decides to be desirable. The morality of New Japan is not the morality of Old Japan, is it? The morality of England now is not the morality of Congoland now, nor of Scotland now, nor of England fifty years ago: customs change with intelligence; and where intelligence is slumbrous, change of custom is slow or stationary, and there men are most customary, like the stationary savage, like the Chinese, stationary as ditch-water through five thousand years — respect of ancestors, ancestral morality. Morality is respect; intelligence, civilization, progress, is disrespect. Intelligence consists in seeing truth — in seeing the untruth of untruths, and being sceptical, in seeing the truth of truths, and being inventive: scepticism, inventiveness: those Two are Intelligence, Wisdom; and to invent is as much to disrespect as to be sceptical is to disrespect. You and I — we modern Europeans — can't even *sympathize* with the moralness of the lower races, the profoundness of their respect for custom: among the Agar Dinga a rainmaker, on getting old, steps down into a hole

in the ground, admonishes the crowd round him to remain moral, then orders them to cover him over with soil; in the Tien-tain mountains in Tai-chow five monks he in a chest in an oven to die in fire on some feast-day each year; so some official will still commit hara-kiri over a Mikado's new tomb, rip his bowels open — no fun that; and Japan imagines that *she* is the missionary, Heaven-appointed, to teach the Christian countries morality — a most dangerous piece of nonsense to enter a nation's head. The morality of the lower races is fanatic, extravagant: in Southern India a woman will crack her skull on the door of an enemy, who must then do the same; some Chinese become substitutes for men sentenced to death, that money may be paid to relatives: there's respect of custom for you. To preach to men to be moral is nonsense: the sin of Man is that he is addicted to morality. The lives of savages is made bitter by it — taboo! taboo! — mustn't do this, mustn't do that, as in Deuteronomy, Leviticus, nobody ever dreaming of doubting, of rebelling: and just so deep asleep as their scepticism is their inventiveness, just so inveterate as their unintelligence is their stationariness. So what makes you a higher life than the far more moral savage is that you, more intelligent, will find yourself speaking of the eight hundred billion waves a second of violet light, while he can only count to six; and what makes him a higher life than a sparrow is that he can count to six, and the sparrow, more moral still than he, can only count to two. And since civilization is intelligence, is scepticism and inventiveness, is disrespect, and *you* teach respect — not even respect of sceptics and inventors, but of ancestors empty of scepticism and inventiveness — you are, then, a wagger of war against civilization, and should be shot like a mad dog by civilized Man”.

“Mad dog” — the holy father's lids peered narrow, considering it—
“oho! don't think I don't see your point. But you are too cocksure for me,

My Son: for I, too, look, am trained in disrespect: as you disrespect ancestors, so I disrespect intelligence, which, I *know*, is very prone to error. If I preach that a girl was got with child by a swan which was a god — though there's no *swan* in Christianity, it is the Greek legend that has swan, the Christian is African (Egyptian) — but suchlike things are only silly on one condition: that they never happened; and I disrespect my intelligence which tells me that they never happened, for they *may* have, once. *You* don't know. If you say that you know, I ask 'How do you?'"

Wallace answered "Yes, but when the intelligent are wrong, it isn't their intelligence that's wrong, it's their unintelligence: Intelligence is seeing truth, is Right, and to disrespect it, to oppose its growth, is to oppose Right. As to the girl-and-god, the brain evolves by process of the suns to a point in scepticism where men say with knowledge 'This is untrue', without bothering to ask themselves how they know, as a day comes when a child automatically finds itself knowing that Alice in Wonderland is fantasy, as a shopman murmurs 'charlatan' at St. Paul's assertion that he was 'caught up to the third heaven', for, though the shopman knows no astronomy, he was born certain that there is no third heaven, and is evolved to the point where such fancies as that the cosmos consists of spheres of glass have become comic. Then again, as to girl-and-god, trained investigators have lately got an exact knowledge of the psychology of savages, and know that savage speculations are not only untrue, but have a quality of dog's-luck that makes them the *opposite* of true. Suppose Aristotle asserts that the earth sits still, then you are safe in betting that it flits with a billion wings; or, if I say to you that a person cannot exist longer than one tick of the clock, then, though I make the statement without offering any proof, you still have good reason to believe it, because Plato and all savages have always been convinced of the opposite, that a person exists eternally. I *know*, then, that

the god never got the girl with child, if *only* because savages say that he did. But the main point, Holy Father, is that I want to go to London for a lark: surely you will indulge a fellow-sinner to that extent? and within two days I send you £100 to get new togs”.

Which set the holy father chuckling, and saying “Well, you aren’t a bad sort, you think I ought to be shot, but you don’t shoot me, don’t live up to your principles, thank God. Do you know who I think you are? — Wallace himself. Can you deny it?”

Upon which Wallace’s eyelids went shy, and the holy father added “You see, that’s who you are, no other than Wallace, I vow. And if I give you away?”

“You wouldn’t do that”, Wallace muttered.

“No, I wouldn’t do that. Come on! change clothes”.

And Wallace: “Now, how kind and good! Thank you! That’s your training: still too rude a villager to accommodate the concept ‘world’, a murderer of the world, but jolly good to Bob, your neighbour — good to me, and I thank you”.

Meantime, the change was being effected: the holy father got even the revolver...

XXI. IN PRISON



AND THE NEXT evening Wallace, a priest, drove straight from Paddington to Berkeley Square, proposing to strike Caroleth Lavarock dumb with surprise, a chronic smile of prospect fixed on his lips, as a too slow taxicab took him: but vain hopes! the lady was away from home.

He next drove to the rendezvous which, the day before, he had written to make with three men, including Ivor Warwick, “his” son, this rendezvous being at the Langham Hotel, for he had not dared to make it at his own home; but when, in going to Berkeley Square, he had passed through Harley Street, and had stood still a little to gaze at his home, everything there had looked so humdrum, usual, safe, that he decided to risk bringing his friends there for the night’s revel.

When he entered their presence at the hotel, everyone exploded into ridicule at his holy dress. “Good old Father Wallace, unholy father of many”, one of the girls observed, walking with him the little distance round to Harley Street — all a boisterous throng of laughers, except Ivor Warwick, who that night had a fixity of lip, and again and again had to goad himself to look gay with the others — with whom, in truth, he was never in unison, but in his association with Wallace was always playing a part, feigning to revel, with the motive to come to some sort of proof that it was Wallace who, as he darkly boded, had drawn Paddy St. Aubyn from her father’s home. In fact, while he laughed with the laughers, he inwardly looked down upon Wallace’s orgies as uncouth, and hissed at the nuisance of having to join in them — that night especially, for — high, unexpected thing! — he

had lately had a letter from Paddy inviting him to meet her before a Whitechapel post-office, the letter which she had decided to write when pressed by Frank Darrel, Ivor's friend, fighter at that Cambridge Road barricade in "The Rebellion".

All preoccupied with which high event, Ivor nevertheless contrived to incite himself to be jolly, and at eleven o'clock had the head of one of the girls on his shoulder, while with a certain dignity of neck, standoffishly tolerant of her existence, his fingers consented to toy with her curls; in the same moments Wallace himself had another lady on his holy-father knee, on which he was cantering her with a gee-up clucking of the tongue; and since the blinds (of that dining-room) had not been lowered, Caroleth Lavarock, who stood peering from the street on tiptoe, could distinctly see.

Having much to discuss with Wallace as to the war-politics, she had come to see if by chance he was at his house, having been told on going home from a dinnerparty that he was in London — had been to visit her; and at this spectacle of "her" son and his father junketing there together, the unholy father in holy garb leading the son astray, a rage of jealousy, of ill-feeling, heated her spleen.

Suddenly she ran to bang at the house-door.

"Be good enough to inform Mr. Ivor Warwick that a lady desires to talk with him" — to Bargrave the butler— "kindly say it privately".

When Ivor tripped out to her, she said "Come"; and he went southward with her, his bare head bowed, being accustomed to hold her in reverence above women, if only because her tone, the quality of her smile, eyes, voice, her height, so reminded him of a mother, so loved, so lost.

"We two are friends by nature, Ivor", she said, "yet you grieve me. Haven't I spoken to you of it before? It is astonishing, Ivor, that you should choose Dr. Wallace as a chum, a model to copy, and let yourself come

among the sort of company that form his comus. Understand that Dr. Wallace has a philosophy by which he does what he does without loss of quality; his consciousness of superiority to the past, which he disdains as a past of half-apes, is part of his everyday mentation: if someone told him that, since so-and-so is contrary to the moral law of some country or epoch, therefore he ought not to do it, that would make him laugh, he'd say 'but the intelligence of the inventors of suchlike customs was ancient, they never dreamt of radium nor of radio'. But you! you are an English gentleman, an islander, a variation from type, the embodiment of a local concept, trained from boyhood to cut a nose at every side-slip from the tightrope of a style: you lose your soul, if you do as he does. And in vain I have tried to separate you from him; but tonight I will separate you: going to tell you something — you are not to tell anyone: it was Dr. Wallace who ran away with Paddy St. Aubyn. Now you have it”.

“Ha, ha” — a dangerous half-a-laugh, hardly audible.

“Now you have it”.

“You *know*?”

“Yes”.

“How?”

“I need not go into that: I do know. Don't let me see you with him again”.

“Ha, ha, you won't” — stepping high-strung, his fingers opening and closing convulsively into fists, as to grip some stick to strike.

“Poor boy, robbed of lover and of mother” — her palm on his arm: “I will be your mother, see? Shall I?”

“Dear Caroleth!... Ha, ha, it was he!”

“Yes, but don't have any quarrel: there are reasons why it would be improper for you to be in conflict with him; don't see him at all again; go

home now. Good-bye, My Dear. Come soon to see me” — as he now kissed her hand at her door; and the door had no sooner closed after her than he was ardently back for Harley Street.

There he did not again go into the riotous diningroom, but, taking his stick in the hall, went up to the drawing-room, where, striding in a high-strung way, he waited with no little strain and patience until the noisy departure after midnight of all but one of the roysterers; and now he called down over the stair-banisters “I am here, Wallace!”

Darting up, Wallace started to say “Why in the world did you — ?”, but stopped when Ivor, having him now in the drawing-room, stepped in silence, locked the door, Wallace standing ghast with astonishment, watching him go and come again to press his fists on a table, the stick within one of them, while he bent forward to talk to Wallace.

“Why, what is it?” says Wallace, pale.

Ivor had a judge’s visage, rigid, but blanched, too; and he asked a needless question: “That is so, is it? that it was you who led away Miss Patricia St. Aubyn?”

“Led away... Well, what of it? What of it? Spit it out!” says Wallace.

“Pretending to be I, without doubt. It is *my* business, then; *I* am called upon... That poor child is now somewhere in Whitechapel, living apparently in penury; a stone might melt in pity... Do you suppose, Sir, that she will any longer go unavenged, if I have any manhood? I have given no undertaking, you know, to keep secret the fact that you are in London: that is about to be made known; tomorrow night you will spend, not in revelling, but in a prison, I think. And certainly, in addition, you deserve the stick. I would be inert, if I did not inflict it”.

Fright at which penetrated the stratum of wine that invested Wallace — not so much fright at the stick, though that was thick, as at the making

known of his presence in London, for the repercussions of his imprisonment upon the Young Men's interests could scarcely fail to be momentous.

But, then, the taker of vengeance here was tackling the task of his vengeance in the temper of Hamlet, which, urged toward vengeance, brandishes words, shirking the brashness of departure from the ordinary — his subconscious being no doubt dominated by the mass of the personality of Wallace. His “about to be made known” should have been “has been”, since he had had time to make it known; nor was there any need to threaten the stick: an efficient stick strikes in a silence of lightning; and, in locking the door, he inefficiently left the key in the lock, preoccupied with principles, not with things: so that Wallace, who was nearer the door, and had acquired some adroitness of self-protection from the plights of war, after staring at “his” son as at some cobra that rears to sting, and after saying “*Oh, you!*” at the dangerous object sprung up to confront him, suddenly skedaddled, wrenched the key, snatched it free, dashed through, and had the door afresh locked ere the other could reach it: so it was the threatener of prison who was a prisoner.

But for how long? That drawing-room was not built to be a prison for living beings with viscera: the prisoner must soon be freed, nor, meantime, was it difficult for a nimble fellow to slip down to a window-ledge just below, and be off to accomplish his evil will. If Wallace resolved to flee immediately from London, that would be without seeing Caroleth Lavarock: so, after pondering bitterly on his fix a little, he said to himself, “Take the spunk out of him, give the beggar something else to think about”; and he said in his bedroom to his Bargrave “Bring some cake”.

When this came he deposited upon the salver a glass of water that he had prepared, then, going soft with the butler to the drawing-room door, he peeped in, until the prisoner, who was walking hither and thither, paused at

a window; whereupon, unlocking the door without sound, Wallace whispered “Now” to the butler, sending him to step soft in, softly to deposit the salver upon a table behind Ivor’s back, and step soft out; then softly anew to lock the door.

At about two o’clock Ivor Warwick dropped tired upon a sofa, slept, woke in an hour, and now took up a stool to bombard the door; but then laughed, put it down, said “patience, patience”, paced about. Void and long those night-hours, and it was as much to do something as because he wanted water that at last, at four, he swallowed half of the water that he saw on the salver.

Soon subsequently to this he was seated, leaning double on the edge of a couch, his head bowed down, down, suffering a strange undoing; and he kept asking himself “But what is it? Why am I like this?”

He presently let his empty self drop upon the couch, to sleep afresh, to dream now of eerie wreckage, bereavement irretrievable, vast disasters: for some dark star had come in among our sun’s family, and nothing was any more stable in Nature, the planets bolting, now toward the star, now toward the sun, now toward one another in intricate indecision, distracted, while the family of Man ran to-and-fro with frantic arms outflung, calling upon the rocks of God to cover them from regarding.

When at six o’clock he saw himself in a mirror, he remained agaze, going “Ur... Who am I?”; and when an hour afterwards Bargrave opened the door to give him liberty, the butler was profoundly puzzled, for, as with those prisoners of the Bastille, a young man had been imprisoned, but an old man was released.

That day Ivor did not go to his business — remained brooding at home, no lust in him, little interest, even his grief dull, even his amaze, nothing any longer great in him, save his tolerance, his forgivingness, his

listlessness, his nonentity. Sometimes his foot moved about his flat, dully, without motive, but mostly he sat in the lassitude of his copos with hanging arms, hardly ate anything, no appetite. In the evening when his clock struck three-quarters, though he could not see it, the flat being in darkness, it entered his head that that was a quarter to eight, that at eight he had to meet Paddy St. Aubyn, and would be late: so now he heaved himself to his feet.

She, for her share, was at the rendezvous *before* eight — keen to see him for different reasons, for himself, for explanations, and then for what was involved now in all her thoughts and motives — money: not money for her own stomach's good, but to gain her baby's favour, to maintain that belly of his globose and boon. That day had been a day of straits for food, and she came to the rendezvous radiant, full of hope that it would result for her in money, which she meant to shew a reluctance to accept, then, when pressed, to accept. But now the Cambridge Road post-office clock pointed to ten past, and she said with offence "How dreadful of him to be late!"

It was not until fifteen minutes later that he came walking northward, having arrived by train at Whitechapel Station; and, seeing her some distance away, he smiled, lifted his stick at her, quickened pace a little, she standing with a craned neck, peering keenly toward him, until the instant when a street-lamp's rays hit his face full; and now she whispered with conviction "Yes, his father again!", and took to her heels.

He called "Paddy!" once, ran some steps after, then stopped, as her fleeing feet disappeared at the corner where her own Cleveland Street joins Cambridge Road.

She ran a little past her lodging to her friend, Darrel's lodging, not only in the hope that he might think of offering her a shilling or two, but that she might pour out to him her resentment at the rendezvous' result: for anything *queer*, anything infected with unexpectedness, instantly pricked into activity

within her that suspicion which she cherished that people in general were in a conspiracy to filch her little one from her. But Darrel happened to be not then at home; and some two hours earlier than usual she started off on one of her nocturnal tramps to procure a store of food out of Mr. Hogan's home.

Unfortunately, since her last expedition Hogan had talked of the larcenies to the police; and if the bucket goes too often to the well, one day the rope breaks.

The policeman on the beat thereabouts was on the look out for her...!

So, near midnight, when those by-streets brooded quiet under a moon that, blooming full, looked on unmoved from the heights, he spied her coming out of the Hogan gate loaded with things to eat; and, as on tiptoe he tripped like a griffon to grip her, he said to himself "Got you, My Lady".

But he had not got her: some instinct visited her to glance aside; and, as she caught sight of him, she, calling upon God, was gone.

Nor, loaded though she was, clinging still to her load, could he catch those passionate toes of her dash; and since she had sixpence left, he, on pitching out into Chiswick High Road, was barely in time to see her skip into a 'bus, to leave him pining behind.

But he was able to note the number of the 'bus, and muttered at her "You aren't so safe as you think yourself".

He instantly stepped into a telephone-box to give The Yard a description of her dress, hand-bag, 'bus-number; upon which The Yard wirelessly it to a flying-squad car: so that before the 'bus arrived at her Cleveland Street corner it was being followed by a car within which three sat and chatted, the cat permitting the mouse to limp free off, for fun, the sweeter to pounce upon its woe.

When, feeling safe now, she went walking northward in Cleveland Street for her home, one of those three was following; but again, warned of God,

she felt him in her, glanced backward, and, as “O, *Lord God!*” parted from her heart, darted, he after.

On coming to Darrel’s lodging, closer than her own lodging, in, in her panic, she bolted, she darted, and up — two sets of stair — to dash his door open; but he, who was over some writing, had hardly time to start upright and become aware of the wildness of affright of that wild face, when another presence was breathlessly with them, the detective, who said “Got you neat”.

“This is *my* domicile... What is it?” — from Darrel.

The detective exhibited his Yardman warrant-card, saying “Entering and theft: come on, You”.

“Oh, but be reasonable, Officer”, Darrel pleaded: “this is a young lady, daughter of a captain of hussars, well known in Old Men circles—”

“Well, you know what orders are, Sir,” the officer said. “Come with me, You”.

From milk-white lips of one standing stiff-stark in the farthest corner came a whisper, “My baby”.

“Has she a baby?” the Yardman asked Darrel.

“Yes: No. 21, third floor. Please, please, Officer —— —”

“Pooh, the baby will be well looked after, Man. Come on, come on”.

As he now made a step toward her, out of the depths of her entrails a scream pealed, “*My baby!*”

In a moment more she fainted, fell upon her face; whereupon the inexorable detective shrilled a whistle out of the window, and, when his car came, carried her down in his arms.

XXII. BANG!



AT ONCE NOW Frank Darrel rang up Ivor Warwick to tell of the pity of it, rousing Ivor from sleep; and at once Ivor rang up Sir Borlase St. Aubyn, to tell.

Two days before this he had rung up the baronet as soon as he had had Paddy's letter making that rendezvous at the post-office, but, as the baronet had been "at the front" somewhere, Ivor, having discovered exactly where, had written the tidings of the finding of Paddy: so now had reason to believe that Paddy's father might be in London; and, in fact, at that hour, about two in the morning, Sir Borlase had been half an hour in his flat in The Albany, and was undressing for bed.

When he heard that his girl was then in a cell for theft he was so long voiceless, that Ivor enquired if he was there...

"I'm here", he replied.

"And I can tell you now definitely", Ivor added, "that it was Dr. Wallace who enticed her off".

"Ah, it was: Wallace. How do you know?"

"A lady told me, then I confronted him, and he admitted—"

"Confronted where?"

"He is in London, in the disguise of a priest — at his place in Harley Street; or was last night".

"I see. Thanks! Goodbye".

Sir Borlase left off undressing — to dress. He went out. To rap at a door, to rouse Harley Street with the row of his rapping, until a drowsing butler

appeared, to hear “I want Wallace”.

“Not here, Sir”, Bargrave answered: “not been here all yesterday”.

“No? I’ll see: switch-on all lights” — and in that voice that ordered was what could not be disobeyed.

Sir Borlase now hunted through the house, not hiding his revolver, down to the basement, up to the domestics’ bedrooms, prying under bedsteads, behind doors.

But the butler had told the truth: for, in consequence of Ivor Warwick’s threat to make known his presence in London, Wallace had not dared to stay there, had decamped to the Langham Hotel before breakfast, stubbornly reluctant to flee from London until he had seen Caroleth Lavarock.

So at ten in the forenoon, after studying the news of two far-flung battles, one on the North-East front, one in the West, in one the Young Men routed, in the other the Old Men, in both the conquerors almost as destroyed as the conquered, he had been at Caroleth’s door; but she, resentful of his ladies and revels, freshly witnessed by her the previous evening, had been not-at-home to him, had said vindictively to herself, “He shall find me difficult: thrice he shall come and not see me”.

So he had had to go again in the afternoon— “not at home”; and again in the evening, when she was really not at home, having gone to a carnival-dance (of the Trade Union Club) at the Royal Opera-house; and to his question, “When expected home?” her footman answered “in the small hours of the morning”.

In those small hours Wallace was there before her door, waiting to intercept her home-coming.

And that way also Sir Borlase St. Aubyn went: for after his hunt, before departing from the Harley Street house, he had scribbled a note: “Lady of my heart, I am hoping to do myself the honour of calling upon you at ten

a.m. tomorrow, this being written in London. I think you will be interested to know that my daughter has been discovered. She sleeps (?) tonight in a police-cell, accused of stealing food. Her betrayer was Wallace”: and, on his way home, he bent his steps into Berkeley Square to drop this into Caroleth’s letter-box.

So almost immediately on entering the square from Bond Street he saw a priest, saw that face of Wallace loitering, and uttered, “God, what luck!”

Nor did he, like Ivor Warwick, bark before he bit: he barked and bit within the same twinkling of an eye: bang! the bullet tore Wallace’s arm.

In one instant Wallace saw, recognized, understood; and, cherishing ever a tender care for his skin’s entirety, took to his heels for Charles Street, to his right as he ran south; but had hardly got to the corner when bang! again the baronet barked, bit — this time in the right thigh.

Wallace, though, could still run: and along Charles Street the race was, each running as he had never run, Wallace rather impeded by the quarrelling of his priest’s frock, nor was he ever more than forty yards ahead; but he had wondrous luck — a taxi pacing empty, as if waiting there for him; and, panting at the taximan “Quick! man wanting to kill—”, he was in and away.

That braw voice of the baronet, not far, bawled after him “I’ll have you, Wallace!”

Now Wallace saw that London was all too hot for him, and was immediately in flight out of it, without having contrived to see Caroleth Lavarock.

It was not till the next noon, at Harrow, where he slept, that he saw a doctor, to have his wounds rendered aseptic; but that was rather late; and, as he made his way back to his battery, it was with a shivering of feverishness in his system.

XXIII. HARBOUR



WHILE HE STILL slept that morning at Harrow, Sir Borlase St. Aubyn was in Berkeley Square telling Caroleth of the failure of his effort in the early morning hours to get his girl out of her cell. “It appears”, he said, “that ‘misdemeanants’ can be bailed out, but she, if you please, is a ‘felon’ — stole some food apparently — to satisfy—”

Here the father’s utterance rather broke, while Caroleth’s eyes filled with tears. She muttered “That’s nonsense about ‘felon’, we must have her free at once. From whom, then, did she steal the food?”

“Curious thing”, Sir Borlase answered— “from Hogan, they tell me! She in Whitechapel, Hogan miles away in Chiswick: I can’t understand it!”

But Caroleth sprang to discovery. “I can: has a key to Hogan’s villa, that’s why... Or don’t you know that she was a nurse-maid to Hogan?”

“Nurse-maid... ha, ha... No, how was I to know? Hogan never told me. He knew that I had lost a daughter, but I suppose it did not enter his head that she might be that daughter”.

Which mumness of Hogan rousing in Caroleth an indignation against him, she said “Yes, Hogan had some reason to keep her hidden from you — knew that she is your daughter, for he telephoned her name to some agents of Dr. Wallace — I had set Wallace to help in the hunt for her — and told the agents that she was in his house, to tempt Wallace to go there and be kidnapped”. Profoundly frowning at it, the baronet sat dumb-struck, till he exclaimed “That man! Knew! ‘Some reason to keep her hidden’... I think Mr. Hogan is going to have me against him, as Wallace has—”

Now Caroleth leant forward to lay her hand on his, with “I want you to get rid of the idea that it was Dr. Wallace with whom she ran off—”

“Idea?” — from the baronet: “the man has now admitted it to someone: there’s no doubt; and I think I’ve already got a bullet or two into him, but he got off. I’ll have him yet”.

“Ah!” — her underlook dwelling on that intractable directness— “what a mess through one man’s wildness... Oh, well, let us see about getting the girl free”.

“And the baby”, the baronet added.

“Baby? Baby?”

“Has a baby — so they said at the station — ill-fated little beggar — not a bad little beggar — ill-fated — born under a star of disaster, poor beggar... Baby in the workhouse infirmary. See me here, grandfather of a pauper — comic opera”.

“But not *her* baby!” Caroleth suddenly cried: “no, no, I am certain that that girl is as virgin as early snowdrops... You know, don’t you, that Hogan lost a baby? a newspaper topic. And this is it! For some reason she ran away from Hogan, taking his baby for some reason, then considered that she had a right to steal his eatables to feed his child. That’s it! Now we’ll go and get her free: I’ll ‘phone to Hogan...”

But Mr. Hogan was not at home — had, in fact, gone to be the prosecutor of the thief, and was seated among solicitors within the court, still without any suspicion that the thief was the Paddy of his reins’ desire, when Caroleth and the baronet arrived at the police-citadel: upon which, sent for, he came astonished to the outer charge-room, shook hands with Caroleth, but the hand which he presented to the baronet was not shaken: only his assurance was shaken by that frown of the baronet’s rancour.

Then when the matter had been explained to him by Caroleth, and now the case came on, he went back with Caroleth into the court, to see Paddy, all astare, now in the “dock”, the baronet remaining in the outer room restlessly pacing in pain. But now it was soon over: for since Mr. Hogan would not now “prosecute”, but on the contrary asked the magistrate’s pardon for the larcenies, the magistrate only “bound the accused over”; and staring she came out liberated to the charge-room, her hair dishevelled, her dress rumpled, her hand in Caroleth’s.

When she saw her father, she stared at him, muttering “Papa”; and, suddenly dropping upon her knees with quivering fists, she entreated “Oh, Papa, you won’t let them take my baby from me!”

On which Caroleth took and pressed the father’s hand, whose face-muscles now convulsed toward eruption of emotion, while to Paddy Caroleth said “You shall have your baby, if you will come and live with me: will you?”

“Yes, I will”, Paddy answered wiping her eyes, “if you get me my baby: he isn’t going to let anybody but me feed him”.

Now Caroleth whispered at Mr. Hogan’s ear “I can have the baby, can’t I?”

“Well, you know” — from Hogan— “Mrs. Hogan’s consent has to be gotten there; but I think I can fix it so you have him for a time”.

“And my bag”, Paddy now said, “where is it? There is food in it”.

Whereupon the baronet, throwing his hand at her, walked out of the room, able to bear it no more: so that Caroleth drove away alone with Paddy, first to the work-house, then, with the baby, to Berkeley Square.

There she at once ‘phoned to Ivor Warwick: “Your dear little bride is now with me, come quick, marry her quick. She did marry Wallace, but, then, *he* is a lawless bigamist, was already married, and the darling remains

as immaculate as Mary of Nazareth — a bit off her nut, maybe — paranoiac — and no wonder, but I'll soon have her straight" — little thinking that Ivor in his present mind was another Ivor, less keen on being married than previously, and reluctant, moreover, to exhibit to her his old-man's wrinkles of that part of a peach which is nearest the stone.

As she said "have her straight", out broke Waldteufel's waltz, "The Skaters", on the wireless, and into the dining-room with wild jollity at the musicians's shrieks of joy she dashed, shrieking out "*Come*, Paddy, girl!", to snatch Paddy off from the boy into a mad waltzing of bacchants, quickly to have Paddy pink and happy.

Then, this over, she skipped back to the 'phone, to talk now with Harley Street, on the chance that Wallace might still be there, that she might inform him of Paddy's haps, and warn him of Sir Borlase's will to kill; but, then, Wallace was now well out of London.

XXIV. THE STORM-TEST DATE



HE WAS FEVERISH when that evening he reached his D.A.C. (Divisional Ammunition Column), and, though he resisted being treated as on sick-list, was ordered by his lieutenant-colonel, who had come to visit him, to a field-hospital bed for the night, whence the next day he was carted to the Advanced Dépôt Stationary Hospital at Stratford, and thence to the General Hospital at Worcester.

Something of which movements could not but become publicly known, to be then much “stretched”: the newspapers had it that he had been wounded “in battle”, was at death’s door; and at last his whereabouts were discovered.

And this was the moment which Mr. Hogan chose to propose a date for the storm-test that he had postponed: Wallace had from him a letter correctly directed to “053, Art., 1432... O. Wallace, G.H., Worcester”, the date now proposed being the twelfth of September, only seven days thence. “It was impossible”, Hogan wrote, “to propose a date before, not only because your own army appeared to be unaware of your whereabouts within it, but because of difficulties with the Corporation of the Royal Albert Hall, and because of the tangle of my engagements in general; nor, if the date which I now suggest fails to suit you, do I see my way to propose any other: the public must then reconcile itself to the annulment of the test...”

This letter Wallace handed to Crichton of Iraq, who was seated in regimentals of a squadron-major at his bedside, Crichton having come west from the debacle of the North-Eastern Army to the only corps of Young

Men that could any longer be considered to exist as a corps; and he said to Wallace “You’ll take no notice of this stuff, of course: that storm-test fakement was never any chop any road, and now’s your chance to skip free of the whole jimbang”.

But Wallace answered “If I take no notice, I simply play into Hogan’s hands: he thinks that I am too ill to bother, will toss it all off me, then he’ll howl abroad that I have backed out — bad for us, that; or he reckons that I may die, then he can cry out that he on his side did all that was possible to bring the thing about, but I decided to die. No, I will accept his date”.

“Oh, well” — Crichton sighed. “There’ll be one more big-sized battle, and if that test-racket comes off before it to make the wise Wallace look soft, the effect of it upon that battle will sure be bad. Do, Wallace, listen, listen—”

And Wallace: “But suppose the test makes me look the opposite of soft? That would abolish priests and lords and rats and flies in Japan and Java, which is what the Young Men are shedding their blood for. I know it sounds tommy-rot, but try to believe me, Crichton: I *do* know scientists who can cause storms — I *do* — for I’ve seen ’em do it — or no, not storms, but clouds, mist, and I don’t doubt that they can cause storms — enormous powers over sub-atomic forces. Also, I can talk to them at a distance, if they are not too far—”

“Well, well” — Crichton smiled— “I’m not saying it’s not so, since you say it is: but is it practical politics, Sonny? *I* am thinking of the *morale* of our men: battle impending — within ten days, Ritchie reckons — corps-cavalry starts marching at dawn to-morrow — not far from London, it will be — Wallingford-Reading line, as I pan it out — battle taller in momentousness than any yet fought on this side Jordan — not big in numbers, of course, for the two armies that began the campaigning are now

cramming the prisons and concentration-camps of Britain, only eighty thousand of our crowd left, and not more than seventy of the enemy, which seventy will include twenty recalled from the Indian sixty, aye, with some Brabant's Horse among 'em, Cape Mounted Rifles, Yeomanry, while our eighty will include Foreign Legion adventurers, with six thousand rookies having precious little training: so our *morale* should be sky-high, for though we outman them, and outgun them, the enemy have the planes, they have the tanks, they have the war-habit".

"I know, yes", Wallace said: "but, then, don't worry, there will be no storm-test in reality. I have hardly any more hope, *au fond*, in my scientists than you have; nor would I be allowed to go spouting in London, Dinka would quickly have me under lock-and-key. So I'll accept Hogan's date, then send four or five of our finest scouts to kidnap him on the quiet; it will then look as if it was *he* who has backed out... How would that do?"

"Not so easy, kidnapping Hogan", Crichton of Iraq remarked, but when he more or less acquiesced to this, Wallace, now well of his wounds, wrote accepting Hogan's date: whereupon the gale of the world's concern in the event burst out again with its previous turbidness, and the condition of Man was as when a breeze is breathing in amid the leaves of the aspen-tree, the American press afresh exhibiting a species of hysteria, the preachers shrieking, the speech-makers, the singers of theme-songs in music-halls, nor less in France, in Japan, celebrities airing their opinions, predictions, in interviews, the Atlantic liners as thick with visitors arriving as the cross-Channel ships, and the price of tickets to witness the event rising still from peak to peak.

This, though, did not please Caroleth Lavarock: for the Young Men's sake she was intolerantly hostile to what she called "the rawness" of that storm-test, and for Wallace's sake also: for, on ringing up Ivor Warwick to

enquire why it was he did not fly to see his Paddy, he answered “I will come... There are reasons that keep me back, moreover I am not at the moment keen to ally myself with Sir Borlase St. Aubyn, who means to be violent at the storm-test: when Wallace stands up on that platform as a target to him, he gives fire, lays Wallace low”; and, as Sir Borlase had himself dropped hints of this purpose to Caroleth, the thing was all on her nerves.

Four vain attempts she made to ‘phone to Wallace, who was now on the move south-eastward with his corps, until at last, at Woodstock, she succeeded in saying to him “If you still want me so hotly, come, have me”.

“Being of Heaven”, Wallace breathed: “but really? I ask out of the dust: will you marry this dog of yours?”

“Yes, Bigamist, I am so weak”.

“By God!”

“On one condition”.

“Condition?”

“That you back out of the storm-test crudity”.

“Oho!” Some moments’ dumbness now. Then, “Right! I back out” — which was deceitfully said, for he had no intention to back out; but since he already had in London six smart carles on the spring to kidnap Hogan, he felt that he could safely say “I back out”.

Unfortunately, the thought had entered other heads — in Whitehall, for example — that Wallace might find it good to kidnap Hogan, so that Wallace’s six found more than six loitering always round about the Hogan house, and wherever Hogan went eyes were there, wide awake, to take care of him; the kidnapers and the anti-kidnapers saw one another, fathomed one another, laughed with one another; as Darrel, the spy of Whitechapel, wrote of it to Wallace: “Interest in the test is become such a craze, that it is

no easy matter to defeat it now by such means as kidnapping: I see advertised a Wallace collar, a Hogan loaf; in Jugoslavia miniature flags fixed on jacket-lapels are being exhibited in millions in support of Wallace or of Hogan, and similar symbols are common about Stockholm, Brussels, Rome — Bombay; in France the fruit-broker, Larabit, has set up betting-booths in principal cities, betting three-to-two against adherents of either leader, and is expecting to reap plenteously, while the desertions from the Foreign Legion with the purpose of joining the Young Men was the subject of an interpellation yesterday in the Chamber, the French in general being adverse to the Wallace cause, because of the Wallace land-idea. What I, for my part, now counsel, as the lesser of two evils — if your Excellency sees your way — is a raw avowal of withdrawal..

But Wallace continued to trust in luck in respect of getting Hogan gripped, recklessly to trust — a spiritual result of the fact that nothing at the moment was to him of supreme interest but Caroleth Lavarock's lips; and with the object of washing quickly in the joy of that orgy — this before all things, then to think of other things — headlong to London he flew under the busby, in the dolman, of a captain of 14th Hussars, his arm in a sling, to perfect him with a look of woundedness and sick-list furlough.

And straight from his train he made for Caxton Hall, Westminster, to acquire a licence to marry, Caroleth so far knowing nothing of his coming — was in those moments at the 'phone, hearing from Ivor Warwick that Ivor was even then on the point of setting out at last to visit Paddy; and she bid him come, since Paddy, though now out, would soon be back.

Then from Westminster Wallace made for the Langham Hotel, where at once he flew to the 'phone to pour out to his loved-one "I have it! the licence".

And she: “You have? Come along, then, Scapegrace... The test is now duly annulled, is it?”

“Aye”, he deceitfully answered, hoping still stubbornly in his kidnappers’ luck, though this was only four days before the test-date.

And Caroleth: “Come, then, dart, you Priap, if you don’t get arrested on the way — or shot dead! Mad as a March-hare, I think: but hares make good venison, eh?”

“Lo, I come quickly!” he cried.

It was then three in the afternoon, everything propitious for their meeting, Paddy absent in the Park with her darling and perambulator; but even as Wallace darted from the ‘phone to speed to her, a knocking was at her house-door — Ivor Warwick, finally brought by her insinuations to see Paddy.

When he stood before her Caroleth’s gaze dwelt dumb some time on that old soul, her left eye going narrow with intensity of stress.

“Don’t look well”, she mentioned.

His lids fell. “Forgive me: some bewitchment has—”

“Now, if this thing isn’t too much!” she suddenly broke out with reproach: “I wonder if he expects me to stand this?” — for, having once seen Wallace suddenly old after being young, she had come to conclude that he could concoct *two* molys, to make old as to make young — and her ruth flew into fury.

“Tell me this”, she said to Ivor, “have you been with Dr. Wallace since the night I told you that it was he who eloped with Paddy?”

“That night I saw him after leaving you”, Ivor replied.

“I told you not to... And what did you eat or drink while with him?”

“Nothing”.

“You did. Try to remember”.

“Well, he locked me into his drawing-room, and I think — yes, there *was* a cake—”

Now there was a knocking at the house-door. A footman came with the name: “Dr. Wallace”.

And Caroleth: “Say to the gentleman that Miss Lavarock is not at home, but will soon communicate with him at his hotel”.

And to Ivor she now said “Oh, well, take heart, you will soon be yourself again. Dr. Wallace is in London, and I am going to give you his address: say that you will not disclose it”.

When he bowed, with “Quite so”, she handed him a note which she had now dashed off and enclosed, saying to him “Take this to Dr. Wallace at the Langham Hotel; and please do what he tells you”.

So Ivor was off, to be taken up at the hotel to Wallace’s flat, who had lately arrived from Caroleth “not-at-home”; and, seeing Ivor, Wallace went “Ha, ha” — with that twinkle in his leer— “you Ivor Warwick? Why the devil are you looking sixty years old? That’s the girls, My Boy; a harem, eh? ten a day; you must go slower, Ivor, must go slower”.

Ivor sneered without reply, now handing the note...

And Wallace read “Don’t think that you will see my face until Ivor Warwick is restored to his proper self. Pity you are such a rascal. Caroleth”.

Wallace started! asking himself, “How can she know that I did it? how? and know that I can restore him?” — moving frowning about; but then, suddenly throwing the perplexity of it off him, said to Ivor “Come on — come with me”; and together they walked round to Harley Street.

There, Ivor remaining in the dining-room, Wallace sped up to his bedroom to get and give some drips of that bezoar of the Deep that is the dew of youth.

But now when he opened the cupboard door, looked at the tube — a blow for him, dismay, mystification! only three or four drips being any more there...

Ghast he stood, breathing “My God! it evaporates!”

But, in fact, it was Caroleth who, since he last looked at the tube, had abstracted the larger part of that algin of youth: for, having beheld him suddenly old that day when he in mistake had drunk the old-age moly, she had apprehended that the effect of the youth moly, which she had drunk, might be temporary in her, and later on had stolen in and taken, to keep in case of need, most of what he, in restoring himself to youth, had left of the youth moly: so now scarcely any was left...

And “Oh, no!” he breathed, “I don’t give this away!”

Down now in a rush of passion he dashed afresh to the dining-room, and he stamped at Ivor with “I’m damned if I’ll stand — Good day, Sir: I have no business with you; tell Miss Lavarock from me that she may do as she dam-well chooses”.

With which message Ivor went back to Berkeley Square, Caroleth being now seated with her head hung far back, dreaming utopian things, having before her a harp flowing as wheatfields flow and flow when sweet winds blow, her hands within it winnowing with swift business. And through the thrumming of it she muttered to Ivor “Here you are, looking a little — depressed, Ivor... Didn’t Dr. Wallace offer you anything to drink?”

And Ivor: “No, he was not so polite — seems angry: I am to tell you from him that you may do as you please”.

The strings continued to bubble dulcetness, as brooks do that tinkle dulcet blubbings, Caroleth answering through the thrumming “Very well, I will do as I please... As to Paddy, she is still out, and I am glad, I don’t wish her to see you looking — gloomy. I suggested that she might take the baby

to visit his mother, and possibly she is gone to Hogan's: I'll see" — now discarding the harp to pass to the 'phone.

It was Mr. Hogan himself who answered her: "No, she has not come. And I pray you not to let her for the present — I have, I may say, a reason: after the storm-test, yes — not now, not now".

Caroleth started. "Storm-test... But isn't the storm-test annulled by Wallace? So I have been informed."

And Hogan: "Annulled, no. My! what people wouldn't all say, if it was! It is for the Twelfth — if nothing happens — as fixed".

"I see. Thanks. Goodbye" — several minutes she remained staring there, wounded at the discovery that Wallace had wanted to delude her.

Then, going again to Ivor, she sent him home, telling him "Keep heart: I may soon 'phone to you to come again"; then sat down some minutes, full of the fact that the test was still to come off. "But the madman will be shot!" she muttered, jumping up now to 'phone to Sir Borlase St. Aubyn at The Albany, to say "I have been expecting you, and feel neglected."

And he: "That so? You know how to flatter, don't you?"

"In no mood for flattering", she answered: "on the contrary, I'm cross: for a little bird has been chirping to me that you purpose to shoot at Wallace when he offers his body to your vengeance at the test".

This got the baronet jealous-angry. "And you care? *You* don't care for that man!"

She answered coldly "But if I care for the Young Men's cause, must I not therefore care for Wallace's life?"

This comforted. "Is that it?" he asked.

And she: "But is it an actual fact that you have that intention?"

"A natural intention, don't you think? Wherever and whenever I first get the man I go for him".

“But if I pray you to drop it?”

“Then, it is dropped. But for a consideration, eh? Quid pro quo. I am in a bargaining mood”.

“You still want to marry me?”

“You know”.

“Come round: let’s discuss it”.

“I have to be at the Home Office — a Dinka appointment: will tonight do? dine with me?”

“All right: come for me. Goodbye”.

And now she rang up Wallace at the Langham Hotel, to say “I am not at the moment disposed to say much to you; but I ought to warn you: understand that, if you get so far as to stand up at the test — which is *not*, as you said, annulled — you will get no farther, a bullet will blow you out”.

Dumbness; then Wallace: “Bullet... I — see. But, then, of course, men did not make themselves, they belong to what made them. I am frightened of bullets, I confess, but, if what I do is for the public good — Who is going to shoot me? Little nigger named St. Aubyn?”

And Caroleth: “Not without reason, you know: he has seen his girl in a police-court — not quite right in her head even now. See what vast harm one unharnessed man can do”.

This got Wallace still crosser. “Pooh, pooh, common Tom’s talk, Dear Lady. How can one living thing do ‘vast harm’ to one other? The vastest harm one can do is to kill the other; but billions of beings cease to live each minute — fleas and chieftains of the spheres: that’s a fact; and, if the death of one is of no importance, still less, if possible, is the manner of his death, by pneumonia, or typhoon, or a bullet. It is unintelligence which does vast harm, for fools harm humanity, while rogues harm Matt or Margaret. But what I can’t understand is how you come to know the things you seem to

know: who told you, told Ivor Warwick, told this St. Aubyn, that I have had anything to do with the little Paddy?”

“It would be long to relate”, Caroleth coldly answered.

“Anyway, you have made me get a licence to marry: am I now to tear that up?”

“You may as well — unless I am to see Ivor Warwick restored to his proper self, and to know for certain that the absurd storm-test is not to take place”.

“But it is impossible to understand — How has it entered your head that I am able to ‘restore’ — ?”

“By putting two and two together” — coldly from Caroleth.

And Wallace: “Aye, anything but putting One and One together, as I want you to. As to the storm-test, it is less ‘absurd’ than you discern, though to me, too, it is sometimes absurd, and I am doing all I know to stop it from occurring; but I am determined not to back out of it: *that*, I can see, would be the worst I could do in the Young Men’s interests. So I thank you for your warning, but crowds of bullets crucifying each inch of me will not stop me”.

“I will stop you, then”, she muttered, her lips now fixed; and she said “Goodbye.”

Immediately she proceeded to ‘phone again to Hogan... “I conceive that you are not keen on the taking place of the test, the challenge to which was made you in an impulse, and accepted by you in an impulse: no more keen than I am. So let us stop it, as we can, since Wallace is in London, and would no doubt be at once snapped up, if you whisper it to Dinka. Wallace is at the Langham Hotel in the disguise, I hear, of a captain of Hussars”.

And Hogan: “Ah, so?... Captain of Hussars, Langham Hotel... thanks! I’ll consider whether and how I can fix it”.

He did not consider long! Almost at once Dinka knew...

Then Hogan waited, and Caroleth waited, for the arrest of Wallace.

But the next day passed, and the next — no news.

Hogan and Caroleth sat in prickles of expectancy; but the bomb failed to go off.

They had, in fact, misread the mind of Dinka, who, ever “tricky”, ever had his fingers on the pulse of the people’s fevers, and to cut out the storm-test now by the seizure of Wallace would have been to cause that other sort of storm that he was always cautious to avoid. The King had lately come to London from Windsor to give dinners to the Kings of Sweden, Denmark, different princes, and to take the bunch of them to witness which way the test-show went; all the nations were agog at “storm-test” as when an organism is gone rollick with grog: Dinka felt it an indelicate thing to step in. But he had also a war-motive far stronger: for now the two armies stood confronted on a Wallingford-Reading line for a final trial of strengths, precisely as Crichton of Iraq had forecasted: the Old Men assembling a far-flung park of aeroplanes, twenty-five square miles, to wipe out the enemy under one catastrophe of fire from heaven: the Young Men assembling men, with mortar and howitzer, hand-grenade, pompom, field-gun, machine-gun, to overwhelm the enemy under weight of metal; and already skirmishings were bursting out to fret and flicker a little, here, there, and be finished. In which condition of things Dinka *wished* the test to take place, that Wallace, discredited, might harm his men’s *morale*; *then* to arrest.

So Wallace remained free; but during a day or two Hogan was so sure of an arrest, that he let himself say in a Press Association “interview” that he had reason to believe that Wallace was anything but eager for the test, and was now in London, with the object, probably, of getting himself arrested, to evade the test: the rumour of which statement flew like loosened effluvia

during two days in the newspapers of Europe and America; and it had upon the Young Men army a marked effect of depression, of which every officer was conscious: certainly, in each of three skirmishes which occurred during the two pre-test days the Young Men forces suffered definite defeats.

But, then, no arrest of Wallace followed: so that Hogan, seeing now that he could not get Wallace arrested, dropped back upon the plan to get himself kidnapped: for Hogan now had hardly any hope, whatever he once had, of getting a storm from God, his conscience, once spotless, having gone all fogged: so at ten in the forenoon of the test-date, noting from a window three of the kidnapper party in a side-street, he went down, climbed a back-wall to hide himself from his guardians, and came out through someone's garden-gate in among the kidnappers.

Upon which Darrel, the Whitechapel spy, remarked to him "We have to ask you to come with us, Mr. Hogan".

Hogan answered "You have a nerve, Sir, to dare to take my person".

And Darrel: "Don't look at it like that, Mr. Hogan — politics, Sir. Do we tie your mouth up, or will you keep quiet?"

"I'll keep quiet" — he got into the kidnappers' car.

Such, then, was the effect upon Hogan of Dinka's unwillingness to arrest Wallace; but upon Caroleth Lavarock, for her part, the effect was a heightening to a crisis of her apprehension that Wallace would be shot at the test. She had before toyed with St. Aubyn's proposal of prompt marriage as payment for an abandonment of his intent to shoot; but now, seeing no other way out, she took the proposal into practical consideration, and, desperately set upon rescuing Wallace, consented to it.

As to Wallace himself, he had to live through three pre-test days of dreadful strain: he kept having intimations from the army that his presence at the front was desirable, and he kept asking himself "Why, why, am I in

London?"; his kidnapping party were continuing to fail: the test, he now felt, would undoubtedly take place, and the tender memory, still fresh in his flesh, of the revolver-shots which had rent him rendered him most shrinkingly timorous of the new wound which he was now sure of receiving; on the second day he even weakened to the extent of attempting to get himself arrested, leaving the hotel to go to his own home, and sending from "Brown" a telegram to the Home Office, "Wallace can be found in his Harley Street house", so as, at all costs, to rescue himself from the gall of the Gethsemane of the storm-test: he was astonished when no arrest followed! Meantime, his tormented midnights were spent in sighings of orison, on his knees, his "psychophone" chronic on his forehead; and with all his soul he besought, he implored, wrestling long in prayer with those sailors whom once he had known in their roaming home. Nor was he all without impressions of response from them, but very indefinite, remote, especially in the first of the nights when he heard, or scented, say, the replies "remembers"... "mother"... "coming"; but in the second midnight the impressions were less disconnected, stingy; and in the third midnight he emerged out of that stress of his supplications with some strange surmise of joy prying somewhere in his consciousness — pale he was, dazed, staring at vacancy, grinning, giddied, half inclined to laugh, half inclined to cry: he had got "egg's mother remembers"... "pray at the time"... "will not be far from you"...

When at eleven the next forenoon, the test-date, he was told at the 'phone, "This is Frank Darrel speaking, Sir... We have Hogan at last... now taking him to the Windsor House", Wallace made this answer, "Take him back home, set him free".

This at the Langham Hotel, to which he had again gone that morning — to *avoid* capture now...

And some minutes after being rung up by Darrel he was rung up by Caroleth Lavarock to be told, "I have with me Ivor Warwick: kindly say if it is any good my sending him again to you?"

For she, in an hour when Paddy was out, had called Ivor to her side, in order to give him to drink those drops of elixir which she had nicked from Wallace; but, being most reluctant to lose them, she had decided at the final moment before giving to try to conjure Wallace to give, imagining that Wallace could concoct as much of the azoth as he chose.

And, by luck, Wallace was at present in a better temper — had indeed rushed into a state of exhilaration in consequence of hopes more rose-coloured than were warranted. He answered to Caroleth "You don't know what you ask — a vast favour".

And she: "He has suffered vastly. It is odd — Don't you pity him? No feeling for him?"

"Well — yes. But the fellow attacked me!"

"Now, could he help?"

"And if I do? You'll give in?"

"If you do, then when the storm-test is an accomplished fact which cannot be undone, and you are down in the mouth, I may pity *you*, and be disposed to come to terms".

Now Wallace cried out "I mayn't be down in the mouth! I have a fancy now that my Masters are in a good mood, and not far from me. Young Woman! Caroleth! Think of it! New heavens and a new earth!"

Taken rather aback by that cry, Caroleth presently said "Oh, well, tomorrow when it will be all over is nearly here... But shall I send him? Please — for me—"

And Wallace: "Oh, very well, send him, send him. But, ah, you are a costly thing; I buy you with many times your weight in diamonds".

Again, then, Ivor was sent to the hotel, again to walk thence round to Harley Street with Wallace, who, after going upstairs, came again to the dining-room with two phials, which he gave, saying to Ivor “This phial contains three drops of a drug that is nearly as strong as nicotine or prussic acid, and is as good as those are bad: swallow them, you; and this other phial contains one drop of the same: make your Paddy swallow it, then marry her. And you should love me well, My Friend: for these four are the only drips of the drug that exist on this globe, and it will be a thousand years, maybe two, before a human being makes any more”.

Five hours afterwards Ivor Warwick departed from that house adance with newness of youth; and at Berkeley Square, having Paddy now wrapped in his arms, put to her lips, as directed, that tiny drip in the second phial: so she was alaugh by the time he was dining with her and Caroleth and the Dowager Duchess of Chumley; with which three, too, he drove to the test, Paddy now parting without regret from her big-bellied baby, her craze for him now dead, while Caroleth went all asmile at the prattling, the wild-eyed liveliness of Ivor and Paddy, gowned, she, in a gorgeous design of flowered satin with sleeves which were enormities — little anticipating that that gown was to come off her quicker than it had gone on.

XXV. THE STORM-TEST



THESE FOUR, THEN, together saw from Caroleth's box in the Hall that storm-test at which the human host stood hushed, as when a sun's eclipse is being transacted, and the spheres are in a fix of travail.

The spaces about the Albert Hall, streets leading to it, were not less bethronged than the hall itself, nor was Britain's consciousness of the event keener than Tahiti's.

Many sat on the platform, at their centre being Mr. Hogan, who conducted the meeting, this beginning with a fanfare of fifty trumpets and the National Anthem when the King and Queen, together with their group of guests, appeared, this to be followed, with Wallace's consent, by a "hymn", selected by Wallace, in which all the hall joined.

O God, our Help in ages past,
Our Hope for years to come,
Our Shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal Home....

Time like an ever-rolling stream
Bears all its sons away,
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day....

Whereupon choristers in white gowns who occupied the arena — a thousand delegates from country choirs combined with a thousand members

of London Choral Societies, and with the Broadcasting Corporation's Symphony Orchestra — rendered selections from “The Creation”.

And now from a little book that he had Mr. Hogan stood to read out something:

And it came to pass that Ahab said unto Elijah, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

And Elijah answered, I have not troubled Israel, but thou, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord, and hast followed Baal.

Now therefore send and gather all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty.

So Ahab sent and gathered them together unto Mount Carmel.

Then said Elijah, Let them cut one bullock in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will cut in pieces another bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And let them call upon their god, and I will call upon the Lord; and the god that answereth by fire, let him be God.

And all the people said, It is well spoken.

Then the prophets of Baal cut in pieces a bullock, and called upon Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O, Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they cut themselves with knives and lances.

And Elijah built an altar, and cut a bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And Elijah said, Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God.

Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones.

And when all the people saw it, they fell upon their faces; and they said, The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God.

And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one escape. And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

On reading which, Mr. Hogan, now leaning forward on his fists, addressed the assembly — rather blanched, a ribbedness anon appearing at that right-angle of his jaw, but much less blanched than Wallace, who, at a small table at Hogan's right, was every moment expecting the gash of gunshot in his flesh; and Hogan spoke with a simplicity, a subduedness, a sadness of humility, yet a manliness also, that won the hearts of all. He said that, Dr. Wallace having been struck by lightning at a public meeting, he, Hogan, had — perhaps unwarrantably — ascribed the stroke to the anger of God; but Dr. Wallace had answered that God's lightning, like everything that happens, is not Christian nor Buddhist, but scientific, so that the Good of Man consists, not in being Christian, but in being scientific, then had gone on to challenge him, Hogan, to a test, in which he, Hogan, should supplicate Jehovah, the God of Christians, to send out lightnings, Dr. Wallace supplicating some scientists whom he claimed to know to send out lightnings: and, if a storm came for him, Hogan, then God was, like Hogan, Christian, and Good consisted in being Christian; but if a storm came for Dr. Wallace, then God was, like Dr. Wallace, anti-Christian, scientific, and Good consisted in being scientific. He, Hogan, at the goad of the moment, had hardly been able to resist the impulse to accept a challenge so direct and public, and had accepted — the result being that assembly, on which was bent that night the gaze of the ryot of the Ganges, and of the rabble of junk-dwellers that jump from junk to junk familiarly in their city of junks on the Yangtsekiang. "But", he added, "did I do well in accepting? I confess that I have since had searchings of heart: for though we are told that 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much', we are told, too, 'thou

shalt not tempt the Lord thy God', lest He let fly His hand and cut you off, and, if I cry for his lightnings, His lightnings may fly out to strike me dead with excess of light. Elijah tempted Him; but am! Elijah? Dust and ashes! miserable sinner, God knows, not fit to represent the three hundred million Christians who are depending this night upon my righteousness. But, then, pluck — and faith: if we have that faith — each and all of us — which can move even the founded mountain, then, I reckon, the trick's done — Lord, increase our faith! Let us pray”.

Now the prayer: begun by informing the Omnipresent of the object of the meeting (“Almighty God, we are met together tonight in order to—” etc), and continued with an entreaty that the oncoming of a storm might demonstrate to all men that the god of Christians was verily God — a thing which anything of a storm that night could hardly fail to demonstrate, for the night was quite calm — a little misty!

When the preacher ceased, sat down, a profound stillness was shattered by the Hall's organ starting to render Handel's “Largo”; and, this over, Mr. Dowdy (at Mr. Hogan's left) stood to bugle solo out of his lungs his beautiful tenor, rendering

O, rest in the Lord,

Wait patiently on Him....

that ribbedness, meantime, at the corners of Mr. Hogan's jaws stirring awork, his visage otherwise a mask of wax shewing no token of the woe that must have been his, as those minutes moved past, while the human family, hearkening to the broadcasting of it, or not hearkening, thought in its heart “He fails”.

Then after half-an-hour Wallace sprang upright with the wild countenance of some wight who is doing a run preliminary to springing into

a precipice, for he had been told that he would be laid low, and if ever man was desperately afraid and desperately brave, it was that man then.

He complimented Mr. Hogan on the fairness with which Hogan had represented the nature of the test, and had confessed that his, Hogan's, hope was based on "faith", whereas his, Wallace's, hope was based on knowledge. He, Wallace, did not pray "Lord, increase our faith", which was as much as to say "increase our rickety half-faith that Thou art what our half-savage fathers imagined Thee to be". His, Wallace's, faith could not possibly be increased, being complete — his faith that no storm could be brought-on by 'the prayer of a righteous man', could only be brought-on by science, by *that* prayer which labour was, by the prayer of the labouratory. In other words, his, Wallace's "faith" was "faith" in a higher conception of God than Mr. Hogan's conception: so that in this test he, Wallace, was Elijah, and Mr. Hogan was the idolator, the Baal-sluggard: for idolatry was a lazy-minded lolling in a lower old conception of God, and since Elijah's Jehovah was doubtless a less low and lazy conception than Baal was, he, Wallace, was Elijah here. All living things were at all instants aware of the being of God — fleas, and so-called "atheists", and archangels, and savages, and Christians, and philosophers; and it is *the same* God that all were aware of — the Power that moves the universe; but there were higher and lower conceptions of Power. Mr. Hogan's conception was not high, was lazy-minded, idolatrous; he might call the God of his conception "Power" and "Almighty", but that God could never cause a storm, or do anything whatever, for, as He had qualities, He was not Force (which had no qualities), and nothing but Force could do anything whatever. But Power was Force: for Power was power to make an event happen, and since only five events could possibly happen — (i) something might move, (2) something might stop moving, (3) something might move faster, (4)

something might move slower, (5) something might move on a new course — since no other event could happen, and since these events, we know, were due to Force, therefore Power was Force, and had no qualities. Then again, Mr. Hogan had that conception of the ancients and savages that Power, the Mover, could be moved — by prayers of the righteous man! But how could Power be moved, when Power alone could move, and when nothing *else* than Power was power? Power was “Absolute”, as philosophers babbled — had no qualities, was a Dark Somehow that caused motion, and could not be altered in quantity; that was all that could ever be known by any soul about Power: the created were far from ever beginning a little to grasp the Uncreated. If Power had qualities, a nature, like a cock, an axe, Power would be forced, like cocks, axes, to behave according to its nature, and since Force alone could *force*, Force would be forcing Force, which was nonsense; and if God had a nature, was fat, or loving, or fussy, or ten-fingered, then God couldn’t help loving, and would be an under-God, since Nature which forced him to love would be Force, would be God. So God did not make apes nor men “in his own image”, having no image, and “thou shalt not make to thyself any mental image, nor bow down to Mumbo Jumbo, for I, the Lord thy God, am an imageless sort of god, not unworthy the worship of your heart’s heart, as your father’s half-a-farthing fancies are”. So, if some of them supposed that he, Wallace, stood there representing irréligion, lazy-mindedness, that was nonsense, it was the other lot who were idolatrous: he, Wallace, on the contrary, was what Goethe called Spinoza, “ein Gott-betrunkener Mensch”, “a God-drunken fellow”: for God was in all his thoughts: he had seen such visions of loveliness as no tongue could utter, washed in joys profounder than ever plummet sounded: which joys he wanted them all to rollick in through a concept of God as true

as his — his, he knew, being true a little — a *very* little — soon to become idolatrous, as Mr. Hogan's at present was idolatrous...

At this point Wallace abruptly sat down, affrighted, sighing “No, I can't.. experiencing a feeling that a bullet was even now on the wing to meet his bosom. That, though, was not so; and he had no sooner touched his chair than up anew he darted, shewing a face still more ashen-wild than before, to pant “I am done... had more to say, but — I can't... I'll now make my supplication to my Masters...”

Now he caught from a pocket his “psychophone” to clap upon his forehead, and raise his face to the heavenly places...

“Egg!” — a mutter, some of which Mr. Hogan could catch, no one else — “Now hatched... supernal friend, friend of Terra, lover of worlds — this is the moment — I come to you: it is to get a world a step higher in its climb toward heaven, its thoughts of God; and your august Mother, she sent me a message, she said that if ever I appealed to her, and she was near to hear, and the matter was large, she would hearken to me. Now's the hour: send out tempest, rend up by the roots the atmosphere of this planet, throw it like dust, send it bellowing for dismay like bulls: O, with your fine ear hear, and be enticed by a soul that lies bowed before the Divine power of your science: hear, O, hear, hear..

Now with a feeling of reprieve and astonishment that still he was not shot he suddenly sat, having half forgotten in the urgency of his orison the gun which lurked, but now remembering with a freshness of shock.

As he sat, the Hall's organ started to recite, “Still as the Night”.

For six minutes it continued to recite...

Until somewhere some startling window slammed smartly, and like a spirit that trips in dance the breath of a wind visited that chamber with freshness of animation, to whisk through it, quicken, thrill it to a quivering

of the lip, kindling every eye to a fire of ecstasy, ten thousand now bounding upright to fill the building with an uproar of vociferation — upright, too, now, being Dr. Wallace, who, stooping, was pointing a forefinger at Mr. Hogan, while soft he hummed “With a woola, woola, woola, and a wolla, wolla, woo.. Then, facing the assembly, he obtained by making gestures hush enough to be able to shout through the rumpus “Your Majesties! Ladies and Gentlemen! Will you take my advice? don’t wait, get home. A storm’s coming, I think — not meaning when I say ‘storm’ what *you* mean when you say ‘storm’: I mean storm primordial, the transcendency of Nature’s rank energies, Jurassic distraction, Triassic racket, the scientists who are sending it, since they condescend to send anything, being likely to send something definite, nor are they the kind of people likely to care for the convenience, or the life, of Bill and Pete — they don’t care for their own life, deeply sweeter to them than ours to us — only care for Life. So what I say is, get home, don’t linger, *I am off*” — at once he was in flight down the steps.

In being borne toward a doorway by the current of a crowd, crushed tight, he chanced to catch sight of Caroleth Lavarock’s flagrant gown five yards in front, and of Ivor and Paddy crushed against her: on which he attempted to hail them, shouting again and again through the row of gale and of mouths “Wait for me!”, and after some minutes they appeared to hear, for Caroleth, throwing a look round a little, lifted an arm. But an instant afterwards Wallace was conscious of a tapping on his back, and horridly he started on seeing that it was Sir Borlase St. Aubyn some feet in his rear reaching forward to touch him.

Sir Borlase now shouted at him “Wallace! you are never more to communicate with that lady, understand, Wallace!... I obtained this paper to give to you.”

By his and Wallace's collusion a document was now manoeuvred out of his hand to Wallace's hand.

Meantime, the fainting of a lady near in front of Wallace had produced a new focus of confusion in the crowd, and when Wallace again gazed round, his eyes now failed to find any sign of the Caroleth group.

Nor was it till he was at his car that he could give a glance at the document handed him, and his forehead dropped at it with such an abandon as if the baronet's gunshot had actually gashed his heart: it was a marriage certificate of Caroleth's marriage with the baronet that afternoon in Westminster.

And since Wallace did not know her motive, that she had been driven to the marriage in order to win from the baronet a promise not to lift a revolver at Wallace in the storm-test, it was a lost despondent heart that drove to his Harley Street home that evening.

XXVI. TURMOIL



HE MIGHT NOT have been any more lost, despondent, if he had known that two spies in a motor were moving behind his motor, the providence of the Home Office having ordained that his arrest should follow the storm-test, whatever its result.

And the shortness of that trip to Harley Street had in it something of astonishment: for though those routes were crowded, the two motors moved quicker than they meant, since the wind came out of west and south, and before long such an object as a motor-car was like fluff to its force.

At this hour, though, the storming of men (in towns) was more boisterous than the winds: queues a thousand yards long waiting for trains, trams, 'buses; stairs and escalators of undergrounds crammed with people desperately seeking trains, Charing Cross underground, in the thick of the chaos of rush and crush, having to be closed for nearly an hour — no more room on platforms, trains crammed with standing men; the parks, too, were at this hour being crammed, and remained open through the night, many at this time finding rest for the feet by sitting down on the pavements, on door-steps, in the middle of streets, a multitude somehow of *prams* more harrassing the muddle of that tempest of men.

And rapidly down like the heart of Man sank the barometer, the record of the Meteorological office being to come after which was over-hurricane, and then, about two in the morning (G.M.T.), over-over-hurricane, when the turmoil of earth and heaven became deafening, so that naught could any longer be heard but the bawling of the dark, and the heart of all that was

mortal paused aghast at the appalling dominance of the voice of God. That night none of our race shut down the eyelids to drowse, and the fowls of the air were led astonished astray on aerial voyages strange and lorn.

It is known that in the China Sea that night, the Timor Sea — there about the Philippines, Borneo, Celebes — the sea was bubbling hot, a pot aboil, over some thousands of square kilometres, eating out the *baru* seams of junks, the pitch of ships' seams: and this is considered to have been the sufficient cause of a storm which was universal on the earth.

In one island, Nevis (West Indies), Life appears to have been wiped out, except for one cynical kitten found surviving, which licked an itch of her skin; and something like this was also true of Florida Keys, of South Florida, of some regions of India, and of some of Japan, while in Europe somehow the loss of (human) life was as small as the loss of property was enormous — buildings, ships, stock, crops, forests.

As to Florida, Miami and Palm Beach were wafted away, hardly any trace of them remaining. At about nine o'clock a Florida aeroplane which, after a wireless warning, started out, racing the storm, to bid the three hundred inhabitants of Ritter Island flee, actually arrived, alighted on the island, but — no one was now alive in it.

Freaks of that sort by the storm were not infrequent: the fields round about Itchenor (Sussex) were found the next daybreak to present the appearance of a sea, crowded to come after which was over-hurricane, and then, about two in the morning (G.M.T.), over-over-hurricane, when the turmoil of earth and heaven became deafening, so that naught could any longer be heard but the bawling of the dark, and the heart of all that was mortal paused aghast at the appalling dominance of the voice of God. That night none of our race shut down the eyelids to drowse, and the fowls of the air were led astonished astray on aerial voyages strange and lorn.

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Freaks of that sort by the storm were not infrequent: the fields round about Itchenor (Sussex) were found the next daybreak to present the appearance of a sea, crowded with craft from the harbour; at some points flocks of house-roofs were seen wayfaring together in the air, like migrations of great geese streaming on their way; another freak-effect was the *smell* that buildings emanated a minute before tumbling, as many persons whose scent was alert learned that night, and so, by flying in time, saved their lives (smell of mortar newly exposed?); another freak-effect was accesses of sexual lewdness — that brisk business of the bull that leaps — this being no doubt due to a feeling of newness and doomsday, holiday from the ordinary walk and law, the universal old world come now to its term, and a new world summoned to birth by that rumpus of the archangel's

trump which the mouth of the tempest was sounding from Pole to Pole: at about eleven a lady in the shreds of a chemise dashed for shelter into a telephone call-box at Notting Hill, a gentleman in tatters dashed in, they were quite unacquainted, yet within some minutes a child was conceived there, of which the gentleman was never to know that he was the parent (the lady being married), and there may have been millions of similar incidents; freakish, too, the story of how at East How (near Bournemouth) an oak-tree dropped perpendicular out of the air into the middle of a bungalow's roof, guarded the roof from being blown away, and afterwards looked as if it had grown there; for three or four days there was nothing like a train, tram, 'bus running, no vehicle on any road, owing to tree-trunks not removed, nor in tubes etc. any train, owing to the break-down of electricity; at the start of the storm some Cardiff policemen, hearing what they thought to be a burglar-alarm going on in an undertaker's garage, surrounded, entered, the garage, to discover that the noise was coming from a motor horn which the storm had short-circuited: one hour later in the night slight would have been their concern about burglars!

But for fully an hour after coming home Wallace sat motionless in his drawing-room, bowed down, brow in hands, except when, twice, he lifted his head in listening to tidings from Reading headquarters out of a superhet receiver near him, tuned to the army's short-wave; but, as the second message had broken off abruptly, he expected no more; and, seated there in grief, with fragments of his windows' glass at his feet, he said within himself "What use is my heart-beat to me now, with that darling madness of the tune that her being hums always to haunt my ear? Howl away! blow me to hell away! howl! blow! I have half a mind myself to blow — blow my brains out".

But at half-past nine the superhet anew broke out — General Ritchie in high spirits at the microphone, with “I have the hope that your Excellency is listening. They have managed to patch-up the aerial break-down of half-an-hour ago, and I take the opportunity — I think I am not premature in announcing now a final victory of the Young Men of England over the Old Fogeys of that ilk. Once again, as in The Armada of 1688, England has been saved by a gale, for of the armada of aeroplanes that started out at 8.45 to annihilate our lines none has arrived: I can hardly be far wrong in stating that every one has come a cropper. Nice high winds, Your Excellency — nice high winds. Winds, happily, behind our men, who are now advancing to attack along our whole front — looking, I am afraid, a rather draggled and ragged crew, the gale playing some curious pranks, I gather, with the guns; but our boys, like Scots, advance with the name of Wallace in their mouths, and with hearts so high now, that I doubt if a war-host thrice their number would subdue the resolution of these troops. They, poor beggars, will be in a sorry way tomorrow: nothing resembling a tent remains; no roof is over my own head, as I speak; but we shall march, Your Excellency, into London, as the clock—”

At this point the superhet anew went mute, at the same moment that the room went dark, but for the off-shine shed abroad from some flaming house not far, all being now up with electricity in London for that night (except cell-electricity); and in that rufous gloom Wallace sat on, again grasping his bowed brow, his fingers amid the mop of wildness that his hair now was, and, grinding his teeth, he groaned within himself “Howl away! blow me to hell away! howl! blow!”, the tempest’s hubbub now resembling the roaring of a cohort of aeroplanes that, moving close overhead, boom their chorus with a reboant bravura, mixed with this continuous undertone being overtones of all the orchestras of the halls of the void, alto voices calling

lost, grave diapason grieving, soprano pealing, vox humana pleading; anon the mass of the air was, as it were, staggered and vibrated, uttering a noising as of gun-batteries gobbling volleys afar, or of carpets flapped; and anon there droned from its throat a solemn noising of snorers snoring at midnight, brief as when the spinning-top breathes a little in deeps of sleep.

Through which uproar Wallace could on a sudden catch a clattering of his door-knocker: whereupon he rushed to shout to his butler “Don’t open!”, since the knocking might be by officers sent to take him; then, speeding to a window, he peeped, to descry five lights (electric — men in this latter day having invented lamps which no tempest can quench); also, he could descry forms of five men: for the night was not yet quite deprived of light, in the skies a local smudge of shine diving through cloudrack, like some affrighted fowl diving to covert — the moon scooting in a mood of doom and darksome disaster, as when a woman bathing is overtaken by men, and trailing in a scare of shame what robes she clutches about her nudity, she rushes, scooting for cover. There was also the offshine from conflagrations which already were raging about London beyond the scope of fire-brigades’ control; by which offshine the five could descry Wallace at the window’s brink; and one of them with stentor lungs sent up “Your Excellency! Frank Darrel come for you, with your four London men: flee instantly with us; arrest impending: and, if arrested, you die tonight, for they know, having lost the war, that you will be rescued tomorrow..

Wallace shouted down “I hear! Right! I come!”

But even as he moved to go, he was aware of the coming of another group, three or four times more numerous than his five; was aware of the five rushing down to the “area”; aware of a revolver-shot; aware of the newcomers rushing across the street for cover to a corner nearly opposite; and now the outbreak of a fusillade of bullets between area and street-corner, so

that the storm seemed to cough and clear its throat — Wallace spurting to seize a revolver lying on his night-table; then, lurking behind the drawing-room wall between window and window, he pointed the revolver at the street-corner; but, able to descry nobody, and ever shy of destroying life, he fired no shot.

And still the interchange of shots continued between the combatant bodies — fifteen minutes, twenty — obstinately like the dropping of water on a rainy day... But now — dumbness: no more of the kettledrum's tremolo in the course of the tempest's oratorio... The following day one saw a pile of five lying dead there in the "area", the eye of one of their pocket-lamps staring alight....

And, they dead, the rest ran across to rattle Wallace's knocker; they howled "Open, Wallace!"; and, having a crowbar, attacked the door with hubbub, one group going by way of the area through the house to guard its back, while Wallace, hiding behind his bedroom's locked door, trepidant, watchful, eyeing the door aside, had in his hand that alkahest of old-age which once already had made of him an old man — he not intending to be arrested, since his arrest, his death, at the enemy's hand, any defeat of him now in the hour of victory and éclat, must seriously injure the Young Men's prestige; nor was he much in love with youth and vitality just now, owing to that marriage of Caroleth Lavarock: so chose to vanish in old-age, and elude arrest, since not by force, by ruse.

But he waited for the actual entrance of the enemy — had not long to wait! for before ever the officers' crowbar had made any impression upon the front door, the door suddenly took to itself wings to swing inward from the gale, and crack itself with racket against the stair. Bargrave, the butler, put his mouth to the bedroom to howl "Door's gone, Sir!"

“I hear!” calls Wallace, who had already divested himself of his officer’s uniform to don clothes of his own; and desperately now he tosses to his mouth what remained of that menstruum of the mundane roamers, sighing to himself “Goodbye for ever, Wallace”.

The arresting party were soon at the bedroom door, but, getting no entrance, left a guard, the rest going further, asearch; and when, after half-an-hour’s search of the house, the searchers turned up afresh at the bedroom door, determined to break in now, Wallace waited till the work had gone on nearly to completion, then got himself up from tossing on his bed of unease to open, and the troop stepped in to see, not the Wallace whom they knew in Hussar uniform, but an old man panting for breath, his back propped upon the wall, who was understood to want to say to them “You waste your time, Sirs, in seeking Dr. Wallace here, and that will be a kindness to one who is old, is ill, and indeed dying, if you now decide to go away, leaving me to die in peace”.

On which one shouted to the others, “No go! bird’s flown”; and presently the house was empty of them.

As they now pressed against the gale toward the Langham Hotel to grab anything arrestable there, their torches chanced to catch a glimpse of Sir Borlase St. Aubyn clinging like the shipwrecked to some railings, he having made his way hitherward to see officially that the arrest was affected. When he called “Not got him?”, an officer called “Bird flown!”, and pressed on, that not being a night for prattle, but mankind contrived to transact its business as the beasts contrive, finding no need for speaking.

Sir Borlase then turned his step toward Berkeley Square, with the purpose to urge his spouse to come now to his home, since he had not managed to cajole her to this after their marriage that afternoon, she having protested that a reception prevented.

On entering Berkeley Square his heart rather sank to note that the roof and upper part of her house were now down in the Square as were three others of those old buildings, while a fourth, unregarded by any brigade, was now grumbling in a soliloquy of conflagration, behaving as a flambeau to the midnight's drama, it being now long past ten o'clock, the tempest's trumpets now mustering its armies for the over-hurricane.

But the baronet battled on, to batter like a master at the front door; and his rumpus reached the ear of Caroleth Lavarock, who had taken refuge in the kitchen, with her being Paddy, Ivor, the Dowager Duchess of Chumley, the Hogan child lying agaze on some coal-sacks on a table, together with eight or nine domestics, the place an agitation of shines and giant shadows, dashed from a fire dancing mad in its grate, a marionette in rags, the strings of whose mad jigging the gale managed; and there was the glimmering of a single pocket-lamp — as at this hour all hospitals, stations, lifts, houses, colleges, were groping gloomy in a glimmering of pocket-lamps, since other lamps, gas, acetylene, candles, were at once puffed out.

Everything that one did, just to stand, sit, change position, one felt to be a rashness, a blasphemy, a challenge to the spirit of malignity in the gale to select one for laying dead; but Caroleth rose, and with the pocket-lamp scrambled upstairs — had the fancy that it was Wallace at the door, come to her for company in the solitude of the storm's enormousness.

As the door was protected from the gale by the house, she, with the help of the baronet's shoulder, managed to drag it open, and now he stood revealed, not now looking a grandee, but risen up out of death-struggle with the gale as ungraced a ragamuffin of the slums as herself.

Her heart hardened against him...

For since life itself was involved in the storm, and was at any moment likely to end, everything that night lost its old proportions, unrealities

vanished, naught but the storm's reality occupying the mind, all ceremony, nicety, amenity of speech appearing trifles: so when the baronet with his mouth in her ear howled into her "Come for you", she, with that offendedness and mare's-kick of women who, loved, do not love, answered with animus "I am not married to you — have a husband — you drove me to it — how dare you go about killing people who haven't even hurt your girl's little finger?"

On her lips leaving his ear, the baronet, leaning toward her, brought his lips near her ear to tell her in a sort of confidence "Look here, damn you — there — take it — I say *damn* you" — he vanished as the door crashed to its slam, for something like a vacuum was in front of it.

Then, with halts and runs, Caroleth fought the campaign of her way back to the below-stairs, to take her seat again on a kitchen-chair near the grate, the little household-group waiting round her recluse like some group within a room on its way to the moon, blown out of some tube's mouth to roam the ether, some seated on the floor, mute as at a wake, waiting in scare for what the mood of that almighty of the tempest might next decide to do.

The baby sat up, began to bellow, as his round mouth proved, but nobody paid any attention: his reign was over.

And pretty quickly now Caroleth began to question whether she had not been rash, impetuous, in blabbing her fact to the baronet: for might he not *now* go and do what his promise to her had stopped him from doing at the storm-test? She had noticed no weapon on him, except a cane; but he might have had a weapon. This set her fidgety. After half-an-hour of anxiety she shouted at Ivor, who sat nigh her, "Going to Harley Street".

"Can't do that" — from Ivor: "give a message: I will go".

And Paddy, lifting her head from his shoulder: "I, too".

"You? No", cries Ivor.

“If you can, I can”, says Paddy.

And Caroleth: “Very well, tell him Come”.

When he stood up Paddy stood up, and when he won his first skirmish, the journey to the open, Paddy was his ally, though the so-called “over-hurricane” was now bawling, and murk and turbulence were the world; but, though the moon had now foundered like many another vessel, they could still more or less see, having the pocket-lamp, and having that glare which regions of conflagration gave out, this revealing the grotesque resemblance of every congregation of trees to a navy of ship’s-masts leaning in a breeze, no branch now being on any tree, some stretches of oak-branches, leafless on the ground, having the appearance of heaps of Negroes’ hair. Also the storm was warm, and not to be called wet (in Britain), though there was hail here and there, and local cloudbursts, brief torrents of rain, tropical, if inches within six minutes, and hailstones elsewhere like plums pelting, laying low some. But no drop wetted Ivor and Paddy, though foreigners had wetness enough — flood — a romp of waters sixteen feet deep leaping rollick, with song, down the Rocky Mountains, to drown a thousand in Colorado; cloudbursts in Kansas, Texas; the Republican River in Nebraska, its banks broken, rolling with a cataract’s roaring four miles wide, carrying on its bosom farm-houses that like arks bore travellers on their roofs, and spreading into a lake a hundred miles wide over the plain between Republican and Platte, those dots over all the lake’s face being the bodies of men and cattle. The Alleghany, too, rising forty feet, flooded Pittsburg (Pa.), fire then breaking out in an oil-company’s plant, and when some oil-tanks exploded, the oil, floating ablaze on the flood, set the town aflame; Johnstown, too, on the bursting of the Wilmer Dam, and the submergence of its thirty bridges, was all under water; while at McClelland Town a coal-pit, flooded, was the darksome catacomb of five hundred miners. The Seine

Valley, too, was flooded, and in the Vaucluse country (South France) hundreds of thousands were made homeless, hundreds arriving by boat at an Avignon that was an island in a Rhone Valley that was a sea — this sea hiding hamlets, farmsteads; in Switzerland the Aire, and the Drize, tributaries of the Rhone, overflowed the low regions round Geneva, drowning farms, cutting off houses; in the Ardeche were landslides; and down into that devouring mouth of the sea slid in thousands of tons of flour the cliffs of England, cloud on cloud deciding to slide and fly, at Dover, Folkestone, Cromer... For the sea that night of riot was irrational, like a madman that rends out his hair at a dance, and had “malevolence-of-the-insane”, billows mounting sixty feet to surmount sea-walls and pound promenades that became blizzards of spray, thickets of snakes’ hissings, the raucousness of the waters’ wrath being audible far inland; at Key West (Florida) breakers which grasped a travelling train dragged it off into that gorge of the sea, as crocodiles drag dogs; Gravesend High Street became a river; the wood-blocks of roads were torn up; ‘buses, cars, were soon ploughing slow through rivers in the streets of Chatham, Gillingham; shingle three feet deep buried Hythe promenade, beach-huts being swung like tennis-balls forty feet to the sea-wall, the sea streaming through the streets, barrels, sofas, floating about rooms in West Parade; at Sydney (Australia) a tram was struck three yards from its rails; at our Brighton many tons of water poured into the Aquarium subway, broke through two sets of doors, flooded the forecourt; and though each ship on the sea immediately pelted for shelter, if near shelter, filling the ether with a crisscross of S.O.S., not many rescued themselves, but the benighted carack, battleship, liner, dived forlorn in the vast dark, as light to the storm’s might as the tiny yacht, coble, koff, the boy and dhow and nugger, felucca, xebec; dozens in Southampton Water tossed to be smashed upon the quays

of docks; fishingboats, speedboats, motorboats, rowboats, tossed from moorings; tankers at Netley, hoppers, dredgers; lightships themselves becoming wandering lights; lighthouses broken short, like every kind of tower, minar, like factory-chimneys, and in the air like larks factories, railways' engine-sheds, hoardings.

And amid the wreckage strange escapes: near Amiens a man who had a woman tied to his belt, and a baby, while clinging neck-deep to a tree, managed to catch a hut which was floating past, to clamber in, and, roaming about in this sort of craft, rode out the storm; every one of seventy girl-tailors, whose work-rooms were on an upper floor of a gown-factory in St. Martin's (London), were marshalled and marched to safety after an explosion in the basement had thrown the whole fabric aslant; from a cargo-steamer that had turned turtle in the Mersey-mouth, a cabin-boy, by *swimming* the mountains from off Formby Point, reached Formby Beach; the central span of the Menai Bridge was so far dislodged, one could not see why the bridge was not destroyed, but it lived through; a French ketch, anchored in a Land's End bay, dragged, drifted, but, even as she sank, her four, *and* a dog, were got into the Sennen lifeboat, and survived; so, too, as regards a Dunkirk-Channel boat, which, her propeller having picked up a wire, was entangled and trapped in Folkestone Harbour: an improbable tug that took her in tow for Dover got there safe. And heavenly like the escapes, the heroisms, fidelities to very death. It appears that people who work for a world — nurses, lifeboat-men, scientists, firemen, postmen, coastguards — work with more happiness and heartiness than those who toil for an “employer's” pocket and for their own stomach's comfort: when at the start of the storm shops were besieged for candles, oil, and when these turned out unserviceable, nurses were still not defeated — wrote their reports by the shabby sheen of flashlamps; all round our shores propellers were racing

when sterns shot upward, hand-gear was being tried for steering when fires, bursting out, burned steering-gear pipes, sinkings were occurring 6 per minute: yet everywhere lifeboats and tugs dared to try to answer distress-signals; the Ramsgate lifeboat, attracted by a motor-tanker blown on to the Goodwins near the Brake Lightship, dashed out, found the tanker shipping each sea that towered, found her too bulky to be towed, but stood-by over an hour, tholing all that warfare of waters, till the tanker sank; five of the Yarmouth (Isle of Wight) lifeboat-crew had the audacity to dash out in a *rowing-boat*, on catching the dark outcries of a brig's skipper, who in a dinghy was rowing from her; they could not see him; he and they perished, but when a motorboat was towing a coal-barge over Plymouth Sound, and, on the tow-rope parting, both foundered, a lifeboat that was thereabout came up in time to rescue two of the motorboat's crew; and when the Salcombe (Devon) lifeboat tried to put to sea to a coasting-steamer anchored off Bolt Head, tried five times to cross the estuary-bar, and failed, her engine deficient in horse-power, another town's boat issued out auxiliary into the war, crossed, did the trick of victory; as to firemen, some fought all night, some standing on rafts, having on gas-masks, some, when acetylene gave out, fighting on by the shine of arc-lamps whose dynamos their fire-engines incited; when gaswork-furnaces at Worthing were flooded, the brigade there worked until daybreak, stubbornly pumping four thousand gallons a minute; one postman, driving the Brighton-to-Arundel nightmail-van, but blocked by a world of waters at Worthing, tried four roads, a miner in the colliery of the night, was tossed aloft, thrice ruined, crucified on the cross of the gale, degraded to a rag, to a gashed Scaramouch, a laughing-stock, but at daybreak actually presented himself and his van at Arundel, conqueror of the strong. He had survived (about two a.m.) things more terrific still than Ivor and Paddy when they did their trip

to Harley Street, *their* chief peril being the shell-fire of tiles, slates, bricks, flying all about, like snowstorm of brimstone upon Sodom: for though, all pylons being down, wires galore entangled all roads, most ‘phone-poles bringing down wire-entanglements of some forty wires, and though there was no lack of high-tension cables of grid lines on the ground, the peril of live wires was insignificant, since fires had started in main-control chambers, switchboards had blown up, as had distribution fuse-boxes, junction-boxes, manhole-covers been shot into the air: so that not long after the start of the storm no electric light or power was in any hotel, hospital, cinema, theatre, street, tramcar, trolley-bus, tube, house — except in some country-house provided with private-dynamo. But for Ivor and Paddy there was that missile danger, tiles, tiles, a manhole danger, too, a danger of being dashed too violently flat to survive. In Bond Street they were led pelting eastward astray with long-legged strides down a side-street (Brook Street), their run stumbling through the *débris* of bedsteads, sideboards, glass, wall, that cumbered all the street, until down they tumbled together, and lay still, astounded. Then, seeing a broken doorway, now wide as a gateway, near, Ivor, after getting himself up, grasped Paddy to his heart, and started to gain that opening; went down again with her; but again adventured, now to stagger in, and to butt against a taxicab that the gale had battered the doorway with, before depositing the cab in the “hall”. Into this cab they got, to sit gasping, exhausted, and get breath. And presently Paddy’s shouted whisper into Ivor’s ear: “Let it, I don’t care, do you?”

And Ivor’s shouted whisper: “Ah!”

And Paddy’s: “Kiss me!”

And Ivor’s: “Ah, Darling, not now”.

And Paddy’s: “Yes!”

And Ivor’s: “Soon! Let’s go on”.

Now the Puritan fellow forced himself, stood up, they went out anew, down to the bottom of Bond Street, into Oxford Street, where they saw a cloth-store caught gaily aloft, as paper-bags are, and there, too, sighted one woman — Ah, the wild soul, caught somewhither on her lorn orbit, baulked, lost, but obstinate. *They* were advancing in dashes, with respites to breathe, seizing chances, having the wind on their backs, but *she* was attempting to make head in the teeth of it, bent westward, her hair stretched rigid as glass between her head and the gale, flag of her distress and her temerity; and she seemed to have a child! — some white weight — the rags still left to her of something like a chemise reaching eastward away from her shoulders, struggling to leave her and soar to gaiety. Her only of women they encountered in their trip, London now cowering in its cellars, kitchens, undergrounds, all ear and fear, but in Vere Street they saw a man, taking breath apparently, embracing some railings — saw without knowing him, or he them, though it was Paddy's father.

For he, as Caroleth had apprehended, had made his way to Harley Street after leaving her — dark-minded that night, the baronet, dangerous, having no gun now, but having a cane, a flash-lamp, and fingers which worked, itching to give the world tit for tat. At Harley Street, indeed, he had seen only an old man on a bed, who somehow seemed to be Dr. Warwick, seemed to be near death; and without making any attempt to say anything, he had glanced and gone away — his angriness now uglier against Caroleth and against Hogan than against Wallace. “Horrid dog!” he called to the gale — that Hogan who had had his girl and had kept her dark from him, whose absurdities had brought upon the world this storm, had burst up the Old Men war-host, so that baronets now would have need to work for their grub, like their game-keepers: he'd draw a razor across his throat first. Noxious and turbulent as the night, murky, inclement, was his mind that night.

Out in the street again, he said “Flog the dog”, and although Hogan was leagues distant from him, and to get at Hogan was to go against the gale, he had leisure for the campaign, could hardly go home and tamely sit, waiting to be blown to hell away, supposing that any home was still left him. So he set out, and four hours later, by no little trickiness and tactics, did actually achieve, reaching Chiswick streaming with blood, worn out to feebleness, a red wretch of shreds, but still stubbornly invincible, the last incidents of his battle having been through the over-over-hurricane.

At Hogan’s gate down he dropped smitten, his mouth agape, his ribs and hollow belly labouring for breath.

Afterwards he sat apart on the door-sill, having now the villa between the wind and him; but presently sprang up to start a battery with the knocker of the dark dwelling; and, having for a long time no reply, kept on with angry doggedness, battering and battering, to brag as gross as that baritone of the hurricane’s throat. And Hogan came at last, he, it appears, having been seated in his kitchen with his wife, in darkness — for apparently he had no flash-light — until a conjecture had arisen within him, then a conviction, that someone, perhaps homeless, was clamouring at his door: and that moved him to come.

“What, you?” he howled, as he won the door open, for the baronet’s pocket-lamp was on; and that was all that was uttered at the door, Hogan knowing that the other was there for no good, the two now going into the little “parlour”, where Hogan at once got a pencil from a desk, rent off a book-cover, and turned to proffer them to Sir Borlase with the cry, “Write!”; but, as he turned, now presenting his front, Sir Borlase, without any word, with a blanched lip of venom, venomously slashed his face with the cane.

Upon which Hogan managed to shy behind a table, bawling aloud, as at a fire which breaks out, “Why, the man’s mad!”, bawling aloud also, with a

throat all engorged, at the fire which gave chase “Strike again, You, and I down you!”; but whether or not Sir Borlase heard this, he was not deterred, nor deterred by the chair which Hogan now snatched up by two of its legs: the check to snatch which so damaged his aheadness, that Sir Borlase caught him, slashed; and, as again the cane came in agony across his nose, Hogan’s chair crashed upon his antagonist’s cranium.

Now the baronet went knock-kneed and wobbled, appeared to stand reflecting on things a little, doddering, tottering, until he decided to drop ponderously upon his right side, and lie still.

Over him Hogan, holding the pocket-lamp, stooped agaze, investigating, but smitten stupid, devoid of thought, his eyes moving a little from side to side, as when one reflects, but empty of reflection. Was it death? All at once he fled away, vaulting through the broken bay-window, out into the torment of the storm...

Murder, wild winds of the night...

Running before the wind, lifted sometimes into runnings on his toes, hunted into caprices of haste, sudden tackings toward this interest or that, like a ship running capricious without rudder, like a silly fowl which is chased, he roamed far eastward at random, all gone, God-forsaken, during two hours, being powerfully built, and, thrice downed, he thrice survived. Sometimes his fist shot aloft to shake menaces at the heavens.

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!

Night of outrage, and the break-up of the fountains of the Great Deep. Murderous that mood of the storm, and that was well, that was God’s mood; but shall a man do murder with his hand upon the son of man, to smirch his hand eternally? That’s hard happening.

“False gods!” he cried aloud: “idols of the mind! Baal, Chemosh, Asmodeus, Jove, Jehovah, Rimmon! The father is Osiris, the son is Horus,

the holy ghost is Astaroth of Babylon, associated with the dove. No more, You! I am through with you! through with you!”

Blow away! wrench out the hairs of your distraction for scattering! rage! blow!

His arm rose heavenward in threat, but then his heart smote him, and, his palms covering his face, he broke into sobbing, like a boy: for it was hard to part from them.

And almost at the same time, his mind being blown about like his body, he had thoughts of Paddy St. Aubyn, lewd emotions at the hope that now he might have her, her father out of the way, murdered by the storm, for all murders in the dismal abyss of that midnight’s turmoil were murders by the storm.

He did not know that Paddy had now found another from whom she could hardly be parted — though there was some parting that midnight when that other permitted her to start back homeward alone from Harley Street.

For when they two had been blown into the doorless house, had looked about for Wallace, and not found, and when they had stood over the bed where an old man lay, their flash-lamps’ shine touching his face, Ivor had started with a mutter, “My father!” — long lost, now found, and found apparently at the point of death — though dying was conscious, for, taking Paddy’s hand, he patted it, and smiled, then patted Ivor’s hand, and smiled.

Not knowing now what to do, they remained some time seated on the bed, one on either side of him, hearing the roaring of that swollen Rhone of the wind rolling ceaseless on its road, the wee glowlamp effulging a local smudge of sheen in their gloom.

To Ivor, meanwhile, it was not inconceivable that Warwick might be no other than Wallace transformed, for he himself had experienced miracles,

and well knew now that there were more quintessences in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in his electro-chemistry. And though Wallace, in restoring him, had told him that no more of the moly remained among men, Ivor divined that Caroleth might have some, since Caroleth had promised to restore him, if Wallace did not. So now he composed with his palms an arch over his mouth to shout close at the old man "Shall we go and tell Miss Lavarock?"

But, as the old man did not appear to hear, he now rose, ran out, and after scrambling down over the house-door and furniture that now encumbered the stair, unearthed a pencil at a desk below, the back of a writing-pad, then, on clambering back up, shed shine on the cardboard to show "Shall we go now and tell Miss Lavarock?"

The old man smiled a tired smile; his head shook "No".

Then once more they remained idly seated on the bed, hearing the tempest deepen now to the bass of a still profounder rumpus, rise to shrieks more gibbering still of beings streaming in affrighted flight; until the old soul seemed to take a turn for the worse, his respiration more precarious, nose more livid, eyes more sunken; and now Paddy, having caught sight of water spilled over the floor, dipped her palm in, to console with the wet the sick temples.

Then once more they remained listlessly seated.

Till Paddy, taking board and pencil, wrote, "After all, we must take *some* answer to Caroleth."

Ivor replied "Should we reach her? wind ahead?"

And Paddy: "Might try".

And Ivor: "Could I leave him like this?"

And Paddy: "You stay, I'll go".

This horrified him; but she jumped up at once, and he let her go solitary.

Three minutes after, though, he realized that he still had the flash-lamp, she in darkness, and now he dashed down and out — soon to catch her, for she had not gained much: and they moved on together, getting a foot and again a foot, actually at last to gain Berkeley Square before two in the ‘foreday. It was Paddy who had won best through, Ivor having been struck by a tile over the eye, and the only rags left him were on one leg, whereas Paddy, not bleeding, remained decent in a petticoat’s relics. When they re-entered that underground where the household-group mutely awaited in their fireshine’s jig whatever vials of doom the gale’s will might design to empty upon their heads, Ivor dropped helpless upon the chair which he had left, all but unconscious, his breath scraping raucous. It was Paddy who wrote for Caroleth “No Wallace. Dr. Warwick there sick.”

When Caroleth had reflected a little on this, she presently wrote to Paddy “It is all right: Warwick has a panacea which he will drink”.

Now Paddy went to wet one of her tatters under a tap, with it wiped Ivor’s wound, bound his brow round... Finally his eyes opened, and before long now he saw what Caroleth had written to Paddy, “Warwick has a panacea...”, on which at once he wrote to Caroleth “If he could get up to get panacea, he has none, if Warwick is Wallace, who told me there may be no more panacea for two thousand years”.

But since to Caroleth this was incredible, she took it coolly, continued to sit brooding, looking at the versatility of the fireshine’s flightiness: for she had always presumed that Dr. Warwick had discovered the moly in the course of his studies, and could produce as much of it as he chose: so, if Wallace had now had cause to drink some of the old-age alkahest — probably to escape arrest after the storm-test — he would naturally have by him some of the youth-moly to swallow after. But her wits were quicker than common, and, as she sat there pondering with awe upon that Pehlevi of

the storm's oratory, a lamp of understanding flashed up in her scone: for *which* "scientists", she now asked herself, were they who had poured out at Wallace's orison this pentecost of mighty rushing wind? She was herself a scientist, and certainly they were no earthly "scientists", but scientists having finer ears than cats', quick to catch that which is stirring among the worlds, and what some heart is hankering after in some azimuth afar. Aye, there had been one night diviner than all night-times round about Penpolack townlet in Cornwall, a night impregnated with trillings of such stars as sing together and ring like chimes of Christmas midnights, when astral influences had moved human souls to dreams that teemed with meanings more mysterious than gnomes gloat on, with oglings: the "scientists" had been there then: no terrestrial scientists; visitants from abroad: *their* keel it was which had left that dent in Penpolack beach, *they* who had rooted up Carew's Clause yew; and it was true that Wallace had bestowed upon Ivor and Paddy the last of the life-hellebore, for it was from those scientists that he had had it — with the diamonds.

Caroleth sprang up. But what was the good? No key! She sat again.

When the first crackle of the catastrophe of the upper part of the house had occurred, she had rushed toward her bedchamber to get the hellebore from a trunk, but then a sudden had rushed in the other direction to rescue herself; and the trunk was now down in the Square — if not soaring in the air. But supposing she found, how open it? Her bunch of keys had reeled away with the bedchamber and the trunk.

But presently after she had started up and sat again a kitchen-maid came to give coals to the fire, and to poke it, for light, not for warmth, not with the bigger kitchen-poker, but with a small stick which was pointed: at sight of which, Caroleth had the notion that with this she might contrive to prise the trunk open: and once more with sprightly eyes she was up.

Now she bound a dishclout close about her skull, gipsy-like; she girt her loins firmly about with cloths; and, guessing what it was that Ivor cried at her (“Shall I come?”), her head shook “No” at him, as she dashed out and vanished, with the flash-lamp.

Nor was it long before she found out the trunk emboxed under a hotchpotch of débris — blocks of wardrobe, bricks, beds; and though she could not, standing, move this, for now it was two o’clock, now the wings of the “over-over-hurricane” were urgently stretched whither they listed, lightsome its flight, mighty the largeness of the laughter of its emancipation attained: so that if, standing, she attempted to put forth any force, she became weightless, or down she went; but, by lying to windward of a pile of wreckage, which checked her rolling, and by clinging, she contrived to shift things by the *Turmoil* — 367 force of her legs, thus getting finally at the trunk; nor did she need to use the little poker on it, both its hinges being now broken, and when she had revolved the lid to crack it off the lock, her hand dived, and quickly had the phial of elixir-drops.

Now with all canvas spread she kept adjusting her helm to scud before the storm — straw caught in cosmic transactions, wafted like dust-clouds drawn all abroad in subtropic Moroccos when the sirocco romps; but she was cunning — Mind versus Might — and not once was overturned, for every time she was obliged to stop for breath, promptly she dropped upon her face, and every time she felt herself being enticed to fly, she preferred the earth, promptly she dropped, and clung to something. When at last she skedaddled into the Harley Street house, her throat giggled a little, uttering “Aye”, and “Aye”, uneasy glee, risky victory...

The front half of the house was now down, but the stair still there intact: so, after managing to clamber the wreckage which strewed it, she soon stood over the old man in the bed-chamber, and “Oh, poor!” she muttered,

“he took too much”, seeing his condition in the lamp-flash — though he was still conscious, smiled with her.

At once she lifted his head, kissed his cheek, put the ule of youth to his lips...

But there was a difficulty little expected — the fence of his fixed teeth, his head shaken at her, seeming to beseech her to let him die in quietness.

Nonplussed she stood at it, understanding now that it must be far from entering his head that this which she presented him was that syrup of virtue, since he was certain that none was now on earth, nor could she be heard, if she cried it aloud, nor could write to him — had come without the pencil!

“Now, how trying!” she cried: for he, knowing that any medicine, but one, would only prolong his sorrow, would not let her, never thinking that *this* could be that one.

However, on going in search, and observing a hairbrush in the grate, she snatched up this, ran back, and now set forcefully to coax him to let her win its silver handle between his teeth. This finally, tired at her persistence, he did, and the instant she had his bps split and fixed, she tipped the elixir in.

When he started, sat upright, retching, coughing, she knew that he had duly swallowed; and when, with eyeballs agaze, he jerked rigid, to lie as one berthed stiffstark for the grave, she said “He is in the *Kief*” (trance).

Then for many minutes she kept vigil, anon switching the flashlight upon the magic-lantern jumps of his changing, watching him change each minute into sixty other men, hearkening with awe in the dark intervals at that darksome soliloquy that the storm talked, thinking in her heart “Ah, dark-minded night-time! in what longitude at this hour are voices of the foundered not shouting outcries all forlorn, which are swallowed up and lost, caught away out of the mouth itself, never to be heard in heaven nor heard on earth? nor does the foundering know if it is the row of the oceans

that drowns his howl or the row of the winds, for the wind imitates the theme of the sea, mouthing the thing that breakers meant to utter through many a dim millennium when they broke and roared, and broke and broke and mourned, on Silurian coasts before the moon was cold... He is in the sleep”.

Not long in the sleep! All at once the flying eyes of a fellow wildly alive were there awake, he saying to her “Hello, Giglot! Hello, Moppet! Sweet Quean! Housemaid! Harlot! I hate you! You’ve been and married—”

Smiling, her head shook No at him, for, with her lively intelligence, she could divine by watching his lips’ business what he wanted to say, as the deaf divine.

And he: “But how come I — ? I feel quite — ! But storm, eh? Storm! My God! An hour hence where shall you and I be found — ?” Now, seeing his psycho phone lying beside his pillow, he clapped it upon his brow, about to announce to those astral rambles that the storm had duly come, but come in a mood all too cosmic for mortal man, when the dog, Guncotton, darting into the room, threw his paws upon the bed, pressingly barking; and since Wallace’s own sense of smell was super-normally bright whenever the psychophone was on his brow, he now suddenly let out the howl, “I smell something! the house is going!” — bounding now out of the bed to catch up Caroleth in his arms, to dash with her, mouth to mouth, out of the room, she at the stair-head separating her lips from his to shout “You will fall!”; but of course, he did not hear, and, not knowing that the stair was all encumbered, down he went tumbling, and she; without much hurt, however; in some moments he had found her, his mouth had found out hers, as he now spurted with her, lip to lip, into the little high-walled yard at the back; nor were they well in it, when all the hind-walls of the house reluctantly decided to nod, to rush down, more or less upon them, in solid and in clouds of powder. But

not far an instant could his lips be riven to relinquish their feast of sweetmeat; now that his arms had her, he was hardly the species of bull-dog to let her go before she was his; but in the haste and awkwardness of their mixing he was bitterly conscious all the time of some splinter, of pitcher or bottle, cutting his shin, she bitterly conscious of some spike of mortar sticking into her spine, and of his psychophone afflicting her forehead, both inwardly aware that, if they had had the strength of will to wait some seconds, no sense of trouble might have infected their blessedness, yet, aware, too, of impending doom, thinking “Let us eat and drink, for in a trice we die”...

XXVII. MORNING



NOW DAWN WAS not far; but, ah, the bleakness of the meanings of that dawning day, and the weird sweet things that the pealing of the symphonies of the winds told to the poet's soul, that no pen may tell.

Supposing that the poet was not very hungry! — in which respect Caroleth and Wallace had luck, for in the part of the Langham Hotel that still stood they procured something to eat; then, going together to see London, saw in Oxford Street a great congregation of people flocking round one coffee-stall — though there was no (hot) coffee, for the storm, considerably mollified, was still boisterous, bleak, singing now its sweet swan-song of Saint Saens, nor certainly had most of that tatterdemallion multitude any money on them to purchase coffee, but were there just to be in the neighbourhood of coffee, and enjoy the thought of coffee. Yet their hunger was not grievous to bear like the hunger of the old civilization's needy, in each bosom now burgeoning a certain joyance at the knowledge of a more abundant earth come that morning to birth.

Also, in Knightsbridge, Caroleth and Wallace had the sight of a march into London of a detachment of Young Men — the Second Rutherfords — its band rendering the Niebelungen March; the rags of its flags garrulous on the gale; and all along its ranks girls, stretching their legs, marching in rags which yet managed to be becoming, some with tripudiary feet that, yielding to the new era's mood, reeled in dance; one and another of which girls some Young Man in marching hugged, gave her a taste of his emergency ration, between young man and girl being a comradeship, and they understand each

other; and before noon, as the Young Men troops continued to pour into the London barracks through the London streets, London completely verted from Old Men to Young Men: hosts of girls got garlands of home-made flowers to crown the conquerors' foreheads; whatever bells hung still aloft broke into pæans of welcome; flags fluttering from millions of house-windows; crowds singing in streets; and that midnight torchlight processions everywhere marched, not in London only, in honour of the new era here, when men were to love as the Young Men loved, not their unreal selves, but that Real One.

Then, after witnessing that march-in of the Rutherfords, Caroleth and Wallace revisited the environs of Harley Street, and, on finding Wallace's motor-car quite sound in its mews, by eleven o'clock were taking off from Hendon for the air, America their aim: for it had been decided that Crichton of Iraq was to be the guiding mind in England, while Wallace was to see what America wanted him to be to it, one of Caroleth's sayings being, "Give me a new New World, and I will give you a young Old World".

So they set off westward in haste — not foppishly dressed for a long voyage! she with her skull still bound about with a kitchen-cloth, and her occupation was to keep decently repressed her breasts' propensity to break prison and exhibit their pretty berries: so that when they were over that southward bend of the Thames where the last battle had been, he said to her "You look a malkin; but, then, the lady fights up, triumphs, pries through. What startles me is rather your morals: during the night of your marriage-day you 'misconduct yourself', as they say; the morning after the marriage you fly off — literally — with another man: 'oâh, shockan!' as the French say".

And she: "Light o' Love? Is that it"? — their voices noising in a sort of song, as on some orb where there's no talking, but voice calls to voice in

song, as when the sailor's tenor, all involved in wawlings of winds, sings out aloft "Aye, aye", and "Aye, aye": for the blast ran brabbling past the aeroplane's tramp as the spattering breath of brazing-lamps brays... "Light o' love? but if I was brought up to consider adultery unladylike? Don't guess so wide. I had a sufficient reason for going through a marriage-form with Sir Borlase St. Aubyn; but as I happened to be already married—"

"*You* were, Caroleth? Married to whom?"

"To you. Hence the event in the storm, which was not so lawless as you thought. Pity, eh? You like it lawless".

Wallace sat bewildered. "Married to me... That, too, was an unreal marriage, Young Lady, the bridegroom did it asleep".

"You were awake. Have you forgotten an old lady named Felicia Warwick whom you once professed to adore? I am — as to say — she".

But this was too much for the brain to take in at once; a superhet's minute of silence, to "heat-up", moved by, Wallace's brows peering keenly at her, as when Rontgen peered at the miracle of his digits' phalanges visible in x-rays. He breathed "Tell me..." and when she told how she had pilfered some of the moly, labelled "poison", to commit suicide, and had been made young instead, then had pilfered more, and now had given him the whole of this, he dropped upon her, his sobs got out "My own, my home — innate mate — I had an instinct — dear to me, nearer than breathing, wife twice"; and when she had pecked a kiss at his hair, and said "Get up", she added "Now you tell: how did you get the elecampane? who are they who sent the gale?"

But he drew in his breath. "Mustn't tell! 'Improper'! I promised".

And she: "You think I don't know? They were — from Mars".

“Hm”, he went: “Mars, eh? There are more swimmers in the Sea than poor little Mars, and our little sun doesn’t count in the crowd”.

“Whoever they are”, she said, “they have a heavy hand. All the cities seemed bombed. That wood down there — not one bough. They’ve wrecked civilization”.

“Dear me”, he answered, “you, too, say ‘Wreck civilization’ — one of those epidemics of phrase that come upon men: ‘the next war will wreck civilization’... The storm has more wrecked civilization than a thousand armies could in a thousand years: but for how long? three weeks? In three months it will be as forgotten as Lisbon in three months forgot its earthquake. Civilization is telephoning, and to wreck that, no scientist must be left anywhere, no mechanic, no text-book — can’t be wrecked by hundreds of storms, thousands of wars. *Roman* civilization could be wrecked, Greek, Assyrian, infant civilization, village civilization; but what is true of an infant thing may contain no trace of truth as to an adult thing: an infant may be wrecked by dropping from a nurse’s arms, but a policeman can’t be wrecked by dropping from a nurse’s arms; rain may crush a lettuce seedling, but hail cannot a little beat down a beech-tree. Rome was a village (in tone): Cæsar couldn’t fly to America — no America; couldn’t wireless to Australia — no Australia; and the Roman empire was a real empire, its villager bits paying tribute to its chief village; but there’s no British Empire — that’s nonsense; such a thing as a modern empire is impossible outside China, where, too, it is becoming impossible, because the concept ‘world’ has been born, and mankind is emerging from the villager type. So our civilization can’t be ‘wrecked’. Inconveniences like wars, storms, are of no importance: what causes misery is not the turbulences of Nature or of men, but men’s inertia, the senility of their forgiveingness, their meekness toward adventurers. They are told ‘forgive seventy times’, and they proceed to

forgive seventy million times, for 'tis their nature to forgive and be lazy. Out of two hundred million people in India a score or so have had the pluck to sit on elephants, and say with a wink 'We are Kings, India is ours', and century after century the millions toil on in chronic sorrow, tilling for the good of those few soil which is their own, sluggishly forgiving all the grossness of the wrong done them, though just fifty daggers dug into fifty guts would for ever end their agonies — cursed are the meek! for they shall *not* inherit the earth..."

She said "Look down and see something..."

Now they saw the sea trotting with wandering feet along beneath, its breezes on their brow with an exultant message of freshness, and in their outlook a boundlessness of mountain summits.

The Short Story Collections



Harrison College, Barbados — where Shiel was educated. Founded in 1733, it was recognised as among the most prestigious secondary schools in the British West Indies, attracting boys from neighbouring islands, including Pelham Warner who later went on to become the “Grand Old Man” of English cricket.

Prince Zaleski (1895)

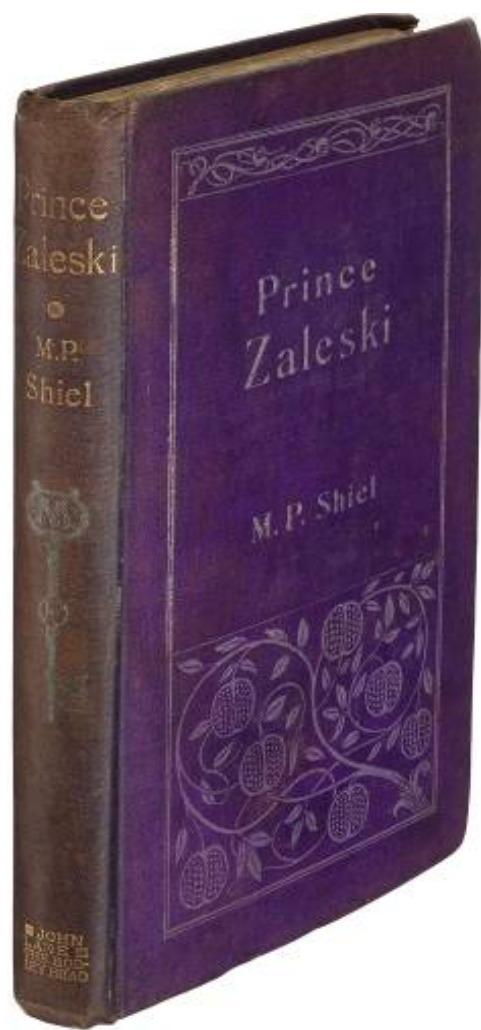


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THE STONE OF THE EDMUNDSBURY MONKS

THE S.S.



The first edition

TO

MY DEAR MOTHER

THE RACE OF ORVEN



NEVER WITHOUT GRIEF and pain could I remember the fate of Prince Zaleski — victim of a too importunate, too unfortunate Love, which the fulgor of the throne itself could not abash; exile perforce from his native land, and voluntary exile from the rest of men! Having renounced the world, over which, lurid and inscrutable as a falling star, he had passed, the world quickly ceased to wonder at him; and even I, to whom, more than to another, the workings of that just and passionate mind had been revealed, half forgot him in the rush of things.

But during the time that what was called the ‘Pharanx labyrinth’ was exercising many of the heaviest brains in the land, my thought turned repeatedly to him; and even when the affair had passed from the general attention, a bright day in Spring, combined perhaps with a latent mistrust of the *dénoûment* of that dark plot, drew me to his place of hermitage.

I reached the gloomy abode of my friend as the sun set. It was a vast palace of the older world standing lonely in the midst of woodland, and approached by a sombre avenue of poplars and cypresses, through which the sunlight hardly pierced. Up this I passed, and seeking out the deserted stables (which I found all too dilapidated to afford shelter) finally put up my *calèche* in the ruined sacristy of an old Dominican chapel, and turned my mare loose to browse for the night on a paddock behind the domain.

As I pushed back the open front door and entered the mansion, I could not but wonder at the saturnine fancy that had led this wayward man to select a brooding-place so desolate for the passage of his days. I regarded it as a vast tomb of Mausolus in which lay deep sepulchred how much genius,

culture, brilliancy, power! The hall was constructed in the manner of a Roman *atrium*, and from the oblong pool of turgid water in the centre a troop of fat and otiose rats fled weakly squealing at my approach. I mounted by broken marble steps to the corridors running round the open space, and thence pursued my way through a mazeland of apartments — suite upon suite — along many a length of passage, up and down many stairs. Dust-clouds rose from the uncarpeted floors and choked me; incontinent Echo coughed answering *ricochets* to my footsteps in the gathering darkness, and added emphasis to the funereal gloom of the dwelling. Nowhere was there a vestige of furniture — nowhere a trace of human life.

After a long interval I came, in a remote tower of the building and near its utmost summit, to a richly-carpeted passage, from the ceiling of which three mosaic lamps shed dim violet, scarlet and pale-rose lights around. At the end I perceived two figures standing as if in silent guard on each side of a door tapestried with the python's skin. One was a post-replica in Parian marble of the nude Aphrodite of Cnidus; in the other I recognised the gigantic form of the negro Ham, the prince's only attendant, whose fierce, and glistening, and ebon visage broadened into a grin of intelligence as I came nearer. Nodding to him, I pushed without ceremony into Zaleski's apartment.

The room was not a large one, but lofty. Even in the semi-darkness of the very faint greenish lustre radiated from an open censerlike *lampas* of fretted gold in the centre of the domed encausted roof, a certain incongruity of barbaric gorgeousness in the furnishing filled me with amazement. The air was heavy with the scented odour of this light, and the fumes of the narcotic *cannabis sativa* — the base of the *bhang* of the Mohammedans — in which I knew it to be the habit of my friend to assuage himself. The hangings were of wine-coloured velvet, heavy, gold-fringed and embroidered at

Nurshedabad. All the world knew Prince Zaleski to be a consummate *cognoscente* — a profound amateur — as well as a savant and a thinker; but I was, nevertheless, astounded at the mere multitudinousness of the curios he had contrived to crowd into the space around him. Side by side rested a palaeolithic implement, a Chinese ‘wise man,’ a Gnostic gem, an amphora of Graeco-Etruscan work. The general effect was a *bizarrerie* of half-weird sheen and gloom. Flemish sepulchral brasses companied strangely with runic tablets, miniature paintings, a winged bull, Tamil scriptures on lacquered leaves of the talipot, mediaeval reliquaries richly gemmed, Brahmin gods. One whole side of the room was occupied by an organ whose thunder in that circumscribed place must have set all these relics of dead epochs clashing and jingling in fantastic dances. As I entered, the vaporous atmosphere was palpitating to the low, liquid tinkling of an invisible musical box. The prince reclined on a couch from which a draping of cloth-of-silver rolled torrent over the floor. Beside him, stretched in its open sarcophagus which rested on three brazen trestles, lay the mummy of an ancient Memphian, from the upper part of which the brown cerements had rotted or been rent, leaving the hideousness of the naked, grinning countenance exposed to view.

Discarding his gemmed chibouque and an old vellum reprint of Anacreon, Zaleski rose hastily and greeted me with warmth, muttering at the same time some commonplace about his ‘pleasure’ and the ‘unexpectedness’ of my visit. He then gave orders to Ham to prepare me a bed in one of the adjoining chambers. We passed the greater part of the night in a delightful stream of that somnolent and half-mystic talk which Prince Zaleski alone could initiate and sustain, during which he repeatedly pressed on me a concoction of Indian hemp resembling *hashish*, prepared by his own hands, and quite innocuous. It was after a simple breakfast the

next morning that I entered on the subject which was partly the occasion of my visit. He lay back on his couch, volumed in a Turkish *beneesh*, and listened to me, a little wearily perhaps at first, with woven fingers, and the pale inverted eyes of old anchorites and astrologers, the moony greenish light falling on his always wan features.

‘You knew Lord Pharanx?’ I asked.

‘I have met him in “the world.” His son Lord Randolph, too, I saw once at Court at Peterhof, and once again at the Winter Palace of the Tsar. I noticed in their great stature, shaggy heads of hair, ears of a very peculiar conformation, and a certain aggressiveness of demeanour — a strong likeness between father and son.’

I had brought with me a bundle of old newspapers, and comparing these as I went on, I proceeded to lay the incidents before him.

‘The father,’ I said, ‘held, as you know, high office in a late Administration, and was one of our big luminaries in politics; he has also been President of the Council of several learned societies, and author of a book on Modern Ethics. His son was rapidly rising to eminence in the *corps diplomatique*, and lately (though, strictly speaking, *unebenbürtig*) contracted an affiance with the Prinzessin Charlotte Mariana Natalia of Morgen-üppigen, a lady with a strain of indubitable Hohenzollern blood in her royal veins. The Orven family is a very old and distinguished one, though — especially in modern days — far from wealthy. However, some little time after Randolph had become engaged to this royal lady, the father insured his life for immense sums in various offices both in England and America, and the reproach of poverty is now swept from the race. Six months ago, almost simultaneously, both father and son resigned their various positions *en bloc*. But all this, of course, I am telling you on the assumption that you have not already read it in the papers.’

‘A modern newspaper,’ he said, ‘being what it mostly is, is the one thing insupportable to me at present. Believe me, I never see one.’

‘Well, then, Lord Pharanx, as I said, threw up his posts in the fulness of his vigour, and retired to one of his country seats. A good many years ago, he and Randolph had a terrible row over some trifle, and, with the implacability that distinguishes their race, had not since exchanged a word. But some little time after the retirement of the father, a message was despatched by him to the son, who was then in India. Considered as the first step in the *rapprochement* of this proud and selfish pair of beings, it was an altogether remarkable message, and was subsequently deposed to in evidence by a telegraph official; it ran:

“*Return. The beginning of the end is come.*” Whereupon Randolph did return, and in three months from the date of his landing in England, Lord Pharanx was dead.’

‘*Murdered?*’

A certain something in the tone in which this word was uttered by Zaleski puzzled me. It left me uncertain whether he had addressed to me an exclamation of conviction, or a simple question. I must have looked this feeling, for he said at once:

‘I could easily, from your manner, surmise as much, you know. Perhaps I might even have foretold it, years ago.’

‘Foretold — what? Not the murder of Lord Pharanx?’

‘Something of that kind,’ he answered with a smile; ‘but proceed — tell me all the facts you know.’

Word-mysteries of this sort fell frequent from the lips of the prince. I continued the narrative.

‘The two, then, met, and were reconciled. But it was a reconciliation without cordiality, without affection — a shaking of hands across a barrier

of brass; and even this hand-shaking was a strictly metaphorical one, for they do not seem ever to have got beyond the interchange of a frigid bow. The opportunities, however, for observation were few. Soon after Randolph's arrival at Orven Hall, his father entered on a life of the most absolute seclusion. The mansion is an old three-storied one, the top floor consisting for the most part of sleeping-rooms, the first of a library, drawing-room, and so on, and the ground-floor, in addition to the dining and other ordinary rooms, of another small library, looking out (at the side of the house) on a low balcony, which, in turn, looks on a lawn dotted with flower-beds. It was this smaller library on the ground-floor that was now divested of its books, and converted into a bedroom for the earl. Hither he migrated, and here he lived, scarcely ever leaving it. Randolph, on his part, moved to a room on the first floor immediately above this. Some of the retainers of the family were dismissed, and on the remaining few fell a hush of expectancy, a sense of wonder, as to what these things boded. A great enforced quiet pervaded the building, the least undue noise in any part being sure to be followed by the angry voice of the master demanding the cause. Once, as the servants were supping in the kitchen on the side of the house most remote from that which he occupied, Lord Pharanx, slippered and in dressing-gown, appeared at the doorway, purple with rage, threatening to pack the whole company of them out of doors if they did not moderate the clatter of their knives and forks. He had always been regarded with fear in his own household, and the very sound of his voice now became a terror. His food was taken to him in the room he had made his habitation, and it was remarked that, though simple before in his gustatory tastes, he now — possibly owing to the sedentary life he led — became fastidious, insisting on *recherché* bits. I mention all these details to you — as I shall mention others — not because they have the least connection with

the tragedy as it subsequently occurred, but merely because I know them, and you have requested me to state all I know.'

'Yes,' he answered, with a suspicion of *ennui*, 'you are right. I may as well hear the whole — if I must hear a part.'

'Meanwhile, Randolph appears to have visited the earl at least once a day. In such retirement did he, too, live that many of his friends still supposed him to be in India. There was only one respect in which he broke through this privacy. You know, of course, that the Orvens are, and, I believe, always have been, noted as the most obstinate, the most crabbed of Conservatives in politics. Even among the past-enamoured families of England, they stand out conspicuously in this respect. Is it credible to you, then, that Randolph should offer himself to the Radical Association of the Borough of Orven as a candidate for the next election in opposition to the sitting member? It is on record, too, that he spoke at three public meetings — reported in local papers — at which he avowed his political conversion; afterwards laid the foundation-stone of a new Baptist chapel; presided at a Methodist tea-meeting; and taking an abnormal interest in the debased condition of the labourers in the villages round, fitted up as a class-room an apartment on the top floor at Orven Hall, and gathered round him on two evenings in every week a class of yokels, whom he proceeded to cram with demonstrations in elementary mechanics.'

'Mechanics!' cried Zaleski, starting upright for a moment, 'mechanics to agricultural labourers! Why not elementary chemistry? Why not elementary botany? *Why* mechanics?'

This was the first evidence of interest he had shown in the story. I was pleased, but answered:

'The point is unimportant; and there really is no accounting for the vagaries of such a man. He wished, I imagine, to give some idea to the

young illiterates of the simple laws of motion and force. But now I come to a new character in the drama — the chief character of all. One day a woman presented herself at Orven Hall and demanded to see its owner. She spoke English with a strong French accent. Though approaching middle life she was still beautiful, having wild black eyes, and creamy pale face. Her dress was tawdry, cheap, and loud, showing signs of wear; her hair was unkempt; her manners were not the manners of a lady. A certain vehemence, exasperation, unreprieve distinguished all she said and did. The footman refused her admission; Lord Pharanx, he said, was invisible. She persisted violently, pushed past him, and had to be forcibly ejected; during all which the voice of the master was heard roaring from the passage red-eyed remonstrance at the unusual noise. She went away gesticulating wildly, and vowing vengeance on Lord Pharanx and all the world. It was afterwards found that she had taken up her abode in one of the neighbouring hamlets, called Lee.

‘This person, who gave the name of Maude Cibras, subsequently called at the Hall three times in succession, and was each time refused admittance. It was now, however, thought advisable to inform Randolph of her visits. He said she might be permitted to see him, if she returned. This she did on the next day, and had a long interview in private with him. Her voice was heard raised as if in angry protest by one Hester Dyett, a servant of the house, while Randolph in low tones seemed to try to soothe her. The conversation was in French, and no word could be made out. She passed out at length, tossing her head jauntily, and smiling a vulgar triumph at the footman who had before opposed her ingress. She was never known to seek admission to the house again.

‘But her connection with its inmates did not cease. The same Hester asserts that one night, coming home late through the park, she saw two

persons conversing on a bench beneath the trees, crept behind some bushes, and discovered that they were the strange woman and Randolph. The same servant bears evidence to tracking them to other meeting-places, and to finding in the letter-bag letters addressed to Maude Cibras in Randolph's hand-writing. One of these was actually unearthed later on. Indeed, so engrossing did the intercourse become, that it seems even to have interfered with the outburst of radical zeal in the new political convert. The *rendezvous* — always held under cover of darkness, but naked and open to the eye of the watchful Hester — sometimes clashed with the science lectures, when these latter would be put off, so that they became gradually fewer, and then almost ceased.'

'Your narrative becomes unexpectedly interesting,' said Zaleski; 'but this unearthed letter of Randolph's — what was in it?'

I read as follows:

“Dear Mdlle. Cibras, — I am exerting my utmost influence for you with my father. But he shows no signs of coming round as yet. If I could only induce him to see you! But he is, as you know, a person of unrelenting will, and meanwhile you must confide in my loyal efforts on your behalf. At the same time, I admit that the situation is a precarious one: you are, I am sure, well provided for in the present will of Lord Pharanx, but he is on the point — within, say, three or four days — of making another; and exasperated as he is at your appearance in England, I know there is no chance of your receiving a *centime* under the new will. Before then, however, we must hope that something favourable to you may happen; and in the meantime, let me implore you not to let your only too just resentment pass beyond the bounds of reason.

“Sincerely yours,

“RANDOLPH.””

‘I like the letter!’ cried Zaleski. ‘You notice the tone of manly candour. But the *facts* — were they true? *Did* the earl make a new will in the time specified?’

‘No, — but that may have been because his death intervened.’

‘And in the old will, *was* Mdlle. Cibras provided for?’

‘Yes, — that at least was correct.’

A shadow of pain passed over his face.

‘And now,’ I went on, ‘I come to the closing scene, in which one of England’s foremost men perished by the act of an obscure assassin. The letter I have read was written to Maude Cibras on the 5th of January. The next thing that happens is on the 6th, when Lord Pharanx left his room for another during the whole day, and a skilled mechanic was introduced into it for the purpose of effecting some alterations. Asked by Hester Dyett, as he was leaving the house, what was the nature of his operations, the man replied that he had been applying a patent arrangement to the window looking out on the balcony, for the better protection of the room against burglars, several robberies having recently been committed in the neighbourhood. The sudden death of this man, however, before the occurrence of the tragedy, prevented his evidence being heard. On the next day — the 7th — Hester, entering the room with Lord Pharanx’s dinner, fancies, though she cannot tell why (inasmuch as his back is towards her, he sitting in an arm-chair by the fire), that Lord Pharanx has been “drinking heavily.”

‘On the 8th a singular thing befell. The earl was at last induced to see Maude Cibras, and during the morning of that day, with his own hand, wrote a note informing her of his decision, Randolph handing the note to a messenger. That note also has been made public. It reads as follows:

“Maude Cibras. — You may come here to-night after dark. Walk to the south side of the house, come up the steps to the balcony, and pass in through the open window to my room. Remember, however, that you have nothing to expect from me, and that from to-night I blot you eternally from my mind: but I will hear your story, which I know beforehand to be false. Destroy this note. PHARANX.”

As I progressed with my tale, I came to notice that over the countenance of Prince Zaleski there grew little by little a singular fixed aspect. His small, keen features distorted themselves into an expression of what I can only describe as an abnormal *inquisitiveness* — an inquisitiveness most impatient, arrogant, in its intensity. His pupils, contracted each to a dot, became the central *puncta* of two rings of fiery light; his little sharp teeth seemed to gnash. Once before I had seen him look thus greedily, when, grasping a Troglodyte tablet covered with half-effaced hieroglyphics — his fingers livid with the fixity of his grip — he bent on it that strenuous inquisition, that ardent questioning gaze, till, by a species of mesmeric dominancy, he seemed to wrench from it the arcanum it hid from other eyes; then he lay back, pale and faint from the too arduous victory.

When I had read Lord Pharanx’s letter, he took the paper eagerly from my hand, and ran his eyes over the passage.

‘Tell me — the end,’ he said.

‘Maude Cibras,’ I went on, ‘thus invited to a meeting with the earl, failed to make her appearance at the appointed time. It happened that she had left her lodgings in the village early that very morning, and, for some purpose or other, had travelled to the town of Bath. Randolph, too, went away the same day in the opposite direction to Plymouth. He returned on the following morning, the 9th; soon after walked over to Lee; and entered into conversation with the keeper of the inn where Cibras lodged; asked if she

was at home, and on being told that she had gone away, asked further if she had taken her luggage with her; was informed that she had, and had also announced her intention of at once leaving England. He then walked away in the direction of the Hall. On this day Hester Dyett noticed that there were many articles of value scattered about the earl's room, notably a tiara of old Brazilian brilliants, sometimes worn by the late Lady Pharanx. Randolph — who was present at the time — further drew her attention to these by telling her that Lord Pharanx had chosen to bring together in his apartment many of the family jewels; and she was instructed to tell the other servants of this fact, in case they should notice any suspicious-looking loafers about the estate.

‘On the 10th, both father and son remained in their rooms all day, except when the latter came down to meals; at which times he would lock his door behind him, and with his own hands take in the earl's food, giving as his reason that his father was writing a very important document, and did not wish to be disturbed by the presence of a servant. During the forenoon, Hester Dyett, hearing loud noises in Randolph's room, as if furniture was being removed from place to place, found some pretext for knocking at his door, when he ordered her on no account to interrupt him again, as he was busy packing his clothes in view of a journey to London on the next day. The subsequent conduct of the woman shows that her curiosity must have been excited to the utmost by the undoubtedly strange spectacle of Randolph packing his own clothes. During the afternoon a lad from the village was instructed to collect his companions for a science lecture the same evening at eight o'clock. And so the eventful day wore on.

‘We arrive now at this hour of eight P.M. on this 10th day of January. The night is dark and windy; some snow has been falling, but has now ceased. In an upper room is Randolph engaged in expounding the elements

of dynamics; in the room under that is Hester Dyett — for Hester has somehow obtained a key that opens the door of Randolph's room, and takes advantage of his absence upstairs to explore it. Under her is Lord Pharanx, certainly in bed, probably asleep. Hester, trembling all over in a fever of fear and excitement, holds a lighted taper in one hand, which she religiously shades with the other; for the storm is gusty, and the gusts, tearing through the crevices of the rattling old casements, toss great flickering shadows on the hangings, which frighten her to death. She has just time to see that the whole room is in the wildest confusion, when suddenly a rougher puff blows out the flame, and she is left in what to her, standing as she was on that forbidden ground, must have been a horror of darkness. At the same moment, clear and sharp from right beneath her, a pistol-shot rings out on her ear. For an instant she stands in stone, incapable of motion. Then on her dazed senses there supervenes — so she swore — the consciousness that some object is moving in the room — moving apparently of its own accord — moving in direct opposition to all the laws of nature as she knows them. She imagines that she perceives a phantasm — a strange something — globular-white — looking, as she says, “like a good-sized ball of cotton” — rise directly from the floor before her, ascending slowly upward, as if driven aloft by some invisible force. A sharp shock of the sense of the supernatural deprives her of ordered reason. Throwing forward her arms, and uttering a shrill scream, she rushes towards the door. But she never reaches it: midway she falls prostrate over some object, and knows no more; and when, an hour later, she is borne out of the room in the arms of Randolph himself, the blood is dripping from a fracture of her right tibia.

‘Meantime, in the upper chamber the pistol-shot and the scream of the woman have been heard. All eyes turn to Randolph. He stands in the shadow of the mechanical contrivance on which he has been illustrating his

points; leans for support on it. He essays to speak, the muscles of his face work, but no sound comes. Only after a time is he able to gasp: "Did you hear something — from below?" They answer "yes" in chorus; then one of the lads takes a lighted candle, and together they troop out, Randolph behind them. A terrified servant rushes up with the news that something dreadful has happened in the house. They proceed for some distance, but there is an open window on the stairs, and the light is blown out. They have to wait some minutes till another is obtained, and then the procession moves forward once more. Arrived at Lord Pharanx's door, and finding it locked, a lantern is procured, and Randolph leads them through the house and out on the lawn. But having nearly reached the balcony, a lad observes a track of small woman's-feet in the snow; a halt is called, and then Randolph points out another track of feet, half obliterated by the snow, extending from a coppice close by up to the balcony, and forming an angle with the first track. These latter are great big feet, made by ponderous labourers' boots. He holds the lantern over the flower-beds, and shows how they have been trampled down. Some one finds a common scarf, such as workmen wear; and a ring and a locket, dropped by the burglars in their flight, are also found by Randolph half buried in the snow. And now the foremost reach the window. Randolph, from behind, calls to them to enter. They cry back that they cannot, the window being closed. At this reply he seems to be overcome by surprise, by terror. Some one hears him murmur the words, "My God, what can have happened now?" His horror is increased when one of the lads bears to him a revolting trophy, which has been found just outside the window; it is the front phalanges of three fingers of a human hand. Again he utters the agonised moan, "My God!" and then, mastering his agitation, makes for the window; he finds that the catch of the sash has been roughly wrenched off, and that the sash can be opened by merely

pushing it up: does so, and enters. The room is in darkness: on the floor under the window is found the insensible body of the woman Cibras. She is alive, but has fainted. Her right fingers are closed round the handle of a large bowie-knife, which is covered with blood; parts of the left are missing. All the jewelry has been stolen from the room. Lord Pharanx lies on the bed, stabbed through the bedclothes to the heart. Later on a bullet is also found imbedded in his brain. I should explain that a trenchant edge, running along the bottom of the sash, was the obvious means by which the fingers of Cibras had been cut off. This had been placed there a few days before by the workman I spoke of. Several secret springs had been placed on the inner side of the lower horizontal piece of the window-frame, by pressing any one of which the sash was lowered; so that no one, ignorant of the secret, could pass out from within, without resting the hand on one of these springs, and so bringing down the armed sash suddenly on the underlying hand.

‘There was, of course, a trial. The poor culprit, in mortal terror of death, shrieked out a confession of the murder just as the jury had returned from their brief consultation, and before they had time to pronounce their verdict of “guilty.” But she denied shooting Lord Pharanx, and she denied stealing the jewels; and indeed no pistol and no jewels were found on her, or anywhere in the room. So that many points remain mysterious. What part did the burglars play in the tragedy? Were they in collusion with Cibras? Had the strange behaviour of at least one of the inmates of Orven Hall no hidden significance? The wildest guesses were made throughout the country; theories propounded. But no theory explained *all* the points. The ferment, however, has now subsided. To-morrow morning Maude Cibras ends her life on the gallows.’

Thus I ended my narrative.

Without a word Zaleski rose from the couch, and walked to the organ. Assisted from behind by Ham, who foreknew his master's every whim, he proceeded to render with infinite feeling an air from the *Lakmé* of Delibes; long he sat, dreamily uttering the melody, his head sunken on his breast. When at last he rose, his great expanse of brow was clear, and a smile all but solemn in its serenity was on his lips. He walked up to an ivory *escritoire*, scribbled a few words on a sheet of paper, and handed it to the negro with the order to take my trap and drive with the message in all haste to the nearest telegraph office.

'That message,' he said, resuming his place on the couch, 'is a last word on the tragedy, and will, no doubt, produce some modification in the final stage of its history. And now, Shiel, let us sit together and confer on this matter. From the manner in which you have expressed yourself, it is evident that there are points which puzzle you — you do not get a clean *coup d'oeil* of the whole regiment of facts, and their causes, and their consequences, as they occurred. Let us see if out of that confusion we cannot produce a coherence, a symmetry. A great wrong is done, and on the society in which it is done is imposed the task of making it translucent, of seeing it in all its relations, and of punishing it. But what happens? The society fails to rise to the occasion; on the whole, it contrives to make the opacity more opaque, does not see the crime in any human sense; is unable to punish it. Now this, you will admit, whenever it occurs, is a woful failure: woful I mean, not very in itself, but very in its significance: and there must be a precise cause for it. That cause is the lack of something not merely, or specially, in the investigators of the wrong, but in the world at large — shall we not boldly call it the lack of culture? Do not, however, misunderstand me: by the term I mean not so much attainment in general, as *mood* in particular. Whether or when such mood may become universal may be to you a matter of doubt.

As for me, I often think that when the era of civilisation begins — as assuredly it shall some day begin — when the races of the world cease to be credulous, ovine mobs and become critical, human nations, then will be the ushering in of the ten thousand years of a *clairvoyant* culture. But nowhere, and at no time during the very few hundreds of years that man has occupied the earth, has there been one single sign of its presence. In individuals, yes — in the Greek Plato, and I think in your English Milton and Bishop Berkeley — but in humanity, never; and hardly in any individual outside those two nations. The reason, I fancy, is not so much that man is a hopeless fool, as that Time, so far as he is concerned, has, as we know, only just begun: it being, of course, conceivable that the creation of a perfect society of men, as the first requisite to a *régime* of culture, must nick to itself a longer loop of time than the making of, say, a stratum of coal. A loquacious person — he is one of your cherished “novel”-writers, by the way, if that be indeed a Novel in which there is nowhere any pretence at novelty — once assured me that he could never reflect without swelling on the greatness of the age in which he lived, an age the mighty civilisation of which he likened to the Augustan and Periclean. A certain stony gaze of anthropological interest with which I regarded his frontal bone seemed to strike the poor man dumb, and he took a hurried departure. Could he have been ignorant that ours is, in general, greater than the Periclean for the very reason that the Divinity is neither the devil nor a bungler; that three thousand years of human consciousness is not nothing; that a whole is greater than its part, and a butterfly than a chrysalis? But it was the assumption that it was therefore in any way great in the abstract that occasioned my profound astonishment, and indeed contempt. Civilisation, if it means anything, can only mean the art by which men live musically together — to the lutings, as it were, of Panpipes, or say perhaps, to triumphant organ-bursts of martial,

marching dithyrambs. Any formula defining it as “the art of lying back and getting elaborately tickled,” should surely at this hour be *too* primitive — *too* Opic — to bring anything but a smile to the lips of grown white-skinned men; and the very fact that such a definition can still find undoubting acceptance in all quarters may be an indication that the true [Greek: *idéa*] which this condition of being must finally assume is far indeed — far, perhaps, by ages and aeons — from becoming part of the general conception. Nowhere since the beginning has the gross problem of living ever so much as approached solution, much less the delicate and intricate one of living *together*: *à propos* of which your body corporate not only still produces criminals (as the body-natural fleas), but its very elementary organism cannot so much as catch a really athletic one as yet. Meanwhile *you* and *I* are handicapped. The individual travaileth in pain. In the struggle for quality, powers, air, he spends his strength, and yet hardly escapes asphyxiation. He can no more wriggle himself free of the psychic gravitations that invest him than the earth can shake herself loose of the sun, or he of the omnipotences that rivet him to the universe. If by chance one shoots a downy hint of wings, an instant feeling of contrast puffs him with self-consciousness: a tragedy at once: the unconscious being “the alone complete.” To attain to anything, he must needs screw the head up into the atmosphere of the future, while feet and hands drip dark ichors of despair from the crucifying cross of the crude present — *a horrid strain!* Far up a nightly instigation of stars he sees: but he may not strike them with the head. If earth were a boat, and mine, I know well toward what wild azimuths I would compel her helm: but gravity, gravity — chiefest curse of Eden’s sin! — is hostile. When indeed (as is ordained), the old mother swings herself into a sublimer orbit, we on her back will follow: till then we make to ourselves Icarian “organa” in vain. I mean to say that it is the plane

of station which is at fault: move that upward, you move all. But meantime is it not Goethe who assures us that “further reacheth no man, make he what stretching he will”? For Man, you perceive, is not many, but One. It is absurd to suppose that England can be free while Poland is enslaved; Paris is *far* from the beginnings of civilisation whilst Toobooloo and Chicago are barbaric. Probably no ill-fated, microcephalous son of Adam ever tumbled into a mistake quite so huge, so infantile, as did Dives, if he imagined himself rich while Lazarus sat pauper at the gate. Not many, I say, but one. Even Ham and I here in our retreat are not alone; we are embarrassed by the uninvited spirit of the present; the adamant root of the mountain on whose summit we stand is based ineradicably in the low world. Yet, thank Heaven, Goethe was not *quite* right — as, indeed, he proved in his proper person. I tell you, Shiel, I *know* whether Mary did or did not murder Darnley; I know — as clearly, as precisely, as a man can know — that Beatrice Cenci was not “guilty” as certain recently-discovered documents “prove” her, but that the Shelley version of the affair, though a guess, is the correct one. It *is* possible, by taking thought, to add one cubit — or say a hand, or a dactyl — to your stature; you may develop powers slightly — very slightly, but distinctly, both in kind and degree — in advance of those of the mass who live in or about the same cycle of time in which you live. But it is only when the powers to which I refer are shared by the mass — when what, for want of another term, I call the age of the Cultured Mood has at length arrived — that their exercise will become easy and familiar to the individual; and who shall say what presciences, prisms, *séances*, what introspective craft, Genie apocalypses, shall not *then* become possible to the few who stand spiritually in the van of men.

‘All this, you will understand, I say as some sort of excuse for myself, and for you, for any hesitation we may have shown in loosening the very

little puzzle you have placed before me — one which we certainly must not regard as difficult of solution. Of course, looking at all the facts, the first consideration that must inevitably rivet the attention is that arising from the circumstance that Viscount Randolph has strong reasons to wish his father dead. They are avowed enemies; he is the *fiancé* of a princess whose husband he is probably too poor to become, though he will very likely be rich enough when his father dies; and so on. All that appears on the surface. On the other hand, we — you and I — know the man: he is a person of gentle blood, as moral, we suppose, as ordinary people, occupying a high station in the world. It is impossible to imagine that such a person would commit an assassination, or even countenance one, for any or all of the reasons that present themselves. In our hearts, with or without clear proof, we could hardly believe it of him. Earls' sons do not, in fact, go about murdering people. Unless, then, we can so reason as to discover other motives — strong, adequate, irresistible — and by “irresistible” I mean a motive which must be *far* stronger than even the love of life itself — we should, I think, in fairness dismiss him from our mind.

‘And yet it must be admitted that his conduct is not free of blame. He contracts a sudden intimacy with the acknowledged culprit, whom he does not seem to have known before. He meets her by night, corresponds with her. Who and what is this woman? I think we could not be far wrong in guessing some very old flame of Lord Pharanx's of *Théâtre des Variétés* type, whom he has supported for years, and from whom, hearing some story to her discredit, he threatens to withdraw his supplies. However that be, Randolph writes to Cibras — a violent woman, a woman of lawless passions — assuring her that in four or five days she will be excluded from the will of his father; and in four or five days Cibras plunges a knife into his father's bosom. It is a perfectly natural sequence — though, of course, the

intention to produce by his words the actual effect produced might have been absent; indeed, the letter of Lord Pharanx himself, had it been received, would have tended to produce that very effect; for it not only gives an excellent opportunity for converting into action those evil thoughts which Randolph (thoughtlessly or guiltily) has instilled, but it further tends to rouse her passions by cutting off from her all hopes of favour. If we presume, then, as is only natural, that there was no such intention on the part of the earl, we *may* make the same presumption in the case of the son. Cibras, however, never receives the earl's letter: on the morning of the same day she goes away to Bath, with the double object, I suppose, of purchasing a weapon, and creating an impression that she has left the country. How then does she know the exact *locale* of Lord Pharanx's room? It is in an unusual part of the mansion, she is unacquainted with any of the servants, a stranger to the district. Can it be possible that Randolph *had told her*? And here again, even in that case, you must bear in mind that Lord Pharanx also told her in his note, and you must recognise the possibility of the absence of evil intention on the part of the son. Indeed, I may go further and show you that in all but every instance in which his actions are in themselves *outré*, suspicious, they are rendered, not less *outré*, but less suspicious, by the fact that Lord Pharanx himself knew of them, shared in them. There was the cruel barbing of that balcony window; about it the crudest thinker would argue thus to himself: "Randolph practically incites Maude Cibras to murder his father on the 5th, and on the 6th he has that window so altered in order that, should she act on his suggestion, she will be caught on attempting to leave the room, while he himself, the actual culprit being discovered *en flagrant délit*, will escape every shadow of suspicion." But, on the other hand, we know that the alteration was made with Lord Pharanx's consent, most likely on his initiative — for he leaves his favoured

room during a whole day for that very purpose. So with the letter to Cibras on the 8th — Randolph despatches it, but the earl writes it. So with the disposal of the jewels in the apartment on the 9th. There had been some burglaries in the neighbourhood, and the suspicion at once arises in the mind of the crude reasoner: Could Randolph — finding now that Cibras has “left the country,” that, in fact, the tool he had expected to serve his ends has failed him — could he have thus brought those jewels there, and thus warned the servants of their presence, in the hope that the intelligence might so get abroad and lead to a burglary, in the course of which his father might lose his life? There are evidences, you know, tending to show that the burglary did actually at last take place, and the suspicion is, in view of that, by no means unreasonable. And yet, militating against it, is our knowledge that it was Lord Pharanx who “*chose*” to gather the jewels round him; that it was in his presence that Randolph drew the attention of the servant to them. In the matter, at least, of the little political comedy the son seems to have acted alone; but you surely cannot rid yourself of the impression that the radical speeches, the candidature, and the rest of it, formed all of them only a very elaborate, and withal clumsy, set of preliminaries to the *class*. Anything, to make the perspective, the sequence of *that* seem natural. But in the class, at any rate, we have the tacit acquiescence, or even the cooperation of Lord Pharanx. You have described the conspiracy of quiet which, for some reason or other, was imposed on the household; in that reign of silence the bang of a door, the fall of a plate, becomes a domestic tornado. But have you ever heard an agricultural labourer in clogs or heavy boots ascend a stair? The noise is terrible. The tramp of an army of them through the house and overhead, probably jabbering uncouthly together, would be insufferable. Yet Lord Pharanx seems to have made no objection; the novel institution is set up in his own mansion, in an unusual part of it,

probably against his own principles; but we hear of no murmur from him. On the fatal day, too, the calm of the house is rudely broken by a considerable commotion in Randolph's room just overhead, caused by his preparation for "a journey to London." But the usual angry remonstrance is not forthcoming from the master. And do you not see how all this more than acquiescence of Lord Phranx in the conduct of his son deprives that conduct of half its significance, its intrinsic suspiciousness?

'A hasty reasoner then would inevitably jump to the conclusion that Randolph was guilty of something — some evil intention — though of precisely what he would remain in doubt. But a more careful reasoner would pause: he would reflect that *as* the father was implicated in those acts, and *as* he was innocent of any such intention, so might possibly, even probably, be the son. This, I take it, has been the view of the officials, whose logic is probably far in advance of their imagination. But supposing we can adduce one act, undoubtedly actuated by evil intention on the part of Randolph — one act in which his father certainly did *not* participate — what follows next? Why, that we revert at once to the view of the hasty reasoner, and conclude that *all* the other acts in the same relation were actuated by the same evil motive; and having reached that point, we shall be unable longer to resist the conclusion that those of them in which his father had a share *might* have sprung from a like motive in *his* mind also; nor should the mere obvious impossibility of such a condition of things have even the very least influence on us, as thinkers, in causing us to close our mind against its logical possibility. I therefore make the inference, and pass on.

'Let us then see if we can by searching find out any absolutely certain deviation from right on the part of Randolph, in which we may be quite sure that his father was not an abettor. At eight on the night of the murder it is

dark; there has been some snow, but the fall has ceased — how long before I know not, but so long that the interval becomes sufficiently appreciable to cause remark. Now the party going round the house come on two tracks of feet meeting at an angle. Of one track we are merely told that it was made by the small foot of a woman, and of it we know no more; of the other we learn that the feet were big and the boots clumsy, and, it is added, the marks were *half obliterated by the snow*. Two things then are clear: that the persons who made them came from different directions, and probably made them at different times. That, alone, by the way, may be a sufficient answer to your question as to whether Cibras was in collusion with the “burglars.” But how does Randolph behave with reference to these tracks? Though he carries the lantern, he fails to perceive the first — the woman’s — the discovery of which is made by a lad; but the second, half hidden in the snow, he notices readily enough, and at once points it out. He explains that burglars have been on the war-path. But examine his horror of surprise when he hears that the window is closed; when he sees the woman’s bleeding fingers. He cannot help exclaiming, “My God! what has happened *now*?” But why “now”? The word cannot refer to his father’s death, for that he knew, or guessed, beforehand, having heard the shot. Is it not rather the exclamation of a man whose schemes destiny has complicated? Besides, he should have *expected* to find the window closed: no one except himself, Lord Pharanx, and the workman, who was now dead, knew the secret of its construction; the burglars therefore, having entered and robbed the room, one of them, intending to go out, would press on the ledge, and the sash would fall on his hand with what result we know. The others would then either break the glass and so escape; or pass through the house; or remain prisoners. That immoderate surprise was therefore absurdly illogical, after seeing the burglar-track in the snow. But how, above all, do you account for

Lord Pharanx's silence during and after the burglars' visit — if there was a visit? He was, you must remember, alive all that time; *they* did not kill him; certainly they did not shoot him, for the shot is heard after the snow has ceased to fall, — that is, after, long after, they have left, since it was the falling snow that had half obliterated their tracks; nor did they stab him, for to this Cibras confesses. Why then, being alive, and not gagged, did he give no token of the presence of his visitors? There were in fact no burglars at Orven Hall that night.'

'But the track!' I cried, 'the jewels found in the snow — the neckerchief!'

Zaleski smiled.

'Burglars,' he said, 'are plain, honest folk who have a just notion of the value of jewelry when they see it. They very properly regard it as mere foolish waste to drop precious stones about in the snow, and would refuse to company with a man weak enough to let fall his neckerchief on a cold night. The whole business of the burglars was a particularly inartistic trick, unworthy of its author. The mere facility with which Randolph discovered the buried jewels by the aid of a dim lantern, should have served as a hint to an educated police not afraid of facing the improbable. The jewels had been *put* there with the object of throwing suspicion on the imaginary burglars; with the same design the catch of the window had been wrenched off, the sash purposely left open, the track made, the valuables taken from Lord Pharanx's room. All this was deliberately done by some one — would it be rash to say at once by whom?

'Our suspicions having now lost their whole character of vagueness, and begun to lead us in a perfectly definite direction, let us examine the statements of Hester Dyett. Now, it is immediately comprehensible to me that the evidence of this woman at the public examinations was looked at

askance. There can be no doubt that she is a poor specimen of humanity, an undesirable servant, a peering, hysterical caricature of a woman. Her statements, if formally recorded, were not believed; or if believed, were believed with only half the mind. No attempt was made to deduce anything from them. But for my part, if I wanted specially reliable evidence as to any matter of fact, it is precisely from such a being that I would seek it. Let me draw you a picture of that class of intellect. They have a greed for information, but the information, to satisfy them, must relate to actualities; they have no sympathy with fiction; it is from their impatience of what seems to be that springs their curiosity of what *is*. Clio is their muse, and she alone. Their whole lust is to gather knowledge through a hole, their whole faculty is to *peep*. But they are destitute of imagination, and do not lie; in their passion for realities they would esteem it a sacrilege to distort history. They make straight for the substantial, the indubitable. For this reason the *Peniculi* and *Ergasili* of Plautus seem to me far more true to nature than the character of Paul Pry in Jerrold's comedy. In one instance, indeed, the evidence of Hester Dyett appears, on the surface of it, to be quite false. She declares that she sees a round white object moving upward in the room. But the night being gloomy, her taper having gone out, she must have been standing in a dense darkness. How then could she see this object? Her evidence, it was argued, must be designedly false, or else (as she was in an ecstatic condition) the result of an excited fancy. But I have stated that such persons, nervous, neurotic even as they may be, are not fanciful. I therefore accept her evidence as true. And now, mark the consequence of that acceptance. I am driven to admit that there must, from some source, have been light in the room — a light faint enough, and diffused enough, to escape the notice of Hester herself. This being so, it must have proceeded from around, from below, or from above. There are no

other alternatives. Around these was nothing but the darkness of the night; the room beneath, we know, was also in darkness. The light then came from the room above — from the mechanic class-room. But there is only one possible means by which the light from an upper can diffuse a lower room. It *must* be by a hole in the intermediate boards. We are thus driven to the discovery of an aperture of some sort in the flooring of that upper chamber. Given this, the mystery of the round white object “driven” upward disappears. We at once ask, why not *drawn* upward through the newly-discovered aperture by a string too small to be visible in the gloom? Assuredly it was drawn upward. And now having established a hole in the ceiling of the room in which Hester stands, is it unreasonable — even without further evidence — to suspect another in the flooring? But we actually have this further evidence. As she rushes to the door she falls, faints, and fractures the lower part of her leg. Had she fallen *over* some object, as you supposed, the result might have been a fracture also, but in a different part of the body; being where it was, it could only have been caused by placing the foot inadvertently in a hole while the rest of the body was in rapid motion. But this gives us an approximate idea of the *size* of the lower hole; it was at least big enough to admit the foot and lower leg, big enough therefore to admit that “good-sized ball of cotton” of which the woman speaks: and from the lower we are able to conjecture the size of the upper. But how comes it that these holes are nowhere mentioned in the evidence? It can only be because no one ever saw them. Yet the rooms must have been examined by the police, who, if they existed, must have seen them. They therefore did not exist: that is to say, the pieces which had been removed from the floorings had by that time been neatly replaced, and, in the case of the lower one, covered by the carpet, the removal of which had caused so much commotion in Randolph’s room on the fatal day. Hester

Dyett would have been able to notice and bring at least one of the apertures forward in evidence, but she fainted before she had time to find out the cause of her fall, and an hour later it was, you remember, Randolph himself who bore her from the room. But should not the aperture in the top floor have been observed by the class? Undoubtedly, if its position was in the open space in the middle of the room. But it was not observed, and therefore its position was not there, but in the only other place left — behind the apparatus used in demonstration. That then was *one* useful object which the apparatus — and with it the elaborate hypocrisy of class, and speeches, and candidature — served: it was made to act as a curtain, a screen. But had it no other purpose? That question we may answer when we know its name and its nature. And it is not beyond our powers to conjecture this with something like certainty. For the only “machines” possible to use in illustration of simple mechanics are the screw, the wedge, the scale, the lever, the wheel-and-axle, and Atwood’s machine. The mathematical principles which any of these exemplify would, of course, be incomprehensible to such a class, but the first five most of all, and as there would naturally be some slight pretence of trying to make the learners understand, I therefore select the last; and this selection is justified when we remember that on the shot being heard, Randolph leans for support on the “machine,” and stands in its shadow; but any of the others would be too small to throw any appreciable shadow, except one — the wheel, and-axle — and that one would hardly afford support to a tall man in the erect position. The Atwood’s machine is therefore forced on us; as to its construction, it is, as you are aware, composed of two upright posts, with a cross-bar fitted with pulleys and strings, and is intended to show the motion of bodies acting under a constant force — the force of gravity, to wit. But now consider all the really glorious uses to which those same pulleys may

be turned in lowering and lifting unobserved that “ball of cotton” through the two apertures, while the other strings with the weights attached are dangling before the dull eyes of the peasants. I need only point out that when the whole company trooped out of the room, Randolph was the last to leave it, and it is not now difficult to conjecture why.

‘Of what, then, have we convicted Randolph? For one thing, we have shown that by marks of feet in the snow preparation was made beforehand for obscuring the cause of the earl’s death. That death must therefore have been at least expected, foreknown. Thus we convict him of expecting it. And then, by an independent line of deduction, we can also discover the *means* by which he expected it to occur. It is clear that he did not expect it to occur when it did by the hand of Maude Cibras — for this is proved by his knowledge that she had left the neighbourhood, by his evidently genuine astonishment at the sight of the closed window, and, above all, by his truly morbid desire to establish a substantial, an irrefutable *alibi* for himself by going to Plymouth on the day when there was every reason to suppose she would do the deed — that is, on the 8th, the day of the earl’s invitation. On the fatal night, indeed, the same morbid eagerness to build up a clear *alibi* is observable, for he surrounds himself with a cloud of witnesses in the upper chamber. But that, you will admit, is not nearly so perfect a one as a journey, say, to Plymouth would have been. Why then, expecting the death, did he not take some such journey? Obviously because on *this* occasion his personal presence was necessary. When, *in conjunction* with this, we recall the fact that during the intrigues with Cibras the lectures were discontinued, and again resumed immediately on her unlooked-for departure, we arrive at the conclusion that the means by which Lord Pharanx’s death was expected to occur was the personal presence of Randolph *in conjunction* with the political speeches, the candidature, the class, the apparatus.

‘But though he stands condemned of foreknowing, and being in some sort connected with, his father’s death, I can nowhere find any indication of his having personally accomplished it, or even of his ever having had any such intention. The evidence is evidence of complicity — and nothing more. And yet — and yet — even of *this* we began by acquitting him unless we could discover, as I said, some strong, adequate, altogether irresistible motive for such complicity. Failing this, we ought to admit that at some point our argument has played us false, and led us into conclusions wholly at variance with our certain knowledge of the principles underlying human conduct in general. Let us therefore seek for such a motive — something deeper than personal enmity, stronger than personal ambition, *than the love of life itself!* And now, tell me, at the time of the occurrence of this mystery, was the whole past history of the House of Orven fully investigated?’

‘Not to my knowledge,’ I answered; ‘in the papers there were, of course, sketches of the earl’s career, but that I think was all.’

‘Yet it cannot be that their past was unknown, but only that it was ignored. Long, I tell you, long and often, have I pondered on that history, and sought to trace with what ghastly secret has been pregnant the destiny, gloomful as Erebus and the murk of black-peplosed Nux, which for centuries has hung its pall over the men of this ill-fated house. Now at last I know. Dark, dark, and red with gore and horror is that history; down the silent corridors of the ages have these blood-soaked sons of Atreus fled shrieking before the pursuing talons of the dread Eumenides. The first earl received his patent in 1535 from the eighth Henry. Two years later, though noted as a rabid “king’s man,” he joined the Pilgrimage of Grace against his master, and was soon after executed, with Darcy and some other lords. His age was then fifty. His son, meantime, had served in the king’s army under Norfolk. It is remarkable, by the way, that females have all along been rare

in the family, and that in no instance has there been more than one son. The second earl, under the sixth Edward, suddenly threw up a civil post, hastened to the army, and fell at the age of forty at the battle of Pinkie in 1547. He was accompanied by his son. The third in 1557, under Mary, renounced the Catholic faith, to which, both before and since, the family have passionately clung, and suffered (at the age of forty) the last penalty. The fourth earl died naturally, but suddenly, in his bed at the age of fifty during the winter of 1566. At midnight *of the same day* he was laid in the grave by his son. This son was later on, in 1591, seen by *his* son to fall from a lofty balcony at Orven Hall, while walking in his sleep at high noonday. Then for some time nothing happens; but the eighth earl dies mysteriously in 1651 at the age of forty-five. A fire occurring in his room, he leapt from a window to escape the flames. Some of his limbs were thereby fractured, but he was in a fair way to recovery when there was a sudden relapse, soon ending in death. He was found to have been poisoned by *radix aconiti indica*, a rare Arabian poison not known in Europe at that time except to *savants*, and first mentioned by Acosta some months before. An attendant was accused and tried, but acquitted. The then son of the House was a Fellow of the newly-founded Royal Society, and author of a now-forgotten work on Toxicology, which, however, I have read. No suspicion, of course, fell on *him*.'

As Zaleski proceeded with this retrospect, I could not but ask myself with stirrings of the most genuine wonder, whether he could possess this intimate knowledge of *all* the great families of Europe! It was as if he had spent a part of his life in making special study of the history of the Orvens.

'In the same manner,' he went on, 'I could detail the annals of the family from that time to the present. But all through they have been marked by the same latent tragic elements; and I have said enough to show you that in

each of the tragedies there was invariably something large, leering, something of which the mind demands explanation, but seeks in vain to find it. Now we need no longer seek. Destiny did not design that the last Lord of Orven should any more hide from the world the guilty secret of his race. It was the will of the gods — and he betrayed himself. “Return,” he writes, “the beginning of the end is come.” What end?

The end — perfectly well known to Randolph, needing no explanation for *him*. The old, old end, which in the ancient dim time led the first lord, loyal still at heart, to forsake his king; and another, still devout, to renounce his cherished faith, and yet another to set fire to the home of his ancestors. You have called the two last scions of the family “a proud and selfish pair of beings”; proud they were, and selfish too, but you are in error if you think their selfishness a personal one: on the contrary, they were singularly oblivious of self in the ordinary sense of the word. Theirs was the pride and the selfishness of *race*. What consideration, think you, other than the weal of his house, could induce Lord Randolph to take on himself the shame — for as such he certainly regards it — of a conversion to radicalism? He would, I am convinced, have *died* rather than make this pretence for merely personal ends. But he does it — and the reason? It is because he has received that awful summons from home; because “the end” is daily coming nearer, and it must not find him unprepared to meet it; it is because Lord Pharanx’s senses are becoming *too* acute; because the clatter of the servants’ knives at the other end of the house inflames him to madness; because his excited palate can no longer endure any food but the subtlest delicacies; because Hester Dyett is able from the posture in which he sits to conjecture that he is intoxicated; because, in fact, he is on the brink of the dreadful malady which physicians call “*General Paralysis of the Insane*.” You remember I took from your hands the newspaper containing the earl’s

letter to Cibras, in order to read it with my own eyes. I had my reasons, and I was justified. That letter contains three mistakes in spelling: “here” is printed “hear,” “pass” appears as “pas,” and “room” as “rume.” Printers’ errors, you say? But not so — one might be, two in that short paragraph could hardly be, three would be impossible. Search the whole paper through, and I think you will not find another. Let us reverence the theory of probabilities: the errors were the writer’s, not the printer’s. General Paralysis of the Insane is known to have this effect on the writing. It attacks its victims about the period of middle age — the age at which the deaths of all the Orvens who died mysteriously occurred. Finding then that the dire heritage of his race — the heritage of madness — is falling or fallen on him, he summons his son from India. On himself he passes sentence of death: it is the tradition of the family, the secret vow of self-destruction handed down through ages from father to son. But he must have aid: in these days it is difficult for a man to commit the suicidal act without detection — and if madness is a disgrace to the race, equally so is suicide. Besides, the family is to be enriched by the insurances on his life, and is thereby to be allied with royal blood; but the money will be lost if the suicide be detected. Randolph therefore returns and blossoms into a popular candidate.

‘For a time he is led to abandon his original plans by the appearance of Maude Cibras; he hopes that *she* may be made to destroy the earl; but when she fails him, he recurs to it — recurs to it all suddenly, for Lord Pharanx’s condition is rapidly becoming critical, patent to all eyes, could any eye see him — so much so that on the last day none of the servants are allowed to enter his room. We must therefore regard Cibras as a mere addendum to, an extraneous element in, the tragedy, not as an integral part of it. She did not shoot the noble lord, for she had no pistol; nor did Randolph, for he was at a distance from the bed of death, surrounded by witnesses; nor did the

imaginary burglars. The earl therefore shot himself; and it was the small globular silver pistol, such as this' — here Zaleski drew a little embossed Venetian weapon from a drawer near him— 'that appeared in the gloom to the excited Hester as a "ball of cotton," while it was being drawn upward by the Atwood's machine. But if the earl shot himself he could not have done so after being stabbed to the heart. Maude Cibras, therefore, stabbed a dead man. She would, of course, have ample time for stealing into the room and doing so after the shot was fired, and before the party reached the balcony window, on account of the delay on the stairs in procuring a second light; in going to the earl's door; in examining the tracks, and so on. But having stabbed a dead man, she is not guilty of murder. The message I just now sent by Ham was one addressed to the Home Secretary, telling him on no account to let Cibras die to-morrow. He well knows my name, and will hardly be silly enough to suppose me capable of using words without meaning. It will be perfectly easy to prove my conclusions, for the pieces removed from, and replaced in, the floorings can still be detected, if looked for; the pistol is still, no doubt, in Randolph's room, and its bore can be compared with the bullet found in Lord Pharanx's brain; above all, the jewels stolen by the "burglars" are still safe in some cabinet of the new earl, and may readily be discovered I therefore expect that the dénouement will now take a somewhat different turn.'

That the dénouement did take a different turn, and pretty strictly in accordance with Zaleski's forecast, is now matter of history, and the incidents, therefore, need no further comment from me in this place.

THE STONE OF THE EDMUNDSBURY MONKS



‘RUSSIA,’ SAID PRINCE Zaleski to me one day, when I happened to be on a visit to him in his darksome sanctuary— ‘Russia may be regarded as land surrounded by ocean; that is to say, she is an island. In the same way, it is sheer gross irrelevancy to speak of *Britain* as an island, unless indeed the word be understood as a mere *modus loquendi* arising out of a rather poor geographical pleasantry. Britain, in reality, is a small continent. Near her — a little to the south-east — is situated the large island of Europe. Thus, the enlightened French traveller passing to these shores should commune within himself: “I now cross to the Mainland”; and retracing his steps: “I now return to the fragment rent by wrack and earthshock from the Mother-country.” And this I say not in the way of paradox, but as the expression of a sober truth. I have in my mind merely the relative depth and extent — the *non-insularity*, in fact — of the impressions made by the several nations on the world. But this island of Europe has herself an island of her own: the name of it, Russia. She, of all lands, is the *terra incognita*, the unknown land; till quite lately she was more — she was the undiscovered, the unsuspected land. She *has* a literature, you know, and a history, and a language, and a purpose — but of all this the world has hardly so much as heard. Indeed, she, and not any Antarctic Sea whatever, is the real Ultima Thule of modern times, the true Island of Mystery.’

I reproduce these remarks of Zaleski here, not so much on account of the splendid tribute to my country contained in them, as because it ever seemed to me — and especially in connection with the incident I am about to recall

— that in this respect at least he was a genuine son of Russia; if she is the Land, so truly was he the Man, of Mystery. I who knew him best alone knew that it was impossible to know him. He was a being little of the present: with one arm he embraced the whole past; the fingers of the other heaved on the vibrant pulse of the future. He seemed to me — I say it deliberately and with forethought — to possess the unparalleled power not merely of disentangling in retrospect, but of unravelling in prospect, and I have known him to relate *coming* events with unimaginable minuteness of precision. He was nothing if not superlative: his diatribes, now culminating in a very *extravaganza* of hyperbole — now sailing with loose wing through the downy, witched, Dutch cloud-heaps of some quaintest tramontane Nephelococcugia of thought — now laying down law of the Medes for the actual world of to-day — had oft-times the strange effect of bringing back to my mind the very singular old-epic epithet, [Greek: aenemoen] — *airy* — as applied to human thought. The mere grip of his memory was not simply extraordinary, it had in it a token, a hint, of the strange, the pythic — nay, the sibylline. And as his reflecting intellect, moreover, had all the lightness of foot of a chamois kid, unless you could contrive to follow each dazzlingly swift successive step, by the sum of which he attained his Alp-heights, he inevitably left on you the astounding, the confounding impression of mental omnipresence.

I had brought with me a certain document, a massive book bound in iron and leather, the diary of one Sir Jocelin Saul. This I had abstracted from a gentleman of my acquaintance, the head of a firm of inquiry agents in London, into whose hand, only the day before, it had come. A distant neighbour of Sir Jocelin, hearing by chance of his extremity, had invoked the assistance of this firm; but the aged baronet, being in a state of the utmost feebleness, terror, and indeed hysterical incoherence, had been able

to utter no word in explanation of his condition or wishes, and, in silent abandonment, had merely handed the book to the agent.

A day or two after I had reached the desolate old mansion which the prince occupied, knowing that he might sometimes be induced to take an absorbing interest in questions that had proved themselves too profound, or too intricate, for ordinary solution, I asked him if he was willing to hear the details read out from the diary, and on his assenting, I proceeded to do so.

The brief narrative had reference to a very large and very valuable oval gem enclosed in the substance of a golden chalice, which chalice, in the monastery of St. Edmundsbury, had once lain centuries long within the Loculus, or inmost coffin, wherein reposed the body of St. Edmund. By pressing a hidden pivot, the cup (which was composed of two equal parts, connected by minute hinges) sprang open, and in a hollow space at the bottom was disclosed the gem. Sir Jocelin Saul, I may say, was lineally connected with — though, of course, not descendant from — that same Jocelin of Brakelonda, a brother of the Edmundsbury convent, who wrote the now so celebrated *Jocelini Chronica*: and the chalice had fallen into the possession of the family, seemingly at some time prior to the suppression of the monastery about 1537. On it was inscribed in old English characters of unknown date the words:

‘Shulde this Ston stalen bee,
Or shuld it chaunges dre,
The Houss of Sawl and hys Hed anoon shal de.’

The stone itself was an intaglio, and had engraved on its surface the figure of a mythological animal, together with some nearly obliterated letters, of which the only ones remaining legible were those forming the word ‘Has.’ As a sure precaution against the loss of the gem, another cup

had been made and engraved in an exactly similar manner, inside of which, to complete the delusion, another stone of the same size and cut, but of comparatively valueless material, had been placed.

Sir Jocelin Saul, a man of intense nervousity, lived his life alone in a remote old manor-house in Suffolk, his only companion being a person of Eastern origin, named Ul-Jabal. The baronet had consumed his vitality in the life-long attempt to sound the too fervid Maelstrom of Oriental research, and his mind had perhaps caught from his studies a tinge of their morbidness, their esotericism, their insanity. He had for some years past been engaged in the task of writing a stupendous work on Pre-Zoroastrian Theogonies, in which, it is to be supposed, Ul-Jabal acted somewhat in the capacity of secretary. But I will give *verbatim* the extracts from his diary:

‘*June 11.* — This is my birthday. Seventy years ago exactly I slid from the belly of the great Dark into this Light and Life. My God! My God! it is briefer than the rage of an hour, fleeter than a mid-day trance. Ul-Jabal greeted me warmly — seemed to have been looking forward to it — and pointed out that seventy is of the fateful numbers, its only factors being seven, five, and two: the last denoting the duality of Birth and Death; five, Isolation; seven, Infinity. I informed him that this was also my father’s birthday; and *his* father’s; and repeated the oft-told tale of how the latter, just seventy years ago to-day, walking at twilight by the churchyard-wall, saw the figure of *himself* sitting on a grave-stone, and died five weeks later riving with the pangs of hell. Whereat the sceptic showed his two huge rows of teeth.

‘What is his peculiar interest in the Edmundsbury chalice? On each successive birthday when the cup has been produced, he has asked me to show him the stone. Without any well-defined reason I have always declined, but to-day I yielded. He gazed long into its sky-blue depth, and

then asked if I had no idea what the inscription “Has” meant. I informed him that it was one of the lost secrets of the world.

‘*June 15.* — Some new element has entered into our existence here. Something threatens me. I hear the echo of a menace against my sanity and my life. It is as if the garment which enwraps me has grown too hot, too heavy for me. A notable drowsiness has settled on my brain — a drowsiness in which thought, though slow, is a thousandfold more fiery-vivid than ever. Oh, fair goddess of Reason, desert not me, thy chosen child!

‘*June 18.* — Ul-Jabal? — that man is *the very Devil incarnate!*

‘*June 19.* — So much for my bounty, all my munificence, to this poisonous worm. I picked him up on the heights of the Mountain of Lebanon, a cultured savage among cultured savages, and brought him here to be a prince of thought by my side. What though his plundered wealth — the debt I owe him — has saved me from a sort of ruin? Have not *I* instructed him in the sweet secret of Reason?

‘I lay back on my bed in the lonely morning watches, my soul heavy as with the distilled essence of opiates, and in vivid vision knew that he had entered my apartment. In the twilight gloom his glittering rows of shark’s teeth seemed impacted on my eyeball — I saw *them*, and nothing else. I was not aware when he vanished from the room. But at daybreak I crawled on hands and knees to the cabinet containing the chalice. The viperous murderer! He has stolen my gem, well knowing that with it he has stolen my life. The stone is gone — gone, my precious gem. A weakness overtook me, and I lay for many dreamless hours naked on the marble floor.

‘Does the fool think to hide ought from my eyes? Can he imagine that I shall not recover my precious gem, my stone of Saul?

‘*June 20.* — Ah, Ul-Jabal — my brave, my noble Son of the Prophet of God! He has replaced the stone! He would not slay an aged man. The

yellow ray of his eye, it is but the gleam of the great thinker, not — not — the gleam of the assassin. Again, as I lay in semi-somnolence, I saw him enter my room, this time more distinctly. He went up to the cabinet. Shaking the chalice in the dawning, some hours after he had left, I heard with delight the rattle of the stone. I might have known he would replace it; I should not have doubted his clemency to a poor man like me. But the strange being! — he has taken the *other* stone from the *other* cup — a thing of little value to any man! Is Ul-Jabal mad or I?

‘*June 21.* — Merciful Lord in Heaven! he has *not* replaced it — not *it* — but another instead of it. To-day I actually opened the chalice, and saw. He has put a stone there, the same in size, in cut, in engraving, but different in colour, in quality, in value — a stone I have never seen before. How has he obtained it — whence? I must brace myself to probe, to watch; I must turn myself into an eye to search this devil’s-bosom. My life, this subtle, cunning Reason of mine, hangs in the balance.

‘*June 22.* — Just now he offered me a cup of wine. I almost dashed it to the ground before him. But he looked steadfastly into my eye. I flinched: and drank — drank.

‘Years ago, when, as I remember, we were at Balbec, I saw him one day make an almost tasteless preparation out of pure black nicotine, which in mere wanton lust he afterwards gave to some of the dwellers by the Caspian to drink. But the fiend would surely never dream of giving to me that browse of hell — to me an aged man, and a thinker, a seer.

‘*June 23.* — The mysterious, the unfathomable Ul-Jabal! Once again, as I lay in heavy trance at midnight, has he invaded, calm and noiseless as a spirit, the sanctity of my chamber. Serene on the swaying air, which, radiant with soft beams of vermil and violet light, rocked me into variant visions of heaven, I reclined and regarded him unmoved. The man has replaced the

valueless stone in the modern-made chalice, and has now stolen the false stone from the other, which *he himself* put there! In patience will I possess this my soul, and watch what shall betide. My eyes shall know no slumber!

‘*June 24.* — No more — no more shall I drink wine from the hand of Ul-Jabal. My knees totter beneath the weight of my lean body. Daggers of lambent fever race through my brain incessant. Some fibrillary twitchings at the right angle of the mouth have also arrested my attention.

‘*June 25.* — He has dared at open mid-day to enter my room. I watched him from an angle of the stairs pass along the corridor and open my door. But for the terrifying, death-boding thump, thump of my heart, I should have faced the traitor then, and told him that I knew all his treachery. Did I say that I had strange fibrillary twitchings at the right angle of my mouth, and a brain on fire? I have ceased to write my book — the more the pity for the world, not for me.

‘*June 26.* — Marvellous to tell, the traitor, Ul-Jabal, has now placed *another* stone in the Edmundsbury chalice — also identical in nearly every respect with the original gem. This, then, was the object of his entry into my room yesterday. So that he has first stolen the real stone and replaced it by another; then he has stolen this other and replaced it by yet another; he has beside stolen the valueless stone from the modern chalice, and then replaced it. Surely a man gone rabid, a man gone dancing, foaming, raving mad!

‘*June 28.* — I have now set myself to the task of recovering my jewel. It is here, and I shall find it. Life against life — and which is the best life, mine or this accursed Ishmaelite’s? If need be, I will do murder — I, with this withered hand — so that I get back the heritage which is mine.

‘To-day, when I thought he was wandering in the park, I stole into his room, locking the door on the inside. I trembled exceedingly, knowing that his eyes are in every place. I ransacked the chamber, dived among his

clothes, but found no stone. One singular thing in a drawer I saw: a long, white beard, and a wig of long and snow-white hair. As I passed out of the chamber, lo, he stood face to face with me at the door in the passage. My heart gave one bound, and then seemed wholly to cease its travail. Oh, I must be sick unto death, weaker than a bruised reed! When I woke from my swoon he was supporting me in his arms. “Now,” he said, grinning down at me, “now you have at last delivered all into my hands.” He left me, and I saw him go into his room and lock the door upon himself. What is it I have delivered into the madman’s hands?

‘*July 1.* — Life against life — and his, the young, the stalwart, rather than mine, the mouldering, the sere. I love life. Not *yet* am I ready to weigh anchor, and reeve halliard, and turn my prow over the watery paths of the wine-brown Deeps. Oh no. Not yet. Let *him* die. Many and many are the days in which I shall yet see the light, walk, think. I am averse to end the number of my years: there is even a feeling in me at times that this worn body shall never, never taste of death. The chalice predicts indeed that I and my house shall end when the stone is lost — a mere fiction *at first*, an idler’s dream *then*, but now — now — that the prophecy has stood so long a part of the reality of things, and a fact among facts — no longer fiction, but Adamant, stern as the very word of God. Do I not feel hourly since it has gone how the surges of life ebb, ebb ever lower in my heart? Nay, nay, but there is hope. I have here beside me an Arab blade of subtle Damascene steel, insinuous to pierce and to hew, with which in a street of Bethlehem I saw a Syrian’s head cleft open — a gallant stroke! The edges of this I have made bright and white for a nuptial of blood.

‘*July 2.* — I spent the whole of the last night in searching every nook and crack of the house, using a powerful magnifying lens. At times I thought Ul-Jabal was watching me, and would pounce out and murder me.

Convulsive tremors shook my frame like earthquake. Ah me, I fear I am all too frail for this work. Yet dear is the love of life.

‘*July 7.* — The last days I have passed in carefully searching the grounds, with the lens as before. Ul-Jabal constantly found pretexts for following me, and I am confident that every step I took was known to him. No sign anywhere of the grass having been disturbed. Yet my lands are wide, and I cannot be sure. The burden of this mighty task is greater than I can bear. I am weaker than a bruised reed. Shall I not slay my enemy, and make an end?

‘*July 8.* — Ul-Jabal has been in my chamber again! I watched him through a crack in the panelling. His form was hidden by the bed, but I could see his hand reflected in the great mirror opposite the door. First, I cannot guess why, he moved to a point in front of the mirror the chair in which I sometimes sit. He then went to the box in which lie my few garments — and opened it. Ah, I have the stone — safe — safe! He fears my cunning, ancient eyes, and has hidden it in the one place where I would be least likely to seek it — *in my own trunk!* And yet I dread, most intensely I dread, to look.

‘*July 9.* — The stone, alas, is not there! At the last moment he must have changed his purpose. Could his wondrous sensitiveness of intuition have made him feel that my eyes were looking in on him?

‘*July 10.* — In the dead of night I knew that a stealthy foot had gone past my door. I rose and threw a mantle round me; I put on my head my cap of fur; I took the tempered blade in my hands; then crept out into the dark, and followed. Ul-Jabal carried a small lantern which revealed him to me. My feet were bare, but he wore felted slippers, which to my unfailing ear were not utterly noiseless. He descended the stairs to the bottom of the house, while I crouched behind him in the deepest gloom of the corners and walls.

At the bottom he walked into the pantry: there stopped, and turned the lantern full in the direction of the spot where I stood; but so agilely did I slide behind a pillar, that he could not have seen me. In the pantry he lifted the trap-door, and descended still further into the vaults beneath the house. Ah, the vaults, — the long, the tortuous, the darksome vaults, — how had I forgotten them? Still I followed, rent by seismic shocks of terror. I had not forgotten the weapon: could I creep near enough, I felt that I might plunge it into the marrow of his back. He opened the iron door of the first vault and passed in. If I could lock him in? — but he held the key. On and on he wound his way, holding the lantern near the ground, his head bent down. The thought came to me *then*, that, had I but the courage, one swift sweep, and all were over. I crept closer, closer. Suddenly he turned round, and made a quick step in my direction. I saw his eyes, the murderous grin of his jaw. I know not if he saw me — thought forsook me. The weapon fell with clatter and clangor from my grasp, and in panic fright I fled with extended arms and the headlong swiftness of a stripling, through the black labyrinths of the caverns, through the vacant corridors of the house, till I reached my chamber, the door of which I had time to fasten on myself before I dropped, gasping, panting for very life, on the floor.

‘*July 11.* — I had not the courage to see Ul-Jabal to-day. I have remained locked in my chamber all the time without food or water. My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth.

‘*July 12.* — I took heart and crept downstairs. I met him in the study. He smiled on me, and I on him, as if nothing had happened between us. Oh, our old friendship, how it has turned into bitterest hate! I had taken the false stone from the Edmundsbury chalice and put it in the pocket of my brown gown, with the bold intention of showing it to him, and asking him if he

knew aught of it. But when I faced him, my courage failed again. We drank together and ate together as in the old days of love.

‘July 13. — I cannot think that I have not again imbibed some soporiferous drug. A great heaviness of sleep weighed on my brain till late in the day. When I woke my thoughts were in wild distraction, and a most peculiar condition of my skin held me fixed before the mirror. It is dry as parchment, and brown as the leaves of autumn.

‘July 14. — Ul-Jabal is gone! And I am left a lonely, a desolate old man! He said, though I swore it was false, that I had grown to mistrust him! that I was hiding something from him! that he could live with me no more! No more, he said, should I see his face! The debt I owe him he would forgive. He has taken one small parcel with him, — and is gone!

‘July 15. — Gone! gone! In mazeful dream I wander with uncovered head far and wide over my domain, seeking I know not what. The stone he has with him — the precious stone of Saul. I feel the life-surge ebbing, ebbing in my heart.’

Here the manuscript abruptly ended.

Prince Zaleski had listened as I read aloud, lying back on his Moorish couch and breathing slowly from his lips a heavy reddish vapour, which he imbibed from a very small, carved, bismuth pipette. His face, as far as I could see in the green-grey crepuscular atmosphere of the apartment, was expressionless. But when I had finished he turned fully round on me, and said:

‘You perceive, I hope, the sinister meaning of all this?’

‘*Has* it a meaning?’

Zaleski smiled.

‘Can you doubt it? in the shape of a cloud, the pitch of a thrush’s note, the *nuance* of a sea-shell you would find, had you only insight *enough*,

inductive and deductive cunning *enough*, not only a meaning, but, I am convinced, a quite endless significance. Undoubtedly, in a human document of this kind, there is a meaning; and I may say at once that this meaning is entirely transparent to me. Pity only that you did not read the diary to me before.'

'Why?'

'Because we might, between us, have prevented a crime, and saved a life. The last entry in the diary was made on the 15th of July. What day is this?'

'This is the 20th.'

'Then I would wager a thousand to one that we are too late. There is still, however, the one chance left. The time is now seven o'clock: seven of the evening, I think, not of the morning; the houses of business in London are therefore closed. But why not send my man, Ham, with a letter by train to the private address of the person from whom you obtained the diary, telling him to hasten immediately to Sir Jocelin Saul, and on no consideration to leave his side for a moment? Ham would reach this person before midnight, and understanding that the matter was one of life and death, he would assuredly do your bidding.'

As I was writing the note suggested by Zaleski, I turned and asked him:

'From whom shall I say that the danger is to be expected — from the Indian?'

'From Ul-Jabal, yes; but by no means Indian — Persian.'

Profoundly impressed by this knowledge of detail derived from sources which had brought me no intelligence, I handed the note to the negro, telling him how to proceed, and instructing him before starting from the station to search all the procurable papers of the last few days, and to return

in case he found in any of them a notice of the death of Sir Jocelin Saul. Then I resumed my seat by the side of Zaleski.

‘As I have told you,’ he said, ‘I am fully convinced that our messenger has gone on a bootless errand. I believe you will find that what has really occurred is this: either yesterday, or the day before, Sir Jocelin was found by his servant — I imagine he had a servant, though no mention is made of any — lying on the marble floor of his chamber, dead. Near him, probably by his side, will be found a gem — an oval stone, white in colour — the same in fact which Ul-Jabal last placed in the Edmundsbury chalice. There will be no marks of violence — no trace of poison — the death will be found to be a perfectly natural one. Yet, in this case, a particularly wicked murder has been committed. There are, I assure you, to my positive knowledge forty-three — and in one island in the South Seas, forty-four — different methods of doing murder, any one of which would be entirely beyond the scope of the introspective agencies at the ordinary disposal of society.

‘But let us bend our minds to the details of this matter. Let us ask first, *who* is this Ul-Jabal? I have said that he is a Persian, and of this there is abundant evidence in the narrative other than his mere name. Fragmentary as the document is, and not intended by the writer to afford the information, there is yet evidence of the religion of this man, of the particular sect of that religion to which he belonged, of his peculiar shade of colour, of the object of his stay at the manor-house of Saul, of the special tribe amongst whom he formerly lived. “What,” he asks, when his greedy eyes first light on the long-desired gem, “what is the meaning of the inscription ‘Has’” — the meaning which *he* so well knew. “One of the lost secrets of the world,” replies the baronet. But I can hardly understand a learned Orientalist speaking in that way about what appears to me a very patent circumstance:

it is clear that he never earnestly applied himself to the solution of the riddle, or else — what is more likely, in spite of his rather high-flown estimate of his own “Reason” — that his mind, and the mind of his ancestors, never was able to go farther back in time than the Edmundsbury Monks. But *they* did not make the stone, nor did they dig it from the depths of the earth in Suffolk — they got it from some one, and it is not difficult to say with certainty from whom. The stone, then, might have been engraved by that someone, or by the someone from whom *he* received it, and so on back into the dimnesses of time. And consider the character of the engraving — it consists of *a mythological animal*, and some words, of which the letters “Has” only are distinguishable. But the animal, at least, is pure Persian. The Persians, you know, were not only quite worthy competitors with the Hebrews, the Egyptians, and later on the Greeks, for excellence in the glyptic art, but this fact is remarkable, that in much the same way that the figure of the *scarabaeus* on an intaglio or cameo is a pretty infallible indication of an Egyptian hand, so is that of a priest or a grotesque animal a sure indication of a Persian. We may say, then, from that evidence alone — though there is more — that this gem was certainly Persian. And having reached that point, the mystery of “Has” vanishes: for we at once jump at the conclusion that that too is Persian. But Persian, you say, written in English characters? Yes, and it was precisely this fact that made its meaning one of what the baronet childishly calls “the lost secrets of the world”: for every successive inquirer, believing it part of an English phrase, was thus hopelessly led astray in his investigation. “Has” is, in fact, part of the word “Hasn-us-Sabah,” and the mere circumstance that some of it has been obliterated, while the figure of the mystic animal remains intact, shows that it was executed by one of a nation less skilled in the art of graving in precious stones than the Persians, — by a rude, mediaeval

Englishman, in short, — the modern revival of the art owing its origin, of course, to the Medici of a later age. And of this Englishman — who either graved the stone himself, or got some one else to do it for him — do we know nothing? We know, at least, that he was certainly a fighter, probably a Norman baron, that on his arm he bore the cross of red, that he trod the sacred soil of Palestine. Perhaps, to prove this, I need hardly remind you who Hasn-us-Sabah was. It is enough if I say that he was greatly mixed up in the affairs of the Crusaders, lending his irresistible arms now to this side, now to that. He was the chief of the heterodox Mohammedan sect of the Assassins (this word, I believe, is actually derived from his name); imagined himself to be an incarnation of the Deity, and from his inaccessible rock-fortress of Alamut in the Elburz exercised a sinister influence on the intricate politics of the day. The Red Cross Knights called him Shaikh-ul-Jabal — the Old Man of the Mountains, that very nickname connecting him infallibly with the Ul-Jabal of our own times. Now three well-known facts occur to me in connection with this stone of the House of Saul: the first, that Saladin met in battle, and defeated, *and plundered*, in a certain place, on a certain day, this Hasn-us-Sabah, or one of his successors bearing the same name; the second, that about this time there was a cordial *rapprochement* between Saladin and Richard the Lion, and between the Infidels and the Christians generally, during which a free interchange of gems, then regarded as of deep mystic importance, took place — remember “The Talisman,” and the “Lee Penny”; the third, that soon after the fighters of Richard, and then himself, returned to England, the Loculus or coffin of St. Edmund (as we are informed by the *Jocelini Chronica*) was *opened by the Abbot* at midnight, and the body of the martyr exposed. On such occasions it was customary to place gems and relics in the coffin, when it was again closed up. Now, the chalice with the stone was taken from this

loculus; and is it possible not to believe that some knight, to whom it had been presented by one of Saladin's men, had in turn presented it to the monastery, first scratching uncouthly on its surface the name of Hasn to mark its semi-sacred origin, or perhaps bidding the monks to do so? But the Assassins, now called, I think, "al Hasani" or "Ismaili"— "that accursed *Ishmaelite*," the baronet exclaims in one place — still live, are still a flourishing sect impelled by fervid religious fanaticisms. And where think you is their chief place of settlement? Where, but on the heights of that same "Lebanon" on which Sir Jocelin "picked up" his too doubtful scribe and literary helper?

'It now becomes evident that Ul-Jabal was one of the sect of the Assassins, and that the object of his sojourn at the manor-house, of his financial help to the baronet, of his whole journey perhaps to England, was the recovery of the sacred gem which once glittered on the breast of the founder of his sect. In dread of spoiling all by over-rashness, he waits, perhaps for years, till he makes sure that the stone is the right one by seeing it with his own eyes, and learns the secret of the spring by which the chalice is opened. He then proceeds to steal it. So far all is clear enough. Now, this too is conceivable, that, intending to commit the theft, he had beforehand provided himself with another stone similar in size and shape — these being well known to him — to the other, in order to substitute it for the real stone, and so, for a time at least, escape detection. It is presumable that the chalice was not often *opened* by the baronet, and this would therefore have been a perfectly rational device on the part of Ul-Jabal. But assuming this to be his mode of thinking, how ludicrously absurd appears all the trouble he took to *engrave* the false stone in an exactly similar manner to the other. *That* could not help him in producing the deception, for that he did not contemplate the stone being *seen*, but only *heard* in the cup, is proved by the fact that he

selected a stone of a different *colour*. This colour, as I shall afterwards show you, was that of a pale, brown-spotted stone. But we are met with something more extraordinary still when we come to the last stone, the white one — I shall prove that it was white — which Ul-Jabal placed in the cup. Is it possible that he had provided *two* substitutes, and that he had engraved these *two*, without object, in the same minutely careful manner? Your mind refuses to conceive it; and *having* done this, declines, in addition, to believe that he had prepared even one substitute; and I am fully in accord with you in this conclusion.

‘We may say then that Ul-Jabal had not *prepared* any substitute; and it may be added that it was a thing altogether beyond the limits of the probable that he could *by chance* have possessed two old gems exactly similar in every detail down to the very half-obliterated letters of the word “Hasn-us-Sabah.” I have now shown, you perceive, that he did not make them purposely, and that he did not possess them accidentally. Nor were they the baronet’s, for we have his declaration that he had never seen them before. Whence then did the Persian obtain them? That point will immediately emerge into clearness, when we have sounded his motive for replacing the one false stone by the other, and, above all, for taking away the valueless stone, and then replacing it. And in order to lead you up to the comprehension of this motive, I begin by making the bold assertion that Ul-Jabal had not in his possession the real St. Edmundsbury stone at all.

‘You are surprised; for you argue that if we are to take the baronet’s evidence at all, we must take it in this particular also, and he positively asserts that he saw the Persian take the stone. It is true that there are indubitable signs of insanity in the document, but it is the insanity of a diseased mind manifesting itself by fantastic exaggeration of sentiment, rather than of a mind confiding to itself its own delusions as to matters of

fact. There is therefore nothing so certain as that Ul-Jabal did steal the gem; but these two things are equally evident: that by some means or other it very soon passed out of his possession, and that when it had so passed, he, for his part, believed it to be in the possession of the baronet. “Now,” he cries in triumph, one day as he catches Sir Jocelin in his room— “*now* you have delivered all into my hands.” “All” what, Sir Jocelin wonders. “All,” of course, meant the stone. He believes that the baronet has done precisely what the baronet afterwards believes that *he* has done — hidden away the stone in the most secret of all places, in his own apartment, to wit. The Persian, sure now at last of victory, accordingly hastens into his chamber, and “locks the door,” in order, by an easy search, to secure his prize. When, moreover, the baronet is examining the house at night with his lens, he believes that Ul-Jabal is spying his movements; when he extends his operations to the park, the other finds pretexts to be near him. Ul-Jabal dogs his footsteps like a shadow. But supposing he had really had the jewel, and had deposited it in a place of perfect safety — such as, with or without lenses, the extensive grounds of the manor-house would certainly have afforded — his more reasonable *rôle* would have been that of unconscious *nonchalance*, rather than of agonised interest. But, in fact, he supposed the owner of the stone to be himself seeking a secure hiding-place for it, and is resolved at all costs on knowing the secret. And again in the vaults beneath the house Sir Jocelin reports that Ul-Jabal “holds the lantern near the ground, with his head bent down”: can anything be better descriptive of the attitude of *search*? Yet each is so sure that the other possesses the gem, that neither is able to suspect that both are seekers.

‘But, after all, there is far better evidence of the non-possession of the stone by the Persian than all this — and that is the murder of the baronet, for I can almost promise you that our messenger will return in a few

minutes. Now, it seems to me that Ul-Jabal was not really murderous, averse rather to murder; thus the baronet is often in his power, swoons in his arms, lies under the influence of narcotics in semi-sleep while the Persian is in his room, and yet no injury is done him. Still, when the clear necessity to murder — the clear means of gaining the stone — presents itself to Ul-Jabal, he does not hesitate a moment — indeed, he has already made elaborate preparations for that very necessity. And when was it that this necessity presented itself? It was when the baronet put the false stone in the pocket of a loose gown for the purpose of confronting the Persian with it. But what kind of pocket? I think you will agree with me, that male garments, admitting of the designation “gown,” have usually only outer pockets — large, square pockets, simply sewed on to the outside of the robe. But a stone of that size *must* have made such a pocket bulge outwards. Ul-Jabal must have noticed it. Never before has he been perfectly sure that the baronet carried the long-desired gem about on his body; but now at last he knows beyond all doubt. To obtain it, there are several courses open to him: he may rush there and then on the weak old man and tear the stone from him; he may ply him with narcotics, and extract it from the pocket during sleep. But in these there is a small chance of failure; there is a certainty of near or ultimate detection, pursuit — and this is a land of Law, swift and fairly sure. No, the old man must die: only thus — thus surely, and thus secretly — can the outraged dignity of Hasn-us-Sabah be appeased. On the very next day he leaves the house — no more shall the mistrustful baronet, who is “hiding something from him,” see his face. He carries with him a small parcel. Let me tell you what was in that parcel: it contained the baronet’s fur cap, one of his “brown gowns,” and a snow-white beard and wig. Of the cap we can be sure; for from the fact that, on leaving his room at midnight to follow the Persian through the *house*, he put

it on his head, I gather that he wore it habitually during all his waking hours; yet after Ul-Jabal has left him he wanders *far and wide* “with uncovered head.” Can you not picture the distracted old man seeking ever and anon with absent mind for his long-accustomed head-gear, and seeking in vain? Of the gown, too, we may be equally certain: for it was the procuring of this that led Ul-Jabal to the baronet’s trunk; we now know that he did not go there to *hide* the stone, for he had it not to hide; nor to *seek* it, for he would be unable to believe the baronet childish enough to deposit it in so obvious a place. As for the wig and beard, they had been previously seen in his room. But before he leaves the house Ul-Jabal has one more work to do: once more the two eat and drink together as in “the old days of love”; once more the baronet is drunken with a deep sleep, and when he wakes, his skin is “brown as the leaves of autumn.” That is the evidence of which I spake in the beginning as giving us a hint of the exact shade of the Oriental’s colour — it was the yellowish-brown of a sered leaf. And now that the face of the baronet has been smeared with this indelible pigment, all is ready for the tragedy, and Ul-Jabal departs. He will return, but not immediately, for he will at least give the eyes of his victim time to grow accustomed to the change of colour in his face; nor will he tarry long, for there is no telling whether, or whither, the stone may not disappear from that outer pocket. I therefore surmise that the tragedy took place a day or two ago. I remembered the feebleness of the old man, his highly neurotic condition; I thought of those “fibrillary twitchings,” indicating the onset of a well-known nervous disorder sure to end in sudden death; I recalled his belief that on account of the loss of the stone, in which he felt his life bound up, the chariot of death was urgent on his footsteps; I bore in mind his memory of his grandfather dying in agony just seventy years ago after seeing his own wraith by the churchyard-wall; I knew that such a man could

not be struck by the sudden, the terrific shock of seeing *himself* sitting in the chair before the mirror (the chair, you remember, had been *placed* there by Ul-Jabal) without dropping down stone dead on the spot. I was thus able to predict the manner and place of the baronet's death — if he *be* dead. Beside him, I said, would probably be found a white stone. For Ul-Jabal, his ghastly impersonation ended, would hurry to the pocket, snatch out the stone, and finding it not the stone he sought, would in all likelihood dash it down, fly away from the corpse as if from plague, and, I hope, straightway go and — hang himself.'

It was at this point that the black mask of Ham framed itself between the python-skin tapestries of the doorway. I tore from him the paper, now two days old, which he held in his hand, and under the heading, 'Sudden death of a Baronet,' read a nearly exact account of the facts which Zaleski had been detailing to me.

'I can see by your face that I was not altogether at fault,' he said, with one of his musical laughs; 'but there still remains for us to discover whence Ul-Jabal obtained his two substitutes, his motive for exchanging one for the other, and for stealing the valueless gem; but, above all, we must find where the real stone was all the time that these two men so sedulously sought it, and where it now is. Now, let us turn our attention to this stone, and ask, first, what light does the inscription on the cup throw on its nature? The inscription assures us that if "this stone be stolen," or if it "chaunges dre," the House of Saul and its head "anoon" (i.e. anon, at once) shall die. "Dre," I may remind you, is an old English word, used, I think, by Burns, identical with the Saxon "*dreogan*," meaning to "suffer." So that the writer at least contemplated that the stone might "suffer changes." But what kind of changes — external or internal? External change — change of environment — is already provided for when he says, "shulde this Ston stalen bee";

“chaunges,” therefore, in *his* mind, meant internal changes. But is such a thing possible for any precious stone, and for this one in particular? As to that, we might answer when we know the name of this one. It nowhere appears in the manuscript, and yet it is immediately discoverable. For it was a “sky-blue” stone; a sky-blue, sacred stone; a sky-blue, sacred, Persian stone. That at once gives us its name — it was a *turquoise*. But can the turquoise, to the certain knowledge of a mediaeval writer, “chaunges dre”? Let us turn for light to old Anselm de Boot: that is he in pig-skin on the shelf behind the bronze Hera.’

I handed the volume to Zaleski. He pointed to a passage which read as follows:

‘Assuredly the turquoise doth possess a soul more intelligent than that of man. But we cannot be wholly sure of the presence of Angels in precious stones. I do rather opine that the evil spirit doth take up his abode therein, transforming himself into an angel of light, to the end that we put our trust not in God, but in the precious stone; and thus, perhaps, doth he deceive our spirits by the turquoise: for the turquoise is of two sorts: those which keep their colour, and those which lose it.’

‘Assurément la turquoise a une âme plus intelligente que l’âme de l’homme. Mais nous ne pouvons rien établir de certain touchant la presence des Anges dans les pierres precieuses. Mon jugement seroit plustot que le mauvais esprit, qui se transforme en Ange de lumiere se loge dans les pierres precieuses, à fin que l’on ne recoure pas à Dieu, mais que l’on repose sa creance dans la pierre precieuse; ainsi, peut-être, il deçoit nos esprits par la turquoise: car la turquoise est de deux sortes, les unes qui conservent leur couleur et les autres qui la perdent.’ *Anselm de Boot*, Book II.

‘You thus see,’ resumed Zaleski, ‘that the turquoise was believed to have the property of changing its colour — a change which was universally supposed to indicate the fading away and death of its owner. The good De Boot, alas, believed this to be a property of too many other stones beside, like the Hebrews in respect of their urim and thummim; but in the case of the turquoise, at least, it is a well-authenticated natural phenomenon, and I have myself seen such a specimen. In some cases the change is a gradual process; in others it may occur suddenly within an hour, especially when the gem, long kept in the dark, is exposed to brilliant sunshine. I should say, however, that in this metamorphosis there is always an intermediate stage: the stone first changes from blue to a pale colour spotted with brown, and, lastly, to a pure white. Thus, Ul-Jabal having stolen the stone, finds that it is of the wrong colour, and soon after replaces it; he supposes that in the darkness he has selected the wrong chalice, and so takes the valueless stone from the other. This, too, he replaces, and, infinitely puzzled, makes yet another hopeless trial of the Edmundsbury chalice, and, again baffled, again replaces it, concluding now that the baronet has suspected his designs, and substituted a false stone for the real one. But after this last replacement, the stone assumes its final hue of white, and thus the baronet is led to think that two stones have been substituted by Ul-Jabal for his own invaluable gem. All this while the gem was lying serenely in its place in the chalice. And thus it came to pass that in the Manor-house of Saul there arose a somewhat considerable Ado about Nothing.’

For a moment Zaleski paused; then, turning round and laying his hand on the brown forehead of the mummy by his side, he said:

‘My friend here could tell you, and he would, a fine tale of the immensely important part which jewels in all ages have played in human history, human religions, institutions, ideas. He flourished some five

centuries before the Messiah, was a Memphian priest of Amsu, and, as the hieroglyphics on his coffin assure me, a prime favourite with one Queen Amyntas. Beneath these mouldering swaddlings of the grave a great ruby still cherishes its blood-guilty secret on the forefinger of his right hand. Most curious is it to reflect how in *all* lands, and at *all* times, precious minerals have been endowed by men with mystic virtues. The Persians, for instance, believed that spinelle and the garnet were harbingers of joy. Have you read the ancient Bishop of Rennes on the subject? Really, I almost think there must be some truth in all this. The instinct of universal man is rarely far at fault. Already you have a semi-comic “gold-cure” for alcoholism, and you have heard of the geophagism of certain African tribes. What if the scientist of the future be destined to discover that the diamond, and it alone, is a specific for cholera, that powdered rubellite cures fever, and the chrysoberyl gout? It would be in exact conformity with what I have hitherto observed of a general trend towards a certain inborn perverseness and whimsicality in Nature.’

Note. — As some proof of the fineness of intuition evidenced by Zaleski, as distinct from his more conspicuous powers of reasoning, I may here state that some years after the occurrence of the tragedy I have recorded above, the skeleton of a man was discovered in the vaults of the Manor-house of Saul. I have not the least doubt that it was the skeleton of Ul-Jabal. The teeth were very prominent. A rotten rope was found loosely knotted round the vertebrae of his neck.

THE S.S.



‘WOHLGEBORNE, GESUNDE KINDER bringen viel mit....

‘Wenn die Natur verabscheut, so spricht sie es laut aus: das Geschöpf, das falsch lebt, wird früh zerstört. Unfruchtbarkeit, kümmerliches Dasein, frühzeitiges Zerfallen, das sind ihre Flüche, die Kennzeichen ihrer Strenge.’

GOETHE. [Footnote: ‘Well-made, healthy children bring much into the world along with them....

‘When Nature abhors, she speaks it aloud: the creature that lives with a false life is soon destroyed. Unfruitfulness, painful existence, early destruction, these are her curses, the tokens of her displeasure.’]

[Greek: Argos de andron echaerthae outo, oste oi douloi auton eschon panta ta praigmata, archontes te kai diepontes, es ho epaebaesan hoi ton apolomenon paides.] HERODOTUS. [Footnote: ‘And Argos was so depleted of Men (i.e. *after the battle with Cleomenes*) that the slaves usurped everything — ruling and disposing — until such time as the sons of the slain were grown up.’]

To say that there are epidemics of suicide is to give expression to what is now a mere commonplace of knowledge. And so far are they from being of rare occurrence, that it has even been affirmed that every sensational case of *felo de se* published in the newspapers is sure to be followed by some others more obscure: their frequency, indeed, is out of all proportion with the *extent* of each particular outbreak. Sometimes, however, especially in villages and small townships, the wildfire madness becomes an all-involving passion, emulating in its fury the great plagues of history. Of such

kind was the craze in Versailles in 1793, when about a quarter of the whole population perished by the scourge; while that at the *Hôtel des Invalides* in Paris was only a notable one of the many which have occurred during the present century. At such times it is as if the optic nerve of the mind throughout whole communities became distorted, till in the noseless and black-robed Reaper it discerned an angel of very loveliness. As a brimming maiden, out-worn by her virginity, yields half-fainting to the dear sick stress of her desire — with just such faintings, wanton fires, does the soul, over-taxed by the continence of living, yield voluntary to the grave, and adulterously make of Death its paramour.

‘When she sees a bank
Stuck full of flowers, she, with a sigh, will tell
Her servants, what a pretty place it were
To bury lovers in; and make her maids
Pluck ’em, and strew her over like a corse.’

[Footnote: Beaumont and Fletcher: *The Maid’s Tragedy*.]

The *mode* spreads — then rushes into rage: to breathe is to be obsolete: to wear the shroud becomes *comme il faut*, this cerecloth acquiring all the attractiveness and *éclat* of a wedding-garment. The coffin is not too strait for lawless nuptial bed; and the sweet clods of the valley will prove no barren bridegroom of a writhing progeny. There is, however, nothing specially mysterious in the operation of a pestilence of this nature: it is as conceivable, if not yet as explicable, as the contagion of cholera, mind being at least as sensitive to the touch of mind as body to that of body.

It was during the ever-memorable outbreak of this obscure malady in the year 1875 that I ventured to break in on the calm of that deep Silence in which, as in a mantle, my friend Prince Zaleski had wrapped himself. I

wrote, in fact, to ask him what he thought of the epidemic. His answer was in the laconic words addressed to the Master in the house of woe at Bethany:

‘Come and see.’

To this, however, he added in postscript: ‘but what epidemic?’

I had momentarily lost sight of the fact that Zaleski had so absolutely cut himself off from the world, that he was not in the least likely to know anything even of the appalling series of events to which I had referred. And yet it is no exaggeration to say that those events had thrown the greater part of Europe into a state of consternation, and even confusion. In London, Manchester, Paris, and Berlin, especially the excitement was intense. On the Sunday preceding the writing of my note to Zaleski, I was present at a monster demonstration held in Hyde Park, in which the Government was held up on all hands to the popular derision and censure — for it will be remembered that to many minds the mysterious accompaniments of some of the deaths daily occurring conveyed a still darker significance than that implied in mere self-destruction, and seemed to point to a succession of purposeless and hideous murders. The demagogues, I must say, spoke with some wildness and incoherence. Many laid the blame at the door of the police, and urged that things would be different were they but placed under municipal, instead of under imperial, control. A thousand panaceas were invented, a thousand aimless censures passed. But the people listened with vacant ear. Never have I seen the populace so agitated, and yet so subdued, as with the sense of some impending doom. The glittering eye betrayed the excitement, the pallor of the cheek the doubt, the haunting *fear*. None felt himself quite safe; men recognised shuddering the grin of death in the air. To tingle with affright, and to know not why — that is the transcendentalism of terror. The threat of the cannon’s mouth is trivial in its

effect on the mind in comparison with the menace of a Shadow. It is the pestilence that walketh *by night* that is intolerable. As for myself, I confess to being pervaded with a nameless and numbing awe during all those weeks. And this feeling appeared to be general in the land. The journals had but one topic; the party organs threw politics to the winds. I heard that on the Stock Exchange, as in the Paris *Bourse*, business decreased to a minimum. In Parliament the work of law-threshing practically ceased, and the time of Ministers was nightly spent in answering volumes of angry 'Questions,' and in facing motion after motion for the 'adjournment' of the House.

It was in the midst of all this commotion that I received Prince Zaleski's brief 'Come and see.' I was flattered and pleased: flattered, because I suspected that to me alone, of all men, would such an invitation, coming from him, be addressed; and pleased, because many a time in the midst of the noisy city street and the garish, dusty world, had the thought of that vast mansion, that dim and silent chamber, flooded my mind with a drowsy sense of the romantic, till, from very excess of melancholy sweetness in the picture, I was fain to close my eyes. I avow that that lonesome room — gloomy in its lunar bath of soft perfumed light — shrouded in the sullen voluptuousness of plushy, narcotic-breathing draperies — pervaded by the mysterious spirit of its brooding occupant — grew more and more on my fantasy, till the remembrance had for me all the cool refreshment shed by a midsummer-night's dream in the dewy deeps of some Perrhoebian grove of cornel and lotos and ruby stars of the asphodel. It was, therefore, in all haste that I set out to share for a time in the solitude of my friend.

Zaleski's reception of me was most cordial; immediately on my entrance into his sanctum he broke into a perfect torrent of wild, enthusiastic words, telling me with a kind of rapture, that he was just then laboriously engaged

in co-ordinating to one of the calculi certain new properties he had discovered in the parabola, adding with infinite gusto his 'firm' belief that the ancient Assyrians were acquainted with all our modern notions respecting the parabola itself, the projection of bodies in general, and of the heavenly bodies in particular; and must, moreover, from certain inferences of his own in connection with the Winged Circle, have been conversant with the fact that light is not an ether, but only the vibration of an ether. He then galloped on to suggest that I should at once take part with him in his investigations, and commented on the timeliness of my visit. I, on my part, was anxious for his opinion on other and far weightier matters than the concerns of the Assyrians, and intimated as much to him. But for two days he was firm in his tacit refusal to listen to my story; and, concluding that he was disinclined to undergo the agony of unrest with which he was always tormented by any mystery which momentarily baffled him, I was, of course, forced to hold my peace. On the third day, however, of his own accord he asked me to what epidemic I had referred. I then detailed to him some of the strange events which were agitating the mind of the outside world. From the very first he was interested: later on that interest grew into a passion, a greedy soul-consuming quest after the truth, the intensity of which was such at last as to move me even to pity.

I may as well here restate the facts as I communicated them to Zaleski. The concatenation of incidents, it will be remembered, started with the extraordinary death of that eminent man of science, Professor Schleschinger, consulting laryngologist to the Charité Hospital in Berlin. The professor, a man of great age, was on the point of contracting his third marriage with the beautiful and accomplished daughter of the Herr Geheimrath Otto von Friedrich. The contemplated union, which was entirely one of those *mariages de convenance* so common in good society,

sprang out of the professor's ardent desire to leave behind him a direct heir to his very considerable wealth. By his first two marriages, indeed, he had had large families, and was at this very time surrounded by quite an army of little grandchildren, from whom (all his direct descendants being dead) he might have been content to select his heir; but the old German prejudices in these matters are strong, and he still hoped to be represented on his decease by a son of his own. To this whim the charming Otilie was marked by her parents as the victim. The wedding, however, had been postponed owing to a slight illness of the veteran scientist, and just as he was on the point of final recovery from it, death intervened to prevent altogether the execution of his design. Never did death of man create a profounder sensation; *never was death of man followed by consequences more terrible*. The *Residenz* of the scientist was a stately mansion near the University in the *Unter den Linden* boulevard, that is to say, in the most fashionable *Quartier* of Berlin. His bedroom from a considerable height looked out on a small back garden, and in this room he had been engaged in conversation with his colleague and medical attendant, Dr. Johann Hofmeier, to a late hour of the night. During all this time he seemed cheerful, and spoke quite lucidly on various topics. In particular, he exhibited to his colleague a curious strip of what looked like ancient papyrus, on which were traced certain grotesque and apparently meaningless figures. This, he said, he had found some days before on the bed of a poor woman in one of the horribly low quarters that surround Berlin, on whom he had had occasion to make a *post-mortem* examination. The woman had suffered from partial paralysis. She had a small young family, none of whom, however, could give any account of the slip, except one little girl, who declared that she had taken it 'from her mother's mouth' after death. The slip was soiled, and had a fragrant smell, as though it had been smeared with honey. The professor added that all

through his illness he had been employing himself by examining these figures. He was convinced, he said, that they contained some archaeological significance; but, in any case, he ceased not to ask himself how came a slip of papyrus to be found in such a situation, — on the bed of a dead Berliner of the poorest class? The story of its being taken from the *mouth* of the woman was, of course, unbelievable. The whole incident seemed to puzzle, while it amused him; seemed to appeal to the instinct — so strong in him — to investigate, to probe. For days, he declared, he had been endeavouring, in vain, to make anything of the figures. Dr. Hofmeier, too, examined the slip, but inclined to believe that the figures — rude and uncouth as they were — were only such as might be drawn by any school-boy in an idle moment. They consisted merely of a man and a woman seated on a bench, with what looked like an ornamental border running round them. After a pleasant evening's scientific gossip, Dr. Hofmeier, a little after midnight, took his departure from the bed-side. An hour later the servants were roused from sleep by one deep, raucous cry proceeding from the professor's room. They hastened to his door; it was locked on the inside; all was still within. No answer coming to their calls, the door was broken in. They found their master lying calm and dead on his bed. A window of the room was open, but there was nothing to show that any one had entered it. Dr. Hofmeier was sent for, and was soon on the scene. After examining the body, he failed to find anything to account for the sudden demise of his old friend and chief. One observation, however, had the effect of causing him to tingle with horror. On his entrance he had noticed, lying on the side of the bed, the piece of papyrus with which the professor had been toying in the earlier part of the day, and had removed it. But, as he was on the point of leaving the room, he happened to approach the corpse once more, and bending over it, noticed that the lips and teeth were slightly parted. Drawing

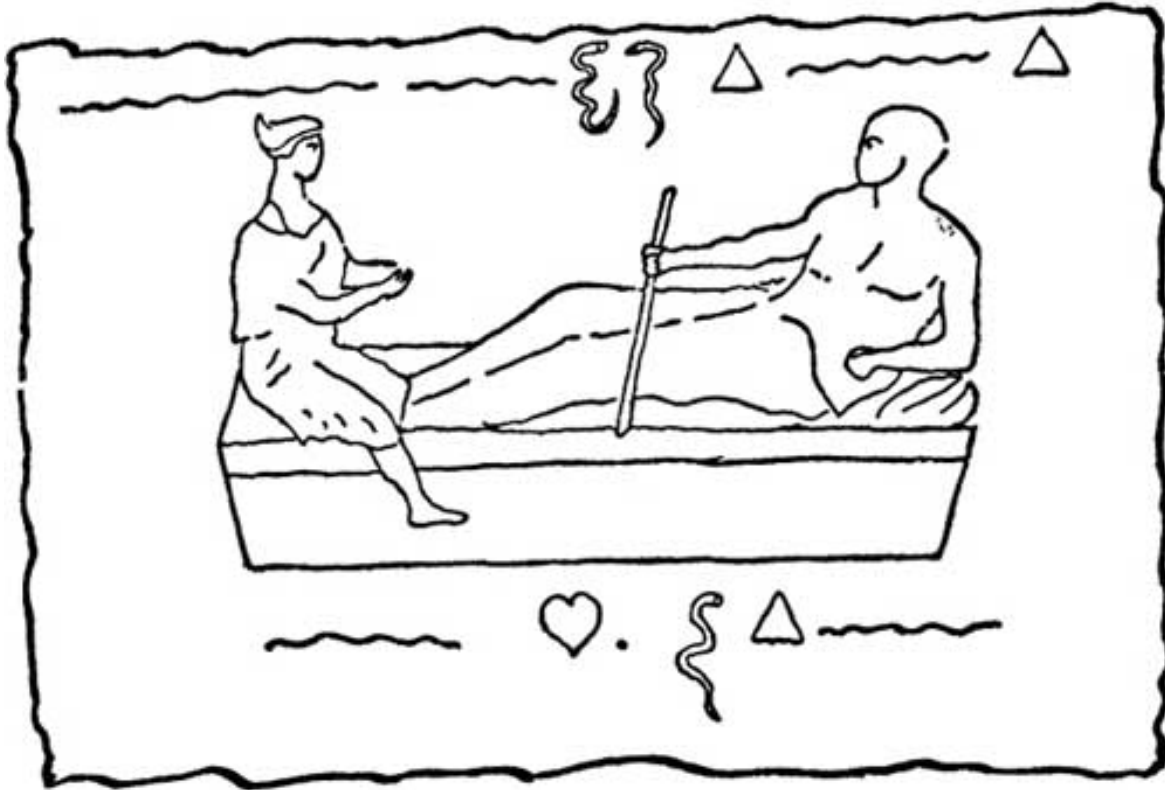
open the now stiffened jaws, he found — to his amazement, to his stupefaction — that, neatly folded beneath the dead tongue, lay just such another piece of papyrus as that which he had removed from the bed. He drew it out — it was clammy. He put it to his nose, — it exhaled the fragrance of honey. He opened it, — it was covered by figures. He compared them with the figures on the other slip, — they were just so similar as two draughtsmen hastily copying from a common model would make them. The doctor was unnerved: he hurried homeward, and immediately submitted the honey on the papyrus to a rigorous chemical analysis: he suspected poison — a subtle poison — as the means of a suicide, grotesquely, insanely accomplished. He found the fluid to be perfectly innocuous, — pure honey, and nothing more.

The next day Germany thrilled with the news that Professor Schleschinger had destroyed himself. For suicide, however, some of the papers substituted murder, though of neither was there an atom of actual proof. On the day following, three persons died by their own hands in Berlin, of whom two were young members of the medical profession; on the day following that, the number rose to nineteen, Hamburg, Dresden, and Aachen joining in the frenzied death-dance; within three weeks from the night on which Professor Schleschinger met his unaccountable end, eight thousand persons in Germany, France, and Great Britain, died in that startlingly sudden and secret manner which we call ‘tragic’, many of them obviously by their own hands, many, in what seemed the servility of a fatal imitateness, with figured, honey-smeared slips of papyrus beneath their tongues. Even now — now, after years — I thrill intensely to recall the dread remembrance; but to live through it, to breathe daily the mawkish, miasmatic atmosphere, all vapid with the suffocating death — ah, it was terror too deep, nausea too foul, for mortal bearing. Novalis has somewhere

hinted at the possibility (or the desirability) of a simultaneous suicide and voluntary return by the whole human family into the sweet bosom of our ancient Father — I half expected it was coming, had come, *then*. It was as if the old, good-easy, meek-eyed man of science, dying, had left his effectual curse on all the world, and had thereby converted civilisation into one omnivorous grave, one universal charnel-house. I spent several days in reading out to Zaleski accounts of particular deaths as they had occurred. He seemed never to tire of listening, lying back for the most part on the silver-cushioned couch, and wearing an inscrutable mask. Sometimes he rose and paced the carpet with noiseless foot-fall, his steps increasing to the swaying, uneven velocity of an animal in confinement as a passage here or there attracted him, and then subsiding into their slow regularity again. At any interruption in the reading, he would instantly turn to me with a certain impatience, and implore me to proceed; and when our stock of matter failed, he broke out into actual anger that I had not brought more with me. Henceforth the negro, Ham, using my trap, daily took a double journey — one before sunrise, and one at dusk — to the nearest townlet, from which he would return loaded with newspapers. With unimaginable eagerness did both Zaleski and I seize, morning after morning, and evening after evening, on these budgets, to gloat for long hours over the ever-lengthening tale of death. As for him, sleep forsook him. He was a man of small reasonableness, scorning the limitations of human capacity; his palate brooked no meat when his brain was headlong in the chase; even the mild narcotics which were now his food and drink seemed to lose something of their power to mollify, to curb him. Often rising from slumber in what I took to be the dead of night — though of day or night there could be small certainty in that dim dwelling — I would peep into the domed chamber, and see him there under the livid-green light of the censer, the leaden smoke

issuing from his lips, his eyes fixed unweariedly on a square piece of ebony which rested on the coffin of the mummy near him. On this ebony he had pasted side by side several woodcuts — snipped from the newspapers — of the figures traced on the pieces of papyrus found in the mouths of the dead. I could see, as time passed, that he was concentrating all his powers on these figures; for the details of the deaths themselves were all of a dreary sameness, offering few salient points for investigation. In those cases where the suicide had left behind him clear evidence of the means by which he had committed the act, there was nothing to investigate; the others — rich and poor alike, peer and peasant — trooped out by thousands on the far journey, without leaving the faintest footprint to mark the road by which they had gone.

This was perhaps the reason that, after a time, Zaleski discarded the newspapers, leaving their perusal to me, and turned his attention exclusively to the ebon tablet. Knowing as I full well did the daring and success of his past spiritual adventures, — the subtlety, the imagination, the imperial grip of his intellect, — I did not at all doubt that his choice was wise, and would in the end be justified. These woodcuts — now so notorious — were all exactly similar in design, though minutely differing here and there in drawing. The following is a facsimile of one of them taken by me at random:



The time passed. It now began to be a grief to me to see the turgid pallor that gradually overspread the always ashen countenance of Zaleski; I grew to consider the ravaging life that glared and blazed in his sunken eye as too volcanic, demonic, to be canny: the mystery, I decided at last — if mystery there were — was too deep, too dark, for him. Hence perhaps it was, that I now absented myself more and more from him in the adjoining room in which I slept. There one day I sat reading over the latest list of horrors, when I heard a loud cry from the vaulted chamber. I rushed to the door and beheld him standing, gazing with wild eyes at the ebon tablet held straight out in front of him.

‘By Heaven!’ he cried, stamping savagely with his foot. ‘By Heaven! Then I certainly *am* a fool! *It is the staff of Phaebus in the hand of Hermes!*’

I hastened to him. ‘Tell me,’ I said, ‘have you discovered anything?’

‘It is possible.’

‘And has there really been foul play — murder — in any of these deaths?’

‘Of that, at least, I was certain from the first.’

‘Great God!’ I exclaimed, ‘could any son of man so convert himself into a fiend, a beast of the wilderness....’

‘You judge precisely in the manner of the multitude,’ he answered somewhat petulantly. ‘Illegal murder is always a mistake, but not necessarily a crime. Remember Corday. But in cases where the murder of one is really fiendish, why is it qualitatively less fiendish than the murder of many? On the other hand, had Brutus slain a thousand Caesars — each act involving an additional exhibition of the sublimest self-suppression — he might well have taken rank as a saint in heaven.’

Failing for the moment to see the drift or the connection of the argument, I contented myself with waiting events. For the rest of that day and the next Zaleski seemed to have dismissed the matter of the tragedies from his mind, and entered calmly on his former studies. He no longer consulted the news, or examined the figures on the tablet. The papers, however, still arrived daily, and of these he soon afterwards laid several before me, pointing, with a curious smile, to a small paragraph in each. These all appeared in the advertisement columns, were worded alike, and read as follows:

‘A true son of Lycurgus, *having news*, desires to know the *time* and *place* of the next meeting of his Phyle. Address Zaleski, at R ——— Abbey, in the county of M ——— .’

I gazed in mute alternation at the advertisement and at him. I may here stop to make mention of a very remarkable sensation which my association with him occasionally produced in me. I felt it with intense, with unpleasant, with irritating keenness at this moment. It was the sensation of being borne aloft — aloft — by a force external to myself — such a

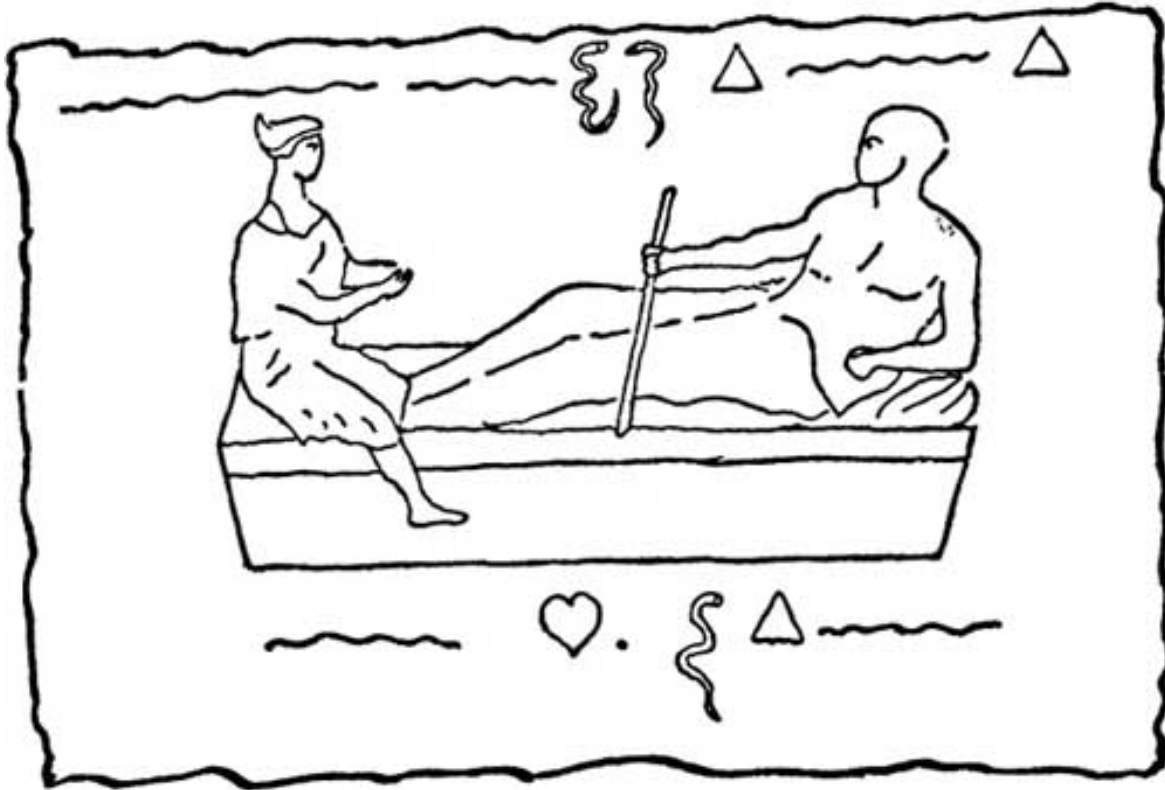
sensation as might possibly tingle through an earthworm when lifted into illimitable airy heights by the strongly-daring pinions of an eagle. It was the feeling of being hurried out beyond one's depth — caught and whiffed away by the all-compelling sweep of some rabid vigour into a new, foreign element. Something akin I have experienced in an 'express' as it raged with me — winged, rocking, ecstatic, shrilling a dragon Aha! — round a too narrow curve. It was a sensation very far from agreeable.

'To that,' he said, pointing to the paragraph, 'we may, I think, shortly expect an answer. Let us only hope that when it comes it may be immediately intelligible.'

We waited throughout the whole of that day and night, hiding our eagerness under the pretence of absorption in our books. If by chance I fell into an uneasy doze, I found him on waking ever watchful, and poring over the great tome before him. About the time, however, when, could we have seen it, the first grey of dawn must have been peeping over the land, his impatience again became painful to witness; he rose and paced the room, muttering occasionally to himself. This only ceased, when, hours later, Ham entered the room with an envelope in his hand. Zaleski seized it — tore it open — ran his eye over the contents — and dashed it to the ground with an oath.

'Curse it!' he groaned. 'Ah, curse it! unintelligible — every syllable of it!'

I picked up the missive and examined it. It was a slip of papyrus covered with the design now so hideously familiar, except only that the two central figures were wanting. At the bottom was written the date of the 15th of November — it was then the morning of the 12th — and the name 'Morris.' The whole, therefore, presented the following appearance:



My eyes were now heavy with sleep, every sense half-drunken with the vapourlike atmosphere of the room, so that, having abandoned something of hope, I tottered willingly to my bed, and fell into a profound slumber, which lasted till what must have been the time of the gathering in of the shades of night. I then rose. Missing Zaleski, I sought through all the chambers for him. He was nowhere to be seen. The negro informed me with an affectionate and anxious tremor in the voice that his master had left the rooms some hours before, but had said nothing to him. I ordered the man to descend and look into the sacristy of the small chapel wherein I had deposited my *calèche*, and in the field behind, where my horse should be. He returned with the news that both had disappeared. Zaleski, I then concluded, had undoubtedly departed on a journey.

I was deeply touched by the demeanour of Ham as the hours went by. He wandered stealthily about the rooms like a lost being. It was like matter sighing after, weeping over, spirit. Prince Zaleski had never before

withdrawn himself from the *surveillance* of this sturdy watchman, and his disappearance now was like a convulsion in their little cosmos. Ham implored me repeatedly, if I could, to throw some light on the meaning of this catastrophe. But I too was in the dark. The Titanic frame of the Ethiopian trembled with emotion as in broken, childish words he told me that he felt instinctively the approach of some great danger to the person of his master. So a day passed away, and then another. On the next he roused me from sleep to hand me a letter which, on opening, I found to be from Zaleski. It was hastily scribbled in pencil, dated 'London, Nov. 14th,' and ran thus:

'For my body — should I not return by Friday night — you will, no doubt, be good enough to make search. *Descend* the river, keeping constantly to the left; consult the papyrus; and stop at the *Descensus Aesopi*. Seek diligently, and you will find. For the rest, you know my fancy for cremation: take me, if you will, to the crematorium of *Père-Lachaise*. My whole fortune I decree to Ham, the Lybian.'

Ham was all for knowing the contents of this letter, but I refused to communicate a word of it. I was dazed, I was more than ever perplexed, I was appalled by the frenzy of Zaleski. Friday night! It was then Thursday morning. And I was expected to wait through the dreary interval uncertain, agonised, inactive! I was offended with my friend; his conduct bore the interpretation of mental distraction. The leaden hours passed all oppressively while I sought to appease the keenness of my unrest with the anodyne of drugged sleep. On the next morning, however, another letter — a rather massive one — reached me. The covering was directed in the writing of Zaleski, but on it he had scribbled the words: 'This need not be opened unless I fail to reappear before Saturday.' I therefore laid the packet aside unread.

I waited all through Friday, resolved that at six o'clock, if nothing happened, I should make some sort of effort. But from six I remained, with eyes strained towards the doorway, until ten. I was so utterly at a loss, my ingenuity was so entirely baffled by the situation, that I could devise no course of action which did not immediately appear absurd. But at midnight I sprang up — no longer would I endure the carking suspense. I seized a taper, and passed through the door-way. I had not proceeded far, however, when my light was extinguished. Then I remembered with a shudder that I should have to pass through the whole vast length of the building in order to gain an exit. It was an all but hopeless task in the profound darkness to thread my way through the labyrinth of halls and corridors, of tumble-down stairs, of bat-haunted vaults, of purposeless angles and involutions; but I proceeded with something of a blind obstinacy, groping my way with arms held out before me. In this manner I had wandered on for perhaps a quarter of an hour, when my fingers came into distinct momentary contact with what felt like cold and humid human flesh. I shrank back, unnerved as I already was, with a murmur of affright.

‘Zaleski?’ I whispered with bated breath.

Intently as I strained my ears, I could detect no reply. The hairs of my head, catching terror from my fancies, erected themselves.

Again I advanced, and again I became aware of the sensation of contact. With a quick movement I passed my hand upward and downward.

It was indeed he. He was half-reclining, half-standing against a wall of the chamber: that he was not dead, I at once knew by his uneasy breathing. Indeed, when, having chafed his hands for some time, I tried to rouse him, he quickly recovered himself, and muttered: ‘I fainted; I want sleep — only sleep.’ I bore him back to the lighted room, assisted by Ham in the latter part of the journey. Ham’s ecstasies were infinite; he had hardly hoped to

see his master's face again. His garments being wet and soiled, the negro divested him of them, and dressed him in a tightly-fitting scarlet robe of Babylonish pattern, reaching to the feet, but leaving the lower neck and forearm bare, and girt round the stomach by a broad gold-orphreyed *ceinture*. With all the tenderness of a woman, the man stretched his master thus arrayed on the couch. Here he kept an Argus guard while Zaleski, in one deep unbroken slumber of a night and a day, reposed before him. When at last the sleeper woke, in his eye, — full of divine instinct, — flitted the wonted falchion-flash of the whetted, two-edged intellect; the secret, austere, self-conscious smile of triumph curved his lip; not a trace of pain or fatigue remained. After a substantial meal on nuts, autumn fruits, and wine of Samos, he resumed his place on the couch; and I sat by his side to hear the story of his wandering. He said:

‘We have, Shiel, had before us a very remarkable series of murders, and a very remarkable series of suicides. Were they in any way connected? To this extent, I think — that the mysterious, the unparalleled nature of the murders gave rise to a morbid condition in the public mind, which in turn resulted in the epidemic of suicide. But though such an epidemic has its origin in the instinct of imitation so common in men, you must not suppose that the mental process is a *conscious* one. A person feels an impulse to go and do, and is not aware that at bottom it is only an impulse to go and do *likewise*. He would indeed repudiate such an assumption. Thus one man destroys himself, and another imitates him — but whereas the former uses a pistol, the latter uses a rope. It is rather absurd, therefore, to imagine that in any of those cases in which the slip of papyrus has been found in the mouth after death, the cause of death has been the slavish imitativeness of the suicidal mania, — for this, as I say, is never *slavish*. The papyrus then — quite apart from the unmistakable evidences of suicide invariably left by

each self-destroyer — affords us definite and certain means by which we can distinguish the two classes of deaths; and we are thus able to divide the total number into two nearly equal halves.

‘But you start — you are troubled — you never heard or read of murder such as this, the simultaneous murder of thousands over wide areas of the face of the globe; here you feel is something outside your experience, deeper than your profoundest imaginings. To the question “by whom committed?” and “with what motive?” your mind can conceive no possible answer. And yet the answer must be, “by man, and for human motives,” — for the Angel of Death with flashing eye and flaming sword is himself long dead; and again we can say at once, by no *one* man, but by many, a cohort, an army of men; and again, by no *common* men, but by men hellish (or heavenly) in cunning, in resource, in strength and unity of purpose; men laughing to scorn the flimsy prophylactics of society, separated by an infinity of self-confidence and spiritual integrity from the ordinary easily-crushed criminal of our days.

‘This much at least I was able to discover from the first; and immediately I set myself to the detection of motive by a careful study of each case. This, too, in due time, became clear to me, — but to motive it may perhaps be more convenient to refer later on. What next engaged my attention was the figures on the papyrus, and devoutly did I hope that by their solution I might be able to arrive at some more exact knowledge of the mystery.

‘The figures round the border first attracted me, and the mere *reading* of them gave me very little trouble. But I was convinced that behind their meaning thus read lay some deep esoteric significance; and this, almost to the last, I was utterly unable to fathom. You perceive that these border figures consist of waved lines of two different lengths, drawings of snakes, triangles looking like the Greek delta, and a heart-shaped object with a dot

following it. These succeed one another in a certain definite order on all the slips. What, I asked myself, were these drawings meant to represent, — letters, numbers, things, or abstractions? This I was the more readily able to determine because I have often, in thinking over the shape of the Roman letter S, wondered whether it did not owe its convolute form to an attempt on the part of its inventor to make a picture of the *serpent*; S being the sibilant or hissing letter, and the serpent the hissing animal. This view, I fancy (though I am not sure), has escaped the philologists, but of course you know that all letters were originally *pictures of things*, and of what was S a picture, if not of the serpent? I therefore assumed, by way of trial, that the snakes in the diagram stood for a sibilant letter, that is, either C or S. And thence, supposing this to be the case, I deduced: firstly, that all the other figures stood for letters; and secondly, that they all appeared in the form of pictures of the things of which those letters were originally meant to be pictures. Thus the letter “m,” one of the four “*liquid*” consonants, is, as we now write it, only a shortened form of a waved line; and as a waved line it was originally written, and was the character by which *a stream of running water* was represented in writing; indeed it only owes its name to the fact that when the lips are pressed together, and “m” uttered by a continuous effort, a certain resemblance to the murmur of running water is produced. The longer waved line in the diagram I therefore took to represent “m”; and it at once followed that the shorter meant “n,” for no two letters of the commoner European alphabets differ only in length (as distinct from shape) except “m” and “n”, and “w” and “v”; indeed, just as the French call “w” “double-ve,” so very properly might “m” be called “double-en.” But, in this case, the longer not being “w,” the shorter could not be “v”: it was therefore “n.” And now there only remained the heart and the triangle. I was unable to think of any letter that could ever have been intended for the picture of a

heart, but the triangle I knew to be the letter #A.# This was originally written without the cross-bar from prop to prop, and the two feet at the bottom of the props were not separated as now, but joined; so that the letter formed a true triangle. It was meant by the primitive man to be a picture of his primitive house, this house being, of course, hut-shaped, and consisting of a conical roof without walls. I had thus, with the exception of the heart, disentangled the whole, which then (leaving a space for the heart) read as follows:

{ ss
 ‘mn { anan ... san.’
 { cc

But ‘c’ before ‘a’ being never a sibilant (except in some few so-called ‘Romance’ languages), but a guttural, it was for the moment discarded; also as no word begins with the letters ‘mn’ — except ‘mnemonics’ and its fellows — I concluded that a vowel must be omitted between these letters, and thence that all vowels (except ‘a’) were omitted; again, as the double ‘s’ can never come after ‘n’ I saw that either a vowel was omitted between the two ‘s’s,’ or that the first word ended after the first ‘s.’ Thus I got

‘m ns sanan... san,’

or, supplying the now quite obvious vowels,

‘mens sana in... sano.’

The heart I now knew represented the word ‘corpore,’ the Latin word for ‘heart’ being ‘cor,’ and the dot — showing that the word as it stood was an abbreviation — conclusively proved every one of my deductions.

‘So far all had gone flowingly. It was only when I came to consider the central figures that for many days I spent my strength in vain. You heard my exclamation of delight and astonishment when at last a ray of light pierced

the gloom. At no time, indeed, was I wholly in the dark as to the *general* significance of these figures, for I saw at once their resemblance to the sepulchral reliefs of classical times. In case you are not minutely acquainted with the *technique* of these stones, I may as well show you one, which I myself removed from an old grave in Tarentum.'

He took from a niche a small piece of close-grained marble, about a foot square, and laid it before me. On one side it was exquisitely sculptured in relief.

'This,' he continued, 'is a typical example of the Greek grave-stone, and having seen one specimen you may be said to have seen almost all, for there is surprisingly little variety in the class. You will observe that the scene represents a man reclining on a couch; in his hand he holds a *patera*, or dish, filled with grapes and pomegranates, and beside him is a tripod bearing the viands from which he is banqueting. At his feet sits a woman — for the Greek lady never reclined at table. In addition to these two figures a horse's head, a dog, or a serpent may sometimes be seen; and these forms comprise the almost invariable pattern of all grave reliefs. Now, that this was the real model from which the figures on the papyrus were taken I could not doubt, when I considered the seemingly absurd fidelity with which in each murder the papyrus, smeared with honey, was placed under the tongue of the victim. I said to myself: it can only be that the assassins have bound themselves to the observance of a strict and narrow ritual from which no departure is under any circumstances permitted — perhaps for the sake of signalling the course of events to others at a distance. But what ritual? That question I was able to answer when I knew the answer to these others, — why *under the tongue*, and why *smeared with honey*? For no reason, except that the Greeks (not the Romans till very late in their history) always placed an *obolos*, or penny, beneath the tongue of the dead to pay

his passage across the Stygian river of ghosts; for no reason, except that to these same Greeks honey was a sacred fluid, intimately associated in their minds with the mournful subject of Death; a fluid with which the bodies of the deceased were anointed, and sometimes — especially in Sparta and the Pelasgic South — embalmed; with which libations were poured to Hermes Psuchopompos, conductor of the dead to the regions of shade; with which offerings were made to all the chthonic deities, and the souls of the departed in general. You remember, for instance, the melancholy words of Helen addressed to Hermione in *Orestes*:

[Greek: *Kai labe choas tasd'en cheroïn komas t'emas
elthousa d'amphi ton Klutaimnaestras taphon
melikrat'aphes galaktos oinopon t'achnaen.*]

And so everywhere. The ritual then of the murderers was a *Greek* ritual, their cult a Greek cult — preferably, perhaps, a South Greek one, a Spartan one, for it was here that the highly conservative peoples of that region clung longest and fondliest to this semi-barbarous worship. This then being so, I was made all the more certain of my conjecture that the central figures on the papyrus were drawn from a Greek model.

‘Here, however, I came to a standstill. I was infinitely puzzled by the rod in the man’s hand. In none of the Greek grave-reliefs does any such thing as a rod make an appearance, except in one well-known example where the god Hermes — generally represented as carrying the *caduceus*, or staff, given him by Phoebus — appears leading a dead maiden to the land of night. But in every other example of which I am aware the sculpture represents a man *living*, not dead, banqueting *on earth*, not in Hades, by the side of his living companion. What then could be the significance of the staff in the hand of this living man? It was only after days of the hardest

struggle, the cruellest suspense, that the thought flashed on me that the idea of Hermes leading away the dead female might, in this case, have been carried one step farther; that the male figure might be no living man, no man at all, but *Hermes himself* actually banqueting in Hades with the soul of his disembodied *protégée*! The thought filled me with a rapture I cannot describe, and you witnessed my excitement. But, at all events, I saw that this was a truly tremendous departure from Greek art and thought, to which in general the copyists seemed to cling so religiously. There must therefore be a reason, a strong reason, for vandalism such as this. And that, at any rate, it was no longer difficult to discover; for now I knew that the male figure was no mortal, but a god, a spirit, a DAEMON (in the Greek sense of the word); and the female figure I saw by the marked shortness of her drapery to be no Athenian, but a Spartan; no matron either, but a maiden, a lass, a LASSIE; and now I had forced on me lassie daemon, *Lacedaemon*.

‘This then was the badge, the so carefully-buried badge, of this society of men. The only thing which still puzzled and confounded me at this stage was the startling circumstance that a *Greek* society should make use of a *Latin* motto. It was clear that either all my conclusions were totally wrong, or else the motto *mens sana in corpore sano* contained wrapped up in itself some acroamatic meaning which I found myself unable to penetrate, and which the authors had found no Greek motto capable of conveying. But at any rate, having found this much, my knowledge led me of itself one step further; for I perceived that, widely extended as were their operations, the society was necessarily in the main an *English*, or at least an English-speaking one — for of this the word “lassie” was plainly indicative: it was easy now to conjecture London, the monster-city in which all things lose themselves, as their head-quarters; and at this point in my investigations I despatched to the papers the advertisement you have seen.’

‘But,’ I exclaimed, ‘even now I utterly fail to see by what mysterious processes of thought you arrived at the wording of the advertisement; even now it conveys no meaning to my mind.’

‘That,’ he replied, ‘will grow clear when we come to a right understanding of the baleful *motive* which inspired these men. I have already said that I was not long in discovering it. There was only one possible method of doing so — and that was, by all means, by any means, to find out some condition or other common to every one of the victims before death. It is true that I was unable to do this in some few cases, but where I failed, I was convinced that my failure was due to the insufficiency of the evidence at my disposal, rather than to the actual absence of the condition. Now, let us take almost any two cases you will, and seek for this common condition: let us take, for example, the first two that attracted the attention of the world — the poor woman of the slums of Berlin, and the celebrated man of science. Separated by as wide an interval as they are, we shall yet find, if we look closely, in each case the same pathetic tokens of the still uneliminated *striae* of our poor humanity. The woman is not an old woman, for she has a “small young” family, which, had she lived, might have been increased: notwithstanding which, she has suffered from hemiplegia, “partial paralysis.” The professor, too, has had not one, but two, large families, and an “army of grand-children”: but note well the startling, the hideous fact, that *every one of his children is dead!* The crude grave has gaped before the cock to suck in *every one* of those shrunk forms, so indigent of vital impulse, so pauper of civism, lust, so draughty, so vague, so lean — but not before they have had time to dower with the ah and wo of their infirmity a whole wretched “army of grand-children.” And yet this man of wisdom is on the point, in his old age, of marrying once again, of producing for the good of his race still more of this poor human stuff. You

see the lurid significance, the point of resemblance, — you see it? And, O heaven, is it not too sad? For me, I tell you, the whole business has a tragic pitifulness too deep for words. But this brings me to the discussion of a large matter. It would, for instance, be interesting to me to hear what you, a modern European, saturated with all the notions of your little day, what *you* consider the supreme, the all-important question for the nations of Europe at this moment. Am I far wrong in assuming that you would rattle off half a dozen of the moot points agitating rival factions in your own land, select one of them, and call that “the question of the hour”? I wish I could see as you see; I wish to God I did not see deeper. In order to lead you to my point, what, let me ask you, what *precisely* was it that ruined the old nations — that brought, say Rome, to her knees at last? Centralisation, you say, top-heavy imperialism, dilettante pessimism, the love of luxury. At bottom, believe me, it was not one of these high-sounding things — it was simply War; the sum total of the battles of centuries. But let me explain myself: this is a novel view to you, and you are perhaps unable to conceive how or why war was so fatal to the old world, because you see how little harmful it is to the new. If you collected in a promiscuous way a few millions of modern Englishmen and slew them all simultaneously, what, think you, would be the effect from the point of view of the State? The effect, I conceive, would be indefinitely small, wonderfully transitory; there would, of course, be a momentary lacuna in the boiling surge: yet the womb of humanity is full of sap, and uberant; Ocean-tide, wooed of that Ilithyia whose breasts are many, would flow on, and the void would soon be filled. But the effect would only be thus insignificant, if, as I said, your millions were taken promiscuously (as in the modern army), not if they were *picked* men — in *that* case the loss (or gain) would be excessive, and permanent for all time. Now, the war-hosts of the ancient commonwealths — not dependent on the

mechanical contrivances of the modern army — were necessarily composed of the very best men: the strong-boned, the heart-stout, the sound in wind and limb. Under these conditions the State shuddered through all her frame, thrilled adown every filament, at the death of a single one of her sons in the field. As only the feeble, the aged, bided at home, their number after each battle became larger *in proportion to the whole* than before. Thus the nation, more and more, with ever-increasing rapidity, declined in bodily, and of course spiritual, quality, until the *end* was reached, and Nature swallowed up the weaklings whole; and thus war, which to the modern state is at worst the blockhead and indecent *affaires d'honneur* of persons in office — and which, surely, before you and I die will cease altogether — was to the ancient a genuine and remorselessly fatal scourge.

‘And now let me apply these facts to the Europe of our own time. We no longer have world-serious war — but in its place we have a scourge, the effect of which on the modern state is *precisely the same* as the effect of war on the ancient, only, — in the end, — far more destructive, far more subtle, sure, horrible, disgusting. The name of this pestilence is Medical Science. Yes, it is most true, shudder — shudder — as you will! Man’s best friend turns to an asp in his bosom to sting him to the basest of deaths. The devastating growth of medical, and especially surgical, science — that, if you like, for us all, is “the question of the hour!” And what a question! of what surpassing importance, in the presence of which all other “questions” whatever dwindle into mere academic triviality. For just as the ancient State was wounded to the heart through the death of her healthy sons in the field, just so slowly, just so silently, is the modern receiving deadly hurt by the botching and tinkering of her unhealthy children. The net result is in each case the same — the altered ratio of the total amount of reproductive health to the total amount of reproductive disease. They recklessly spent their best;

we sedulously conserve our worst; and as they pined and died of anaemia, so we, unless we repent, must perish in a paroxysm of black-blood apoplexy. And this prospect becomes more certain, when you reflect that the physician as we know him is not, like other men and things, a being of gradual growth, of slow evolution: from Adam to the middle of the last century the world saw nothing even in the least resembling him. No son of Paian *he*, but a fatherless, full-grown birth from the incessant matrix of Modern Time, so motherly of monstrous litters of “Gorgon and Hydra and Chimaeras dire”; you will understand what I mean when you consider the quite recent date of, say, the introduction of anaesthetics or antiseptics, the discovery of the knee-jerk, bacteriology, or even of such a doctrine as the circulation of the blood. We are at this very time, if I mistake not, on the verge of new insights which will enable man to laugh at disease — laugh at it in the sense of over-ruling its natural tendency to produce death, not by any means in the sense of destroying its ever-expanding *existence*. Do you know that at this moment your hospitals are crammed with beings in human likeness suffering from a thousand obscure and subtly-ineradicable ills, all of whom, if left alone, would die almost at once, but ninety in the hundred of whom will, as it is, be sent forth “cured,” like missionaries of hell, and the horrent shapes of Night and Acheron, to mingle in the pure river of humanity the poison-taint of their protean vileness? Do you know that in your schools one-quarter of the children are already purblind? Have you gauged the importance of your tremendous consumption of quack catholicons, of the fortunes derived from their sale, of the spread of modern nervous disorders, of toothless youth and thrice loathsome age among the helot-classes? Do you know that in the course of my late journey to London, I walked from Piccadilly Circus to Hyde Park Corner, during which time I observed some five hundred people, of whom twenty-seven

only were perfectly healthy, well-formed men, and eighteen healthy, beautiful women? On every hand — with a thrill of intensest joy, I say it! — is to be seen, if not yet commencing civilisation, then progress, progress — wide as the world — toward it: only here — at the heart — is there decadence, fatty degeneration. Brain-evolution — and favouring airs — and the ripening time — and the silent Will of God, of God — all these in conspiracy seem to be behind, urging the whole ship's company of us to some undreamable luxury of glory — when lo, this check, artificial, evitable. Less death, more disease — that is the sad, the unnatural record; children especially — so sensitive to the physician's art — living on by hundreds of thousands, bearing within them the germs of wide-spreading sorrow, who in former times would have died. And if you consider that the proper function of the doctor is the strictly limited one of curing the curable, rather than of self-gloriously perpetuating the incurable, you may find it difficult to give a quite rational answer to this simple question: *why*? Nothing is so sure as that to the unit it is a cruelty; nothing so certain as that to humanity it is a wrong; to say that such and such an one was sent by the All Wise, and must *therefore* be not merely permitted, but elaborately coaxed and forced, to live, is to utter a blasphemy against Man at which even the ribald tongue of a priest might falter; and as a matter of fact, society, in just contempt for this species of argument, never hesitates to hang, for its own imagined good, its heaven-sent catholics, protestants, sheep, sheep-stealers, etc. What then, you ask, would I do with these unholy ones? To save the State would I pierce them with a sword, or leave them to the slow throes of their agonies? Ah, do not expect me to answer that question — I do not know what to answer. The whole spirit of the present is one of a broad and beautiful, if quite thoughtless, humanism, and I, a child of the present, cannot but be borne along by it, coerced into sympathy with

it. “Beautiful” I say: for if anywhere in the world you have seen a sight more beautiful than a group of hospital *savants* bending with endless scrupulousness over a little pauper child, centering upon its frailty the whole human skill and wisdom of ages, so have not I. Here have you the full realisation of a parable diviner than that of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Beautiful then; with at least surface beauty, like the serpent *lachesis mutus*; but, like many beautiful things, deadly too, *inhuman*. And, on the whole, an answer will have to be found. As for me, it is a doubt which has often agitated me, whether the central dogma of Judaism and Christianity alike can, after all, be really one of the inner verities of this our earthly being — the dogma, that by the shedding of the innocent blood, and by that alone, shall the race of man find cleansing and salvation. Will no agony of reluctance overcome the necessity that one man die, “so that the whole people perish not”? Can it be true that by nothing less than the “three days of pestilence” shall the land be purged of its stain, and is this old divine alternative about to confront us in new, modern form? Does the inscrutable Artemis indeed demand offerings of human blood to suage her anger? Most sad that man should ever need, should ever have needed, to foul his hand in the [Greek: *musaron aima*] of his own veins! But what is, is. And can it be fated that the most advanced civilisation of the future shall needs have in it, as the first and chief element of its glory, the most barbarous of all the rituals of barbarism — the immolation of hecatombs which wail a muling human wail? Is it indeed part of man’s strange destiny through the deeps of Time that he one day bow his back to the duty of pruning himself as a garden, so that he run not to a waste wilderness? Shall the physician, the *accoucheur*, of the time to come be expected, and commanded, to do on the ephod and breast-plate, anoint his head with the oil of gladness, and add to the function of healer the function

of Sacrificial Priest? These you say, are wild, dark questions. Wild enough, dark enough. We know how Sparta — the “man-taming Sparta” Simonides calls her — answered them. Here was the complete subordination of all unit-life to the well-being of the Whole. The child, immediately on his entry into the world, fell under the control of the State: it was not left to the judgment of his parents, as elsewhere, whether he should be brought up or not, but a commission of the Phyle in which he was born decided the question. If he was weakly, if he had any bodily unsightliness, he was exposed on a place called Taygetus, and so perished. It was a consequence of this that never did the sun in his course light on man half so godly stalwart, on woman half so houri-lovely, as in stern and stout old Sparta. Death, like all mortal, they must bear; disease, once and for all, they were resolved to have done with. The word which they used to express the idea “ugly,” meant also “hateful,” “vile,” “disgraceful” — and I need hardly point out to you the significance of that fact alone; for they considered — and rightly — that there is no sort of natural reason why every denizen of earth should not be perfectly hale, integral, sane, beautiful — if only very moderate pains be taken to procure this divine result. One fellow, indeed, called Nancleidas, grew a little too fat to please the sensitive eyes of the Spartans: I believe he was periodically whipped. Under a system so very barbarous, the super-sweet, egoistic voice of the club-footed poet Byron would, of course, never have been heard: one brief egoistic “lament” on Taygetus, and so an end. It is not, however, certain that the world could not have managed very well without Lord Byron. The one thing that admits of no contradiction is that it cannot manage without the holy citizen, and that disease, to men and to nations, can have but one meaning, annihilation near or ultimate. At any rate, from these remarks, you will now very likely be

able to arrive at some understanding of the wording of the advertisements which I sent to the papers.'

Zaleski, having delivered himself of this singular *tirade*, paused: replaced the sepulchral relief in its niche: drew a drapery of silver cloth over his bare feet and the hem of his antique garment of Babylon: and then continued:

'After some time the answer to the advertisement at length arrived; but what was my disgust to find that it was perfectly unintelligible to me. I had asked for a date and an address: the reply came giving a date, and an address, too — but an address wrapped up in cypher, which, of course, I, as a supposed member of the society, was expected to be able to read. At any rate, I now knew the significance of the incongruous circumstance that the Latin proverb *mens sana etc.* should be adopted as the motto of a Greek society; the significance lay in this, that the motto *contained an address* — the address of their meeting-place, or at least, of their chief meeting-place. I was now confronted with the task of solving — and of solving quickly, without the loss of an hour — this enigma; and I confess that it was only by the most violent and extraordinary concentration of what I may call the dissecting faculty, that I was able to do so in good time. And yet there was no special difficulty in the matter. For looking at the motto as it stood in cypher, the first thing I perceived was that, in order to read the secret, the heart-shaped figure must be left out of consideration, if there was any *consistency* in the system of cyphers at all, for it belonged to a class of symbols quite distinct from that of all the others, not being, like them, a picture-letter. Omitting this, therefore, and taking all the other vowels and consonants whether actually represented in the device or not, I now got the proverb in the form *mens sana in ... pore sano*. I wrote this down, and what instantly struck me was the immense, the altogether unusual, number of

liquids in the motto — six in all, amounting to no less than one-third of the total number of letters! Putting these all together you get *mnnnnr*, and you can see that the very appearance of the “m’s” and “n’s” (especially when *written*) running into one another, of itself suggests a stream of water. Having previously arrived at the conclusion of London as the meeting-place, I could not now fail to go on to the inference of *the Thames*; there, or near there, would I find those whom I sought. The letters “mnnnnr,” then, meant the Thames: what did the still remaining letters mean? I now took these remaining letters, placing them side by side: I got *aaa, sss, ee, oo, p* and *i*. Juxtaposing these nearly in the order indicated by the frequency of their occurrence, and their place in the Roman alphabet, you at once and inevitably get the word *Aesopi*. And now I was fairly startled by this symmetrical proof of the exactness of my own deductions in other respects, but, above all, far above all, by the occurrence of that word “*Aesopi*.” For who was Aesopus? He was a slave who was freed for his wise and witful sallies: he is therefore typical of the liberty of the wise — their moral manumission from temporary and narrow law; he was also a close friend of Croesus: he is typical, then, of the union of wisdom with wealth — true wisdom with real wealth; lastly, and above all, he was thrown by the Delphians from a rock on account of his wit: he is typical, therefore, of death — the shedding of blood — as a result of wisdom, this thought being an elaboration of Solomon’s great maxim, “in much wisdom is much sorrow.” But how accurately all this fitted in with what would naturally be the doctrines of the men on whose track I was! I could no longer doubt the justness of my reasonings, and immediately, while you slept, I set off for London.

‘Of my haps in London I need not give you a very particular account. The meeting was to be held on the 15th, and by the morning of the 13th I

had reached a place called Wargrave, on the Thames. There I hired a light canoe, and thence proceeded down the river in a somewhat zig-zag manner, narrowly examining the banks on either side, and keeping a sharp out-look for some board, or sign, or house, that would seem to betoken any sort of connection with the word “Aesopi.” In this way I passed a fruitless day, and having reached the shipping region, made fast my craft, and in a spirit of *diablerie* spent the night in a common lodging-house, in the company of the most remarkable human beings, characterised by an odour of alcohol, and a certain obtrusive *bonne camaraderie* which the prevailing fear of death could not altogether repress. By dawn of the 14th I was on my journey again — on, and ever on. Eagerly I longed for a sight of the word I sought: but I had misjudged the men against whose cunning I had measured my own. I should have remembered more consistently that they were no ordinary men. As I was destined to find, there lay a deeper, more cabalistic meaning in the motto than any I had been able to dream of. I had proceeded on my pilgrimage down the river a long way past Greenwich, and had now reached a desolate and level reach of land stretching away on either hand. Paddling my boat from the right to the left bank, I came to a spot where a little arm of the river ran up some few yards into the land. The place wore a specially dreary and deserted aspect: the land was flat, and covered with low shrubs. I rowed into this arm of shallow water and rested on my oar, wearily bethinking myself what was next to be done. Looking round, however, I saw to my surprise that at the end of this arm there was a short narrow pathway — a winding road — leading from the river-bank. I stood up in the boat and followed its course with my eyes. It was met by another road also winding among the bushes, but in a slightly different direction. At the end of this was a little, low, high-roofed, round house, without doors or windows. And then — and then — tingling now with a thousand raptures —

I beheld a pool of water near this structure, and then another low house, a counterpart of the first — and then, still leading on in the same direction, another pool — and then a great rock, heart-shaped — and then another winding road — and then another pool of water. All was a model — *exact to the minutest particular* — of the device on the papyrus! The first long-waved line was the river itself; the three short-waved lines were the arm of the river and the two pools; the three snakes were the three winding roads; the two triangles representing the letter #A# were the two high-roofed round houses; the heart was the rock! I sprang, now thoroughly excited, from the boat, and ran in headlong haste to the end of the last lake. Here there was a rather thick and high growth of bushes, but peering among them, my eye at once caught a white oblong board supported on a stake: on this, in black letters, was marked the words, “DESCENSUS AESOPI.” It was necessary, therefore, to go *down*: the meeting-place was subterranean. It was without difficulty that I discovered a small opening in the ground, half hidden by the underwood; from the orifice I found that a series of wooden steps led directly downwards, and I at once boldly descended. No sooner, however, had I touched the bottom than I was confronted by an ancient man in Hellenic apparel, armed with the Greek *ziphos* and *peltè*. His eyes, accustomed to the gloom, pierced me long with an earnest scrutiny.

““You are a Spartan?” he asked at length.

““Yes,” I answered promptly.

““Then how is it you do not know that I am stone deaf?”

‘I shrugged, indicating that for the moment I had forgotten the fact.

““You *are* a Spartan?” he repeated.

‘I nodded with emphasis.

““Then, how is it you omit to make the sign?”

‘Now, you must not suppose that at this point I was nonplussed, for in that case you would not give due weight to the strange inherent power of the mind to rise to the occasion of a sudden emergency — to stretch itself long to the length of an event; I do not hesitate to say that *no* combination of circumstances can defeat a vigorous brain fully alert, and in possession of itself. With a quickness to which the lightning-flash is tardy, I remembered that this was a spot indicated by the symbols on the papyrus: I remembered that this same papyrus was always placed under the *tongue* of the dead; I remembered, too, that among that very nation whose language had afforded the motto, to “turn up the *thumb*” (*pollicem vertere*) was a symbol significant of death. I touched the under surface of my tongue with the tip of my thumb. The aged man was appeased. I passed on, and examined the place.

‘It was simply a vast circular hall, the arched roof of which was supported on colonnades of what I took to be pillars of porphyry. Down the middle and round the sides ran tables of the same material; the walls were clothed in hangings of sable velvet, on which, in infinite reproduction, was embroidered in cypher the motto of the society. The chairs were cushioned in the same stuff. Near the centre of the circle stood a huge statue, of what really seemed to me to be pure beaten gold. On the great ebon base was inscribed the word [Greek: LUKURGOS]. From the roof swung by brazen chains a single misty lamp.

‘Having seen this much I reascended to the land of light, and being fully resolved on attending the meeting on the next day or night, and not knowing what my fate might then be, I wrote to inform you of the means by which my body might be traced. ‘But on the next day a new thought occurred to me: I reasoned thus: “these men are not common assassins; they wage a too rash warfare against diseased life, but not against life in general. In all

probability they have a quite immoderate, quite morbid reverence for the sanctity of healthy life. They will not therefore take mine, *unless* they suppose me to be the only living outsider who has a knowledge of their secret, and therefore think it absolutely necessary for the carrying out of their beneficent designs that my life should be sacrificed. I will therefore prevent such a motive from occurring to them by communicating to another their whole secret, and — if the necessity should arise — *letting them know* that I have done so, without telling them who that other is. Thus my life will be assured.” I therefore wrote to you on that day a full account of all I had discovered, giving you to understand, however, on the envelope, that you need not examine the contents for some little time.

‘I waited in the subterranean vault during the greater part of the next day; but not till midnight did the confederates gather. What happened at that meeting I shall not disclose, even to you. All was sacred — solemn — full of awe. Of the choral hymns there sung, the hierophantic ritual, liturgies, paeans, the gorgeous symbolisms — of the wealth there represented, the culture, art, self-sacrifice — of the mingling of all the tongues of Europe — I shall not speak; nor shall I repeat names which you would at once recognise as familiar to you — though I may, perhaps, mention that the “Morris,” whose name appears on the papyrus sent to me is a well-known *littérateur* of that name. But this in confidence, for some years at least.

‘Let me, however, hurry to a conclusion. My turn came to speak. I rose undaunted, and calmly disclosed myself; during the moment of hush, of wide-eyed paralysis that ensued, I declared that fully as I coincided with their views in general, I found myself unable to regard their methods with approval — these I could not but consider too rash, too harsh, too premature. My voice was suddenly drowned by one universal, earth-shaking roar of rage and contempt, during which I was surrounded on all

sides, seized, pinioned, and dashed on the central table. All this time, in the hope and love of life, I passionately shouted that I was not the only living being who shared in their secret. But my voice was drowned, and drowned again, in the whirling tumult. None heard me. A powerful and little-known anaesthetic — the means by which all their murders have been accomplished — was now produced. A cloth, saturated with the fluid, was placed on my mouth and nostrils. I was stifled. Sense failed. The incubus of the universe blackened down upon my brain. How I tugged at the mandrakes of speech! was a locked pugilist with language! In the depth of my extremity the half-thought, I remember, floated, like a mist, through my fading consciousness, that now perhaps — now — there was silence around me; that *now*, could my palsied lips find dialect, I should be heard, and understood. My whole soul rose focussed to the effort — my body jerked itself upwards. At that moment I knew my spirit truly great, genuinely sublime. For I *did* utter something — my dead and shuddering tongue *did* babble forth some coherency. Then I fell back, and all was once more the ancient Dark. On the next day when I woke, I was lying on my back in my little boat, placed there by God knows whose hands. At all events, one thing was clear — I *had* uttered something — I was saved. With what of strength remained to me I reached the place where I had left your *calèche*, and started on my homeward way. The necessity to sleep was strong upon me, for the fumes of the anaesthetic still clung about my brain; hence, after my long journey, I fainted on my passage through the house, and in this condition you found me.

‘Such then is the history of my thinkings and doings in connection with this ill-advised confraternity: and now that their cabala is known to others — to how many others *they* cannot guess — I think it is not unlikely that we shall hear little more of the Society of Sparta.’

THE END

Shapes in the Fire (1896)



**BEING A MID-WINTER'S NIGHTS ENTERTAINMENT IN TWO
PARTS AND AN INTERLUDE**

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To Mistress Beatrice Laws

Dear Beatrice, — The pieces of this inkling of a Book, which, with much longing, I dedicate to you, were not all written in the same night, but separated in their execution by intervals for eating and sleeping; and as you know me to be of at least not less nervous vigour than your sweet self (for in Thee is not vigour gobbled up in sweetness?), so you, too, red ruddes, should read them (in spite of the sub-title), with like intervals, one by one, not gulp them like porridge or a novel, — which, you know, are homogeneous, these being designedly heterogeneous — or you will hardly, I think, get at what one meant to imply (Easily, you know, in the crash of the orchestra, do the light flute-notes lose themselves on the tired ear: a fact which seems to indicate that works of art, especially such as pretend to be more or less musical should be not only pretty short, but separately imbibed; so that the Concert, for one thing, is wrong; and with it, the book, such as this, of short detached pieces, which is a literary Concert; only that here, you have it in your option to extend your concert into as many nights as there are pieces; and your concert-giver, too, hath it more in his dominion what piece shall company with what, and what shall be the precise complexity and information of the whole.) Well, but to maintain the dear fiction of the Winter's Night, I will say this (epistolary — and not as they write big in the volume of the Books, lest you pout): that the curtain having risen, I will present you first a diary-extract of a poor friend now dead; then a little morne drama which I have encountered in the chronicle of one Aventin von Tottenweis; and next a rather dark experience of my own in the dim Northern seas, which, in dream, yet revisits me. Then will be a short interlude for cigarettes, ices, and whispy-lispy, during which will be rendered a piece just splashed down anyway, for a male reader or two, and

in some places dull (to you I mean) and in others pretty cheap, — this, however, being a day of cheap things, sweetmeat; you yourself, perhaps, not so over-dear, and only over-dear to the beglamoured eyes of male-made me. This, then, you should skip (recalcitrant roe that thou art on the Mountains of Endeavour!) Go out on the verandah, pig's-eye, and there heave, the open secret of that torse my soul remembers to the chaste down-look of Dian's astonished eye-glass, and the schwärmerei of the winking Stars. But soon, at about midnight, return; for now, to the tinkle of a silver bell, will unfold itself the life-history, very well translated by me from the original, of a poor man of Hindustan, not, I verily believe, unloved of the gods, but loved, you perceive, in their peculiar fashion: those people (as the late Mr. Froude uncommonly said to the dying Carlyle) probably having reasons for their carryings-on, of which we cannot even dream. And truly, dear, this is marvellous in our eyes, or at least in mine. Well, but now, just as that dark Daphne with the gems entangled in her hair turns paling in flight from the red rape of day, I shall (spiritualest wine coming last, you know, as at that Marriage) once more introduce myself in character this time of lover, and tell how I wooed one of the ladies of my heart at world-illustrious Phorfor. Immediately whereupon, Beloved, shall the Day break, and the Shadows flee away. — Yours, pour toujours et une Nuit d'Hiver!

The Author

XÉLUCHA



“He goeth after her... and knoweth not...” (From a diary)

THREE DAYS AGO! by heaven, it seems an age. But I am shaken — my reason is debauched. A while since, I fell into a momentary coma precisely resembling an attack of petit mal. “Tombs, and worms, and epitaphs” — that is my dream. At my age, with my physique, to walk staggers, like a man stricken! But all that will pass: I must collect myself — my reason is debauched. Three days ago! it seems an age! I sat on the floor before an old cista full of letters. I lighted upon a packet of Cosmo’s. Why, I had forgotten them! they are turning sere! Truly, I can no more call myself a young man. I sat reading, listlessly, rapt back by memory. To muse is to be lost! of that evil habit I must wring the neck, or look to perish. Once more I threaded the mazy sphere-harmony of the minuet, reeled in the waltz, long pomps of candelabra, the noonday of the bacchanal, about me.

Cosmo was the very tsar and maharajah of the Sybarites! the Priap of the détraqués! In every unexpected alcove of the Roman Villa was a couch, raised high, with necessary foot-stool, flanked and canopied with mirrors of clarified gold. Consumption fastened upon him; reclining at last at table, he could, till warmed, scarce lift the wine! his eyes were like two fat glow-worms, coiled together! they seemed haloed with vaporous emanations of phosphorus! Desperate, one could see, was the secret struggle with the Devourer. But to the end the princely smile persisted calm; to the end — to the last day — he continued among that comic crew unchallenged choragus

of all the rites, I will not say of Paphos, but of Chemos! and Baal-Peor! Warmed, he did not refuse the revel, the dance, the darkened chamber. It was utterly black, rayless; approached by a secret passage; in shape circular; the air hot, haunted always by odours of balms, bdellium, hints of dulcimer and flute; and radiated round with a hundred thick-strewn ottomans of Morocco.

Here Lucy Hill stabbed to the heart Caccofogo, mistaking the scar of his back for the scar of Soriac. In a bath of malachite the Princess Eglá, waking late one morning, found Cosmo lying stiffly dead, the water covering him wholly.

“But in God’s name, Mérimée!” (so he wrote), “to think of Xélucha dead! Xélucha! Can a moon-beam, then, perish of suppurations? Can the rainbow be eaten by worms? Ha! ha! ha! laugh with me, my friend: ‘elle dérangera l’Enfer’! She will introduce the pas de tarantule into Tophet! Xélucha, the feminine Xélucha recalling the splendid harlots of history! Weep with me — manat rara meas lacrima per genas! expert as Thargelia; cultured as Aspatia; purple as Semiramis. She comprehended the human tabernacle, my friend, its secret springs and tempers, more intimately than any savant of Salamanca who breathes. Tarare — but Xélucha is not dead!

Vitality is not mortal; you cannot wrap flame in a shroud. Xélucha! where then is she? Translated, perhaps — rapt to a constellation like the daughter of Leda. She journeyed to Hindostan, accompanied by the train and appurtenance of a Begum, threatening descent upon the Emperor of Tartary. I spoke of the desolation of the West; she kissed me, and promised return.

Mentioned you, too, Mérimée— ‘her Conqueror’— ‘Mérimée, Destroyer of Woman.’ A breath from the conservatory rioted among the ambery whiffs of her forelocks, sending it singly a-wave over that thulite tint you know.

Costumed cap-à-pie, she had, my friend, the dainty little completeness of a daisy mirrored bright in the eye of the browsing ox. A simile of Milton had for years, she said, inflamed the lust of her Eye: ‘The barren plains of Sericana, where Chinese drive with sails and wind their cany wagons light.’ I, and the Sabaeans, she assured me, wrongly considered Flame the whole of being; the other half of things being Aristotle’s quintessential light. In the Ourania Hierarchia and the Faust-book you meet a completeness: burning Seraph, Cherûb full of eyes. Xélucha combined them. She would reconquer the Orient for Dionysius, and return. I heard of her blazing at Delhi; drawn in a chariot by lions. Then this rumour — probably false. Indeed, it comes from a source somewhat turgid. Like Odin, Arthur, and the rest, Xélucha — will reappear.”

Soon subsequently, Cosmo lay down in his balneum of malechite, and slept, having drawn over him the water as a coverlet. I, in England, heard little of Xélucha: first that she was alive, then dead, then alighted at old Tadmor in the Wilderness, Palmyra now. Nor did I greatly care, Xélucha having long since turned to apples of Sodom in my mouth. Till I sat by the cista of letters and re-read Cosmo, she had for some years passed from my active memories.

The habit is now confirmed in me of spending the greater part of the day in sleep, while by night I wander far and wide through the city under the sedative influence of a tincture which has become necessary to my life. Such an existence of shadow is not without charm; nor, I think, could many minds be steadily subjected to its conditions without elevation, deepened awe. To travel alone with the Primordial cannot but be solemn. The moon is of the hue of the glow-worm; and Night of the sepulchre. Nux bore not less Thanatos than Hupuos, and the bitter tears of Isis redundate to a flood. At three, if a cab rolls by, the sound has the augustness of thunder. Once, at

two, near a corner, I came upon a priest, seated, dead, leering, his legs bent. One arm, supported on a knee, pointed with rigid accusing forefinger obliquely upward. By exact observation, I found that he indicated Betelgeux, the star “a” which shoulders the wet sword of Orion. He was hideously swollen, having perished of dropsy. Thus in all Supremes is a grotesquerie; and one of the sons of Night is — Buffo.

In a London square deserted, I should imagine, even in the day, I was aware of the metallic, silvery-clinking approach of little shoes. It was three in a heavy morning of winter, a day after my rediscovery of Cosmo. I had stood by the railing, regarding the clouds sail as under the sea-legged pilotage of a moon wrapped in cloaks of inclemency. Turning, I saw a little lady, very gloriously dressed. She had walked straight to me. Her head was bare, and crisped with the amber stream which rolled lax to a globe, kneaded thick with jewels, at her nape. In the redundancy of her décolleté development, she resembled Parvati, mound-hipped love-goddess of the luscious fancy of the Brahmin.

She addressed to me the question:

“What are you doing there, darling?”

Her loveliness stirred me, and Night is bon camarade. I replied:

“Sunning myself by means of the moon.”

“All that is borrowed lustre,” she returned, “you have got it from old Drummond’s *Flowers of Sion*.”

Looking back, I cannot remember that this reply astonished me, though it should — of course — have done so. I said:

“On my soul, no; but you?”

“You might guess whence I come!”

“You are dazzling. You come from Paz.”

“Oh, farther than that, my son! Say a subscription ball in Soho.”

“Yes?... and alone? in the cold? on foot...?”

“Why, I am old, and a philosopher. I can pick you out riding Andromeda yonder from the ridden Ram. They are in error, M’sieur, who suppose an atmosphere on the broad side of the moon. I have reason to believe that on Mars dwells a race whose lids are transparent like glass; so that the eyes are visible during sleep; and every varying dream moves imaged forth to the beholder in tiny panorama on the limpid iris. You cannot imagine me a mere fille! To be escorted is to admit yourself a woman, and that is improper in Nowhere. Young Eos drives an *équipage à quatre*, but Artemis ‘walks’ alone. Get out of my borrowed light in the name of Diogenes! I am going home.”

“Near Piccadilly.”

“But a cab?”

“No cabs for me, thank you. The distance is a mere nothing. Come.”

We walked forward. My companion at once put an interval between us, quoting from the Spanish Curate that the open is an enemy to love. The Talmudists, she twice insisted, rightly held the hand the sacreddest part of the person, and at that point also contact was for the moment interdict. Her walk was extremely rapid. I followed. Not a cat was anywhere visible. We reached at length the door of a mansion in St. James’s. There was no light. It seemed tenantless, the windows all uncurtained, pasted across, some of them, with the words, To Let. My companion, however, flitted up the steps, and, beckoning, passed inward. I, following, slammed the door, and was in darkness. I heard her ascend, and presently a region of glimmer above revealed a stairway of marble, curving broadly up. On the floor where I stood was no carpet, nor furniture: the dust was very thick. I had begun to mount when, to my surprise, she stood by my side, returned; and whispered:

“To the very top, darling.”

She soared nimbly up, anticipating me. Higher, I could no longer doubt that the house was empty but for us. All was a vacuum full of dust and echoes. But at the top, light streamed from a door, and I entered a good-sized oval saloon, at about the centre of the house. I was completely dazzled by the sudden resplendence of the apartment. In the midst was a spread table, square, opulent with gold plate, fruit dishes; three ponderous chandeliers of electric light above; and I noticed also (what was very bizarre) one little candlestick of common tin containing an old soiled curve of tallow, on the table. The impression of the whole chamber was one of gorgeousness not less than Assyrian. An ivory couch at the far end was made sun-like by a head- piece of chalcedony forming a sea for the sport of emerald ichthyotauri. Copper hangings, parnllled with mirrors in iasperated crystal, corresponded with a dome of flame and copper; yet this latter, I now remember, produced upon my glance an impression of actual grime. My companion reclined on a small Sigma couch, raised high to the table-level in the Semitic manner, visible to her saffron slippers of satin. She pointed me a seat opposite. The incongruity of its presence in the middle of this arrogance of pomp so tickled me, that no power could have kept me from a smile: it was a grimy chair, mean, all wood, nor was I long in discovering one leg somewhat shorter than its fellows.

She indicated wine in a black glass bottle, and a tumbler, but herself made no pretence of drinking or eating. She lay on hip and elbow, petite, resplendent, and looked gravely upward. I, however, drank.

“You are tired,” I said, “one sees that.”

“It is precious little than you see!” she returned, dreamy, hardly glancing.

“How! your mood is changed, then? You are morose.”

“You never, I think, saw a Norse passage-grave?”

“And abrupt.”

“Never?”

“A passage-grave? No.”

“It is worth a journey! They are circular or oblong chambers of stone, covered by great earthmounds, with a ‘passage’ of slabs connecting them with the outer air. All round the chamber the dead sit with head resting upon the bent knees, and consult together in silence.”

“Drink wine with me, and be less Tartarean.”

“You certainly seem to be a fool,” she replied with perfect sardonic iciness. “Is it not, then, highly romantic? They belong, you know, to the Neolithic age. As the teeth fall, one by one, from the lipless mouths — they are caught by the lap. When the lap thins — they roll to the floor of stone. Thereafter, every tooth that drops all round the chamber sharply breaks the silence.”

“Ha! ha! ha!”

“Yes. It is like a century-slow, circularly-successive dripping of slime in some cavern of the far subterrene.”

“Ha! ha! This wine seems heady! They express themselves in a dialect largely dental.”

“The Ape, on the other hand, in a language wholly guttural.”

A town-clock tolled four. Our talk was holed with silences, and heavy-paced. The wine’s yeasty exhalation reached my brain. I saw her through mist, dilating large, uncertain, shrinking again to dainty compactness. But amorousness had died within me.

“Do you know,” she asked, “what has been discovered in one of the Danish Kjökkenmöddings by a little boy? It was ghastly. The skeleton of a huge fish with human—”

“You are most unhappy.”

“Be silent.”

“You are full of care.”

“I think you a great fool.”

“You are racked with misery.”

“You are a child. You have not even an instinct of the meaning of the word.”

“How! Am I not a man? I, too, miserable, careful?”

“You are not, really, anything — until you can create.”

“Create what?”

“Matter.”

“That is foppish. Matter cannot be created, nor destroyed.”

“Truly, then, you must be a creature of unusually weak intellect. I see that now. Matter does not exist, then, there is no such thing, really — it is an appearance, a spectrum — every writer not imbecile from Plato to Fichte has, voluntary or involuntary, proved that for good. To create it is to produce an impression of its reality upon the senses of others; to destroy it is to wipe a wet rag across a scribbled slate.”

“Perhaps. I do not care. Since no one can do it”

“No one? You are mere embryo—”

“Who then?”

“Anyone, whose power of Will is equivalent to the gravitating force of a star of the First Magnitude.”

“Ha! ha! ha! By heaven, you choose to be facetious. Are there then wills of such equivalence?”

“There have been three, the founders of religions. There was a fourth: a cobbler of Herculaneum, whose mere volition induced the cataclysm of Vesuvius in ‘79’ in direct opposition to the gravity of Sirius. There are more fables than you have ever sung, you know. The greater number of disembodied spirits, too, I feel certain—”

“By heaven, I cannot but think you full of sorrow! Poor wight! come, drink with me. The wine is thick and boon. Is it not Setian? It makes you sway and swell before me, I swear, like a purple cloud of evening—”

“But you are mere clayey ponderance! — I did not know that! — you are no companion! your little interest revolves round the lowest centres.”

“Come — forget your agonies—”

“What, think you, is the portion of the buried body first sought by the worm?”

“The eyes! the eyes!”

“You are hideously wrong — you are so utterly at sea — —”

“My God!”

She had bent forward with such rage of contradiction as to approach me closely. A loose gown of amber silk, wide-sleeved, had replaced her ball attire, though at what opportunity I could not guess; wondering, I noticed it as she now placed her palms far forth upon the table. A sudden wafture as of spice and orange-flowers, mingled with the abhorrent faint odour of mortality over-ready for the tomb, greeted my sense. A chill crept upon my flesh.

“You are so hopelessly at fault—”

“For God’s sake—”

“You are so miserably deluded! Not the eyes at all!”

“Then, in heaven’s name, what?”

Five tolled from a clock.

“The Uvula! the soft drop of mucous flesh, you know, suspended from the palate above the glottis. They eat through the face-cloth and cheek, or crawl by the lips through a broken tooth, filling the mouth. They make straight for it. It is the *deliciae* of the vault.”

At her horror of interest I grew sick, at her odour, and her words. Some unspeakable sense of insignificance, of debility, held me dumb.

“You say I am full of sorrows. You say I am racked with woe; that I gnash with anguish. Well, you are a mere child in intellect. You use words without realization of meaning like those minds in what Leibnitz calls ‘symbolical consciousness.’ But suppose it were so—”

“It is so.”

“You know nothing.”

“I see you twist and grind. Your eyes are very pale. I thought they were hazel. They are of the faint bluishness of phosphorus shimmerings seen in darkness.”

“That proves nothing.”

“But the ‘white’ of the sclerotic is dyed to yellow. And you look inward. Why do you look so palely inward, so woe-worn, upon your soul? Why can you speak of nothing but the sepulchre, and its rottenness? Your eyes seem to me wan with centuries of vigil, with mysteries and millenniums of pain.”

“Pain! but you know so little of it! you are wind and words! of its philosophy and rationale nothing!”

“Who knows?”

“I will give you a hint. It is the sub-consciousness in conscious creatures of Eternity, and of eternal loss. The least prick of a pin not Paeon and Aesculapius and the powers of heaven and hell can utterly heal. Of an everlasting loss of pristine wholeness the conscious body is sub-conscious, and ‘pain’ is its sigh at the tragedy. So with all pain — greater, the greater the loss. The hugest of losses is, of course, the loss of Time. If you lose that, any of it, you plunge at once into the transcendentalisms, the infinitudes, of Loss; if you lose all of it—”

“But you so wildly exaggerate! Ha! ha! You rant, I tell you, of commonplaces with the woe—”

“Hell is where a clear, untrammelled Spirit is sub-conscious of lost Time; where it boils and writhes with envy of the living world; hating it for ever, and all the sons of Life!”

“But curb yourself! Drink — I implore — I implore — for God’s sake — but once—”

“To hasten to the snare — that is woe! to drive your ship upon the light/mouse rock — that is Marah! To wake, and feel it irrevocably true that you went after her — and the dead were there — and her guests were in the depths of hell — and you did not know it! — though you might have.

Look out upon the houses of the city this dawning day: not one, I tell you, but in it haunts some soul — walking up and down the old theatre of its little Day — goading imagination by a thousand childish tricks, vraisemblances — elaborately duping itself into the momentary fantasy that it still lives, that the chance of life is not for ever and for ever lost — yet riving all the time with under-memories of the wasted Summer, the lapsed brief light between the two eternal glooms — riving I say and shriek to you! — riving, Mérimée, you destroying fiend — She had sprung — tall now, she seemed to me — between couch and table.

“Mérimée!” I screamed, “ — my name, harlot, in your maniac mouth! By God, woman, you terrify me to death!”

I too sprang, the hairs of my head catching stiff horror from my fancies.

“Your name? Can you imagine me ignorant of your name, or anything concerning you? Mérimée! Why, did you not sit yesterday and read of me in a letter of Cosmo’s?”

“Ah-h... ,” hysteria bursting high in sob and laughter from my arid lips—
“Ah! ha! ha!

Xélucha! My memory grows palsied and grey, Xélucha! pity me — my walk is in the very valley of shadow! — senile and sere! — observe my hair, Xélucha, its grizzled growth — trepidant, Xélucha, clouded — I am not the man you knew, Xélucha, in the palaces — of Cosmo! You are Xélucha!”

“You rave, poor worm!” she cried, her face contorted by a species of malicious contempt.

“Xélucha died of cholera ten years ago at Antioch. I wiped the froth from her lips. Her nose underwent a green decay before burial. So far sunken into the brain was the left eye—”

“You are — you are Xélucha!” I shrieked; “voices now of thunder howl it within my consciousness — and by the holy God, Xélucha, though you blight me with the breath of the hell you are, I shall clasp you, living or damned—”

I rushed toward her. The word “Madman!” hissed as by the tongues of ten thousand serpents through the chamber, I heard; a belch of pestilent corruption puffed poisonous upon the putrid air; for a moment to my wildered eyes there seemed to rear itself, swelling high to the roof, a formless tower of ragged cloud, and before my projected arms had closed upon the very emptiness of insanity, I was tossed by the operation of some Behemoth potency far-circling backward to the utmost circumference of the oval, where, my head colliding, I fell, shocked, into insensibility.

When the sun was low toward night, I lay awake, and listlessly observed the grimy roof, and the sordid chair, and the candlestick of tin, and the bottle of which I had drunk. The table was small, filthy, of common deal, uncovered. All bore the appearance of having stood there for years. But for them, the room was void, the vision of luxury thinned to air. Sudden

memory flashed upon me. I scrambled to my feet, and plunged and tottered, bawling, through the twilight into the street.

MARIA IN THE ROSE-BUSH



DREADFULLY LIKE AN immortal goddess i' the face! — Homer

Albrecht Dürer — artium lumen, sol artificum-pictor-calcographus-sculptor-sine exemplo — one day sent, as we know, a black-and-white wash of his face, untouched by pencil, to his friend, a certain Raphaelo Santi at Rome: a piece of work said to have been much admired of the Master. Two years later, Dürer despatched just such another to the morganatic Gräfin von Hohenschwangau — a great lover of Art, herself an artist — and it was the burning of this portrait that was the undoing of the Lord of Schwangau himself and so of all that branch of the race of the Herzogs of Swabia, till now.

The history is in part archived in the Bertha room of the little yellow-stone Schloss which now occupies the heights of the Schwanstein — a spot strange ‘picturesqueness,’ wondered at within the last decade by some of those British pilgrims who have taken the Constance route to see at Oberammergau. One stops at drowsy Füssen on the torrent Lech, and mounting an Einspanner, penetrates five miles into the richly-forested mountains. The new castle, like the one which preceded it, occupies the loneliness of a sharply-defined ridge-summit, and looks down upon the grey old lazy race of swans which haunts the Schwansee below, and upon the vague blue dream of yet three lakes visible from the height; but the oldest castle of all was lower down, near the plain, on the borders almost of the

See. The top of Schwanstein could not, in fact, have contained its massive spread. For gaunt background, the bare breasts of the cleft Säuling.

The incident is, moreover, sketched in a rare old folio of one Aventin von Tottenweis, called: *Beiträge zur Kenntniss der mittelalterlichen Malerschulen, mit verschiedenen damaligen Familien-Geschichten.*

Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, having the lust to harry Turks south of Danube, had drawn in his wake many a thirsty sword of Southern *Wehrfähige* from Franconia to utmost Rheinpfalz; and even when only the fame of the Ungarn king still lived, Caspar of Schwangau, observing with disquiet a fleck of rust on his two-handed sword, and a white wire in his long beard, enticed after him a small body, *Freiherren*, barons, holding, some of them, in feof of his house, and set out on the well-worn route: by no means with injurious intent to any person, but merely in order that that might happen which our Lady of Zugspitze, in her gracious pleasure, might will to happen.

And now, scarce any rough work presenting, the band meeting only with cullions and caitiff curs, and so dispersing by mere centrifugal perversity and dissent, — what more simple than that Caspar, headlong man, should find himself alone with sword and jazeran at Stamboul; cross over into the Troad; thence by the Aegean to the legs of Piraeus; and in the neighbourhood of Colonus, near the very grove, sacrosanct, solemn, where the *Semnai* gave everlasting rest to way-weary Oedipus, there finally be meshed?

In precipitate fashion, he wooed, and partly won. She was of ancient priestly family, a genuine *Hellen* of antique descent, unmixed, chaste, and over-tall in the half-revealing draperies of the old daughters of the gods.

Over the Knie-pass, west of Wetterstein, a train of sumpter-mules, following behind them, laboured out of the Tyrol toward the flat table-land

of Ober-Bayern, under a burden of precious things, a Hera by Praxiteles, immortal amphorae, MSS, paintings older than the Lyceum. This was the Countess's *dot*.

The grandeur of the alp must have been novel after sylvan Colonus, and even Caspar's eye was not callous: but Deianira saw here nothing but rudeness. Only, let once a lonely *Sennhaus* appear, the overhanging roof of thatch weighted with boulders, the variegated *Sennerinn* herself in thick-waisted shin-frock at the door, and instantly the Greek interest would flutter up at the hint of fitness, the making hand of man, and the artist reined to look with sidling head.

And so they came to the Schloss by the Schwansee; drawbridge and portcullis felt a throe, and through a double hedge of pikes and arquebuses they passed by the base-court to the great black round Keep, tower-flanked; and here in the gloom of the old Ritter-saal, before castle-chaplain, and God, and every saint, Caspar tendered the left hand of a true knight, and his whole passionate and subservient heart.

Said old Wilhelm of the Horneck, garrulous as a rattle, inveterate tri-ped, having shot out an oaken limb ever since the reign of Caspar's father: 'But, Gräfin, you must e'en know that these are not the days that have been. Hey for the fair, gallant times when Wilhelm was tall as the rest; and land and laws were supple to the will of the grand reckless old Adels; and a free imperial knight might e'en marry a scullion, and forthwith have her 'nobled without ado. But Wilhelm is old now, Gräfin, and things do flow to change. There was Lippe-Detwold wedded a wench from the market-place at Strassburg; and there was Heinrich von Anhalt-Dessau married a hind's pullet in Schwarzwald, as indeed nearly every Anhalt-Dessau has stooped to the *unebenbürtig* since the time of Conrad *le Salique*. Ennobled! the whole company of them, and nothing said. But now! by the Three Kings, the

Empire melts, with your upstart free cities, and the rest. Why, can you credit it, dear lady, that the Elector Frederick himself, a Reichsunmittelbarer-Fürst, who married a ballad-singer from the Court at Munich when I was a lad, can't yet obtain a dispensation, and the children remain what you guess? And here now is our own Herr Graf gone to the diet at Ratisbon to talk with Maximilian, if something cannot be done for *you*; and there's Maximilian, stubborn as a Lombard mule, or a bürger of Augsburg—'

A luminous narrow lake of grape-purple, clear hyaline, showed gaudily beneath her half-opened lids.

'Is that, then, the reason of the Count's absence?'

'What! did he not tell you? I thought I heard him—'

'Possibly. It can be of no moment.'

'Of no moment! hear her! by the gebenedeite Jungfrau Maria of Eichstadt! and the children then are nothing—'

'What children?'

'The children that are coming, though late — that are e'en now coming, I think — —' Her face was as when a drop of blackest dragon's blood falls and melts into a silver bowl of cream.

'Twittering sparrow that thou art, Wilhelm!'

'Ay, ay, Gräfin, Wilhelm's no eyas — an old fowl. I was burg-vogt of this castle half a score of years before our good lord was born: and right proud of it: and you think me an eyas, a stripling! people have me for an unfledged eyas! I who remember when, near seventy years ago, the grandfather of the wild Wolf of Rolandspitze broke loose over the land, stormed the old palace of the Emperor Arnulf at Regensburg, and carried off gold plate, pictures—'

'Yes? tell me....'

‘Ah, you like to hear about pictures: too much, I think: and the Graf grows jealous — deadly jealous — of all your fine Kram and Putz, and the love you pay them! Say little, see much: that’s my motto: I follow a point with my eye, as the needle said to the tailor. And let old Wilhelm, who has heard more marriage-bells mayhap, ay, and funeral-knells, than you, give you this hint—’

‘But the Wolf! you mean the robber-baron of this region?’

‘The same; he of the Felsenburg on the yon side of Lech; his grandfather sacked Regensburg Palace, seizing much treasure, all which his vile Lanzknechte trundled home—’

‘Do you remember anything in particular?’

‘Remember, ay; old Wilhelm’s memory is as clear to-day.... The varlets took everything: the Blessed Sacrament chalices from the altar of the Doppel-kapelle, and, if you *must* know, there was *one* famous picture, spoken of at the time, called the Madonna in der Rosenlaube—’

A luted note escaped her. ‘And has he it now, the Wolf?’

‘They do say it was hung up in the shrine of his chapel of St. Gereon.’

‘Wilhelm! it was a work of your own Meister Stephan, a disciple of Wilhelm von Cöln! Dürer has written me concerning him. But to recover it?’

‘Recover — what? you judge ill of the fangs of Roland of Roland spitze, if you think—’

‘Leave me now. Return later in your Nestor dress — the picture, you see, grows. And prepare me instantly a messenger for Ratisbon to call back the Count.’

The apartment, circular in shape, terminated a long series of darksome corridors from the central Ritter-saal. High up, two Gothic slits in the Cyclopean walls let in a parti-coloured gloom. Within, *lychnoi* and cressets

perpetuated a dim Feast of Lanterns; making vague the majesty of a Zeus Herkeios in the centre; painted French watches; an Isis of Egypt; an open letter, and a drawing in red chalk, from Raphael, on a table of ebony arabesqued with walrus tusk; chryselephantine panels of Byzantium; a deep-blue mackaw from the South Seas, and two small golden serpents, deadly, black-freckled, of Hindostan, in a glazed Doric temple, love-offerings of Venice, the great merchantman, sent in adoration of the exotic beauty-queen of the Schwangau; enamelled pyxes of Limoges, pietas in wax, enoptra (mirrors), tapestries — a whole incrustation, dubious, sheeny, of all that fine Kram and Putz of which old Wilhelm had spoken.

That very night, while the messenger was still on the road to Ratisbon, Caspar broke through the hangings of the doorway, rosy with ardour.

‘Ah, *Herzchen, Herzchen* — to see you again!’

By the deep low couch where she lay in a *peplos* of Genoa velvet he fell upon a knee, full of the consciousness of her sex, all-gone anew at the vaguely-lit contrast between the china whiteness of skin, and the thick convolving lips, fierce scarlet, of Rossetti’s apocalypses. He bent to kiss her with a reverent, chivalric slowness, she motionless.

‘And I have lorded it over the best Ortenburg, and Agalolfinger, and Hapsburg of them all — and you are to be Countess of Halsenheim!’

‘Did you not meet my messenger?’

‘Not I: is aught amiss?’

‘Nothing; only I sent to you—’

‘Tell me, tell me, *Schätzchen* — ah, the boy — when he comes’ — laying close siege to her ear— ‘shall be Graf von Halsenheim, with a ninepearled coronet to his head!’

‘The wolf of Roland-spitze, is he *strong*?’

‘Strong, ay, with a pack of three hundred *faitour* jackals of Schwartz-reiters in his black hold. But why?’

‘Does he not fear you?’

‘Not he! not yet! though, by the bones of the Eleven Virgins, the wolf may yet know the meeting of the hound’s teeth on his quarters—’

‘But he loves gold?’

‘Loves it, and takes it on the Duke’s high-road. But why, *Liebling*, why —’

‘Did you know that he has Stephan’s Madonna in his chapel?’

He let slip from him like cold snow the naked thick arm which he had been kneading with caresses. He stood erect.

‘Pictures again — and *already!*’

‘Hence I sent for you,’ she answered, with eyes opening slowly wide, ‘it is, or should be, a great work: Albrecht Dürer writes me—’

‘Tell me not of this Dürer — a low-born Bürger *Schelm*, drubbed, they say, by his own *wife*—’

‘Base woman. No law of man could make such union good.’

‘Pah! do you not know that the dauber is son to a goldsmith of Ungarn!’

‘He is a son of the gods.’

‘There is but one God, Deianira, and’ — crossing with low head— ‘Jesu Christ whom He hath sent.’

Her eyes smiled and closed. ‘This hunting after beauty, beauty,’ he continued, calming, ‘is not good, *Liebling*. Best make sure that God and his blessed saints look not upon it as sinful with holy eye askance. What then is this divine ‘beauty’ that you speak so of? By’r Lady, I see it in none of these gimcracks of yours! Give it up, *Zuckerkorn!* God’s creatures for beauty, say I; look, if you want to see it, all lustrous, grand, in yonder mirror—’

‘But I was not made by man for man’s eyes.’

‘You were made, I swear it, by God for *my* eyes.’

‘And if you find me perfect, it is, — perhaps, — your eyes that are imperfect. The chance toppling of stones *may* form a hut, you know; but chance never built a temple to the Endless. The Greek women placed a statue of Hyacinthus in their sleeping-rooms, that their offspring might catch something of its wonder. Nature, you see, is nearly everywhere rude, crude, and waits for the rearranging touch of *our* hand. Glance only at that’ — she pointed to the Zeus — no man of flesh ever looked so; you certainly never saw one such. Not by the imitation of nature was *that* shape born to life; but by four-winged imagination, yoked to the divine instinct of loveliness, and riding in paean triumph, scornful almost of nature. The Assyrians copied nature, and you know—’

‘Nay, nay, I am no schoolman in these matters. You want, it seems, this Wolf of the Spitze hunted, and the smudge torn from his claws; well, by St. Hubert, hunted he shall be, and torn it shall be — by power of gold — or secret nightfall — or open storm — —’

He had succumbed again to her side. She, inclining to him, bore a dead kiss to red pyre in his beard.

A page entered with a packet. An adventurer Italian, Count della Torre de Tasso (now great Thurn und Taxis) had lately set up a riding-post throughout the Empire. His courier had reached thus far from Nürnberg.

The packet flew open. First there was Brunehild, princess of the Visigoths, mortal bane of ten princes of the Merovingians, carved in hone-stone, and initialed ‘A.D.’; the furrows of eighty years of crime; the blood-dabbled grey hairs tied to a horse’s tail; the indignant hoofs spurning to broken death their guilty incubus; the triumph-smile of young Clothair near. Next, a letter in Latin, flourished at the end with a couplet from Ovid; and

next, a curling folio of canvas, washed with a head. She held it open with her two extended arms.

‘This then is he!’

Caspar had leant over to look. ‘The burger-son of Nürnberg?’

‘Dürer.’

‘Well, he has a goodly, pleasant face enough. But methinks the fellow presumes, *Herzchen*. A bonfire of these child’s toys, if you wish to pleasure me! And a letter interdicting—’

‘Nay, the *next* letter,’ she said, smiling an arch *câlinerie*, ‘will be a boast that I have the Stephan Madonna of the Rose-bower — safe!’

The Dürer-head, stretched on a framing, took rank by the couch. The light of a fierce, fond criticism beat upon it, and Caspar, entering unawares, was witness how, sitting on the edge, she searched the pale azure eyes with intent forgetfulness, so that he touched her before she knew. And he frowned to see the swell of sudden pink which leapt to her throat.

And the next day when, fulminant with rage, he broke into the room, Dürer had vanished, and he noticed it: but his mind was of such sort as to bear the stress of only one disquiet at a time, and he said nothing of the daub. In his hand he flourished a document; a torrent of invective came from him.

‘The blasphemous *Frevler*! His weasand for it, as I am true knight and Christian gentleman! See, *Herzchen*, see, this he has sent me — he — *he* — the meanest *Mittel-frei*, self-styled Graf and Wolf! His great-grandfather’ — stamping to and fro — ‘dugged the trench round his five-acre farm with his own hands. And this to *me*! His life for it — I will worry, worry, worry the poisonous rat from his stench-hole, by the Holy Mother of God! Self-styled Count! Slitting throats at noontide! claiming right to coin money in his own vile lair, like an *Adeliger*! taking of tolls! tribute from the villages!

Walpurgis-tax — Michaelmas-tax — hearth-shilling — Frohn-arbeit — levied all upon other men's bauers — and his own grandfather a lubber-lipped *Landsasse!* Deems himself *rechtsfähig*, by — ! Ha, Sir Count!' — with robust emphasis of foot— 'thy weasand for it, then! I did but write, *Herzchen*, making stipulation for the stolen Madonna you wot of in return for honest Schwangau money rendered. He replies by a threat to harry me — harry *me*—'

Her eyes were wide. 'But you *will* obtain the Madonna?'

'Ah, that will I, and within the sennight!'

'By strategy and surprise, then — not by open assault.'

'How so?'

'For the sake of your own safety; and partly lest the man, having warning, destroy the work.' She made her arms a lulling charm, and slowly cooled his judgment to the temper of hers. Long after a windy night-fall, a picked body of cavaliers crept through the dripping woods of the heights above Füssen, taking their secret way to the Felsenburg.

The enterprise was as hardy as could be. Caspar only realised the steepness of the danger he had dared when he stood once more within his own good castle-gate. It was then breaking day. Helmeted still, visor down, glistening in wetted armour-plates, he winged his feet with the good news towards the bed-chamber of Deianira. As often, she had passed a sleepless night; her bed was unruffled. Thence with eager outlook he hurried to the apartment where the *lychnoi*, in a sleepy twilight inviolate as yet of the crude day, laved the empty couch of the Greek. An angry 'wetter!' broke from him. In a corridor he came upon Wilhelm of the Horneck, always a shaker before the cock, a heap of age, built upon his staff.

'How, now, Wilhelm? The Gräfin!'

'Not in her chamber, and not in her Kunst-kammer?'

‘In neither, man, by my faith.’

The old fellow, sudden and quick in jealousy for his over-lord’s dignity, looked bilious, suspecting truth.

‘Follow me,’ he said, ‘old Wilhelm’s eyes — old Wilhelm’s wits— ’twas always so — the dagger to cut every knot — from the time when your grandfather, Otto, took to too fluent rouses of Hochheimer grape—’

‘Come, come, old man, less of lip and more of limb!’

Wilhelm led the way up the steep, unequal steps of a turret, along a dark passage, and pointed. Caspar stood before the open door of an extremely small room cut from the wall. Within, on a low table — almost an altar — of pierced bone, burned a right flank of three long vestas, stuck on pricket-candlesticks; a left flank of three; and, somewhat retired from them, a centre of three; and beyond them, hanging to the wall, a washed head; and before them, priestess of this shrine, the breast-banded back-view of Deianira, the gorgeous grace of her samite *peplos*, she erect, with perked head, searching, searching the pale azure eyes. She had not heard the clinking approach of Caspar’s armour.

A harsh ‘Ha!’ broke from him.

She started into pink confusion, and then, instantly calm again, ‘Ah, you have brought it then, the Madonna!’

The rattle of his metal broke an awful silence as he turned and marched to her apartment, she clinging expectant to his side. A not very large parcel, placed by a halberdier, lay in wrappings on the floor.

‘Help, help me!’ she cried, eagerness trembling in her fingers as she undid it; and then, ‘but, oh! see there! fie! you have defaced it,’ and now, after a moment’s breathless inquisition, ‘but — it is not — beautiful — not supremely; it lacks — not scrupulousness — certainly not that — but the —

This is not Art, thought, — it is Nature, impulse! I am sorry I gave you the pains.’

Caspar stood tapping the frown of his resentment to ultimate smoothness beneath the tip of his steel boot, till she, remembering that he needed reconquest, set herself leisurely to the work. His *bonderie* lasted till mid-day, and then he was hers again.

Falconry, and the dear delights of woodcraft in the forest near, filled his mornings; and once, when the Madonna had been relegated to forgotten obscurity, she rose to meet him as he entered the door of the art-room, plumed, horn by horn, holding still the spear and straight short sticker, faintly streaked with dry blood of the boar.

‘Tell me, have you had good venery this morning?’

She lavished on him the whole Aegean incantation of her loveliness, languishment of kisses, listening with quite disproportionate interest to details of the chase, the halloo, conduct of pack and prickers, the bringing to bay, the dimensions of the quarry. Then suddenly:

‘Tell me, where is — Arras?’

‘Arras? In Frankland, surely. But what now?’

‘They make tapestry there?’

‘Ay.’

‘And you have heard of Raphael? You *must*, I think, — in Welschland?’

‘Well, well, *Herzchen*.’

‘Raphael, you know, highest of all — he has lately executed, so Pietro Perugino writes me, ten great works, altogether immortal, on *cartone*, at the invitation of your Pope, and these have been sent to Arras and the factory there to be woven into fabric. You see now the full connection? You see? And I hear that now their purpose is served, little account is made of them, and they lie dust-grown, neglected; to be purchased, therefore — think of it!

— perhaps for little, by a wily bargainer, crafty to hide his eagerness of acquisition. Ah, and you will go! You will go!’

‘Now, by St.—’

The name of the saint fainted on his lips, as a wind at the caress of a pearl-shelled grotto of roses, and down a steep incline, topped by angry impatience, and based by growling complaisance, slid Caspar; so that after not many days, accompanied by a very few pikes, he rode his moody way over the plain of the Schwangau. The sentinels on the turrets saw the little band swallowed by a glade of the forest, as they wound slowly forward on their long journey to Frankreich.

It was shortly after this that Albrecht Dürer — most dreamy-wandering of bürger-sons — his whole life a pious Wanderjahr — arrived.

Passing near on foot, he hoped for the minute-measured privilege of some talk with the exalted lady who had been pleased to approve him. Old Wilhelm of the Horneck himself, with no overflow of courtesy — eyeing yellowly, with rheumy eye, the dusty hose, and belted *wamms*, and short cloak, all of rather worn brown stuff — led him from the base-court, up to the Saal, and so along the corridors. A satchel, hanging diagonally, contained *butter-brod*, and two pieces of chalk. Deianira, just emerging from the hangings of her sanctuary, saw, and knew; and uttered a bated cry.

Dürer, too, knew, and his heart, failing, sank; regretting his rashness. More blushes than a girl’s covered him. A sudden noon-day sun could not have dazzled and winded him more.

Some little time before this, while on his Italian trip he had written to a friend: ‘In Italy I am a gentleman; in Germany a parasite.’ Add to this that the genius was, by nature, shyer than a kid.

She greeted and led him to the chamber with a heart-simple old majesty, beyond anything he saw in the high dames who sailed athwart his eyesight

in his humble Hofmaler attendance at the court of Maximilian and (afterwards) of Charles. Climaxes of crimson rushed every moment across his face. She sitting over against him. Andromache in his eyes, Helen, Artemis' self; and she said unexpectedly this:

‘Well! you have come in lucky time: within — shall I say three weeks? — Raphael's Sistine cartoons *will be here!* Ten of them — a banquet of wine. And I know you will not think of going without seeing them!’

He could evoke nothing but a murmur of thanks.

Airy German magi, Novalises, idealists, will not hear of Time; for if the *condamné* actually finds a night eternity, and the Monk Felix one hundred years a second — whose shot brings down the volatile truth? Both, or rather neither, they say; for the thing computed is in each case reflexive of the computer merely, externally inane. Albrecht and Deianira, with their quick brains, might well have realised some such thought, had they compared the pace of these weeks of waiting with others past and to come. But crowded speculations of a different sort were insistent upon their attention.

At first, it was all decked words, picked turns of phrase, some of the open bashfulness remaining on the one side, the secret diffidence on the other; a continuous torrent of mere opinions; the world-old dogmatism of the artist, self-sure, but with claws now tucked-in;

Deianira's theories quite different from his, yet seeming almost to coincide, by means of trimmed, only half-expressed convictions, on this hand and that.

Everything was gazed into; Stephan produced. ‘What curious work! so minute; but—’ and she stopped.

‘He is my favourite of the Cöln school,’ said Durer; ‘his limpid piety seems so to illumine all he did. Wynrich I place on a much lower grade: you

never saw his Sancta Veronica in the Munich Pinacothek? No? Rather an inanity. And yet the old Cöln *tempera* was so excellent that he ought—'

'You place a *very* high value on medium, do you not?'

'Well, as a workman, a fairly high value, perhaps. You, I daresay, do not — —'

'Not *so* high, maybe.'

'But this of Stephen is fine — ah, delicate, virgin. He painted the Dombild, too, in the Cathedral, but that, you would see, is much immaturer; here he is at his perfectest — the chastity of detail — of the crown, of the cherubs in the medallion — but you, doubtless, do not—'

'The Greek writers, painters, sculptors' — evading direct reply— 'placed, I think, little value in details by themselves, except in so far as they conduced to the intended effect of the whole as a whole.'

This was a point of view new to Dürer. He blushed. And timidly: 'You think they were right?'

'They *may* have been wrong,' she said, and smiled.

Thus to begin. But the rapid days brought rapid realisation of the equality of all infinite things, and so a full resumption of self-reverence, and so greater freedom of thought and speech; the words falling out now less knit, foreknown — and more, ever more, of them, torrents laughing with light and feeling. No more careful retraction of claws, but roughish play, the free fraternity of two natural, high-strung people, conscious of themselves and of each other. Dürer had been everywhere, looking at things through the crystal simplicity of a devout, open intellect; lowliest pilgrim to Venice, to the Flemish cities: a lynx in the castle of Barbarossa at Gelnhausen, and among the ruins of the great old Charlemagne palaces at Aachen and Engelheim. The *quattrocentisti* had hewn their work, and ended; and out of that strength was coming, had come, sweetness as of ambrosia; Botticelli,

the Holbeins, Buonarroti, all breathed the same new air; the Van Eycks had been painting in their wonderful new oil-varnish medium at Binges. All this movement, art-life, the delicate young monk-mind had felt, cutting clean the rein of aspiration, dreaming dreams, high but pure. Raphael had sent him two life-studies in chalk. He poured into the ear of Deianira fairy tales of art-history, gleams, hints, half cabalistic in their effect; secret treasures stored in monasteries grey as the dawn of German things; suspected gems in the vaults of the church of the Augustines at Nürnberg, and in the cloisters of St. Catherine at Augsburg; old Abbots — Alfred and Arinam of Bayern; Gosbert and Absolom of Triers — mixing in their *tempera* occult substances, dying with their selfish arcana; the splendid art of the Hohenstaufens; the rich gold-ground honey-medium work of the thirteenth century; the perfect *impasto* of John van Eyck; *protégés* of the old Emperors at Prague; the Maastricht school; subtle distinctions between Rhine-men and Westphalia-men, Dutch and Flemish; Israel von Meckenen; and the beauties of Wurmsur and Veit Stoss, and the only three-quarter beauties of Martin Schoen; a whole snow-flake cataclysm of wanton words.

‘Do you know,’ he asked, ‘what di Cosimo mixed in his colours for the Death of Procris? Only guess!’

‘And what does it matter *what* he mixed?’ she answered, freely pouting now, a long-legged Aphrodite playing angry at baby-tricks of little Eros.

They parted lingeringly late in the night, and lay dreamlessly dreaming of the next day’s bacchanal of reason, the word-orgy, and dancing rivulet of fancies.

For him she threw off something of the anchorite quiescence, and there were days when they took long walks together over the plain, and so into the shade of the forest; Albrecht’s temper, naked to all influences of nature, softening at the great old trees, and deep glens, and dank, religious gloom;

she maintaining the Greek coldness, feeling nothing. And long-drawn floats on the lake filled the halt twilight. A steep flight of stone steps at the back of the castle, mossy underfoot, over-arched every-way with a wide wilderness of bindweeds, led at this point down the hillside, and so plumped into the See. By this way they reached the high-prowed little shallop, itself a swan, moored to the platform.

Albrecht sometimes flung from a zither an old psalm-air or dainty-tripping Minne-lied to the drugged breezes and wavelets of the See. Not yet had Jacob Stainer gone through the forest with little tapping steel-hammer, and found that ever the oldest tree had in it the mellowest Memnon- music: Mittenwald and the violins were therefore future; but every peasant of Bavaria, even then, was a maker and twanger of the zithers whose universal twitter filled the land with sounds.

‘Look!’ cried Deianira, ‘see — see how the presence of a man’s hand reforms the callous landscape!’

It was the 23rd of June. Here and there, on the heights round Schwangau, cones of flame, smoke-plumed, burned upward to the deepening sky.

‘*Sonnenwandfeuer*,’ said Albrecht, ‘lit by the bauers. It is the Eve of St. John.’ ‘St. John! — why, it is the celebration of a solar myth — this, you know, is the summer solstice — the myth which underlies the story of Oedipus.’

‘Hardly, I think. We light the fires because St. John—’

‘And yet — they lack — arrangement. A supreme artist might so place them in reference to each other as actually to lift the scene into ideality. Chance does nothing.’

This *banne camaraderie* fructified into intimacy. Albrecht put a modest hand into the wallet of his brown cloak, and drew out the MS. of his little book, not yet completed, *De Symmetriâ Partium*; she envisaging him,

sitting on the couch-edge, elbows meeting draped knees, chin joisted on fisted hands. And he read — Monk-Latin, with acolyte intonation — and she, with sure scalpel of inward criticism, listened, searching, searching his face. Now, the figures of Dürer in the ‘Trinity with Heavenly Host’ and the ‘Christian Martyrs,’ painted by himself, as well as his still surviving two heads, are beautiful indeed, but probably not true of his face, for his gift was never the presentation of a superlative degree of human ‘prettiness.’ The painter had, in fact, the spiritual face of a stripling seraph; such a face, that, had he been Italian, had his life passed in Florence and not Nürnberg, he must have been Raphael and not Dürer. A crinkled head of long, gossamer, auburn hair was the pensive playmate of every breath; and blushing maidenhood, and the innocent eyes of old recluses, and the kiss-compelling lips of Byron, transfigured him to the meek beauty of Leonardo da Vinci’s John at the Last Supper.

And in fond repayment of the *Symmetriâ Partium*, Deianira produced from an alcove her own work of the last three years: a triptych with the rape of Persephone; old Wilhelm as Nestor; and, large on chestnut panel, a return of a *sennerinn* on Rosenkranz Sunday from Almen-leben on the heights; the bell-cow decked with edelweiss and rhododendron; the crowned *sennerinn* on its back; the train of meek kine, calved; the gratulatory length of village-street full of the laughter poured from every gossiping doorway; the bashful lover, broad-faced, in felt steeple-hat, presenting to Gretel the necessary nosegay — reward of all her lonesome ward of love. And she had only seen it once, crossing the Alp to Schwangau, years before. Albrecht, without a word, self-abased, looked at it, she smiling at his blank face. What spurred his wonderment was the lifefulness — he well knew the scene — and then, far above all, the unlikeness to any life anywhere. Never Bavarian peasant, or peasant or man in the world, owned such meaning traits, look so strange

and high. Here, then was contact with a new school, perpetuated by one disciple, grandest of all, the school of Apelles, and old Rhodian masters of the Doric Hexapolis. It was shortly after this revelation that Dürer wrote to his friend Melanchthon that sentence so full of pathetic meekness: *'admirator sum minime meorum, ut olim; et saepe gemo meas tabulas intuens, et de infirmitate meâ cogitans.'*

And now change was manifest in the spirit of their intercourse; a third distinct phase, like the evolved presentments of a planet's face — so natural, self-unconscious. The penumbra of a profound melancholy fell upon these souls — penumbra, because though poignant, it was not painful, but, on the contrary, full of luxury. Without shadow of apparent cause, they walked continually on the borders of the misty-dripping lake of tears, by the twilight banks of a spectral river of sighs. The art-talk dropped utterly; and, in its place, talk of life; and especially of death; and all mournful things. Albrecht had secretly wondered whither had vanished the present of his washed head: but exploring alone one day, he saw the square of deeper darkness on the wall of the little cell; entered, knew, looked at the nine extinguished tapers on the low altar-table; and frowned down a tingling tumult of ecstasy and pang which rushed through all his frame. Soon subsequent to this the doleful mood grew on.

'Pirene,' said Deianira, 'wept and wept, so *bitterly* wept, that she melted into a fountain.'

'And Kriemhild,' said Albrecht, 'when she heard of the death of Siegfried, so *bitterly* laughed, that the ringing rafters made the house to tremble.'

Here was intensity for intensity; deep calling to deep. Deianira had been no dyspeptic worm in painted Hoch-deutsche MSS., new-printed books. They droned of old German women; Thusnelda, the magnificent;

Rumetrude, misty-weird; Carolus and his paladins in the romaunts; tragic bignesses of Niebelungen-lied; the true heart of Bertha; lily-chastity of Theodelinda; all the ah and pain of woe-worn Tannhäuser of the Hörselloch. They fell into comparisons between Ajax and Amadis; asked which was the pitifulest, Hercules Furens or Orlando, not yet ‘Furioso.’

‘Read to me,’ he said. ‘What?’

‘Something *sad*.’

She filled the night with a reading-from-the-scroll of the long lamentation and wringing of hands of Euripides’ *Trojan Women*.

At home with Plato and Aristotle, less familiar with the Tragedies, he caught perhaps not half; but the half filmed his eyes with a constant moisture. As the slow, variegated words, each a perfect round messenger from her, wafted clean and light like bubbles from a pipe, floated about him — rhythmic chorus, and pomp of sententious rhesis — he then first realised the Greek language, and all the fresh joy and wonder it is. And as all modes of beauty are akin — beauty of form to beauty of sound to beauty of odour — these need but approximation under right conditions to blend into harmonies, and so produce the ultimate delight. Albrecht, listening, drank an exhalation from her of mingled frangipane and ambergris, and roamed from the Paphian face of sea-foam white, to the braided bosom, to the fine linen *zonè*, to the broken billow of draperies at her feet, to the dainty arrangement of sandal-straps; and again back to the dead-white face. A rare exaltation — verging on tears — like the rarest flame of interstellar ethers — ached through his physic man.

The invitation had been that he should stay to see the Raphael cartoons. Looking now, each saw in the other’s eyes that this must not be.

He slung his satchel, containing the chalk-sticks and the *butter-brod* crusted now to stone, upon his back.

The setting sun was the very genius of gold on the waters of the Schwansee. Languid undulations curved into purple and saffron and crimson before the breasts of the swans, and the beaked prore of the shallop. From the terraced garden which sloped to the edge of the See on the castle side, an oppression of violet-beds and roses pervaded the whole spirit of nature. Yet not a breath ran upon the water. All was a conflagration; the bordering tree-tops burned unconsumed; yellow streaks stretched quite up to the zenith; the sun and his immediate train stepped down incarnadine to *couchée* and purple bed, pumped and appanaged like dormituriert old queens of Assyria, drunk with blood and wine.

Their most commonplace words were uttered in a tone of profoundest sadness.

‘Helen,’ said Dürer, splashing one of the birds, ‘had for father — a swan. Her mother Eurotian Leda. I seem to see a perfect fitness in the myth.’

‘The poets,’ she answered, looking never at him, ‘would have pawned their hope of Elysium for power to give a higher impression of her beauty; and as of her beauty, so of the pain, the tragedy of her.’

‘The pain, the tragedy! So it is, then, and must be, with beauty! Calvary is witness.’

‘Cursed be it, I say; and the hunger of it!’

She hid from him the sudden passion of her face.

The sun set; the mist and melancholy of a *morne* twilight grew deepening down upon the lake. A flight of crows, the sad fate of a nightingale in a grove near, the flap of a swan, were evidence of the silence. They heard distinctly a change of sentries at the turret-portal next the see.

‘You return to Nürnberg?’

‘Not yet. I am a wanderer, you know, a confirmed wanderer.’

‘Rest is best.’

‘For myself I look for one rest henceforth — the rest that remaineth to the people of God.’

‘I meant what you mean.’

‘A roam among the alp-heights, perhaps — some sketching—’

‘You will be still near me then.’

‘Near you? Ah yes! still near you.’

The mournful mood of Gethsemane was in them; the old torrent of words ran low. Moving red lights gleamed through the barred window-slits of the donjon. It was night. A faint breeze arose, and wooed to truancy hairs of Deianira’s filleted, uncovered head, and was heavy at a perfume it met around her, and died at the sweet tumult it won from the old gilt Aeolian *phorminx*, seven-stringed, which lay since the previous night in the shallop. She took it, and the insistence of the plectrum won from her a softly-sung hymn of Andromache.

Hector, the harmer

Moan’d at the night of thee; Myrmidon armour

Paled at the light of thee.

(Your lutes of lotus wood

Libyan wail for him!

Your lutes with wax conglued

Sweetness exhale for him!)

Ploughman of blessings!

Whelp-son his lingering,

Tears his expressings,

Harps knew his fingering!

Zeus! who through Ancient Night

Urgest thy travelling,

Yet metest ever right
Doom of thy ravelling;
Red has the flame of noon,
Rushed to obscurity — Rash let the crapèd moon
Rend up her durity!

‘Ah! that was a chillier wind.’

The moon, which had uttered a scared face, drew quickly the grey curtains of the night and disappeared.

‘It grows cold for you; you must go now within the Schloss.’

‘It is lonely there.’

‘Is it lonely?’

‘And I am not cold. Touch my hand.’ At his touch she shivered. A single drizzle-spray fell upon each of them.

‘Still I must go,’ he said.

A sob!

‘We may meet again.’

‘You will never come again.’

‘Time and tide happeneth to us all, you know.’

‘But — you will never come again.’

They had reached the platform of the bowered stair. He stepped from the shallop and stood with her. The mizzle had become clearly sensible. The moon had utterly vanished.

Her hand was in his. He stooped and kissed it — on back, in palm — ready to be mad as she. Luckily, her face was quite turned from him.

‘God—’ he said.

From her working lips came no sound. Her bosom rowed like two oarsmen struggling for life from the suck of the whirlpool.

He was gone. She stood and watched him to the other side of the lake, and the embankment there. He made fast the boat. A curtain of masonry ran here parallel to the See to defend the castle-back. Before he reached it the mist had swallowed him. As he finally disappeared from her, she buried her face in the voluming folds of her left arm, and the thin, low wail of a little child welled from her. Slowly she ascended the stairs.

The end would have been different, had Dürer, like Deianira, been all artist; but the Nürnberg painter was first of all saint, and artist after.

But there was evil news at the Schloss of Schwangau in those very days. The old nose of Wilhelm perked high, sniffing danger on the wind. Bauers and yeomen from round Füssen and Eschach, leaving their farms, came crying to the Burg-vogt for protection. Sathan himself was loose. At Hopfen a whole street had burned, the church of St. Magnus been pillaged. Two villages flamed together. Roland of Rolandspitze, biding his time, collecting his forces, had not forgotten his Madonna.

He was a species of Swabian Epplein von Gailingen, a Sud-deutscher Wild Boar of Ardennes.

On the third day Caspar arrived — almost by stealth — with his little band of men-at-arms. He had heard tidings of trouble on the way. His blood was up.

Flushed with enthusiasms, high passions, he came to where the wool stood bundled before heron the distaff. ‘Ah... ah... ah!’ was all he could say, as he did, and did again, perfervid violence to her lips; she enduring with pensive patience. ‘But you look not *so* well, *täubchen* — not so well — a look of care — to be expected now, perhaps — and I have brought the smudges — aha! that pleases it then? Ah... ah... sugary ecstasy that thou art! — three of them — yes, *only* three — the other seven lay buried in some hole — the factory is a monstrous place, you must know — and they

showed me there scant courtesy, by'r Lady; but three, by much entreaty, and a threat or two thrown in, I did get — these being easily unearthed — for a few gulden. Ha! and here they come.'

Two waiting-men bore-in a long narrow box, opened; the cartoons had been cut into strips. Deianira rose, and adjusted them on the floor: Stephen stoned; Paul in prison at Philippi; the light at noon-day 'above the brightness of the sun.' For a minute, over each, the impeccable energy of her scrutiny worked intensely; then, without fail, she knew the truth of form, composition, drapery, effect. Coming to him, she rewarded him with a cold kiss. And coldly she said:

'Thank you — they are very lovely.'

Even he could see it, and went away wondering at her inertness, the death of her enthusiasm. But action, action was the word — no dallying over daubs! 'Come, man, news, news!' he cried to Wilhelm, towing the three-goer into a small room. Wilhelm, who was directness itself where the talk touched upon the old trade of war, was minute on the defences of the castle, ammunition, provisions, his own share in everything, the ravages of the Wolf. Only a few hours before a Wappen-herald had arrived at the gate, demanding the return of the Maria, loud with threats of siege.

'His strength, man?'

'Over three hundred, they say.'

'And ours?'

'A hundred and twenty, beside a flock of bauers.'

'And gold in our coffers?'

'Scarcity of that till harvest.'

'Ha! and where is now my cousin of Swabia?'

'At Augsburg they say.'

‘Good! a despatch to him instantly, requisitioning succours, and the same to every friendly burggraf of the region. The ripped bowels of this *Verräther*, Wilhelm! And other news?’

‘Nothing — only—’ the old man halted, half loving his suzerain’s quiet mind, and half the solace of the oily tongue.

‘Well, Wilhelm, well—’

‘Nothing — a visitor to the castle — the painter of Nürn—’

‘Now, by—’

‘For more than two weeks—’

‘Ha!’

‘Two weeks,’ the conciseness melting before a fervour of doddering communicativeness, ‘and never by my goodwill, either— ’tis not till now that Wilhelm of Horneck has waited to see the back of a noble house broken by some strolling troubadour or runaway bauer’s pup with fair face. You may have heard of Trautmandorfs wife and the mummer nigh a century gone. And did ye ever know old Wilhelm to predict you false? With right jealous eye, I tell you, I looked upon the long intimacies of speech — and wantonness of glides on the lake — by night — with worrying of — harps and zithers—’

‘Enough, Herr of Horneck, enough—’ Caspar had drawn back a foot, and was frowning into the old man’s soul.

‘Worrying of harps — and confluence of bent heads over Kram and Putz — and now that he is gone, the rekindling of the tapers before the painter-head — put your trust in old Wilhelm’s eyes for seeing! — nine of them — burning continually, like the fires which they used to say the prince-bishop of Bruchsal plenished near the tombs of the Emperors in the crypts of Spires Cathedral — and the door of the cell kept locked, and a daily double-visit paid to the head—’

‘Enough, man, I say—’

‘But, for that matter, ’tis a left-handed wedlock — you are not bound. Well I remember the case—’

‘Traitor! Silence!’ His roar was the lion’s; the old man cowered, silent; Caspar walked away. It was then late in the day. That very night a fresh troop of bauers fled into the castle, with tidings of added woes. At dawn the plain before Hohenschwangau was dotted grey, well beyond artillery range, with the leaguering tents of Roland.

And there was brisk work before long. The *Burgh-wache*, though insufficient to make even the proper show of strength, had no lack of fire, through hope of speedy help, and confidence in Caspar’s generalship. He was in every place, a strong, ubiquitous spirit of disposition, inspiration. Two parallel bastioned curtains defended the front and sides of the donjon; before each of these a fosse and drawbridge; and before the outermost drawbridge an out-work barbican. Upon this last the chief besieging party, under Roland himself and his brother Fritz, concentrated their efforts with scaling-ladders, petards and grenadoes, potent enginery; and upon this detachment Caspar in person, from a bastion of the first curtain, directed a saker and culverin hail-rain. But before nightfall the out-work had fallen to the reverberating hochs!’ of the brigands.

Early the next day the storm reopened. The enemy, with manifold advance and retreat, now attempted the bastions of the first escarpment. Still no sign of Swabian support. A sigh for sleep, only for sleep, arose among Caspar’s men. During the night a strain in the relief of sentinels had made itself felt, so meagre the garrison. Caspar himself had mounted guard.

In the afternoon, passing by Deianira’s room, tired, he entered, pining for her. Hardly since his coming back had he seen her. Freely now, from his heart, he forgave her the entertainment of the bürger-son, knowing well her

child's love for pictures and suchlike. Here in these recesses the volleying of howitzer and mortar, saker and falconet, whizz of arrows, smiting of pikes, was only buzzingly audible. She lay on the couch at full length, beautifully asleep, or only on the borderland of wakefulness. In this dim state, hearing the ghost of his footstep, she stretched out her arms, both of them, at full length before her, inviting to the luxury of her embrace; and he, smiling ineffably, trusting, gentle, came to her, bending himself down, happy at the sweet, voluntary friendship of her arms about his neck. She, in her half-sleep, murmured:

‘Albrecht, Albrecht, thou art come...’

Caspar stumbled backward with that pale, distorted rigidity of face seen in the agonised brave fellows on the bastions when a sudden arrow entered their hearts. He reeled like a dying man from the chamber.

Deianira, vaguely conscious of disturbance, slowly opened her eyes, and was alone.

But in little time Wilhelm of Horneck came dashing into the room, youth in every third projected leg, and before her fell prone to his old knees, with outstretched clasped hands, a world of prayer in his eyes.

‘O Gräfin — save the Count — you only can — for the love of God! Gräfin! There may be yet time — he thinks to make a sally — stark mad, raving! And the men, seeing certain death, refuse to follow him. Some devil, some furious devil, rides him. Save him! Only some fifty against three hundred! Gräfin! his eyes are two rolling suns of flame; and help must come to-night — tomorrow — for very certain, if he would only wait—’

She, surprised, rose. Outside they met men rushing hither and thither with wild looks. One said:

‘They are gone — just passed the inner Fallbrücke. God help them!’

The desire to see overcame her, and, mounting the steps of a turret, she took a seat on a planchette within the boldly-projecting machicolation near the battlements, looking through an aperture. Here she was alone, the donjon being as yet safe from shot. The small band — multifariously armed, hellebardiers, brigandined archers, carabiniers, Caspar at their head — were then issuing from the outer bridge. Just now there had come a lull to the storm; the enemy were in lager. The sun was low, hidden behind a crag of Säuling. The castle party moved down a gentle slope.

A flourish of trumpets, a shout, arose — two — triumphant on one side, death-challenging on the other. Quickly before the lager-tents sprang a crop of dragon's teeth; midway they met.

Deianira's eyes rested only upon Caspar. A certain unusual tingling feeling, vaguely working, was struggling into form within her — akin to admiration. To the minute when the fight began her face was calm. Then she saw him in the thick of things, firm, Actè-bluff when thunder-bolts are abroad, and breakers break upon its rock. The first dawn of a smile rose orient upon her lips. A small body of men — the very pick of the castle — surrounded now every-way by the enemy — formed his immediate *entourage*; the rest, blocked, sustained the shock of the brigands. Every minute a life ended — two to one on the side of the besiegers, who did double-battle with the dogged despair of Caspar's men. He, it was clear, was bent upon some object away from him; his sword the very tooth of pestilence in his hand, his helmet-plume floating above all heads, certain token of coming death. The dawn spread to Deianira's eyes; an eager lustre grew gradually radiant in them. And soon the end of Caspar's quest was evident — the Wolf himself, distinguished by his raucous shouts of cheer, huge battle-axe, suit of fluted armour. The brool of Caspar's roar rang challenging out; they were near now. Roland, a towering bulk, nothing loth,

rabid with the taste of blood, struck spur to charger; casting axe, drawing sword. They dashed together. The warring *Lanzknechte* made way, and left large field: it was a recoil of the wave from the basalt, like the scampering of chaff from flails. The two men fought alone. Deianira drew a deeper breath.

It was at this precise moment that the sun, sinking hitherto behind a fork of the Säuling, burned forth a perfect red circle in the inter-space between the riven rock. Its beams, falling upon Caspar panoplied in plated steel mail, made him rich, splendid; a luminous molten glory of cuirass and gorget, arm-piece and helmet and greaves; it welded him to his bossed and prancing war-horse, and turned them, him and it, into a homogeneous Centaur of fluent and refulgent gold.

‘O! — but it is beautiful!’ The effect was so sudden. It took her breath away. Her hands clasped, rigidly. A swelling wave of feeling flowed in her. Beautiful! And why? This, as usual, was the first question of her analytical mind. As she faintly heard the ringing outcries raised from the clattered metal of the warriors, saw the swift avenging flash of Caspar’s blade, she knew quickly why. It was in the nature of a revelation to her. The doer, then, was great as the maker? Conduct as art? Marathon lovely as the Parthenon? The Crusades as Aphrodite? Caspar as Raphael? Was it *so*, then? And if not, how came this sight so to lift her bosom with the beauty-sense — with love perhaps? It was more than a revelation — it was a regeneration, the birth of a little child, as natural, as definite, as the conversion of Lydia. Not since their meeting-day to this hour had Caspar appealed unconquerably to the predominant in her — her abandonment to beauty. Now he loomed in quite another light: he was immense — he was thrilling! With an aesthetic inquisitiveness, she peered at the illumined interchange of tierce and quart, shrewd thrust, ponderous hew: the two men were nicely parallel in skill,

virulence; Caspar not quite so tall, his war-horse larger. Only to look at him, facing so great danger, at so great odds, with so great manfulness, was joy! And now the thought rose bitingly within her that this all was for *her* sake; of all the pillaged Madonna of Stephan was the inception; and his boy-like sincerity of affection, his minute love for her, races on her errands over Europe, all seemed precious and different, now. She would design, in the fulness of her gratitude, a highly-finished pattern, and send it to Milan to be gold-embossed in arabesque on a suit of plated armour for him, great son of Peleus that he was! She would make her arms a constant ensorcelment about him! But now, sudden fears took hold upon her: — if he never returned? Of this she had not thought. She turned a bitter face from the sight of his cleft helm. But immediately afterwards Caspar, executing a *demi-volte* on his charger, hewed with his whole momentum, and Roland the Wolf toppled with centrifugal brains from his saddle.

Deianira stood up, most tall, laughing, with clapping hands.

Seeing the fall of his brother, Fritz with a body of cavaliers galloped towards the Count. But the *restes* of Caspar's band, some twenty men, closed round him. They effected, still fighting, a slow retreat, till the ordnance of the bastions covered them. They reached in safety the castle-gate.

Deianira with haughty, crimson face — proud of him — of herself, that she was his, he hers — had descended the steps of the turret. As she passed along the corridor, she came to the shrine of the Dürer-head; stopped, thinking; then took from her bosom a key, unlocked the door, and entered. For a long time she stood, searching the painter's face; his innocent, azure eyes. Then, slowly, she extinguished the tapers, — all except one; which she held uplifted in her hand.

She waited presently for him on the couch of her own sanctum, devising garlands of gratulation with which to crown him. He came, striding rapidly, his face bloody, passing through to another part, almost forgetful of her in the flush and heat of the moment. And she held out wide arms to him. He started into fury: — just so — just so — she had looked *before!* The action goaded him to a memory *so* bitter, that he stamped, with the one roar:

‘Woman!’

Caspar’s stamp was like the tramp of a shod bull. The flooring shook. A box of tarsia-work slid with clatter from an inclined plane to the ground; an enamelled *chasse*; a little hung marble temple fell to fragments; and among the fragments writhed the black-speckled gold of two small serpents, presents from Venice, the great merchantman. He saw and did not crush them with his foot. Raging, he dashed from the room.

But, already, in the corridor, he stopped. Such was the depth and power of his love for her. There was something fatherly in it — she so much younger than he! And this time, at least, she had wished to embrace *him* — *this* time she did not dream. The thought somewhat relaxed the tension of his wrath. What had maddened him above all was the shame of it — to his father’s house — to his own son that was to be. A goldsmith of Ungarn’s cub! But still, he would return to her — later on. Only first, the daubed head! The swift smoking-out — as of a pest — of that and every other memory of the bürger from the castle; and then he would see.

With masterful stalk he ascended to the alcove. A sensation of pleasure suffused him when he found it in darkness. He groped on the table; struck light to one of the tapers; raised it to apply the flame to the canvas; and — *started so*, that his armour rattled.

The picture was already consumed.

He could see the burned edges within the frame where the fire had died. In a flash the whole truth illumined him — the whole brave story of her struggle — self-conquest — sacrifice. He threw down the light, and ran — rapidly ran — toward her room, remembering now, with sudden vividness, the Doric temple of marble. As he fell in, she lay stretched on the couch, with closed eyes, the purple gloom of the *lychnoi* on her face, an arm overhanging the edge. On the back of her hand, peering near, he discerned a minute *piqure*....

High in a tower of the donjon sat Caspar of Schwangau. The chamber was a small oval one, ponderously hung with old figured tapestry; and it was hot and bright with a multitude of burning wax tapers; and its air was heavy with the breath of flowers. Flowers were everywhere — rose, and narciss, and lily, and jasmine — sprays of yew, and bitter rosemary, and rue — piled on the floor, heaped high against the tapestry, covering the bed where the body lay. He was alone, and it was late in the night. The door was twice locked. He felt no pain — only a dull, nightmare speculation rode him. A slow, endless inquiry as to Beauty, and the nature of it, infinitely repeating itself in a numbed brain. What was it, what was it, at all? He propped the frown of his brow on his hand, thinking it out. It was an oppressive word to him merely. *She* knew, but slept. On her waking he would exact from her minute exegesis. Only in some far-away, lotus-choked region of his consciousness did he know her verily dead. Her face was not stern to him — still soft, and white. Her hair underspread her wide to the knees. His anxiety now was that she should look her very loveliest on the bed — he knew that to be a care to her. Twice he had taken from her black head a garland of yellow roses, which he had discarded for another of white, and then for one of red; and then he had yielded to endless doubts, and replaced the yellow. And why roses at all? Why not violets? lilac?

Choice of all lay round him; and one or other, to the ideal eye, was beautifulest, best — but which? She, in her heart, knew exactly. On her waking he would learn without fail. The unnoticed hours of the night passed over him. He sat in shirt and hose, bootless, thinking it out. Every now and again he would rise to readjust something on the quiet bed. Chance, she often said, ‘does nothing’ — one must create Beauty by wise, directed energy of soul. He unstrapped her sandals, deeming her bare feet fittest; and in a few minutes was bent upon replacing them, but stopped, deciding again that it was best so. He rearranged fifty times the folds of her violet robe. Then the room grew so hot that mechanically he opened a narrow casement. A fulgor of watching constellations brooded steadily over the hushed morning hour. The window looked sheer upon the lake. A swan chased his flapping mate over the ruffled surface, with noises. Water and death — wherein lies their intimacy? This was a new question for him. There *is* a relation. The funeral-train which winds by the sea-shore is ever the saddest of funerals. But how so? Could it be that she — those artist folk — had shrewdness to know the reading of riddles so quaint and dubious? For him it was wholly a hopeless matter.

Wearied to death with the day’s battles, he fell to a nodding sleep on a chair. But with earliest dawn he sprang, the senility quite gone, raving at all things, himself most, and the foul murder he had done. He ran in disorder to the base-court, distraught of eye, stuttering and spluttering through a frantic clarion. Sixty men volunteered to follow him on a fresh sally, remembering the partial success of the day before, thinking his rashness knightly, rather than the demented rage of whom the god destroys. Caspar dissipating a random fury was among the first to fall, done to death by the sword of Fritz. When Swabian help before dawn of the next day at last arrived, the castle was a smoking desolation.

Fritz made a point of saving from the wreck his Madonna of Stephan, which later on somehow found its way to the Cathedral at Cologne. The Raphael cartoons flamed with the rest. It was so that Hohenschwangau was anticipatory of South Kensington; and thus did Albrecht Dürer's washed head, and its burning, become the undoing of a house.

About thirty years later a small new castle seems to have been built near the old site on the heights of the Schwanstein by some other branch of the Swabian ducal family. This was purchased by the late King Maximilian of Bavaria for a sum, I have heard, of about one hundred and fifty florins (fifteen pounds). It was then demolished, and a little yellow so-called 'Schloss' erected in its place. The modern building is decorated throughout with paintings representing the life-turmoil of famed Lohengrin, the Swan-Knight. When the editor passed by it, it was used as the occasional *Residenz* of the sombre and mysterious Ludwig, and his queen-mother. And to some such end it may still serve.

VAILA

E caddi come l'uome cui sonno piglia. — Dante.

A GOOD many years ago, a young man, student in Paris, I was informally associated with the great Corot, and eye-witnessed by his side several of those cases of mind-malady, in the analysis of which he was a past master. I remember one little girl of the Marais, who, till the age of nine, in no way seemed to differ from her playmates. But one night, lying a-bed, she whispered into her mother's ear: "Maman, can you not hear the sound of the world?" It appears that her recently-begun study of geography had taught her that the earth flies, with an enormous velocity, on an orbit

about the sun; and that sound of the world to which she referred was a faint (quite subjective) musical humming, like a shell-murmur, heard in the silence of night, and attributed by her fancy to the song of this high motion. Within six months the excess of lunacy possessed her.

I mentioned the incident to my friend, Haco Harfager, then occupying with me the solitude of an old place in S. Germain, shut in by a shrubbery and high wall from the street. He listened with singular interest, and for a day seemed wrapped in gloom.

Another case which I detailed produced a profound impression upon my friend. A young man, a toy-maker of S. Antoine, suffering from chronic congenital phthisis, attained in the ordinary way his twenty-fifth year. He was frugal, industrious, self-involved. On a winter's evening, returning to his lonely garret, he happened to purchase one of those vehemently factious sheets which circulate by night, like things of darkness, over the Boulevards. This simple act was the herald of his doom. He lay a-bed, and perused the feuille. He had never been a reader; knew little of the greater world, and the deep hum of its travail. But the next night he bought another leaf.

Gradually he acquired interest in politics, the large movements, the roar of life. And this interest grew absorbing. Till late into the night, and every night, he lay poring over the furious mendacity, the turbulent wind, the printed passion. He would awake tired, spitting blood, but intense in spirit — and straightway purchased a morning leaf. His being lent itself to a retrograde evolution. The more his teeth gnashed, the less they ate. He became sloven, irregular at work, turning on his bed through the day. Rags overtook him. As the greater interest, and the vaster tumult, possessed his frail soul, so every lesser interest, tumult, died to him. There came an early

day when he no longer cared for his own life; and another day, when his maniac fingers rent the hairs from his head.

As to this man, the great Corot said to me:

“Really, one does not know whether to laugh or weep over such a business. Observe, for one thing, how diversely men are made! Their are minds precisely so sensitive as a cupful of melted silver; every breath will roughen and darken them: and what of the simoon, tornado? And that is not a metaphor hut a simile. For such, this earth — I had almost said this universe — is clearly no fit habitation, but a Machine of Death, a baleful Vast. Too horrible to many is the running shriek of Being — they cannot bear the world. Let each look well to his own little whisk of life, say I, and leave the big fiery Automaton alone. Here in this poor toy-maker you have a case of the ear:

it is only the neurosis, Oxyecoia. Splendid was that Greek myth of the Harpies: by them was this man snatched — or, say, caught by a limb in the wheels of the universe, and so perished. It is quite a grand exit, you know — translation in a chariot of flame. Only remember that the member first involved was the pinna: he bent ear to the howl of Europe, and ended by himself howling.

Can a straw ride composedly on the primeval whirlwinds? Between chaos and our shoes wobbles, I tell you, the thinnest film! I knew a man who had this peculiarity of aural hyperaesthesia: that every sound brought him minute information of the matter causing the sound; that is to say, he had an ear bearing to the normal ear the relation which the spectroscope bears to the telescope. A rod, for instance, of mixed copper and iron impinging, in his hearing, upon a rod of mixed tin and lead, conveyed to him not merely the proportion of each metal in each rod, but some strange knowledge of the essential meaning and spirit, as it were, of copper, of iron,

of tin, and of lead. Of course, he went mad; but, beforehand, told me this singular thing: that precisely such a sense as his was, according to his certain intuition, employed by the Supreme Being in his permeation of space to apprehend the nature and movements of mind and matter. And he went on to add that Sin — what we call sin — is only the movement of matter or mind into such places, or in such a way, as to give offence or pain to this delicate diplacosis (so I must call it) of the Creator; so that the ‘Law’ of Revelation became, in his eyes, edicts promulgated by their Maker merely in self-protection from aural pain; and divine punishment for, say murder, nothing more than retaliation for unease caused to the divine aural consciousness by the matter in a particular dirk or bullet lodged, at a particular moment, in a non-intended place! Him, too, I say, did the Harpies whisk aloft.”

My recital of these cases to my friend, Harfager, I have mentioned. I was surprised, not so much at his acute interest — for he was interested in all knowledge — as at the obvious pains which he took to conceal that interest. He hurriedly turned the leaves of a volume, but could not hide his panting nostrils.

From first days when we happened to attend the same seminary in Stockholm, a tacit intimacy had sprung between us. I loved him greatly; that he so loved me I knew. But it was an intimacy not accompanied by many of the usual interchanges of close friendships. Harfager was the shyest, most isolated, insulated, of beings. Though our joint ménage (brought about by a chance meeting at a midnight séance in Paris) had now lasted some months, I knew nothing of his plans, motives. Through the day we pursued our intense readings together, he rapt quite back into the past, I equally engrossed upon the present; late at night we reclined on couches within the vast cave of an old fireplace Louis Onze, and smoked to the dying flame in

a silence of wormwood and terebinth. Occasionally a soirée or lecture might draw me from the house; except once, I never understood that Harfager left it. I was, on that occasion, returning home at a point of the Rue St. Honoré where a rush of continuous traffic rattled over the old coarse pavements retained there, when I came suddenly upon him. In this tumult he stood abstracted on the trottoir in a listening attitude, and for a moment seemed not to recognise me when I touched him.

Even as a boy I had discerned in my friend the genuine Noble, the inveterate patrician. One saw that in him. Not at all that his personality gave an impression of any species of loftiness, opulence; on the contrary. He did, however, give an impression of incalculable ancientness. He suggested the last moment of an aeon. No nobleman have I seen who so bore in his wan aspect the assurance of the inevitable aristocrat, the essential prince, whose pale blossom is of yesterday, and will perish to-morrow, but whose root fills the ages. This much I knew of Harfager; also that on one or other of the bleak islands of his patrimony north of Zetland lived his mother and a paternal aunt; that he was somewhat deaf; but liable to transports of pain or delight at variously-combined musical sounds, the creak of a door, the note of a bird. More I cannot say that I then knew.

He was rather below the middle height, and gave some promise of stoutness. His nose rose highly aquiline from that species of forehead called by phrenologists "the musical," that is to say, flanked by temples which incline outward to the cheek-bones, making breadth for the base of the brain; while the direction of the heavy-lidded, faded-blue eyes, and of the eyebrows, was a downward droop from the nose of their outer extremities. He wore a thin chin-beard. But the astonishing feature of his face were the ears: they were nearly circular, very small, and flat, being devoid of that outer volution known as the helix. The two tiny discs of cartilage had

always the effect of making me think of the little ancient round shields, without rims, called clipeus and peltè. I came to understand that this was a peculiarity which had subsisted among the members of his race for some centuries. Over the whole white face of my friend was stamped a look of woeful inability, utter gravity of sorrow. One said “Sardanapalus,” frail last of the great line of Nimrod.

After a year I found it necessary to mention to Harfager my intention of leaving Paris. We reclined by night in our accustomed nooks within the fireplace. To my announcement he answered with a merely polite “Indeed!” and continued to gloat upon the flame; but after an hour turned upon me, and said:

“Well, it seems to be a hard and selfish world.”

Truisms uttered with just such an air of new discovery I had occasionally heard from him; but the earnest gaze of eyes, and plaint of voice, and despondency of shaken head, with which he now spoke shocked me to surprise.

“À propos of what?” I asked.

“My friend, do not leave me!”

He spread his arms. His utterance choked.

I learned that he was the object of a devilish malice; that he was the prey of a hellish temptation. That a lure, a becking hand, a lurking lust, which it was the effort of his life to eschew (and to which he was especially liable in solitude), continually enticed him; and that thus it had been almost from the day when, at time age of five, he had been sent by his father from his desolate home in time sea.

And whose was this malice?

He told me his mother’s and aunt’s.

And what was this temptation?

He said it was the temptation to return — to fly with the very frenzy of longing — back to that dim home.

I asked with what motives, and in what particulars, the malice of his mother and aunt manifested itself. He replied that there was, he believed, no specific motive, but only a determined malevolence, involuntary and fated; and that the respect in which it manifested itself was to be found in the multiplied prayers and commands with which, for years, they had importuned him to seek again the far hold of his ancestors.

All this I could in no way comprehend, and plainly said as much. In what consisted this horrible magnetism, and equally horrible peril, of his home? To this question Harfager did not reply, but rose from his seat, disappeared behind the drawn curtains of the hearth, and left the room. He presently returned with a quarto tome bound in hide. It proved to be Hugh Gascoigne's Chronicle of Norse Families, executed in English black-letter. The passage to which he pointed I read as follows:

“Nowe, of thise two brethrene, tholder (the elder), Harold, beying of seemely personage and prowesse, did goe pilgrimage into Danemarke, wher from he repayred againward boom to Hjaltlande (Zetland), and wyth hym fette (fetched) the amiabil Thronda for hyss wyf, which was a doughter of the sank (blood) royall of danemark. And his yonger brothir, Sweyne, that was sad amid debonayre, but far surmounted the other in cunnying, receyued him with all good chere. Butte eftsones (soon after) fel sweyne sick for alle his lust that he hadde of Thronda his brothir's wyfe. And whiles the worthy Harold, with the grenehede (greenness) and foyle of yowthe, ministred a bisy cure aboute the bedde wher Sweyne lay sick, lo, sweyne fastened on him a violent stroke with swerde, and with no lenger taryinge enclosed his hands in bondes, and cast him in the botme of a depe holde.

And by cause harold wold not benumb (deprive) hymself of the gouernance of Thronda his wif, Sweyne cutte off boeth his ere[s], and putte out one of his iyes, and after diverse sike tormentes was preste (ready) to slee (slay) hym. But on a daye, the valiant Harold, breking hys bondes, and embracinge his aduersary, did by the sleight of wrastlyng ouerthrowe him, and escaped. Nat-with- standyng, he foltred whan he came to the Somburgh Hed not ferre (far) fro the Castell, and al-be-it that he was swifte-foote, couth ne farder renne (run) by reson that he was faynte with the longe plag[u]es of hyss brothir. And whiles he ther lay in a sound (swoon) did Sweyne come sle (sly) and softe up on hym, and whan he had striken him with a darte, caste him fro Samburgh Hede in to the See.

“Nat longe hereafterward did the lady Thronda (tho she knew nat the manere of her lordes deth, ne, veryly, yf he was dead or on live) receyve Sweyne in to gree (favour), and with grete gaudying and blowinge of beamous (trumpets) did gon to his bed. And right soo they two wente thennes (thence) to soiourn in ferre partes.

“Now, it befel that sweyne was mynded by a dreme to let bild him a grete maunsion in Hialtland for the hoom-cominge of the ladye Thronda; where for he called to hym a cunnigne Maistre-worckman, and sente him hye (in haste) to england to gather thrals for the bilding of this lusty Houss, but hym-self soiourned wyth his ladye at Rome. Thenne came his worckman to london, but passinge thennes to Hialtland, was drent (drowned) he, and his feers (mates), and his shippe, alle and some. And after two yeres, which was the tyme assygned, Sweyne harfager sente lettres to Hialtlande to vnderstonde how his grete Houss did, for he knew not the drenchyng of the Architecte; and eftsones he receiued answer that the Houss did wel, and was bildinge on the Ile of Vaila; but that ne was the Ile wher-on Sweyne had appoynted the bilding to be; and he was aferd, and

here fel doun ded for drede, by cause that, in the lettres, he saw before him the mannere of wrytyng of his brothir Harold. And he sayed in this fourme: ‘Surely Harolde is on lyue (alive), elles (else) ben thise a lettres writ with gostlye hande.’ And he was wo many dayes, seeing that this was a dedely stroke. Ther-after, he took him-selfe back to Hjalt-land to know how the matere was, and ther the old Castell on Somburgh Hede was brek doun to the erthe. Thenn Sweyne was wode-worthe, and cryed, ‘Jhesu mercy, where is al the grete Hous of my faders becomen? allas! thys wycked day of desteynye.’ And one of the peple tolde him that a hoost of worckmen fro fer partes hadde brek it doun. And he sayd:

‘Who hath bidde them?’ but that couth none answer. Thenne he sayd agayn; ‘nis (is not) my brothir harold on-lyne? for I haue biholde his writinge’; and that, to, colde none answer. Soo he wente to Vaila, and saw there a grete Houss stonde, and wharm he looked on hyt, he saye[d]: ‘this, sooth, was y-bild by my brothir Harolde, be he ded, or bee he on-lyue.’ And ther he dwelte, and his ladye, and his sones and hys sones sones vntyl now. For that the Houss is rewthelesse (ruthless) and withoute pite; where-for tis seyed that up on al who dwel there faileth a wycked madncss and a lecherous agonie; and that by waye of the eres doe they drinck the cuppe of the furie of the erelesse Harolde, til the tyme of the Houss bee ended.”

I read the narrative half-aloud, and smiled.

“This, Harfager,” I said, “is very tolerable romance on the part of the good Gascoigne; but has the look of indifferent history.”

“It is, nevertheless, genuine history,” he replied. “You believe that?”

“The house still stands solidly on Vaila.”

“The brothers Sweyn and Harold were literary for their age, I think?”

“No member of my race,” he replied, with, a suspicion of hauteur, “has been illiterate.”

“But, at least, you do not believe that mediaeval ghosts superintend the building of their family mansions?”

“Gascoigne nowhere says that; for to be stabbed is not necessarily to die; nor, if he did say it, would it be true to assert that I have any knowledge on the subject.”

“And what, Harfager, is the nature of that ‘wicked madness,’ that ‘lecherous agonie,’ of which Gascoigne speaks?”

“Do you ask me?” He spread his arms. “What do I know? I know nothing! I was banished from the place at the age of five. Yet the cry of it still reverberates in my soul. And have I not told you of agonies — even within myself — of inherited longing and loathing...”

But, at any rate, I answered, my journey to Heidelberg was just then indispensable. I would compromise by making absence short, and rejoin him quickly, if he would wait a few weeks for me. His moody silence I took to mean consent, and soon afterward left him.

But I was unavoidably detained; and when I returned to our old quarters, found them empty.

Harfager had vanished.

It was only after twelve years that a letter was forwarded me — a rather wild letter, an excessively long one — in the well-remembered hand of my friend. It was dated at Vaila. From the character of the writing I conjectured that it had been penned with furious haste, so that I was all the more astonished at the very trivial nature of the voluminous contents. On the first half page he spoke of our old friendship, and asked if, in memory of that, I would see his mother who was dying; the rest of the epistle, sheet upon sheet, consisted of a tedious analysis of his mother’s genealogical tree, the

apparent aim being to prove that she was a genuine Harfager, and a cousin of his father. He then went on to comment on the extreme prolificness of his race, asserting that since the fourteenth century, over four millions of its members had lived and died in various parts of the world; three only of them, he believed, being now left. That determined, the letter ended.

Influenced by this communication, I travelled northward; reached Caithness; passed the stormy Orkneys; reached Lerwick; and from Unst, the most bleak and northerly of the Zetlands, contrived, by dint of bribes to pit the weather-worthiness of a lug-sailed 'sixern' (said to be identical with the 'langschips' of the Vikings) against a flowing sea and a darkly-brooding heaven. The voyage, I was warned, was, at such a time, of some risk. It was the Cimmerian December of those interboreal latitudes. The weather here, they said, though never cold, is hardly ever other than tempestuous. A dense and dank sea-born haze now lay, in spite of vapid breezes, high along the waters enclosing the boat in a vague domed cavern of doleful twilight and sullen swell. The region of the considerable islands was past, and there was a spectral something in the unreal aspect of silent sea and sunless dismalness of sky which produced upon my nerves the impression of a voyage out of nature, a cruise beyond the world. Occasionally, however, we careered past one of those solitary 'skerries,' or sea-stacks, whose craggy sea-walls, cannonaded and disintegrated by the inter-shock of the tidal wave and the torrent currents of the German Ocean, wore, even at some distance, an appearance of frightful ruin and havoc. Three only of these I saw, for before the dim day had well run half its course, sudden blackness of night was upon us, and with it one of those tempests, of which the winter of this semi-polar sea is, throughout, an ever-varying succession. During the haggard and dolorous crepuscule of the next brief day, the rain did not cease; but before darkness had quite supervened, my helmsman, who talked

continuously to a mate of seal-maidens, and waterhorses, and grülies, paused to point to a mound of gloomier grey in the weather-bow, which was, he assured me, Vaila.

Vaila, he added, was the centre of quite a system of those rösts (dangerous eddies) and cross-currents, which the action of the tidal wave hurls hurrying with complicated and corroding swirl among the islands; in the neighbourhood of Vaila, said the mariner, they hurtled with more than usual precipitancy, owing to the palisade of lofty sea-crag which barbicaned the place about; approach was, therefore, at all times difficult, and by night fool-hardy. With a running sea, however, we came sufficiently near to discern the mane of surf which bristled high along the beetling coast-wall. Its shock, according to the man's account, had oft-times more than all the efficiency of a bombing of real artillery, slinging tons of rock to heights of several hundred feet upon the main island.

When the sun next feebly climbed above the horizon to totter with marred visage through a wan low segment of funereal murk, we had closely approached the coast; and it was then for the first time that the impression of some spinning motion in the island (born no doubt of the circular movement of the water) was produced upon me. We effected a landing at a small voe, or sea-arm, on the western side; the eastern, though the point of my aim, being, on account of the swell, out of the question for that purpose. Here I found in two feal-thatched skeoes (or sheds), which crouched beneath the shelter of a far over-hanging hill, five or six poor peasant-seamen, whose livelihood no doubt consisted in periodically trading for the necessaries of the great house on the east. Beside these there were no dwellers on Vaila; but with one of them for guide, I soon began the ascent and transit of the island. Through the night in the boat I had been strangely aware of an oppressive booming in the ears, for which even the roar of the

sea round all the coast seemed quite insufficient to account. This now, as we advanced, became fearfully intensified, and with it, once more, the unaccountable conviction within me of spinning motions to which I have referred. Vaila I discovered to be a land of hill and precipice, made of fine granite and flaggy gneiss; at about the centre, however, we came upon a high table-land sloping gradually from west to east, and covered by a series of lochs, which sullenly and continuously flowed one into the other. To this chain of sombre, black-gleaming water I could see no terminating shore, and by dint of shouting to my companion, and bending close ear to his answering shout, I came to know that there was no such shore: I say shout, for nothing less could have prevailed over the steady bellowing as of ten thousand bisons, which now resounded on every hand. A certain tremblement, too, of the earth became distinct. In vain did the eye seek in its dreary purview a single trace of tree or shrub; for, as a matter of course, no kind of vegetation, save peat, could brave, even for a day, that perennial agony of the tempest which makes of this turbid and benighted zone its arena. Darkness, an hour after noon, commenced to overshadow us; and it was shortly afterward that my guide, pointing down a precipitous defile near the eastern coast, hurriedly set forth upon the way he had come. I frantically howled a question after him as he went; but at this point the human voice had ceased to be in the faintest degree audible.

Down this defile, with a sinking of the heart, and a most singular feeling of giddiness, I passed.

Having reached the end, I emerged upon a wide ledge which shuddered to the immediate onsets of the sea. But all this portion of the island was, in addition, subject to a sharp continuous ague evidently not due to the heavy ordnance of the ocean. Hugging a point of cliff for steadiness from the wind, I looked forth upon a spectacle of weirdly morne, of dismal wildness.

The opening lines of Hecuba, or some drear district of the Inferno, seemed realized before me. Three black 'skerries,' encompassed by a fantastic series of stacks, crooked as a witch's fore-finger, and giving herbergage to shrill routs of osprey and scart, to seal and walrus, lay at some fathoms'

distance; and from its race and rage among them, the sea, in arrogance of white, tumultuous, but inaudible wrath, ramped terrible as an army with banners toward the land. Leaving my place, I staggered some distance to the left: and now, all at once, a vast amphitheatre opened before me, and there burst upon my gaze a panorama of such heart-appalling sublimity, as imagination could never have conceived, nor can now utterly recall.

"A vast amphitheatre" I have said; yet it was rather the shape of a round-Gothic (or Norman) doorway which I beheld. Let the reader picture such a door-frame, nearly a mile in breadth, laid flat upon the ground, the curved portion farthest from the sea; and round it let a perfectly smooth and even wall of rock tower in perpendicular regularity to an altitude not unworthy the vulture's eyrie; and now, down the depth of this Gothic shape, and over all its extent, let bawling oceans dash themselves triumphing in spendthrift cataclysm of emerald and hoary fury, — and the stupor of awe with which I looked, and then the shrinking fear, and then the instinct of instant flight, will find easy comprehension.

This was the thrilling disemboisement of the lochs of Vaila.

And within the arch of this Gothic cataract, volumed in the world of its smoky torment and far-excursive spray, stood a palace of brass... circular in shape... huge in dimension.

The last gleam of the ineffectual day had now almost passed, but I could yet discern, in spite of the perpetual rain-fall which bleakly nimbused it as in a halo of tears, that the building was low in proportion to the vastness of its circumference; that it was roofed with a shallow dome; and that about it

ran two serried rows of shuttered Norman windows, the upper row being of smaller size than the lower. Certain indications led me to assume that the house had been built upon a vast natural bed of rock which lay, circular and detached, within the arch of the cataract; but this did not quite emerge above the flood, for the whole ground-area upon which I looked dashed a deep and incense-reeking river to the beachless sea; so that passage would have been impossible, were it not that, from a point near me, a massive bridge, thick with algae, rose above the tide, and led to the mansion. Descending from my ledge, I passed along it, now drenched in spray. As I came nearer, I could see that the house, too, was to half its height more thickly bearded than an old hull with barnacles and every variety of brilliant seaweed; and — what was very surprising that from many points near the top of the brazen wall huge iron chains, slimily barbarous with the trailing tresses of ages, reached out in symmetrical divergent rays to points on the ground hidden by the flood: the fabric had thus the look of a many-anchored ark; but without pausing for minute observation, I pushed forward, and dashing through the smooth circular waterfall which poured all round from the eaves, by one of its many small projecting porches, entered the dwelling.

Darkness now was around me — and sound. I seemed to stand in the very throat of some yelling planet. An infinite sadness descended upon me; I was near to the abandonment of tears. “Here,” I said, “is Kohreb, and the limits of weeping; not elsewhere is the valley of sighing.” The tumult resembled the continuous volleying of many thousands of cannon, mingled with strange crashing and bursting uproars. I passed forward through a succession of halls, and was wondering as to my further course, when a hideous figure, bearing a lamp, stalked rapidly towards me. I shrank aghast. It seemed the skeleton of a tall man, wrapped in a winding-sheet. The glitter

of a tiny eye, however, and a sere film of skin over part of the face, quickly reassured me. Of ears, he showed no sign. He was, I afterwards learned, Aith; and the singularity of his appearance was partially explained by his pretence — whether true or false — that he had once suffered burning, almost to the cinder-stage, but had miraculously recovered. With an expression of malignity, and strange excited gestures, he led the way to a chamber on the upper stage, where having struck light to a vesta, he pointed to a spread table and left me.

For a long time I sat in solitude. The earthquake of the mansion was intense; but all sense seemed swallowed up and confounded in the one impression of sound. Water, water, was the world — nightmare on my chest, a horror in my ears, an intolerable tingling on my nerves. The feeling of being infinitely drowned and ruined in the all-obliterating deluge — the impulse to gasp for breath — overwhelmed me. I rose and paced; but suddenly stopped, angry, I scarce knew why, with myself. I had, in fact, found myself walking with a certain hurry, not usual with me, not natural to me. The feeling of giddiness, too, had abnormally increased. I forced myself to stand and take note of the hall. It was of great size, and damp with mists, so that the tattered, but rich, mediaeval furniture seemed lost in its extent: its center was occupied by a broad low marble tomb bearing the name of a Harfager of the fifteenth century; its walls were old brown panels of oak.

Having drearily observed these things, I waited on with an intolerable consciousness of loneliness; but a little after midnight the tapestry parted, and Harfager with hurried stride, approached me.

In twelve years my friend had grown old. He showed, it is true, a tendency to corpulence; yet, to a knowing eye, he was, in reality, tabid, ill-nourished. And his neck protruded from his body; and his lower back had quite the forward curve of age; and his hair floated about his face and

shoulders in a disarray of awful whiteness. A chin-beard hung grey to his chest. His attire was a simple robe of bauge, which, as he went, waved aflaunt from his bare and hirsute shins, and he was shod in those soft slippers called *rivlins*.



Rude Impression of Harfager

To my surprise, he spoke. When I passionately shouted that I could gather no fragment of sound from his moving lips, he clapped both palms to his ears, and thereupon renewed a vehement siege to mine: but again

without result. And now, with a seemingly angry fling of the hand, he caught up the taper, and swiftly strode from the chamber.

There was something singularly unnatural in his manner — something which irresistibly reminded me of the skeleton, Aith: an excess of zeal, a fever, a rage, a loudness, an eagerness of walk, a wild extravagance of gesture. His hand constantly dashed the hair-whiffs from his face.

Though his countenance was of the saffron of death, the eyes were turgid and red with blood — heavy-lidded eyes, fixed in a downward and sideward intentness of gaze. He presently returned with a folio of ivory and a stylus of graphite hanging from a cord about his garment.

He rapidly wrote a petition that I would, if not too tired, take part with him in the funeral obsequies of his mother. I shouted assent.

Once more he clapped palms to ears; then wrote: “Do not shout: no whisper in any part of the building is inaudible to me.”

I remembered that, in early life, he had seemed slightly deaf.

We passed together through many apartments, he shading the taper with his hand. This was necessary; for, as I quickly discovered, in no part of the shivering fabric was the air in a state of rest, but seemed for ever commoved by a curious agitation, a faint windiness, like the echo of a storm, which communicated a gentle universal trouble to the tapestries. Everywhere I was confronted with the same past richness, present raggedness of decay. In many of the chambers were old marble tombs; one was a museum piled with bronzes, urns; but broken, imbedded in fungoids, dripping wide with moisture. It was as if the mansion, in ardour of travail, sweated. An odour of decomposition was heavy on the swaying air. With difficulty I followed Harfager through the labyrinth of his headlong passage. Once only he stopped short, and with face madly wild above the

glare of the light, heaved up his hand, and uttered a single word. From the shaping of the lips, I conjectured the word, "Hark!"

Presently we entered a very long black hall wherein, on chairs beside a bed near the centre, rested a deep coffin, flanked by a row of tall candlesticks of ebony. It had, I noticed, this singularity, that the foot-piece was absent, so that the soles of the corpse were visible as we approached. I beheld, too, three upright rods secured to the coffin-side, each fitted at its summit with a small silver bell of the kind called *morrice pendent* from a flexible steel spring. At the head of the bed, Aith, with an appearance of irascibility, stamped to and fro within a small area.

Harfager, having rapidly traversed the apartment to the coffin, deposited the taper upon a stone table near, and stood poring with crazy intentness upon the body. I too, looking, stood. Death so rigorous, Gorgon, I had not seen. The coffin seemed full of tangled grey hair. The lady was, it was clear, of great age, osseous, scimitar-nosed. Her head shook with solemn continuity to the vibration of the house. From each ear trickled a black streamlet; the mouth was ridged with froth.

I observed that over the corpse had been set three thin laminae of polished wood, resembling in position, and shape, the bridge of a violin. Their sides fitted into grooves in the coffin-sides, and their top was of a shape to exactly fit the inclination of the two coffin-lids when closed. One of these laminae passed over the knees of the dead lady; another bridged the abdomen; the third the region of the neck. In each of them was a small circular hole. Across each of the three holes passed vertically a tense cord from the *morrice-bell* nearest to it; the three holes being thus divided by the three cords into six vertical semicircles. Before I could conjecture the significance of this arrangement, Harfager closed the folding coffin-lid,

which in the centre had tiny intervals for the passage of the cords. He then turned the key in the lock, and uttered a word, which I took to be, "Come."

At his summons, Aith, approaching, took hold of the handle at the head; and from the dark recesses of the hall a lady, in black, moved forward. She was very tall, pallid, and of noble aspect. From the curvature of the nose, and her circular ears, I conjectured the lady Swertha, aunt of Harfager. Her eyes were red, but if with weeping I could not determine.

Harfager and I, taking each a handle near the coffin-foot, and the lady bearing before us one of the candlesticks, the procession began. As we came to the doorway, I noticed standing in a corner yet two coffins, inscribed with the names of Harfager and his aunt. We passed at length down a wide-curving stairway to the lower stage; and descending thence still lower by narrow brazen steps, came to a portal of metal, at which the lady, depositing the candlestick, left us.

The chamber of death into which we now bore the coffin had for its outer wall the brazen outer wall of the whole house at a point where this approached nearest the cataract, and must have been deep washed by the infuriate caldron without. The earthquake here was, indeed, intense. On every side the vast extent of surface was piled with coffins, rotted or rotting, ranged upon tiers of wooden shelves. The floor, I was surprised to see, was of brass. From the wide scampering that ensued on our entrance, the place was, it was clear, the abode of hordes of water-rats. As it was inconceivable that these could have corroded a way through sixteen brazen feet, I assumed that some fruitful pair must have found in the house, on its building, an ark from the waters; though even this hypothesis seemed wild. Harfager, however, afterwards confided to me his suspicion, that they had, for some purpose, been placed there by the original architect.

Upon a stone bench in the middle we deposited our burden, whereupon Aith made haste to depart. Harfager then rapidly and repeatedly walked from end to end of the long sepulchre, examining with many an eager stoop and peer, and upward strain, the shelves and their props.

Could he, I was led to wonder, have any doubts as to their security? Damp, indeed, and decay pervaded all. A piece of woodwork which I handled softened into powder between my fingers.

He presently beckoned to me, and with yet one halt and uttered "Hark!" from him, we traversed the house to my chamber. Here, left alone, I paced long about, fretted with a strange vagueness of anger; then, weary, tumbled to a horror of sleep.

In the far interior of the mansion even the bleared day of this land of heaviness never rose upon our settled gloom. I was able however, to regulate my levées by a clock which stood in my chamber. With Harfager, in a startlingly short time, I renewed more than all our former intimacy.

That I should say more, is itself startling, considering that an interval of twelve years stretched between us. But so, in fact, it was; and this was proved by the circumstances that we grew to take, and to pardon, freedoms of expression and manner which, as two persons of more than usual reserve, we had once never dreamed of permitting to ourselves in reference to each other.

Down corridors that vanished either way in darkness and length of perspective remoteness we linked ourselves in perambulations of purposeless urgency. Once he wrote that my step was excruciatingly deliberate. I replied that it was just such a step as fitted my then mood. He wrote:

"You have developed an aptitude to fret." I was profoundly offended, and replied: "There are at least more fingers than one in the universe which

that ring will wed.”

Something of the secret of the unhuman sensitiveness of his hearing I quickly surmised. I, too, to my dismay, began, as time passed, to catch hints of loudly-uttered words. The reason might he found, I suggested, in an increased excitability of the auditory nerve, which, if the cataract were absent, the roar of the ocean, and bombast of the incessant tempest about us, would by themselves be sufficient to cause; in which case, his own aural interior must, I said, be inflamed to an exquisite pitch of hyperpyrexial fever. The affection I named to him as the Paracosis Willisii. He frowned dissent, but I, undeterred, callously proceeded to recite the case, occurring within my own experience, of a very deaf lady who could hear the fall of a pin in a rapidly-moving railway-train.* To this he only replied: “Of ignorant persons I am accustomed to consider the mere scientist as the most profoundly ignorant.”

[* Such cases are known, or at least easily comprehensible, to every medical man. The concussion on the deaf nerves is said to be the cause of the acquired sensitiveness. Nor is there any limit to such sensitiveness when the concussion is abnormally increased.]

Yet that he should affect darkness as to the highly morbid condition of his hearing I regarded as simply far-fetched. Himself, indeed, confided to me his own, Aith's, and his aunt's proneness to violent paroxysms of vertigo. I was startled; for I had myself shortly before been twice roused from sleep by sensations of reeling and nausea, and a conviction that the chamber furiously spun with me in a direction from right to left. The impression passed away, and I attributed it, perhaps hastily (though on well-known pathological grounds), to some disturbance in the nerve-endings of the “labyrinth,” or inner ear. In Harfager, however, the conviction of wheeling motions in the house, in the world, attained so horrible a degree of

certainly, that its effects sometimes resembled those of lunacy or energumenal possession. Never, he said, was the sensation of giddiness wholly absent; seldom the feeling that he stared with stretched-out arms over the verge of abysmal voids which wildly wooed his half-consenting foot. Once, as we went, he was hurled, as by unseen powers, to the ground; and there for an hour sprawled, cold in a flow of sweat, with distraught bedazzlement and amaze in eyes that watched the racing house. He was constantly racked, moreover, with the consciousness of sounds so very peculiar in their nature, that I could account for them upon no other hypothesis than that of tinnitus highly exaggerated. Through the heaped-up roar, there sometimes visited him, he said, the high lucid warbling of some Orphic bird, from the pitch of whose impassioned madrigals he had the inner consciousness that it came from a far country, was of the whiteness of snow, and crested with a comb of mauve. Else he was aware of accumulated human voices, remotely articulate, contending in volubility, and finally melting into chaotic musical tones. Or, anon, he was stunned by an infinite and imminent crashing, like the huge crackling of a universe of glass about his ears. He said, too, that he could often see, rather than hear, the parti-coloured whorls of a mazy sphere-music deep, deep, within the black dark of the cataract's roar. These impressions, which I ardently protested must be purely entotic, had sometimes upon him a pleasing effect, and long would he stand and listen with raised hand to their seduction; others again inflamed him to the verge of angry madness. I guessed that they were the origin of those irascibly uttered "Harks!" which at intervals of about an hour did not fail to break from him. In this I was wrong: and it was with a thrill of dismay that I shortly came to know the truth.

For, as once we passed together by an iron door on the lower stage, he stopped, and for several minutes stood, listening with an expression most

keen and cunning. Presently the cry "Hark!"

escaped him; and he then turned to me, and wrote upon the tablet: "You did not hear?" I had heard nothing but the monotonous roar. He shouted into my ear in accents now audible to me as an echo heard far off in dreams: "You shall see."

He lifted the candlestick; produced from the pocket of his garment a key; unlocked the door.

We entered a chamber, circular, very loftily domed in proportion to its extent, and apparently empty, save that a pair of ladder-steps leaned against its wall. Its flooring was of marble, and in its centre gloomed a pool, resembling the impluvium of Roman atriums, but round in shape; a pool evidently deep, full of an unctuous miasmal water. I was greatly startled by its present aspect; for as the light burned upon its jet-black surface, I could see that this had been quite recently disturbed, in a manner for which the shivering of the house could not account, inasmuch as ripples of slimy ink sullenly rounded from the centre toward its marble brink. I glanced at Harfager for explanation. He signed to me to wait, and for about an hour, with arms in their accustomed fold behind his back, perambulated. At the end of that time he stopped, and standing together by the margin, we gazed into the water. Suddenly his clutch tightened upon my arm, and I saw, not without a thrill of honor, a tiny ball, doubtless of lead, but smeared blood-red by some chymical pigment, fall from the direction of the roof and disappear into the centre of the black depths. It hissed, on contact with the water, a thin puff of vapour.

"In the name of all that is sinister!" I cried, "what thing is this you show me?"

Again he made me a busy and confident sign to wait; snatched then the ladder-steps toward the pool; handed me the taper. I, mounting, held high

the flame, and saw hanging from the misty centre of the dome a form — a sphere of tarnished old copper, lengthened out into balloon-shape by a down-looking neck, at the end of which I thought I could discern a tiny orifice. Painted across the bulge was barely visible in faded red characters the hieroglyph:

“harfager-hous: 1389 — 188”

Something — I know not what — of eldritch in the combined aspect of spotted globe, and gloomy pool, and contrivance of hourly hissing ball, gave expedition to my feet as I slipped down the ladder.

“But the meaning?”

“Did you see the writing?”

“Yes. The meaning?”

He wrote: “By comparing Gascoigne with Thrunster, I find that the mansion was built about 1389.”

“But the final figures?”

“After the last 8,” he replied, “there is another figure, nearly, but not quite, obliterated by a tarnish-spot.”

“What figure?”

“It cannot be read, but may be surmised. The year 1888 is now all but passed. It can only be the figure 9.”

“You are horribly depraved in mind!” I cried, flaring into anger. “You assume — you dare to state — in a manner which no mind trained to base its conclusions upon fact could hear with patience.”

“And you, on the other hand, are simply absurd,” he wrote.

“You are not, I presume, ignorant of the common formula of Archimedes by which, the diameter of a sphere being known, its volume may be determined. Now, the diameter of the sphere in the dome there I have ascertained to be four and a half feet; and the diameter of the leaden balls

about the third of an inch. Supposing then that 1389 was the year in which the sphere was full of balls, you may readily calculate that not many fellows of the four million and odd which have since dropped at the rate of one an hour are now left within it. It could not, in fact, have contained many more. The fall of balls cannot persist another year. The figure 9 is therefore forced upon us.”

“But you assume, Harfager,” I cried, “most wildly you assume! Believe me, my friend, this is the very wantonness of wickedness! By what algebra of despair do you know that the last date must be such, was intended to be such, as to correspond with the stoppage of the horologe? And, even if so, what is the significance of the whole. It has — it can have — no significance! Was the contriver of this dwelling, of all the gnomes, think you, a being pulsing with omniscience?”

“Do you seek to madden me?” he shouted. Then furiously writing: “I know — I swear that I know — nothing of its significance! But is it not evident to you that the work is a stupendous hour-glass, intended to record the hours not of a day, but of a cycle? and of a cycle of five hundred years?”

“But the whole thing,” I passionately cried, “is a baleful phantasm of our brains! an evil impossibility! How is the fall of the balls regulated? Ah, my friend, you wander — your mind is debauched in this bacchanal of tumult.”

“I have not ascertained,” he replied, “by what internal mechanism, or viscous medium, or spiral coil, dependent no doubt for its action upon the vibration of the house, the balls are retarded in their fall; that is a matter well within the cunning of the mediaeval artisan, the inventor of the watch; but this at least is clear, that one element of their retardation is the minuteness of the aperture through which they have to pass; that this element, by known, though recondite, statical laws, will cease to operate

when no more than three balls remain; and that, consequently, the last three will fall at nearly the same moment.”

“In God’s name!” I exclaimed, careless what folly I poured out, “but your mother is dead, Harfager! You dare not deny that there remain but you and the lady Swertha!”

A contemptuous glance was all the reply he then vouchsafed me.

But he confided to me a day or two later that the leaden balls were a constant bane to his ears; that from hour to hour his life was a keen waiting for their fall; that even from his brief slumbers he infallibly startled into wakefulness at each descent; that, in whatever part of the mansion he happened to be, they failed not to find him out with a clamorous and insistent loudness; and that every drop wrung him with a twinge of physical anguish in the inner ear. I was therefore appalled at his declaration that these droppings had now become to him as the life of life; had acquired an intimacy so close with the hue of his mind, that their cessation might even mean for him the shattering of reason. Convulsed, he stood then, face wrapped in arms, leaning against a pillar. The paroxysm past, I asked him if it was out of the question that he should once and for all cast off the fascination of the horologe, and fly with me from the place. He wrote in mysterious reply: “A threefold cord is not easily broken” I started. How threefold? He wrote with bitterest smile: “To be enamoured of pain — to pine after aching — to dote upon Marah — is not that a wicked madness?” I was overwhelmed. Unconsciously he had quoted Gascoigne: a wicked madness! a lecherous agonie! “You have seen the face of my aunt,” he proceeded; “your eyes were dim if you did not there behold an impious calm, the glee of a blasphemous patience, a grin behind her daring smile.” He then spoke of a prospect, at the infinite terror of which his whole nature trembled, yet which sometimes laughed in his heart in the aspect of a

maniac hope. It was the prospect of any considerable increase in the volume of sound about him. At that, he said, the brain must totter. On the night of my arrival the noise of my booted tread, and, since then, my occasionally raised voice, had caused him acute unease. To a sensibility such as this, I understood him further to say, the luxury of torture involved in a large sound-increase in his environment was an allurements from which no human strength could turn; and when I expressed my powerlessness even to conceive such an increase, much less the means by which it could be effected, he produced from the archives of the house some annals, kept by the successive heads of his race. From these it appeared that the tempests which continually harried the lonely latitude of Vaila did not fail to give place, at periodic intervals of some years, to one sovereign ouragan — one Sirius among the suns — one ultimate lyssa of elemental atrocity. At such periods the rains descended — and the floods came — even as in the first world-deluge; those rösts, or eddies, which at all times encompassed Vaila, spurning then the bands of lateral space, shrieked themselves aloft into a multitudinous death-dance of water-spouts, and like snaky *Deinotheria*, or say towering monolithic in a stonehenge of columned and cyclopean awe, thronged about the little land, upon which, with converging débâcle, they discharged their momentous waters; and the loebs to which the cataract was due thus redoubled their volume, and fell with redoubled tumult. It was, said Harfager, like a miracle that for twenty years no such great event had transacted itself at Vaila.

And what, I asked, was the third strand of that threefold cord of which he had spoken? He took me to a circular hall, which, he told me, he had ascertained to be the geometrical centre of the circular mansion. It was a very great hall — so great as I think I never saw — so great that the amount of segment illumined at any one time by the taper seemed nearly flat. And

nearly the whole of its space from floor to roof was occupied by a pillar of brass, the space between wall and cylinder being only such as to admit of a stretched-out arm.

“This cylinder, which seems to be solid,” wrote Harfager, “ascends to the dome and passes beyond it; it descends hence to the floor of the lower stage, and passes through that; it descends thence to the brazen flooring of the vaults, and passes through that into the rock of the ground.

Under each floor it spreads out laterally into a vast capital, helping to support the floor. What is the precise quality of the impression which I have made upon your mind by this description?”

“I do not know!” I answered, turning from him; “propound me none of your questions, Harfager. I feel a giddiness...”

“Nevertheless you shall answer me,” he proceeded; “consider the strangeness of that brazen lowest floor, which I have discovered to be some ten feet thick, and whose under-surface, I have reason to believe, is somewhat above the level of the ground; remember that the fabric is at no point fastened to the cylinder; think of the chains that ray out from the outer walls, seeming to anchor the house to the ground. Tell me, what impression have I now made?”

“And is it for this you wait?” I cried— “for this? Yet there may have been no malevolent intention! You jump at conclusions! Any human dwelling, if solidly based upon earth, would be at all times liable to overthrow on such a land, in such a situation, as this, by some superlative tempest! What if it were the intention of the architect that in such eventuality the chains should break, and the house, by yielding, be saved?”

“You have no lack of charity at least,” he replied; and we returned to the book we then read together.

He had not wholly lost the old habit of study, but could no longer constrain himself to sit to read. With a volume, often tossed down and resumed, he walked to and fro within the radius of the lamp-light; or I, unconscious of my voice, read to him. By a strange whim of his mood, the few books which now lay within the limits of his patience had all for their motive something of the picaresque, or the foppishly speculative: Quevedo's *Taca — o*; or the mundane system of Tycho Brahe; above all, George Hakewill's *Power and Providence of God*. One day, however, as I read, he interrupted me with the sentence, seemingly à propos of nothing: "What I cannot understand is that you, a scientist, should believe that the physical life ceases with the cessation of the breath" — and from that moment the tone of our reading changed. He led me to the crypts of the library in the lowest part of the building, and hour after hour, with a certain furore of triumph, overwhelmed me with volumes evidencing the longevity of man after "death." A sentence of Haller had rooted itself in his mind; he repeated, insisted upon it: "*sapientia denique consilia dat quibus longaevitas obtineri queat, nitro, opio, purgationibus subinde repetitis...*"; and as opium was the elixir of long-drawn life, so death itself, he said, was that opium, whose more potent nepenthe lulled the body to a peace not all-insentient, far within the gates of the gardens of dream. From the *Dhammapada* of the Buddhist canon, to Zwinger's *Theatrum*, to Bacon's *Historia Vitae et Mortis*, he ranged to find me heaped-up certainty of his faith. What, he asked, was my opinion of Baron Verulam's account of the dead man who was heard to utter words of prayer; or of the leaping bowels o' the dead *condamné*? On my expressing incredulity, he seemed surprised, and reminded me of the writhings of dead serpents, of the visible beating of a frog's heart many hours after "death." "She is not dead," he quoted, "but sleepeth." The whim of Bacon and Paracelsus that the principle of life

resides in a subtle spirit or fluid which pervades the organism he coerced into elaborate proof that such a spirit must, from its very nature, be incapable of any sudden annihilation, so long as the organs which it permeates remain connected and integral. I asked what limit he then set to the persistence of sensibility in the physical organism. He replied that when slow decay had so far advanced that the nerves could no longer be called nerves, or their cell-origins cell-origins, or the brain a brain — or when by artificial means the brain had for any length of time been disconnected at the cervical region from the body — then was the king of terrors king indeed, and the body was as though it had not been.

With an indiscretion strange to me before my residence at Vaila, I blurted the question whether all this Aberglaube could have any reference, in his mind, to the body of his mother. For a while he stood thoughtful, then wrote: “Had I not reason to believe that my own and my aunt’s life in some way hinged upon the final cessation of hers, I should still have taken precautions to ascertain the progress of the destroyer upon her mortal frame; as it is, I shall not lack even the minutest information.” He then explained that the rodents which swarmed in the sepulchre would, in the course of time, do their full work upon her; but would be unable to penetrate to the region of the throat without first gnawing their way through the three cords stretched across the holes of the laminae within the coffin, and thus, one by one, liberating the three morrisco bells to a tinkling agitation.

The winter solstice had passed; another year opened. I slept a deep sleep by night when Harfager entered my chamber, and shook me. His face was ghastly in the taper-light. A transformation within a few hours had occurred upon him. He was not the same. He resembled some poor wight into whose

unexpected eyes — at midnight — have glared the sudden eye-balls of Terror.

He informed me that he was aware of singular intermittent straining and creaking sounds, which gave him the sensation of hanging in aerial spaces by a thread which must shortly snap to his weight. He asked if, for God's sake, I would accompany him to the sepulchre. We passed together through the house, he craven, shivering, his step for the first time laggard. In the chamber of the dead he stole to and fro examining the shelves, furtively intent. His eyes were sunken, his face drawn like death. From the footless coffin of the dowager trembling on its bench of stone, I saw an old water-rat creep. As Harfager passed beneath one of the shortest of the shelves which bore a single coffin, it suddenly fell from a height with its burthen into fragments at his feet. He screamed the cry of a frightened creature, and tottered to my support. I bore him back to the upper house.

He sat with hidden face in the corner of a small room doddering, overcome, as it were, with the extremity of age. He no longer marked with his usual "Hark!" the fall of the leaden drops. To my remonstrances he answered only with the words, So soon! so soon! Whenever I sought I found him there. His manhood had collapsed in an ague of trepidancy. I do not think that during this time he slept.

On the second night, as I approached him, he sprang suddenly straight with the furious outcry:

"The first bell tinkles!"

And he had hardly larynxed the wild words when, from some great distance, a faint wail, which at its origin must have been a most piercing shriek, reached my now feverishly sensitive ears. Harfager at the sound clapped hands to ears, and dashed insensate from his place, I following in hot pursuit through the black breadth of the mansion. We ran until we

reached a mound chamber, containing a candelabrum, and arrased in faded red. In an alcove at the furthest circumference was a bed. On the floor lay in swoon the lady Swertha. Her dark-grey hair in disarray wrapped her like an angry sea, and many tufts of it lay scattered wide, torn from the roots. About her throat were livid prints of strangling fingers. We bore her to the bed, and, having discovered some tincture in a cabinet, I administered it between her fixed teeth. In the rapt and dreaming face I saw that death was not, and, as I found something appalling in her aspect, shortly afterwards left her to Harfager.

When I next saw him his manner had assumed a species of change which I can only describe as hideous. It resembled the officious self-importance seen in a person of weak intellect, incapable of affairs, who goads himself with the exhortation, “to business! the time is short — I must even bestir myself!” His walk sickened me with a suggestion of ataxie locomotrice. I asked him as to the lady, as to the meaning of the marks of violence on her body. Bending ear to his deep and unctuous heard, “A stealthy attempt has been made upon her the skeleton, Aith.”

My unfeigned astonishment at this announcement he seemed not to share. To my questions, repeatedly pressed upon him, as to the reason for retaining such a domestic in the house, as to the origin of his service, he could give no lucid answer. Aith, he informed me, had been admitted into the mansion during the period of his own long absence in youth. He knew little of the fact that he was of extraordinary physical strength. Whence he had come, or how, no living being except Swertha had knowledge; and she, it seems, feared, or at least persistently declined, to admit him into the mystery. He added that, as a matter of fact, the lady, from the day of his return to Vaila, had for some reason imposed upon herself a silence upon all

subjects, which he had never once known her to break except by an occasional note.

With a curious, irrelevant impressment, with an intensely voluntary, ataxic strenuousness, always with the air of a drunken man constraining himself to ordered action, Harfager now set himself to the ostentatious adjustment of a host of insignificant matters. He collected chronicles and arranged them in order of date. He tied and ticketed bundles of documents. He insisted upon my help in turning the faces of portraits to the wall. He was, however, now constantly interrupted by paroxysms of vertigo; six times in a single day he was hurled to the ground. Blood occasionally gushed from his ears. He complained to me in a voice of piteous wail of the clear luting of a silver piccolo, which did not cease to invite him. As he bent sweating upon his momentous futilities, his hands fluttered like shaken reeds. I noted the movements of his muttering and whimpering lips, the rheum of his far-sunken eyes. The decrepitude of dotage had overtaken his youth.

On a day he cast it utterly off, and was young again. He entered my chamber, roused me from sleep; I saw the mad gaudium in his eyes, heard the wild hiss of his cry in my ear:

“Up! It is sublime. The storm!”

Ah! I had known it — in the spinning nightmare of my sleep. I felt it in the tormented air of the chamber. It had come, then. I saw it lurid by the lamplight on the hell of Harfager’s distorted visage.

I glanced at the face of the clock. It was nine — in the morning. A sardonic glee burst at once into being within me. I sprang from the couch. Harfager, with the naked stalk of some maniac old prophet, had already rapt himself away. I set out in pursuit. A clear deepening was manifest in the

quivering of the edifice; sometimes for a second it paused still, as if, breathlessly, to listen.

Occasionally there visited me, as it were, the faint dirge of some far-off lamentation and voice in Ramah; but if this was subjective, or the screaming of the storm, I could not say. Else I heard the distinct note of an organ's peal. The air of the mansion was agitated by a vaguely puffy unease.

About noon I sighted Harfager, lamp in hand, running along a corridor. His feet were bare. As we met he looked at me, but hardly with recognition, and passed by; stopped, however, returned, and howled into my ear the question: "Would you see?" He beckoned before me. I followed to a very small window in the outer wall closed with a slab of iron. As he lifted a latch the metal flew inward with instant impetuosity and swung him far, while a blast of the storm, braying and booming through the aperture with buccal and reboant bravura, caught and pinned me against an angle of the wall. Down the corridor a long crashing bouleversement of pictures and furniture ensued. I nevertheless contrived to push my way, crawling on the belly, to the opening. Hence the sea should have been visible. My senses, however, were met by nothing but a reeling vision of tumbled blackness, and a general impression of the letter O. The sun of Vaila had gone out. In a moment of opportunity our united efforts prevailed to close the slab.

"Come" — he had obtained fresh light, and beckoned before me— "let us see how the dead fare in the midst of the great desolation and dies irae!" Running, we had hardly reached the middle of the stairway, when I was thrilled by the consciousness of a momentous shock, the bass of a dull and far-reverberating thud, which nothing conceivable save the huge simultaneous thumping to the ground of the whole piled mass of the coffins of the sepulchre could have occasioned. I turned to Harfager, and for an

instant beheld him, panic flying in his scuttling feet, headlong on the way he had come, with stopped ears and wide mouth. Then, indeed, fear overtook me — a tremor in the midst of the exultant daring of my heart — a thought that now at least I must desert him in his extremity, now work out my own salvation. Yet it was with a most strange hesitancy that I turned to seek him for the last time — a hesitancy which I fully felt to be selfish and diseased. I wandered through the midnight house in search of light, and having happened upon a lamp, proceeded to hunt for Harfager. Several hours passed in this way. It became clear from the state of the atmosphere that the violence about me was being abnormally intensified. Sounds as of distant screams — unreal, like the screamings of spirits — broke now upon my ear. As the time of evening drew on, I began to detect in the vastly augmented baritone of the cataract something new — a shrillness — the whistle of an ecstasy — a malice — the menace of a rabies blind and deaf.

It must have been at about the hour of six that I found Harfager. He sat in an obscure apartment with bowed head, hands on knees. His face was covered with hair, and blood from the ears. The right sleeve of his garment had been rent away in some renewed attempt, as I imagined, to manipulate a window; the slightly-bruised arm hung lank from the shoulder. For some time I stood and watched the mouthing of his mumblings. Now that I had found him I said nothing of departure. Presently he looked sharply up with the cry “Hark!” — then with imperious impatience, “Hark! Hark!” — then with rapturous shout, “The second bell!” And again, in instant sequence upon his cry, there sounded a wail, vague but unmistakably real, through the house. Harfager at the moment dropped reeling with vertigo; but I, snatching a lamp, hastened forth, trembling, but eager. For some time the high wailing continued, either actually, or by reflex action of my ear.

As I ran toward the lady's apartment, I saw, separated from it by the breadth of a corridor, the open door of an armoury, into which I passed, and seized a battle-axe; and, thus armed, was about to enter to her aid, when Aith, with blazing eye, rushed from her chamber by a further door. I raised my weapon, and, shouting, flew forward to fell him; but by some chance the lamp dropped from me, and before I knew aught, the axe leapt from my grasp, myself hurled far backward. There was, however, sufficiency of light from the chamber to show that the skeleton had dashed into a door of the armoury: that near me, by which I had procured the axe, I instantly slammed and locked; and hasting to the other, similarly secured it. Aith was thus a prisoner. I then entered the lady's room. She lay half-way across the bed in the alcove, and to my bent ear loudly croaked the râles of death. A glance at the mangled throat convinced me that her last hours were surely come. I placed her supine upon the bed; curtained her utterly from sight within the loosened festoons of the hangings of black, and inhumanly turned from the fearfulness of her sight. On an escritoire near I saw a note, intended apparently for Harfager: "I mean to defy, and fly. Think not from fear — but for the glow of the Defiance itself. Can you come?" Taking a flame from the candelabrum, I hastily left her to solitude, and the ultimate throes of her agony.

I had passed some distance backward when I was startled by a singular sound — a clash — resembling in timbre the clash of a tambourine, I heard it rather loudly, and that I should now hear it at all, proceeding as it did from a distance, implied the employment of some prodigious energy. I waited, and in two minutes it again broke, and thenceforth at like regular intervals. It had somehow an effect of pain upon me. The conviction grew gradually that Aith had unhung two of the old brazen shields from their pegs; and that, holding them by their handles, and smiting them viciously

together, he thus expressed the frenzy which had now overtaken him. I found my way back to Harfager, in whom the very nerve of anguish now seemed to stamp and stalk about the chamber. He bent his head; shook it like a hail-tormented horse; with his deprecating hand brushed and barred from his hearing each recurrent clash of the brazen shields.

“Au, when — when — when—” he hoarsely groaned into my ear, “will that rattle of hell choke in her throat? I will myself, I tell you — with my own hand! — Oh God...” Since the morning his auditory inflammation (as, indeed, my own also) seemed to have heightened in steady proportion with the roaring and screaming chaos round; and the râles of the lady hideously filled for him the measured intervals of the grisly cymbaling of Aith. He presently hurled twinkling fingers into the air, and with wide arms rushed swiftly into the darkness.

And again I sought him, and long again in vain. As the hours passed, and the slow Tartarean day deepened toward its baleful midnight, the cry of the now redoubled cataract, mixed with the throng and majesty of the now climactic tempest, assumed too definite and intentional a shriek to be longer tolerable to any mortal reason. My own mind escaped my governance, and went its way. Here, in the hot-bed of fever, I was fevered; among the children of wrath, was strong with the strength, and weak with the feebleness of delirium. I wandered from chamber to chamber, precipitate, bemused, giddy on the up-buoyance of a joy. “As a man upon whom sleep seizes,” so had I fallen. Even yet, as I approached the region of the armoury, the noisy ecstasies of Aith did not fail to clash faintly upon my ear. Harfager I did not see, for he too, doubtless, roamed a headlong Ahasuerus in the round world of the house. At about midnight, however, observing light shine from a door on the lower stage, I entered and found him there. It was the chamber of the dropping horologe. He half-sat, swaying self-hugged, on

the ladder-steps, and stared at the blackness of the pool. The last flicker of the riot of the day seemed dying in his eyes. He cast no glance as I approached. His hands, his bare right arm, were red with new-shed blood; but of this, too, he appeared unconscious. His mouth gaped wide to his pantings. As I looked, he leapt suddenly high, smiting hands, with the yell, “The last bell tinkles!” and galloped forth, a-rave.

He therefore did not see (though he may have understood by hearing) the spectacle which, with cowering awe, I immediately thereupon beheld: for from the horologe there slipped with hiss of vapour a ball into the torpid pool: and while the clock once ticked, another! and while the clock yet ticked, another! and the vapour of the first had not utterly passed, when the vapour of the third, intermingling, floated with it into grey tenuity aloft. Understanding that the sands of the house were run, I, too, flinging maniac arms, rushed from the spot. I was, however, suddenly stopped in my career by the instinct of some stupendous doom emptying its vials upon the mansion; and was quickly made aware, by the musketry of a shrill crackling from aloft, and the imminent downpour of a world of waters, that a water-spout had, wholly or partly, hurled the catastrophe of its broken floods upon us, and crashed ruining through the dome of the building.

At that moment I beheld Harfager running toward me, hands buried in hair. As he flew past, I seized him. “Harfager! save yourself!” I cried— “the very fountains, man, — by the living God, Harfager” — I hissed it into his inmost ear— “the very fountains of the Great Deep....!” Stupid, he glared at me, and passed on his way. I, whisking myself into a room, slammed the door. Here for some time, with smiting knees, I waited; but the impatience of my frenzy urged me, and I again stepped forth. The corridors were everywhere thigh-deep with water. Rags of the storm, irrageous by way of the orifice in the shattered dome, now blustered with hoiden wantonness

through the house. My light was at once extinguished; and immediately I was startled by the presence of another light — most ghostly, gloomy, bluish — most soft, yet wild, phosphorescent — which now perfused the whole building. For this I could in no way account. But as I stood in wonder, a gust of greater vehemence romped through the house, and I was instantly conscious of the harsh snap of something near me. There was a minute's breathless pause — and then — quick, quick — ever quicker — came the throb, and the snap, and the pop, in vastly wide circular succession, of the anchoring chains of the mansion before the urgent shoulder of the hurricane.

And again a second of eternal calm — and then — deliberately — its hour came — the ponderous palace moved. My flesh writhed like the glutinous flesh of a serpent. Slowly moved, and stopped: — then was a sweep — and a swirl — and a pause! then a swirl — and a sweep — and a pause! — then steady industry of labour on the monstrous brazen axis, as the husbandman plods by the plough; then increase of zest, assuetude of a fledgeling to the wing — then intensity — then the last light ecstasy of flight. And now, once again, as staggering and plunging I spun, the thought of escape for a moment visited me: but this time I shook an impious fist. “No, but God, no, no,” I cried, “I will no more wander hence, my God! I will even perish with Harfager! Here let me waltzing pass, in this Ball of the Vortices, Anarchie of the Thunders! Did not the great Corot call it translation in a chariot of flame? But this is gaudier than that! redder than that! This is jaunting on the scoriac tempests and reeling bullions of hell! It is baptism in a sun!”

Recollection gropes in a dimmer gloaming as to all that followed. I struggled up the stairway now flowing a steep river, and for a long time ran staggering and plunging, full of wild words, about, amid the downfall of

ceilings and the wide ruin of tumbling walls. The air was thick with splashes, the whole roof now, save three rafters, snatched by the wind away. In that blue sepulchral moonlight, the tapestries flapped and trailed wildly out after the flying house like the streaming hair of some ranting fakeer stung gyratory by the gadflies and tarantulas of distraction.

The flooring gradually assumed a slant like the deck of a sailing ship, its covering waters flowing all to accumulation in one direction. At one point, where the largest of the porticoes projected, the mansion began at every revolution to bump with horrid shiverings against some obstruction.

It bumped, and while the lips said one-two-three, it three times bumped again. It was the levity of hugeness! it was the maenadism of mass! Swift — ever swifter, swifter — in ague of urgency, it reeled and raced, every portico a sail to the storm, vexing and wracking its tremendous frame to fragments. I, chancing by the door of a room littered with the débris of a fallen wall, saw through that wan and livid light Harfager sitting on a tomb. A large drum was beside him, upon which, club grasped in bloody hand, he feebly and persistently beat. The velocity of the leaning house had now attained the sleeping stage, that ultimate energy of the spinning-top. Harfager sat, head sunk to chest; suddenly he dashed the hairy wrappings from his face; sprang; stretched horizontal arms; and began to spin — dizzily! — in the same direction as the mansion! — nor less sleep-embathed! — with floating hair, and quivering cheeks, and the starting eye-balls of horror, and tongue that lolled like a panting wolf's from his bawling degenerate mouth. From such a sight I turned with the retching of loathing, and taking to my heels, staggering and plunging, presently found myself on the lower stage opposite a porch. An outer door crashed to my feet, and the breath of the storm smote freshly upon me. An élan, part of

madness, more of heavenly sanity, spurred in my brain. I rushed through the doorway, and was tossed far into the limbo without.

The river at once swept me deep-drowned toward the sea. Even here, a momentary shrill din like the splitting asunder of a world reached my ears. It had hardly passed, when my body collided in its course upon one of the basalt piers, thick-cushioned by sea-weed, of the not all-demolished bridge. Nor had I utterly lost consciousness. A clutch freed my head from the surge, and I finally drew and heaved myself to the level of a timber. Hence to the ledge of rock by which I had come, the bridge was intact. I rowed myself feebly on the belly beneath the poundings of the wind. The rain was a steep rushing, like a shimmering of silk, through the air.

Observing the same wild glow about me which had blushed through the broken dome into the mansion, I glanced backward — and saw that the dwelling of the Harfagers was a memory of the past; then upward — and lo, the whole northern sky, to the zenith, burned one tumbled and fickle-undulating ocean of gaudy flames. It was the aurora borealis which, throeing at every aspen instant into rays and columns, cones and obelisks, of vivid vermil and violet and rose, was fairly whiffed and flustered by the storm into a vast silken oriflamme of tresses and swathes and breezes of glamour; whilst, low-bridging the horizon, the flushed beams of ‘the polar light assembled into a changeless boreal corona of bedazzling candor. At the augustness of this great phenomenon I was affected to blessed tears. And with them, the dream broke! — the infatuation passed! — a hand skimmed back from my brain the blind films and media of delusion; and sobbing on my knees, I jerked to heaven the arms of grateful oblation for my surpassing Rephidim, and marvel of deliverance from all the temptation — and the tribulation — and the tragedy — of Vaila.

PREMIER AND MAKER



Give him the Nectar!
Pour out for the Poet,
Hebe, pour free!
Quicken his eyes with celestial dew,
That Styx the detested no more he may view,
And like one of us Gods
may conceit him to be,
Thanks, Hebe! I quaff it! Io Paeon! I cry.
The wine of the immortal
Forbids me to die.

— Coleridge (*Imitation of Schiller*).

My friend, Mr. O'Malley Phipps, is a young man of good principles and ancient family, but one who, owing to his indolent habits, and an incurable weakness for dispensing among the poor munificences wildly disproportionate to his 'means,' seems to live at perpetual loggerheads with Fortuna on the Money Question. It is to his profound, and apparently quite unaffected, contempt for 'public opinion' that I owe permission to publish the following piece. Having lately made a small essay of perceptible, but (as I must think) somewhat crude, genius, he thought fit to despatch a copy

thereof to the then Prime Minister, together with the following extraordinary note:

‘My Lord, — I herewith send you a copy of my little book, *Life and the Poppy*, which, if you can read at all so well as I can write, will not fail to renovate and translate you. I have, my Lord, many designs half peeping within me — hair-tearings, delights — which it may not be *so* well for England if I do not utter. But I am, my Lord, impecunious— ‘without cattle’; certain aspre-minded persons, exquisitely called ‘gentle,’ having usurped all the lands on which one might feed one’s possible cattle; and these things, my Lord, I have not even the slightest intention of uttering for England (which, as you know, depends upon her Celtic and Celticised population for her great and half- great men), if England do not, to begin with, grant me reasonable ease and leisure for that purpose. If you care, however, to offer me a sine-cure, I might possibly be content to accept it. I have always fancied, my Lord, that between your destiny and mine subsisted some affinity, since the day on which you formally opened the street now known as X — Avenue; that day was my birthday, the 21st of July, which, as you perceive, is the Third Seventh day of the Seventh month; in that street I then resided. This, however, has nothing to do with the case. — I am, my Lord, your sincere,

‘O. O’Malley Phipps.’

A month later, when Mr. Phipps pretends to have quite forgotten the fact of this letter, he received the following reply:

‘Sir, — I am instructed by Lord X — to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th ult., together with a copy of your book, *Life and the Poppy*.

This work his Lordship now directs me to say he has read with very considerable interest; and if you will be good enough to call at his Lordship's town residence, No. 11A. M — St., W., at 11 A.M. on Wednesday next, the 7th inst., his Lordship will be glad of a few hours' private converse with you.

I am, Sir, Your obdt Serv^t,
E ——— L — , Private Secy'

On Wednesday at 11 A.M., London was black with fog. Mr. Phipps was, however, punctual in presenting himself at the Premier's residence, where, in spite of the menial's surprise at the rather shabby character of his attire, lank hair, four-cornered coif of threadbare velvet, and a general appearance of the mediaeval poor-scholar, he was at once led forward and ushered into an inmost chamber, the centre of a labyrinth, in which, hardly aided by the glow of two tapers made, like Zobeide's, of aloes-wood and ambergris, he could at first discern nothing. He presently perceived, however, that the room was Moorish, full of small tables of woods ivory- inlaid, and liberal with crystal, porcelain, mirrors, stuffs of Mecca, shawls of India, and a profusion of cushions; the tapestries being panelled in coloured velvets embroidered with sentences from the poet Sadi; also that, with an arm leaning on the plush of an ottoman near, and the other held out in greeting, the Premier squatted sartorial at one end of a rug on the floor. His Lordship wore a dressing-gown of crocus satin, widely-cylindrical pantaloons of cerulean silk, slippers which curled high at the toes, and a close gold-wrought cap for calpac and turban. His shaven face, though ruddy, looked not un-Moorish in the dimness. After indicating a similar robe, he motioned Mr. Phipps to occupy the cushion at the other end of the rug, upon which

the author accordingly proceeded to deposit himself in like Turkish fashion. Silence reigned. On two tripods of tortoise-shell stood sherbet of orange in ice; and from one of the crystals his Lordship, laying down the stem of his hookah, took occasional lazy sips. Mr. Phipps also, finding a narghil at his elbow, rosily drew through rose-water the smoke of the tobacco of Philippi. No sound was in the room, but the faint stuttering of a distant grate. Presently an Oriental person imported three dishes containing almond patties and two creams of pomegranate, one fennel-yellow, one light pink, freckled each with spices; followed by another with tiny white-china cups of Mocha coffee, yellow-black, boiled with cloves and saffron. The attendants having made a salaam, retired backwards.

No sound was in the room. An hour passed. As a bitter pelican broods solitary on a mid-sea crag at even-fall, so gravity was fathomful in the contemplation of the two: you would have said that, through the closed lids of a death stiff between them, they gazed into the vague orbits of eternity. Once only the premier, looking up, nodded sagely to the maker, a salutation which Mr. Phipps returned in kind. It was only after yet half-an-hour that the minister, as if surging from nirvana, waved high fluctuant the flag of his left eyebrow, and, sighing, said:

‘What can you *do*?’

‘I can write a shorthand.’

‘What else?’

‘I can write decent Monk-Latin; think in the best Attic Greek.’

‘Proceed.’

‘I can swim in water.’

‘Let not your voice sink in air.’

‘I can read in many sciences, algebras, calculi.’

‘My ear is a hostelry.’

‘I can trample to death a short distance with the toes of an extremely rapid run.’

‘Spurt on.’

‘I can read the Hebrew Scriptures; which, in my case, more or less implies the Arabic, Syriac, Aethiopic, and Samaritan.’

‘My ear cerumenously waters.’

‘I can make women and children obey me.’

‘My ear is a word-perceiving Eye which never shuts in sleep.’

‘I can delight them with whimsies, and histories, and conceited anomalies.’

‘I am swallowed by my middle ear.’

‘I can discourse tolerably on English, Celtic, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Danish, Anglo-Saxon, old Hoch-Deutsch, old Icelandic, Rabbinical, Basque and Norse literatures.’

‘My ear is an only half-filled museum.’

‘I can ride a horse.’

‘Trot on.’

‘I can make very pretty pictures with black-lead pencil and Chinese white on tinted paper.’

‘My ear is a pit of receptiveness.’

‘I can pick out the ‘The Heavens are Telling’ with my right forefinger on the harpsichord.’

‘Stump on.’

‘I can write a book on the *rationale* of musical laws, in which I should have three quite new theories to propound; and a relation to demonstrate between the nature of the mind and a new species of rhyme.’

‘Proceed.’

‘I can make a boy to hate vileness; to love culture and goodness.’

‘My ear is a miser’s purse.

‘I can exactly tune an embrace or a conversation to the momentary temperament of a woman: I am of the same height as she at every altitude.’

‘My ear opens like a flower-calyx to the breeze of your mouth.’

‘I can govern this kingdom wisely and humanly.’

‘You?’

‘I here. I can frame a fabric of law upon the foundations of the universe
—’

‘What can you *not* do?’

‘I cannot spin a top.’

‘Proceed.’

‘I cannot add up rows of figures, nor comprehend the money columns in the newspapers. ‘My ear is a word-trap.’

‘I cannot, in some moods, understand why Odysseus did not abide immortal with Calypso, or at the Aeaeon Isle.’

‘Proceed.’

‘I cannot conceive, though they appear in all the MSS., that Sophocles really wrote the words ‘*akestera chalinon*’ (the *healing* bridle): the expression seems complex, Hebraic, for a Greek.’

‘My ear proves the pangs of a longing woman.’

‘I cannot remember the British being who wrote of ‘the haughty Romans and the insolent Greeks’ without an itching energy in my hide-bound ends.’

‘How so?’

‘Because the Greeks were not insolent.’

‘No?’

‘And because, if he had ransacked the lexicons of language, he would have met no adjective half so libellous upon a people with whom to be suave and kind and simple and joyous was religion.’

‘Do not lengthen speech. What else?’

‘I cannot understand how a woman can live from year to year without hearing me. How forlorn that poor man who grows old and never loved me!’

‘Your mouth is an ear-syringe, sedatively expressive of warm jets of language.’

‘I cannot sleep at night.’

‘Is ‘t so! Then there *is* some affin—’

‘Do not mention it. It becomes too obvious.’

‘When *can* you sleep?’

‘At noon: when some matter leans upon vigilance.’

‘When else?’

‘At morn: when tappings rhyme *reveille*.’

‘Proceed.’

‘When summer has me: and falling water droops a red pennant to the breathless sunset.’

‘Persist.’

‘When sermons thump and thunder: so Napoleon slumbered on the battle-field.’

‘You attend divine service?’

‘I have done so a boy.’

‘What distinguished thing have you since achieved?’

‘I have written a Book,’

‘Every one has. I myself.’

‘Not every one: I know two.’

‘What are they?’

‘Novelists.’

‘What restrains them?’

‘Self-respect, and a morbid craving for distinction.’

‘You have achieved what else?’

‘I have sighed at *Don Quixote* and *Le Tartuffe*; I have laughed at *Cato* and *Polyeucte*.’

‘Proceed.’

‘I have taught a dog to spare a mouse — to reverence and love it.’

‘My ear is the sponge of eloquence.’

‘I have said to broad-faced Jove: ‘Abnormal! Appear now before me, and I will push a spear—’

‘Why did you so speak?’

‘At sunset I had an opaline opium-dream; through the long night I paced, racking remembrance; at daybreak my worn brain grew impious, and I cried: ‘Abnormal! appear now—’

‘He did not appear?’

‘He knows what a pillow is my bosom for his head — and he knew that I had no spear.’

‘You had other weapons.’

‘You cannot attack the immortals with a quill.’

‘The challenge was quixotic. He is Spirit.’

‘Yet, by night, in a lonely upper chamber by the sea, I have *seen*.’

‘So? And what did you?’

‘I *wept*. His hair dripped a dew, and his beard, new-drenched with the storms of Saturn. He is more beautiful, I say to you, than a palace of margarita pillowed upon rainbows in mid-air, and from every ranked window there becks a wine-stained concubine of Sibmah. I, shrinking self-loathed from the long kisses of his mouth, sobbed:

‘Oh that I knew how I might bind thee to my posts, and load thee with fetters in my chamber!’ I wept till I was water.’

‘Did you speak?’

‘There was long familiarity of talk. I said: How went it with Sirius last night? And was it well with Aldebaran? Does old Neptune still retch those old belches of hell? or has a moon of Vega, swift-wheeling as the clay, slipped exorbitant of late from the treadled wheel of thy pottering? Which of the tribes of thy pasture lacks forgotten grain of thee this night, and for this whisp of me, too, can it be verily so that thou thinkest? At that he glanced the reproach of Love, and for a moment our hearts burst and flowed together: there was no division between us. He said I was not such a very whisp as I thought, because cubic bulk is nothing at all, and a soul casts a sweller shadow than a planet, the measure of things being the amount of spirit they contain. He told me I was not to trouble about Mr. Matthew Arnold and those people, at heart, most of them, philosophers; because philosophers are always wrong, and all men wrong, except one man only — the Poet! the Music-maker! right he in his errors. He assured me that he *is* ‘a magnified non-natural man in the clouds’ — and more — and elsewhere; but at least that and there, so that those who have thought so of him were *not wrong!* The Egyptians symbolised him by the cat, and he said he is that, too — and more; and a lark, and a lion — and more; and Thoth, and Pasht, and Phthah — and Nisroch and Adramalech — and whatsoever shape of Ape, or soaring Hippogriff or sideways-rearing Ram, or crouching Mixoparthenon, our whim can lend to him — and more. He told me then to call him not so much ‘Not-Myself which makes for righteousness,’ as, Abh, and Nurse, and Aītas; for that when a human male, with eyes drowning like some strong swimmer, surnames him *so*, that soft-soaps and overcomes him; and it is as though one stroked an infinite cat; the universe goes *purring* for comfort. And many killing things he said of men. He told me that he had noticed with interest my little efforts to produce beautiful things,

and that if I persevered in my passion for goodness, I should yet make one little great work of high perfectness, which should be recognised as such, not only by myself and him, but by five other cultivated persons now living; also that he had appointed a place where he would meet with me when I am older, and there open me a secret, by the knowledge of which the mystery involved in certain weird discords of the Harp would cease to be a mystery to me.'

'You are prolix.'

'I am precise.

'You have achieved what else?'

'I have 'invented' three mechanical puzzles for children.'

'Proceed.'

'I have given my last actual and foreseen six-pence to a street-lass for toffee.'

'And dreamed yourself vastly magnificent, no doubt!'

'It was magnificent. It was as grandly dissolute as the economics of Jesus or Shelley. I dreamed it so.'

'The ear is feminine: the mouth is masculine: I lie naked and wanton to your aggressions.'

'I have discovered an altogether novel *raison d'être* for serpent-worship; also for the serpent being represented by the autochthones as yoked to the car of Demeter and Triptolemus; also that Microbius was quite wrong in thinking the serpent-limbs of the giants typical of their debased emotions.'

'I am like a corn-field bending ears to the wide-whispered breaths of summer.'

'I have discovered that if Mr. Ruskin, and I, and Mr. Gladstone, and you, and Mr. Balfour, and the Harcourt sirship, all died suddenly on the same

day, considerable were thereby the disaster to England; but *less* than the disaster caused by the birth into England of one unhealthy child.'

'My ear is a weighing-machine.'

'I have gone forth to see the world: and I saw the wrong that was done: the hand of the murderer was stained; the harlot glanced behind her; by night intruded the thief. And this, having returned to my chamber, I said: In the period of the universe is a day for every dark, and in the breadth of its paradise a herb for every hurt; but the strong man who, for three running days, oppresses a weak, is an exile from Grace.'

'My ear is the Gothic door of a gloomy hermit's vault, ajar for every pilgrim.'

'I have invented a New Commandment, which, for the next two hundred years I wish to take precedence of all the commands of all the law-givers; for it includes them all, and more.'

'What is it?'

'It is hard to understand *now*; yet *will* be understood.'

'But what is it?'

'*Thou shalt be a good Citizen.*' 'There is no thoroughfare between my ears; all words attempting to pass undergo arrest.'

'I have kissed a lovely Nun.'

'My ear is the belly of vacuity!'

'I have seen three women bathe in a lakelet, and their beauty like a soul was born again in the inverted baptism of the water.'

'You interest me strangely!'

'I perceive it.'

'Tell me! where were you?'

'I was behind the oval copse that lipped the lake.'

'And you peered? You really saw?'

‘I saw.’

‘Did they look like nymphs at Tempe?’

‘They resembled British women.’

‘Tell me! what did they?’

‘The water hissed and spurted. There was hoop-hoop and laughter.’

‘Did they see you?’

‘They sniffed me — on the morning breeze. Have you observed the startled herd of antelopes, instinct wide in their darting eyes?’

‘By the Prophet! — were they ladies?’

‘One was a young viscountess — all, for the moment, were washerwomen.’

‘You are a democrat.’

‘I am a *revolutionnaire* — a thing it may be ordained that *you* shall yet be.’

‘You answer everything.’

‘You spoke.’

‘In the multitude of words is folly.’

‘But a close-fitting answer is like a plaster to the broken skin, or stays to the pappy mammae.’

‘You are a *revolutionnaire*, then. What else?’

‘A philosopher.’

‘Proceed.’

‘A poet.’

‘Persist.’

‘A Puritan Don Juan.’

‘Define ‘Puritan.’’

‘A sane miser.’

‘Define ‘Don Juan.’’

‘A body-genius.’

‘Define ‘genius’ the man.’

‘He is humanity in the kettle-spout: as steam to water to ice, so he to mankind to the brute.’

‘Define ‘genius’ the thing.’

‘Tertiary diplopia of the brain.’

‘Why tertiary?’

‘ ‘All life is disease’ — optic-nerve-obliquity. In the brute it is primary, in mankind secondary, in genius tertiary.’

‘You are what else?’

‘A pantheist.’

‘Define ‘pantheist.’”

‘A believer in God.’

‘You are what else?’

‘A humanist.’

‘Define ‘humanist.’”

‘A Christian.’

‘Define Christianity.’

‘It is the success of the attempt of which modern Gothic art is the woful failure: it is the idealisation of the commonplace.’

‘True; but I fancy trite.’

‘It is the apotheosis of the courtesan: Phryne made a constellation no less than Helen; Nana star-throned amid the galaxies no less than Stella Mans.’

‘You are apt.’

‘I am curiously felicitous.’

‘You are self-opinionated.’

‘To be felicitous is easy. To be curiously felicitous is extremely difficult.’

‘I am also curiously felicitous.’

‘What do you do for a living?’

‘I make works of fine art.’

‘What is a work of fine art?’

‘A self-consciously-wise product of the pure imagination.’

‘What is imagination?’

‘It is Euclid grown Orphic, it is winged Reason, it is the mathematics of fancy.’

‘Explain yourself.’

‘I might have said *mathesis*: it is fancy grown *précieux*, purposeful, architectural, nay, self-creative. In this last function it greatly resembles, or is, that divine Essence by which the worlds stood forth; so that a man *so* engaged may, for the moment, without presumption, call himself God and Elohim.

‘And what is fancy?’

‘The adventure-luck (*Abenteuer-Glück*) of the touring soul. ‘What else do you?’

‘I make works of gross art.’

‘What is a work of gross art?’

‘A self-consciously-wise product of the observation, more or less assisted by the fancy; or (in some branches of art) of the fancy alone.’

‘Not of the observation alone?’

‘I cannot imagine such a thing ‘self-consciously-wise.’ A blue book is not a work of art.’

‘But when the fancy alone is thus wise, is it not then imagination?’

‘I cannot answer you both shortly and convincingly. But this I will say: I have looked at a work and decided definitely in myself: this is only fancy, not imagination; dream, not apocalypse; and yet it is self-consciously-wise. *Gulliver* is an instance.’

‘Of the two kinds I need not ask which you consider the highest.’

‘They are not comparable: one is high as height itself: the other no higher than shoe-clouting (which also is high).’

‘The highest is, of course, the hardest.’

‘They are not comparable: one is the hardest of the possible matters upon which the spirit of a man may engage: it is the snatching of flame from the heavenly gods: premiering, for instance, being a trifling business in comparison. The other, to the practised, is, or should be, cheaper than — matches.

‘Do not spread your answers. To distinguish between the two kinds, you should first of all define art in general. Is it definable?’

‘Those moustachio slippers — the gleaming of yonder tapers — are not so cleanly definable.’

‘It is not then a vague something, the precise nature of which nobody (or only a few mysteriously sage persons) quite knows?’

‘Its precise nature has over and over again been well known to everybody then living.’

‘What then is it?’

‘As the etymology of the word betokens, it is simply a ‘fitting-together.’”

‘So if I adjust this stem in my hookah, and thus effect a fitting-together, that is art?’

‘Yes, that is art; if, in doing so, you have, and accomplish, a specific purpose other than smoking.’

‘Well, define it. My ear is a barren old womb.’

‘Art, then, is the production, by elaborate new contrivance, of intended effects upon intended minds.’

‘That is your inclusive-exclusive definition?’

‘It is.’

‘It is short.’

‘It is exhaustive. It swaddles the universe. And it is the Greek radical conception.’

‘The notion of fitting-together is, I presume, contained in your word ‘contrivance’?’

‘Yes. But I apologise for ‘elaborate.’ I do not quite mean what I say. I do not, for example, mean ‘complex.’ By ‘elaborate’ I half mean elaborate and half deliberate. Perhaps ‘laboured’ would be better; yet I somehow prefer ‘elaborate.’”

‘You speak of *intended* minds.’

‘Yes; for though the scarecrow was a work of art, it is not one for wingless me; Peterborough would affect a Tahitian, or a Tahitian-like Englishman, but not produce the effect intended by the architect; while *The Creation* would produce no effect at all except a humming bewilderment. So a friend of mine writes tales only for persons who are drunk, and to such his works accordingly give great delight; and I have myself written a piece which no one uninfluenced by the sulphate

of morphia could fully appreciate. You know, too, how the highest kind of poetry, the Greek myths for instance, seems simply silly to unpoetical people. So, too, there are passages in Milton and Euripides which, from a certain lack of humour or time-spiritedness, could be poetry to no living person, and yet, I think, are good art: poetry to some of their contemporaries.’

‘You speak of *intended* effects.’

‘Yes; for a work may produce an admirable effect, yet if not the effect intended by the maker, or if he had no precise intention on planning the work, then the work is clearly not a work of *art*, but of something else.’

‘Your definition is exclusive: thus we speak of the Physician’s Art, the Art of War.’

‘We speak wrongly. Art is the production of effects upon *minds*. The steam-engine is not a work of art; but the scarecrow is.’

‘But if a general causes the enemy to think him in one place when he is in another?’

‘That is art — if his contrivance be new.’

‘Or if by his conduct, he strike terror into the foe, or inspire his own troops?’

‘That is art — if his conduct be purposeful of those effects.’

‘Alexander at the Hydaspes annihilated with a wretched army the masses of Porus and his elephants.’

‘Supposing Arrian exact, that was one part art, and nine parts mechanical ingenuity. Jay Gould or Mr. Edison could have done it — or nine parts of it.’

‘You speak of *new* contrivance.’

‘Yes; for it is clear that, though the inventor of the three-card trick (whatever that be) was a genuine artist, no one would call the *second* operator by such a name.’

‘But suppose some one now invents a similarly wise new fraud with *cards*?’

‘He indeed. I do not, of course, mean that the whole paraphernalia of an art-work must be new. The second man who painted a picture was not *altogether* novel.’

‘What then do you mean?’

‘Only that the chain of thought, starting from a knowledge of the mind to be acted upon, which precedes the execution of the work, must in the main

be new; must be not such as has, in the main, been previously welded in one's own or another's mind.'

'And now for fine art and gross art; how are they known?'

'By their effects.'

'Explain.'

'The effect of one is fine; the effects of the other are gross.'

'What are fine effects? what gross?'

'The child on being born, weeps, and laughs, is afraid, scratches himself, and physically lusts. He needs no work to teach him these things. Nor does any such work add at all to his *culture*. To Fear, Laughter, etc., were temples at Sparta — but not at Athens.'

'Proceed. My ear—'

'The characteristic of a gross work of art is this: that though its contrivance is new, its effects are old. It merely reincites in the man emotions the same as, or similar to, those which arose spontaneously in the child. Broadly speaking, its ultimate effects are muscular, rather than nervous. It never wins the mind into a state it dreamed not of before; into the doing of a thing it did not before.'

'Laughter, tears, horror, lust, etc., you call gross: and yet some of our highest artists, our Dickens, and Thackeray and Zola—'

'*Ne me citez pas ces gens-là!*' 'You are angry.'

'Two know better. For the third hot knowledge waits.'

'You believe in a Lake — —'

'No. But I believe that a man, or a nation, cannot take a fluent, or haphazard, or vulgar book, and say: I will go lounge and complacently dram-drink this for titillation: it will do me no good: it can work me no harm. In truth, it will work harm. It is ordained that the man, the nation, shall be more fluent, more haphazard, vulgar.'

‘And you think that the person who *writes* such in large quantities—’

‘Does a big thing!’

σχέτλια έργα!

If there are pains and penalties reserved, they are for him.’

‘But people are not compelled to read—’

‘Yes. Mr. Matthew Arnold, indeed, has told them to read ‘only the best’; and that, as you know, is one of those lucky sayings whose unexpected wisdom does not fail to surprise one the longer one thinks of it: wise — but quite futile: until this other counsel be added: See, somehow, that nothing but the best be *written* in your nation. For Mr. Arnold might just as well have said: ‘Drink nothing but mountain-lymph,’ to a people upon whom the gin-shop presses omnipresent from birth, for all the world like a law of nature. The people, of course, will *not* drink mountain- lymph, until you close the shop-doors — with a bang, too, of such crude fanatic violence, that it shall go sounding through the nations, and reach the very throne of Heaven, giving pleasure *there*. Now, a person who, knowing that there are too many, keeps open an *old* shop, is, of course, a bad citizen but how of him who opens a *new* one? he, surely, is a great criminal. And with regard to books, I say this: That you will never persuade Lord Tom and Mr. Dick really to study Dante (who will make them cultured), until you find means to induce, or compel, M. Zola (who makes them fallow) to write — for the love of God — no more. And if I seem to you to speak strongly, it is not that I speak strongly, but that you do not suffer from a weakness of which I, by no effort, can rid myself: the weakness of dearly loving Tom and Dick, and of cordially detesting the foolish or knavish person who, for his own pleasures, does them hurt.’

‘By ‘fluent’ do you mean ‘wordy’?’

‘That, and if there is anything worse, then that: cataclysmic incontinence, salivation, letter- writing literature, pen-talk. The *tongue*, you know, was made for talking; the pen, on the other hand, is the modern substitute for the graver on stone, and, in literature, should be used with the same agony of curiosity. The Ten Commandments did not, you know, fill many Minerva volumes, for each letter was the work of a day. But how, says Thackeray, do the thoughts, unsuspected before, flow to us when once we take pen in hand! Notice the insolent *us*. *Us*, one hopes, meant only self, Dickens, and crew; for being a reader of Greek and Hebrew books, he must have known that some of *us* know very well what we must say long before we take the pen in hand, and know too that any addition of ‘happy thoughts’ to that will mean the hopeless ruin of our clean undertaking.’

‘But ‘Shabby-genteel People’ is certainly very pleasant rea—’

‘Do not speak in that way. ‘Sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind;’ take that phrase, whoever made it, as a model of good writing, and believe that all art-writing which essentially differs from it is more or less base. Here you have agonised reticence — and with it, ‘opium’ enough, halo, — the few (twelve) words producing a *super*-abundant impression, expressing, as it were, vastly more than they say. They paint a picture, not for the mind’s-eye, but for the *inner* mind’s-eye of fantasy; are not really picturesque at all (as I think Coleridge said of Milton), but *musical*; related, that is, less to the art of painting than to the art of sounds, and so are directed to the mind’s *ear*; or say again, are not a word-picture but a word-aria. Which of your ‘happy-thought’ men, forgetful of the denunciation against spoken idle words (aimed how much more against written?), but would have whelmed the world with a chapter of vulgar incident and small-talk, or the deluge of half a volume, to produce the complete effect of that one word “Operos”?’

‘But you are severe—’

‘Not, you mean. Have you considered the significance of the fact that not one of the really decent minds of our century, the Carlyles, etc., will have anything to do with prose fine art, ashamed and scared from any species of association with the singular crew who purport to practise it? In consequence of which, the word ‘novelist’ or ‘fictionist’ has now got to carry with it a certain slight social opprobrium, like the words ‘coroner’ ‘butcher,’ ‘lord-mayor,’ ‘policeman;’ so that *you*, for instance, now think somewhat less of a gentleman after hearing that he is a person of that trade than before hearing. I at least do. Thus have we debased the Holy of Holies; and to such a point brought it with our floods of words. Says Plutarch: We are pleased with perfumes and purple, while dyers and perfumers appear in the light of mean mechanics. And Hosea: Because thou hast rejected knowledge, therefore have I rejected thee that thou be no priest to *Me*. You know, too, how one at least of the men you have mentioned thought it nothing odd to go about proclaiming, with a species of city-clerk pride, his innocence of — *Greek!*’

‘But we hardly still consider that inability fatal—’

‘It is, however. Imagine a Christian preacher who had never heard of the Bible! Greek art is, of course, the Bible of artists; in so much that some people could not string a dozen decent English sentences on the same day on which they had not read some sort of Greek writing. So, too, you are a Prime Minister: is it likely that you will effect the supreme in statecraft, if you have not soaked yourself with the supremest done in that line from the beginning? Except indeed you be a man of altogether stupendous intellect.’

‘But I notice you prolix. You are long-winded in your answers.’

‘Not willingly. You force me by your dulness.’

‘Dull me no dulness.’

‘Long-wind me no long-windedness.’

‘Let us proceed. We have now spoken of gross art and its gross effects; what are the fine effects of fine art?’

‘Its effect is always uniform.’

‘You surprise me.’

‘Uniform, I mean, as to genus, not as to species. The genus of the effects produced by two beautiful women is the same; their species different.’

‘What is the uniform genus of its effect?’

‘An effect of Beauty.’

‘This cream of pomegranate appears beautiful to my senses: is my *chef* then a fine artist in reference to me?’

‘No. The beauty of the custard lacks two qualities which, did it possess them, would prove your *chef* a fine artist.’

‘So that not *any* beauty will do for the fine artist? but only a certain special beauty having two invariable qualities?’

‘That is so.’

‘What then are they?’

‘Novelty (or Uniqueness); and Infinity.’

‘Novelty. That then makes yet a difference between the work of gross and of fine art? For whereas the gross is novel in its contrivance, but old in its effects; the fine is novel both in its contrivance, and the species of its effect. Is ‘t so?’

‘You are observant and exact.’

‘Why *must* the gross be novel in its contrivance?’

‘By definition and three-card illustration: otherwise it were not art.’

‘And now Infinity. What *do* you mean?’

‘Only that the task of the better kind of artist is not to create ‘new forms of beauty’; but to create new forms of *such* beauty as shall suggest, in *some*

manner, at *some* point, were it but for a moment, what includes, and is more than, the *allgemein*, that is to say, the Infinite.'

'But I do not understand this of Infinity. I am practical. You are vague.'

'Earth is of the same hue as the skies, though a taint of yellow infects her azure to terrestrial green; yet, even so, the *sea*, you know, regains the celestial chrome. Or say again: Man is but a little lower than the angels; the veil that divides them may, here a little, there a little, be lifted. The hint, then, of every great art-work is this: Homo is, or may be made to suggest, a tremendous fellow — a head higher than his collar! — important to the gods! He *looks* most absurdly small, but only unbosom your tape and try the *shadow* of him athwart the abysms. His body is more than raiment, his life is more than breakfast-table Autocracies, genialities! And if you want *certain* proof of the very high humour that is in him, just cast a glance at this very woof which I, a man, have been weaving here! That, I think, is what the Greek tragedies wanted to say, and said, and could not utterly say.'

'Do you make Fine Art a kind of 'handmaid to religion'?'

'Nonsense. It is religion itself.'

'You consider *De Rerum Naturâ* and *Queen Mab* religious?'

'Quite infinitely.'

'Explain yourself.'

'If *laborare* is *orare*, how much more is *elaborare*?'

'I begin to see.'

'*Operosa parvus carmina lingo.*' — I, little chiel, potter my toilsome songs. Is not that religion? How humble, haughty. Suppose your *chef* sits him down, and, meekly believing that there dwells in man an infinite spirit, shall so build upon his knowledge of your nature a fabric of deliberate reasoning, that he shall thereby evolve a novel custard, of which *you*, tricked, shall exclaim: This, of a surety, is none other than own sister to that

ambrosia of the *heavens*, which, if a man eat, he shall never die! then is he a fine artist. Fail not to sinecure *him*. He has made you a cultured man, he has saved your soul alive.'

'I see. And this, you say, is an effect only to be wrought by imagination.'

'Only so, when it is a genuine art-effect. But it may also be wrought by inspiration.'

'Why may it not be wrought by observation?'

'Because one invariable element of all high beauty is, as has so often been said, a certain divine 'strangeness.' We do not, you know, kiss a hand to the sun at noon: but to the White-One, walking in shining? and to her, *because* she is queer-eyed, and dishevelled, and lunatic. And the *midnight* sun again? And that furious world, the sunset? And that most weird aenigma of Mrs. Langtry's charitoblepharous eyes? Of *such* is the Kingdom of Heaven. Have you observed the very singular character of the landscape in Burne-Jones's 'Looking-glass'? Or those 'Golden Stairs' which never curved on earth?... Now, let it be admitted at once that there is nothing more 'strange' than the commonplace — a sphinx not a whit more than a cat: only, the common-place cannot by any goading be made to *seem* strange, and since art is the production of seemings, that is why you find *all* the great art of the ages concerned with sphinxes, and never at all with cats. A cat it certainly is, you know, and not a sphinx, which Thackeray would have set up at the Pyramids; and he would have made a monstrous big one, too, and a very knowing-looking one, to the whiskers; just such a one as he one day *chanced* to see on some Dowager's lap; so that people would have flocked, crying: 'See now, how like a real cat, and how startling a cat-knower have we with us, subtil to catch in stone the very simper of dowager-cats!' The Egyptians, however, though not themselves the greatest artists, yet immeasurably greater than Thackeray, thought differently, and

gave to the world what you know. So you see that he who reports his observations must necessarily report the antithesis of the ‘strange,’ that is to say, the commonplace; and even when his selection of the things reported is most scrupulous and wise, he will fail to produce an impression of true loveliness, since all, or nearly all, his parts being of one *genre*, his whole cannot be of another.’

‘Why cannot such an effect be wrought by fancy?’

‘Because another invariable element of all high beauty is a certain accuracy, an *exact* justice of its parts: and this impression can only be produced by a faculty *mathematical* in its operations — possessing a delicate *conscience* of error and fitness. A square moon, or Hermes with the beard of Jove, would be still beautiful, but no longer divinely so. In reading *Gulliver*, people say: ‘This is good, yet had I written it, I had written it different; and better.’ But no one ever studied, the earlier books of the *Odyssey* without a feeling that they different were they spoiled; they seem, in fact, as minutely just as the intergravitation of the planets, and have all the look of construction by a being half machine, half man, and half — something higher.’

‘He was thus a Homer and a half.’

His third was his ‘better half’: it was that spirit of loveliness to which he was wed.’

‘And this, you say, is an effect only to be wrought by the pure imagination? Yet the *Odyssey*, at least, undoubtedly contains much that was once ‘commonplace,’ and so must have been partly a work of ‘observation.’”

‘You are wrong. The subject of Art is not Man, but his shadow. Homer makes all *his* fine artists *blind*, *incapable* of contemporary ocular observation; was himself blind. ‘Blind Thamyras, blind Maeonides, and

Teirisias and Phineus, prophets old.’ Similarly every fine artist must be blind; having ‘converted’ eyes,— ‘dead’ or blind to the earthly vulgar, and ‘alive’ or seeing to the heavenly lovely.’

‘But *why*? The Aphrodite of Praxiteles was a work ‘infinite’ in beauty, producing an intense degree of ‘novel’ rapture upon the ‘intended’ minds:* a product therefore of the pure imagination. Yet the statue stands upon two legs, not upon one nor three. Was not this due to the fact that the artist had ‘observed’ that women in general have two legs?’

[* If I remember right, people ran agape from all over cultured Greece to see this stone. Yet Mr. Ruskin says that there was nothing specially ‘beautiful’ in Greek sculpture, and thence infers that there are people now living lovelier than the loveliest of the Greeks. It would be weird if this were so. But Mr. Ruskin confutes himself when he proceeds to assert that body is only the expression of mind; for if this be true, then an average Greek must have been as much lovelier than the loveliest of moderns, as Euclid or Archimedes (to say nothing of Plato) was more radically cunning than Mr. Ruskin. I say *average*, for not mind, but body, seems to have been the sphere of their highest development. It is, in fact, almost certain that they were lovelier than they were mental; and everybody, except Dryden, knows that they were mentaler than the mentalest.]

‘But do not the waves yield to the homely sense of a little paraffin?’

‘You seek to puzzle me: that is clear. Better seek to gyve the whirlwind with withes. You cannot, you know, instil into the wild zebra the love of poppy; nor teach the tossing limbs of ocean to swear allegiance to mandrake.’

‘The oil must be genuine mineral; bilge-water will not do. And if you are not wrong as to all this, you are at least wrong-headed. Imagination, from its very nature, is a faculty which does not work in collaboration with

another. It is sole. Its attitude is, if anything, one of *hostile* superiority to nature. Herr God made cold meat, Mrs. Lazenby pickles. I praise both, but give the apple to the lady. But there is *one* little bit of nature to which imagination pays devoutest homage: the nature, namely, of the mind which it seeks to influence. Now, it is a principle of this mind that in animal-figures it shall perceive the highest beauty when the animal has two legs, not more, nor less. And to the artist's consciousness of *this* fact, not to his observation that women have two legs, was due the shape of the Aphrodite. Nor must you think this a mere quibble, the result being the same, anyway; for, on the contrary, here you have the very *radix* of the difference between gross art and fine; and oftentimes the result is far from being the same, anyway; inasmuch as not all things that we see are utterly fit, as is the number of a woman's legs. And if the Creator had made the mistake of giving to her three legs, or, still worse, only one, be sure that Praxiteles, whatever Giotto might have done, would have detected the slip, and given to his Aphrodite two. Nay, even where the arrangement of nature *is* utterly fit, imagination sometimes does not hesitate, in attacking the mind on some of its sides, to take the law into its own hands, and with victorious masterfulness bid total defiance to nature: thus Homer gave to Odysseus two eyes, but to the Cyclops only one; nor must you think either more triumphant, credible, deep-rooted, than the other. In the relief at Ellora, too, of the beauteous Parvati and Siva, the latter has four arms, not two. And *this* one gets to feel to be right.'

'But has not George Eliot said something about the duty of the artist to reproduce the world as it stands; to see life 'without opium'?'

'Yes, she seems to have been a lightsome hen, that lady. Imagine Gounod writing a Serenade, Shakespeare a *Winter's Tale*, Euripides a *Hippolytus*, without opium! Stockbrokers, you know, see life 'without opium'; doctors,

jurymen, prime ministers; and see it, from birth, without opium, because without effort. The artist, *sacer vates*, or whatever you call him, used to consider himself greater than all these, because to him alone of men was granted force to scale Olympus, to descend even into the dim house of Aides, in order, as if by fire, to come at some little opium: so remotely shy a thing is opium; so difficult to be sure that one has not, after all one's trouble, clutched nothing but the mere thin nauseating ghost of it.'

'You advocate, then, the 'opium-traffic'?'

'Human life were impossible without it. Richly (in places) has it been used by the Arch-Poet in his plan of the world. You know very well what your wife is, what Helen was: a mass of gore and livery carrion — glamoured over with a pink skin. Not that the skin was *really* pink, or the sky blue, or that there is any sky there: but only pink, and there, and blue to *our* eyes. Nay, that very skin, I now hear, was full of worms, and little objectionable creatures living at ease, but so cunningly adapted to the opiated eyes of Paris, that sacred Troy has fallen, and to you life becomes possible and even musical. Putrescence, then, if we abolish that too languishing traffic.'

'Imagination, by your suggestions, must be uncommon among men?'

'In England, a reviewing gentleman tells me, there are now published annually hundreds of fiction-works and pictures, which are bad all through; in which, he means, there is not *anything* richly good (a new product of human industry, I fancy, for the sun to see), and in every one of these, if you look, you will probably find traces of imagination — a certain impotent imagination, unconscious of itself.'

'The faculty is common then?'

'If every man has it not, then nearly every man.'

'What then is precious?'

‘Poetical imagination: imagination so freely, yet fastidiously imaginative, that its product becomes poetical, *musical* (*μουσικός*) in its effect. One sort amuses, ‘gives pleasure’ to vulgar people, and refined people in low moods; the other bemuses, gives translation to refined people.’

‘Illustrate yourself.’

‘Contrast *Don Quixote* with *Round the World in Eighty Days*; contrast *L’Homme Qui Rit* with *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; *Astarte Syriaca* with Leighton’s *Solitude* or some one’s *Doctor*; the Doge’s Palace with the Tour Eiffel!’

‘And that higher imagination is, you say, rare?’

‘It is always rarer than platinum; it is generally rarer than rubidium; it is sometimes as rare as the dodo.’

‘But is not this imagination that you call ‘impotent,’ or ‘non-poetical’ or ‘non-musical’ closely akin to mere unyoked fancy?’

‘You are right. They are, in fact, hardly distinguishable. And yet, by looking into myself, I feel certain they are distinct.’

‘And now tell me: what is the reason of the scarcity, if they are scarce, of these ‘fine effects’ of which you speak among us?’

‘There are many. The age is iron, art-infidel, *Assyrian*.’*

[* Very curious, in truth, is the resemblance between, say, the modern novel, and the sculptures of Nineveh; nor could any one to whom it was once pointed out fail to notice it; the crude, and revolting (because absolute) fidelity to life in the hinder parts of the winged bulls especially, and the fingers of the kings, is very instructive. Add to the lifelikeness of the bulls the raw instinctive reaction against mere imitation of nature indicated by the *incoherent* fancy of their *wings*, and you have the modern novel. It seems,

however, that a certain indefinable supremacy of vulgarity was reserved by the ages for the contemporaries of M. Zola.]

‘That is vague.’

‘The Greeks, I have said, were gentle and joyous, and *kind*. Their hearts were most simple, sensitive, religious. With all their dreadful tragedies, they could not bear a murder on the stage. When Telemachus sneezed (horrid was the hoop-hoop!) Penelope *laughed*. Only such people are fancy-free: and fancy is the raw material of fine art.’

‘Another.’

‘We, artists and nation, think more of a hundred pound *avoir-du-poids*, and the gold of Paz and Kharûts, than of an all-wifely adjective, or a wraithly metaphor, or the symmetry of a right tale, or the flight of a continent curve; love money and *éclat* better than the perfection of beauty.’

The Greeks confessedly loved money and *éclat*.’

‘That is so. Most corn-eating men. But if you see no world of difference between their love and ours, you are a bad reader, and your instincts are awry.’

‘Another.’

‘Partly, I suppose, owing to the character of our thoughts, the nations have not yet attained to a high degree of physical beauty. From childhood our senses grow hardened to *all* forms of terrestrial poverties, cruelties, horrors.’

‘Proceed.’

‘The audience of our fine artists is small — few and hardly fit. They work only for a ‘tenth’ — and the only unimportant tenth — of mankind. The mass, who, in the end, might possibly be stern and right critics, do not study such work for two reasons.’

‘What?’

‘They are still too poor; and still too rude.’

‘Do they not read and understand Dickens? Jan van Beers?’

‘But not Tennyson and Rossetti; they appreciate the ‘music-hall’; Beethoven is the buzz-oozing sea-shell to their ear. The Greek proletariat, on the contrary, seems to have appreciated to the full the very highest art.’

“‘Buzz-zoozing’ is *beau*. It is nicely onomatopoeic without being nonsense, like the ‘shattering’ trumpet. Is it original?’

‘Yes. It deserves a permanent place in the memory of man. But do not suppose that nonsense makes ‘shattering’ less beautiful. Both words are absolute, right. They depend for their production upon faculties far finer and more venerable than those which won Austerlitz, or invented the phonograph. They are more precious than the corals of P’ninim, or the ruby of Sultan Giamschid, or the collars of Mahmood’s—’

‘Let another man praise thee, and not thy own mouth!’

‘But if you want a thing well done, you must do it yourself: you must not leave it to others. For maxim, you see, I wreak you maxim, for parable, parable. Besides, you must not think me weak enough to praise myself: it is Homer that I praise, the poet, the party of God.’

‘Another reason.’

‘Women, now first in history, attack in large numbers high-art subjects. This must degrade not only women, but art.’

‘But! — I strongly differ from you. Why so?’

‘If you are going to differ from me, you should cease your questioning. You cannot suppose that I would wilfully mislead you, and you may well give me credit for knowing the rudimentary facts of a subject, the inner secrets of which I might be supposed to know for certain.’

‘Yet you make two statements: prove them. Why does it degrade *woman*?’

‘The Maker, in his making, was not *often* an artist: the sun, quinine, cat’s-meat, for instance, he made not so much for the admiration of the eyes which perceive them as for vastly other reasons. Occasionally, however, he said: Come now, we will do something for the Nerve! And *then*, the thing produced was so *excessively* effective, that a danger of *lunacy*, moon-sickness, overtook the intended beholder. Now, of such kind was our weaving dear, the loaf-giver; the penumbra of this place of shadow; our hint of light; a work of fine art— ‘unique’— ‘infinite.’ Here, certainly, the Artist outdid himself. He blushed shame for his crude tinkering upon the seraphs when he saw completed Woman. So far he overshot, that man found it necessary to *veil* her glory, to her very face in some countries, lest at her nakedness the world rush into frenzy of admiration; and to this day, if a young man meet a maid in the lanes of spring, broad-faced Jove, where he sits, pondering upon the sum of things, knows what is pending. He smiles. The father of gods and men is not without a sense of humour. He says: ‘That old sex-idea of mine, though far-fetched- seeming at first, has turned out a fine success, after all, and still works. I shall now watch those two into the glades of the forest, and see what shall there grow up.’ Now, this I say: that when woman produces to the utmost this complex fine-art effect upon the world, as does not fail whenever her functioning is pure womanly and intended, then is she at her supremest, fulfilling the law of her being; and that it is pure womanly and intended when it is *felt* to be so by the intended minds, and when not felt to be so, not so; but if she subtract at all from herself, you get an effect of hair-cutting; and if she add at all to herself, you get an effect of *rouge*; and it is as though one added to, or subtracted from, the Odyssey — the result, anyway, degradation.’

‘Why does the art of woman degrade *art*?’

‘Because it can only have the effect of causing the proportion of low-class work to vastly preponderate over the high: always a great calamity when it occurs in a nation.’

‘But that surely is not a final answer. For what reason *must* their work be low?’

‘Every work of art is a new, self-sure experiment — nothing fundamentally resembling it was yet seen. And this from the very meaning of the word *Art*. That is to say, art is more inventive than the son of Maia, it is more aggressive than war, than piracy. And women are, by structure, non-aggressive, non-inventive.’

‘That is opinion. You cannot prove it.’

‘Not opinion as to aggressiveness, surely? but aggressiveness is one element of inventiveness: and a thing cannot exist without all its elements. Nor do I even mean that women are *never* aggressive: for I see daily that they are somewhat so, and Moses would contradict me with one too fearful example: but only that she is not naturally so: that if she step forward alone, she will, by some sure instinct, do it with a certain ataxic *gaucherie*, as when she throws a stone; that her aggression is transgression. Milton makes our general mother plunge her leg into a deepish vacuum by taking a morning walk alone, I think? Makes her, you know, *more* aggressive than our general ancestor, goody Adam; but whereas it is she who hits upon the idea of eating the wrong pulp, it is he who invents right clothes. Not rightly aggressive then, not rightly inventive. And I can prove, at any rate, that to this hour a woman has not invented anything — not even the needle, not the distaff, not the pot. And this, if you look into yourself, you will find that you know *by instinct*. Miriam and ‘all the women’ went out with timbrels and with dances; but we know that the timbrels were the invention of a man; and, if the dances were very good, then the dances.’

‘Sappho and her sapphics?’

Do not refer to that poor lady — she pined for *me*, and I was long in being born; hence these tears and sapphics. I have a fancy (though one knows little of Sappho) that you would hit nearer the mark if you said crude Emily Brontë, or even narcotic Jane Porter. But every savage knows that the world’s hardest work, its fighting, and ploughing, and prophesying, must be done by men; and *we*, too, know it, and instinctively decide that women lack force to make good premiers: and if premiers, how much more high artists? And *this* last fact also we should know, were it not for a radical misconception in our nineteenth-century minds as to the awful venerableness and difficulty of fine art. If you cannot, however long you try, produce so great a poem, or new-musical-thing-made, as ‘Il Penseroso’ or ‘Lewti,’ you may be sure that the reason is that Milton and Coleridge were better premiers than you: for from their very decent flying, you may conclude their admirable running, and their all-surpassing walking. So when I tell you that I cannot spin a top, nor add up figures, I want you to understand that I can spin and add them much better than Lord Tom or Mr. Dick — if I could be persuaded to try. Now this I say of Sappho and her sapphics: that the Almighty has ordained that there shall be one thing *impossible* for a man, possible for a woman: to gestate, to bear; and, in compensation, one thing impossible for a woman, possible for a man: to beget, create; the outward structure, to the very skull-shape, thigh-bone, being, in each case, an expression of the inner. Of course, you may have mental, as you have physical, hermaphrodites; but the characteristic of such a being is not, you know, that it performs *both* the male and female functions equally well; but that, on the whole, it performs *neither* well; being, in truth, a neutrality, or No Thing.’

‘But—’

‘Why, after all, ‘but’ me? You must know that what I say is true; and if you do not know it, read too-didactic Milton and the rest of them; and if you gashly think that you know better than *He*, then neither will you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.’

‘But do you not then consider that women should be professional persons, doctors, and the like?’

‘That question takes me beyond the sphere of my special knowledge. I am not sure. But does not Mr. Ruskin, who seems to be an expert in ladies, point out that Helen, Circe, etc., were excellent druggists? They did not, indeed, *sell* their knowledge of drugs, for they were genuine ladies, or loaf-givers; but if you can once get over your objection to a lady of your family selling herself, I should think that women, with their preternatural powers of observation, quick brains, and infallible little peepy wisdom, might make splendid scientists, and discoverers in science. But she cannot beget a child; she cannot make a new thing.’

‘But do not women write excellent novels?’

‘*You* are right. And the mere fact that *so* many women write *such* excellent novels, should be an indication to a waking *mind* that there is something fearfully and wonderfully wrong with the *novel*; that it is not, in fact, a true art-form; or, in any case, has long since ceased to be novel, or capable of novelty. The idea of presenting a picture of contemporary life in book-shape, though a good historical or scientific *motif*, was not at any time, in my opinion, a good *art-motif* — especially when that contemporary life happened to be the last possibility in the way of hideousness; but, at any rate, the idea once contained this great art-element — that it was *new*: and that this was its chief merit in the eyes of its inventor and his contemporaries is proved by the name ‘novel,’ which they gave to its product. But when this *motif* had been used for the second, the tenth time?

Why then, its only merit had vanished, and with it the thing's reason for existence. And as a matter of fact, so base a century as the eighteenth (for you cannot count *Belphegor* and the like) could not have been expected to produce an art-form at the same time new and good. So that he who would now be both fictionist and fine-artist must revert, like the Norwegian, to the old forms, or begin to cast about him for entirely new forms, or, at least, for characters and incidents of a wholly different kind, very much less life-like — equally *alive* — very much more artificial, artistic.'

'Unlifelike, and yet alive?'

'It is difficult, *because* high; but not, of course, impossible. I know a gentleman who is a great writer. He is well-to-do. He does not publish. But he causes to be made four copies of each of his productions, which he distributes to four friends who form his public. His aim in life is to produce five or six short pieces in prose which shall be in no way inferior to any of the works of God; and, in fact, those of his works which I have seen have all the self-assurance and *heiterkeit*, the coherence and profundity, of works of Nature. (They are inferior, of course, in mere bulk; but bulk is nothing at all: for if the world had been made orange-size, and all else in the universe to correspond, nothing would have been lost.) Now, this is his way: the name of each of his tales is a *place*-name with the word 'At' prefixed — the name of some conceived environment, or say rather, of some imagined world, which is never really *this* world, though it purports to be; nor are his characters really men, though they purport to be. They are more unlifelike than Lear, than Oedipus, and as alive, coherent, as Scott's crude Louis, or Plutarch's younger Cato: that is to say, are *creations* — makings out of *nothing*: words not *wholly* meaningless when applied to the operations of a divinely-gifted human spirit which thinks it not robbery to be equal with God. He is, indeed, a *disciple* of God, and imitates the methods of his

Master, but does not copy his *work*: for why, he says, should that which is once done be twice done? As to the execution of his conceptions, everything is artificial, nice; a sentence, a detail, transposed from one piece to another would spoil both; he has no invariable ‘style’ of his own — and would regard with some contempt a critic who spoke of his ‘style’ — for each tale is written in a different ‘literary manner’ (itself sometimes an invention, or else borrowed from some Greek), the manner of all others, best suited to the hue of *that* particular world; nay, one part of one piece is written this way, another that: for here he is concise as a *précis*-writer, there all ordered flowers and fancies, anon he pretends to be bitingly philosophic, and yonder you find him bawling like hell. And the whole is the complete expression and impression of a new *mood*; that is to say, does what a piece of music does; and is, in fact, a piece of music; apparently as perfect, and certainly as unique, as Mars or Venus, a-singing *their* diverse ‘angel-songs.’”

‘Another reason.’

‘You cannot conceive how amusingly fast we all work. Olympus quivers with gay, immortal paunches; the very apes and turkey-cocks stutter merriment.’

‘The very *apes*, you say—’

‘Yes. Agatharcus said: I despatch my pictures without over-travail. Zeuxis replied: If I boast, it shall be of the long-drawn slowness with which I enter upon mine. The better sort of artist, at that time, not at all considering himself called upon to produce the good (which is easy), but to produce the best (which is nearly impossible).’

‘Almost you persuade me.’

‘Do you remember the meaning of the contemptuous Greek word *autoschediastes*? No? It is a word well worth adoption into English. You

should use it in a speech against some one. It means, '*one who speaks or works off-hand; a novice.*' Very well; that is what we are. Not trembling eremite fitters-together of things born and pining for approximation, and choicely culled by winged adventure from the four quarters of the searched universe — but happy-go-lucky ones — persons with note-books (of all things) — trusters in the god of chance, and in that epidemic of most cheap appreciation which is now working the moral, artistic, and political hurt of Europe — content, and teaching the world contentment, with the approximate, the passable, and everywhere shooting the thin, plenteous excrement of our dysenteric brains — improvisers — naturists, not artists — *autoschediastae.*'

'How do you prove all—'

'Consider only: almost any one of our prominent fictionists probably produces more, numbering the words, in a year or two than one of the old fellows in a lifetime; and more in a lifetime than all the Greeks in *their* added lifetimes. The reason *may* be, of course, that we possess vastly more brain-power than they. Do *you* think that is the reason?'

'Ha! ha! ha! no.'

'Ha! ha! ha!'

'Ha! ha! ha!'

'He! he! no — I agree with you — that can hardly be the reason.'

'It seems alarming.'

'It seems like the beginning of the end of something or other.'

'But the Greeks wrote mostly rhythm?'

'And is rhythm then so much harder than prose? You cannot mean that. Its flight indeed is somewhat higher, but remember that they are both flight: for if prose be not flight, then what is it at all? and whyever is it written, except for scientific and news-giving purposes? And have you considered in

what lies the special difficulty of rhythm? Milton says it must be ‘simple, sensuous, and in trouble’ (he used the word ‘passionate,’ but meant in trouble, or *empressé* there being no English ‘passion’ in the Odyssey, or in Milton’s greatest: *P. Regained*). In a late age, however, it must be a fourth thing, as Milton well knew: it must be solemn or usual, or its effect will be a laugh; but it must also be novel, or it will not be art; and it is in the nice conciliation of these two hostile claims that the difficulty of the architectural part of modern poetry seems to lie. Our poets, I must say, appear to me to err on the side of usualness; on the other hand, in the personage Whitman, potentially one of the greatest of poets, but without cultivated intimacy with literature, and so without any notion of the difficulty of fine art in general and the need of solemnity in particular, you have a man aiming at being a music-maker, and succeeding indeed in being poetical or musical, but not in being a poet or maker at all. Now prose, almost freed from this conflict between solemnity, or usualness, and novelty, is yet all the more burdened with the necessity of being novel: and it is easier to be solemn than to be novel. Moreover, the temptation to fly loosely is always greater in prose, and since there is always pain in resisting temptation, that is an added hardship. But however all that be, it seems to me the merest axiom that the sum-total of a nation’s art should be small in bulk, small and precious. If it is large, then you have a *proof* that the nation is vulgar; and you have a *cause* of ever accelerated vulgarity.

‘Do you and your contemporaries call this voluminous work fine art?’

‘I am not sure, but I fancy so. We sometimes even unbosom to the public papers, with exquisite lack of humour and dignity, yet with the darkly mysterious unbendings of hierophants, the precise way in which we do our thaumaturgies. One illustrious, as by some chance I have read, avows that, about to ‘invent’ a work, he sits crouched over a fire, smoking a pipe, ‘for a

few hours, thinking *hard*;' rises then, victory sitting on his brow, crying, 'I have done it!' Can fancy frame you a more droll, yet pathetic figure than that poor carle sitting there, unable to answer the question: *why?* yet bent, islanded in smoke, with eye stern, hair revert, mindless, yet thinking '*hard*,' miraculously believing in his light cube-root of a heart that he is doing '*it*'? *It*, mind you — not something which has been done many times before *ad nauseam*, and which there is not the slightest necessity to do again, if it be not to fill the illustrious man's own unamiable void places. It cannot, you know, be a very light matter to give a new impression to Mr. Gladstone after his eighty years of art-gluttony: yet that is what '*it*' has got to do (or have reasonable hopes of doing), or *strictly* speaking, it is an '*idle word*,' and has no right to appear in a world already piled with the perfect fine art of ages, from Moses to Tennyson; a world, too, in which land longs (or ought to) for the plougher, and leather cries out (or ought to) for the awl of the stitcher.'

'But you are too—'

'Not at all. Sometimes, I am told, a great personage will even fanfare that he is accomplishing more than one undertaking at *the same time*. I have even heard of three together, six. Now, if Pallas and Apollo do not laugh at that, then, like the fool, I am prepared to say that there is *no* Pallas and Apollo. A pregnant ecstatic hen, conceiving the notion that the universe perished for lack of tiny eggs, went gashly cackling her resolve to lay, at her next visitation, not one large egg, but six equivalent small ones — and to do that very thing, or *die*! In the end she did neither. Six putrid spurts, not having any resemblance to small eggs, was the limit assigned by nature to *her* success.'

'Did not the six monstra sell?'

'I am pretty certain that they sold. But eggs or books are not successful when they sell, but when God knows that they are very good.'

‘I am myself flotsam on the current of that opinion. But what, think you, is the root of all this rank blossoming?’

‘The *root* is this: the existence of an artist-class who live only or mostly upon the proceeds of their art. I cannot think that in a well-ordered state such an arrangement would be tolerated. At any rate, where, in a crowded age, you have such a class, you get base art.’

‘Can you prove that?’

‘It seems to me so obvious. Men are such, that if you say to a man: ‘Do this, and I will give you fame, and a hundred pound *avoir-du-poids*,’ he will not do it so well as if you say to him: ‘Do this, and I will give you infamy and death; albeit you will benefit your race.’ And this I say not of your Newtons, great men, of whom it is obvious, but of common Lord Tom and Mr. Dick, if uncorrupted by bad institutions. I mean that a man *cannot* work divinely well for wages. Precious things must be given away, or sold only for a wreath of wild olives, or something of that sort.’

‘But I notice you apt to substitute opinion for argument. All that is mere —’

‘*Proof* is easy. For when you have a class living by their art, the question arises: Of what kind must my art be, so that I may live *well*? And the answer is always uniform: It must be voluminous, and such as to give ‘pleasure.’ The giving of ‘pleasure,’ then, becomes the chief aim of art. Now, it is *easy* to give ‘pleasure,’ because men and women are so made, that it is, in general, a positive pain for them to sit still and do absolutely nothing; and into the hand of a person so sitting, if you put a straw, a cigarette, a French novel, a mirror, *anything* that is not hot, it will give ‘pleasure.’ And if you want certain evidence that much of modern art *has*, in fact, become easy, you have only to consider two things; first, that it is largely photographic, and secondly, that of all trades the photographer’s is

by far the easiest to acquire and practise; whereupon the reason of the ‘success’ in, say literature, (the second hardest of the arts) of every foolish young woman, crass and unenchanted, who chooses to take pen in hand, will become clear to you. Where, therefore, is such a class, art becomes easy; and I might go on to show that when it is easy it is necessarily base, but this is perhaps so axiomatic from the very constitution of the world that I need not do so. Where, therefore, is such a class, art is, or rapidly becomes, base; and instead of a noble, Rechabite band of artists, eaten up with a holy, self-forgetful zeal for art, and belief in the *possibility* of art, you are apt to get a mere chance rabble of little blind mouths, bitterly stale citizens of Clapham and Monte Video, happy *yahoos*, with hardly more genuine *mother-wit*, *radical* ingenuity, and no more genuine cark for the well-being of mankind, than that other rabble which fills your prisons.’

‘But by a principle of weeding-out, and survival of the fittest, do you not always get *some* few—’

‘Do not repeat that poor old scientific catchword. It is not true. Among individual men, at any rate, the general rule of Nature, so far, seems to be the survival of the unfittest. I cannot understand in what way Paris was fitter than Hector — except ‘fit’ means ‘flexible,’ cartilaginous, and so inorganic, base: yet Hector dies, Paris thrives; Jesus dies, Barabbas thrives; Agis, Gracchus, Cato die, Sulla and Newcastle thrive; Chatterton, Poe, Keats, Byron die, and die scornfully, triumphantly; Monsieur Zola and Mr. H. R. Haggard thrive. That is survival of the fittest after a *piquant* fashion, I think?’

‘But tell me — how, think you, came that six-work man by his notion that Art is easy? It surely never used to be considered so.’

‘I cannot even guess. The opinion has somehow arisen. Thackeray, you know, in one of his books says that the painter’s business is a ‘*delightfully*

easy' one. In *his* case the superstition, I fancy, arose from the fact that *he* found the *writer's* (and the illustrator's!) craft so unexpectedly easy. Both, however, are hard. On a leaf picked up in the street, I find the following put into the mouth of a primitive artist by Mr. R. Kipling, a well-known writer of this century: 'Take this wisdom for your use, which I learned when deer and moose nightly roared where Paris roars tonight: there are nine and thirty ways of composing tribal lays, *and every single one of them is right!*' Now, this species of raw optimism, as of a man deep in the wine-cup at midnight, lends itself, one must admit, to very genial jingle in the hand of the writer — if only the mind could resist the suspicion that it is meant not at all for jingle, but for '*wisdom*' whereupon it cannot be kept from exclaiming: How! every *single* one of those thirty-nine ways right? Not one wrong? And Mr. Kipling's fortieth, too? and my forty-first? It needs a scribbler of this century to believe it! I, on the other hand, without having seen any of the forty, am bold to say that not one *single* one of those forty-one ways is right — or if one right, then only one — the best way, namely — the canonical way — but probably all wrong; it being understood that that way is wrong in art, which, if different, would be better for its purpose, and only that right, which, if different, would be not so good. So that I say: Not easy! as elephantine old Carlyle has it, but '*hard*' — even for the most gifted; the world being so made — so framed and fenced about, — that nothing greatly good shall be smuggled into it, from a healthy child, to a Roman race, to a perfect song, without travail most sore — throe on throe — and '*pangs* that wrung me till I *could* have shrieked, but would not."

'Is that your own experience?'

'Do not ask. I wish that I could even split dead on the rack of aspiration — but the cold clay, and the '*burning marl*' — alternate Eros, and the opium-dream — But for this at least you may give me credit, that until I *do*

thole such pangs, I shall never permit myself to be deluded, either by myself or others, into the notion that I have done anything worth two perfect pennies. For this advantage I have over delightfully-easy, four-eyed Thackeray: that I have been to the Mint, and there seen that the pennies, anyway, are the product of brisk thumps, headstrong forces; and I have also stood and watched the grinning teeth of a woman's trouble, and there learned how close a thing is genuine Birth in a world not made of soap-suds and New Suppurations, Humours; but of something else. By all which I only mean to say that what we call Art is either toying and trifling, or it is not: if it is (as Thackeray and Herr Nordau, rare twinity, say and illustrate), then it is a shame that strong, two-handed men should spend their parasite lives in practising it; if it is not (as Goethe and *his* kind say and illustrate), then it must be very difficult indeed, and a thing to be handled only by consecrated hands.'

'But that old Presbyterian idea of being 'called' to a business has now been ousted by the rush of our modern life. You can hardly expect it to survive alone among painters, scribblers and the like?'

'It should, however — because they, surely, and not the bishops, are the oracle of God. If they be silent, indeed, no harm is done, the world being already full of the finest art which *their* inferior work keeps somebody or other from studying: but if they speak and speak basely, of earth, and not of heaven, then much, or all, as they say in France yonder, is, for the moment, base and earthly. But how if you hear one old artist saying to another not so old: Do not 'waste' all your good 'ideas' upon short pieces: be more 'economical' — draw them out, and make *Books* of them! In other words, do not consider, with agony of a thousand doubts, knowing that the history of literature somewhat depends upon your decision, what is the ideally right form of drama, lyric, *conte*, in which to cast your special 'idea' (such as it is

— to begin with an ‘idea’ at all being to begin at the wrong easy end); but consider how you may make most pounds and fame by it; or again, do not serve God in your little attempt at writing; serve Mammon! or lastly, if you insist upon serving God, as most decent people do, then do it not with a single eye to *his* glory, but with a triple eye to your own weighing-machine and soon-dying *éclat* also. There you have that Presbyterian idea in a somewhat astral state, I fancy.’

‘But have we, then, in your opinion, absolutely no perfect art among us to-day, except—’

‘Do you say *perfect*?’

‘Yes.’

‘Plenty of *that*.’

‘Give an example.’

‘A London penny novelette — most Sunday morning sermons — a novel of Zola — a Sardou or Adelphi melodrama — many advertisements—’

‘You surprise me! Can you really mean that these productions are artworks as near perfection as the *Odyssey* or *Oedipus Coloneus*?’

‘Nearer perhaps. You must not suppose, because it is *easy* to write such, that this has any the least relation to their claim to be called either art or the perfection of art. It was not, for instant, *difficult* to make a scarecrow, which, you know, is perfect art.’

‘What, then, is your test of perfection?’

‘Have you not observed some poor citizen’s advertisement of ‘*pink* pills for *pale* people’? That, if it was deliberate, and not merely a ‘happy thought,’ is perfect art. (Notice the suasiveness, *epieikeia*, then the contrast, then the alliteration, and the combination of these.) Here you have nicest adaptation, fitting-together, between an object and the eyes that see it; in other words, you have an object producing in a high degree the very effect it

was intended to produce upon the very minds intended. If upon me and you these things produce no effect but one of sea-sickness, remember that they were not made for me and you. Servant-girls really *weep* — with the genuine *art-frenzy* — over the novelette; country-defenders blubber and roar at the melodrama. If, then, they are art at all, I say their perfection is more emphatic and definite than that of *Oedipus*.’

‘You say, *if* they are art at all.’

‘I only mean that I am not quite sure whether the ‘contrivance’ — as, for example, the aristocratisation of the characters in the novelette — is ever *now* sufficiently in the nature of a *novel* contrivance on the part of the writer to admit of the label ‘art.’ It certainly *once* was. Loosely speaking, they may still be called art. They are about as novel as Dickens.’

‘But it seems to me — do you not make art nothing more than mere artfulness directed toward a mind?’

‘Quite so — nothing more. It never was anything more. Only, I hope you do not imagine that there is any higher thing possible to man, or angel, or final God, than this ‘mere artfulness.’ By mere artfulness was the earth seated, and, lo, He fastened the Heavens with Artfulness.

Venerable is it to me, even when tellingly exhibited on the low plane of the common thief — and so, too, you remember, it was to the Greek. For mere artfulness, and ever more of it, till I tingle musical with it, rises day and night my prayer to Hermes.’

‘I take it, then, from what you have now said, that the production of genuine and perfect, though gross, art, may be a commonplace every-day affair?’

‘Yes — except in the two highest branches of art, which, when genuine and serious, are never gross.’

‘Which is the highest?’

‘Music.’

‘Why so?’

‘Because it habits the highest aethers.’

‘That is vague.’

‘Because, of the three factors, observation, fancy, imagination, it does not employ the lowest. It is fanciful or imaginative. Its production has no relation to what is called ‘life’ (that is to say, to existing phenomena), except only to the existing nature of the mind which it influences.’

‘And am I to understand that in proportion as the other branches of art cease to be observational — that is, to be in close relation with actual ‘life’ — in that proportion they rise to the height of the highest, or music?’

‘You are shrewd. That is just so.’

‘The art of music, then, you say, is of two kinds — fanciful or imaginative.’

‘I did not say the art of music.’

‘What did you say?’

‘Music.’

‘Explain yourself.’

‘Think of Gounod’s Serenade, and the Symphony in B Flat. If at first both seem to you like the *alalabs* of archangels, afterwards you *feel* a difference. One I call the highest imagination disporting itself in the highest element; the other I call fancy. One art; the other not.’

You cannot mean that painful Beethoven was not an artist?’

‘I do mean something like that. The Pythoness, delirious with the waters of Cassotis, was not called by the Greeks an artist. Though her doomings rived her with hell-agonies, yet was she not an artist. Beethoven was a seer — drunk with God. A man who forgets his own name and address is not an

artist, but a seraph. Inspiration is, of course, not art. Art is successful aspiration, right reasoning.'

'Which is the highest: this inspired fancy, or the imagination of Gounod?'

'They are both infinitely, and therefore equally, divine. One I call the working of Nature; one of Art. Turner, you know, was not less sublime than the sunset; Hugo than the hurricane. A tall man — on tip-toe — may be near the summit of God.'

'You spoke of the *two* highest branches of art: which is the next highest?'

'The invention of new dances, times, measures, rhythms.'

'Not a very prosperous art to-day, I think?'

'No. It is in abeyance. It dies at an iron age, as a ditty in the lanced throat. It lately found a fitting winding-sheet in the draperies of the 'serpentine' lime-lit cloud-compeller. It will reappear: and, I think, flourish above all others with the serious advent of a more social society.'

'The next highest.'

'Literature.'

'Proceed.'

'Then architecture, house-decoration, and landscape-disposition.'

'Persist.'

'Then drawing.'

'My ear is holy.'

'Painting.'

'My ear is a watering mouth for the tit-bits of utterance.'

'Sculpture.'

'I lust.'

'Play-acting.'

'I pine.'

‘Dancing.’

‘My ear is Mahlström!'/p>

‘Flirting.’

‘My body bursts into blossom with ears!’

‘Piano-strumming, fiddling, singing, dress, cookery, jugglery, etc.’

‘But! — *what of Oratory?*’

‘Forgive me for seeming to forget you.’

‘For seeming?’

‘I only seemed. Oratory is a grosser literature, its pen flabby, its eye haliotoid. When at its best, its ultimate effects generally consist in the muscular actions of blowing the nose, or clapping the hands. Yet great, as you well know, is its power. So goody Cicero made Caesar change a lachrymose mind.’

‘But state-craft is surely an art?’

‘When its effects are directly mental, and are intended to be what they prove. It then comes under the head of flirting or jugglery; as does war, swindling,* etc.’

[* It is, of course, highly illustrative of the Greek radical view of Art that Hermes, the first of artists, was also the prince of swindlers. There is also an Altheof (All-thief!) in Scandinavian mythology: but I do not know what his significance was. There may be some significance, however, in the fact that Jubal-Cain was the grandson of Cain, the inventor of sudden death in other people.]

‘You include acting. Has that not been called into question?’

‘Only by persons who have forgotten, or never knew, what art is.’

‘Prove your position.’

‘The mere fact that the same drama performed by two different companies will produce, *not* different effects indeed, but different

intensities and tones of the same effect, should be sufficient to show that the actor has room for ‘elaborate new contrivance,’ and so may be an artist.’

‘The general effect is never, then, a new effect of the actor’s own?’

‘No.’

‘His is therefore a gross art.’

‘That, at least, goes without saying. He is fettered on every hand to the already existing facts of ‘life’: to the written play, the appropriate costume, the whole properties and paraphernalia of the stage. His work *must* be more or less ‘observational.’ It can never be so imaginative as to be *musical*.’

‘Yet the acted drama undoubtedly produces ‘fine’ effects.’

‘They are, in every case, the effects of the play-architect; not of the play-actor.’

‘You are sure of that?’

‘I could give you a hundred reasons why it must be so, if I had time. If you, a cultured person, read *OEdipus* or *Sardanapalus*, and then see it acted, this is what will happen to you: the work will enormously gain in vividness, but somewhat *lose* in ethereal fineness of effect. If you see *A Winter’s Tale*, you weep more, laugh more — but sigh less, smile less. For this *loss* of musicalness the corporeal actor is responsible. So far is his art from being ‘fine.’”

‘You speak of his work being *more or less* observational.’

‘I only mean that he need not be a mere lens for photographing life, if original-minded: that the stage does afford him scope — though little — for doing something higher than holding a mirror up to nature; and that in proportion as he faithfully holds this mirror, so his art becomes more and more gross, if more and more vivid. When he holds it to perfection, he ceases, of course, to be an artist, and the dramatist is all in all.’

‘That is hardly Shakespeare’s view.’

‘Powerful, uneducated people sometimes feel grandly, but never think exactly. Now, Shakespeare, rude-thinking, and not himself an artist, might be depended upon to go wrong on the theory of such a subject (just as he might be depended upon to go instinctively right in the practice of it). That he differed from me may therefore be taken as a rough proof that I am right. A mirror-holder is not an artist, but a mirror-holder. A blue-book is not an artwork.’

‘You ban boldly.’

‘Not boldly. Whoever supposes him an artist must have strange notions of word-meanings. Words, of course, *have* fixed meanings, which no amount of loose talk can alter. Will did not think that of himself. The nightingale is not an artist. Art is self-conscious; Will was luxuriously self-unconscious. He was a jolly, many-gifted fellow, full of high musics and instincts; resembling Beethoven. Goethe has partly shown how an artist would have constructed *Hamlet*. What Will showed was his real divinity in coasting, with sails filled by the voluntary afflatus of the heavens, so tremulously near the ideal artistic, *without* the careful oars of art.’

‘The *danseuse*, too, you make a gross artist.’

‘As genuine as the actor; but grosser; and gross for the same reasons.’

‘The daughter of Herodias, dancing, did so exalt the mind of Herod, that she seduced him to the sublimity of an oath. She, surely, was a fine artist?’

‘Yes — if she invented her own dance. So is the wise actor if he writes his own fine drama; or the wise violinist if he writes his own fine music. If, on the contrary, her synthesis of motion was the invention of another, then what she really did was this: by her wise and novel presentment of the inventor’s thought, she so incited an animal animation in the spectator — not a novel *effect*, you observe, but one already well known to Herod — that she thus became the means, in the end, of laying his whole being with

the ethereal, and infinite, and novel effect intended by the inventor — an effect which culminated in the outburst of the oath.’

‘You are *very* prolix. Suppose the dance was impromptu?’

‘In that case there was no ‘deliberate contrivance,’ and no art, gross or fine. The sylphs and the graces are not artists.’

‘I now clearly know all you think about art?’

‘You know little that I think. You gather shells on the sea-shore.’

‘I know something: I know that you make your living by gross art and fine art: and what these are. How else?’

‘I ‘invent’ things.’

‘What?’

‘Puzzles, toys, and witty articles.’

‘What have you thereby gained?’

‘Fifteen shillings.’

‘What have you spent on patents, etc?’

‘Forty-five pounds.’

‘You have lost then?’

‘You are a budget-man: the problem is not insoluble to meditation.’

‘What else?’

‘I prosecute people civilly.’

‘Proceed.’

‘I pawn Paphian pipes — for the sake of the alliteration.’

‘Persist.’

‘I act as shorthand writer and messenger-boy to myself; receiving a weekly stipend from myself.’

‘Are you regularly paid?’

‘Payments are in arrear.’

‘You do not prosecute yourself civilly?’

‘To prosecute Vacuity is to plunge into the Infinite: I am willing, but gravitation restrains me.’

‘What else?’

‘I write magazine simplicities.’

‘Your words are honeybees; my ear their waxy cell.’

‘I keep a staff of rich wedded sisters.’

‘My ear resembles them, for like a staff, it understands you.’

‘I milk a maiden aunt.’

‘That is impossible.’

‘She yields a catarrh: I milk her ‘through the nose.’”

‘Proceed.’

‘I beg.’

‘Persist.’

‘I borrow.’

‘You do not steal?’

‘I have stolen.’

‘How often?’

‘Thrice.’

‘How much?’

‘Two cigars, and a threepenny bit.’

‘What for?’

‘The cigars to smoke; the bit to buy a war-ship.’

‘Who were your victims?’

‘My father as to the cigars; my mother as to the bit.’

‘You were young.’

‘No. I was six.’

‘You speak willingly of children. You are fond of them?’

‘I am myself a child. Everything that is simplex and azure I love.’

‘What else?’

‘A sick dog.’

‘Proceed.’

‘The solitude of a grey cave by the seashore.’

‘My ear is a harbour-basin for the fleets of Yourmouth.’

‘A tall ship, nothing but a wide-winged whiteness: and, as the blue-eyed beck and nod elusive so she, lenient, trips and fawns and curtsies to the offing-breeze.’

‘You delight in the salt-water?’

‘My father was a ship-owner. We dwelt on the summit of an island. He went often down from us. Nothing restrained him to the land. When he rarely returned, we said: He is come! One meeting another a-crag or a-field, said: How droll! he is here and you did not know it. Simple he was, sensuous too, passionate enough. Ocean heaved and billowed in his brain. If it lightened, he was sublime. If thunder cracked brittling through the heaven of heavens, battle-joy it was to drink the rich brool of his challenging cry. God was his turbulent friend. The full hurricane made him Prometheus.’

‘He is dead?’

‘Yes — he fell a victim to the choragic exigencies of heaven.’

‘You love what else?’

‘Anything that is drowning.’

‘Proceed.’

‘A young virgin.’

‘Persist.’

‘An old man.’

‘These above all?’

‘Yes.’

‘Why so?’

‘A young virgin, unlike the grown woman, or the boy, is quite whole and untarnished. An old man wonderfully knows. He has seen man and God. Do not suppose that tsar or shah is half so reverend as he. He is on the brink of promotion in the ranks of being. Much is not secret to him.’

‘You have known some?’

‘I knew one. She was six. She came to my bedside in the early morning, bearing a message of illness. I had not seen her before. She stood, winter-gloved, wonderfully stout and neat. I said: *Who* are you? She replied: A little girl. I said: Where lurks the cabala of your surety? Her hung head simpered infinite things.’

‘You smiled?’

‘I comprehended the world.’

‘Another.’

‘I knew another. He was ninety-five. Every Tuesday he received two shillings from the ‘Parish.’ He said: Is this relief-day? I replied: No — it is Saturday. He said: Well, really, I don’t know *how* the Time is going; and spread his hands.’

‘You smiled?’

‘I grovelled and kissed his feet.’

‘He is dead?’

‘They took him away to the workhouse: the same day he died.’

‘You wept?’

‘I laughed.’

‘Another.’

‘Another translated Horace at eighty-six.’

‘That was great.’

‘It was *sweet*. It had upon me the effect of perfect fine art.’

‘What, the translation?’

‘No: the translation was even poorer than the original so often is; but the knowledge that he translated.’

‘Another.’

‘Another — but time wears.’

‘Will you go?’

‘I must go.’

‘I like you.’

‘You love me.’

‘You are Celtic, yet Greek; you are proud, yet meek; you are human, yet unique.’

‘Therein have you kneaded what is rare: a dough of both rhyme and reason.

‘What sins do you commit?’

‘No sins.’

‘You are perfect?’

‘Yes. I may have coveted a neighbour’s wife, or daughter, or maid-servant.’

‘But for that you would be perfect?’

‘I am perfect in spite of that! The under-will is crystal! Argon is not so negative and simple. Strike me, and your tympanum shall tingle you testimony of a flawless gold. If I do a wrong, Jove reconsiders himself: he says: Well, the thing was right after all, for *he*, the poet, in his purity, has *done it*. Every time I find myself, and man, Well Makered.’

‘Well, I say that I like you.’

‘If you do not love me, it is that you do not understand me.’

‘You shall be my private secretary.’

‘The post is filled.’

‘The filler shall *filer*.’

‘I dread his fillips.’

‘What sort of fillips?’

‘His lipic fillips.’

‘Define ‘lipic fillip.’”

‘A Philippic.’

‘But you accept?’

‘I am unused to steady labour.’

‘To what are you used?’

‘Like Cato and Epictetus I permit myself to grow wedded to nothing — least of all to steady labour.’

‘The work shall be made erratic.’

‘I may nibble at it.’

‘You shall! You shall banquet at my table! You shall wed my daughter, Florrie!’

‘I have said that, like Cato and Epictetus, I permit myself to grow wedded to nothing — least of all to steady—’

‘Yet to my daughter, Florrie, shall you grow wedded!’

‘Is she lovely?’

‘She resembles me.’

‘Well — but how old is Florrie?’

‘Seventeen.’

‘That is too old for me.’

‘You shall have Alexandrovna.’

‘How old?’

‘Fifteen.’

‘Let the nuptials be hastened, then. Farewell.’

‘But you will come to-morrow?’

‘I cannot subsist on cream of pomegranate. I must go write simplicities for my living: must work. I am not in the Cabinet.’

‘Do we not work in the Cabinet?’

‘You perorate.’

‘We work.’

‘You attitudinise.’

‘We work!’

‘You strut!’

‘But you will come?’

‘I may.’

‘Yes! Then shall we contemplate sherbet and Mocha, and rosily smoke upon vague discourse.’

‘Farewell, then!’

‘Adieu!’

‘Salaam!’

NOTE. — It is perhaps unnecessary to add, for the sake of Lord X— ‘s well-established reputation as a *connoisseur*, that all the details of this matter, except the mere personality and photograph of my friend, are *altogether* imaginary, or rather, not to give big adjectives to little things, nothing more, as Mr. Phipps himself would say, than the adventure-luck (or the adventure-bad-luck, surely) of my own touring soul.

TULSAH

[Translation of a Scorched Hindoo MS.]



MOST WONDERFUL, I often think, must have been the dower of vitality originally vouchsafed me. The passage of one hundred and twenty years has not availed to bleach a single hair of these raven masses. My memory is still, as it was, almost more than that of men. Undimmed is my eye. Yet the end is surely near. A hundred and twenty was the age at which the great Boodh, prince of Oude, passed into unending muckut; at such age, too, died he whom they called my father, and, they say, *his* father also; and, for what I know — but such speculations are frivolous.

It is singular that none of my subjects ever heard of, or even suspected, the undoubted connection which exists between Boodh and my race. He was one of its sons, and one of its fathers. Here in the profundity and gloom of this subterrene, I now for the first time in modern days commit this tremendous secret to parchment.

I have spoken of my memory: yet on one side at least the tree is bare of blossom or leaf. All my first youth has passed from me as completely as though I never *had* a first youth. Many and many are the days which I have spent, unconscious of the universe, rapt in contemplation of this mystery. But no intensest effort could bring one ray of remembrance. I can recall, indeed, the circumstance of my awaking to self-knowledge; but as to all that preceded it, there is the blackness of darkness. In a chamber hollowed out of the face of the natural rock I opened my eyes. I lay on my back in a

coffin of red stone. A reddish cloth, studded with jewels, enwrapped my body, but the convolutions extended far below my feet, as though the swaddling had been intended for one of much greater stature than I. The coffin itself was large enough to contain the body of a man. Long I lay, first in listless dream, then with the burgeoning consciousness of entity. I rose from the coffin; I cast off the cerements; I crawled from the chamber of rock. I looked at my limbs, the limbs of a well-grown boy, and saw that they were perfect, and withy, and beautifully brown. I could have exclaimed at all the marvel and delight. But the lion's voice broke upon my ear. I at once felt terror, understanding him an enemy. The sun was setting. I was in the midst of the jungle of the unfathomable forest.

I passed during the night through the million-fold life of the wild. I exulted when I eluded the mad elephant and the prowling tiger-cat by the sinuousness of my limbs; I looked without fear upon the ape and the untamed zebu; but when I saw the *serpent* — heinously leprous — then hatred and loathing thrilled me, and I climbed, breathless in panic, to the branches of a tree.

With the light of the morning I came, on the edge of the forest, to a stately town, full of aëry edifices, traceried light as vision; it lay in a valley enclosed by a circle of high blue mountains, down which brawled many a rill; the whole mirrored in an oval lake which nearly occupied the rest of the valley. It was at this sight that, so far as I can now remember, the conception of *Time* first arose in my brain: I went back aeon upon aeon, and connected this city with memories, penumbral but real, and old, it seemed, as the world. The town is situated in the centre of Hindostan, is exceedingly ancient, a kingdom by itself, unvisited.

An aged priest met me on the outskirts. He looked with a quick intentness upon my face, and spoke some words to me. I did not understand,

nor could I answer him. He led me to the temple where he ministered, and for three years concealed me in its recesses from the eyes of all. At the end of this time he made me lead him to the chamber of rock, and commanded me to point out the coffin in which I had opened my eyes. This satisfied him fully: it was the coffin of the maharajah of the city, who, he told me, had died a year before my awaking. The maharajah was then very old; he had acquired, it was said, the sum of human wisdom. His people had, by his own explicit directions, instead of burning the body, laid it to its rest in the sarcophagus, at the spot where conscious life, as far as I could recollect, was first born within me. Adjeebah, the Brahmin *gooroo* who had instructed me, announced me as the son, hidden by him till then, of the dead rajah. None could doubt it: to doubt would have been the insanity of unbelief: I was the living likeness of the dead! A day came when I mounted the throne of the palace as sovereign of Lovanah amid the acclamations of the people.

Among the first things I learned was that all my ancestors had been known and revered during life as men who had attained the holy calm of yug; that a long tradition had handed it down that, without exception, they had left the cares of durbar (or state) to their ministers, in order to muse in the interior palace upon the deep things of wisdom. The same instinct rose spontaneously and irresistibly within me. I became a species of Yati, resolving to search out knowledge and the nature of things, if so be I might arrive at the comprehension of the ultimate mystery. The years fled rapidly. Many languages I learned; the wisdom of the Hellenes; the zoomorphism of the Egyptians; the heights of the pyramids of Chufu and Shafra. In intense meditations passed my leaden days. I read in the Hebrew scroll of that Melchisedec, King of Salem, priest of the Most High God, without father, without mother, having neither beginning of days nor end of life. I

learned how Boodh, too, who was of my kin, was delivered of his mother Maia in a manner most marvellous. I was convulsed at the thrilling secrets of the world; my tongue shuddered, my eye rolled, in ecstasy on ecstasy. I tracked the vanity and sublimity of Man to their hiding-place; I sought out the meanings of religions, whence they come, whither they go.

I lighted, many years after my accession to the kingdom, upon a document, deep among the mouldening archives, and yellow with the accumulation of ages. Having read it, I swooned upon the agate floor, and lay through the long day and night as dead. It was a narrative inscribed on biblion, and by it I learned the dark fate which befel the first of my race. He was called Obal, and went out from his home a century before ever that Abram, from whom the Hebrews sprang as the sands of the sea, had yet departed out of Haran. The object of his pilgrimage was to know wisdom, and learn the modes of men. He travelled onward till he reached Hur of the Chaldees, one of the first cities built by the hand of the mason and the smith. It was in Mesopotamia, which was called Naharaïm. Here dwelled the votaries of that Zabaism from which is derived the Parsee hierology. The doctrine has its origins deep in the roots of the universe. Loosely allied to it is phallic, and — very much more intimately — serpent, worship: for, inasmuch as the mist of constellations in the farthest heaven assumes the form of a *serpent* in its uneasy writhings, here have we a connection — profound enough, terrible enough — between Flame and the Serpent; and since Flame is torture, so is the Serpent the fit emblem of Hell. Hence the wisdom of the Hebrew serpent-myth of the temptation and fall of man; and hence, too, came it, that the Zabians, worshipping in the first instance the heavenly hosts of fire, were also worshippers of the snaky uncleanness. At Hur the heart of Obah was seduced by the specious beauty of Star and Moon: he became a devotee to the fire and the serpent. For many years he

lived there a life of study and peace; not till he was a very old man did the consummation of Fate overtake him. In a forecourt of a temple of Ashtoreth he saw a maiden priestess whose loveliness kindled his sere heart. Her name was Tamar. She was vowed to chastity. How foul the crime to draw her from the service of the Goddess Obal knew. But he seems to have been a man of daring eye and headlong lust. He found occasion to speak with the maiden; the abomination of love became mutual between them; he wedded her. Had he not been a great man in Hur, he, with the apostate woman, would without doubt have been stoned to death. But they lived — so long, and so securely — that it seemed as though the heavens were oblivious of the sacrilege. At last Tamar died. Obal was full of years. On the night preceding her journey to the tomb, the patriarch slept by her side — for the last time — on the couch of ivory where she stiffly lay. He slept. In the morning his eunuchs, coming to the chamber, found him dead. His face, his staring eyes, were black with imprisoned blood. Around his throat had coiled itself a serpent, red of colour, as though a flame perfused its veins. The body of Tamar was not seen.

I have said that I swooned upon the floor, and lay as dead. This was singular, for I had so far travelled upon the road of knowledge as to be aware of the ancientness and universality of superstition, manifesting itself always by a certain historical metabolism. The tendency of my mind was indeed toward the exact. While the Jookaja believes that nothing exists but knowledge, things being only the forms thereof; and the Medheemuck that both knowledge and things, are *sun*, or cipher, and the All itself but a visionary vesture half concealing the eternal Glare; I, admitting the seemliness of these syntheses of dogma, must say that my own mental trend was the other way, toward a full belief in matter, and the truthfulness of the senses. I was therefore more and more inclined to assert that no impression

of life is explicable save by facts in their essence 'natural.' *And yet* this unauthenticated tale of the old and vanished world rent my soul, 'like a veil,' in twain. Let me not attempt to explain this mystery. Here is a secret too dark — too dark — for speech. The nations of the far West blab of a Deity who travails and travails and travails for ever — just as though the bursting brain of a man could realize that thought and live! The yellow Brahmin, on the other hand, shaves his head, and with light heart full of craft, discusses a lazy Brimmah, omniscient, but clothed in inertia as in a mantle. I will say nothing. It is a subject *full* of fear. In the one doctrine at least is safety: in the other — could it be realized — is the frenzy eternal. Let me not therefore be understood to maintain this other: for who would believe if I say that *memory* was the secret of the effect which the tale of Obal wrought upon me? Would I not sputter the babblings of a maniac, did I assert that — vaguely, but really — afar off, but with no dubiety — I remembered — from beginning to end — ah! but at *this* mystery let silence cover with her hand the mouth of rashness!

I now set myself diligently to the study of the race of kings who had reigned since the beginnings of the over Lovanah. The facts which confronted me were startling. It was then that I first learned that the Boodh, who, like Obal, had left his home mad with the passion for wisdom, was of us. Of fifty kings in the direct line I found that all had lived to ages far beyond the ordinary span of human life; that more than half had taken as wives, not Hindoos, but believers in the Zend-Avesta, followers of Zoroaster, *fire-worshippers*; that at least ten had deserted their kingdom, and wandered far over Asia — in obscurity, poor — hounded by the criminal lust of our race for the *cabala* of knowledge; that at least twenty-five — among them my own predecessor — had met their death by the stings of venomous serpents; that all of them had married; and that the

death of not one of them had preceded in order of time the death of his consort.

It was when I had understood the sinister meaning of these things that, in the dim chamber which I had made my abode, I fell upon my face to the ground, and swore in my heart three oaths, to which I called every power of the Universe to witness; I would moderate, and, if necessary, quench, the zeal to know which inflamed me; I would never for any purpose wander abroad from the land, from the house in which I then found myself; no daughter of man would I ever espouse. This I swore, and thus did I resolve to break in my person the continuity of that destiny which hunted my race.

I called to my presence my *dewan* and two other ministers of state, and ordered them to publish abroad a proclamation offering a reward of ten rupees of silver to the slayer of every serpent within my dominion.

‘Your father published the identical proclamation,’ answered the chief minister. I started.

‘And,’ said another, ‘its only visible result was an enormous increase in the number of serpents in the district.’

‘An increase,’ added the third, ‘which was above all conspicuous in the multiplication of an unknown species, distinguished by its very remarkable colour, and extreme rancour.’

These announcements did not fail to have their full effect upon me. I had then arrived at the age of perhaps fifty. From thenceforth I shut myself from mankind with even greater-persistency than ever, and to lull into quiescence my too restive brain, I now abandoned my body to the delight of the lotus pipe, and the peace of the sleepy *bhang*. As the Jain, tangled in a mesh of religious frivolities, never slaying a living thing, seeks by strong crying to Parswanath, and the practice of self-torment, to enter forcibly into *nirvana*; so I, by another and a broader gate, entered the *nirvana* of vision.

Thirty years passed over me as a watch in the night, opaline with vague prismic hues. I was a confirmed hermit: in a year hardly two of my servants saw my face: the active memory of me passed from men. I still studied — sought — thought — but over the intensity of research was shed the appeasing glamour of the long, long, trance, the hyperborean dream.

I walked one night in an out-court of the palace, and admired that ‘crooked serpent’ which trails in everlasting length athwart the heaven. It was the first time for many years that I had passed from the gloom of my chamber. I was alone. The sound of voices in a neighbouring field reached my ear. I walked pensive toward a gate, and chanced to see a concourse of people standing some little distance away. Long it was since I had mingled with my fellow: I walked quietly toward the crowd, and saw it grouped round a funeral-pile, on which lay stretched the body of a man. It was a *suttee*. In their midst stood a very young woman — most god-like tall — surpassing lovely — delirious with opiates; her body perfumed; her head sprinkled with sandal- powder; the wife of the dead maim, who had devoted herself to the flames which were to consume him. Tulsah! — dame of my life — sovereign mistress of my destiny — Tulsah! then first, under the moon, did my eye light upon that serpentine form, that iridescent grace! I beheld how with wavy ease she ascended the pyre — the imponderable limbs of spirit composed themselves beside the shape of the dead — her eyes closed; from a corner of the resinous pile I saw the red flame dart upward, upward! Already I was aged — but strong too, and lithe: I dashed forward — with victorious energy I tore her from the lick of the tongues of the fire, and to the murmuring mob I cried aloud:

‘Back, fools — I am the Maharajah!’

I know not what extremity of change now accomplished itself within me. My disenchained spirit danced and danced in the ecstasy of a new youth.

True, I had vowed — I had vowed. But Tulsah had that dear quality of the eyes to which the Greek artists gave the name *ôû ýãñüí*, ‘liquidity.’ This impression they produced in their statues by a slight raising of the underlid. Man is folly itself. Let this one fact only be considered: those same Greeks believed that they alone of the nations possessed the thing they called *philosophia* — the love of the subtleties of wisdom; and even while they were thus believing, the Vedic Hymns had been sung; the Brahmin had codified the intricate activities of the Attributes Sut, Raj, and Tum; and the Boodh had denied that Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahadeva were emanations of the Spirit of God. Such is the inborn vanity and shallowness of man.

And I, too, was vain and shallow! My oath I flung to the winds. The passions of a youth, intensified a million-fold, pulsated within my bosom. My zenana, so long tenantless, at last received an inmate — and her name was Tulsah!

Little cared I for the prejudices — deep, religious, though they were — of my uncultured people, who declared that I had robbed her from the dead. I loved to recline through the sluggish hours by her side, and watch the ichor that swelled and swelled her veins. Surely her skin was not the skin of the Hindoos: but I cannot remember that I ever definitely learned her origin. I know only that Tulsah adored me. We passed our lives together in the twilight of a perfect and happy solitude; and never did I surfeit of her ethereal presence, or tire of gazing upon the strangely delicate streaks of reddish hue which mingled with her jet-black hair, or upon the torpidly-indolent and sinuous movements of her exquisitely soft, and supple, and undulating form.

In an evil hour one day, when, heavy with opiates, I lay in waking trance, by her side I revealed to her the history of the tragedy of the patriarch Obal.

She listened to the whole with agitation, with heaving bosom, and an intense alertness for which I could not account.

‘He seduced her,’ she said after a long time, speaking bitingly, and gazing afar— ‘he seduced her from her devotion to the heavenly hosts—’

‘Ay! — Tulsah! — he snatched her from her ministry upon the eternal flames—’

‘And you—’

‘I, my Tulsah? *I! I!*’

‘Yes — you — *you* snatched me, a devotee to the flames, from the very flames themselves—’ I folded her panting to my lean bosom.

‘Angel! angel!’ I shrieked, ‘yet does the Power not live whose craft could prevail to change thy dear perfection into the viper’s tooth!’

In such manner we spent our life. The years multiplied themselves and passed. Tulsah approached the borders of age. Her beauty waned — markedly waned. As she grew older the sinuosity of her muscular and osseous systems became, I must say it, too pronounced to be longer fascinating. A singular affection of the skin covered her body with a multitude of regularly-shaped small dull-red erythemata. Her eyes reddened, uttering a rheumy mucus. I looked for the whitening of her hair. My disappointment was bitter. The heavy surges which, once black, billowed like a torrent to her feet, and wide overflowed the floor like the surf of a sea of ink, gradually at first — then rapidly — took on the gorgeous, and the *farouche*, and the unhuman semblance of a mantle of vivid flame.

She died. With my own hand I swaddled her corpse, and helped to place it upon the pyre. Death among our Eastern nations is surely never a comely sight: yet it was with sorrow rather than with loathing that I looked for the last time upon the wan face of my Tulsah.

We were alone together in a court of the palace. The fulsome gloat of moon and stars shone over and about us. I held a torch to the pile: a sheet of flame shot up, crackling, around the beloved sacrifice.

To this day I know not how it was: either the fire consumed its victim with a rapidity inconceivable, or a suspension of consciousness, due to the anodynes which I had that day freely imbibed, deprived me of sight: but from the moment when I applied the torch to the moment when I again looked at the pile was an interval which seemed so short as to be inappreciable; and

yet within it, in sharp disproof of my estimate of its length, both the pyre and its occupant had passed, utterly consumed, from before my eyes.

I stood amazed, gazing at the column of blue smoke which rolled up from the very small heap of ashes into the air: and now a new impression — born perhaps of my own fantasy — or born of the despotism of drugs — or born of the more dread despotism of reality — an impression this the of absolute terror — forced itself upon my mind. I beheld, or thought so — the blue of the ascending reek turn to the sanguine hue of Sardius; and now with a spasmodic jerk the whole high and solid pillar of the reddened smoke split itself into innumerable dismemberment; and I saw every wreath, and curl, and tortured tendril stand apart in definite isolation, and shape itself into a changing snaky form, till the whole vast nest, coalescing, writhed together in infinite implication, with hollow eye, and extruded fang.

Aghast at the illusion, I hurried from the spot. I entered the palace. Through a secret corridor I passed to the chamber where Tulsah and I had spent the years of our love. A light shed itself from a vessel of oil in the ceiling. I sank doddering to a seat, and covered my face. Hours went by, and still I sat. All the past was around me — she herself. How like a dream the whole mystery of her coming, her abiding, her going! Tulsah! — I groaned

her name. I lifted up my voice weeping. ‘Where now remote in some green sanctity of ocean cave or azure fold of space broods thy ethereal presence?’ I rose to throw my despairs upon the couch where she had been wont to lie, when, in the gloom, I saw — within the palsy of horror saw — coiled thick upon the bed, with gorge erect above a foul vast base of clotted wreaths, and palpitant through all its mucous swelth, the fat and lazar loathliness of a monstrous Snake, whose ruby eyes regarded me.

I ran from the palace! A secret portal led me to the borders of the forest. Here I came upon the traces of a highway, the windings of which I followed. The rising sun of the next day found me still fugitive — hasting in wildest panic — already many a mile from the towers of Lovanah.

I had thus broken the second of my vows, which bound me to my home. It was not till long afterwards that this thought occurred to me. But there remained the third: never, by my own seeking, to penetrate the ultimate secret of the world: and by this I have faithfully abided.

Ten years passed and left me, as they found me, vagabond over India. I journeyed from city to city, meditating on the manners of men, and begging my bread from the charitable. I have wandered in the streets of that Benares to which Boodh first retired from the world; I have stood beneath the great granite mosque of Jumna Musjid at Delhi; and through all the cities of the north I have passed.

But my pilgrimage was very far from purposeless. I sought with intense scrupulousness — as for hid treasures — after something. I hoped to find a retreat in which, with absolute security from the designs of destiny, I might lay me down, and die the natural death of the rest of men.

I came at last, in the vale of Cashmere, to a lonely Hindoo temple — one of the great vihâras — consisting of a long oblong chamber. The roof was supported by two rows of huge stone pillars connected by vaulted

architraves, and at the farthest end, semicircular in shape, stood a colossus of the seated Boodh. The temple had been chiselled out of the base of the Himalaya.

Through a burning lamp hung from a pillar, the sanctuary seemed deserted. I entered, and passed up the broad central nave. At the extremity, near the statue, where the vihâra might be expected to end, I happened to find an open door. I walked through it, and descended a long stairway which brought me to a second temple; all was now the intensity of darkness; but happening to meet with another door-way, I descended still farther — down and down — until, in this way, I had traversed six stairways of equal descent. I must by this time have travelled a very considerable distance both into the interior of the mountain and the depths of the earth.

Yet another series of steps, and I came to a passage, at the end of which was a circular apartment: here was clearly the termination of this great excavation. From its roof hung a lamp which distilled a vermilion light. I could see from the appearance of the chamber that it had been unvisited perhaps for ages, and I was unable to conjecture by what means the lamp was kept alive, except it were by means of feeding pipes from the far outermost temple of all; but, at any rate, it showed me that the key-contrivance of the door of the chamber was *on the outside*. With the deliberate purpose of there ending my days, I passed into the apartment, and pulled the door toward me. I heard with joy the click of the fastening which sealed my fate.

In the room is a small stone table and a stool. I had brought with me parchment, and the materials for writing. This history, as far as it has now gone, has by these means been recorded. I shall leave it to moulder beside

my bones. As the half-pleasurable pangs of hunger, and the languor of coming disease, invade my body, I may add yet a phrase or two.

I have now observed that this chamber is not of stone, as far at least as its interior lining is concerned. It is certainly extraordinary; but there can be no doubt that the flooring and ceiling are of wood, and that the circular sides are of old iron-plate panelled at regular intervals with narrow wooden laminae. The faintness of the lamp's scarlet glow doubtless prevented me from noticing this singularity from the first.

I have brought with me a quantity of opium. On the lap of an ocean of rainbows will I embark when the great hour comes.

The opium works well in stanching the current of the blood, and in overdriving the spent heart to its final throbbings. It will thus quicken the action of the hunger. The past five or six hours I have spent in a coma full of luxuriousness.

Spare me! Spare me! frail man that I am! This chamber, in which — with my own hand — I have imprisoned myself, *is the nethermost hell itself!* Happening to rise from my seat, I saw — in the shadow thrown by the table — a sight! the skeleton of a man; having a burnt appearance; old as the mountain; dismembered now in the lower limbs, the ribs in fragments; but the cervical vertebrae still cohering, and around them — coiled — in perfect preservation, in hideous symmetry, the vertebrae of a great — No! not that word again! I dashed my body against the door of my prison; for a full hour of frenzy beat my life against its adamant: then fell to the ground.

As I lay on the floor, my senses having returned to me, I seemed to hear a very faint sound, proceeding apparently from beneath the casing of wood. I bent down my ear. It was a gentle crepitant sound, as though a rat gnawed the wood.

But this it could hardly have been which made me leap up with an alacrity so frantic. The action was involuntary; but I soon recognized its reason. On placing the palm of my hand upon the boarding, a marked degree of *warmth* communicated itself to my skin. I have also touched the iron casing of the chamber all round, and find the same condition.

This apartment must be at a great depth in the bowels of the earth. Can it be that huge geologic forces, volcanic in character, are tumbling in Acherontic travail around me? The heat of the floor and walls slowly but steadily increases.

Seventy years ago I made a threefold vow. Forty years ago I broke the first, and wedded. Ten years ago I broke the second, and left my home. Three days ago I broke, thou seeing God, the third, when, within my own hand, I closed upon me this tomb of woe. For now — at last! — I know — with clear precision — the ultimate, the flaming, the maddening secret of being.

It is old: it has been heard from the beginning; but heard as an incredible tale. Upon no heart of man has its intolerable incubus ever rested as now it rests upon mine; no eyeball has its excess of light so scorched and blasted into ashes. And this I say in foolish and feeble words; that there is knowledge, and there may be things; but gibbering spectres of this One Thing only: *an Eye that glares and glares for ever!* And wise are they who call it Hammon, Brimmah, Zeu-Ya, and Ra, and Allah; but wiser they who say *Saranyû* (*i.e.* ‘Eninyes,’ Counteraction).

The scraping and gnawing sound has multiplied itself a million-fold, amid is now clamorous and constant. At every point beneath the flooring — along the length of every wooden panel — over all the wooden ceiling, it is heard. An army of creatures boring, *boring* their invincible way to reach me....

The floor I can no longer touch with my feet; the table of stone itself grows hot; the iron casing of the chamber, even under the scarlet gleam of the lamp, now emits the redding glow of heated metal....

Tulsah! — that name again! — the fiery furnace of intensest hell — ah bitter, *bitter* love! to the centre it blazes. And now — ah now — from a thousand apertures — around, above, beneath — a thousand small and crimson serpent-heads extrude! convulsive — O bile of God! — in ecstasy — they expel and retract their salamandrine necks! Crimson, crimson, is their name! But what a Babel of hissing! Once, in sleep, did I not see her tongue loll black and long — And now — wage, wage of lawless love! — now — O Majesty — they come — that flaming fault in worms — now — ten thousand forked and jagged (three words of doubtful meaning follow).

THE SERPENT-SHIP



‘O THAT I knew where I might find Him! that I might even come into His presence!’

‘My help!’
the Emperor called,
‘the bard!
 With teaching touch
 who toucheth the harp,
 and teacheth the heart,
 to harp.’

Nor long:
a rhapsody brave
of song:
 A hive of breath;
 and busy amongst,
 the lyrical buzz
 and throng: —

‘Good-bye!’
the Viking his Gerd —
a-pressed:
 Two sobs that kiss —

then life is a sail —
then life is a-blurr,
and mist.

Ten years:
the consequent times
revolved:

But Hrolf, in Logres,
with Heracles moils,
was making the world
for God.

‘That night,’
so, spinning, to Gurth,
the churl,
The lady glozed,
‘how fine was his calm,
when Hakon besieged
the burg!’

And Gurth:
‘but that was a day,
at Dvaiss!

I wounded fell,
pernicious as Thor,
he hewed me a lane,
and saved.’

So she:
‘he loved thee at heart,

poor Gurth!

A heart, though strong,
yet kingly infirm
with fatherly lodes,
and throes.'

And Gurth:

'but where can his Sail
be spread?

His Bones where white?
or plies he till now
his continent rage
with men?'

She laughed:

'reblooms in the night
a gourd!

He, thrilling plumb,
like shuttlecocks falls;
recurs like the moons his
Sword!

'What Bones!

I know that my war-
rior lives!

Yet O, that Nord
would wing me with winds,
their wings to the winds
who gives!'

At last
a rumour from God
has vogue:

A myth, a breath:
at Thanet he lies,
his wounds unaneled,
unmoaned.

Nor long:
a schip from the burg-
-bay runs:

Her sixty oars
unanimous troop,
voluminous hoops
her lug.

In vain!
at Thanet was void,
and ah:
One knew — one thought —
he'd fared for the Franks
he'd passed to the Picts —
afar!

'No more?
and *will* he no more
be *kind*?

Then Gurth,' she cries,
'the wave be my world,

though waste be its ways,
and wild!’

She cruised:

at London is nought,

but germ:

At Hythe no news —

at Wyht he has stormed —

at Dwyght he was yet

— to storm.

When Day —

his cyclops inflamed

enlaved:

When fairy Night,

in lazuli grot,

her lamp-lit bazaar

unveiled;

Till dawn,

the swarm of her wake

she notes:

Her sea-bitch hunts,

a-hunt is the moon,

and solves in gavottes

the coast.

‘How droll!’

so, pious and boon,

she taled:

‘On Triss, my mare,
when tipsy one day,
his feet on the ground he
trailed.’

And Gurth:

‘but that was a day,
at Fahl!

Our *yolle* capsized,
and there was his head,
like echoes and claps
a-laugh!’

So she:

‘you men in his train
were rich!

The world, and woes,
were made for his sake,
to furnish with realm
a prince.’

And Gurth:

‘but where can his sword
be groans?

Or south, or north,
with Logresman or Scot,
or rolls with the flood
his Bones?’

She smiled:

'he wounds, but himself
is Balm!

'Tis said, you know,
the hair of a hound,
though bitter the bite,
can salve.

I wait

a Silence through things
is spun:

The first of men
was made in the night,
and skipped when he saw
the sun.'

Three years:

the seas with her oars
were thronged:

But Hrolf, returned,
in haven was heaved,
and home-sick at home
was strong.

Then four:

the voluble times
returned:

A fame had steered
to Zetland her helm:

at Zetland was void,
and dearth.

He mourned:
all patient, adult,
arrived:

His glance was worth,*
and expert his heart,
and chaste from the rods
of Time.

[* Weorthan = werden, *become*]

He mourned:
a warrior crowned,
and trite:

His hair was hoar,
his warrings were o'er,
his war-gear he wore
and died.

And rich —
with breastplate of gold,
and targe,

And broidered zone, —
his mort they propose,
sublime on his poop,
and huge.

All day,
like mourners with griefs
a-rave,

The crooning surfs
to funeral troop,
and funerals taint
the rain.

At eve:
his rovers the shore
bethrong:

The torch they use,
the moorings they loose,
the holocaust moves,
is gone!

How grand!
thou mariners' Nurse,
though wet,
Berock him now!
with languidest waft
they hail him a last
Fare-well!

Afar,
the desert a Sign
acclaims:

Between the hills
a Pillar of Cloud,

with banner of blue,
her sail.

A-rave,
up sun-smears in oils
she glides:

The buxom swell
she glibly excels,
a Pillar of Flame
she rides.

But lo! —
by flurry applied,
her flame —
the billows' bursts
and cataracts quench:
her peril she slips,
though scathed.

'Twas night:
and Gerda from Zet-
-land works:
The sea-room's lurch
her governing oar,
andante her cords,
beskirl.

It chanced —
when Imbrifer sets*
in murk,

And sea, and sky,
with dribbly rheums
and equinox squalls,
conturbs.

[* In October.]

She fronts,
sedate on the deck,
the storm:

The spoil of hope,
though foundered in night,
instinctive of light,
her orbs.

And thus,
inclining her head,
to Gurth:

‘I saw, one night,
a mist in his eye,
when Dagmar, the scald,
rehearsed.’

And Gurth:

‘but that was a day,
at Voss!

He felled an oak,
which fell on a thrall,
and fell on the trunk,
and sobbed.’

So she:

‘a typical man,
and tall!

His social wo —
his musical weird...
but talk not of oaks
— that fall.’

And Gurth:

‘but who shall his Se-
-cret guess?

Or far, or near,
his Dragon he steers,
or broads to the kites
his Breast?’

She wept:

‘the world is its own
redress!

Its orb, though dark,
is starlight afar,
and smiles like a bride
a death.

‘The past,
like throeings and growth,
we slight;

The future dark may,
dazzling dark,

be dark with excess
of bright.

‘And say:
that sockets for eyes
he keep:

And worst be truth:
an outcome’s innate;
from death-beds a babe
may creep.

’Twas morn:
a sail through the squall
they spy:

Some pirate keel?
upon them he bears!
she, thoral below,
bids fly.

He looms —
a ‘serpent-schip’ lank,
and high:

But slighter she —
and ruffling in stays,
she yaws on the yeast,
and flies.

And now —
with sea-winds my tale
I wet:

In down-hill glee,
each following threat
she wins to her use,
adept.

Their flow
with melting reserves
she rides:

By noon he's air:
they breathe from the oars:
a westering blotch
he hides.

Away!
affairé on Ahs
the Vault:

The self-sick sea
its bosom bespues:
unearthly the world,
and salt.

The prow
its dissolute Ghost
— out-pants!

The eddies pair
in scampering reel
the regiment stalks,
and tramps.

And bleak, —
comes brooding the dark,
like doom:

A rift remains,
and darkling bleak,
that wraith through the rift
relooms.

One eve —
(the Dead-sea terrasse
I roamed) —

I saw a form,
and still as I fled,
a presence that form
I found;

So they:
and plies them a name-
-less cark!

He steadfast drifts,
and rudderless steers,
an Argonaut blind,
his bark.

There is —
engraved in the deep —
a place,

With eddies vext,
a caldron morose,

all ringstraked with froths,
that race;

And midst,
circumference vast,
— it yawns!

And harab dark,
that staggering void,
and wails from its whorls
a swan.

To this —
for foul was the night, —
they drive:

To this that ship,
as sheep-dogs the sheep's,
had shiftily shaped
their flight.

As bent —
his jennet some fla-
-grant steed

Pursues a-marsh,
with scattery scamp,
rotatory tramp,
a-ramp.

And soon —
that influence wild
involves:

She twists, she shoots, —
a maenad of death,
she planets, remote,
that orb.

He too:
to lightning my tale
I link!

A-keel they wing,
and fluttering poised,
with shuddering joys,
they wing.

As hunts —
a drake his unwife-
-ly bird,
(Their heads are far, —
— and half on the lake —
— and half on the wing —
they churn.)

So he:
a cable-length late,
he throes:
And round, and round,
in mizmazy rote,
in blackness secerned,
they roam.

When lo!
in rufous she bursts
the tomb!

Some shattered lamp —
in Tophet is dawn;
pregnated he, too,
— up-blooms!

But yet —
not *yet* does she dream
him nigh —

(As round, and round,
in narrowing whorls,
in volutes of flame,
they fly.)

Till now —
That chiselled extreme
they reach;

(Those satin depths
with shimmering shafts,
like Seraphim swords,
they parch.)

Then first!
then first does she dream
him close!

His streaming flag
— with wondering awe —

— his bulk on the pyre —
she notes.

As when —
some chymist his drugs
combines:

He waits, he frowns,
the menstruum fails;
but rallies the world,
he smiles:

So she —
dismays from her eyes
dismay,

As trance of dawn
at sunset arrests
the withering eye
of day.

'Tis Hrolf!
Reclaimant! how deep!
and strange!'

(He *whispers dumb,*
and Gorgon he smiles;
surmising her heart,
and sage.)

And swift!
she runs the blockade
of reek —

With poising arms,
like tottering bairns,
her prow she attains
— and leaps.

Nor fails:
for courtly he holds
his poop:
 Bonanza rare!
 She falls on his Length!
 and down to the skies
 they swoop.

He ceased:
but silence with song
was rife:
 The world's a star!
 more stringèd a psalm
 than trills on the ear,
 its life.

PHORFOR



Αἶ! Αἶ! τὰν Κυθέρειαν!

They reckon ill who leave *Me* out!
When me they fly — I am the Wings!
I am the Doubter and the Doubt;
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

— R. W. Emerson

At that more sombre season called Opora, which fills the interval between the rising of Sirius and the rising of Arcturus, when the cycled year dying as the phoenix, forest-leaves glow red- reflective of the conflagration, and birds fly migratory from the world-wide majesty of the pyre — I passed on horse-back over the blue and high-surging undulations of the Orchat Mountains, whose broad swell is as the Eastern heave of a jeweled bosom; thence through lower- lying slopes, and delicious groves of citron, almond, and maple; and thence through a seine of streams, over-waved by that bulbous Nile-lily which the Greeks called ‘lotus’; till, entering the domain of Phorfor, I drew up, as night fell, at the entrance of the far-reaching castle by the sea.

The ancient home! I had worn its dark forests as an easy old garment; listened through the whole dead summer-day by its brook-banks to the abstracted talk of my cousins Sergius and Areta, children then like me; splashed in the waters of its day. But a sudden pride, quickened by another’s malice, impelled me to wide wanderings over the world, from which, after

too many years, I now returned with little won — a knowledge of constitutions, modes, of the swellings of cities, artfulness of art; and a longing beyond language for heavenly message of the eyes of Areta, and the benign wisdom of the lips of Sergius.

A letter of announcement had preceded me by some days. An old serving-man waited me at the entrance. I recognized him well, but to my smile he returned no answering smile. In silence he led the way, doddering with prone neck and angled knees, through a series of lofty glooms, till in the recesses he stopped before a high, embossed, and arched brazen gateway, to the curtained wicket of which he pointed, bowed, and retired.

I passed inwards. Here sight groped with somewhat more surety; though a thick odour of the smoke of myrrh smothered out the atmosphere. On a cushion on the ground I saw Areta sit: an easel before her. On the easel a square of ivory, in the centre of which, by medium of *coccus*, the scarlet dye of the kermes-berry, she stained a small head. The brush was between her fingers. Wide and wild over the marble *dalles* of the flooring were spent the light purplish largesses of her main. Her back was towards me.

‘Areta!’

Eagerly she painted. But she was conscious of my voice, for, without turning, she said in a thick, hurried murmur:

‘You are come, then. See — *your* work.’

She pointed with the handle, and continued her task. I, looking, saw in misty distances of the chamber — a bed. But how *my* work? I drew gently near it. It was strewn with splinters of fragrant agalloch-wood. I saw a noble, cold forehead. The body was robed in splendid volutions of cloth-of-gold; the red lamp of a ruby glowed large at his breast; the head was crowned with daphne: an expression all this, as I knew, of Count Zinzendorf’s whim, that death, so far from being the chill passage through

any valley of any shadow, is, without metaphor, a jubilant bursting from sleep at day-break. But how *my* work? Wherein was *I* guilty? That question I asked myself. A coffin of sarcophagic limestone lay on chairs beside the low bed.

Eagerly Areta painted. From behind I saw that the effort was to preserve the august likeness in death; and already I was able to predict failure: no truth could an eye so wild interpret to a hand so unstable. I sat near her in the numbness of awe, and hours of the night rolled over us.

Later, I crept from the room. As I passed through one of the outer halls, a stupendous stalking figure moved diagonally across a far corner of it. The light was dim, but his step slow, and my eyes searched him fully. I knew the Elder, Theodore. A simple garment of blood-red silk, with amice of orphreyed black, tuned on the marble an intermittent musing to his strides. A mist of hair, crowned with the fanon, floated in wide white vagueness over his back. A great veil of yellow cloth covered his face, as a veil covered the face of the Prophet of Khorassan. I cannot at this moment picture forth all that passed within me at this sight: the intense impressions of first youth stamped themselves once more deep upon me. Once more it was Theodore, the omnipotent, that I saw. And though his head was immobile aversion as he passed through, I knew that he knew my presence.

I inquired of the old serving-man who attended me in my room at supper an hour later as to the arrangements for the burial of Sergius. He answered, ‘At the next rise of dawn he was to have been interred in the vaults of the rock-chapel.’

‘*Was* to have been?’ ‘But since your arrival — within the hour, in fact — time Elder Theodore has come in person from the Tower, and suggested to the lady Areta that the body be embalmed.’

I started, understanding enmity — a deadly thrust at my own heart. ‘And she?’

‘Eagerly consented. The constant presence of the body will be her unhopd consolation. The Elder, skilled, sir, in all designs, has himself undertaken the work, and the coffined frame has even now been conveyed by boat across the water to the Tower.’

I retired weary to my bed. But though morning was near, sleep was an ambition merely. I lay and swept clean the house of memory, building in the deep the old life up again. Of Sergius I thought, and his singular likeness to the boy, Christ; his questionings, answers, parables; his sibylline intensity of interest in sounds, and strata, and the shapes of things, and the hues of birds; how eagerly he accepted anything out of the ordinary course as a doubly-direct revelation of Omnipotence to himself. After a time, every appearance was to him a rune: like old augurs and aeonoscopi, he followed within musing eye the course of all winged creatures. The fragments of a rainbow had pythmic meanings for him. He contrasted the notes from the vocal organs of many living things; showed how this sound or odour was really identical with that appearance, and how the difference of their mode of occurrence was not intrinsic, but due merely to the differentiation of our own sense-organs. His little museum was full of strangely sorted specimens of this and that: seeds, zoolites, spotted eggs, fuci, spawn, spongiadae, chips of chert, bars of bast. Once, having spent the night in the forest, he came at dawn to where I, enfolding Areta, sat on the sea-terrace. His white brow was radiant. He told how all the night he had listened in a thicket to the song of a nightingale: a song which, he said, *was not her native*. I long remembered the impression which the quaint high things he thereupon uttered made upon us. And I thought of his smooth-mindedness, as of that Jesus whom he aped. If by chance he encountered rudeness, dullness, it was

good to see within how light-like a power he appeased it. I would often cavil at the obscure and loosely-metred *extravaganzas* which he sometimes sang to us; and always would he graciously pause to show how under the appearance of ease lay a strenuously-reached fitness; how beyond the cloud was light. 'To what metre,' he asked one day, 'do earth-sent angels tune the dithyrambs of their exultation?'

'To a metre,' I answered. 'which 'ear hath not heard,' nor can hear.' But he: 'Oh yes! heard indeed, but with scentless and purblind ears.' He then took jewels of different sizes and colours; laid them in a line. All the syllables of each foot of the metre he marked by stones of the same hue; the *length* of the syllables he indicated by the varying sizes of the stones. No sooner had he done this, than Areta, perceiving a vision of some beauty in the combination, clapped hands; while I, observing indeed a picturesqueness, ended. 'You here see,' said Sergius, 'that the first foot is a trochee (long followed by short syllable), while the last is an iambus (short followed by long): a symbolism, you will at once say, of the fall and rising again of Man; and, if you compare nearly all the Shemitic dialect-versions of the hymn I have in my mind, you will find the same general alternation: a beginning of long-and- short, and an ending of short-and-long, or long-and-long.' And then, with exquisite clearness of rhythm, he proceeded to chaunt in Hebrew an improvization of the angel-song of the Gospel, beginning, 'Fear not,' and ending, 'shall be called the Son of God.' Night-dews gathered in the eyes of Areta as the melody rose from him; myself not all unmoved. Nor did Sergius ever leave the reason restive. He pointed out now, for example, the coincidence that in the Greek version, too, of the words their alpha is a trochee, and their omega an iambus, and so even in later versions, as the Latin, French, English, and many others. It was at moments such as this that Areta would rescue her hand from mine with a

rashness almost angry, and sidling towards her brother, lean a passionate face to peace on his bosom; and many hours, many longing days, might pass, before her dear favour returned to me. In such constant rivalry for her lived Sergius and I. I have won her from him by a hairataghan of agates, a cameo of onyx, or a bird from the sunset, spoil of my skill with the bow; and he back again by the solution of some problem in ciphers or lines, by a psalm, on earnest chansonnette. A very slight divergence, I remember, once occurred in the march of their thought. It was the custom at the time for one or other to read aloud by a deep-shadowed brook in the Wood, the ‘Giornale di un Viaggio di Constantinopoli in Pohonia,’ by the idealist mathematician Ruggiero Boscovich: a book of books for my cousins. During one such *séance*, Areta set up claim to Boscovich as supporting the cosmothetic view of the impressions of the senses, her own strongly marked leaning being toward that subjective idealism of Fichte which attributes the orderly succession of sensible changes to the nature of the individual mind in which they are perceived. To Sergius, on the contrary all was directly God — every event, sight, sound, God’s quite special act: and hence it was, perhaps, that in *his* eyes the Bishop of Cloyne loomed immense, as the greatest who ever breathed. The divergence, I say, was slight, for to neither mind, as a thing of course, did any such idea as the absolute existence or agency of matter ever occur: yet Sergius frowned at the interruption — a sign in him of strong displeasure. Boscovich, he said, austere, was ‘*other than she thought.*’ Morning redness over-swept Areta: a vice caught her nether lip. For a week she abandoned herself wholly to me. Deep in the glens and bowers we wandered, hiding through the night in the darkness of caves, folded together. Sergius was a mateless bittern by the pool. One other singularity I may mention as often noticed in my love: her bird-like flightiness of motion, giving sometimes the impression of translation

through space. Walking with her along the path of the wood, I have lifted my head to a squirrel's perch, or stooped to a fallen catkin, and turning again, lo, have seen her rapt well beyond me, beckoning airily perhaps from the summit of a rising ground. Her computations, too, of the dial's variations were not always in strict harmony with common notions; when, after my long absence, I returned as related to Phorfor, she said, 'You are come, then,' and the murmur had precisely that intonation with which one speaks of an interval of hours.

I lay in the darkness, and I swept clean the house of memory. Of the Elder Theodore I thought. We children called his name in pious, lower voices. Vast powers over nature, vast mystery of lore, we gave to him. Our imagination crossed itself at him. Only at night, on every seventh day, in the reluctant gloom of the rock-chapel, did we come at sight of the hem of his garment; for our awful lids would not lift to his veiled face. Here, kneeling, we took from his hands the elements of the Holy Supper; whereupon he made haste to disappear into the black *adyla* of the sanctuary. He was, Sergius hinted, of Aramaean, or Syro-Chaldean race; or else he derived from among the priests of the Cophti. The veiling of the face might be due to some disease of the blood which rendered him all too chill a horror for the glance of a fellow-mortal. The Tower was his solitary abode: a tall structure rising from the sea of our land-locked bay, about two stone-throws from the beach; it tapered upward pyramid-wise in seven brick terraces, each lacquered in a glaring colour. By day it cast on the vapouring purple water the reflection of a gaudy basking lizard. Above all was the observatory. There the sun sometimes fired through narrow openings a tangled refulgence of sextants, armillary spheres, gimbals, the cannon of a telescope, azimuth compasses, pictured charts. In the deepest night we opened the eyes and thrillingly knew that the Elder pored into the ever-

written red-letter scroll of the past and the to-come. Neither I nor the orphans ever understood what had been his precise relation to their parents; that they had revered him above mortal we understood; also that the guardianship of our lives was in some sort bequeathed to his hands. But was it by childish sure instinct, or a series of trivial and now forgotten incidents, that I came to know that *I* was by no means included in the scheme of Theodore's providence? that I, the waif, the Hagarson, might become, perhaps was, an obstacle to the unfolding of that elaborate forethought? This consciousness at any rate grew gradually mine. When at last I fled from Phorfor, I was a missile from the suggestion, tense, compelling, secret, of the Elder of the Tower.

Thus I built in the deep. But with the morning I despatched a note to Areta, asking if I might hope that day for the sight of her face, but for a word from her. She apparently did not receive, or read, the paper; for I waited without reply. The galleries, park, gardens, fed my memory with here an ancestral effigy, there a grove or stream. Another day passed, and another. But at the fourth dusk, a boat lay moored at the water-steps of the terrace. Its benches sustained in a glazed coffin of light pagodite the body of Sergius already cured to perpetuity by a miracle of asphaltum, natron, bitumens; a dwarf rower of dark skin held the skulls of the bow; fastened to the stern by a twine floated a little shallop of mother-of pearl. I, standing near, waited. Areta in purity of white came slowly from the portico of the mall, walking down an aisle of the double xystum of Corinthian columns which lined the terrace; palms on either hand over-shaded her; and she came the full and sudden moon through the palms, walking in shining. My hand touched my mouth; I was at once abashed and excited at her developed splendour. As she passed, she extended laterally her left hand, without seeming to see me. I burned it within a kiss. She descended the

stairway, looked upon the steadfast face of Sergius, and stepped into the shallop. I following, the dwarf began to paddle.

Here the sands and the low cliffs all along the two folded claws of the bay are of a very pale pink colouring; the sea being an extremely vivid purple resembling the hue of the dye called Phoenician, and remarkably shallow throughout. Here and there the cliffs project bluffly quite into the bay, thus blocking the continuity of the sand. The water is but very slightly brackish. A bright-hued sea-weed, scallops, and star-fish visibly carpet the bottom; while moon leaved water- growths cluster into groups of silvery greenness over the surface. From the terrace our rower slowly conveyed us a hundred yards to the left, and there turned into a opening in the coast-rock about four feet wide through all its length; up this the sea, far-winding, slumbers in breathless gloom, covered thick with the drowsy grace of Egyptian lotus-lily. Three wide steps near the end of the inlet lead into a low square chapel excised from the mountain-rock, its roof being supported by the ebony columns of twin stylobats.

Areta had not spoken. Her face was the uttermost expression of a rigid woe. Arrived at the chapel entrance, she looked up, and stepped readily from the shallop. The dwarf and I bore the now lightened body in its shell to trestles near a purple catafalque before the altar-rail. On the craped altar itself a taper on either side of the pyx nimbused itself with a little sphere of little rays, giving all of light we had. The black hangings of gold-fringed velvet made the distant places of the excavation a vastness of darkness.

Areta, seating herself on the altar-step near the body, motioned to us to leave her. I, seeming to obey, retired; ordered the dwarf back to the Tower; and took my place in the obscurity of a recess. Hence I could watch her tearless pain. She leaned her head on the rail sideways, and watched obliquely the steadfast dead. She did not move. As the spaces of the night

marched by, the taper-flames began to leap duskily, and one of them puffed suddenly out. She rose then; and opening a cista behind the altar, obtained two others; and was about to light them, when I, buying up the opportunity, stepped boldly forth. I took the tapers and lit them, and adjusted them to the candlesticks. She showed no surprise at my bodily presence near her. We sat together on the altar-step by the coffin; together we gazed. The face before us was unchanged and Sergius's own; a mournful richness of gold involved him. Her hand did not refuse the ring of warmth in which till morning I fostered it.

When the deeper shadows had thinned to a twilight in the chapel, she rose and walked to the doorway. I, entering with her paddled in the shahlop down the winding way, and so out to the sea. The sun was now bright above the circling blue mountains of Phorfor; nature looked wide-eyed in pricked alertness; the water a flushed and many-gifted soul under the blaze of light and the roughening reel of routs of zephyrs, morning home-returners. White, long-necked birds, scarlet-legged, flew hither and thither, uttering a swancall akin to the viola-note. I watched anxiously to read the countenance of Areta. For a moment the throes of vacillation had her; for a moment she struggled to maintain the grey face of grief — but a single sobbing gasp of laughter burst suddenly forth from her bosom, and instantly the hilarity of the sky, and the frolic of the world was in her look. She hurriedly buried a crimson face in the draperies of her arm.

To this I had looked forward with the precision of certainty — if she remained at all the same Areta that I knew. Never was Areta other than the unfailing exactest mirror of environment; a condition which no doubt arose from her belief — so deep as to be part of herself — that environment was, in fact, the exact mirror of herself; and this again from her disbelief in the existence of matter. Now, it is no doubt true that most cultivated people of

the outer world accept such non-existence as an intellectual thesis, whether tentatively in the form presented by Malebranche, Geulinx, and the so-called Cartesian school; or in the form of the absolute phenomenalism of Hume, Browne, and the middle German teaching; but in most minds, as I imagine, a lingering half-faith in Lockes 'thing in its real essence' (Kant's 'thing in itself') must persist to the end, for the very reason that the fancy, by long habit of youth, has already grown to hold the earth-rock genuine solid, and the sun very 'substance.' To my cousins, however, even from the first dawn of thought, all was pure spirit; the one 'substance' the consciousness of their own inner souls; the world a thin picture on the senses, resolvable as mirage. And this knowledge, so far from being an affair of the mere reasoning understanding, was their very life itself. To them no other possibility suggested itself. The slightest change in the environment of Areta would indicate to her a preceding change in her own mental being. Sergius, looking up, would question the causing Mind; she, looking inward, asked, How has the alteration been produced in *me*? I remember them thus affected by the disappearance of many things around them. In the bursting Spring I have known Areta a wild ass's colt on the hills with twinkling feet and bacchant stare; in the chiller season puritan and wise. That her consciousness should now evolve a gay picture of nature, she, feeling the discord within her sorrow for Sergius, doubtless marked as a strangeness in herself.

Having arrived at the terrace-steps, she raised her face, and leapt to the land. I proceeded to make fast the shahlop, but on reaching the top of the hanging-stage, saw her already beneath the pediment of the portico, on the point of disappearing within the castle. There I heard that she had retired to a distant part, and would be seen no more until sunset.

It was dark when she reappeared at the waterside. We then proceeded as before to the chapel, and renewed our silent vigil. Her face had lost nothing of its hard misery. She seemed not to know me, though I clasped her hand. Within the intrusion of the morning, I suggested that we should return to the castle. She slowly turned her head, and within the raised eyebrows of surprise, looked at me fully; then, frowning, said, 'Leave me! leave me!'

I could not but obey. Later I heard that on the preceding day a side-apartment of the chapel, of which there were many, had been fitted up as a chamber for her. This then was to be her constant abode of gloom.

In the evening I returned. She frowned, but did not deny me place by her side. There watching through the slow circle of the night, I was near happiness, for I was near her. Yet she was far from me. So months, many months, passed over us. Every sun divided us, but with the drawings of the moon we flowed together again. Upon the steadfast face of Sergius our gazes fell.

Rarely at midnight would the Elder Theodore step from a boat at the entrance, and walking toward the sacrarium, reappear huge at the altar within chrisam and plaque and chalice, bearing the Host and Wine of the Eucharist. Blessed then it was, as we knelt, to see the face of Areta, adoring spirit's more than woman's. We sang no hymn; a few muffled Greek words rumbled like the echo of a reverberation from Theodore; whereupon his feet resought the way they had come. Areta might then melt somewhat; speak a word to me; her kindled pity for the Redeemer's trouble seeming to suage into twilight the starlessness of her own crude night. She might produce from her chamber hooks, and I at her bidding would read, perhaps von Hardenberg's Hymn to the Night commencing: 'Once when I was shedding bitter tears; standing by the grave which hid the Form of my Life; chased by unutterable woes; forward could not go nor backward; lo, from the azure

distance fell chill breaths of Twilight; and the band of Birth, the fetter of Life, was rent asunder; thou, Night's inspiration, Slumber of Heaven, overcamest me; to a cloud of dust that grave expanded; through the cloud I beheld the transfigured features of my Beloved'; or the mystical aphorisms of *Siris* would fit her mood; or Arthur Collier's ideality in *Clavis Universalis*. And sometimes within the passing months I would tremble to see her wan face dimple fleetingly into the very smile of Areta; and noticing one night her spinning-wheel of electrum — quick-gleaming alloy of gold and silver — stand by contrivance of my artifice with violet-dark wool on distaff near the coffin, she did at length stretch out doubting fingers, and commence a woven undertaking. And the droning incessant circle bred a stirring in the roots of speech. At last — I shot a glance of triumph at Sergius — she yielded to the impulse of words.

'He had long, you know, been ailing: phthisis was his worm. And the intense contemplation of sleepless weeks was its fattening aliment. For the last few months of life the spirit might be said to sway half-disembodied; but eschewing his bed, he still studied and roamed. I never left him. You know the unspeakable sympathies which from our dual birth united us; but now for the first time our two souls lost definiteness, and hovered into one. I was lifted at times into awful heights to share his apocalypse of the world. Nothing seemed any longer secret to him. The illusion of Time, for instance, ceased to cloud him: he knew the past and the future. He rearranged his little museum, changing the relative position of this and that, into a quite wonderful beauty; then locked the door, and threw the key into a hot sulphur-spring in the forest. Once, as he lay in languid sleep at noonday, I heard him twice call your name, 'Numa! Numa!' When he woke he said, 'Numa, I know, is moved toward us again; but I could wish he were now here; I could then commit you, with confidence, to him.' Speech was

now a gasping difficulty with him, and I wondered especially that he should speak so of you and me. He seemed to forecast — I know not what. Soon subsequent, absolute powerlessness confined him to an easy-chair in the chamber where you first saw his body. I read to him through the day from the Hebrew scriptures, from his beloved Bishop Berkeley, and the hymns of Pindar. At every sunset he swooned to sleep; and slept happily to the next noon. Once, surprising from a mid-day trance, he dictated to me runningly in Hebrew three of those his imponderable metrical *capriccios*, and then fell back wearily to instant sleep again. I had followed him far, but as to these last words, the meaning was of subtler element than my spirit, and out-soared me. They may have been simple prophecy of quite simple events; they may have been parable or rhapsody, or prayer. His dear hand could no longer lift the pencil's weight; his eyes were two twice-illuminated moons. A little yellow bird called Beatrix, which it had been his whim to overpaint to a sombre grey hue, fluttered constantly in his breast, shrilling his name. He had so trained it from its motherless birth. I have everywhere sought it since his death, but in vain. At the beginning of the last week he again sighed your name; and henceforth every noon hoped aloud for you. On the third day he minutely directed me to draw a Key on paper, which, when it was finished, I immediately recognized as the 'key' figured in Wilhelm Meister's *Wanderjahre*; beneath this he told me to write the opening words of the angels' song in the Gospel of Luke beginning 'Fear not.' These two, the former above the latter, were to be inlaid in gold on the headpiece of his inner coffin; and this, as you see, has been properly accomplished by the Elder. On the next day he called me close; I kneeling before him, his hand rested upon my head. 'I do not doubt,' he said in the whisper of the dying wind, 'that he for whom I wait will come speedily. The hoofs of the rider's horse are urgent on the mills. I bless you then, Areta, and say good-bye.

Yield yourself utterly to God, little one. Give to every passion its wine, to every pulse its throb, to every song its dance. *He*, in truth, is pulse and blood, song and singer. Yield freely to him. If you would be perfect in divinity, let the Wind, passing, win from the whole intense gamut of your chords a wafture of richest perfected humanity. Ah, little sister, quick — my harp! my harp!’ Quickly I reached him his kithara; held it before him; handed him the quill plectrum. He faintly delved from it a distant air — ah me, an air known even in the highest cycle of heaven — which since childhood I had not heard from him. He then had measured it to the Gospel words: ‘Fear not... he shall be great... . and shall be called the Son of God.’ Ardently did I pray that while the harmony still clung in the web of my consciousness I might have opportunity to transcribe it into musical signs; but at that moment a hot messenger entered with your note of announcement. Even while I glanced through it, Sergius knew its meaning; and having uttered a sigh of rest, the visual body slid from him.’

‘But the melody?’

‘Passed utterly from me. In vain have I mined into myself for it. If I could hear it again — ah me, but once again — I think that the love and the hope of life, which seem dead within me, might yet — again—’

Sudden tears shined from her uplifted eyes. Her hands clasped rigidly.

So she spoke with me through the show circle of the nights, spinning. The chiller season passed, and the spring, and the leafiest weeks of summer. She had settled into an unvarying morne mood; words she uttered, only livid in hue, and pregnant always with the odour of the grave from which they winged. But to sit always and watch her loveliness, so sad, so lunar, was already the dizziness of frenzy. She had dressed herself in the mourning of loose purple draperies, made of a very flimsy diaphanous cloth. A fillet of gold circled her head. My blood railed at its channels; with torrent fury I

leapt the barriers, and spoke to Areta — of our old loves among the caves and crannies — of the wild hopes which had led me back to Phorfor. I think she did not at all comprehend my meaning; quite simply, with mournful gaze upon the dead, she said: ‘Our whole love is hid in him now — yours and mine; conscript to the memory of what he was, and to this little all that remains to us of him.’ It was then that I knew that Sergius, living, was strong; dead, was invincible; and it was then that I called down upon that Argus cunning which, on my coming, had impregnated his body with eternity, the bale of every imprecation.

Yet, I too, won my small triumph. For on an afternoon of beginning autumn, when the sun had sunk not yet below the west-looking harbour-hills, I — induced her with me to the terrace! It was my tingling Marathon. ‘Bright! bright!’ she cried, hiding her face. Blood surged to her lewd limbs; visible to me was the ravelling of the cerements from the risen, pulsing flesh. We sat on a couch of alabaster on the lowest stratum of the terrace, quite near to the marble balcony-rail overlooking the bay. In the circling pink arms of the sands the purple basin of sea looked a dew-splashed violet cosy in the heart of a rose. Areta lived again. Sweet-linked waftings from the parterres set out staggering-adventurous to reach her, and reached her fainting. The sun, all glory-clouds and shekinahs, like the God of some mad universe belalalah’d *en route*, with cymbals and with dances, flamed down afloat in the *gluth* of a passion which he never assumes but when he would enkindle to mutual ardours the light-thoughted mother-hills of Phorfor.

Areta was simple childhood itself. Looking abroad on the rich vision, she laughed a laugh of perfect *bonne camaraderie*; nested herself snakily at the end of the seat; I reclining at length, watching close the spiritual play of her face. And we really spoke at last of things other than Sergius and his mummy.

‘See,’ I said, ‘how the sun’s rim demarks into seven contrasts of fire the colours of the tower. The glazed bricks have the appearance of red and blue and yellow heat.’

Looking, she laughed. ‘Mens agitat molem.’

‘The Elder’s mind—’

‘No, the sun-god’s: kindled by us; and kindling by means of us.’

‘And in another sense the Elder’s, too, — from within.’

‘In literal truth, yes: man, as Novalis without metaphor said, being a sun, of which his senses are the planets. In the case of such as Theodore above all.’

‘Singular man!’

‘He walks his uplifted way alone: dead to sorrow, hope, desire; in a strict sense king of the world.’

‘But listen, Areta: you miss the mark here: Theodore, I know, is not dead to desire.’ ‘Not? Then to what desire not dead?’

‘The conservation in his hands—’

‘Of the meanings of the stars.’

‘Of the opulent territories of Phorfor.’

‘Fie! of the revelations of God.’

‘The keeping of *you* safe—’

‘From what?’

‘From me.’

An oval ‘O!’ of lower’ comedy answered nine. ‘And I tell you truth, Areta, the day may come when you will confront the necessity of choosing between me, your cousin, and the Elder Theodore, whose face you never beheld.’

‘Really so? and whom think you I would choose — my father’s prophet, the guiding forefinger of my brothers thought, grey hunter in old

alchymy and astrologies — or you, a worldly wanderer, lithe hopper in every grass?’

‘I know well whom you would *once* have chosen; but as to now, of course” Sweetly she smiled.

‘And am I then so greatly changed in — how many years? — six, I think? You are, as of old, ‘*Numa*’; a light-footed boy, I remember, somewhat empty of thought, lengthened now only by a sixfold growth of the leopard’s beard — which also could be sheared.’

‘Call the beard ‘fantasy of your dream,’ and me still rubious *Numa*, capricious with you in the long grasses of the valley.”

“What other than ‘fantasy of my dream’? and yet to *me* very hyacinthine real.’

“Card it with carding fingers: I promise you no dream but substance enough.’ “If my finger’s would but assume the office of the carder’s comb! But is feeling then less fantasy than sight? You do not mean this that you say of ‘substance.”

‘So men speak and think in the world, Areta.’ ‘You mean among savage tribes?’

‘No, but among races considered civilized.’

‘The gravers of their great men must scratch a shallow tracery on this ‘world’ of yours!’

‘Oh, very shallow indeed! There are many conflicting voices, you know; the writings cross and re-cross on the basalt; and as they rather lack the genius of sharp distinction between the really great and the only seeming, so confusion comes, and continual movement in a circle in place of locomotion.’

‘But you do not mean that they have a genuine conception of a material universe?’ ‘Extremely genuine and material, in the case of the great

majority at least.’

‘They are not Christian?’

‘Oh yes!’

Areta’s laugh had a resemblance to the chirping of the cicada: so shining, and lalling, and dry. ‘Not Christian: for what account can they possibly render themselves of the many feats of magic performed by Jesus?’

‘The feeding of the multitude, and so on? I hardly know. Some disbelieve them; some nebulous-shruggingly neither believe nor disbelieve; some, in a fury of faith, charge them to the conniving *leger-de-main* of Omnipotence.’

‘The con — ! but these last are either hypocrites or self-deluders. They cannot conceive the inconceivable. If nature be phenomenon and nothing else, it *is* conceivable how one mind may, by its forceful action upon other *minds*, effect in them a sense of variation from the usual succession of phenomena. With such a hypothesis, magic becomes natural and easy. But like only can conceivably act upon like; you cannot, for instance, feed mind with broths, or blood with thoughts. Where therefore you introduce a conception of packed matter, the conceivability of magic — or indeed of any action whatever of spirit, divine or not, upon the phenomena perceived by other spirits — utterly collapses. And in the case of those who only half believe in the eyewitnessed performances of Jesus, there is, of course, no pretension to belief—’

‘But there is: many of these last indeed cling on with quite riotous vigour to the *rest* of the torn Book.’

The sun had set, Areta’s profile looked duhhwan, a misty crescent in the sudden dusk. Her drooped lash was as a trait of sea-weed dark on the spume of breakers under the Cyprian moon. Her voice tuned every moment to a lower sadness.

‘Yet Jesus was the most ideal of the idealists. ‘Matter’ to him was less than the dream of a dream. What, for instance, do these persons make of his saying: he that hath his spirit in such and such a way shall announce to the mountain: Be thou plucked-up! and it shall obey him? They must either think that he had a meaning, or hold him for a rhetorician — or, lower still, an orator.’

‘But the world, Areta,’ I said, ‘does not, you understand, call itself a thinking world, but an acting. Very slowly indeed, in its preoccupation, do the thoughts of its deep ones filter through the whole: and the reason is that pointed out by Des Cartes in *Principia*, and I think also by Malebranche, that the faculties we have are few, and designed for support and pleasure, rather than to penetrate the essence of things.’

‘But — I like your distinction between thinking and action. If there be nothing but spirit, upon what can action act, and by means of what? There is in truth no action but thought; to aspire is to be an adventurer; to dream is to be practical; to feel is to be a man of affairs; and when your world calls itself an acting one, it may simply use a euphemism for vague or wrong thinking. As for the Cartesian view which you mention, compare with it Berkeley’s saner one: that ‘some truths there are so *near* and *obvious* that a man need only open his eyes to see them; and such I take this one to be, that all the choir of the heavens and the furniture of the earth, have not any substance without a mind; that their being consists in being perceived.’ And now, having proved that, say, *fire* is nothing more than a particular combination of colour and form, and that colour and form can no more exist without a seeing spirit than a sound without an ear, Berkeley, you know, disdains to proceed to prove that this purely notional appearance cannot, for example, *burn*: merely remarking that that at least is *obvious*; and this is certainly the conclusion of Hume, Comte, and the rest. So that the faculties

would seem to require no very ‘penetrative’ acumen for the perception of truths so superficial.’

‘And yet,’ said I, baiting my hook, glad at the drone and harping of her voice, ‘I venture to say that these truths are in fact so far from ‘obvious’ to the untrained mind, that they may even seem rather ridiculous to it.’

‘And why? Does the untrained mind then suppose that fire or rock is anything *more* than colour and form? and if so, what? what invisible, inconceivable thing does the colour and form hide from us? They would, at least, make the same impressions upon us, if this singular thing of which we are never cognisant were not there: and we cannot, therefore but assume it to be absent; since, too, we cannot imagine the unimaginable, to *speak* of it is to use words without meaning. If, moreover, a thing perceived be really nothing more than colour and form, the ‘untrained mind may readily arrive at the certainty that it can neither burn, nor do anything whatever; and hence that no power, as no substance, can be other than spiritual. As to how, in such case, phenomena have the ‘power’ of producing impressions upon our consciousness, one opinion may differ from another. Singular Jonathan Edwards in his *Original Sin* is, you know, actually driven to assume the constant re-creation of all existing objects for the purpose of reimpresing us at every moment; but to me there seems no necessity for the creation or recreation of anything; it is only necessary that *we* should be, and should dream. Only in the mysterious loom of the spirit can the woof of the world be spun; for if phenomena were in truth external, how could they, not being spirit, make impressions upon spirit, unlike upon unlike, especially as, being passive, they can do ‘nothing whatever’? There may indeed be a law of our mind that every time we are conscious of proximity between a form and colour called ‘hand’ and a form and colour called ‘fire,’ we shall also be conscious of pain: as to which, Sergius, you know, declared that every such

consciousness of pain was the special act of the Divinity, — thus bringing Him in very deed ‘closer than breathing,’ ‘in our hearts and in our mouths.’ But at any rate, we can have no certainty that such law is universal, or that such special acts are inevitable: for is it not too probable that there are fingers in the universe which, plunged into flame, would feel torture indeed, but the torture of Arctic cold? the flame then must be without property, substance: and only substantial the nervous, visionary *ich*. And even for us, the law, if it exists, may not be always strict; the dream of yesterday was well-ordered; but as sometimes happens in the less lucid visions of the night, the phantasmagory of to-morrow may melt and writhe into strange distortions. Nay, on a night, I actually *had* the trance that he, my splendid dead king, held to the furnace a barchment which, like the bush of Moses, burned unconsumed. Ah, but let us return — to him!’

She stood upright, tall and grey. The moon was abroad in the heavens. I, conquering her hand in the trouble of love, kissed it.

‘Areta! Areta! this one night grant me, I implore! Do not return. For one night only leave Sergius to his death. Sleep, for me, in the castle!’

She smiled at my zeal with a shaken ‘No!’

‘Only this one night, for me?’

‘Shall we not go and sit *together* by him?’

‘My first prayer since I have come back to you: ah, Areta!’

‘Really your first?’

‘You know.’

‘You make it late.’

‘Then grant it early!’

‘Always wilful of bead, little Numa! and a lubricant for persuasiveness! It was really night. I, twining round her arm, led her pouting recalcitrant, to the portico. Far within the halls she must needs part from me; mounted on

wings the marble stairway, torch in hand; waved me a swift spirit's good-night; calling, 'the *second* may be harder i' the winning!'

I had no hope, no wish for sleep. Plying the paddle of the shallop, I circled many times the basin of the bay, now halting in the shadow of a bill, now basking in the moon's utmost noon. A red light, steadfast to the changing hours, burned through a slit of the ripple on the shelly sands. I peace, low-sobbed, of an night tense in an agony of stars, distraught of eye as the patient stricken ox, and dumb with the pains of its passion, as I with the pains of Areta. Her words, the odour of her, her sweet yielding, had purged my blood to the ultimate element of flame; her name was nightmare in my aching gorge. I came to the inlet; passed upward. It was midnight. Here no gloating ardour of the heavens trenched upon the supremacy of Shadow in which the reach of fan-shaped lotus, close-clustering, slept a perfect nepenthe. I stepped from the shallop; entered the chapel. The darkness was complete. Long on the altar-step, on the spot, where she sat, I sat. Aloud now I found utterance to call her name. Then falling to my knees, I overcast the coffin with my arms, my head fallen above his head, beseeching him as a god. 'Sergius! if death have ears, solitudes! if ghosts be veined with the ichor of human pitifulness! open your lean and lungless bosom — stretch your adamant arms of Polar ice: grant me, still quick, lustful, craft to wrest her from your mortality! give her back to me!' A sudden glimmer like a taper-light seemed to glance behind me. I sprang panting to my feet: but all was dark as before. I returned to the shallop, and so out upon the bay. The steeply-slanting constellations, stepping foot and foot with the night, were evidence of its revolving. Having surfeit of the water, I came to land; and finding beneath the portico a hung heptachord, took it, and made a circuit of the spread castle. I was faint with the long sickness of desire; my lips lay dead for lack of the carnal life-flame of her

kiss. To the East I stood beneath a square turret in a garden of spices. In a chamber on the second stage I knew that Areta slept. It was beginning morning: night, throeing with dissolution, spread out, like old misers on lamp-lit death-beds of velvet, a gluttony of bulging jewels; a languid, low-looming moon wrapped in elfin satins the crimson of pomegranate, and the grey-green of the tower, and the sardius of asphodel-berries, and the purple of myrtle-fruit. Here in galaxies fireflies poise uncertain, sun-birds and droning coccinellae dart. Turtles and nightingales hang their harps upon its willows. Inconsequent hints of zephyrs, hoth with the fragrance of clove and jasmine, came with healing in their wings to my parched lips and forehead. I sent up from the lyre a lullaby, tuned to the splash of a fountain which gushed from a basin of cipolin — a cold white spirit in the midst of the garden; muttering; wreathing with aureoles of the lunar rainbow her far-tossed hair of dew. I sent up the melody, and with it my soul, hoping for her face at the window: when a sudden consciousness of danger, a sense of some luminous descending mass, appalled me. My eyes being turned upward, I clearly saw whence it came — from a window of the third stage, that immediately above Areta. I had but the to rush backward before it fell to the earth. It appeared in the moonlight to be a great quantity of grey powder; and almost immediately on contact with the ground, it uttered a fremor of froth, and burst vividly forth into a carmine flame, mingled with writhing tongues of cobalt.

I hurried to the terrace. The red light burned steadfastly in the topmost Tower. Till morning I watched in vain to see a huge expected form emerge from the castle. Expected, I say, and yet with endless doubts; for Theodore's boat was a visible spot of blackness floating by the Tower- wall. I was confounded. Was his arm, I asked myself, indeed longer than the arm of

man? Soon after the full dawn, the dwarf set out from the Tower, broom by side, towards the chapel. I beckoned him to me.

‘Is the Elder Theodore,’ I asked, ‘now in the Tower?’

He nodded.

‘And has been throughout the night?’

‘Ha, master! that I do not know.’

‘You know with what knot you last moored the boat; has she been since removed?’

‘Not, for certain.’

I loitered for some hour or two among the parterres. It was a dank, secretive morning. The mountains donned grey veils of pudicity, low-lashed matin nuns after the glut and riot of a night. Areta came to the portico, looked abroad, her face sedate. My heart leapt to see the purple mourning gone, and a peplos of saffron in its stead. A broader regency of gold chapleted her head. The mists seemed to rarify at the yellow sun of her. I went and took her hand.

‘I heard your sleepless moonings.’ ‘And did not show a face?’

‘Being sleepier than you! and their end, moreover, was so abrupt.’ I said nothing of my narrow escape.

We walked to the parapet. Just then the dwarf, paddling near the shore, was returning from the chapel.

‘Call him that he may take us back,’ she said. ‘Already, Areta — already!’

‘It is fitting now. Let us look with quiet joy—’ ‘Give me till noon.’

‘Till noon, persistent Numa? Well, till noon. You shall read to me in the castle. Call him that he may fetch the book.’

‘I will myself bring it. What book?’ ‘John Norris.’

I set off rapidly in the shallop, passing on the way the dwarf, who was making for the terrace. In the chapel I lingered a very long time, and when I returned, returned without the book. I had forgotten it. Strong agitation, half joy, half fear, throbbed within me.

Areta, looking, saw my pale face, and caught its pallor, fore-knowing. As I sprang to the stage, the dwarf, coming with a weighted basket from the castle, descended the steps to the boat.

‘You were even now in the chapel?’ I said to him. “Yes, master.’ ‘Did you miss sight of nothing?’

‘Of nothing, sir.’

‘And all you found as usual?’

“Yes, master.’

‘What is it? What is it?’ cried Areta. I sprang to her side.

‘Areta — love — I know not how — I swear to you — but the coffin and the body of your Sergius have vanished from the chapel.’

Never could I have expected such result. With the sudden curvature of a cankered lily, her head drooped forward. Heavy she lay on me as a white column of Corinth aslant in arms of a bower of bindweeds. I bore her to a couch in the castle, and there till the gathering of darkness watched the wanness of her apathy.

She rose, a straining, a luminous strange questioning in her deep eyes; dashed back her hair; Niobe bereft; and instantly fled from the room. Swiftly as I followed, she was already far in the shallop when I reached the landing-stage. Having no boat, I sprang to the sands, and ran along them till stopped by a projecting cliff; thence made my way to the inlet through the sea, which at no point reached me above the middle. On the altar of the chapel a light glowed. Areta, sitting on the altar-step, pored upon chasms, a pity to see. Sergius had left not a rack. It was a second death of the beloved

to her; a twice-whetted knife piercing home from breast to back; acuter than at first, suddenness lending point. She was such that her heart was as a quicksand, deep-sective of every cherished object. Excision implied always the drawing of blood, and, it might be, the tapping of life. And the vitality of her ideal view of the world was oil to these flames; the loved thing, held the creation of her own soul, grew into the substance of its god, pant of her pulse, beat of her blood. And the embalmed body was all she had possessed of her Sergius; for the unfinished stained head of her attempt had been thrown aside as worthless. Thinking so, I stood near, moved with pity. She lifted her eyes and saw me; flashed a ray of mistrust at me.

‘How of the body, Numa?’

I started.

‘Were it not well to question as to that the Elder Theodore?’

‘The Elder? No! The Elder was in the Tower: I, standing by the parapet, saw no one pass on the water: the dwarf had the boat: left all as usual in the chapel! *his* strength could not have sufficed to move the weight: then *you* went to the chapel—’

Her head followed her wringing hands downwards. I was appalled at the close welding of this chain of inference.

‘You suspect me? Areta! With what motive—’

‘Alas! it is hard to tell: with no motive but one unworthy our race! Except indeed my fantasy be all awry — my love to him unknowingly estranged — or his to me — some punishment for I know not what—’

She stopped suddenly short, and together we darted wild eyes around the chapel in the infinity of new surprise. A voice in the air, in liquidest falsetto, in breathless impatience, called: ‘Sergius! Sergius! Sergius!’ And instantly from the depths of the black recess behind the reredos of the altar there slid like slanting light-rays through the air a little creature, a tenuous grey bird,

an embodied breeze, a flash of life. It settled, still minstreling its luted sibboleth, to a fluttering rest in the panting bosom of Areta.

‘Beatrix! Beatrix!’ she called, in a note lucid-high as that of the tiny thing she fondled, ‘Beatrix! little herald! whisperer of his secret! fledged dove of my comfort! Thou art come then?’ Close she hugged it, trouling, laughing, trilling, light-wheeling to the hint of a dance, a maiden-canephorus tripudiary in the comus of the Dionysia. The transit from despair to frolic was perfect. No question she asked as to whence the bird of Sergius had come after so long an interval. It was a heavenly benison — a dear revelation — unaccountable but real: she made no scrutiny. The slim-sloping little bird, nothing but a winged voice, unappeasably garrulous of its Becket vocabulary, throated and throated again its shrill *euion* of Sergius! Sergius! — and every twittered sesame availed to open wide the heart of Areta to ever a fresh flood of Libyan buoyancies. Breast fluttering to breast, she flitted and whirled with the new love to the door of the chapel; and, heedless quite of the old, floated rapidly in the shallop down the inlet. Following, I dimly saw her disappear behind a winding of the rock; heard yet a last echo of the ceaseless pipe. Then walked drearily backward, as before, through the sea.

After this very many weeks passed away before I again looked upon the face of my love.

I won from the mysterious tongue of an old stepdame almost daily whisperings of her; how she spent herself upon the bird; fed it at every hour from her own hand; slept only tranquilly when it lay warm in the happy valley of her breasts; laughed with it, danced with it, was a wanton in the abandonment of her kisses; never wearied of the hypocrite zeal of its monotone. How sometimes, she would descend by a narrow stair to a side-garden of the castle, high-walled between two buttresses; daily there an

hour or two; but how, as the suave winter of Phorfor drew on, her chamber had her always. This I learned. Several letters I wrote to her, protesting my innocence in the matter of the mummy; my constant longing for her; and once received a verbal reply that she would see me shortly. Hope burst at once into flower within me; but after many days of straining outlook, I dropped limp from my watch-tower, and fell to wide listless roamings over the domain. During all this time I was wary as to my life, knowing it in danger; kept circumspect eyes; barred my doors; never slept twice following in the same bed.

When the mourning-doves had once more resumed the practice of their elegies in the copses, I stood often near the small side-garden; and when spring had blown into still freshest summer, I quickened every day more ears at the gate than Typhon guardian-eyes before the garden of the daughters of Hesperus. Areta came at last one noon; I heard her step on the shells of the walk; the call of the bird. Outside I bent listening to her stirrings; listened till, after an hour, she walked back into the castle. At the same hour of the next day she returned. I, procinct with the sword of adventure, tapped at the wicket. She instantly lifted the latch, opened, and was before me, laughing cascades and carillons.

‘Little Numa! *you?* say ‘little Numa! little Numa!’

‘Sergius! Sergius!’ shrilled Beatrix, picking a crush of grapes and rose-buds from her lips, upturned.

She was dressed only in a thin llama Greek robe of umber brown, and through the shaken folds her limbs glanced, bluish to aspiration’s eye, as limbs of new-sprung Aphrodite mirrored fluctuant among brown sea-weed in the Paphian shallows. Her head thrown far back gave me view of the full convex of her throat, white as brandished legs of hamadryads in Apidamian glens by moonlight. Blue-blooded Areta! long-legged! — she was younger

than the summer; she was the hopeless Ideal to the spring of the *folie* of perfect loveliness.

We sat beneath an almond-tree in blossom, obstinate snow beneath the universal sweat and glister of the sun. Before us a monarch-peacock, Argus-tailed, stormed its little hour on the path. The air of the garden was full of roses.

‘And Numa has not been to see us!’ she cried, billing to Beatrix, larks prattling to the sunlight in her voice.

‘Sergius! Sergius!’ ‘Areta! — you are light with me.’

‘Not at all: I have been here: you might have come.’ ‘But could I know —’

‘You have been brooding upon the death of Sergius! He has been giving way to melancholy broodings upon the death of our sw-e-et, sw-e-et Sergius!’

‘Sergius? Sergius?’

‘I! — you certainly mistake me as to that. Sergius is dead, Areta — dead as flint — as carrion—’ ‘He vibrantly lives!’

‘Dead, Areta! and so long ago—’

‘Fie! you let the delude you so? It was yesterday as much as a year ago, a thousand aeons ago. Time is the counter by which ploughmen — and little sw-e-et Beatrixes — reckon the number of their successive ideas; we surely should feel in subtler algebras.’

‘That is so, Areta: that I know to be so: yet, as you must see this same Time is the fated element in which we breathe. And Sergius, as men reckon, actually did die—’

‘Did I tell you that he dictated three far-meaning fantasias to me just before death? One of them had clear reference to this subject of Time,

though of none have I been able to follow more than a footprint or two.
Would you hear them?’

‘Them — or anything you say to me.’

She repeated the compositions, slinging a knee between catapult arms, looking up, wondering at distance. Two of these, on later familiarity with them, I tried to translate into common English verse from the rhythmic Hebrew in which they were dictated; but I found their metrical parallelism packed with those archaisms and Chaldee-Aramaean enrichments (often obscure) in which the prophets delighted; so that owing to this, as well as to the extreme tenuity of their meaning at all points, I failed in the attempt. In the case of the opener third, however, I may have come somewhat better out of the thicket:

‘Shapes in the Fire come and go:
an orb from Scorpio swoons —
(empurpled woe!)
and horns hath she, and eyes,
and lethal trance, and voice, that as she hies,
the swan’s death-nocturne tunes.

I see a headlong Messenger:
her robe a crocus flame —
(confide in *her*!)
thrills shake her plumes amain:
her passion’s load, the burthen of her pain,
is the burthen of A NAME.’

There smiles a lady, veiled, in death;
bright angels round her chaunt —
(mellifluous breath!);
she, from the VIIth sphere,
regards the VIth where gleams her lovely bier,
and sighs her ancient haunt.

List to the Organ's roaring throat!
Hymen's loud *euois* swell —
(triumphal note!):
this day two souls entwine:
their purple orgies drenched in aphrian wine,
and Priap loves, a-dell.

'I doze below four lax-zoned moons:
nude wails of woman rave —
(lugubrious tunes!);
nude, by a beach of bones,
their pallid pomp in torchlit dolor moans,
seeking a new-oped grave.

'Lo! — one I see — a child of man!
his outlines laved in light —

(complete in plan!);

eternal smiles he wears:

no clothing on his chiselled lustre bears, and yet is clothed in White.’

So for a long time I sat by Areta; she lithe as phosphorescence, and full of aery, moth-winged words; yet words infect always with the lues of Sergius and his mortality. And the next day she again admitted me to the garden; and so at every noon we sat beneath the almond-tree; amid saw the long-trained peacock, proud as a lady, step; and talked together in the interludes of the Corybant *orgia* of Beatrix. Once she came with me beyond the garden-gate. It was a morning magnificently broad and bright. Deftly I snatched the bird from her finger, and before she knew my meaning, ran backwards with it to the castle; passed up a stone stairway, along three corridors, and so to her chamber; saw all windows closed; posited the bird up on her square low bed, of ivory, arabesqued in a fan-tracery of gold; reclosed the door; and flew back to regain her. She, coming to meet me, stood: rather scared to see at first: then, guessing my thought, with the shaken pendulum-shoulders of half-comic reluctance. Further and further that long day did I first, then she, beck like folly-fire into the glades of the forest; umbrageous valleys of Phorfor thick with dewes and gloom; Calypso-antrums dishevelled with maiden-hair, for all that diamond intergleams of stalactics pin the frivolous tresses; azure-brown steep-banked rills we knew of old; boskets dim and tremulous and secret as the soul of treasure-finders; and where, at midnight, dumb footfalls heat to syrinxal lutings not of men, and routs of freakish aegipeds chase eyesidling Kupris under the tense-lipped leer of the witched, subconscious moon. Areta, finding herself in the very lap of summer, was impotent; resigned herself; fled before me, unattainable, calling; was a town-bred *grisette* rolling concupicent in

feathery beds of heather. Not till dusk did we return, languid; passed slowly by the terrace; saw the shallop bobbing in the quiet twilight by the landing-stage; and the large boat by the Tower-steps; round in the little garden fell wearily to the seat, she leaning a pale face against the tree-trunk; then, with closed eyes:

‘Haste and fetch me my little Beatrix.’

As I passed along the second of the three angled corridors, I seemed to hear a rustling train on the floor of the third; but when I reached it, found it lonely. Entering the chamber, I looked for the bird; looked long in the agony of interest. Fearing, doubting, I returned to Areta.

Glancing, she saw me come from the door without the bird; and sprang pallid to her feet. ‘Areta! the bird—’

Again that under-look of mistrust, heartpiercing! ‘Where is she, Numa?’

‘It is very singular — she seems to have left — or been taken from — the chamber—’ She, suddenly tragic, cried: ‘Oh why — why are you here to plague me! If I but walk with you, talk with you — pain — bitter — falls to me—’ drooped then to the seat, face caught in hands, weeping.

Presently she rose, and with grave bent head, walked slowly without speech into the castle. Diligent search was made for Beatrix, the servants all requisitioned. Areta pined in her chamber; ‘heart-broken,’ said her waiting-woman. Beatrix had swerved like a vision into the breaths of the wind, slipped quite back into the jaws of the abysm whence she came. On the fifth evening, however, a letter, as I heard, was handed to Areta from the Elder Theodore. Though it was then near midnight, she at once set out alone; passed over the bay to the chapel; and the next morning sent word by the dwarf that daily food should be taken her from the castle, as in the days of her first seclusion.

That night I, too, took boat to the chapel. Areta, I found, had retired to her side-chamber. In front of the altar, on the spot where the body of Sergius once lay, another coffin, a malachite shell, now shimmered dully under a taper-glow; stretched, open, on the old trestles. In the headpiece was gold-inlaid the Key and angel-song, as before. Supine within lay a figure — a marble statue. I wondered at the minute burin, so intimate with the genius of death, subtle to catch in stone the inmost thought of the Azrael. Here was flesh twice mortal; here was Sergius himself, stiff-fixed in a sleep doubly eternal. As the Greeks in the days of their hairiest niceties over-painted every part of their marbles, wreathing the lips in rosy smiles of supernal loveliness; so here, with opposite hope was the figure painted over-all. Too clearly with opposite hope: for I knew not which to say prevailed in naked ghastliness, the stained face and slumbering lids, yellow as fennel; or the beard and lashes, matted black; or the leaden lips, or greenish ears, or livid finger-tips, or winding-sheet of gold.

As I stood regarding this effigy, lo, black velvet hangings parted before a doorway, and Areta, licked below the haunches by curling purplish tongues, loomed cold in a splendid unbroken gown of soft silk, all whiteness, like taper snowbergs, sun-smeared, clear against the black of Polar precipices.

‘You see, Numa,’ she said, coolly splenetic in voice, ‘I am not all alone. The Elder, knowing my loss—’

‘Stay, Areta!’ I cried, ‘can it be that you still suspect me of that wanton act?’ ‘In the *first* case, I seemed to wrong you; in the second I knew not how to imagine — the inference looked so clear—’

‘But you cannot believe this! I had no wish to rob you of your Beatrix! Were we not happy together? Can you not see that in all this there is a design deeper than our probing — a force stronger than we? That your suspicion is quite ill-aimed? and your trust?’

‘Forgive me then if that really so.’ Her voice mellowed. ‘The objects of our apprehension come and go, melt and harden before us in endless flux, and we are apt to seek for explanation in the activities of other minds, when perhaps it is we that vary in the temper of our loves and hates, passions and wills. At any rate, with the sight we now see before us I am well content; it has been graciously fashioned for me by the Elder’s own cunning and will more than replace

‘But, Areta! you will not look upon this hideousness from day to day — promise me

‘Numa! it is the very placidity of Sergius in death; full of a mournful greatness. If to your eyes hideous, to mine far from that. But I will sleep now. In the day-time you will come and sit by me.

She turned and went.

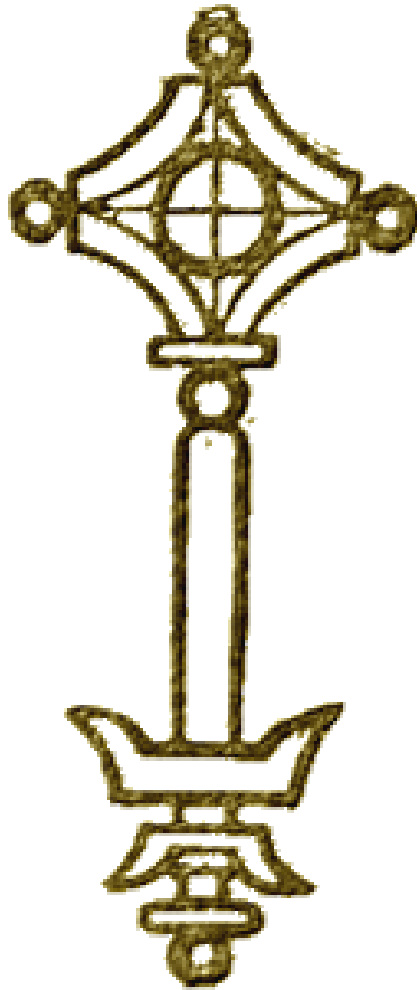
As I passed over the water to the castle, a sudden thought took me, as when deserted ships are smitten fervently aback into new lays on a gusty day. It had reference to the Key and Angel- motto ordered by Sergius to be inlaid on his coffin, and it was the fresh sight of these that night which must have pricked me to the thought. A troubled instinct seemed to rise in me that the significance of the device — too well I knew Sergius to doubt that it had significance — might not be deeper than earnest study. I knew that he had *sung* the words to an air of his finding; that he had measured them out in metrical feet. For many days after this I kept close, profoundly engaged upon the task. Long years before, on reading the *Wanderjahre* of Goethe, I had wondered at the introduction of this figure into the work; wondered that so meaningful a writer, with no apparent reason, should plump this seemingly absurd drawing, without intimacy with the context into the thick of his seriously-intended book. The ‘key’ had then seemed to me not only very frivolous, but even rather stupid. But later on I came to the certainty

that in Goethe's mind at least (with its strong bias towards the mystical) the figure was alive with some secret meaning; and now assurance was doubled in me; for I knew that this must have been the thought of Sergius also, to the flame-jet of whose genius the hardness of the riddle had doubtless soon solved to fluid clearness.

I reproduce the figure; and it may perhaps be well if I barely indicate the very slow and steep road by which I toiled to some sort of apprehension of the significance given by Sergius (and I presume by Goethe) to this singular key. And first I was led by the extreme non-resemblance of the figure itself to my own ordinary notions of the *genus* key, to ask myself for what reason the author could have chosen to call the drawing a 'key' at all; and hence was confronted, in the first place, with the necessity of defining the word 'key.' What then, I asked myself, is a 'key'? 'That which opens,' I at once answered; and that this is the commonest conception I was convinced by the occurrence in most languages of such metaphors as the 'key of the situation,' etc.: so Bosphorus was called the 'key' of Pontus. But reflection showed me how far is this from a satisfactory definition; for crowbars open, hands, winds, many things; nor do all keys open, as in those cases where the casket or safe, once locked by one key, can only be re-opened by pressure upon a secret spring — a spring which is, in fact, *another* key. And what I needed was a definition inclusive of all keys, and exclusive of all other than keys.

I was therefore compelled to step deeper, and then arrive at the certainty that a key is that rather which *locks* — which alone locks; nor are any exceptions to this truth other than apparent, as when automatic locks fasten keylessly, in all which cases the key-principle is, of course, concealed in the mechanism; and this fact is expressed in the German Schlüssell (key), *i.e.* *locker*, and so with clef, clavis, *kleis* (all related to English cleave, close,

include, etc.). The key, then, I said, locks, welds together; and I thus got the idea of binding force.



But looking at the figure, I could not but observe how the four small circles at the corners of the handle are bound to the large central circle by the two lines running at right angles within the handle; and how the fifth, further away, at the top of the key, is also (less directly) connected with the same large circle by the shaft, or body, itself. Whereupon there arose within me the conception of a sun *binding* to itself five surrounding planets; and instantly I remembered Areta's repetition of von Hardenberg's apothegm that 'man is a sun of which his senses are the planets' — *four* senses (of sight, smell, hearing, and taste) closely connected with the cerebral centre

of light and thought; and a *fifth* (of feeling) more distantly related to it by its diffusion over the body; there thus took shape in me the double notions of flame and human life: notions, indeed, so closely allied as to be almost one — as is proved not only by their interweaving in all the theosophies that have been, but by the common use in language of such expressions as ‘glow,’ ‘fire’ of life; and etymologically by the identity between such words as breath, spirit, etc., and *purify*, *purge*, *fire*, etc., all connected with Greek *pur* (fire). With the notion, too, of flame is allied (indirectly through the notion of breath) the notion of *music*; especially of such music as is sung, or won from wind instruments. But, says Goethe, in reference to the key: ‘Does it not remind you of arrows with barbs? God help us!’ Arrows with barbs — the unvarying symbol of flight with wings! and having reached this point, a glimmer of the connection between the key and the coffin-motto, ‘Fear not... he shall be great...’ lit me — the motto *sung* by the *flaming* and *winged* and *human-shaped* messenger to the maiden of Nazareth; and since this motto had yielded to the scrutiny of Sergius a metre, and been hymned by him to a melody, I no longer doubted that in the key would in very deed be found the key to this melody.

Remembering, then, my twin notions of flame and the human being, I set myself to seek in the key itself more definite expression of them; nor was it long before I observed that the whole figure is little more than a reproduction over and over again of the figure this figure, it will be seen, is formed by the ‘binding’ lines in the handle with each of the small circles at the corners; and formed again by each of them with the large central circle; and formed again by the shaft with the circles at its top and bottom; above all the whole key, if inverted, is, in its *ensemble* (omitting the barbs or *wings*), a general reproduction of it. But the figure is the antique and most elementary conceivable representation of the *wingless* human form,

regarded as consisting of head and body; it also represents a burning and haloed candle or torch; a globed lamp; a tailed and flaming comet.

The figure, then, I assumed to be the *rationale* and *motif* of the whole key; and having determined this, I could not fail to remember that this very figure is also the obsolete Greek letter *koppa*. Now, *koppa* occurring between *pi* and *rho* would, had it been retained in the alphabet, have occupied the very place which the central *u* now occupies in the word *pur* (fire); it accordingly corresponds with our Latin *q*, and its line extended upward through its circle in fact makes a kind of double-*q*: *Ae* But as the whole Key, inverted, is *koppa*, so *q*, inverted, is none other than *b*; and the elements of this letter *b* (a semicircle and a straight line) are actually formed no less than eight times in the key by means of the ‘binding’ lines and the central circle. If, then, the Key indeed represented the key of the melody sung by Sergius, I had at last (remembering the flat delineation of the figure) the tangible result of B flat. And in this conclusion I was confirmed, when I considered that by means of the ‘binding’ lines within the handle, in conjunction with part of the central circle, and part of the curves bounding the whole handle, the elements of the ‘flat’ sign in music are produced no less than eight times over: thus *b*; and now I was able to see for what reason these boundary curves had not been made to bulge *outward* (a conformation which would have made the key a perfect *koppa*) instead of inward: for the inward curve was absolutely necessary in order that they might touch the central circle at four points, and so help to produce the eight repetitions of the character *b*.

It now only remained for me to take the Hebrew version of the words ‘Fear not,’ etc., and write down all the successive letters corresponding to the first seven (*a* to *g*) of the Latin alphabet: I thus obtained my *notes*. *Time* I determined by dividing two such letters, if they occurred consecutively by

the semi-quaver, using quaver, minim, or crochet as one or more of the letters subsequent to *g* intervened. (In this convention I counted the Hebrew vowel-points as real letters.) Turning now to the organ, and trying my result in the key of B flat on the treble notes, I won — as any one may henceforth win — an air so Orphic-wild, and — to *my* seeming — so mournful, that it bore me captive as it floated upward; an air, too, at which the ears of memory pricked: I gradually coming to realize that this was no other than the very tune which in early childhood I had heard from Sergius.

All this time I sat often with Areta beside the statue. Autumn and winter supervened. Her quick fictile spirit likened more and more to the marble shape of gloom upon which she looked. ‘Deaths dreeriment’ prevented and pervaded her. She sat and read and wove and gazed. Her mood deepened to resemblance within that of the more hyper-spiritualistic of the Herrnhüters, and the Moravian and Bohemian brethren — the complex religiosity of the Brahmin *yati* basing itself upon the simple Christian faith. Her only books now were Spinoza’s *Ethics*, and the three treatises of Jacob Böhme: The high and deep searching of the three-fold Life of Man according to the Three Principles; the Introduction to the real Knowledge of the Great Mystery; and the Supersensual Life. She reverted to her habit of watching through the night, and sleeping by day; she clothed herself in the black habit of a recluse; the wanness of long fastings made her in the grey darkness of the chapel stranger than water-ladies hair-wringing beneath unnatural gloatings of the moon; her diet was cream thickened with raw crushed Persian apples. I wondered that two environments could so of one make two: such varieties were infinite in Areta! Not now was she the same but lately maenad-irrational with the lechery of spring. One link only seemed to bind her any more to me: her eagerness that I should convert to

sympathy with her feeling. It was a quiet settled mania with her. She besieged me with meek persistence at every point.

‘Little Numa,’ she said, taking my hand in her two, ‘were you not ever my unrelenting shadow, hot-hunting me whither I fled from you? So now must you follow me where I go — as I *him*.’

She kissed me, once and again, motherly-familiar, on the forehead, I manoeuvring flagrant lips to the tingling transport of her cheek.

‘And where that is you know. Is it not’ — summoning the *Uebersinnliches Leben* of Böhme— ‘there where no creature dwelleth? where, having ceased from all thinking and willing, we hear what God unspeakably speaketh? To be real sovereigns of nature and ourselves, must we not be silent and quiet, and then are we as God was before nature and creature. We must learn to distinguish between the thing and that which is only the image of it; that which is properly angelical, and that which is no more than bestial. For’ — what says the writing?— ‘if thou rulest over the creature externally only, and not from the right inward ground of thy renewed nature, then is thy ruling verily in a bestial kind, and a sort of imaginary government; but if thou hast put off the bestial or ferine nature, then thou art come into the Super-imaginariness, which is a state of being above figures and shadows: and so rulest over all, being reunited to thy original in that very source out of which they came; and henceforth nothing on earth can hurt thee, for thou art all things, and nothing is *unlike* thee.’

She held my hand: she kissed me — lingeringly — again and yet again, on the brow. But I: ‘Yet here you seem wayward, Areta. As for me, I fly from my mast the flag of Sergius. Sergius and Jacob Böhme, it seems clear, looked through eyes of different-coloured irises. For, so far from bidding you cease from all willing, did he not say’ — was it not his last word to you — ‘give to every passion its rein—’

‘Sh-h-h!’ She extinguished my mouth with swift smothering hand, ‘you cannot suppose that the maxim will fit *you* — rudderless little Argonaut that you are! Nor yet me. Sergius it fitted: for in him every ‘passion’ was spiritual, and winged colt born of that instinctive mother-purity of his, which everywhere saw God: to give to such its rein was to be snatched into heaven. But *you* — thick, all clay—’

She swooped like a fishing-bird upon a sighted kiss in my hair.

But I again: ‘And is clay then, Areta, less divine than spirit? Not so, I am certain, did Sergius think. ‘Give,’ he said, ‘to every song its dance’ — and to you he said this, specially to you. Ah, Areta! is not body sweet as soul? Does not God beat and burn in both? To feast then must be divine as to fast: to kiss sublime as to pray. For is He not kiss, and kissed, and kisser; prayer and shrine, and pilgrim? So said Sergius.’

A disdainful sidling look, pouting resentment, kept her from answer.

One night — it was then beginning spring — she, looking upon the statue-face, said, frowning:

‘I somehow seem conscious of some sort of change. Look, Numa, see if the same effect is not wrought upon you, too.’

I looked, but shook my head. Yet the change, very gradually growing from day to day, had long been far from unknown to rue.

‘And with this consciousness of change, Areta, does not your fondness for the marble lessen?’ She seemed astonished.

‘How could that come? You appear to cling most persistently to the notion of some inherent reality in the things we see. If I see a thing, which I *know* can be nothing more than the image of my own mind, must I not also know that any seeming change in it is an exact reflection of some real change in me, by some means produced? so that, supposing I love the thing, my relative position to it must be at all times unaltered; and love, so long as

it can realize the identity of the thing, follows it through all its modifications, as Boötes hunts Harmaxa, or as the suns in the tail of the Bear follow it through all its circhings round the Polar star.'

'But suppose,' I said, 'you know the *means* by which the change is wrought in you — the definite will of another mind working upon yours; suppose, for instance, the Elder, willing that you should be conscious of change in this statue, effected his purpose, in the fashion taught by experience to be possible and easy, by applying to it a burin, while you slept —'

'In that case, indeed, some loves might spread wings from their object; but as for me, even in that case, I feel sure — and your supposition is as wild as little Numa hunting hares of old on the mountains!'

She caught my head between antipodean hands, and dipped at it a steep kiss, motherly-playful. Little by little Spring slackened her girdle, swelling nymphic-gravid. Change in the statue now grew amain.

For this, not Theodore, but I, was responsible. Despair at its ghastliness and the deepening gloom of Areta had spurred me at last to come to the chapel during her sleeping-hours, and with furtive tremulous chisel to soften the face into a semblance somewhat more life-like; the chipped part I would then resmear with a hue less lethal, yet not too discrepant. And the effect upon her was very quickly evident.

One noon a mountebank, from a townlet beyond the mountains, arrived laggard at Phorfor. I hurried to the chapel.

Down a side-aisle I ran to her chamber. She slept. I intruded my head between the velvet hangings of the door-way, and called:

'Areta! Areta!'

She was as when the first presentiment of morning stirs in the plumage of the eider-duck; strained the ivory coronal of a bare arm lazily round her

head; jerked suddenly stark, as in the last throes before death; and lay outlined sideways, hills and a central mountain in Lihhiput under the thin green coverlet, eyeing me through imbecile eyes.

‘Areta! a punchinello!’

‘A punchinello! O joy...’

Fleeter than the ether wings of instinct, more oilily than interfluent mercury, she leapt instantly before me, standing hot and rosy, clean-cut through the smoke-puff of a night-veil of gauze. Then quickly scarlet with remembrance —

‘Numa! go....’

I waited in the chapel, dubious, yet buoyed on the memory of all the craze and fervours which the appearance of a mountebank had meant to Areta, a girl.

She came presently, dressed in black. And mournfully negative, said: ‘I cannot go with you.’ ‘How! you will not let the man return—’

‘Let him be fed and paid.’

‘I certainly shall not stir without you, Areta.’ She stood looking at the changing statue. Then rushing furiously downward at its eyebrow a skew and still-born kiss, throttled my wrist. ‘Come then!’ Dragged me toward the door.

We sat beneath the almond tree of the little garden, and the punchinelho set his stage and puppets before us; fussy puppets with breath to grin, and caper, and perorate. Areta looked — mostly pale, averted, — with nostrils panting thorough-bred; now and then flushing into crimson; now and then rippling into sheer oblivion of laughter. The new sunlight seemed to wind her with ecstasy. That night I was able to force her to sleep once more in the castle. The greater part of it I spent in chiselling at the statue.

In the morning I returned within her to the chapel, she guilty and silent. We stood by the altar-rail — for a long time stood dumb, gazing on the emptiness where the statue had lain. The spirit of its pallid granite had passed into Areta; only, she just moved her head measurely from side to side, woe-ridden. Two hours before I had left the coffin safe by the rail.

All at once paroxysmal in queenliness, horizontal from shoulder-blade to rosy-armed forefinger-tip, she cried to me —

‘Oh go! go! — far from Phorfor — whence you came—’

I bowed. The suddenness of high blood had ever been a trait of our race, nor was I all undowered with its quiet-quick arrogance. I bowed — and walked instantly from the chapel, through the sea, to the castle.

So then Areta had dismissed me as a hireling from the ancient home of my family. I passed to my chamber, crammed a few pieces of clothes into a travelling-bag, and descended to the stables at the back. I saddled my horse, and was about to mount, when the dwarf, appearing from behind an angle, shambled briskly toward me, and handed me a parchment.

‘From whom?’

‘The Elder Theodore, master.’

I broke the seal, and read:

‘The Lady Areta has now commanded you from Phorfor. I, her protector, suggest that this injunction meet instant obedience.

‘Theodore.’

On the document I made haste to scribble in pencil the words:

‘I shall *not* go: and I defy you, Theodore’; handed then the parchment to the dwarf; unsaddled the horse: and returned to my chamber.

The thought which shadowed me all the day was the wonder that Theodore should know of Areta’s ‘go! go!’ He had heard it, then: but how? We two stood alone in the chapel; his boat was by the Tower. Had he asses’

ears? My faith in magic, to Areta possible as nature, was small. I sought deeply for explanation. I remembered how, praying one night by the coffined Sergius, a taper-flash seemed to glance behind me in the chapel: yet Theodore's boat was by the Tower. And I thought of the fall of luminous powder as I harped beneath the turret-window: yet the boat was by the Tower. And from what hand had Beatrix flown to us out of the chapel-recesses? How had she disappeared? The boat was then by the Tower.

At midnight I dressed in white, and crawling flat-faced along the marble terrace, reached the landing-stage; thence dropped to the sands; and so, still crouching, entered the sea, four-square; with hands bloody from the barbed star-fish of the bottom, I came to the inlet, fairly sure that I had thus cheated the eyes of Theodore. Having reached the reredos-end of the chapel, I struck light to a taper, and passed straight onward through a draped doorway. Never beyond this point had I dared before, nor, as I knew, had Areta, nor Sergius. A long and steep corridor, with branches veining out every-way stretched before me. After hours of search, I found that the alcoves, vaults, chambers of every shape, both along the main corridor and its ramifications, were past numbering. Many of these were doorless; many had doors, but open, admitting me to examination; one only, near the end of a long and very precipitate corridor which was the branch of a branch, hid from me behind a locked door. The position of this I marked, and judging that the time had now come when the night shudders into a deeper gloominess at the instinct of the near darts of morning, I returned with like secrecy to the castle.

At the next midnight I crawled back with the same furtiveness to the chapel, and made for the marked door. I carried a bunch of old keys, one of which chance at length fitted to the lock: there was no creaking, and I guessed a well-used mechanism. Within I found a large chamber, black

every-way with its own bare rock, and empty. I walked round it, once and again, and met everywhere — nothing. Surprised, I again set out, holding the taper high; but happening now to come nearer one of the corners than before, I stepped upon air; plunged downward into the throat of an abyss; and bumping in my descent upon steep stone gradients, arrived at the bottom all shock and amaze. But I held the taper: in five minutes I was conscious of this. And light was in my pocket. I rekindled the flame, and found myself at the angle of two subterranean galleries. And now truth dawned upon me. For it was clear from their general directions that of these, one led beneath the sea to the Tower, and one beneath the inlet and the land to the vaults of the castle.

Here, too, having passed cautiously along the Tower-gallery, I found a honeycomb — clefts and crannies everyway, veins, chambers. The chief artery itself was full of windings, angles. For about two hours old Erebus blinked in every nook at the innovating flicker (if my taper. I went so far sea-ward as to see the steps leading down from the lower: their length showed me the great depth of the excavation beneath the water. Then back again into the side-catacombs, eyes stepping in my careful feet, a thief in the night, all leers and tremors. Once, far in the labyrinth, I stumbled over some rock-debris. Instantly there was an answering sound: a faint stirring as of shaken plumage, and this barely-whispered, sleepily-voiced interrogatory: ‘Sergius? Sergius?’

It came from behind a bolted door opposite where I stumbled. I drew the staple; entered; roused grey Beatrix in her hung cage of reeds to a sage lateral interest of round eyes in roe; saw the mummy of Sergius in its shell; and near it the statue in its coffin; then, knowing morning near, rebolted the door; returned to the chapel-level; locked the door of the stair-chamber; and with elaborate secrecies made my way to the castle.

Before midnight of the same day I had toilsomely lifted the statue-weight from its coffin, and round its neck fastened a provided rope: with this, having slung the Beatrix-cage upon my back, I dragged draught-cattle-wise, barked at by Cerberus echoes. Progress was slow. The taper, carried in an alternate resting hand, showed me now, what I had previously noticed indeed, but not in such numbers — large cloth bags, stuffed with some soft substance, laid here and there on the ground of many parts of the labyrinth. Resting, I happened to see a little of the powder which as (I concluded) filled the bags, spilt by chance at my feet; it was grey, and I remembered the descending mass beneath the turret-window. I stooping to examine it, a flake of hot grease fell near. The powder instantly volleyed me such a hoot, that space seemed to split fragmentary round me, and I woke to sense prostrate against the wall, deaf but to the booming buzz of my own waltzing brain, and blind but to the two bluish round ghosts that hovered before me in the darkness. When I had relighted the taper, Beatrix was still fluttering and screaming with fright. I had now passed through the length of the vein, and was near the main artery. I dragged the statue after me up a step, and proceeded slowly on this final stage toward the stair. I had not consumed many yards, however, before there sounded upon my palsied consciousness from behind an angle of the corridor the stalk of an approaching step — and, O Heaven, the rustle of silk. I spun motionless, fled riveted, was fixed in sick gyrations, like the statue of a whirlwind, was everything in a moment and nothing, a circle in flesh, symbol of infinity, sign of zero. But only for one eternal instant: in the next I had extinguished my light, had lifted the statue in my arms, and, shuddering under the incubus, had plunged into the dark orifice of a cranny near me; just as Theodore, holding a candlestick, loomed into view. He came close, tremendous, heavy, veiled, himself a phalanx, a marching pyramid — passed close to my breath,

unsuspecting — went yet a few strides beyond: when Beatrix, tempted, called, as if uncertain, ‘Sergius? Sergius?’ Theodore stopped statuesque, angled his head sideward; his ears a pair of scales, zealous to weigh the very dust of sound; and so for a full minute stood. Hearing nothing, he again strode two steps forward; and again the new sound stirred the bird to call, briskly now and loud. Theodore turned, hesitating, came towards me, glanced at the black mouth in which I hid, and passed somewhat beyond. Once more the bird uttered a note, and once more he halted short, the stone monument of an ear, grandly patient, his back towards me broadly immobile. Not now did I hesitate a moment: my shoes were already done off. Creeping from my retreat, I drew on tiptoe near him, all bloodless, collected, a concentrated corpse, and stretching a sudden head above his shoulder, puffed utterly out the flame of his candle. An ‘Ah — h — ...’ broke from him like the menace of thunder. I flew back to my cranny, expecting him now to return to the Tower for new light; instead of which he immediately came in my direction, and walked away towards the chapel, blocking my exit! In the chapel, I knew, he would procure a light, and return armed. I, clasping desperation to my bosom, grasped the statue-rope, and tugged towards the Tower; and finding progress all too slow, summoned the cracking thews of Atlas, and lifted the burthen, running, laying it down, running again, until I stood at the foot of the Tower stairway. All this time, Beatrix, wildly swinging in her cage, was two ecstatic winnowing-fans in a granary of chaff. From the step-foot I half hoisted, half dragged, the burthen up the stairway, and had overcome more than threequarters of its steep length, when I beheld Theodore heaving rapidly towards me along the corridor a mountain in travail, steel glinting in his right hand, as when a regiment winks moving on the hillside. Upon the strength of Atlas I piled the fury of Samson — the statue grew light at my

maniac tendons. Before the Elder of the Tower had halved the stairs, my head was prising up the trap-door of iron above: it gave sluggishly — I urged and hunted the statue through the aperture — pelted myself madly after it — and slapped down the ponderous metal upon the snapped point of Theodore's blade.

Having spindled the hasp on the top of the trap-door, I found myself in a dark room; but quickly discovering the locked door, the key of which projected inwardly, I opened it, and easily towed the statue over the glazed bricks of the flooring to the boat by the Tower-steps. The wakeful dwarf, dumb at my apparition, gazed upon me with fish-mouth vacant as his eyes. I was soon by the landing-stage, and so with my burthen reached the castle. Looking in the darkest morning from a casement, I dimly discerned Theodore wading to the Tower through the sea — vast as a reef when it awfully forges through the fog athwart the drifting mariner.

I cull some few sentences from a journal which I kept at this time:

Elaphebolion, 3rd (*hist.*). Areta, then, will not see me. Will let me go without one last look or word. My note of to-day was the third in which I have declared my power to prove the quite natural means by which her mementoes of Sergius have disappeared. She sends no answer. Her old waiting-woman has been with me again by stealth: is all in my favour, and full of sibilant talk, breathless news. Theodore, it seems, plies Areta with missives: warns her presumably against seeing my face. I work all the night, and nearly all the day, upon the statue and the bird. The thought that I have thereby made the spirit of Areta somewhat brighter will be to my exile like fruit in winter: she will see my hand, my care for her, and remember how I loved.

Elaph. 4. This day I have received the first message from Theodore since the incidents in the galleries. My minute outlook seems to have filched him

of the hope of assassinating me by cryptic drugs and dirks. And so open murder is to sit arbiter upon us. His parchment was a conjugation of the verb dare: you dare, you have dared! 'We cannot *both* abide at Phorfor.' Foolish old man! he does not know how soon Phorfor will heave a rid bosom at me. I wrote on the parchment: 'I will not go. Swords punctually at midnight of the 9th in the chief underground gallery of the chapel.' An hour after the answer came: 'It is well.'

Elaph. 5. I am toiling as before at the statue and the bird.

Elaph. 6. By the 9th all will, I conclude, be ready. I shall leave a note for Areta, and set out by dawn of the 10th, provided only that Theodore's sword do not prove longer than my life.

Elaph. 7. Areta's room is constantly warm with her: so the old dame reports. The Mahlström of the spring, it is clear, has not caught her in its now widening whorls. The three last troparions of Sergius she has written out afresh, and studies them long. These, and a few books marked with his name, are all she has of him.

Elaph 8. This day I have been pondering upon my appointed meeting with Theodore. An unwillingness has arisen and grown almost compulsory within me. He is an old man; many reasons come to me. Yet he must not think me dreadful of his power. Time must decide for me.

On the 9th no entry appears. During the evening of that day I sat and wrote my letter of farewell to Areta. The room was the one in which I had chiefly lived of late; vastly domed; tapestried in Utrecht velvet of red, but blood-black under the orbed moon of pink light pendent from the centre. It jutted from the castle on the second stage, somewhat basilica-shaped, the roof being low and flat over the semi-circle at the far end. On one side it looked east towards the mountains, and west over the bay on the other. A palisade of taper stained-windows, Gothic-mullioned, surrounded it. Half

the length of the west side was filled by a ponderous organ, the most important of the three in the castle. I sat and wrote my letter, and had not finished, when, hearing an opened door, I looked, and saw, to my confusion, Areta herself stand; simple in silver-white linen *chiton*, zoned with gold-cloth; an azure and rosy diamond in her forehead flirting lissom at hide-and-seek with the various spirit of light.

A thick sadness veiled her face. ‘I have come, Numa, in friendship, to bid you farewell — having just heard of your resolve to go from us tomorrow.’

‘Ah, that is kind. And you do not fear the Elder’s malison, I hope?’ ‘I fear nothing, Numa. But you speak lightly, sir, of the great Theodore.’ We sat together on a couch within a small recess. The hangings before us half hid us from the room.

‘It is a pity,’ she said, ‘that you have so acted as to rouse his gentle mind to displeasure. You and he cannot, it is certain, now live upon the same atmospheres. One must disappear — you are a boy — he hoar with the snows of reverence — ah me!’

‘Yet not for the displeasure of Theodore do I go: be sure of that, Areta: but because you, with your own lips, have bid me.’

‘That was the mere wind of the blow which struck me; the flash of the sword which pierced me. I was deeply wounded, you must know. Forget that, Numa. But now a far stronger reason urges. Theodore is mortally angry with you, sir.’

‘And because I have committed the sin of loving you.’ ‘Of —— ? No! of *not* loving me, you mean.’

‘Areta! why, the pebbles on the beech moan with the torment of their thirst when you pass on them — the callous heart of ocean flares into scarlet

flames at you! And how have I shown this impossible lack of love? By removing, of course—’

‘Yes, Numa.’

‘But in that case my only motive must have been jealousy, which is but the yellow mustard- flower of love.’

‘And some such half-notion it was which has helped me towards softer thoughts of you. Yet it was a base jealousy — of one far nobler than you — and so venomous bitter in its effects—’

‘And now, if after all it be not true that I did remove your treasures, Areta?’

‘In each case the Elder saw you in the act: in his wisdom, though absent in space, not merely saw, but foreknew: and warned me beforehand that if I laughed with you, went abroad with you, you would be led to do so and so, with such and such motive. All which unheeding, I rushed on, and was punished.’

‘Have you slept to-day, Areta?’ ‘Yes.’

‘Then stay with me to-night — the last — till midnight, at least. It will be a memory to me.’ ‘And why midnight?’

‘I may leave you then for a while. Before, I should without advantage pain you by turning all you hold light into the blackness of darkness; your childhood’s *eidolon* of truth into the very Isis of lies. But after midnight, if fortune steer my steel, I may to good purpose hold to your eyes lenses rather less distorting.’

She did not understand. We sat together silent. The spaces of the night marched by us. She was the grey symbol of apathy beside me, a grey pen in the gloom of the recess, still wearing on her pensive forehead the jewel without name of her lost celestial home. Did she not care that I should leave her lonely in the morning? Was Sergius still the just dead bridegroom of her

widowhood? She took from the *sinus* of her dress a small roll, the three new-written fantasias of his deathbed. Pored over them in the dim light, bent, forgetting me. Then suddenly vocal:

‘What, think you, did he mean by ‘suns whose rays are *living* lutes’?’ ‘I cannot tell, Areta. Read the whole.’

The cooing doves of her voice were like a bath of lukewarm luxury to my wallowing. She read the poem.

‘Sergius best knew his own winged meanings, Areta: they may, as you once said, have been prophecy, or rhapsody, or prayer.

‘The *second* was the prayer of a Moses dying at sunset on Pisgah.’

She read it, bent grey in the gloom.

‘The third seems mere poetry.’

‘Do not think so! — he never conceived *mere* poetry.’ This too she commenced slowly to read:

‘Shapes in the Fire come and go:
an orb from Scorpio swoons —
(empurpled woe!)
and horns hath she, and eyes,
and lethal trance, and voice, that as she hies,
the swan’s death-nocturne tunes.

I see a headlong Messenger:
her robe a crocus flame —
(confide in *her*!)
thrills shake her plumes amain:

her passion's load, the burthen of her pain,
is the burthen of A NAME.'

'Areta!' I cried, breaking in, ecstatic. A sudden flash seemed to enkindle a whole landscape of truth to me. 'Areta, love!' I sprang to my feet. 'A crocus flame! — thrills shake her plumes — my God! the burthen of a *name*! You shall see!' Heedfulness died in me, moderation, remembrance, and hurrying to an opposite recess, I dashed aside the draperies, mounted on moveable steps, and threw wide the doors of a high-hung cage. There was a stirring, a meditation, a poising, and instantly a little saffron bird, yellow-bright as orpiment, took flight, clipping within twinkling tongue and wing a ruled and fluid pathway through the air — alighting upon the high white bosom Areta spread to it.

Her face changed to the beaming sunlight of joy. She knew Beatrix, though changed by my earnest lavings from the grave grey of Sergius to her native gold of Canary.

'And thou hast come back to thy Areta's soul' — whispering low — 'ah wild, wild aeronaut' — hugging it to her throat — 'come back in gaudier robes — and yet I love, I love, I love thee just so, too — no other than just so, little prodigal! But say your master's name — lisp, lisp it to my secret ear — sw-e-et — Sergius!'

'Numa! Numa! Numa!' shrilled Beatrix, recovered in breath, eloquent of the briefer euphony of my own arduously inculcated name.

Areta slid into waltzing with the bird, her head tossed back, laughing.

'O changeling Beatrix! O wanton breeze! O whirling whip! What, another name, then? No longer deserted Sergius? And does the new-launched burthen loll move lightly, then, on the ebb and flow of its little, little, liquid throat? Ah, it is well! it is well!'

We sat again within the recess, the bird swiftly fickle from her to me, an incessant slim bobbin zealous for the net, a frantic ploughshare in the sands, stitching us together with a million airy threads. Numa was her constant burthen.

‘Confide in *her*, Areta! ha, love! can you not now believe that the mighty soul of your brother lovingly foreknew me?’

She looked upon me and smiled.

A huge clock of greenish-black augite under the rosy central lamp tolled midnight.

‘It is midnight. Whither was it you spoke of going?’

‘Nowhither, Areta. I will not leave you to-night.’

The indecision had frozen together into sudden resolve within me. No blood, I decreed, of me or by me, should spill at that final parting-time. Theodore, if he dared, might think one of my race a coward. In the morning he would know me gone for ever.

But I rose, and bearing the steps to one of the high western windows, mounted upon them, and slightly opening a stained half on one side of the mullion, peeped through. Theodore would probably go to the meeting-place by the underground way, but if he took boat, I was there to wave him signal of my changed purpose. He would not wait to see me leave the terrace in the shallop, knowing that I now knew the subterranean way from the vaults of the castle.

Several minutes passed; then concluding that he had by that time reached the *rendezvous* I commenced to descend; but was arrested — seeing a shadow, the shadow surely of Theodore, pass by a blind of the Tower. Awe and confusion filled me, dread of his dreadful subtlety. What woof did he weave? He was not in the Tower having *returned* from the meeting-place: for this the time since midnight was utterly insufficient. He had not

therefore gone at all. But for what reason? As I stood debating, a horrible bursting and cracking, uproars of wrack and shock, earth- heavings, throbbed and thundered at my ear, loosened my knees. Enceladus, compact with tremors, crawled beneath us. The castle, flicked but by the tail of the explosion, shivered as with the coldness of horror. Looking in the direction of the chapel, I saw the wide winging of smoke, flying rocks, a dull lurid flare. Then I knew in my hurrying heart how precipitous was the ruin I had shunned; how stern, majestic the wrath of Theodore. There came a moment of lull — a sickening treachery of peace — and in the next instant the Tower in the sea sent up to heaven a wild shrieking bellow, and from the centre of its summit an infinite clean spear of crimson and blue and greenish flame laddered yells of horrid menace to the stars. The earth-shock, immeasurably fiercer in its effects than its author's thought, had communicated the fury of its fires along the underground gallery to the witches' cauldron of volatile chemicals in which Theodore brewed the sorceries of his dark will. The Tower throed, and frittered, and spat red bricks as a grounded pugilist his bloody teeth. For a moment, on the topmost parapet of all, a hunted monumental form appeared — a veilless face — with a similitude of excrescent horns on the forehead — a face which was but a dead and thick and featureless lump of lavender-leprous flesh, lit and lashed by scorpion whips of flame from his silken robes and wide-burning fleece of hair; but the gallery cracked from under him; he lurched ponderously, and lancing a far-circling shrill, empurpled, to my fancy, with a strange chaunted hint and cadence of a death-melody, fell — like holocausts slung flaring from the battlements of heaven — old Lucifer hurtling rotary in somersaults of steep combustion through — the interspaces. And immediately thereupon the whole fabric burst, and

rumbled down upon him, building him a funeral mound of hissing bricks broad above the surface of the water.

Of all this Areta had seen nothing. She stood in the middle of the room, three-eared, with lifted auditory hand.

‘O Numa, tell me — what is it?’ she cried, wan in voice and face.

I led her by the hand to the recess.

‘Listen, Areta, and believe serenely that all is of God — the Elder Theodore is dead.’ She doubled, hiding her face in her lap.

‘Dead....’

To her it was the dissilience of whole Scorpio from the zodiac.

I, in solemn peace, spoke low, unveiling all. Her face was buried from me; she made no sign; only, when I told how that Theodore had lied to her, she shook her head, quick-sobbing:

‘Oh no, no, no....’

For a long time then we sat speechless. Her face I could not see, but I knew it veiled with the crape of tragedy. The spaces of the night marched by us. The clock chimed three.

‘What can *he* have thought, seeing all?’

‘Sergius?’

‘Yes.’

‘Sergius, I incline to think, probably mastered long before death, to a far greater degree than you or I, Areta, the alphabeta of that dark Sanscrit in which Theodore’s soul languaged itself. But he, like Theodore, is dead now; and it can be of little moment to us what he thinks.’

There was silence between us for a while, till she, as if reasoning with her own thoughts, said, ‘But strange! strange!’ and began again to read slowly the vision of Sergius:

‘Shapes in the Fire come and go:
an orb from Scorpio swoons —
(empurpled woe!)
and horns hath she, and eyes,
and lethal trance, and voice, that as she hies,
the swan’s death-nocturne tunes.

I see a headlong Messenger:
her robe a crocus flame —
(confide in *her*!)
thrills shake her plumes amain:
her passion’s load, the burthen of her pain,
is the burthen of A NAME.’

There smiles a lady, veiled, in death;
bright angels round her chaunt —
(mellifluous breath!);
she, from the VIIth sphere,
regards the VIth where gleams her lovely bier,
and sighs her ancient haunt.

List to the Organ’s roaring throat!
Hymen’s loud *euois* swell —
(triumphal note!):

this day two souls entwine:
their purple orgies drenched in aphrian wine,
and Priap loves, a-dell.

‘But,’ I cried aloud, suffused, and, as it were, electrically shocked, by a revelation, ‘this — this was no voice of man, but of a glowing spirit from heaven!’ and rushing to the organ, I furiously filled its mighty frame with wind; sat before the notes, and in victorious euphony, in pealing acclamation, I sent boasting and gaudent through the timid silence of the morning the angel-song of Sergius. The air was his intact; but instead of the sad minor-key, transposition to a major; instead of the solemn serenity, the light step and golden pomp of wedding marches. The bass was my own. Never so shall I play again. Areta was behind me, her hand on my shoulder, trembling; her face pressed hot to mine. Beatrix, long since flown to her sleepy perch, but pricked to sympathy by the practice of her own native art, warbled a continuous drowsy serenade of my name. All this has self-maturing memory brought me back. But for the time I was lost to sense. Music was a well of living water within me; the broad bosom of the organ shivered at me as when a Pegasus finds its unappeasable rider. I leaned faint upon it when my tyranny was accomplished.

‘O Numa’ — her two hands on my shoulders, her face a rosy lake-ripple looking up at dawn— ‘O Numa, you have—’

She stopped. ‘And whence, of whence, have you drawn this power over me? You seemed to me a little Numa-god as you played!’

‘The piece, you see, is changed in movement and key from the melody as sung by Sergius.’ ‘Changed — and glorified.’

A pain went lightning through me.

‘You like it better so?’

‘Yes — that even *must* be.’

‘The written music, if I go in the morning, you shall have.’

‘If you go. But not the pippling of every popinjay is a prophecy, nor the whisper of every wind a warning!’ She laughed, mocking my impotence.

‘And do you not see it surely true, Areta, that the great soul of your Sergius lovingly foreknew me?’

Her look rested upon my face: her hand fell to mine.

We sat again within the recess. I opened to her the pit whence I had dug the lost jewel of the melody. Grey spaces of the morning now shivered past like home-turning ghosts. After long intimacy with her, I bent the trickle of our talk to our child’s friendships, delights and abandonments together in the deep places of Phorfor. She turned herself from me.

‘Children,’ she said, ‘are—’ ‘Yes?’

‘Are—’

‘Tell me!’

‘Sensual.’

The word rived her with a shudder; but if of luxury, or if of self-retention, I could not say.

‘And men too, Areta, and women. Is it not the barm of the Holy Spirit lovingly uneasy in our bodies? So said Sergius.’

She made no answer. Stealthy mists of seriousness had again crept gradually large around her. Contact was no longer possible. She became burrs to me and a battery, memorable to pilgrim fingers. The shadow of some thought in her stretched between us.

Morning threw wide casement after casement: the cock was as a herald with clarion vacillant between hand and lip, tiptoe-parturient with the yet unvoiced evangel: Behold the Bride-groom.

An aged man-servant for whom I had drawn back the lever of a bell, appeared, bearing comfitures on a salver, and a mama of wine. I, pouring a glassful, presented it to her. ‘No! the day now begun is marked as a fast-day with me.’

‘See, Areta, how the night hops away with bedraggled wing, like a faint, wounded raven:

‘And now does the cock,
Half anxious its crow
Of tribrach and long,
Shrill: doesn’t it GROW...’

my hour them is near: will you not drink me a parting *salve* in this glass?’

This I said craftily, with hope in her answer. Her eyes leapt upon me in eager query. ‘Oh... you do not mean—’

‘Have you not *bid* me go? and you have not yet unbid me.’

Her lashes fell in long curvature upon a perfectly pallid cheek. I could see that she debated keenly within herself. After a time she spoke, arguing to her lap:

‘Well, if you will go, you will go. I here will give myself utterly to those vigils and tears and prayers which made *her* saintly; prayers, Numa, in which *you* shall not be forgotten.’

My heart sank horribly.

In saying ‘her,’ she pointed to a picture in oils of a long-dead lady of our race hung on the opposite wall: a middle-aged lady, with meekness in her look, and a radiance of unearthly sunlights in her smile, far known of old beyond the bounds of Phorfor as St. Anna, the blessed.

I, pale as she, held the wind before her.

‘Drink for me, Areta!’ ‘No! why urge me so? I have told you no — no.’

The flash of her anger singed me of enterprise. I sat again mouse-quiet by her side. ‘To what a point,’ she said, looking up at the beatitude of St. Anna, ‘must she not have adventured on the greased mast of spiritual attainment! Her life was a long upward gaze: an eye turned white to heaven. Before death she is said to have been familiar with the facial expressions of many of the winged things of the cycles of the skies. But — how singular — that we should speak of her — to-night!’ and she repeated:

There smiles a lady, veiled, in death;
bright angels round her chaunt —
(mellifluous breath!);
she, from the VIIth sphere,
regards the VIth where gleams her lovely bier,
and sighs her ancient haunt.

List to the Organ’s roaring throat!
Hymen’s loud *euois* swell —
(triumphal note!):
this day two souls entwine:
their purple orgies drenched in aphrian wine,
and Priap loves, a-dell.

‘I doze below four lax-zoned moons:
nude wails of woman rave —

(lugubrious tunes!);
nude, by a beach of bones,
their pallid pomp in torchlit dolor moans,
seeking a new-oped grave.

‘Lo! — one I see — a child of man!
his outlines laved in light —
(complete in plan!);
eternal smiles he wears:
no clothing on his chiselled lustre bears, and yet is clothed in White.’

‘Then, Areta — then — —’ I cried, frantically stamping to my feet, ‘*then* was the Sergius we knew indeed true prophet, and sibyl, and seer!’ — and flying towards the far semi-circular end of the chamber, I sent hissing apart along a brazen bar the two halves of a silken curtain, and revealed between the divided drapery, standing poseful on an *estrade* in the alcove, a statue of marble. Areta at the sight flew wide-winged towards me, rhythmic-swaying to the throb of timbrel and cymbal, eating up with inconceivable swiftness the vast length of the room. And we looked together, she leaning heavy upon me. Soft glammers of blue and crimson light, levelled by the now high-prospering day-spring through the stained windows, lotioned the head in a dream of colours. Only by the thick-matted black hair could she know it the very block of the Sergius-statue: in all else death had been wonderfully buried into life — the painted cerements all chipped from it, and in their place the white clothing only of its own immaculate marmor.

“But, Numa — it is you! it is you!”

She compressed from my sight a face all inflamed in her two tight hands. Twin-sisters, lake- women, rowed competitive to rhymes in the milky hollows of her breasts!

‘It is you, Numa! It is you!’

It was indeed I; I smiling rosy patronage; I nude; express; accomplished Man. Areta blushed. She was a vomiting Aetna of blushes.

But I violently tore her hands from her face, and I held them in mine, both in both, swinging them. And she, with prudish under-glance, looked up into me, I deep into her.

O broken heart of Love! in her eyes were films, and meanings, and the everlasting and impetuous YEA.

That morning a thievish sprite in my feet led me a-hunt through all the nooks and by-ways of the castle. By a studied plea I had escaped from Areta. Yet Sergius, either with design or without, had left little of himself behind: some sandals I found, a few gowns woven without seam, three books of Bishop Berkeley marked with his name. These I took, and kissing them one by one, worshipping, praising him as a god, I locked them in a cabinet, and flung the key far. An hour thence, I, rejoined to Areta, was with her in the woods, gathering flowers: she dancing raillery at every rein. Her lips and pure white dress were stained with the dribble of the syrupy magenta wine of the grapes of Phorfor, her eyes all glairy with its tipsy yeast. We had, indeed, tippled freely of its whispering nectar; and as the garland of ivy and violets with which I had crowned her had toppled aslant on her head, my riotous love had somewhat the look of an awry Bacchante rather drunken among the forest-glades. For many generations no marriage at Phorfor had been dehymenised by any such thing as benefit of clergy, and the laying on of frog-chill agastric hands: nor, as I knew, would Areta have tolerated any such. But from a slight gash in my fingertip she stained her

tongue with my sucked blood; I mine with hers. Then repairing to her chamber with the gathered flowers, we bent to build the Altar of our Covenant: and, truly, it was upper Aiden and the very hair-curling tortion of delight to watch Areta, with what sighing pains, wifely collusions as of Bertha the Good, she took part in the making. It was low and broad by the side of her bed, and directly faced the rising sun. Plushy we made it, and furry, with riches and thicknesses of velvets; over-shading it with canopy of silk; and over and around the velvets we heaped a strew of ivy and violets (the blend worn in chaplets by the *phallophoroi* in the Great Dionysia); and over this we sprinkled poppy-flowers; and over this parsley mixed with barley- groats; and over this tufts of wool; and over all — on the front, and on the back, and on the sides, and on the top — we traced out in characters of the immortal flowers of amaranth this word:

aphrodite peitho

THE END

Miscellaneous Short Stories



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HUGUENIN'S WIFE (1895)

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HUGUENIN, MY FRIEND — the man of Art and thrills and impulses, — the finished boulevardier, the persifleur — must, I concluded with certainty, be frenzied. So, at least, I reasoned when, after long years of silence, I received from him this letter: —

“‘ Sdili,’ my friend; that is the name by which they now call this ancient Delos. Wherefore has it been written, ‘so passeth the glory of the world.’

“Ah! But to me it is — as to her it was — still Delos, the Sacred Island, the birthplace of Apollo, son of Leto! On the summit of Cynthus I look from my dwelling, and within the wide reach of the Cyclades perceive even yet the fruity offerings arriving from Syria, from Sicily, from Egypt; I see the barks that bring the sacred envoys of Pan-Ionium to festival — I note the flutter of their hallowed garments — on the breeze once more floats to me their ‘Songs of Deliverance.’

“The island now belongs almost entirely to me. I am, too, almost its sole inhabitant. It is, you know, only four miles long, and half as broad, and I have purchased every available foot of its surface. On the flat top of the granite Cynthus I live, and here, my friend, shall I die. Chains, more inexorable and horrible than any which the limbs of Prometheus ever knew, bind me to this crag.

“A friend! a friend! That is the thing after which my sick spirit pants. A living man: of the dead I have enough; of living monsters, ah, too much! An

aged servant or two, who seem persistently to shun me — this is all I possess of human fellowship. Would that I dared to ask you, an old companion, to come to the solace of a sinking man in this place of desolation!”

The letter continued long in this strain of mingled rhapsody and despair, containing, moreover, a lengthy disquisition on the Pythagorean doctrine of the metempsychosis of the soul. Three times did the words “ living monsters “ occur. Such a communication, coming from him, did not fail to excite my utmost curiosity and pity.

From London to Delos is no inconsiderable journey; yet, conquered during the course of a long vacation by an irresistible impulse, and the fond memories of other days, I actually found myself, on a starry night, disembarking on the sands that bound the once famous harbour of the tiny Greek island. My arrival may be dated by the fact that it fell out just two months before the very extraordinary natural phenomena, of which Delos was the scene during the night of August 13th, 1880. I crossed the ring of flat land which nearly encircles the islet, and began the ascent of the central mountain. The slumberous air languished with the wild breath of rose and jessamine and almond; the pipe of the cicada and the gleam of the firefly were not wanting to add to the narcotic charms of this land of dreams. In less than an hour, I walked into a tangled garden, and placed my hand on the shoulder of a tall, stooping man, dressed in Attic attire, who walked solitary under the trees.

With a fearful start he turned and faced me.

“Oh,” he said, panting, and placing both his hands upon his chest, “ I was greatly surprised! My heart...”

He could utter no more. It was Huguenin, and yet not he. The heavy beard rolling down his white woollen garments was, I could see, still black

as ever; but the masses of unkempt hair which floated with every zephyr about his face and neck were bleached to the whiteness of snow. He stared at me through the dull and cavernous eyes of a man long dead.

We walked into the house together. The mere sight of the building was enough to convince me that in some mysterious way, to some morbid degree, the Past had fettered and darkened the intellect of my friend.

The mansion was of the purely Hellenic type, but nothing less than inconceivable in extent — a wilderness rather than a habitation. I found myself in an ancient Greek house — only, a Greek house multiplied many times over into an endless, continuous congeries of Greek houses. It consisted of a single story, though here and there on the vast flat roof there rose a second layer of apartments. These latter were reached by ladders. We walked through a door — opening inwards — into a passage, which in turn led us to an oblong marble court-yard; this was the aule, surrounded by Corinthian pillars, and having in the centre an altar of stone to Zeus Herkeios. Around this court, on every hand, was ranged a series of halls, chambers, th, hung with rich velvets; and the whole mighty house — made up of a hundred and a hundred reproductions of such court-yards with their surrounding chambers — formed a trackless desert of rooms, through whose uniform labyrinths the most cunning would assuredly fail to find his way.

“This building,” said Huguenin to me, some days after my arrival, “this building — every stone, plank, drapery of it — was the creation of my wife’s wild and restless fancy.”

I stared at him.

“You doubt that I have, or had, a wife? Come, then, with me; you shall — you shall — see her face.” He led the way through the dark and windowless house, lighted throughout the day and night by the dim purple

radiance shed from many small, open lamps of earthenware filled with the fragrant nardinum, an oil pressed from the flower of the Arabian grass nardus.

I followed the emaciated figure of Huguenin through a great number of the gloomy chambers. As he moved slowly forward, visibly panting, I noticed that he kept his form bent downward, seeming to seek for something; and this something I soon found to be a scarlet thread, laid down to afford guidance for the feet through the mazes of the house, and running along the black floor. Suddenly he stopped before the door of one of the apartments called amphithalamoi, and, himself remaining without, motioned to me to enter.

I am not a man of what might be called “a tremulous diathesis,” yet not without a tremor did I glance round the room. For a time I could discern nothing under the sombre glimmer radiated from a single lampas pendent from wrought brazen chains. But at length a great painting in oils, unframed, occupying nearly one whole side of the chamber, grew upon my sight. It was the picture of a woman. My heart throbbed with a most strange, deep excitement as I gazed upon her lineaments.

She stood erect, robed in a flowing, crimson, embroidered, with head slightly thrown back, and one hand and arm pointing stiffly outward and upward. The countenance was not merely Grecian — ancient Grecian, as distinct from modern — but it was so in a highly exaggerated and unlikelike degree. Was the woman, I asked myself, more lovely than ever mortal was before — or more hideous? She was the one, or the other, or both; but the riddle baffled me. The Lamia of Keats arose before me — that “shape of gorgeous hue, vermilion-spotted, golden, green and blue.”

A hardly-breathing surprise of eyes held me fixed as the image slowly took possession of my vision. Here, then, I muttered, was the Gorgon’s

head, whose hair was serpents and her eye a basilisk's; and as I so thought, I reflected, too, on the myth of how from the dripping blood of Medusa's head strange creatures sprang to life; and then, with a shuddering abhorrence, I remembered Huguenin's childish ravings about "monsters." I drew nearer, in order to analyse the impression almost of dread wrought upon me, and I quickly found — or thought I found — the key. It lay, surely, in the woman's eyes. They were the very eyes of the tiger: circular, green, large, with glittering yellow radii. I hurried from the room.

"You have seen her?" asked Huguenin, with a cunning, eager distortion of his ashen face.

"Yes, Huguenin, I have seen her. She is very beautiful."

"She painted it herself," he said in a whisper.

"Really!"

"She considered herself — she was — the greatest painter who has lived since Apelles."

"But now — where is she now?"

He brought his lips quite close to my ear.

"She is dead. You, at any rate, would call her so."

This ambiguity appeared to me only the more singular when I discovered that it was his habit, at stated intervals, to make regular and stealthy visits to distant parts of the dwelling. Our bed-chambers being contiguous, I could not fail, as time passed, to notice that he would rise in the dead of night, when he supposed me asleep, and gathering together the fragments of our last meal, depart rapidly and silently with them through the dim and vast house, led always in one particular direction by the scarlet thread of silk which ran along the floor.

I now set myself strenuously to the study of Huguenin. The nature of his physical malady, at least, was clear. He laboured under the singular

affection to which physicians have given the name of Cheyne Stoke's Respiration, the disease manifesting itself at intervals by compelling him to lie back in a perfect agony of inhalation, and groan for air; the bones of his cheeks seemed on the point of appearing through their sere wrapping of mummy-skin; the ala of his nose never rested from an extravagance of expansion and retraction. But even this ruin of a body might, I considered, be made partially whole, were it not that to lull the rage and fever of such a mind the world contained no anodyne. For one thing, a most curious belief in some unnamed fate hanging over the island on which he lived haunted him. Again and again, he recalled to me all that, in the long past, had been written about Delos: the strange notion, contained both in the Homeric and the Alexandrian hymns to the Delian Apollo, that the island was or that it was merely secured by chains; or that it had only been thrown up from the deeps as a temporary resting-place for Ortygia in her travail; or that it might sink before the spurning foot of the new-born god. He was never tired, through long hours, of pursuing, as if in soliloquy, a kind of somnolent, mystical exegesis of such passages as we read together.

"Do you know," he said, " that the ancients really supposed the streams of Delos to rise and fall with the rise and fall of the Nile? Could anything point more clearly to a belief in the extraordinary nature of the island, its far-reaching volcanic affinities, occult geologic eccentricities?" Often would he repeat the punning hexameter line of the very ancient Sibylline prophecy

"And Samos shall be sand, and Delos (the far-seen) sink from sight."

often, too, having repeated it, he would strike from the repining chords of an Aeolian lyre the air of a threnody which, as he told me, his wife had composed to suit the verse; and when to the funeral wail of this dirge — so

wild, so mournful, that I could never hear it without a shudder — Huguenin added the melancholy note of his now hollow and plaintive voice, the intensity of effect produced on me reached the intolerable degree, and I was glad of the dubious and pallid and purple gloaming of the mansion, which partially hid my face from him.

“Observe, however,” he added one day, “the meaning of the implied epithet ‘far-seen’ as applied to Delos: it means ‘glorious,’ ‘illustrious far-seen to the spiritual rather than to the bodily eye, for the island is not very mountainous. The words ‘sink from sight’ must, therefore, be supposed to have the corresponding significance of an extinction of this glory. And now, judge whether or no this prophecy has not been already fulfilled, when I tell you that this sacrosanct land, which no dog’s foot was once allowed to touch, on which no man was permitted to be born or to die, bears at this moment on its bosom a monster fouler than the brain of demon ever conceived. A fearful literal and physical fulfilment of the prophecy cannot, I consider, be far distant.”

That all this esotericism was not native to Huguenin I was certain. His mind, I was convinced, had been ploughed into by some tremendous energy, before ever this rank growth had choked it. I drew him on, little by little, to speak of his wife.

She was, he told me, of a very antique Athenian family, which by constant effort had conserved its purity of blood. It was while passing southward through Greece in a world-weary mood, some years before my visit, that he came one night to the village of Castri; and there, on the site of the ancient Delphi, in the centre of an angry crowd of Greeks and Turks, who threatened to rend her to pieces, he first saw Andromeda, his wife.

“This incredible courage,” he said, “this vast originality was hers, to take upon herself the part of a modern Hypatia — to venture on the task of

the bringing back of the gods, in the midst of a fanatical people, at the latter end of a century like the present. The furious mob from which I rescued her was standing around her in front of the vestibule of a just completed temple to Apollo, whose worship she was then and there attempting to restore.”

The love of the woman fastened on her preserver with passionate intensity. Huguenin felt himself constrained by the impulse of an irresistible Will. They were united, and came at her bidding to live in the grey abode of her creation at Delos. In this solitude, under this shadow, the man and the woman faced each other. As the months passed the husband found that he had married a seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams. And visions of what hue! and dreams of what madness! He confessed to me that he was greatly awed by her, and with this awe was blended a feeling which, if it was not fear, was akin to fear. That he loved her

“Like a rapt, delirious Pythoness”

riot at all he now knew, while the excess of her passion for him he grew to regard with the hate which men feel for the distilled elixir of the hemlock. Yet his mind inevitably took on the lurid hue of hers. He drank in unfailingly all her creeds. He followed her in the same way that a satellite follows a world. When for days together she hid herself from him and disappeared, he would wander desolate and full of search over the pathless house. Finding that she habitually yielded her body to the lotus delights of certain opiate seeds produced on the island, he found the courage to frown and warn, and ended by himself becoming a bond-slave to the drowsy gattja of India. So too with the most strange fascination she exercised over the animal world: he disliked it — he dreaded it; regarded it as excessive and unnatural; but he looked on only with the furtive, pale eye of suspicion, and said nothing. When she walked she was accompanied by a long magnetised queue of living things, felines in particular, and birds of large size.

Dogs, on the contrary, shunned her, bristling. She had brought with her from the mainland a collection of these followers, of which Huguenin had never seen the half; they were imprisoned in unknown nooks of the building; ever and anon she would vanish from the house, to reappear with new companions. Her kindness to these dumb creatures should, I presume, have been amply sufficient to account for her power over them; but Huguenin's mind, already grown morbid, probed darkly after some other explanation. The primary motif of this unquietness doubtless lay in his wife's fanaticism on the subject of the Pythagorean theory of the transmigration of souls. On this theme Andromeda, it was clear, was violently deranged. She would stand, he declared, with outstretched arm, with eye wild-staring, with rigid body, and in a rapid, guttural recitative — like a rapt, delirious Pythoness — would prophesy of the eternal mutations prepared for the spirit of man. She would dwell, above all, with a kind of contempt, on the limitations of animal forms in the actual world, and would indignantly insist that the spirit of an extraordinary and original man, disembodied, should and must re-embody itself in a correspondingly extraordinary and original form.

“And,” she would often add, “such forms do really exist on the earth, but the God, willing to save the race from frenzy, hides them from the eyes of common men.”

It was long, however, before I could induce Huguenin to speak of the final catastrophe of his singular wedded life. He related it in these words: —

“You now know that Andromeda was among the great painters of the world — you have seen her picture of herself. One day, after dilating, as was her wont, on the narrow limitation of forms, she said suddenly, ‘But you, too, shall be of the initiated: come, come, you shall see something.’ She went swiftly forward, beckoning, looking back repeatedly to smile on

me a loving patronage, with the condescension of a priestess to a neophyte; I followed, till before a lately finished painting she stopped, pointing. I will not attempt — the attempt would be folly — to tell you what thing of horror and madness I saw before me on the canvas; nor can I explain in words the tempest of anger, of loathing and disgust, that stirred within me at the sight. Kindled by the blasphemy of her fancy, I raised my hand to strike her head; and to this hour I know not if I struck her. My hand, it is true, felt the sensation of contact with something soft and yielding; but the blow, if blow there were, was surely too slight to harm the frame of a creature far feebler than the human. Yet she fell; the film of coming death grew over her dull, upbraiding eyes; one last word only she spoke, pointing to the Uncleaness: ‘In the flesh you may yet behold it!’ and so, still pointing, pointing, she passed away.

“I bore her body, embalmed in the Greek manner by an expert of Corinth, to one of the smaller apartments on the roof of the house. I saw, as I turned to leave her in the gloom of the strait and lonely chamber, the mortal smile on her waxen face within the open coffin. Two weeks later I went again to visit her, My friend, she had vanished utterly — save that the bones remained; and from the vacant coffin, above the now fleshless skull, two eyes — living — the very eyes of Andromeda’s soul, but full of a new-born, intenser light — the eyes, too, of the pictured horror whose whole form I now discerned in the darkness — gleamed out upon me. I slammed to the door, and fainted on the floor.”

“The suggestion,” I said, “which you seem to wish to convey is that of a transition of forms from the human to the animal; but, surely, the explanation that the monster, brought secretly by your wife into the house, imprisoned unawares by you with the dead, and maddened by hunger, fed on the uncovered body, is, if not less horrible, at least less improbable.”

He looked doubtingly at me for a moment, and then replied: “ There was no monster imprisoned with the dead. Be not rash with ‘explanations.’ You do not require me to tell you, what you must know, that there are many more things in earth — to say nothing of heaven — than were ever dreamt of in your philosophy.”

But at least, I urged, he would see the necessity of flying from that place. He answered with the extraordinary avowal that it was no longer doubtful to him, from the effect which any neglect to minister to the creature’s wants produced on his own bodily health, that his life was intimately bound up with the life of the being he stayed to maintain; that with the second murder of which he should be guilty — nay, with the very attempt to commit it, as, for example, by flight from the house — his own life would inevitably be forfeited.

I accordingly formed the resolution to work the deliverance of my friend in spite of himself. Two months had now passed; the end of my visit was drawing near; yet his maladies of brain and body were not alleviated. It tortured me to think of leaving him once more alone, a prey to the manias which distracted him.

That very day, while he slept his damp, unquiet, opiate slumbers, I started out on the track indicated by the scarlet thread. So far it led — and the rooms through which it passed were of such uniformity, and the path so serpentine, and the sameness of construction on every hand so unbroken — that I could not doubt but that, the clue once snapped at any point, the journey to the desired end could be accomplished only by the most improbable good fortune. I followed the thread to its termination: it stopped at the foot of a ladder-like stair, which I ascended. At the top of the stair, and close to it, I was faced by a narrow wall, in which was a closed wooden door; in the door a hole large enough to admit the hand. As I placed

my foot on the topmost step, a long, low, plaintive whine, with a sickening likeness to a human wail, broke upon my ear.

I hurriedly descended the steps. Some little distance from them I broke the silken thread, and, gathering it up in my hand as I went, again broke it near the region of the house which we occupied.

“Hereby,” I said, as I held the gathered portion to the flame of a lamp, “shall a soul be saved alive.” I watched him later on through half-closed lids, as he departed, haggard and shivering, on his nightly errand. My heart throbbed under an agony of disquiet while I awaited his long-delayed return.

He came swiftly and softly into my room, and shook me by the shoulder. On his face was a look of unusual calmness, of dignity and mystery.

“Wake up,” he said. “I wish you — I am a sorry host, am I not? — I wish you to leave me to-night, at once; to leave the island — now”

“But tell me - “ I gasped.

“Nay, nay; I will take no refusal. Trust me this once, and go. There is a danger here. Destiny is against me — an impudent destiny, careless even to conceal its hand. Go. One or two of the fisher-folk of the harbour will convey you over to Rhenea before the morning light, and you will be saved.”

“But saved from what?”

“From what? I cannot tell you: from the destiny, whatever it be, which awaits me. Do you know — can you dream — that the thread on which my life depends is snapped?”

“But suppose I tell you...”

“You can tell me nothing. Ah... you hear that?” He held up his hand and listened. It was a sudden shriek of the wind around the house.

“It is but the rising wind,” I muttered, starting up.

“Ah, but that — that which followed. Did you not feel it?”

“Huguenin, I felt nothing.”

He had clasped with both arms a marble pillar, against which his forehead rested, while with one foot he gently and mechanically patted the floor. In this posture, now utterly demoralised and craven, he remained for some minutes. The wail of the wind was heard at intervals. Suddenly he turned towards me, with a ghastly face and the scream of a frightened woman.

“Now — now at least — you feel it!”

I could no longer deny. It was as if the whole island had gently rocked to and fro on a pivot.

Thoroughly unnerved myself, trembling more with awe than with terror, I seized Huguenin’s arm, and sought to draw him from the pillar, which, muttering low, he still embraced. He sullenly refused to stir; and I, resolved in any event to stay by him, sat near. The seismic agitation increased. But he seemed to take no further note of anything, — only, with the regularity of a clock’s oscillations, the tripudiary automatic motion of his foot persisted. In this way an hour, two hours, passed. At the end of that time the rocking movement of the earth had become intense, rapid and continuous.

There came a moment when, overwhelmed by a new panic, I sprang to my feet and shook him.

“Headstrong man! “ I cried, “ have you then parted with every sense? Do you not smell — can you not feel — that the house is in flames?”

His eyes, which had grown dark and dull, blazed up instantly with a new madness.

“Then,” he shouted, with the roar of a clarion,— “then she shall — I say she shall be saved! The cheetah — the feathered cheetah!”

Before I could lay hold of the now foaming maniac, he had dashed past me into a corridor. I followed behind in hottest pursuit. The carpets and hangings, as yet but dully glowing, filled the passages with the smoke of Tophet. I hoped that Huguenin, weak of lung, would fall choked and exhausted. Some power seemed to lend him strength — he rushed onward like the wind; some sure, mysterious instinct seemed to guide him — not once did he falter or hesitate.

The long chase through the cracking house, burning now on every side, was over. The just intuitions of insanity had not failed the madman — he reached the goal for which he panted. I saw him hasten up the half-consumed ladder, whose foot was already in a lake of flame. He rushed to the smouldering wooden door of the tomb of Andromeda, and tore it wide open.

And now, from out the vault, there burst — above the roaring of the fire, and the whistle of the tempest, and the thousandfold rattle of the earthquake — a shrill and raucous shriek, which turned my blood to ice; and I saw proceeding from the darkness a creature whose native loathsomeness human language has no vocabulary to describe. For if I say that it was a cheetah — of very large size — its eyes a yellow liquid conflagration — its fat and boneless body swathed in a thick panoply of dark grey feathers, vermillion-tipped — with a similitude of miniature wings on its back — with a wide, vast, downward-sweeping tail like the tail of a bird of paradise, — how by such words can I image forth all the retching nausea, all the bottomless hate and fear, with which I looked?

The fire, it was evident, had already reached the body of the beast; already it flamed. I saw it fly, rather than spring, at Huguenin's head; the burial of its fangs in his flesh, the meeting of its teeth about his windpipe, I saw. He tottered — gurgling — tearing at the feathery horror — backward

over the spot where a moment before the stair had stood; together they fell into the sea of flame beneath.

I ran in headlong haste from the house, discovering by good chance an egress. The night was clear, yet all the winds seemed to tumble in disenchained ecstasy about the islet. As I descended I noted the scathed and scorched aspect of the trees and of certain of the rocks; at one spot a multitude of deep, smooth, conical openings, edged with grey, glowing scoria:, riveted my attention. Still lower, I stood on a bluff promontory and looked sheer into the sea. The sight was sublime and appalling. The deep — without billow or foam or ripple — luminous far down with phosphorescences — rushed, like some lambent lamina yoked to the fiery steeds of Diomedes, with a steady, intense, almost dazzling impetuosity towards the island. Delos, indeed, seemed to float — to swim, painfully struggling, like a little doomed bird, against the all-engulfing element.

I passed with the earliest light from this mystic shrine of ancient piety. Among the last sights that greeted my gaze was the still ascending reek of the blighted and accursed dwelling of Huguenin.

THE CASE OF EUPHEMIA RAPHASH (1895)

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MAN'S GOINGS ARE of God: how can a man then understand his own way? — Proverbs

“OH, Mr. Parker, he is coming at last, sir!”

“Good heavens! you mean the Doctor?”

“The Doctor, sir — saw him with my own eyes — he is on foot — must have passed through the north park gates, and is at this moment coming up the drive!”

I ran to the lawn; saw him slowly coming in the old frock-coat of thin stuff, his eyes studying the ground.

“Ah, Parker” — he glanced up and held out a limp hand— “that you? Well, I hope?”

“I am well enough, thank you, Doctor.”

“And why the accented I? My sister, Parker?”

I was simply astounded.

“You have not then heard?”

“Heard? I have heard nothing.”

“Merciful heavens! in what land have you then wandered?”

“Parker, in a land far away.”

I said nothing more, nor he. For the first time in his life he felt fear — fear to ask the question which I felt fear to answer.

We passed into the gloomy half-ruined pile, an ancient place, the home of a race most ancient. In the little room we called “study”, he seated himself on the divan, and with perfect composure said:

“Now, Parker — my sister.”

“Miss Euphemia, Doctor, is no more.”

His face was stone; but he swallowed. After a time I distinctly heard him mutter:

“I thought as much — so it happened once before.”

What? I was all wonder; but only added:

“Three weeks ago, Doctor.”

“Of what?”

“She was — —”

“Go on.”

“Doctor, she was — —”

“Say it, man — she was murdered.”

“She was murdered, Doctor.”

I see him now; spare and small, mighty in forehead, which at the top was thinly covered with a cropped iron-grey scrub: thick, tight lips; sallow, shaven face; and those eyes, grey, so unquiet, never for an instant of life ceasing the internal inquisition in which they wandered fro and to, down, and up, and round.

A name high in the view of the world was his — as an apostle of science, as hierophant among the arch-priests of learning. During the fifteen years I had acted as his secretary, we had produced nine books, each monumental in its way. His activities in the domain of thought were, in fact, immeasurable — though I will not say that they were continuous; or, at least, not continuous so far as I was concerned; for the doctor would ever and anon leave me, perhaps in the midst of some work, and without

warning snatch himself wholly for long weeks from Raphash Towers; nor could I then determine whether sarcophagi of old Egyptian dynasties had lured him overseas, or excavations at Mycenae, or the enticements of Khorsabad and Balbec. I knew only that he had quietly and mysteriously disappeared; that he as quietly returned in due course to his labours; and that his taciturnity was so inveterate as to seem brutish.

An old housekeeper and myself, beside the Doctor and Miss Euphemia, were the only inmates of the old mansion. We occupied an insignificant portion of the ground floor of one of the immense wings. Never visitor broke our solitude, except a gentleman whose calls always corresponded with the Doctor's absences. The lengthy tête-à-tête of this personage with Miss Euphemia led me to suspect an old flame, to which the Doctor had had known objections.

Miss Euphemia was a lady of forty-five years, taller than her brother, but remarkably like him. She, too, had become learned by dint of reading the Doctor's books. For the life of me I cannot now say how it was, for they hardly ever exchanged a word, but I had gradually arrived at the conviction that each of these two lives was as necessary to the other as the air it breathed.

Yet for three weeks the newspapers had been discussing her singular disappearance, and he, of all others, knew not one word of the matter! He looked at me through half-closed lids, and said, with that utter dryness of tone which was his:

“Tell me the circumstances.”

I answered: “I was away in London on business connected with your Shropshire seat, and can only repeat the depositions of old Mrs. Grant. Miss Raphash had, strange to say, been persuaded to attend the funeral of a lady, known to her in youth, at Ringlethorpe; and, staying afterwards with the

mourning friends, did not return till midnight. She wore, it seems, some old family jewels. By one, however, the house was in darkness; and it was an hour later that a scream shrilled through the night. Mrs. Grant was able to light a candle, and had opened her door, when she dimly saw a man rushing towards her with some singular weapon in his hand which flashed vividly in the half-dark — a small, wiry man, she thinks. She had but time to slam her door, when he dashed himself frantically against it, where-upon she fancies she heard the angry remonstrance of another voice. Here, however, her evidence is vague; hours later when she woke to consciousness, she rushed to her mistress' room, and found it empty."

"Of the jewels?"

"Of Miss Raphash herself."

"And the jewels?"

"They lay on the dressing-table where they had been placed, untouched."

"Clearly the murderer was not a burglar."

"Clearly he was. He, or they, took other things, valuables from your room and mine to the amount of four hundred pounds."

"But some of these have been traced?"

"Not one. Some have been found — none 'traced'."

"Where found?"

"In a clump of bushes immediately beneath the balcony of the south wing."

"They were singular burglars. And my sister's body was found — —"

"Nowhere."

"It was buried in the park."

"Quite certainly not. The park has been subjected to too minute a scrutiny for that."

"It was burned."

“Not in the house, and again not in the grounds. It was for some ghastly reason conveyed away.”

“It is not *now* in the house, for instance?”

“No — if the most recondite search in the darkest recesses of the mansion are of any value.”

“There were blood-stains?”

“A few on the bed.”

“No clue?”

“One. It would seem that the assassin, or one of them, before gaining entrance, drew off his boots, and on running away left them, for some undreamable reason, behind him.”

“It is very simple. He went in a pair of yours or mine.”

“No. Had his foot, as measured by his boot, been one-third as small, it could never have been urged into a boot of yours or mine.”

“And yet Mrs. Grant says he was a small man; it is peculiar he should have so immense a foot.”

“It is clear then that there were more than one.”

“Yet I incline to the one-man theory; for through some failure of courage or memory, one might leave the jewels, but hardly two. Mrs Grant, distracted, may have mistaken his stature; and in the course of my anthropological experience, I have even come across that very discrepancy between man and foot — an occasional survival of simian traits in human beings.”

“There is another point,” I said, “the boots were found to be odd.”

“But that is a clue!” he said. “I have the man in my grasp. Have you now told me everything?”

“Except that a gentleman had called to see Miss Raphash that afternoon.”

“Ah — what sort of man?”

“Tall, black-dressed, middle-aged, with side-whiskers. I have seen him here when you have been away. Mrs. Grant says that Miss Raphash spoke to him with some show of anger, though no words could be made out.”

“Ah!” said the Doctor, and resumed a restless walk.

“It is not impossible,” he continued after a while, “that deeps, black to the eye of a policeman, may lighten to the eye of a thinker. Let us go over the house.”

Science had taught the Doctor to labour without the stimulus of expectancy. On this hopeless search we spent several hours in the mouldy vastnesses of the house; in the solemn silence of old Tudor wings which perhaps no foot had set a-barking with echoes for centuries; deep down in the nitre-crusted vaults. We came at length to an old room on the second floor of the south wing overlooking a patch of garden, rank now with shrubs. The chamber was very damp and gloomy; its tapestries of Arras had mouldered to grey shreds. The Doctor had partly used it as a depository: here were stacked bones of mammoths, embryos in flasks, fossils, spongiadae, implements of stone, iron, and bronze. Along one side was a vast oaken chest, carved, black with centuries of age. It, as well as a secret recess behind a panel in the wall, contained piles of bones methodically labelled.

The lock of the door was of peculiar construction, and the Doctor had the key always about him. I could not therefore but smile, when on entering, I said to him:

“Here, at least, our search is fantastic.”

He glanced at me, and passed in doggedly. Through the grime of the window light hardly entered. Here a piece of old armour, there a cinerary urn of Etruria showed in the gloom its grey freckles of fungus; a dank dust was over all.

“Some one has been here,” said the Doctor.

“Doctor!”

“The catch of the window seems awry: notice the dust on the floor; does it not look — —”

“But if it is impossible, it is impossible, and there an end,” I answered.

He opened the window. Below was the stone balcony of the first floor of the wing; and from it to a point near the window a tin rain-spout ran up. It was among the bushes of the garden beneath the balcony that the stolen valuables had been found.

“He climbed up, you see, by the spout,” said the Doctor. “The feat seems superhuman: but there is the spout, and here is the turned window-catch. We must confront phenomena as we find them.”

“But at least, Doctor, he did not climb up with a dead body in his arms?”

“No; you are right.”

“And he did not enter by the door.”

“No.”

“Then our search here is absurd.”

“Doubtless. You might look behind the panelling.”

I looked and saw only the dust-grown bones of old monsters.

“She is not in *here*, now?” he said, and tapped the oaken chest with his knuckles.

I smiled.

“No, Doctor, she is not in there. The man does not live who could force the century-old secret of *that* riveted lid.”

“Come then, Parker. Come — we shall find her.”

We went out, and he locked the old silences and solitudes within the room once more. Men of great minds undertake tasks which, from their very vastness, seem nothing less than silly to men of smaller gauge. The

region of the impossible, indeed, is the true sphere-of-action of genius. But, on the other hand, the crowd may be excused if, observing this, they become sometimes incredulous, resentful, and even cachinatory.

And, I confess, it was not without resentment that I listened to Doctor Raphash as he said to me:

“Let us find *him*, Parker — the murderer of my sister — the secreter of her body. This is a task we must not leave to the crude intellects of the recognized authorities. Let us hunt *him* down — and, *after* that, we shall resume our consideration of the science of Comparative Mythology.”

But his method, at least, was singular. To acquire personal intimacy with the whole criminal class of London is an undertaking, if possible, at all events far from light. Yet this was his notion. In a few months we had learned a new language, become acclimatized denizens of a new world — the language and the world of the East of London. Our dress was the dress of the “navvy”; our habits those of the ne’er-do-well.

And now most wondrously were revealed to me ineffable deeps in Doctor Raphash’s character. The intensity of this hatred of an unknown man to me seemed hellish. “Let us hunt *him* down.” His life became the incarnation of that sentence. It was the man of science turned beast of prey, but retaining the perfect scientific calm; an intensity bordering on lunacy shrouding itself behind the serenity of ocean-depths; the avenging angel *without* the flashing eye and flaming sword.

Days and nights we spent in public houses, gambling-hells, cells of pawnbrokers, with roughs at slum-corners, stormy crowds at music-hall doors. We were boon companions of men who related to one another without secrecy or shame-blush their achievements in every species of crime. In the morning we parted; to compare late at night notes of the day’s haps. Then far into the morning hours I would hear the slow soft tread of

that divine patience to and fro in his room near mine. This, and a heightened glare in his eyes, were all the indication of the mania fretting at his heart.

One day I heard something.

In a gin-palace two women, dissolute of face, stood at the bar.

“And how about your old man, then?” I heard.

“Oh, he must fish for hisself, he must. I took his boots, the last thing I’ve got, to the pawn this morning, and they wouldn’t take them.”

“Ain’t they no good, then?”

“They’re sound enough, but they’re odd.”

“Go on!”

“S’help me. I nearly tore his eyes out over them same boots. I buys my lord a seven-and-eleven pair in the summer and sends him hop-picking in them; two months ago he turns up with his own boot on the right foot and somebody else’s on the other.”

“And what accounts did he give of hisself?”

“There’s where the provoking part of it comes in. Every time I asks him about it, it’s ‘Drop it, mate’, and ‘Drop it, I tell you, mate.’ He was on the job, you may bet, got into some scrape, and now dursn’t say nothink about it.”

I need not mention the steps by which, in half-an-hour, I had become the bosom friend of these two women. The time, place, and circumstances of the boots profoundly impressed me, and when I parted from them I felt assured that the name and address I had obtained were those of the man we sought. When Doctor Raphash returned, haggard and pallid, to our little garret that night, I pressed his hand.

“You have news for me, Parker.”

“I have heard something that may have some bearing on the case.” I told him the incident.

“Undoubtedly — it has some bearing. Let us go.”

“You look tired tonight, tomorrow perhaps — —”

“Not at all! Tonight, man — now — *now* — is the time to find what we seek” — and he stamped on the floor.

I glanced, startled, at him. The action seemed like a sign of the break-up of that supernal serenity which characterized him.

We passed out, I taking the precaution to bring with me a Colt’s revolver. When, by the way of endless labyrinths, we reached the address the Doctor at last spoke:

“There is no light, you see; he is, probably, still out. Suppose you wait till he comes; then speak, take him under the lamp there, see the boots, and ask him to drink with you. I, waiting at yonder corner, will then join you.”

Flakes of snow drifted downwards. I walked sentinel-wise; the Doctor crouched still at his post. From a Swedish chapel I heard the strokes of twelve, and at the same moment a working-man approached me.

“Cold tonight, mate,” I said, carelessly.

“Ah, that it is,” he answered.

His teeth chattered — his face wore a blue hue. Turned-up coat-collar, and buried hands, and forward pose, spoke of his shivering agonies.

“You look frozen. Come and have a drink along with me.”

“I could do with one, mate. I haven’t tasted grub this day.”

“What — broke?”

“Dead broke!”

“Come along then — the ‘Brown Bear’.”

He followed me. Under the lamp I stopped.

“Do you like the ‘Brown Bear’? If not — —”

The light fell upon him. A sense of contempt and disappointment overcame me at the sight of his weak face, sheepish blue eyes. But there, at

any rate, were the counterparts of the odd boots I had handed over to the authorities.

The Doctor had slowly approached us, and was in the middle of the road when Hardy, glancing, saw him.

The change in the man's face was sudden and wonderful.

His eyes glared; he tottered, livid, against a railing; then, suddenly taking to his heels, fled, as for dear life, down a turning.

The Doctor followed, and then I. And now powers of physique, as unexpected as previously depths of soul in my old friend, stood visible to me. He distanced me. His feet grew winged. Hardy, indeed, had an advantage in his knowledge of the intricate grimy courts down which he dodged. Sometimes for a moment he disappeared. But the Doctor slowly gained upon him, "hunting him down". The streets were all but deserted.

Suddenly Hardy dashed into a cul-de-sac. The house at the end was empty, every window broken. If the fugitive, then, could gain an entrance his escape by the back was safe. I judged that this was the house for which he had all along been making. On reaching it, Hardy dashed down the area steps to a basement below the street-level.

"Shoot!" cried the Doctor, looking back. "Shoot with the revolver — shoot!"

This I was far from willing to do, but it was already too late; for Hardy had disappeared. A minute afterwards we, too, had rushed down the steps, and through a gate-like door passed into a low, wide, damp cellar of which the ground was a soft, powdery earth covering our ankles. There was no other visible means of egress, and I was looking about for Hardy, when the gate-door banged suddenly behind us, and a bar clanged down into a staple in the outer wall.

So that we were prisoners. That the man had entered the cellar was certain, and also that he had found some means of leaving it other than the door. But here our knowledge ended. The darkness was Erebus itself; whole clouds rose with every step and choked us; and the intensity of damp cold, after our run, hardly made speech possible. I groped round the walls, fired my revolver; but the flash revealed nothing but a portion of unhewn wall and low ceiling; I shouted at the door; but the neighbouring houses were ruins — an echo answered me.

Towards the early morning I received, I confess, a thrilling shock of horror from Doctor Raphash. That he was not himself, that he suffered far more than I, became apparent. Once or twice only had he spoken through the night, sitting crouched in the dust of a corner, his knees bent up, his head buried in his arms. By palpation I knew him in this position.

Once I said in alarm:

“Doctor, do not sleep! This cold

The doctor laughed aloud.

“No, no,” he said bitterly; “I won’t sleep; small fear of that — tonight.”

I walked for warmth to and fro, treading warily on the dust. A deep groan drew me to him: my cold fingers touched his forehead with the sensation of contact with a heated plate.

“You are suffering greatly,” I said.

“Leave me alone, Parker! Go from me!”

An hour, and I knew that he was stalking swiftly up and down the whole length of the cellar; swiftly! filling it with a continuous convolute reek of the brown incense of the dust. Long I stood, noting his faint sounds as he came near, losing them, following in fancy his cloudy progress, determining that now he was here, now there, now yonder. His disjointed mutterings guided me. He seemed oblivious of my presence.

When the air had finally become unbearably, I moved to go to him. My head came into contact with something, which on seizing I found to be a rope pendant from the ceiling. Unable to guess its purpose, I succeeded after many efforts in climbing it. My head struck the ceiling. Groping round with my hand, I encountered what seemed like the inner panels of a trapdoor. The means of Hardy's escape flashed upon me. I pushed with my knuckles, and a thin stream of light entered. In another minute I was free on the other side — it was already day.

A strange, pallid face looked up at me, rolling wild eyes. I drew him up, and together we passed out to the street.

Here he suddenly seized my hand.

“Parker!” — his breath came in gasps — “be a leech in your tenacity — as you love me, man! Hunt him down! Goodbye.... Madman! do not follow! Good-bye....”

And before I could surge from the depths of maze and stupor into which the hissed words had plunged me, he had rushed furiously down the street, and vanished into a passing cab.

After Dr. Raphash's mysterious desertion of our quest when success seemed near, I simply returned to the Towers, and waited. I now, in fact, considered my duty done when I had described to the police the fellow with the odd boots, who at this time was in hiding.

It was a month later that I observed one evening, as I walked about the grounds, that a man, hearing my approaching footsteps, had ducked his head from my sight in a clump of bushes — the very bushes, by the way, in which the stolen articles had been discovered.

I was accompanied by a large mastiff. Coming closer to the spot, I said aloud:

“Do not run, simply rise, and hold your hands over your head. I happen to be armed — and you see the dog.”

The crack of a pistol would have much less surprised me than the hang-dog air with which he rose before me. I recognized at once the insipid face of Hardy.

“No offence, master,” he said, touching his hat, trembling like an aspen.

“Ah, we have met before, Hardy.”

He scrutinized my face, but shook his head.

“You know me better ‘n I know you, sir.”

“Well, Charles, you must come with me,” I said. I led him by the arm into a room of the house, instructing Mrs. Grant at the entrance to send for a couple of the rather distant local police. I then closed the door, and proceeded to examine my prisoner. The creature wept!

“Now, Hardy,” I said, “dry your tears, and tell me how came you in those bushes tonight.”

“I was looking for the rings and things. It was hunger drove me — they’ve been hunting me like an animal for the last month, and I give myself up.”

“What rings?”

“The rings I dropped in those bushes. I thought that, anyway, one of them might by chance be left there still.”

“You admit the burglary, then?”

“Yes, master, I admit it. It was my first, and it will be my last. I haven’t had a moment’s peace since. I even put up a rope in an old cellar to hang myself, only I’m a coward

“And you admit the murder?”

“Murder, master?” he cried with scared face— “murder! Why, it wasn’t *me* who did the murder, it was one of the other two, and didn’t I nearly drop

dead with fright when I see it done?”

“There were, then, two others?”

“Yes, sir, a working man such as myself, and an old gent.”

“Tell me about it.”

“I and a mate of mine, sir, came down hop-picking. He was a wild chap, and hops was too slow for him; so he says to me as how some of these country houses was mere child’s play, with plenty to be got, and not much danger, besides. He was one of those chaps it’s no use saying ‘no’ to, so one night here we stood behind the old shed on the other side, waiting till the old lady was well asleep, when all of a sudden, as if he’d sprung from the ground, this old gent stood between us. I started running; he looked like a spirit to me; but Jim, who was more bolder like than me, he stands his ground; soon he whistles to me, and when I come up, he ses, “Ere’s a lark, Charlie,” ses he, ‘the old chap’s on the job hissself!’ ‘Partnership’s a leaky ship, Jim,’ ses I; but he only ses, ‘Oh, bother, live and let live.’ Well, pretty soon I and Jim take our boots off, and we all get inside. No sooner inside, than the old man takes the lead, showing the way, telling us what to do, and me and Jim does everything he tells us, quite nat’ral like. He knew every crick of the place; and first he takes us into a room, and ses he, quite wild like, ‘Plunder now! raven and harry! to your souls’ content!’ And then he reaches down a case from a shelf, and takes out a strange, shiny knife, locks the case again — I believe he had keys to every lock in the place — and rushes out of the room into the one opposite. ‘Queer chap, that,’ ses Jim, looking queer hissself, ‘makes me feel shivery all over’, and before I could tell him I felt sure the man was a devil or a ghost, we hear a struggle in the opposite room — a gasping for breath — and then a long shriek which I ain’t ever going to forget while I live. Immediately after, out he flies with blazing eyes, and dashes hissself against the other old woman’s door yonder.

Jim, sweating cold, plucks up courage to reason with him a bit, and at last he runs back to the murdered lady, and dashes out again with her in his arms, light as a feather, a gash showing right across her chest, her grey hair trailing on the ground. And now he comes up to us, and quite lofty like ses he, ‘Marshal yourselves before me — march! march! and I will lead you where trophies and treasures lie thick-heaped for yer ‘arvesting!’ His words is branded into my brain. And then he makes us walk before him right across the building into the other wing and up two flights of stairs, till we come to a dusty room with a lot of bones of dead people — and there, oh great God! hide me! there — there — *there he is!* He will kill me, as he killed my mate — he will kill you, too — —”

He started wildly about, rushed behind my chair, and crouched down there. The man’s shriek of panic horror thrilled me through, and as the ponderous door swung slowly wide on its hinges, and Dr. Raphash calmly entered the room, I clung paralysed to my seat.

“Well, Parker,” he said in the old callous dry voice, “here I am again, you see. But whom have we . . . the murderer caught at last, surely!” and triumph lighted his eyes as they rested on Hardy, who, pale and panting, now leaned against the tapestries.

“Yes, the murderer!” gasped Hardy, “but that’s not me! Oh, there’s plenty of proofs if it comes to that! That long coat is the very one you wore — have you washed out the blood-splash on the sleeve yet?”

Dr. Raphash sat, barely smiling, examining the face of Hardy. Presently he looked at his arm.

“It is a remarkable thing,” he said, speaking to himself: “I have noticed a stain here on my sleeve; it cannot be blood; Parker, see, it looks not like blood, man — eh?”

But, as for me, a red mist hung thick before my eyes; I could see nothing.

“It is blood,” continued Hardy, gaining courage from the Doctor’s calm — “you know it is, or perhaps you were too mad that night to know anything. Who but a madman would have carried the lady’s body all the distance to that old chest; and there, didn’t you chase Jim round and round the room and stab him like a dog, because you said one body wasn’t enough to fill the chest? And if I hadn’t slipped down to the balcony by a spout, wouldn’t you have killed me, too; and didn’t you look out of the window and tell me to prepare myself because you was coming, and didn’t I have to jump from the balcony to the ground, rolling over, and dropping all the things I had; and didn’t I just have time to draw on two of the boots when you came down and started after me?”

I was looking at Dr. Raphash; during this categorical charge, no sound had issued from his lips; gradually a yellow pallor as of death had overspread his features, and the muscles of his face became tense and fixed; his head drooped forward, and his arms and legs stretched stiffly from his body; the cold stony glare in his eyes lent to his face a look of rhadamanthine sternness awful to see.

I ran and seized the clammy fingers in mine; but he did not recognize me. So he remained for several minutes, no sound breaking the silence of the room.

Then, still rigid in all his limbs, he raised his head, and let it drop heavily over the back of the chair; and, with the action, there burst from his blanched lips — higher and higher, peal on peal, in horrid articulation, in shrillest staccato — a carillon of maniac laughter. When this had passed, his whole face slowly settled into the vacant smile of idiocy.

With creeping flesh, I seized Hardy by the arm, rushed — faint — from the room, and locked the door upon the ruin within.

In this way Dr. Arnot Raphash hunted down the murderer of his sister; and so, with him, fell the Jewish House of Raphash in the county of Kent.

Some days later I received a letter, of which the following are a few extracts:

When I tell you that I am the proprietor of the private asylum from which this letter is dated, and a cousin of Dr. Raphash, you will at once conjecture that his (to you) unaccountable absences from home always corresponded with his voluntary sojourns in my establishment. He well knew the warning symptoms — head pains, a high temperature, etc. — and he usually had two or three days grace before the definite onset of the malady. Sometimes, again, the attack was more sudden, especially when preceded by any excitement; thus, when he reached my establishment a month ago he was already mad, and I at once guessed some previous violent agitation.... His first paroxysm occurred at the age of thirty, when he destroyed a just-married wife by locking her in a room filled by him with a poisonous gas. In the sane state he had no recollection of his insane acts, which were distinguished by their cunning and a strongly marked homicidal mania, directed chiefly against those for whom he most cared. He never knew of his wife's fate, for he was at once placed under my care, and on returning home found her buried.... When he was leaving me, "cured", after the death of his sister, I deemed it prudent to say nothing to him of the tragedy, preferring that the journey to the Towers should intervene before the shock of the news fell on his newly restored powers; hence his ignorance of the matter.... You have probably seen me on my visits to Miss Raphash when the Doctor was away from home; their object was to give that minute report of her brother which alone could satisfy her. On the very

day of the tragedy I had a somewhat angry dispute with her respecting the expediency of putting her brother into irons, she deprecating, I insisting. Unfortunately, I allowed her to influence me, and her death was the result.... It is now beyond all doubt that the Doctor escaped from my establishment on that night, though how he contrived to pass out of the house and grounds and into them again without detection is yet unexplained; but to his cunning, as I have hinted, there were positively no bounds.... I need only add that I shall soon have — I may almost say the pleasure — of announcing to you the death of Dr. Raphash. He may still, indeed, linger for a few weeks; but the end, in any case, cannot be distant.

THE END

THE BRIDE (1902)



*“He shall not see the rivers, the floods,
the brooks of honey and butter” — Job.*

THEY met at Krupp and Mason’s, musical-instrument-makers, of Little Britain, E.C., where Walter had been employed two years, and then came Annie to typewrite, and be serviceable.

They began to “go out” together after six o’clock; and when Mrs. Evans, Annie’s mamma, lost her lodger, Annie mentioned it, and Walter went to live with them at No. 13 Culford Road, N.; by which time Annie and Walter might almost be said to have been engaged. His salary, however, was only thirty shillings a week.

He was the thorough Cockney, Walter; a well-set-up person of thirty, strong-shouldered, with a square brow, a moustache, and black acne-specks in his nose and pale face.

It was on the night of his arrival at No. 13, that he for the first time saw Rachel, Annie’s younger sister. Both girls, in fact, were named “Rachel” — after a much-mourned mother of Mrs.

Evans’; but Annie Rachel was called “Annie,” and Mary Rachel was called “Rachel.” Rachel helped Walter at the handle of his box to the top-back room, and here, in the lamplight he was able to see that she was a tallish girl, with hair almost black, and with a sprinkling of freckles on her very white, thin nose, on the tip of which stood collected, usually, some little sweats. She was thin-faced, and her top teeth projected a little so that her lips only closed with effort, she not so pretty as pink-and-white little

Annie, though one could guess, at a glance, that she was a person more to be respected.

“What do you think of him?” said Annie, meeting Rachel as she came down.

“He seems a nice fellow,” Rachel said: “rather goodlooking. And strong in the back, you bet.”

Walter spent that evening with them in the area front-room, smoking a foul bulldog pipe, which slushed and gurgled to his suction; and at once Mrs. Evans, a dark old lady without waist, all sighs and lack of breath, decided that he was “a gentlemanly, decent fellow.” When bed-time came he made the proposal to lead them in prayer; and to this they submitted, Annie having forewarned them that he was “a Christian.” As he climbed to his room, the devoted girl found an excuse to slip out after him, and in the passage of the first floor there was a little kiss.

“Only one,” she said, with an uplifted finger.

“And what about his little brother, then?” he chuckled — a chuckle with which all his jokes were accompanied: a kind of guttural chuckle, which seemed to descend or stick straining in the throat, instead of rising to the lips.

“You go on,” she said playfully, tapped his cheek, and ran down. So Walter slept for the first night at Mrs. Evans’.

On the whole, as time passed, he had a good deal of the society of the women: for the theatre was a thing abominable to him, and in the evenings he stayed in the underground parlour, sharing the bread-and-cheese supper, and growing familiar with the sighs of Mrs. Evans over her once estate in the world. Rachel, the silent, sewed; Annie, whose relation with Walter was still unannounced, though perhaps guessed, could play hymn-tunes on the old piano, and she played.

Last of all, Walter laid down the inveterate wet pipe, led them in prayer, and went to bed. Most mornings he and Annie set out together for Little Britain.

There came a day when he confided to her his intention to ask for a rise of “screw,” and when this was actually promised by His Terror, the Boss, there was joy in heaven, and radiance in futurity, and secret talks of rings, a wedding, “a Home.” Annie felt herself not far from the kingdom of Hymen, and rejoiced. But nothing, as yet, was said at No. 13: for to Mrs. Evans’ past grandeurs thirty shillings a week was felt to be inappropriate.

The next Sunday, however, soon after dinner, this strangeness occurred: Rachel, the silent, disappeared. Mrs. Evans called for her, Annie called, but it was found that she was not in the house, though the putting away of the dinner-things, her usual task, was only half accomplished.

Not till tea-time did Rachel return. She was then cold, and somewhat sullen, and somewhat pale, her lips closing firmly over her projecting teeth. When timidly questioned — for her resentment was greatly feared — she replied that she had just been looking in upon Alice Soulsby, a few squares away, for a little chat: and this was the truth.

It was not, however, the whole truth; she had also looked in at the Church Lane Sunday School on her way: and this fact she guiltily concealed. For half an hour she had sat darkly at the end of the building in a corner, listening to the “address.” This address was delivered by Walter. To this school every Sunday, after dinner, he put down the beloved pipe to go. He was in fact, its “superintendent.”

After this, the tone and temper of the little household rapidly changed, and a true element of hell was introduced into its platitude. It became, first of all, a question whether or not Rachel could be “experiencing religion,” a thing which her mother and Annie had never dreamt of expecting of her.

Praying people, and the Salvationist, had always been the contempt of her strong and callous mind. But on Sunday nights she was now observed to go out alone, and “chapel” was the explanation which she coolly gave. Which chapel she did not specify: but in reality it was the Newton Street Hall, at which Walter frequently exhorted and “prayed.” In the Church Lane schoolroom there was prayer-meeting on Thursday evenings; and twice within one month Rachel sallied forth on Thursday evening — soon after Walter. The secret disease which preyed upon the poor girl could hardly now be concealed. At first she suffered bitter, solitary shame; sobbed in a hundred paroxysms; hoped to draw a veil over her infirmity. But her gash was too glaring. In the long Sabbath evenings of summer he preached at street corners, and sometimes secretly, sometimes openly, Rachel would attend these meetings, singing meekly with the rest the undivine hymns of the modern evangelist. In his presence, in the parlour, on other nights, she quietly sewed, hardly speaking. When, at 7 p.m., she heard his key in the front door her heart darted toward its master; when in the morning he flew away to business her universe was cinders.

“It’s a wonder to me what’s coming to our Rachel lately,” said Annie in the train, coming home; “you’re doing her soul good, or something, aren’t you?”

He chuckled, with slushy suction-sounds about the back of the tongue and molars.

“Oh, that be jiggered for a tale!” he said: “she’s all right.”

“I know her better than you, you see. She’s quite changed — since you’ve come. Looks to me as if she’s having a touch of the blues, or something.”

“Poor thing! She wants looking after, don’t she?” Annie laughed, too: but less brutally, more uneasily. Walter said: “But she oughtn’t to have the

blues, if she's giving her heart to the Lord!

"People seem to think a Christian must be this and that. A Christian, if it comes to that, ought to be the jolliest fellow going!"

This was on a Thursday, the night of the Church Lane prayer-meeting, and Walter had only time to rush in at No. 13, wash his face, snatch his Bible, and be off. Rachel, for her part, must verily now have been badly bitten with the rabies of love, or she would have felt that to follow to-night, for the third time lately, could not fail to incur remark. But this consideration never even entered a mind now completely blinded and entranced by the personality of Walter.

Through the day her work about the house had been rushed forward with this very object, and at the moment when he banged the door after him she was before her glass, dressing in blanched, intense and trembling flurry, and casting as she bent to give the last touches to her fringe, a look of bitterest hate at the projection of her lip above the teeth.

This night, for the first time, she waited in the chapel till the end of the service, and walked slowly homeward on the way which she knew that Walter would take; and he came striding presently, that morocco Bible in his hand, nearly every passage in which was neatly under-ruled in black and red inks.

"What, is that you?" he said, taking into his a hand cold with sweat.

"It is," she answered, in a hard, formal tone.

"You don't mean to say you've been to the meeting?"

"I do."

"Why, where were my eyes? I didn't see you."

"It isn't likely that you would want to, Mr. Teeger."

"Go on — drop that! What do you take me for? I'm only too glad! And I tell you what it is, Miss Rachel, I say to you as the Lord Jesus said to the

young man: ‘Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven.’”

She was in it! — near him, alone, in a darkling square, yet suffering, too, in the flames of a passion such as perhaps consumes only the strongest natures.

She caught for support at his unoffered arm; and when he bent his steps straight homeward, she said trembling violently: “I don’t wish to go home as yet. I wish to have a little walk. Do you mind, Mr. Teeger?”

“Mind, no. Come along, then,” and they went walking among an intricacy of streets and squares, he talking of “the Work,” and of common subjects. After half an hour, she was saying:

“I often wish I was a man. A man can say and do what he likes; but with a girl it’s different.”

“There’s you, now, Mr. Teeger, always out and about, having people listening to you, and that. I often wish I was only a man.”

“Oh, well, it all depends how you look at it,” he said. “And, look here, you may as well call me Walter and be done.”

“Oh, I shouldn’t think of that,” she replied. “Not till—”

Her hand trembled on his arm.

“Well, out with it, why don’t you?”

“Till — till we know something more definite about you — and Annie.”

He chuckled slushily, she now leading him fleetly round and round a square.

“Ah, you girls again!” he cried, “been blabbing again like all the girls! It takes a bright man to hide much from them, don’t it?”

“But there isn’t much to hide in this case, as far as I can see — is there?”

Always Walter laughed, straining deep in the throat. He said: “Oh, come — that would be telling, wouldn’t it?”

After a minute's stillness, this treacherous phrase came from Rachel:
"Annie doesn't care for anyone, Mr. Teeger."

"Oh, come — that's rather a tall order, any one. She's all right."

"But she doesn't. Of course, most girls are silly, and that, and like to get married—"

"Well, that's only nature, ain't it?"

This was a joke; and downward the laugh strained in his throat, like struggling phlegm.

"Yes, but they don't understand what love is," said Rachel.

"They haven't an idea. They like to be married women, and have a husband, and that. But they don't know what love is — believe me! The men don't either." How she trembled! — her body, her dying voice — she pressing heavily upon him, while the moon triumphed now through cloud glaring a moment white on the lunacy of her ghostly face.

"Well, I don't know — I think I understand, lass, what it is," he said.

"You don't, Mr. Teeger!"

"How's that, then?"

"Because, when it takes you, it makes you—"

"Well, let's have it. You seem to know all about it."

Now Rachel commenced to tell him what "it" was — in frenzied definitions, and a power of expression strange for her. It was a lunacy, its name was Legion, it was possession by the furies; it was a spasm in the throat, and a sickness of the limbs, and a yearning of the eye-whites, and a fire in the marrow; it was catalepsy, trance, apocalypse; it was high as the galaxy, it was addicted to the gutter; it was Vesuvius, borealis, the sunset; it was the rainbow in a cesspool, St. John plus Heliogabalus, Beatrice plus Messalina; it was a transfiguration, and a leprosy, and a metempsychosis, and a neurosis; it was the dance of the mænads, and the bite of the tarantula,

and baptism in a sun: out poured the wild definition in simple words, but with the strife of one fighting for life. And she had not half done when he understood her fully; and he had no sooner understood her, than he was subdued, and succumbed.

“You don’t mean to say—” he faltered.

“Ah, Mr. Teeger,” she answered, “there’s none so blind as those who will not see.”

His arm stole round her shuddering body.

Everyone is said to have his failing; and this man, Walter, in no respect a man of strong mind, was certainly on his amatory side, most sudden, promiscuous, and infirm. And this tendency was, if anything, heightened by the quite sincere strain of his mind in the direction of “spiritual things”: for, under sudden temptation, back rushed his being, with the greater rigour, into its natural channel. On the whole, had he not been a Puritan, he would have been a Don Juan.

In an instant Rachel’s weight was hanging upon his neck, he kissing her with passion.

After this she said to him: “But you are only doing this out of pity, Walter. Tell the truth, you are in love with Annie?”

He, like Peter, tumbled at once into a fib. “That’s what you say!”

“You are,” she insisted, filled with the bliss of the fib.

“Bah! I’m not. Never was. You are the girl for me.”

When they went home, they entered the house at different times, she first, he waiting twenty minutes in the street.

The house was small, so the sisters slept together in the second-floor front room; Walter in the second-floor back; Mrs. Evans in the first-floor back, the first-floor front being “the drawing-room.”

The girls, therefore, generally went to bed together: and that night, as they undressed, there was a row.

First, a long silence. Then Rachel, to say something, pointed to some new gloves of Annie's, asking: "How much did you give for those?"

"Money and kind words," replied Annie.

This was the beginning.

"Well, there's no need to be rude about it," said Rachel. She was happy, in paradise, despised Annie that night.

"Still," said Annie, after a silence of ten minutes before the glass, "still, I should never run after a man like that. I'd die first."

"I haven't the least idea what you're talking about," replied Rachel.

"You have. I should be ashamed of myself, if I were you."

"Talk away. You're a little fool."

"It's you. Throwing yourself at the head of a man who doesn't care for you. What can you call yourself?"

Rachel laughed — happily, yet dangerously.

"Don't bother yourself my girl," she said.

"Think of going out every night to meet a man in that way: look here, it's too disgusting of you, girl!"

"Is it?"

"You can't deny that you were with Mr. Teeger to-night?"

"That I wasn't."

"It's false! Anyone can see it by the joy in your face."

"Well, suppose I was, what about it?"

"But a woman should be decent, I think; a woman should be able to command her feelings, and not expose herself like that. Believe me, it gives me the creeps all over to think of."

"Never mind, don't be jealous, my girl."

The gentle Annie flamed!

“Jealous! of you!”

“There isn’t any need, you know — not yet.”

“But I’m not! There never will be need! Do you take Mr. Teeger for a raving lunatic? I should go and have some false teeth put in first if I were you!”

Thus did Annie drop to the rock-bed of vulgarity; but she knew it to be necessary in order to touch Rachel, as with a white-hot wire, on her very nerve of anguish, and, in fact, at these words Rachel’s face resembled white iron, while she cried out, “Never mind my teeth! It isn’t the teeth a man looks at! A man knows a finely built woman when he sees her — not like a little dumpy podge!”

“Thank you. You are very polite,” replied Annie, browbeaten by an intensity fiercer than her own. “But still, it’s nonsense, Rachel, to talk of my being jealous of you. I knew Mr. Teeger six months before you. And you won’t know him much longer either, for I don’t want to have mother disgraced here, and this is no fit place for him to lodge in. I can easily make him leave it soon—”

At this thing Rachel flew, with minatory palm over Annie’s cheek, ready to strike. “You dare do anything to make him go away! I’ll tear your little —”

Annie winked, flinched, uttered a sob, no more fight left in her.

So for two weeks the situation lasted. Only, after that night, so intense grew the bitterness between the sisters, that Annie moved down to the first-floor back, sleeping now with Mrs.

Evans who dimly wondered. As for Walter, meanwhile, his heart was divided within him. He loved Annie; he was fascinated and mesmerised by Rachel. In another age and country he would have married both. Every day

he came to a different resolve, not knowing what to do. One thing was evident — a wedding-ring would be necessary, and he purchased one, uncertain for which of the girls.

“Look here, lass,” he said to Annie in the train, coming home, “let us put a stop to this. The boss doesn’t seem to be in a hurry about that rise of screw, so suppose we get spliced, and be done?”

“Privately?”

“Rather. Your ma and sister mustn’t know, — not just yet a while.”

“And you will still keep on living at the house?”

“Well, of course, for the time being.”

She looked up into his face and smiled. It was settled. But two nights afterwards he met Rachel on his way home from prayer-meeting; at first was honest and distant; but then committed the incredible weakness of going with her for a walk among the squares, and ended by winning from her an easily granted promise of marriage, on the same terms as those arranged within Annie.

When, the next day at lunch-time, he put his foot on the threshold of the Registrar’s office to give notice, he was still in a state of agonized indecision as to the name which he should couple with his own.

When the official said, “Now the name of the other party?” Walter hesitated, shuffled with his feet, then answered:

“Rachel Evans.”

Not till he was again in the street did he remember that Rachel was the name of both the girls, and that liberty of choice between them still remained to him.

Now, from the day of “notice” to the day of wedlock, an interval of twenty-one clear days must by law, elapse, and Walter, though weak enough to inform both the sisters of the step he had taken, was careful to give them

only a vague idea of the date fixed. His once clear conscience, meanwhile, was grievously troubled, his feet in a net; he feared to speak to God; and went drifting like flotsam on the river of chance.

And chance alone it was which at last cast him upon the land. The fifth day before the marriage was a Bank Holiday, and he had arranged with Rachel to go out with her that day to Hyde Park, she to wait for him at an arranged spot at two o'clock. At two, then, at a street-corner, stood Rachel waiting, twirling her parasol, walking a little, returning. Walter, however, did not appear, and what could have happened was beyond her divination. Had he misunderstood or missed her? Though incredible, it was the only thing to think. To Hyde Park, at any rate, she went alone, feeling desolate and ennuyée, in the vague hope of there meeting him.

What had happened was this: Walter had been half-way toward the rendezvous with Rachel, when he was met in the street by Annie, who had gone to spend the day with a married friend at Stroud Green, but had returned, owing to the husband's illness. Seeing Walter, her face lit up with smiles.

"Harry's down with the influenza," she said, "so I couldn't stay and bore poor Ethel. Where are you going?"

For the first time since his "conversion" twelve years before, Walter, with a high flush, now consciously lied.

"Only to the schoolroom," he said, "to hunt for something."

"Well, I am open to be taken out, if any kind friend will be so kind," she said fondly.

Now he had that morning vowed to himself to wed Rachel; and by this vow he now again vowed to be bound. All the more reason why, for the last time, he should "take out" Annie.

"Come along, then, old girl," he gaily said: "where shall we go?"

“Let us go to Hyde Park,” said Annie. And to Hyde Park they went, Walter, ever and anon, stabbed by the bitter memory of waiting Rachel.

At five o’clock the two were walking along the north bank of the Serpentine westward toward a two-arched bridge, which is also pierced by a third narrow arch over the bank: to this narrow arch, since it was drizzling, they were making for shelter, when Rachel, a person of the keenest vision, sighted them from the south bank. She was frantic at once. Annie, who was supposed to be at Stroud Green! What treachery! This, then, was why . . . She ran panting along the bank, toward the bridge, then over it, northward, and now heard the two under the arch, who stood there talking — of the wedding. Unfortunately, just here is a block of masonry, which prevented Rachel from leaning directly over the arch to listen. Yet the necessity to hear was absolute: so she ran back clear of the masonry, and bent far over the parapet, outwards and sideways toward the arch, straining neck, body, ears, and anyone looking into those staring eyes then would have comprehended the doctrine of the Ferine Soul. But she was at a disadvantage, heard only murmurs, and — was that a kiss? Further and further forth she strained. And now suddenly, within a cry, she is in the water, where it is shallow near the bank. In the fall her head struck upon a stone in the mud.

For three days she screamed continuously the name of Walter, filling the street with it, calling him hers only. On the third night, in the midst of a frightful crisis of cries, she suddenly died.

“Oh, Rachel, don’t say you are dead!” cried Annie over her.

The death occurred two days before the marriage-day, and on the next, Walter, well wounded, said to Annie: “This knocks our little affair on the head, of course.”

Annie was silent. Then, with a pout, she said: "I don't see why. After all, it was her own fault, entirely. Why should we suffer?"

For the feud between the sisters had become cruel as death; and it outlasted death: Annie, on the subject of Rachel and Walter, being no longer a gentle girl, but marble, without respect or pity.

And so, in spite of the trepidations and hesitancy of Walter, the marriage took place, even while Rachel lay stretched on the bed in the second-floor front of No. 13.

The ceremony did not, however transpire without hitch and omen. It was necessary, first of all, for Walter to forewarn Annie that he had given notice of her to the Registrar by her second name of "Rachel" — a mad-looking proceeding that was almost the cause of a rupture which nothing but Walter's most ardent pleadings could steer him clear of. At any rate it was to "Rachel," and not to "Annie" that he was, as a matter of fact, after all married.

After the ceremony, performed in their lunch-time, they returned to business together in Little Britain.

At ten o'clock the same night, as he was going up to bed, she ran after him, and in the passage there was a long, furtive kiss — their last on earth.

"Twelve o'clock?" he whispered intensely.

She held up her forefinger. "One!"

"Oh, say twelve!"

She did not answer, but drew her palm playfully, across his cheek, meaning consent, for Mrs.

Evans was an inveterately heavy sleeper. He went up. And, careful to leave his door a little ajar, he extinguished his candle, and went to bed. In the apartment nearby lay stark in the dark — with learned, eternal eyelids and drowsy brow — the dead.

Walter could not but think of this presence close at hand. “Well, poor girl!” he sighed. “Poor Rachel! Well, well. His way is in the sea, after all, and His path in the Great Deep, and His footsteps are not known.” Then he thought of Annie — the little wife! But instead of Annie, there was Rachel. The two women fought vehemently for his thought — and ever the dead was stronger than the living. . . . Instead of Annie there was Rachel — and again Rachel.

At last he could hear twelve strike from a steeple, and sat up in bed, listening eagerly for the door to open, or a footfall on the floor.

A little American clock ticked in the room; and in the flue of the chimney was a sigh and chaunt just audible.

Suddenly she was intensely with him, filling the chamber — from nowhere. He had heard no footstep, no opening of the door: yet certainly, she was with him now, all suddenly, close to him, over him, talking breathlessly to him.

His first sensation was a shuddering which strongly shook him from head to foot, like the shuddering of Russian cold. She held him down by the shoulders; was stretched at length on the bed, over him; and the room seemed full of a rustling and rushing, very strange, like starched muslins rushing out in stormy agitation. She was speaking, too, to him in breathless haste, whimpering a secret gibberish which whimpered like a pup for passion — about love and its definition, and about the soul, and the worm, and Eternity, and the passion of death, and the nuptials of the tomb, and the lust and hollowness of the void. And he, too, was speaking, whispering through his pattering teeth, saying: “Sh-h-h, Rachel — Annie, I mean — sh-h-h, my girl — your ma will hear! Rachel, don’t — sh-h-h, now!” But even while he kept up this “sh-h-h dear — sh-h-h, now,” he was conscious of the invasion of a strange rage, of such a strength as if energy was being

vehemently pumped into him from some behemoth omnipotence. The form above him he could hardly discern, the room was so dark, but he felt that her garment was flowing forth from her neck in a continuous flutter, with the rustling of the starch of a thousand shrouds, like the outflow of a pennant in wind; and the quivering gauze seemed now to swell and fill the chamber, and now to sink again to the size of woman. And ever the rhapsody of love and death went on, mixed with the chattered “Sh-h-h, Rachel — Annie, I mean,” of Walter; till, suddenly, he was involved in an embrace so horrible, felt himself encompassed by a might so intolerable, that his soul fainted within him. He sank back; thought span and failed in darkness beneath the spell of that lullaby; he muttered, “Receive my spirit. . .”

After two days Walter, still unconscious, died. His disfigured body they placed in a grave not far from Rachel’s.

THE END

MANY A TEAR (1908)



“GOD COUNTS A woman’s tears.” — The Talmud

I FIRST heard the name of Margaret Higgs one gloomy afternoon, when passing over the Chase by Tydenham, with Severn (they don’t say “the” Severn there) trailing itself away through a vale of haze far down on my right. The aged clergyman I was making the journey with showed me the mass of rags and grey locks, where the woman sat alone on a rock on the Chase, saying to me— “Mark that woman, a remarkable being, I assure you, a woman who during sixteen years has plumbed even the deeps of human woe; for I say that if ever the arm of the Almighty bared itself to be known openly in the affairs of men, it was in that life. There, like a pine blighted by the lightning’s wrath, sits Margaret now, a living pledge of that Power which governs the world.”

He spoke with no little solemnity, though I must say that when he went on to tell me the facts, he left me utterly unconvinced of this “arm of the Almighty”; and I hope that by this time he, too, has nobler thoughts with regard to Margaret Higgs.

“I remember her when she had no resemblance to the object you see there,” he told me, “a shapely wench with a tripping run on her toes, soft-spoken and most soft-eyed, dark blue eyes and black hair, a gay gossip— ‘news-hunter’ they say here — with a prayer-book in her hand in the lanes on Sunday, and a name for ‘knocking around’ with the young men; one of those earth-born souls of this part, unconscious of a world beyond Severn

— save of Gloucester, because the magistrates say to the naughty ones: ‘Go to Gloucester for a month.’

“She came of good farmer-folk in a small way, who died almost together, upon which Margaret chose to marry beneath her, a quarry-man from the Wyebanks near, a thickset, rather taciturn and nervous person, named Higgs, a widower some fifteen years Margaret’s senior. He had a son of twelve or so called Fred Higgs; and I think I have heard it said that as a girl Margaret had had the nursing of this boy, and that it was her fondness for the boy which caused the heiress to make choice of the father.

“Well, Margaret and Higgs got on very well for several years. I have observed them driving toward St. Bride’s of a week-end to market, frequently have called in to visit them, and they appeared happy. However, one summer there came to lodge with them a stranger — a sailor they say he was, though, as the house stands well out of the way in a bower, and as the stranger never at all showed his nose abroad, not much is known of him; one or two, however, of the Woolaston villagers lower down the mountain — a group of people known as the most ‘news-hunting’ in the country — gave it out that the stranger was a good-looking chap, and that Margaret had lost her heart to him; a tale which was confirmed when he was one afternoon loudly ordered out of the house by Higgs, and was observed to pass out of the house and away over the mountains.

“Well, some time after nine that night, when the boy Fred Higgs went to bed, Margaret, from motives of revenge, probably, destroyed her husband; for from that night Higgs has never been seen, and a daft fellow called Felix, who would frequently roam the countryside all night, reported that near three that morning he had seen Mrs. Higgs struggling in a storm across the fields towards Severn beneath the burden of a body.

“This was all the evidence to begin with, except the queer fact that Margaret breathed not a syllable to anyone with regard to her husband’s disappearance; but other signs and evidences soon followed, as I have told you, from — Heaven itself.”

Owing, maybe, to the fact that this witness, Felix, was not a man able to appreciate the nature of an oath, the police took no open action in the matter; and at this apparent sluggishness of the law, you never saw such a gush of fury, every boatman for miles up the two rivers becoming an eye to scan the waters for a body; and both where the banks are all mud, and where there are reaches of beach, parties of diggers, organised by the villagers, were ferreting for a buried body.

“Well, no body was ever discovered; but by society, I can tell you, a way was discovered to avenge itself, and the woman was punished. The baker’s cart ceased to wait at Woodside farm, the butcher declined to deal; even so far off as St. Bride’s and the Forest of Dean, Margaret Higgs could neither sell her starved calf nor get meal for her pig, nor find a forgiving smile.”

“Her’s done away wi’n right enough,” was the word everywhere: “hanging be too good for she, and shame ought to cover the face of the police.” Passing by the farm one morning, I walked up the garden-path, and saw Margaret. The round of industry there was suspended now, her stepson appeared to be aiming shots at imaginary rabbits, and the young woman, swinging her knee between her hands, was seated on the door-sill of her snowy low home. She sprang up to offer me a chair, and I said then sorrowfully to her:

“Well, Mrs. Higgs, things are not so well with you as they have been,” at which she at once became visibly inflamed, and cried out, “the gossiping, news-hunting lot, ignorant as wagon-horses!

“I do have nothing off they, Mr. Somerset! They don’t keep me! Why should I trouble about what they have to say?”

“But how, Mrs. Higgs, do you propose to live, to manage the farm?” I asked.

“I did live and find bread for the boy before, and I’ll do it again, sir,” she answered.

“But for one to defy many is up-hill work, and you without a protector now,” I said...”Tell me the truth, Margaret,” I added, “is Higgs dead?”

She stood against the wall, eyeing the ground, and after a silence said with a shrug of her shoulders: “‘Er be dead, I suppose — God knows; I don’t.”

Well, I was angry at this callous shrugging, and left her at once.

The next Sunday she dared to come to church, and as I surmised that this would be resented, especially as she walked up the aisle with so haughty a toss of the head, I uttered in my sermon a few words as to the beauty of Christian forbearance. But it had no effect, and all up the back lane that leads steeply to Woodside, though it was a stormy afternoon, Margaret was followed by the congregation — most of them her cousins, and cousins of one another. They did not at first molest her, but tittered coughs, whistles, catcalls; all which she endured without looking round, till by beck and signs they managed to induce her boy to leave her side and join the enemy, and thenceforth the walk became a cross-fire of abuse yelled from side to side, the woman hastening on in front afraid, with a grey face, but defiant eyes on fire, the people eagerly speeding upon her heels with no peaceable meaning.

“Go on!” she shouted to them, laughing with a rather ghastly grin of the mouth— “you gossiping, news-hunting lot! Shame ought to cover your face!”

“Where’s Higgs?” they all roared at her.

“Go on, you! ignorant as wagon-horses, with your silly, foolhardy questions!” And so till they came to her house, where the crowd surrounded her; and now, finding herself at bay, her defiance suddenly failing, the woman broke into tears, and falling to her knees, called out upon the Almighty in passionate tones of reproach, saying “What have I done, my good God? If I have done any wrong, send that my house may be burnt to the ground, may every evil befall me, may I be struck paralysed from my crown to my foot—” a vow so apparently hearty, and so awful to the villagers that they went away and left her.

But that night her house was burned to the ground.

When the crowd had left her, she had flung herself upon a couch in the house, where she had remained in the grip of an ague till nine in the night; and getting up then to go to bed her still trembling hand had dropped the lamp....

The news of that thing flew that night like loosened effluvia, and in a few minutes Woolaston was at Woodside. They found the boy, Fred Higgs, confined in the house by the fire, for in the first panic Margaret had run out, calling out to him, but he had been asleep, and now was screaming at his window, which was too little for him to squeeze through to leap to the ground.

Seeing this, some of the crowd darted off to look for the orchard-ladder, when Margaret herself, to the awe of all, dived back into the fire, and presently appeared tearing at the framework of the boy’s window, half of which was a fixture, and half a sideward slide. Well, as she as ever a person of great strength, the woodwork gave way to her tuggings, leaving space for the leap to the ground, and they came down safely.

Fred Higgs was taken home by Price, the grocer; and Margaret, now all bald and baked on one side of the face, found a shelter in her stable with the body of her starved horse, which had died that day.

But the woman's spirit was not yet broken. When, the next morning, Morgan, the policeman, called to invite her, things being as they were, to make a clean breast of what had happened to Higgs, she still sat dumb, rocking her body to and fro. She seems to have entertained still the crazy hope of carrying on the farm on which she was born, but that same day Mr. Millings, Loreburn's land-steward, called to tell her that, of course, she must go now, offering, however, to give her a price for her implements, etc., which no one else would buy of her. These terms she had to accept; but she showed then as ever a fierce determination not to leave the place of her birth, and like a spider whose web has been torn, at once the woman set mutely to work to build up her life anew.

On the third day after the fire she came with her face in bandages to my daughter, Nina, who owned a cottage high up there near the Chase; and though I felt bound to warn my daughter of the danger of letting, she chose to do so. On this the woman went away to Newport, bought there some new things, took her sow and fowls to her new abode, and was about once more to commence housekeeping. But it was not to be: for when all was ready, and she went down to Price, the grocer, who had taken in her boy, the boy roundly refused to go with her, saying to her: 'No, mother, I don't want to see thee face never again.' These words seemed to strike the woman quite silly; and turning toward the crowd for pity, with a wry mouth that tried to smile, she let slip the words: "Why, it was for him chiefly I did it!" "Did it! You hear her? Did what?" cried some, while the rest of the boors booed and hissed her.

“Come with your mother, hearty,” wooed the woman to the boy, “don’t be hard.”

“Thee go away,” said the boy, emboldened by the mob, “thee bisn’t my own mother, nor I never did despise anybody so much as I do despise thee, never in all my life, and shame ought to cover thee face.” Margaret looked awe-struck at this last disaster. She said nothing more, but throwing her arm languidly at him was gone with lagging steps, as if broken down now, given over, cowed, and done for; nor from that day, I think, did she ever show any resistance to whatever was done to her, except once, when she threw a stone at a throng of boys who were pursuing her.

Morgan, the policeman, however, and I also, thought that with regard to the boy, to whom from his youth the woman had ever been a good mother, a hardship had been done her; especially as without his help her new nook of land would be of little use to her. So after three weeks of talk the grocer formally agreed to give up the boy; and the same morning Morgan, happening to be passing up there, called to Margaret across her gate that her boy would be coming back to her at once. Upon this she seems to have run to stand under an ash tree at the end of the lane to see him coming up the hill; several persons, hurrying past in the rain, saw her standing there that day with her dress thrown over her head; and though the boy did not come for some hours, there she stood patiently on the look out, until the afternoon had become late and dark with storm. At last the boy came. But it was to find her lying helpless on her right side, apparently struck by lightning — the ash, at any rate, had been shivered, and she was found paralysed right down one side. Babbling with her blighted tongue, she begged the boy to give her a hand, to try to get her home without uttering a word to anyone, but he, as if out of his wits, flew down the hill, howling out the news to the four winds.

Well, however deep the woman's sin, what followed for her that evening is really shocking to recount, for a legion of fiends seem to have taken possession of the people to make a scene out of pandemonium on the mountain that evening. The words arose, "drum her out" — for, of course, whatever doubt may have lingered in any mind with regard to Margaret's guilt was gone now, since all that her vow had called down upon herself was now fallen upon her; nor did the rain and darkness make any difference; with one accord the crowd started up the mountain. Happily, she guessed their approach, and in her terror, gathering whatever forces remained to her, she fled before them, managing to drag her frame into some bush before they reached the tree; while they, going on to her cottage to find her, and not finding her, threw all her new goods into a hurly-burly, and by accident or design burned to the ground my daughter's house. It was not till the next morning that Margaret was discovered lying in the field called the Morplepiece, and was then carried away by the police, to be put into the St. Bride's infirmary.

There pressure was afresh brought to bear upon the woman to make some sort of confession, but she remained as dumb as ever; and after some months was sent out with that maimed drag in her gait and speech, which even now marks her. She dared again, though now penniless and hopeless of gaining a living here, to face the load of pain that awaited her in her native place; and hereabouts, Heaven knows how, has continued to exist. My daughter Nina, whose heart has always deeply grieved for her, sometimes of an angry night will say to me: "That poor Margaret Higgs, papa; perhaps out on the Chase in it all." Aye, and I have known her go out with a groom and a lantern to look for the woman, and on discovering her under one of those two-arched kilns which are common in this part, has wooed the poor soul to come home with her. Margaret when dragged has

come, but always before morning was gone again. In deed, she had soon become much of a wild woman, imbued with the mood of storm-winds and dark nights, as shy and gloomy-eyed as those shaggy nags on the Chase, her only mates, whose manes and great tails the gales up there ever fret; so that belated yokels on their way home have often paused to hearken to some moan or laugh of hers in the dark. Once she was sent to prison, when, ever unlucky, on happening to throw a stone at a throng of boys, the stone cut one of them, and the magistrates gave her their “go to Gloucester for a month.” One of these magistrates, by the way, was none other than her stepson, Fred Higgs, who had been taken up by some mysterious business man — in Glasgow they say it was — had graduated at Oxford, and is now, you may say, one of our magnates. The man has simply ignored his stepmother’s existence.

However, the new proprietor of Glanna has given orders that the woman be housed, and provided with the means of a livelihood — has let it be understood, too, that whoever injures her will incur his displeasure. In fact, during the few weeks that this Mr. Ogden has been in residence, his goodness to the poor has become the talk, though he seems something of a queer sort, and almost a hermit. At any rate, through him, the condition of Margaret may shortly be expected to undergo a change, though it is not easy to rescue her — she resists, appears to be suspicious, can’t now believe perhaps that anyone really wishes her well — and whether she is capable of being reclaimed from her half-savage state it is hard to say: for the years alter us all, sir, the years leave the marks of their passing upon us.

So much Mr. Somerset, the aged clergyman, was able to give me of the story of Margaret Higgs, and that morose star of hers; and two days later I learned in further detail that every effort was being made to tame and help her.

But the bad destiny that seemed to have the woman in hand was not even yet done with her.

Her new abode was actually ready for her, and she had agreed to go into it, glad, I suppose, poor soul, of a bed at last, when some men, digging for a foundation down by Severn, found the remains of a man.

It was near the spot where the daft Felix over fifteen years before had seen Margaret Higgs with a body on her back one dark morning, and the cry arose, “the body of Higgs at last.”

Again, then, was Margaret taken to prison; and I, hearing of all the to-do, took train to St. Bride’s to witness her trial in the petty sessions there.

Of the two justices one was her own stepson, Fred Higgs, a good-looking man of not much more than thirty, and the other, the new lord of the Manor of Glanna.

As to the woman herself, she sat through it all — she was too woefully weak to stand — in a spiritless attitude, as unmoving as a statue. It was understood that, on being pressed in prison, she had admitted that the body discovered was that of her husband, buried by her; to which admission one Inspector Jonas deposed, and spoke as to the enforcing of the Coroner’s warrant, and the whole story of the horror.

But what struck me from the first was the nervousness of one of the justices, the lord of Glanna — a short-built and broad-faced man, with cropped hair, and squat fingers, with which he kept tapping on his chin, tapping on his chair, tapping ever on everything near him.

And presently his keenness to procure the release of the accused became quite clear, till it was painful. One never saw a judge so jumpy in his chair, so agitated, so impatient of opposition.

When his brother justice once leaned toward him, perhaps to whisper some remonstrance, Mr. Ogden cried out loudly: “You be sure to shut your

mouth!” and I then noticed that the very slight rocking of Margaret Higgs’s body, which was going on as regularly as a pendulum’s swing, suddenly ceased, and the woman seemed to start and hearken.

Evidence, however, is evidence, and no magistrate could have saved the woman from the County assizes, had it not been that at the last, when the prosecution was summing-up, saying, “there can be no doubt therefore that the remains now found are actually those of Barnaby Higgs—” Mr. Ogden at those words leaped from his chair, calling out: “But how can all that be so certain to you, sir, when here’s Barnaby Higgs himself, a living man, talking to ye?”

The hand which the old man spread before us shivered with strong emotion, while tears blinded his eyes. I heard Mr. Somerset, seated near me on the bench, twice breathe to himself:

“My God!” The mass of rags in the dock sprang straight with a crazy stare. Throughout the crowded room hardly a sound was heard till Mr. Higgs, stepping to the rail, spoke — with a most painful agitation at the beginning, but presently more calmly and then again with wrathful agitation when, turning upon Fred Higgs, he scourged his son with invective. And ever afresh at the object of sorrow and rags arraigned before him he stretched his forefinger, with red-veined eyes, and a moan of love in his choked throat, calling her blessed, calling her saint.

It was the same Barnaby Higgs, he told the court — was rather surprised that some of them hadn’t recognised him — only sixteen years older now, and a big-wig, in a frock-coat, and without a beard, but the same.

One summer there had come to the farm a man named John Cheyne — a sailorman he was — a cousin, who had got into trouble for abducting a girl, and Higgs had hidden him.

But the chap had not been three days on the place when Higgs began to be jealous.

“Though she told me that there was nothing in it, I didn’t believe her, nor I don’t now believe her, for I distinctly saw John Cheyne kissing, or trying to kiss, her behind the sty; and that same day, between three-thirty and four by the clock, I turned the fellow off the place.”

The sailor took his departure, but by ten in the night was back at the farm, craving to be again taken in; this Higgs refused. Cheyne pushed himself in, hot words arose, then fisticuffs, during which Cheyne, who must have had heart-disease, “dropped down dead before a right-handed cross-counter in the left ribs, after a lead-off with the left by himself.” Some moments afterwards, Margaret, who had been out “at fair,” walked in and saw what that was which Higgs was crouched down over on the floor.

Higgs, in the crowd of his terrors, knowing that his row with the sailor was known, could foresee nothing but the gallows; but Margaret, after sitting like a stone a long time, proposed flight, she to bury the body down by Severn, and in three nights’ time to meet Higgs secretly on the Chase, to let him know whether he might safely return home.

This was agreed. Higgs ran, Margaret buried the sailor — no one suspected that he was dead, but as to the rendezvous on the Chase on the third day Higgs, ever nervous, had shirked it.

Terrified by the tidings heard in his hiding that Margaret had been seen carrying a body on her back, he had not dared to return into the region of danger, but, having reached Liverpool, took ship.

“Yes,” he said from the bench, “I abandoned her, little thinking that she’d be seriously charged with killing me, who knew myself to be alive and hearty, and all the time I was in South Africa I was that shy and sick of my cowardice I couldn’t write to her; I preferred she should think me dead and

gone. But I didn't know, I made sure she'd be going on all right in the old style....

“Hadn't I left one to protect her, friends? Didn't I get a business friend in Glasgow to adopt him? He did nothing for her. My own son — this man — he did nothing for her. Ah! the squalls that caught her and the frosts that froze her bones were never a bit so hard on her as this bitter heart.

“It was for him she did it, friends, just think! She said to me that night, for she was cross wi' me, ‘it's not to screen thee, I do it,’ she said, ‘so I tell thee straight; but what kind of a life will it be for Fred with everybody having it to say he be a murderer's son?’ And she kept the truth dark from him and from all — how long? For two months? For ten? While he was a dutiful boy to her? No, sixteen solid years down to this hour, though he was a beast to her. Why, sirs, talking of Christianity, there stands a Christian for you, I think? And you — you, couldn't you do some little something for her who did so much for you? Were you really bound to send her to Gloucester? And when you saw that her own husband had coward-like abandoned her, and all the crowd of them was hounding her, and the Almighty God on high Himself that ought to have been her Father was all dead agen her, and she stood dumb and astonished, was that the moment for you, too, Fred, hard heart...? For if only from this confession she has made that she did kill me, I can pretty well judge what she's been through; she has confessed because, when she'd once tasted her prison cell that's proved a palace of rest to her after her kilns, and her brackens, and her barns, and her storms, she was afraid of being set free, maybe, if she didn't confess; or maybe she was too aweary to trouble to say no to aught they asked her. Oh, well, poor wounded woman, you've had it to do, haven't you, poor mute ewe, with all your wounds and bruises on you; but a bosom is here at last to guard you,

Margaret Higgs, like the morning to a murky night, and the turning to a long lane, aye, a bosom is here to guard you...The prisoner is discharged!

“Officer, I give myself in charge for the manslaughter of one John Cheyne.”

It was now that the woman, babbling something, put out both her hands one moment toward her husband, but in the very act failed and fell. She was raised and taken out, and I, rushing out with the rest just behind her husband, witnessed everything that was done in vain to revive her, and the raver’s frenzied vain prayers to his dead.

THE END

THE PALE APE (1911)



“A BIG THING of a pig.” — Aristophanes.

YESTERDAY again I stood and looked at Hargen Hall from the lake; and it is this that has brought me to write of my life in it. Wintry winds were whistling through the withered bracken and the branches, whirling withered birch-leaves about the south quadrangle; and no birds sang.

When I first entered it I was a girl, one might say — gay enough; but now I have known what one never forgets; and the days and the hairs grow grey together.

Five titled names among my friends gained me an entrance to Hargen in the fall of the year ‘08. I arrived on the evening of 10th November; and shall never forget the strangeness of the impression made on my mind that night: for even ere I rounded into sight of the house, the sound of the waters far off filled me with a feeling of the eerily dreary — the house being almost surrounded with mountain and cliff, down which a series of cascades shower; and that night I had some difficulty in catching quite everything that was said to me, though in two or three days, maybe, my ear became used to the tumult.

It was four days before I met Sir Philip Lister himself — Davenport, the old butler, told me that his master was “indisposed” — but Sir Philip sent me a polite missive inviting me to take things carelessly a little: so I spent the first days in learning my pupil’s moods, and in roaming over the place, from “Queen Elizabeth’s Room” — behind the bed still hung a velvet shield brodered with the royal arms in white wire — to the apes and the cascades.

A sense of forlornness pervaded it all, for scarcely ten of us were in all the desert of that place, with an occasional glimpse of two or three gardeners, or a groom. The kitchen was now a panelled hall like a chapel, with windows of painted glass containing the six coats-of-arms of the Lister Lynns, a hall in whose vastness the cook and her assistant looked awfully forlorn and small; and hardly even a housemaid ever now entered all that part of the east wing which had been singed by a fire fifty-five years since.

It was on the fourth forenoon, a day of “the Indian summer,” that my pupil took me to see the apes. There were three of them — two chimpanzees, one gibbon — in three rooms of wire-netting close to the east line of cliffs, i.e., about six hundred yards from the house. There, chuckling and chattering in the shadow of chestnuts, they lived their lives, anon speculating like philosophers upon their knots, or hearkening to the waters which chanted near in their ears. And there was a fourth room of netting in the row, but empty; as to which my pupil said to me:

“The one that used to be in this fourth room was huge, Miss Newnes, and had a pale face. He died some time before I came to Hargen: but his ghost walks when the moon is at the full.”

“Now Esmé,” I muttered. (Her name was Esmé Martagon, daughter of the Marquis de Martagon and of Margaret Lister, Sir Philip’s sister; the child being at this time twelve years of age, and an orphan — a rather pretty elf with ebon curls, but as changeable as the shapes of mercury, now bursting with alacrity, and now cursed with black turns of sadness.)

“But if I have seen it?” she gravely replied, gazing up at me with her great eyes.

“The ghost of an ape, Esmé,” I muttered.

For answer, flying off into vivacity, she cried to me:

“Come, you shall hear it!” — and she led the way northward through the park, until we walked down a dark path tremulous with spray, where one of the smaller waterfalls came down. By stepping on the tops of rocks in its froth, one could get, in the rear of the torrent, into a grot, where the greenery grew very vigorous and gay from the perpetual spray; and when I had followed Esmé’s career into this hollow in the rock, she hollaed into my ear in opposition to the tons of thunder sounding down: “Now, listen a little: this one is named ‘The Ape.’”

For some minutes — three to six — I heard nothing but the burden of the cascade’s murmur, and was now about to say something sceptical, when there sounded what I am bound to say affected me in a rather startling way — a sound very sharp and energetic — the chuckle, chuckle of a monkey — most pressing, most imperative, in its summons to the attention. It was over in a moment; but presently came again: and in the course of half an hour’s listening it came altogether five times, not quite at regular intervals, but still with a kind of periodicity: and I concluded that some small cause, perhaps only a condition of the wind, acted ever and anon to modify the cataract’s tract, and produce this curious cackling.

My pupil hollaed to me: “And if you kept on waiting to hear, and listening to it, do you know what would happen to you, Miss Newnes?” — and when I asked what, she called:

“You would go stark mad!”

“Not I,” I said.

One of the shadows darkened the child’s face; and presently she remarked: “I should, I know.”

“Three of the ladies of the Listers, and one of the Lynns, have — among them my mother’s mother.

“It is in the blood, I think.”

I started! — for I now suddenly believed her. Indeed, to my consciousness, there was something ironic in the torrent's chuckle, and at once, taking the child's hand, I said: "Come."

Late in the day when we were together in what is called "the Great Hall," Esmé, ever sage beyond her age, again spoke of the chuckling cascade, begging me not to mention or show it to her Cousin Huggins when he came: for a young man of this name, who had hardly been at Hargen since he was six, was coming from India in some months, and was expected to spend a month with us.

It was that night that, for the first time, I saw Sir Philip Lister: for he dined with Esmé and Mrs.

Wiseman and me in the main building dining-room, the old Davenport waiting upon us in state with his silent footsteps, we five making a pretty insignificant group in that great room, whose array of windows have a south aspect upon the south quadrangle.

It has (or had) tapestry all round, and rows of Jacobean carving-tables, which give the room an air of very gloomy state; and a wood-fire bickered on the iron-work fire-back, under whose oak over-mantel Sir Philip sat with Esmé and me ten minutes, then took himself away into his own sequestered nook of the house.

Two days after this he again had dinner with us, and again the day after that; but that third time the child, in one of her chatterbox fits, chanced to observe that "Uncle Philip is lending his presence since Miss Newnes has come" — and, like a bird that shies, Sir Philip showed himself no more to us for many days.

I regretted this, for his presence interested me, his manners were in such a high degree grave, dignified, and gracious. He was big, and, if not handsome, interesting to the eye — quaint, one might say — his face

smooth like an actor's, his hair longer than usual, with great owl-eyes, whose glowering underlook was thronged, to my thinking, with mysteries of sorrow — something shifting, though, uncandidly shy, in them. His age I guessed to be about forty-five.

He was engaged in the writing of what I heard was “a great work,” six volumes long, on “The Old Kingdom” (fourth of sixth dynasty of Egyptian Kings), and lived a life of such privacy, that it was three weeks ere I met him afresh. Meantime, Esmé and I entered upon the course of our adventurous studies— “adventurous,” for never for two hours together was my pupil the same girl. Esmé had fits of headache; and she had fits of reading, when she feasted upon volumes with a hungry vulture's greed; and she had fits of indolence, dormouse torpors, fits of crying, dark-minded lamentations, fits of flightiness, of crazy dissipation, of craving for — wine. As for her knowledge, it was astonishing in such a child, and she anon plied me with queries to which I could find no reply.

On a forenoon in the fourth week, when she was feeling out of sorts, we were sauntering in the park, when, for once, I saw Sir Philip out of doors. We came upon him with his face against the ape-house netting, gazing in at the gibbon — so eagerly, that we were near him ere he seemed to hear us. When he suddenly saw us, he stood struck into a posture as of suspense, but presently was very affable in his reserved manner, and conversed with me some minutes about the apes and their various traits. They had the names of Egyptian kings, the chimpanzees being Pepy II, and Khety, and the gibbon Sety I; and at the gibbon Sir Philip shook his finger, saying with a playful solemnity: “That fellow! That fellow!” — I had no idea what he meant.

Suddenly, in the midst of our talk, he — with a certain awkwardness of his lids — proposed a picnic-luncheon out of doors to which Esmé and I readily assented. But three minutes afterwards he started, furtively

murmuring the words: "I must be getting back to work," and was gone — to my astonishment!

After this he again made himself very scarce for three weeks. Esmé and I, meantime, got into the habit of spending our hours of labour in the great hall, sitting on a day-bed that lay in the solar-room gallery there — the gallery from which of old one gazed down upon the retainers at table below; and those days of my life, that I whiled away in that place, are to me at present days touched with much strangeness and a tone of Utopia. But the great place was quite plain and empty — a plain ceiling, plain white walls, oak-panelled half-way up: only, as it was lighted by fourteen great windows with shields of painted glass, when the sun glowed through them, it transfigured that old room into glory-land. . . . But it is gone from me now like a dream, and I shall not see it again.

It was on the Thursday afternoon of my thirteenth week at Hargan that I received from Sir Philip Lister a singular missive: he had injured his thumb, he said, and wished to know if I would "kindly write from his dictation." But what, then, I asked myself, was to become of Esmé meantime? I did not wish to leave the child! However, I could not say no: and so entered that day the sacred den. He, with his fingers in a sling, instantly jumped up with a gush of apologies, showering upon me a thousand thanks that were at once gushing and shy, till the shyness triumphed, and he was suddenly silent and done. Then, I sitting at an old abbey-table, he on an old farmhouse settle, he dictated to me with his eyes closed, in a low tone, all about Khufu, and Khafra, and the things of "the Pyramid Age," until I had the impression that he was himself something Egyptian and most ancient, and I with him, and in which age of the world we were I was not at some moments certain. In the midst of the dictating he all at once pressed his left palm upon his forehead, as if tired or muddled, his eyes tight shut; and,

jumping up, he muttered to me, “thank you! thank you!” offering me his hand. Some of his actions had a wonderful swiftness and suddenness; and that hand of his which I touched was as chill as snow: so that I made haste from him.

That night I retired, as usual, soon after eleven to my room, which was in a rather remote and lonely region of the house; and was soon asleep. Two hours later I awoke terrified — I could not quite tell why — but so terrified, that I found myself sitting up in bed — with a singular sound, or the memory or dream of a singular sound, lingering about my ears: and I was trembling, my brow was wet with sweat. Through my two windows, which stood open, shone the full moon’s light, lying over the floor, lighting the stamp-work tapestry on my right; and I could hear the night-breeze breathing drearily through the leaves of the cedar, some of whose branches, held up with chains, brushed my panes. For some minutes I sat so, hearing my heart beating in my ears, the breezes shivering through the tree, the streams showering, the soundlessness of the house and hour, and as conscious of some living spirit hovering round me as though I saw it. If it had lasted long, I must have lost consciousness, or else cast off the oppression of it with a shriek: but presently something reached my ear — a chuckle, a little giggle of glee, just distinct enough to convince me that it was due to no lunacy of my ear: and immediately, with a creeping in my hair, but a species of rage and desperation elevating me, I was out of bed, and at one of the windows: for just after the chuckle a sharp rush through the leafage of the cedar seemed to reach me, and I rushed to see.

What I saw made me faint — whether instantly or after some seconds I cannot say: I know that when I came to my senses I was seated on the floor with my forehead leaning on my old oak chair, and the tower-clock was now sounding the hour of three. But however soon I may have swooned

after seeing it, it was not so instantly that I could have the slightest doubt as to the actualness of what my eyes saw. For though the moonlight left the interior regions of the tree's leafage in some obscurity, I was sure that some brute of the ape species with a pale face was hanging there in the cedar — hanging head-downward among the network of chains and branches in such a way as to see into my chamber; and I have an impression of hearing — either before I fell, or through my swoon afterwards — a succession of chucklings; and then a voice somewhere remonstrating, pleading, commanding, in a secret species of shout; and then a strangled outcry of horror, of anguish, somewhere, all mingled with a dream of the chuckle of the chuckling stream.

But the strongest of my impressions was undoubtedly that drowning outcry of horror — an impression so strong, that I could hardly believe it to be a dream, or all a dream. This cry was somehow connected in my mind from the first with old Davenport; and this feeling was confirmed in me when Davenport was nowhere to be seen the next day, nor for four days after.

Mrs. Wiseman, the housekeeper, who for days was pale, and occasionally fell into a vacant staring, told me that Davenport was “suffering.” She asked me no questions as to the night, but I twice caught her eye piercingly bent upon me with a meaning of inquiry, of anxiety, in it; and the same thing was true of Sir Philip when, three days later, he appeared towards evening: for he took my hand with a tender solicitude, and a lingering look of question in his gaze. As for Davenport, when I next saw him it was under a tree in the park, where he sat like a convalescent, in his flesh that pathetic pallor of the flesh of aged people who have passed through an illness; and the wrappings round his neck could not wholly hide from my eyes that his throat had been most brutally bruised.

During those days it was as if a blow had fallen upon Hargen. Esmé no longer laughed, and a lower tone of talk overtook us all. It was obvious that each held the consciousness of a secret which none dared breathe to another; and in vain I consumed days of musing in seeking to see into the meaning of these things. For my part, I was ailing, nor could quite hide it. I had the thought of moving out of my room, which I now shrank from entering even in the day-time, but did not care to show so openly that I was afraid. Through the nights I burned a light, but slept with my nerves awake. Not that I was ever of a very nervous temperament, I think: but terror infected me like a sickness in those days; the stare of eyes of affright in the night was ever present in my imagination; and Hargen soon grew to be to my haunted heart the very home of gloom. Then one day, on a sudden, all this trouble of mind rushed away from me like a shadow; and my being galloped into a mood of gladness in which gloom was abolished, and I forgot to be appalled in the dark.

I will tell of it very briefly. It happened that one afternoon when Esmé and I were sitting listlessly in that solar-room gallery, an open grammar lying idle between us, suddenly behind us, there rose out of the floor, as it seemed, a young man who clapped his fingers over Esmé's eyes, smiling with me the while. "Cousin Huggins!" the child cried out — much surprised, for Huggins Lister was not expected at Hargen for some days yet. He caught her up in his big arms, and bussed her like a gun, for he was a being made all of ardours and horse-play: and then he looked into my eyes, and I looked into his eyes.

It was as if I had always known him — long before I was born; and what hurried me more into the sort of maelstrom in which I was now caught was the circumstance, that on the day after that first day Esmé took a chill, remained in bed, and I was all alone with Huggins Lister in that wilderness

of Hargen. The young man was, or pretended to be, interested in old things, and would have me show him all the cassone and old needlework, the Spanish glasses giving their glints of gold, the old girandoles with their amorini. He dined with me, we two alone, and Mrs. Wiseman: for Sir Philip more than ever kept himself to himself.

Only, on the fourth evening when Huggins Lister and I were walking in the park, Sir Philip suddenly appeared before us, walking with precipitate steps the other way; did not pause, nor utter a sound, as he passed by us with a bowed brow, his hat raised; but when he had gone some way beyond us, he stopped, and — shook his finger at us! was going, too, I am sure, to venture to say something, but failed; and suddenly was gone on his way again. I remember being very offended at the moment: but a moment more, God forgive me, had forgotten that Sir Philip Lister lived.

I showed the young man the apes, and the Queen's Room, and the cascades, save one, and the ivory inlay of the two Spanish chests, and the Tudor fireplaces, and what was in "the long gallery"; and still he wished to see things. And just under the window that lights the great staircase, there stands on the landing a sedan-chair painted with glaring variegations, the window-glass casting the gauds of the six coats-of-arms of the Lister-Lynns upon the already gaudy chair: in which chair he got me to sit — it was high noon, on the open stair, but we were as solitary there as if night veiled us in a monastery; and, indeed, all that waste of Hargen seemed but made to beguile and mislead our feet to our fate — he got me to sit in it, I say, and then, having me well in his bondage in the sedan-chair, began to sob to me with passion; and when I hid away my face for pity of him there in his passion on his knees, and dashed one wild tear from my eyes, the young man ravished my lips with his lips, there in the chair on the stair that day. I could not help it, for in respect of me Huggins Lister came, and saw, and

conquered! and I was as one drugged with honey-dew, and dancing drugged, in Huggins Lister's hands.

Also, the young man persuaded like a hurricane! and hurried me as madly into marriage as those sand-forms of the sand-storm which madly waltz into oneness. Within six months, he said, he would arrange everything so as to proclaim the marriage; but meantime it must be secret, and must be immediate! Against this tyranny I made a feint of resistance; but half-heartedly; and it availed me nothing: indeed, he was dear to me, and near, and had me all in the hollow of his hand and heart. And so one forenoon I stole out of Hargen gates, and met him at a house in St. Arvens townlet, the place of our marriage; but, as we were passing out, married, from the door of the house, my heart bounded into my mouth to see Sir Philip Lister walking hardly ten yards away. Yes, he who never left home was there before my eyes in the broad light in St. Arvens street with his oak-stick — walking away from us, indeed, seeming unaware of our presence: yet I have an impression, too, of his head half-turned toward us a moment, of a face ashen with agitation: and my heart, for all its warmth, shivered as with a mortal chill in me.

My reeling feet led me back to Hargen in a kind of dream, a wedded wife, as wild with thoughts as with wine that day, for I was my beloved's, and he was mine: and in what way I spent that day I could not say, since I was new in heaven, and can but remember my fruitless efforts to hide from Esmé's eyes the state of my mind: for she had lately risen from her ailment, and I made a pretence of study with her, and I was severe with my dear, denying him my presence until the evening; and even then retired betimes, leaving him sighing.

My chamber-door I barricaded with a chair — a bridal childishness, since, to secure the room, I should have locked it. And I lay awake for a

long hour, looking at the luminosity of the full moon, until, wearied out by the reel of my day's dream, I fell into a brief sleep.

From this a roar awoke me: and may a sound like that sound never more come to me to summon me with its trump. I understood that some soul was in extremis, and out of the deeps of grief and horror was horridly appealing to his God; and, finding myself on the ground, I knelt one wild second, crying aloud: "Almighty God, guard my love from harm in this house of horror." A moment more I had thrown a gown round me, and was gone out of the door.

As I ran along the corridor, trying to strike a light to the candle that I carried, there seemed to reach my ear from somewhere a chuckle very hushed and low, like the jackal chattering over its carrion; and my fingers were so shaken by this thing, that they failed to bring the match into relation with the candle's wick. When the heat reached my hand I dashed down the match. Still running, I lit another — or half lit it: for in the instant when the match fused at the scratch, saw — or in some manner knew — that some mad and monstrous animal was with me; at the same moment the match went out, or was puffed out; and a thing most chilly cold touched my skin. I felt pain then, the pain of the awe of the darkness; and I stood palsied. But within some seconds, I think, I was rushing afresh toward the corridor-end, without the candlestick now, which had dropped from me; so that I could not see that the portal at the end, which I expected to be open as usual, was shut; and I rushed with a shock upon it. It was not only shut, but locked! — finding which, I, standing there, piled the passion of my whole soul into cry on cry, crying "Huggins! Sir Philip! Davenport! Huggins!" then I stood, hearing the streams murmuring as through eternity in the silence of the night, and the strong knocking of my heart against my side — but no reply to my calls.

This was not very astonishing, as my room was in such a solitary part of the mansion: and I stood imprisoned, suffering, expecting every second the coming upon me of that which would strike me dead with fright. The stillness lasted half a minute, perhaps, and then I became aware of a sound outside the door, a bumping going down the stairs in a regular way, like something massive being dragged down, with bump, bump, bump: and such was the solemnity and mystery of this thing to me in my solitude there in that gruesome gloom, that to linger any longer there in my pain soon grew to be impossible to me; and before I knew what I was doing I was out of a window, moving along a ledge fifty feet aloft toward the next window. The ledge was scarcely more than a foot wide, I think, and how I dared it, and why I did not fall, I can't now say. With my nose close to the wall — conscious all the time of drizzle tossed by high winds, conscious of the night full of a wild light, though the moon was quite hidden — I stepped flutteringly along over thin snow in dizzy suspense, keeping my sob until I should reach the next window: and there, as I leapt, I gave it vent, and fainted at my safety. I did not cease to hear, though, the bumping sound going down; and when it got to the bottom, something in me gave me the dauntlessness of heart to go after it.

Down I crept, haltingly, crouching, stair by stair. Halfway down I seemed to hear something being dragged over the floor below. I went on down. The sound had now gone out through a doorway, and I knew which doorway; but as I followed that way, my bare toes struck upon something cold, and I dropped upon my hands over it. I moaned then for pity of myself, because it was dark, and because I did so suffer. But I was conscious, as I dropped, of a rattle of matches, for I still had the match-box in my hand, without knowing that I had it: and the desire took me to strike a light. It was some time, though, before I would, or could, and when I

eventually ventured, I saw the sight of the body of the old butler in his night-attire lying wildly before me on the floor: and I knew by a look that was in his eyes that they were for ever sightless.

At the same moment I was aware of the slamming of a door some way off; and again I knew which door — the little side-portal by the kitchen-entrance, leading out northward into the park — and again something gave vigour to my knees, and lifted my feet, to go to see. I made my way to the little portal; opened it slowly; my soles were out on the snow. And before me on the short gravel-path going north into the park I distinctly saw the pale ape, bearing a body against his breast. A moment later he laid down his heavy load, and bent over it; and when I saw him horribly muttering over it, something in me stooped, took up a stone, and threw it at the brute.

It went straight to his head.

After some seconds the creature raised himself slowly, and raced with reeling feet into the darkness of the park.

I staggered then to the body, and saw that it was Huggins Lister strangled; and on the body of my beloved my senses left me.

It was ten in the day before I knew anything more; and then I lay on a bed, on one side of it Esmé, on the other side Mrs. Wiseman.

The latter had a fixed stare; and from the manner in which Esmé was smiling, with her face held sideward, while she persistently counted on her fingers, I could make out that the child was now insane.

I lay still, I said nothing; little I cared.

Presently a girl named Bertha entered to murmur the words: “He isn’t found yet”; and from some words murmured in reply by Mrs. Wiseman, I gathered that Sir Philip Lister had disappeared.

Little I cared, I lay still and sullen, with closed lids.

Near noon again came the news that the men seeking for Sir Philip Lister could even yet discover no trace of him; but at about live in the evening he was found dying in the hollow of the rock that lies behind the cascade that they call “The Ape,” and was brought to the Hall.

Very soon afterwards Mrs. Wiseman, who had then left my side, flew in again to me with crying eyes, imploring me to try and go for a moment to the dying man, who was hungering to have one sight of me; and I let her throw some clothes over me, and was led by her to the death-bed.

By this time I knew — for Mrs. Wiseman during the day had revealed it to me in a flood of tears — that Sir Philip Lister’s mother had too much listened to the chuckling cascade, and so had borne him the being he was — a being capable at any agitation of shedding his human nature to resume the nature of the brute, and hurling away human raiment with his human nature in the murderous turbulence of his nocturnal revels — he who in my eyes had been so perfect in gentleness, so shy, so staid! But none the less I shuddered to the soul when he touched my hand to pant at me through the death-ruckle rolling in his throat: “I have loved you well” — a shudder which perhaps saved me from death or from madness, for I had lapsed that day into a mad apathy. It was nearly night then, and the light in there was very dreary; but I could still see that the hair which overgrew the ogre’s frame was considerably more than an inch deep — greenish, and gross as the gorilla’s. It clasped him round the throat and round the wrists in lines perfectly defined, like a perfect coat of fur that he wore; and it did not thin, but continued no less thick where it abruptly ended than everywhere else.

But he had “loved me well,” and I him now — for if he had been perniciously jealous, it was for love of me that he had been jealous; and in dying he looked into my eyes with human eyes, kindly, mildly, looking “I have loved you well”; and when with his last strength he pointed to where

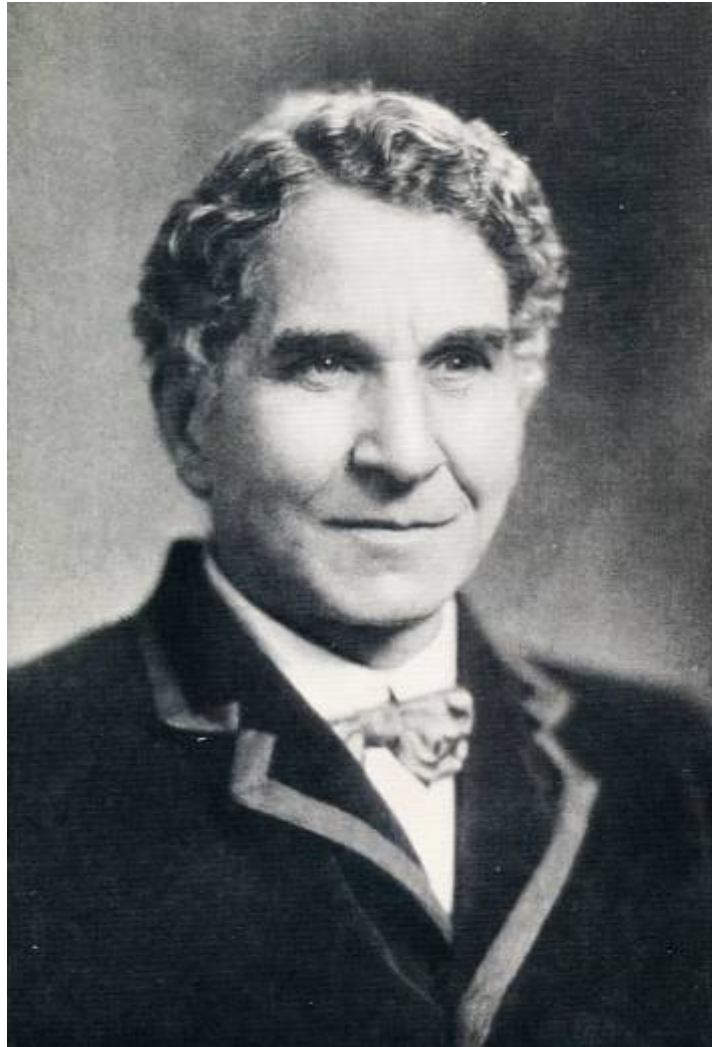
the pebble I had flung had sunk into his skull, then I lifted my voice and wept to God because of him, and myself, and Hargen Hall and all, not caring any longer if my face was buried in the horror of his hairy breast. And so he died, and Huggins Lister, and I was left alive.

THE END

The Non-Fiction



Wisborough Green, a village near Chichester, West Sussex — where Shiel spent his final years



Shiel, c. 1910

Science, Life and Literature (1950)



First published in London by Williams and Norgate in 1950, *Science, Life and Literature* appeared posthumously as Shiel died on 17 February 1947 at the age of eighty-one. In 1931, the novelist had met the young writer and poet, John Gawsworth, who would become Shiel's close friend for life and his literary executor after death. Gawsworth wrote the foreword to *Science, Life and Literature* and was a lifelong admirer and champion of Shiel's work. Most bizarrely, Gawsworth also assumed Shiel's former title of 'King' of the Kingdom of Redonda; an uninhabited micro-nation island in the Caribbean. Shiel stated that he was crowned the 'King' of the island in 1880 on his fifteenth birthday by his father. The extent to which he was serious about this claim is hard to determine, but Gawsworth heavily promoted the story after his friend's death.

Science, Life and Literature is a collection of non-fiction essays on a diverse array of topics. Shiel was deeply interested and engaged with the intellectual and scientific discussions prevalent of the time. In the essays 'On Reading' and 'On Writing', written during the opening decade of the twentieth century, Shiel focuses on writers and writing, as well as exploring the art of literature. The collection also includes the author's musings on topics such as wealth, war, tolerance, vengeance, time-travel and religion. The book provides a revealing insight into Shiel's thoughts, beliefs and intellectual convictions.

Please note: due to copyright restrictions, Gawsworth's *Foreword* cannot appear in this edition.



The poet John Gawsword (1912-1970)

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I. OF MYSELF

I



I NAME MYSELF a native of the West Indies, whither I was transported to commence to draw breath — to Montserrat, a mountain mass, loveliest of the lovely, but touchy! uncertain! dashing into tantrums — hurricanes, earthquakes, brooks bubbling hot, “sou frières” (sulphur swamps), floods— “fit nurse to a poetic child”, and I have seen “unspeakable things, not possible for a man to utter”.

My father was a “local preacher” (Methodist), little imagining how far his only son, born after eight daughters, and bred a Nazarite, would be from preaching in chapels, though vastly more religious than he, since with increasing speed now we are “better than our fathers”. Not so much a poet as he, however, for, if one had told him “You are a poet”, he would have said “Nonsense”, whereas I have found out that I am a poet, in the hour that I found out becoming less profoundly a poet, in such a case “the unconscious being the alone complete: know *not* thyself”. But when there was storm abroad, and cosmic voices of wanderers calling all aloft, and all cowered awestruck, and the bounds of Being were swallowed up in bleakness, then was his night of the ball and high Sinai interview, he, blown all aflaunt like Lear, going in a flowing gown up and down the house, hailing those howlers’ haste, egging on the hurricane’s crew to yet graver hurries, and the up roarious to yet more tremendous terrorisms— “blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!” — while we others sat mouse

quiet, and had our hand on our mouth. Anyway, owing to that religiosity of his, each morning for years he and I on a little sofa read together a chapter of the Bible, and from thus knowing the book by heart arises perhaps that I write as I do, I myself being a preacher at eleven, preaching in a nightdress over my clothes of Jonah in the whale's belly, shouting, "Lazarus, come forth!", and Lazarus came; but no sooner was fourteen than I began to name the Methodists "the Methodies", making sad a man.

He had also the Irish foible of thinking highly of people descended from kings, and had, in truth, about him some species of kingship, aloofness, was called by all "the Governor", and on my fifteenth birthday, July 21st, 1880, had me crowned King of Redonda — a day of carousal, of a meeting of ships (he was a shipowner), and of people, to see the palm of the Rev. Dr. Semper, of Antigua, daub me with the balm of anointment; and this notion that I am somehow the King, King of kings, and the Kaiser of imperial Caesar, was so inveterately suggested to me, that I became incapable of expelling it. But to believe fantasies is what causes half our sorrows, as not believing realities causes half, and it would have been better for me if my people had been more reasonable here; nor can I forgive myself now for the solemnity and dignity with which I figured in that show. For what is a king without subjects? Certainly, if I am a king, my kingdom is "not of this world": Redonda is a rock-island of scarcely nine square miles, and my subjects were troops innumerable of boobies deciding to swoop with sudden steepness into the sea like streams of meteors streaming, together with eleven poor men who gathered the boobies' excrement to make "guano" (manure). And these were American people! Moreover, not long after my coronation the British Government, apprehensive that America might "annex" the rock, "annexed" it itself, i.e., stuck a little flagstaff on it; and though my parent irked heaven and earth with his claim of "priority", there

the flagstaff remains, if it has not gone to heaven on some gale's gallop: there may it ever remain. I have scaled to that rock's very top, and looked abroad at blue-eyed Beauty, being ever nimble on my feet, given to feats of climbing, running, rope walking, dancing, acrobatics, and once at thirteen jumped without hurt from a first-floor window (higher than ours): for I had told a tutor that, if ever he ventured to touch me, I should jump; and he touched me, and I jumped — to his everlasting heart-shock. Conjuring tricks also attracted me, as still I cherish a reverence for the conjuror, the acrobat — intellectual or physical — knowing that “by wit He seated the earth, He fastened the Heavens with trickiness”. Once when a troupe came, I saw a conjuror break eggs into a hat, put on the hat, take it off, and now round his brow was a row of roses. So the next day I, entranced — I was eleven — said to Paddy — lad of twenty, wedded to me— “I can do it!” He denied; I insisted, “Paddy, I can.” Now, he was a mulatto — a sort of people as credulous as priests are, for whom fancies have the same weight as ascertained facts — and, shaken in his faith in Nature by my faith in myself, he said, “Well, we’ll see.” So he gets eggs, breaks them into a hat; and I can see again his keen stoop, his stare of interest, as I raised the hat toward my head, and can hear again his glad outcry of laughter, as the universe rallied to re-establish his old view of her, while I stood foolish, with the fluids raining down my face.... But how ill-educated for eleven! how foreign to the cosmos! I had been reading Caesar, you see, the prick of my intellect “let down” (as we say when we soften steel) for ever. Then, after my window-jump, to Harrison College in Barbados — a good school, as schools go; but I do not seem to have had any more scepticism than my teachers — any more perception that the two hours a week of chemistry and the four of Greek was a crazy state of things. To-day I am in the ironic situation of “knowing” six or seven languages (“Interpreter to the

International Congress of Hygiene and Demography”), while being fiercely at war with that sort of “knowledge”, the acquisition of which is a lazy-labour, occupying the brain with the hobby and habit of remembering, until, pampered, it shrinks from the ice and pioneer’s pick of thinking. Then after my coronation I was translated to King’s College, London: now matriculation and “intermediate”; about the time of my degree my father dying; and during all that alumnus period I seem to have quite abandoned writing English, though at twelve I had written a novel, the MS. of which was long preserved in my family (never published); at thirteen I was issuing a penny periodical, seven copies a week for seven “subscribers”, written by hand — a labour of Hercules; and at fifteen I had a serial in a newspaper. But then I was hypnotised into being interested in writing Latin asclepiads, Greek sapphics — grotesque thing! irrelevant thing! — changing into a Chinese mind a European stripling. But when I had taught for a year what was called “mathematics” in a Derbyshire school, I thought of following my namesake James Phipps Shiel, and becoming a doctor (great-grandfather — he who said of some field “Not mine? It is mine from heaven’s height right down to hell!”, the wild mind); this thought kept me at St. Bart’s six months, where upon, coming directly, every day, in contact with science, I was done with writing — or reading! — Greek poetry, except the old Homer, whom one may easily get addicted to. But the very first operation which I saw was for strabismus — on the eyeball — and this so sickened and hypnotised me into a dislike for knifing, that I gave it up; and, lying idle one day, gazing at the sky, was given the idea to write my Prince Zaleski. At seventeen I had come across Poe just when I had begun to smoke, and the two smokes transported me to Nephelococugia, where I sojourned many days, so that this Prince Zaleski (published in Lane’s famous “Keynote Series”) has in it more Poe than Job. Then, on writing

more, I decided that writing English — my first love — was what was given me to do. I soon had no lack of interests. Through Sir Ernest Clark, of the Royal Agricultural Society, whom I had known, I was appointed interpreter to the Congress; through Sir William Robinson and my brother-in-law, the Honble. S. L. Horsford, I was brought into contact with Earl Gray and with Sir C. Alexander Harris, of the Colonial Office (later Governor of Newfoundland), through whom again I came into relation with Mrs. Gladstone, a very gracious lady, connected with the West Indies, who at that time took no little interest in my writing, and profoundly influenced my goings and comings; through this again W. T. Stead got to know me, conceived that I “had an imagination”, and would write to me invitingly when one of his rapturous ideas in journalism attacked and urged him — he and I even writing a wild little “book” in collaboration; at the same time I was coaching my nephew, Cyril Horsford, now the butcher of “nose ear and throat” of 24 Harley Street; and simultaneously was in with Louis Tracy, with whom I wrote several “books” under a pen name, he having “the idea”, I concocting “the plot”, writing the first half, he the second — in a wildly different style! I can’t think now with what motive I so wasted myself. Meantime, I was getting to know the literary people, like Dowson, Machen, Louÿs, Ella D’Arcy, George Egerton, Harland, Wilde, Stevenson, while the periodical people were getting to know me. When some trouble broke out in China, Keary, of Pearson’s, for whom Tracy had written a very “successful” serial (The Final War), asked me to do a “war serial”, which became my “successful” Yellow Danger, published by Grant Richards, then beginning, he, too: and he, with Werner Laurie, has been my publisher. Then serial after serial: I am summoned by Alfred Harmsworth, am tempted by that tempter to abandon Pearson, but won’t, till, too much tempted, I write for People, Chronicle, Leader, Red, and the rest — easy labour by which one

makes two or three thousand pounds a year; but then, to make real books of the serials, one must needs rewrite, and that is trying. In the thick of which my fate takes me one afternoon into the Palais de Glace in the rue de Madrid, where I see a girl of sixteen skating, a Parisian Spaniard. Of course, I had seen lovely girls — in Cuba — in Andalusia — in Martinique — but never before seen *a beauty*, and she resembled a girl whom I had loved at seven, another girl whom I had loved at thirteen, and my mother. Now, I had long ceased “to pray” like my parents, considering that improper; but that afternoon I dashed in a cab to my chamber, and, prostrating myself, I prayed, “God! give her to me!” And the good God did. I did not know her name to begin, but out of the grasp and drag of some twenty I grabbed her, got her. It was natural, after this, for me to pray for girls; and I can say that, if ever I have prayed for a girl, I have got her from God. She — Lina — was the “Laura” of my *Cold Steel* — at least her face and manner; in the streets of London every creature turned the head to look back at her, and observe the handicraft of her Father. But she did not think London “pretty” (“Londres n’est pas jolie”), and it was thus that I got the habit of living long in Paris. However, she was not strong — died after five years, leaving me and a daughter; and it was some fifteen years before I married again, when I met at a lecture Lydia, who resembles Lina and my mother. Then the war — Censor’s Office — toward the end Italy — privilege of kissing the Pope’s great bit, his toe — and, meantime, no writing; but then commenced afresh, having something to say, as America especially seems to see.

Meantime, I have a good time, “counting my days”, having found out how to live in heaven high health — never have a pain, or anything like that. Though no chick still, I run six miles a day — or rather a night, for I like the light of the other suns even better than ours. “My amusements” are mathematics, sometimes mountaineering.... But more than enough of my

little self: which “*self*”, I know, is a fancy, has no reality, being a succession of little selves connected by a thread of memory, and only One is real: to know which thing is weal, I think.

II

It is not very consistent of me to have written books, since I can see that people read too much, through a certain laziness of mentation: as an American lady has lately written to me, “I read three books a week,” and I to her, “I guarantee that that would undermine any mind, however strong: this, then, is why you ‘go to confession’, for the habit of leaning upon props will at last bring one to being a cripple.” She, however, it appears (I never met her), reads all sorts of books — travel, sem-science — but some English ladies whom I know read novels and newspapers — little else. Now, the souls of these are lost: there is no saviour can save them; they are no more themselves, but are puddles of other souls that are themselves puddles. Newspapers! published daily! the hurried words of the tattler, having a circulation wider — far — than the words of the wise; and, as to novels — well, I must confess that I never had time to read many, but in those that I have got through I saw nothing novel, and what struck me was that there didn’t seem to be enough motive for one to sit down and write that mass, so that I have asked myself, “Why ever didn’t he (or she!) amuse himself by doing carpentry, or conic sections, puzzles, tennis — something more educating and entertaining than this purposeless whirl of words?” If there is a desire to “represent life”, and if there is a sense in the writer of some special gift to do this, that might be something; but, in general, life is little represented: people in real life, when they meet, talk on general subjects — the fall of the French Cabinet, the velocity of the nebulae, the decay of the Church, the conditions of flight in the stratosphere — but in

the novel the people speak only of one another, of the plot in which they are involved; or, if by chance they discuss things in general, the conclusions to which they come aren't new enough, nor of moment enough, to produce the impression that here was the insight, here the discovery, that moved the writer to write, and it was worth the time he spent: so that when in a few years the writer fills shelves with empty books, the impression left is that his (her!) only motive was to earn a livelihood, and that he is a common work man, who works for himself and for another man, not for Man, not for a planet, not, so to say, for God. And since no one is quite unlike his environment, I, too, no doubt, am of this kind. Not wholly, though, I fancy — perhaps because my father had some money; so that when my old friend, Mr. Louis Tracy, C.B.E., has said to me, "Strange fellow, Shiel: you could make as much money as Bernard Shaw and Edgar Wallace put together, but you persist in casting your pearls before swineherds, who know not pearls," I have answered something like this; "It is you, Tracy, who are strange, if you do not conceive that different people can be pleased by different things, that Mr. Shaw may have had a liking for oranges, and I a liking, not less genuine, for pineapple. And, if I made that money, whatever should I do with it? Should I by chance eat more? Not all the wealth of ten Ormuzes would induce me to put one ounce more food into my sweet little body that I treat with a ritual so deliberate, as an altar. Moreover, as to 'pearls' and 'swineherds', they aren't all swineherds; those that are will be changing their occupation — soon — getting to be fruit-growers. Haven't you noticed this new interest of boys in wireless mechanisms, model engines, and so on? I am expecting to live to see the kicking to the devil of headmasters of the parson-type, and nations of scientists arising. They won't be swineherds then, look. And, if I don't live to see, I shan't be restless in my grave, but shall abide in quietness, having died knowing what I know." Hence I have

considered no music too sweet, nor wit too deep, to put into the sort of narrative of events that I have evolved. It seems to be considered in England that the one named *The Purple Cloud* is my “best”, but in America they think better of my *How the Old Woman Got Home*, which has run, is still running, into “editions”, while I myself think best of one named *Children of the Wind* — or think best of the memory of the dream of it, for I shrink from retreading it, lest I should find it less rich in wit and singing than I anticipate, as once happened to me. But the *Old Woman* one has this distinction, that in it is given, so to say, my political system. I first demonstrate what “good” means — and anyone who makes quite sure of this little thing will be astonished at the flood of light which it will throw into his thoughts on all sorts of subjects. I demonstrate, then, that the noun “Good” means pleasure, that the adjective “good” means pleasant — and nothing else. Then I demonstrate that all pleasure, all good, is the result of truth, of science — the science of the amoeba or of Newton. Then I demonstrate that the growth of truth, of science, of pleasure, of Good, depends (i) upon brains (a little), and (2) upon luck (much). Then I demonstrate that, though the luck of a million is exactly a millionfold more than the luck of one, the million must be in the way of truth, seeking truth, or no luck can accrue — must be scientists, men of leisure; but this they can’t be, if they are slaves, i.e., “landless men”, men without a country: so that any great growth of Good depends upon countries being owned by nations.

Ill And now I have to do with the young poet, John Gawsword, a live wire, he, young! and live! who fumbles like the bee among my written things, and, knowing wondrously all that have been published, if he comes upon aught unpublished, utters sound of discovery, as when H. G. Wells’ men on the moon cried, “Life!”, and those ten thousand cried, “The sea! the

sea!” I never dreamt that I had written poems, but he has contrived to discover a surprising number, as to his dear industry is due the collection of these pieces that ensue, some of them cribbed out of other books, but some, he thinks, new.

II. ON READING



A Dedicatory Letter to a Mrs. Meade of Kensington.

FIRST, why should one read? At present everybody does, some “the papers”, some the prayer-book, or a novelette; I once even saw a periodical called *Something to Read*. But why this? Your reply, I think, will be, that in the throng of modern things there are periods of peace wherein one reads to “while away the time”; but, even so, it is to be observed that this *relaxation* is most perfectly to be obtained in turning from work for pay to work for play, as City-folk from business to cricket, to being Territorials, and so forth.

For, really, this reading-mania of the nations has an origin deeper in nature than any desire to “while away the time”, has an origin in the fact that progress *is the law of Life*, in the fact that the longer progress has gone on the greater has grown its rate, so that by the time it got to man its rate began to be great, and at modern man its rate is even eager. Nor is progress any more the law of Life in the gross than of the separate life, man or nag, though, because of its increasing speed, a modern man will do *anything*, will be gnawing an end of straw, will be perusing football gossip, sooner than sprawl all torpid, while a horse, its girth once gorged with herbage, will long bulge dead-still with a lubberlip in his meadow-plot, bitterly meditating upon nothing. Progress, then — but let us linger one instant, so as to be definite within us as to what progress is. Progress in a mound of stones is a growth in the amount of stone; in a tide, a fire, a growth in the

amount of tide, of fire; progress in Life is a growth in the amount of life: and we know when the amount of life is grown, when we are aware of a growth in what is the trait of Life — consciousness, or knowledge, or science: the trait of *all* Life, of nettles also — as we may well divine: for though it is some months since we were protozoa, and we no more recollect the tone of protozoa souls, we conclude that since we at present possess consciousness, protozoa, and no less protophyta, must possess the elements of some kind of consciousness or knowledge, must have a dream, the fantasy of a dream, and at least know that they have it. And so we find how to define Life-progress: “*Progress is a growth in consciousness*” — in knowledge of truth; and here is that law of Life which one is jolly, if he is fulfilling, ill if not, and herein the meaning of this reading greed of modern people, who so read, since, progress at eager speed being their law, they feel that they must needs read, or be doing something, to be at every second bettering themselves, in the direction of extending their consciousness of truth.

But, now, how do they prosper in this? Not too splendidly, I think! We know, indeed, as a fact of science that the Law of Time is That Good Be: consequently each thing which is is to the good: serves for the moment some “purpose” in the evolution of the universe; and were it only to load evolution, still, as a load, it is useful in evolution. So when we asseverate of stealing, or reading, or anything that is, that it is “bad”, we mean so far as we can perceive, and it is our duty to seek with all our wrath to root out or prune it with all speed, if we believe it bad, as if it were really bad: for this our belief, too, is involved in The Plot, and if we succeed in killing the thing, our succeeding, too, will be good in its hour, as the thing killed was good in its hour.

*Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Cause the great Atlantic,
Shape the gracious land,
The gracious land.*

*Little dooms atomic,
Molecules of fate,
Framed the constellations,
Make their nations great,
Their nations great...*

meaning that, since there are *atoms of circumstance* as atoms of matter, pebbles in that temple of history we see a building, hence the little opinions and acts of you and me, as of the pterodactyl crashing through the rattle of the Jurassic morass, are matters of permanent purport, and work in the world. So as regards this reading greed I call it bad (knowing it good), because, firstly, we read without having first learned how to read; secondly, because, supposing we read only the best that has been written, still we read very much more than we should; and then, because nearly all that we read is nearly as bad as bad can be, unnovel novels of feeble little people, offal beneath pity. And if it was the best, still, I say, it would be much too much of a best thing. For is there to be no time for thinking? as how can there be, if every time we sit down in an idle hour, our fingers of their own motion go out to our Job, our Jehovist, Homer, Spinoza, Herbert Spencer, Goethe, Plato? Or do you feel that “Elia” said well when he said, “I love to lose myself in other men’s minds; when I am not walking I am reading; I cannot

sit and think: books think for me”? Well, “Elia” was an easy creature of a remote era who wrote many essays, and was weak in the head: not the highest of types, you say: whereas what we others are now after is to be finding the right path for our sons of the time to come, and be the highest. Or do you say maybe that your Leibnitz, your Mill, “make you think”? you, as Lamb was, are mistaken if you imagine that — not what one can name thinking. Who made *them* think? No one. “If I had read as much as others,” Hobbes says, “I should be as ignorant as they” (he meant as thoughtless). No, they thought because they were not so weak as to be always reading, and because thought, by use, soon grew to be to them the grandest of hilarities, as the habits of running and slow breathing grow to people who will only grow to them — sweets so deep, that they could no more keep it concealed, but must needs be putting it in a book. As a matter of fact, you cannot smoke and muse in another man’s universe in the old coat *he* uses; even these simple little ideas that I am at present expressing to you you get only the off-glow of, not that braw brightness and focus *I* see them in: how, then, from our philosophers, wholly preoccupied with their philosophy, and no poets, nor potentates of expression, shall you happen to catch so much as half of all that their eye just managed to catch in a certain light and the mood of a certain moonshine of the mind? Everyone, then, his own seer, his own thinker: and if one asks, as a young lady once asked me, “What, though, shall one think of?” the answer is the answer which I gave to her; “What can one think of, save of God and His Ways? — since there is nothing else. Smoking a cigarette, you may think of the cigarette and the smoke; sitting before a grate, you may think of the grate and the blaze — a thing which, if you should ponder long upon it, would still after trillions of ponderings defy you to solve a small part of its Divine mysteries.” What is heat...? Well, as to that, certainly, we need not be disturbing our wee circlets

of head, since at the burden and hoariness of this question the hosts of the Heavens hold their breaths, saying, "Holy, Holy." Heat is some species of force: and if we owned skulls larger than London, we should still find ourselves infinitely far from knowing what a force is, nay, the bigger our skulls grew, the more truly would we be seeing that we did not one bit know, the more confirmed would become the certainty of our eternal journey that we could not by searching find out the Almighty. But there are a thousand doubts and queries about heat.... Heat hardens an egg, softens an egg-pan, causes brass to expand, rubber to contract — of all the extraordinary facts! Water, in growing cold, contracts, then all at once — *expands!* Now, is not this enough to fret a seraph's front, if he does not know? It is not, probably, an insoluble problem: possibly we, with our pretty wit, may solve it. Or shall we say that the water in our jars is an article in which certain persons called Thomson, Bohr, are somehow more concerned than we are? No, we will not, I believe, say that: that would be too feeble of us. Let us think, then, of these things; ponder upon the ways of God; upon the grate's steel; that negro rock within it: upon the dream of the meeting in the deep of the eras between that particular piece of anthracite and me, the entrancing mass of romance in that tryst! For the coal-measures of England came into being some ages ago — before Horsa's braves stormed, now, or the arm of Abraham had planted his staff to travel out of Haaran, or a Vihaara been built, or a Sabeian, heart-smit, built him an altar to the Morning Star. As for Kensington, it was not then, nor its mayor there to stare; no man, no mammal, was; nor no beeches nor birches were to be seen in the world; a few firs, maybe; and ferns, ferns, thronging in forests monstrous high; and the heavens, I divine, were of a heavier hue; and the moon in her hey day loomed bigger then, I think, over those woods and lagoons within whose glooms the labyrinthodon brooded. Moreover, we

know, those coal-measures were some ages in making their layers — more than a thousand years; more even than four thousand; more than four thousand thousand: millions on millions. And we know that they were made for (or to) the use of men (since men *do* use them), and one particular lump was made for (or to) my use on a particular winter's night (since on that night I do use it), and a myriad suns uprose, and clomb, and most pensively set, and the lump of coal waited to come to me, then it came to a meeting with me, and I did not see it, I was reading Poincaré on entropy. But one should think a bit, too, shouldn't one? The thing is to educate oneself a little — *to awake one's consciousness of the truth of things*: this being even what education is — a bringing out, awaking, liberating one's brain to an active, an astonished, a romantic consciousness of facts: for whereas men, now, and cows, see many things, and wonder at nothing, overmen and angels — educated souls — live at most moments in an adoration of amazement. To conjure up, then, one's consciousness: that's the thing: a thing we will never get from books, though good books can instigate, but a thing to be got by sitting and thinking for one's self of the way of God; and if it is an irksome work at first, as running is to plump persons, the end of it is strength, independence, hilarity, and happiness. What we want, and are dying for lack of, in our islands is exactly this habit of philosophy, is it not? — the mental strength, independence, and *liberation* of philosophers: until we attain to which liberation, as they are attaining abroad, Britons, you may bet, ever must be slaves, and in the end slaves of philosophic foreigners.

To think, then; and so, I think, we have our first lesson in learning to read: DON'T READ.

Well, but I should never be able to persuade anyone to give up reading altogether; nor do I wish to: for those very philosophers whom we have to copy, who were philosophers because they were not always reading, would

have been but lean philosophers if they had never read anything. We must thus be reading a bit: and, having mentioned how much, we have to see what, and especially in what way. As to what, Tit-Bits, now, is no Feast (of Reason); and though Answers answers nothing, it has, I think, something to answer for. To me it seems clear that an abuse of the invention of printing, the most ludicrous, the most huge, has been committed in our epoch! and I venture to predict an epoch when in a century not a tenth of the printed stuff at present produced in six months will offer itself to occupy, to confuse, and to use up the Commonwealth. I observe, by the way, that Herbert Spencer and others think well of “an abundant literature”; but they, or else I, must be pretty dull in this. An abundant harvest, indeed; an abundant barter: but I can’t think of a reason for this “abundant literature”. For this interval, look, subsists between an ear of corn and a book: that an ear of corn eaten is eaten; but a book read is not consumed; a million others may read it, either that particular volume, or a copy of it. Nor is this all: for everywhere through the domain of Nature that which is eminent is rare in the way of a ratio, as men breed at a speed less rapturous than rabbits, rabbits than sprats. Well, the production of press-stuff is at present just in this low or rabbit-sprat mood of evolution: and, if our paper, Something to Read, had been shrewd enough to name itself Nothing to Read, that had been just the truth. How it comes that our Government, which gives an eye to our milk, sends our wires, does not embark upon the more important job of supplying to our minds and hearts, as a monopoly of its own, the two new art books a year that we may need to use, I don’t know. If you insist that art-criticism hardly exists in our country, and wish to know who, then, is to choose those two so beautiful books, I answer that criticism — at all events literary criticism — is not at all what many think it: not at all an art, for example, nor a question of the impressions of this or that little man’s palate, opinions: it is a science,

in which the judgments of one who has become perfect in it are subject only to so much uncertainty or imperfectness as are the judgments of a surgeon or a plumber; and critics so scientifically strict and right will arise, I think, quickly after a need for them arises. Meantime, the deluge. No dearness of “Nothing to Read” here! For not merely are the people who wield the pen a legion, but each seems to wield it with what speed he can achieve in a species of shriek. They wish to live.... But are they wits? It seems a suspicious thing that a wit should wish to live by his pen, since even the penmen who are luckiest in a money way do not have half so much money as a wit would have in other paths. Are they wits? If they are not wits, what the deuce are they doing with an art tool? If they are wits, why, if they have no money, do they not abandon art a bit, get some money somehow — invent some bawble, dash off a Charley’s Aunt — there’s no difficulty, if he is a wit — then hark back to his art? Indeed, it seems to me that one should do this, should convince oneself of wit in some such actual fashion before tackling the most ticklish of tasks: for we must not think that the human spirit is split up into little compartments, or that Wilkie Collins could do a work of art a quarter so good as wits and worthies and walkers with God like the bringer of wireless or Otto of the four cycle engine. That would be odd, if it could be so. But induce, say, Otto to take it up, and his brain will assuredly produce you a book truer, shrewder, closer to the core of Being, than the whole mass and scrap-heap of fiction books yet scribbled by man. For a wit is a wit, and will do what he wills to do. If you answer that Chatterton was a pauper, that Wagner got to pawning his goloshes, I say again that I cannot understand that — if they were wits: they could have done something cunning. Why, now, can’t our Government go round to everyone, asking “What are you?”, and if he says “An author”, let the Government answer, “Oh, nonsense: you have no idea what an author, or

auctor, is: an auctor is an increaser — an increaser of folks' consciousness of the truth of things. You are not an increaser of anything. But come — to bootmaking: and now, for the first time, you will be really an author, really an increaser of the weal and woe's work of the world." For, in truth, the sum of art books so far produced, vast as it is, comes to but little, if you think of it; there have been no great writers, "great" meaning of a radical and grand practicality in grappling with facts — unless you call writers men like Darwin, Newton, Flume, who, indeed, because their mighty minds could not but find themselves at ease in every field, wrote better than half the roll of those who have thought themselves writers, but, nevertheless, were far too full of a world of other concerns to acquire more than half of the art, the science, and the mind of writers. For, if there have been great writers, you can find and give me their names on your fingers. Job, you say, the Jehovist of Genesis. You add Homer perhaps? However, if you go down into yourself, are a little of a critic, you will find, I think, that your delight in Homer is a delight due to your remoteness from him — to a swageing quality of quaintness that you are conscious of: and delight in a writer, mind, is terribly likely, if one is not careful, to beguile one's brain into an impression of greatness where no greatness is, i.e., a grand and radical consciousness of facts. As to the genius, Shakespeare, he was not a writer. Or do I seem to speak now with a certain accent of pertness and world-challenge of Tolstoi, which, however, is but slightly to the liking of my kind? Tolstoi, half of whose treatise *What is Art?* I have been reading, is an estimable soul, but not himself a writer, man of letters, is too nobly at war, let us say, to know about what is Art, and about writers and writing. Moreover, as I have said, literary criticism is not a question of the caprice of this man's feelings, or that man's palate, is quite an exact science, a question of facts, nor will a critic ever vex you with statements that he is less prepared

to convince you of than of some principle in arithmetic. If you say that critics differ, that De Quincey or Emerson would have derided such a statement as mine that “Shakespeare was not a writer”, I reply, as Socrates to the Companion in the Minos, that “those who know (i.e.. are scientists) must of necessity hold the same opinion with one another on things that they know, ever and every where”. Critics, then, can only so much differ as plumbers, if they know their trade. Well, but since, like Milton, I make the statement that Shakespeare was not a writer, the question arises (since Shakespeare assuredly did use a pen) what, then, a writer is? The definition is “a writer is a literary artist who seeks to enlarge the reader’s consciousness of the truth of things”; and, omitting for the moment this of “the truth of things”, let us only say at this time “a writer is a literary artist”; on which someone may wish, I think, to know just what “literary” means, and what “artist” means. It is wonderful, by the by, that I should think that anyone would wish to know! but when one finds Sir Oliver Lodge indicting Haeckel with “considerable literary ability”, I assume that others, too, must wish to know. One wonders with what hectic of the cheek the excellent Haeckel received “the soft impeachment”! he probably did not believe, since it was Lodge who asserted it. But words have certain meanings — each word its genius meaning: and as to the word “literary”, “literary” means “lettery”, concerned with letters (not with words, we observe, but with letters); and as to the word “artist”, Art is the production of one passion [A “passion” is anything that we suffer, undergo, an eagerness, sneeze, sleepiness] or another in the spirit through the action of a particular kind of tickling — *titillatio quaedam* (Spinoza) — upon one or other of the five senses; and an “artist” is any being that deliberately does that: not a sparrow prattling, but a blackcock uttering the love-call. So, now, what is a literary artist? He is “a person who deliberately works some passion in the

spirit by the action of a particular kind of tickling, with written letters, upon one or other of the five senses”. But which one of the five? Not the nostril, now, for that is the province of the producers of perfumes; nor the eye, now, for that is the province of the designer, the dancer, the actor, the architect, the coquette, the painter; nor the taste, for that is the province of those concerned in producing and dressing foods; nor the peripheral nerves, for that is the province of the courtesan, the hammam-man, the masseur: so we see that it is the ear. However, the ear is not now any more, as in the era of, say, Homer, so directly the province of men of letters as it is of the musician; soon, probably, a machine will be produced which will peruse what is printed and repeat it to the ear: after which the art of literature will anew become what it used to be, an art purely aural. But as things at present are, the nerve that the literary artist works upon is that nerve-thread—“commissure” is the correct word — which forms the connexion betwixt the visual centre in the brain and the auditory centre, the thread which, when the visual ganglia see a letter, transmits the telegram of it to the ear ganglia, announcing its sound. This, then, for the time being, is a writer, a literary artist: he is “a person who deliberately works one passion or another in the spirit by the action of a particular kind of tickling, with written letters, upon the thread which forms the connexion betwixt the visual and the auditory centres in the cerebrum”. [In respect of one of my works, I urged the publisher to print the letters in colours — the letter or letters representing any particular sound to be printed in a particular colour of its own throughout, thus to implicate the eye, too, in the delight of the rhyming and music. This, I think, could be highly artistic. But he said that it would be too expensive — couldn’t, in fact, understand what was the matter with me!] Of course, when real writing is at the present time read aloud, either with the mouth or any species of phonograph-machine, it again, as in old

ages, makes its appeal directly to the ear — I say real writing, for there exists a mass of difference as radical as you like between writing that is literary and scribbling that is not, seeing that the former fulfils the definition of an Art, and the other, charming as may be the thoughts in that which is scribbled, does not: the difference being as great as that betwixt gravings with a burin and using the organs of talk. For men possess, of course, two methods of expressing themselves — the tongue, the pen: and the two though so profoundly different, will without difficulty interchange their functions: thus, the oratory of Demosthenes was really a writing with the tongue, while your “leading article” this morning was really a speaking with the pen — call it “pen-talking” — call it anything you like, except writing. Or if you desire a definition of a writer slightly less formal, so that Carlyle may be brought in, let us say that “a writer is a wit, who, by the concentration of his whole weight of wit and luck, can only just scrape through, like a lady taken in the fix and scrape of labour: so myriad-minded the trick he tries his skill on”. For consider that his work is not to say what is to be said: but his work is to say it in those words that are then and there the best words. “She came in and sat down”; “She came in and took a chair”; “She entered and sat”; “She walked in and seated herself”; “Having stepped in, she sat down”; in not less than a thousand instances of shape and sound this little thing may be said: what, then, must it be with those sights and sounds of the mind that the writer describes in a town in the clouds, finer than the spider’s trifle? and his work, I say, is not to express them, but his work is to express them in those words, that tone, that heaven knows to be the best. Suppose, now, that the accident of burning had happened to a manuscript of Scott, and also to a manuscript of Flaubert, and that they both, like Carlyle, started out to recompose their burned works. Well, this is what would have occurred: that not ten sentences, probably, in Scott’s

second work would have been expressed in the words of the first, whereas every word, probably, in Flaubert's second would have been the same. So, then, Flaubert was a writer, Scott not — not implying that Flaubert's letters and words were those perfect-best ones which Hermes might have chosen, only implying that they were both fine, and Flaubert's best. Besides, a writer is a wit — i.e., a gallant with a bigger brain than the man's-in-the-street, whereas, on the contrary, the brain of Scott when dead was seen to weigh less than the man's-in-the-street. Not so Shakespeare's surely: still — could it be that that heedless Bohemian of Elizabethan England, who, having got hold of some glossary or something, wrote down in a whirl the first word he lit on in it, and then died of the effects of drink, was a writer? Sweet Will! so Milton muses, who knew his Will, totting him up to a T in the twottling violin-harmonic of four W's, "Sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child, marbling his native wood-notes wild" — nor must we think that a mind like Milton's could utter that "wild", that "woodmotes", in atone untouched with condescension. And if this sounds like heresy to one whose head is crowded with shreds of Shakespeare-phrases, "like household words", let him remember that it is in the genius of us British to speak in little catchwords, parrot-terms, as a friend once showed me an essay commencing with, "Hearts weep for mankind" — the inanity wherewith we say "the sere and yellow leaf", "*pip-pip!*", "To be or not to be", "there's hair!", "the garden beautiful", "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" — idols of the mind! though no sooner does our brain begin to gain that liberation which embraves us on beginning to think than the result is an utter mistrust of our crusted rucks, mental mirages, charts of conception: for to think is to be educated: to be educated is to be sceptical. So where I suggest that our heedless Bohemian, "having got a glossary or something, wrote down in a whirl the first long or odd word he found", if someone is

shocked at this, his shock is due probably to a failure of his imagination any longer to enter into the mood in which boys and girls live and work, and to his failure to remember that our Will, living in the boyhood of our nation, must have been himself by nature very boisterously a boy. Indeed, there are respects in which the greatest of ancient penmen are necessarily a great deal inferior to the sorriest of modern ones. I find that Shakespeare's consciousness, compared with mine, was like the consciousness of Hodge's fox hound compared with the consciousness of Hodge. Milton's thoughts "wandered through eternity": C. W. Saleeby's also; but the eternity through which Milton's thoughts wandered, compared with the whirl of eternities (through which Saleeby's wander, was like a land-locked harbour compared with Arctic and Atlantic: "to God", as my excellent father said, "be the glory" (as though glory, or any thing, could be to anything but God). Let us think, then, in this way of our Will, as a jolly boy and heed less Bohemian of Elizabethan Cheapside, happy in the tones of those reeds of Pan whose melodious breezes he breathed with equal spirit into his pieces of hilarity and sorrow, comedy and "tragedy" — though you will be in the wrong, by the way, if you imagine that he ever managed a tragedy. For, adopting Aristotle's and Goethe's dogmas as to tragedy, we see that *Othello*, now, is never a bit a tragedy: there must be no "villain" in a tragedy; or, at least, the catastrophe must not be owing to the villain's artifice, but to the hero's "own fault": and Fate must be the villain of the play. No more is *Romeo and Juliet* a tragedy, only a calamity, because there is no tragic sense of "fault" in the lovers; moreover, it ends happily. [I do not say this in its disfavour, though, since a tragedy, after the tragedy, *should* find final happiness, to be true: for Life, so far, after its tragedies, has ended happily; and will haply end ever happier.] Nor is *Macbeth* a bit a tragedy: for the man of a tragedy must not be a criminal lunatic, look, not a murderer, like Richard the Third

— must be “*like ourselves*”, an imperfect but worthy person, “a good man struggling with adversity”, within him, without him. If you say that in every bosom a criminal lunatic slinks, that may be true; but not so near in us that we can experience for murder that “pity”, or, as I prefer to say, “compassion”, “sym-path-y”, “*Mit-leid*”, which true tragedy induces. Nor is *Lear* a tragedy: for whereas in *Macbeth* we have all “terror” and no tragic “pity”, in *Lear* we have all “pity”, and no tragic “terror” — unless that is meant for terror where someone thumbs out someone’s eye, saying, “out, out, vile jelly”. Moreover, the hero of a tragedy mustn’t *start* by being mad, as *Lear* seems to have started, or we lose all feeling of “own fault”. No, we can see that tragedy was a task over earnestly grand for our hurried, and hungry, and Hebe-worshipping Bohemian, though he certainly knew the glances of the tragic Muse. I should say that *Hamlet* is a tragedy: but, then, such a muddle-headed tragedy.... Far, indeed, be it from me to preach that an author ought to set explicitly in a shop window all his ineffable philosophy for the benefit of raw eyes: for writers, look, simply will not do this: but when wits brighter than a writer’s can’t after three hundred years even decide if the writer’s hero was, or was not, mad, we may be certain that some smack of burnt sack was in the work. Thus much as to the matter of the tragedies; but with respect to the manner, I remember that even as a boy droiling over Shakespeare, “with notes”, for examinations, I used to be amused at the solemn comments made by grave dignitaries of Oxford upon the vagaries in idiom, irresponsible as a Babu’s dribble, of our heedless Bohemian. I have now at my hand a Shakespeare, I will open it, and the passage on which my eye chances to light I will quote:

*“The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
My thrice-driven bed of down: I do agnize*

*A natural and prompt alacrity
I find in hardness.
Adost humbly, therefore, bending to your state,
I crave fit disposition for my wife;
Due reference of place and exhibition;
With such accommodation and besort
As levels with her breeding.”*

Or this on the same page:

*“... No, when lightwingéd toys
Of feather’ d Cupid seel with wanton dulness
My speculative and offic’ d instruments,
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,
Let housewives make a skillet of my helm,
And all indign and base adversities
Make head against my estimation.*

Now, when we know absurd words by heart, as we all know these, it is hard to see their absurdity. What, though, is this? If you say, “not Chinese, nor English, but a kind of Middle-English”, I reply, “no kind of English, unless Mrs. Malaprop in Sheridan’s comedy talked a kind of Middle-English” — for irresistibly Shakespeare brings to my mind Mrs. Malaprop; and I know that it is not a kind of Middle-English, not only because More, Milton, did not write it, but also because I can remember the mood of my youth, when I was ten, and given to scribbling this very lingo, a lexicon at

my side. Since you will say, then, that Shakespeare was not a great *writer*, who, shall we say, was a great writer?

That ever interesting critic Edward Thomas, having once demanded of me, “But don’t you, in reading Milton, feel yourself in the presence of a great mind?”, it was some moments before I gave answer, “But no,” I was so taken aback by the (to my habit of mind) novelty of such a notion, having long ago forgotten that it is *in the tradition* to make Milton a great mind. But a critic has, to begin with, to clear his intellect clean of tradition, like a captain clearing his ship for action — to begin with. And if our critic, in reading *L’Allegro*, finds himself in the presence of a great mind, how, one gets to wondering, does he read Schopenhauer, Herbert Spencer, even, say, Adam Smith? — he must be so lost in awe, that it must be impossible for him to proceed! I, now, in reading Milton, find myself in the presence of a child’s mind — an ancient child’s: a mind aspiring, certainly, earnest, pure, bemused, deft, learned (though quite uneducated); but a mind unexploring, local; more mouth than bowels, sound than power; more feeling than perceiving, obedient than leading; giving little signal of that radical and grand practicality in grappling with facts, whereby greatness (or vigour) of intellect is exhibited. Or will you say that your Ibsen was a great writer? But one of the strands of greatness is grandeur, that bigness of gesture of Milton, Goethe, Shakespeare; a certain *allgemeinheit*, (universality), moreover, of the sun and sunset glory: wherein the Norwegian, who to a Japanese would appear all jejune, strange and unrelated, fails of greatness. Or, as to the novelists, will you not say Thackeray? Dickens, now, was a clown. And if “clown” looks too loud a term to tack to “an honoured name”, the answer is that Dickens is not an honoured name — if it is the quality, not the quantity, of honour that makes the honour of a name. Grace Darling’s, now, I agree to call an honoured name, for the reason that the

people who honour her are capital critics of the act they honour her for; whereas the Mahdi's, though of all names the most honoured, if the quantity of honour were the thing, I can't call an honoured name, since I can't consider the flocks of lack-alls who honoured him capital critics of a prophet; and so as to Dickens, though many tight little Viking islands devise many monuments to his honour, still if the critic does not honour him, he is not honoured. Indeed, if you know that writing is a craft whose technique is harder to acquire than virtuosity on the violin, you must know also that one can't hasten from "taking notes" in the House of Commons, without any preparation, into literature, and accomplish it well. And if you know with what horror every Harrow boy observes the poison-basilisk of an iambic verse stolen into the tissue of his prose, and know that Dickens, thinking the jig grand, hopped jog-trotting through paragraphs in bad iambs, you now think Dickens a clown. But his clownishness goes more profoundly down in him than can be judged from this, showing itself in everything, down to the *outré* mood of the names that he chooses for his characters — characters that have no souls, that have only noses, poses, clothes, for the page of illustrations. Mr. Micawber is a bald head, a stock phrase, an *outré* name, and — no more: Mrs. Someone who says "everything goes contrary wi' me" is that phrase, an *outré* name, a robe and a nose probably, and — no more. That is, they are not characters, they are drawings; drawings infected with caricature; nay, many of them, I think, photos of actual folks known to Dickens. But let us say that they are not photos, nor caricatures, but drawings, excellent drawings: then, because they are drawings, excellent drawings, they are wrong; nothing so wrong. And if you demand why so monstrously wrong, the answer is that to draw with the pen is to use a wrong tool, is to pestle with a saw, plough with a pounder. What, now, was the shape of Helen's, of Joseph's, nose? Homer, the Jehovist, are careful not

to mention that, for that is the painter's care: yet Homer contrives, nevertheless, to embue us with the brightest remembrance of Helen's beauty. For the *rôle* of the pen is to relate — to relate that which is in motion, a race, a rebellion, a rebellion in the breast, since it speaks to that which is in motion in Time, to the Mind, which easily perceives, but not easily sees; whereas the *rôle* of the pencil is to show that which is motionless, the racer in some moment before the race begins, *La Rixe* before the struggle: for it speaks to that which is quiet in Space, to the Eye, which easily sees, but pesters perceiving. [As we close our eyes to think.] Not that the penman may not let himself write a line as to that which is quiet, as Shakespeare acquaints us with the fact that Hamlet was fat: yet let the user of the pen know that even a phrase or two of "drawing" is proof of a failure of genius, is the use of a wrong tool, and borrowing of the brush. What, then, can be said of Dickens, whose whole book, if you look into it, you will see to be of this kind — like (though so unlike) that article of Poe named *The Domain of Arnheim*, a description of a park, in which he wishes to produce in the reader a deep feeling of beauty; and he does, I think, produce a feeling of beauty; but, oh, the mountain of effort on both reader's and author's part, and the mouse of effect! whereas, with the right tool, a pencil, forty times the effect of beauty would have been wrought in the mind with a fortieth part of the effort. So, without further discussion, we will now call our Dickens a clown; [I think, though, that *Pickwick* will live, since it is already read. I never met a Frenchman who had read it, but a friend (Arthur Machen) tells me that a French critic told him that, having read it uninterestedly to the middle, he then suddenly uttered "a mad laugh" (poussait un fou rire). On the other hand, I remember when a lad seeing a sister, a Methodist saint, sit and peruse it from beginning to end with the gravest face — to my great amusement.] and if you say, "and yet the people

liked, and like him”, the reply is, “No, the people never liked him.” The people, certainly, have heard somebody say that they like him, and think that they like him, as they think that they like beer, and whisky, and *Tit-Bits*. but, having tasted both beer and whisky, to see, I will take my dying oath that no human brother of mine ever really liked beer and whisky; and as to Art, what the people *really* like is what is right and refined and conformed to the laws of their mind and of Art; only, they know not a little what they like, until they are taught what they like, as an infant is taught, in spite of tears, that the nipple is hardly the highest type of feeding, and that it likes the highest.

Thus much, then, as to what not to read; as to the leakage in the British ship implicit in this abuse of the printing machine which we view; as to the constant loss to the Commonwealth involved in the writing, printing, binding, and reading of such cargoes of garbage; as to the long-suffering of God, who has daily to read The Daily Telegraph through, the lean unleading articles, the criticism, the cricket, causing the Infinite to yawn. And would you be reading it all? Oh, beware: “life is brief”; and how solemn, now, is the striking of the clock, its gong sounding the death-knell of the hour that’s gone, the very voice of God noising through the void and night-watches of Time, which you may buy for five bob. Beware, then, of “the papers”, since in Britain, by a ripping bit of luck, one may easily enough glean what is going on from the notice boards, and get the rest from friends; knock off every kind of periodical (except technical); and, as to books, remember that, since time is not good, but very good, your book, then, must be not good, but very good, must positively improve your consciousness of the truth of things, and produce progress in you, if it is to give you so much as you give to it. So much, then, as to what not to read; but as to what to read, I divide it into two things: (1) science; (2) music — to use an expression of Plato’s,

meaning whatever is truly poetical: with the proviso, that, though I divide them, yet science is truly musical, and music nigh to science. And as to science: since to you has been vouchsafed *the high* favour not to have been born in a former age; since, modern, your main duty is to be modern; since this you can scarcely be, and not be of a scientific mood: therefore, your duty is to be studious in science, in which I loosely include modern philosophy; and your rule will be to read but few books, which you will curiously choose, though these you will read frequently — at least thrice each mighty writer, the first time to follow and learn of him, the second time to wend alongside and converse with him, the third time to trot first and controvert him. It is well, I think, to know well some one toe in that moving foot of science, as I, since my nipperhood, have kept myself pretty well *au fait* in what men know of chemistry: but that would be rather a tallish order for, say, a married lady rolled in the social maelstrom; nor is it essential. What you want is to pick up with some sort of minuteness a knowledge of those simple, large-minded truths of science, just the subconsciousness of which makes us moderns a different *kind* of being from the ancients. You cast up your eye to the sky at night, you mark its largeness, you form a conception of its size in your thought: well, the earth is larger far than your notion of the whole army and march of all the worlds; yet if the earth was a mote in the eye of one all-knowing, He would not know that a mote was in His eye. Things of that sort, simple, vast-minded: the hoariness of Time, the remoteness of the suns, the hurry of Light, the story of Life. And then, having gathered such facts from books, having got them well into your subconsciousness, remember that you have still to *educate* yourself with them, by drawing them up into your consciousness through pondering and strong imagining of them; have still to become an overman, and live happily in fairyland, for the universe is fairy; land to

overmen. I, for my part, do not regard as educated minds like the old Mr. Gladstone's, ever ready for heaven, but unconscious of The Heavens, and I know that there is more psychic value in Prof. Haldane's right auricle than in all the vitals of a mind like Matthew Arnold's. Thus much, then, as to science; but as to music —

But this of music leads me to my third thesis: for first I tried to determine how much we shall read, and found that the reply is “not much”; and secondly I inquired what not, and what we shall read, to find that, as to what, the reply is science and music; and now, lastly, we have to find *how* we shall read, science with a devout eye, and music — how?

For to seek to read music without learning how is as useless as to wish to turn tea-taster or champagne; taster in the City without so much as knowing what are the dispositions which an expert detects in excellent tea or excellent champagne. You cannot do it. Though when you are once taught what those niceties are, when you have acquired the science of wine-tasting, then practice will add to you the craft of wine-tasting, till on a day you find yourself a wine; taster. My business, then, is to bring you to see quite what are the beauties of excellent writing, or music: for I find that to teach you how to read, I am obliged to teach you how to write — an Art, the science of which you may acquire in quite a short time, just as you may acquire the science of shorthand in as few days as that of the violin will take you weeks, yet must spend as many months in the exercise of shorthand as that of the violin will keep you years.

III. OF WRITING



How, THEN, TO write? that is our thesis.

Well, let us say that a messenger-boy is appointed to bear you a message: then, all those points of excellence which you may expect from him as a messenger-boy you will unite in your art writing: all those, and no more.

What, now, are those points?

Well, you would not want your boy to be all spoiled with smallpox, or uncomely clothed: so you will grant to your thoughts a decent form as to grammar, prosody, etc.

But now the more important points about our boy...

Evidently, the main thing is his message — the matter of his message; and, after that, his manner or form of telling it: (1) the gem; (2) its shape.

And as to his matter, we can at once say what it must be: it must be a true message; and then it must be a new message — fresh news; and then it must somehow be a message about yourself, of some interest to *you*; or, bracketing all this into an abstract form — he must *enlarge your consciousness of the truth of things*, and that intimately.

This, then, as to matter, is your task.

And if you ask, “But is the object of Art precisely the object of science and of philosophy — to enlarge the consciousness?” the reply is, “Yes — what else than to enlarge the consciousness,” i.e., to augment the quantity of Life, i.e., to cause Progress in Life— “that we may have Life, and have it more abundantly?” Nevertheless, the method of Art, though more after the method of philosophy, is as divided from it as the method of philosophy

from that of science. Art, for instance, is more intimate and about ourselves somehow, enlarging our consciousness of the truth of our own hearts, and bosoms' biology principally, and affecting us in an intimate way by a particular kind of tickling of one or other of the five senses. Besides, though the object of Art, like that of philosophy, is the demonstration of some abstract fact, Art does not, as philosophy does, formally state this, but conveys it intimately, as by innuendo and parable, in a glance, a sob, ineffably, in the tone of gossips pottering over a dead body; and it is divided from science, and from philosophy also, in this, that even the facts that it formally states are not concrete, but are themselves, like its abstract facts, abstractions: for, if it tells of a man, an axe, it is not any actual man or axe that exists exactly as it tells of it, as in Dickens, but it is an abstraction from a mass of actual men or axes of that class, like Hamlet, or Hector's axe, or Gainsborough's *Grace*. And so we get clearly the difference between science, philosophy, and art:

Science is occupied with facts for their own sake, and formally states them.

Philosophy is occupied with facts, not for their own sake, but for the sake of some abstraction, i.e., some large fact, which it draws from facts, and formally states it.

Art is occupied with abstractions of facts, not for their own sake, but for the sake of some larger abstraction which it draws from facts, nor does it formally state it, but intimately, exciting the mind to its perception by a particular kind of tickling of one or other of the five senses.

In which definition, if you think, you will see included not only such arts as music (so called), drawing, writing, and so on, but also the arts of the actor, the cook, the coquette. And as to the writer, you see, do you, what the definition implies? you must find in his writing (1) plot; (2) realism; (3)

romance. And as to plot — or don't you care for plots, and revel in your Henry James, who doesn't care for plots? or do you care for plots, and think that there is a plot in your Wilkie Collins, your Emile Gaboriau? They could as easily, stealing with the feet of the midnight thief when the Cosmos sleeps, sneak Venus from God, and fix her glittering in a finger-ring for their Felicity's finger. For plots have been more uncommon than conquests, most of them evolved not by any one head, it appears, but, so to say, by peoples. What, then, is this thing, a plot? Well, recollecting what Art is, as distinct from Science and Philosophy, you can see what a plot cannot but be, merely, "*a* plat or fabric of facts, in their nature abstract, the statement of which involves a philosophic abstraction"; and to make this plain, I offer you two plots, both in Shakespeare (but, of course, not Shakespeare's own).

PLOT: TWO Italian families are at feud (a truth); a man of one and a woman of the other love furiously (a truth); [A truth, I mean, since, love between them being forbidden fruit, they would be the more prone to love. Romeo would love Juliet in gratitude and vanity, owing to the greatness of the gulf she leapt to get to him; Juliet, loving Romeo's love, would love it the more fiercely, since it was unique, a Koh-i-noor among loves; and both would contend in glorifying the greater greatness of the god of love above every god.] to this their death is due (a truth); and over their tomb their relatives are reconciled (a truth).

ABSTRACTION: NOW, how grave a gash in the state, that wrangling! Is there no chemistry can heal its haemorrhage and hectic? Hate and hacking cannot. But Love does. And the philosophic abstraction inherent in the mere positing of the facts is that Love is a healer.

PLOT: Contumely educes the crudest instincts, as in the case of the Jews of the Middle Ages (a truth). One such Jew induces a merchant to undertake to lose a certain weight of flesh in case of a failure to pay: for the merchant,

never having been himself oppressed, and incapable of conceiving the realness of the effects of oppression, is unconscious that a bond so bizarre can be meant as aught else than a formality (a truth); and the unexpected happens (a truth), for his vessels miscarry, he fails to pay, the Jew claims the flesh (a truth). But the Jew, in his habit of brooding on national wrongs, has, in drawing up the bond, forgotten a detail on the plane of the pigmy and the commonplace (a truth) — that flesh cannot be cut, and no blood shed (a truth): so he is dished.

ABSTRACTION: There is that in the scheme of things which is ingenious in dishing evil, and finally rides smiling in, triumphing.

You notice that they two are true woofs, every item intertwining nicely with every other and with the entirety, as in a Chinese puzzle, or piece of Japanese marquetry — mortise and tenon — and so fulfilling the sense of Art, i.e., “a fitting”, “*art-iculating*” (*ἀγπαρισκω*), as in the story of Joseph, not as in *The Odyssey*, *Don Quixote*, though these, each in its way, are worthy works, for other reasons, on a lower level. And if you would know why the plot, or plat, stands on so lofty a level, the answer is that, as it only is true to things and to Life, it alone is divine, since the cosmos is a plot, a molecule a plot, the solar rhyming a plot, the story of Life a plot; and since Plot in matter is the cousin or correspondent of Harmony of Order in manner. Herbert Spencer, I observe, imagined that the absence of plot is an evolution: but, then, he knew not at all what a plot is, thought that there were plots in Wilkie Collins, and would without doubt have gone to the opposite opinion as to plots, if he had ever given any long thought to Art. Thus much, then, as to plots; but about romance and realism — which, now, do you champion? for it appears that people stand in two camps as to the matter, one lot choosing to give their votes to Scott, Schlegel, one lot

wishing to vote for Zola. But since the object of Art is to enlarge (or at least to sharpen, or at the very least to refresh) your consciousness of the truth of things, the question naturally is, which of the two is the truer, realism or romance? Well, there can be no question that realism is true, if it be truly realistic; but the' truth is that it is not truly realistic, if it be not romantic, since truth is romantic. With a mood of wistfulness in your eyes you look at the moon one night, where, as musing, she walks amid the stars, and you wish that you were there where she muses: wait: before you go to bed you will be there where she muses, if our globe be moving that way, and soon you may be soaring not far from where Venus at this hour leads the crowd of the starry orchestra with her crown and psaltery. Is this romance? trance and tarantula-land? I hear you say "yes"; you whisper "yes". Well, it is true: so realism, if it What, now, do you say of these? What of that of Meredith's... Is it true? Is it new? Is it precious? If it is precious, why is it precious? Is it not precious owing to this, that it tends to put us in old slippers in the universe; owing to this, that it is *a scientific discovery*, specially precious because hardly any formal scientist could have lighted on it, and because we have it spoken in a humour and mood peculiar to one man, who alone could have communicated it to us in that humour: in which humour we for the future may use it? And if you desired to know the title of the book that it is in, or anything else that is in that book, I could not tell you, for I have read three of Meredith, and the fact is that his lack of philosophic volume, and his submission to the influence of the brain of Shakespeare and the Arabians, spoiled him of being strictly a voice, or verily impressive to a critic. Besides, his paragraphs are anon masses of probable misprints, mixed with a sister of Mrs. Malaprop — not how "the simple great ones" write: this obscurity being due to a cowardice, unlike

Browning's obscurity, which is due to a kind of mental stutter: due (in Meredith)

(1) to a horror of the commonplace, the shallow; (2) to a subconsciousness of being commonplace, shallow; (3) to a consequent neuropathy as to plain statements, for fear of appearing (to himself) what he is: hence his thoughts are veiled prophets of Khorassan, all veil, and no prophecy. Precious, however, is his power of expression (of ideas as distinct from thoughts); and you observe how, for the reason that I had learned to read, I immediately seized upon the one supreme beauty in whatever the book was, and by improving with it my consciousness of the truth of things, enriched myself with it for ever. And as to that marvel of Carlyle: "the body lies on the steps; the head is off through the streets" — can you read this? In no lingo of man but English, I think, could that mad glance have been hinted; by no mortal in English but Carlyle. But what vivacity! Bacchic alacrity! *The head is off through the streets...!* Do you catch? see the spontaneity of the head? the rapture of hilarity with which it snatches itself away? It is strictly inexpressible; yet he expresses it, by miracle. Pity only that he did not say "the head's off" instead of "head is".

But how about your boy's voice? If his message is of any length, his sounds will much affect your sense of it, their (1) harmony (kinship with one another), and their (2) melody or tone (kinship with their subject and the mood of the hearing ear). So you will be harmonious, or literary. And if you demand: "Is literature nothing more than harmoniousness?" the answer is: "Nothing more"; and, as I presented you examples of perfect matter and of perfect expression, I next present an example of perfect literature:

"a, a, a; ba, ba, ba; ca, ca, ca"; and if you demand: "Is it not, then, necessary that the letters make words?" the answer is: "No, not necessary for literature"; though it is an evolution, look, that the letters should make

words; and it is an evolution that the words should make sense; and it is an evolution that that sense should be beautiful; but all this has nothing to do with *literature*, which is concerned, not with words, or with sense, but with *letters*, and men of literature are men of *letters*, not wordy men, inventors of ever new and beautiful mosaics of *letters*. For you know what was the origin of literature? Religious, was it not? And religious it must mind to continue to be, for if a book is not a Bible, it is not a book. Its origin was religious in this wise: that the old hierophant, obiah priest, beating upon his torn torn within the forest groves in celebrating the Mysteries, to goad his rabble to dance with abandonment, gabbled sounds of instigation, again and again the same sound:

“Dar, dar, dar, dar,

Dar, dar, dar;

Ah gar, gar, gar, gar,

Gar, gar, gar.”

Go again, however, down into the a thousand years later, and now you’ll hear still with a dwelling on the same sounds):

“Dart, darlings, dar, dar

Dar, dar, dar; Ah, garters all, gar, gar,

Gar, gar, gar.”

And steal near yet a thousand years later, and now you’ll hear (yet the same sounds):

*“Daart yourselves staark., maidies,
Naked as a staar!
Aah, get your gaarters laaughing, ladies,
Daart your legs faar!”*

And so the thing would continue, until that humming thunder of Homer will be heard rolling, and Poe’s pibroch skirling. You may know that of Madame de Stael’s, “un son nous fait désirer celui qui doit lui répondre, et quand le second rétentit, il nous rappelle celui qui vient de nous échapper”; and Plato’s $\acute{o}\iota\acute{\alpha}\nu\acute{o}\chi\acute{o}\nu\alpha\iota\ \upsilon\epsilon\ \acute{\iota}\alpha\alpha\ \chi\acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\epsilon\iota\nu\ \omicron\nu\rho\omega\lambda\nu\ \omicron\iota\ \alpha\omicron\ \rho\omicron\lambda$, “I learn from the wise to use rhymes”; or, if you noticed on the “notice-boards”, some months since, “Reign of Terror in Teheran”, this is literature, at any rate literary — would be literature, if it had been “Reign of Terror in Tayeran” (emphasis on the Tay): for how much more terrible a business is a reign of terror in Tayeran than a reign of terror in mere Ispahan; whereas pippins and hips in Ispahan (emphasis on the Is), are, by some profound principle of repetition in music and musical utterance, more suited to our soul’s disposition than pippins and hips in Teheran. Harmoniousness, then: nor is our load only to be harmonious in the sounds we use, but to choose those sounds which are most suited to our sense: thus, “ah”, “aw”, are tall and haughty, “p” is a very spirited little letter, “oo” is useful for pity (as where Will, quite instinctively, I think, whines “*poor* woounded name, my boosom as a bed shall lodge thee”), and so on in a thousand subtleties known to the old hound’s nose. And all this harmony and choice of letters to be joined with a choice of words, you observe — those *very* words which are best for expression: a contradictory business, “more endangered than when Argo passed through Bosphorus betwixt the jostling rocks”; as to

which we see, I think, that here is a task which only a carl born lucky to the heart, born with a caul, nay, with a call, need attempt to meddle in. Thus far, then, as to literature, or harmony, or the art of writing as distinct from pen talking.

But how about the boy's tone? That is important! for if somebody has been run over by a motor bus, and he gives you the story of it with a grin, or if he gives you the poet's dream eating nuts, this will be by no means pretty. Tone, then. Now, tone, of course, is thousand fold: and since the tone of a whole tome or piece must be so-and-so to suit its mood, and the tone of each part or page must needs be subtly so and-so to suit *its* mood, and yet the tone of each part or page be in harmony with the tone of the whole, here once more, we see, is a task that only a carl born lucky to the heart, born with a caul, need attempt to meddle with. Moreover, in tone there is invariably in the greatest writers a something, a grain, a tone within their tones, which I in my own mind always call *naïveté* — an element not richly represented in English literature (in Bunyan principally), but very richly in French, in Greek, in Hebrew, in Heine and Wieland. How a little savour of it would have saved Poe, Meredith, Milton! But I am not certain that I am able to make myself clear as to what I mean by this word *naïveté* — something like what Goethe meant by his *heiterkeit*? Simplicity, yes, to the edge of child-likeness, of childishness; but something much more, a *pregnant* simplicity, struggling against poetry, against grandeur, against agonies of emotion, and remaining triumphant, a burning nerve yearning to blurt its burden, but restrained by the very rein of, reticence, and not the shadow of an adjective or adverb within a thousand furlongs to whittle down the nouns and verbs. “Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these”: this is “naïf”: for you see what a world of

ermine and purflings of purple the Speaker leaves unmentioned here, yet mentions. And I add yet one example — one not only of *naïveté*, but of every preciousness of tone, of expression, of matter and of manner, the phrase that in my view takes the cake as the truest, most musical, most beautiful, most romantic, till now ranted by a man's mouth:

“Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained to the days of the years of the lives of my fathers in the days of their marches...”

If you can read this, you have *learned* to read music and the yearnings in the tumults of October breezes. The stories of those “fathers’ marches” have been told deliberately: you have lived with them — long marches; and, generation after generation, they have strangely gone, engulfed in the gorge of God, the suns no longer know them; and now the aged Jacob, he, too, is about to foot it down that steep, and he says, “Few and evil... “Oh my, if the Sphinx should speak, just so, I think, she’d speak, so mindfully, so miserly, so almightily. And on the whole, this whole tome of the Jehovist, in its emotion at, and intoning of, that unknown word of the world and the worlds, is to Homer at his uppermost note what Homer is to a penny novelette; nor can I, either, read it well in a town, but at dead of night, in a waste place, in a tent, where sounds of wintry winds and a reign of breakers drown the brain in a revel of drowns and reveries.

So, now, we have finished with our messenger. His excellencies, we can see, will consist in (1) Matter (2) Expression (3) Harmony (4) Tone.

Those four: and if he combine two or more of them, we will find the following code of law to hold:

Expression+Harmony=“ Magic” (Art)

Matter+Expression=“Interest” (not Art)

Tone+Harmony=“Charm” (Art)

Matter +Expression+Tone=“Fascination” — (not Art)

Matter + Expression + Harmony + Tone = “Beauty” (Art).

We will also find the law that Harmony or Order in manner is the cousin or correspondent of Plot in matter; Expression in manner the correspondent of Realism in matter; Tone in manner the correspondent of Romance in matter.

And as regards Matter, you will find that the masters so far (or the great masters, if you like adjectives) are in the following order:

(1) The Jehovist; (2) Goethe; (3) Job; (4) Lucretius; (p Plato; (6) Homer; (7) Molière; (8) Cervantes; (9) Hugo — not all of these, you perceive, being writers, i.e., artists, but all a kind of artist, not formal philosophers, whom I leave out.

And in the matter of Expression, you will find that the masters, or the great masters, are in the following order:

(1) Job; (2) Carlyle; (3) I; (4) Lucretius; (p The Jehovist; (6) Keats; (7) Milton; (8) Meredith; (9) Flaubert; (10) Browning; (11) Homer; (12) Coleridge; (13) Goethe.

And in the matter of Harmony you will find that the masters are in the following order:

(1) Poe; (2) Homer; (3) Milton; (4) Swinburne; (5) Virgil; (6) Dante; (7) Sophocles; (8) Racine; (9) Coleridge; (10) Cicero; (11) *The Mights*; (12) Flaubert; (13) Loti; (14) Sir Thomas Browne; (15) Demosthenes; (16) Lord Chesterfield; the verse men stepping first, not because more harmonious, but because harmony is harder in what is metrical as well.

And in the matter of Tone you will find that the masters are:

(1) Shakespeare; (2) The Jehovist; (3) Dante; (4) De Guérin; (p De St. Pierre; (6) Heine; (7) Aeschylus; (8) Poe; (9) De Quincey; (10) Ecclesiastes; (11) Homer; (12) Omar-i-Kayyam; (13) Wieland; (14) Coleridge; (15)

Keats; (16) Bunyan; (17) Milton; (18) Gray; (19) Horace; (20) Loti; (21) Words worth; (22) Petrarch; (23) Job; (24) Virgil; (2p Fénelon; (26) Dowson; (27) Burns; (28) Goethe;(29) Carroll; (30) Arnold; (31) Boccaccio; (32) Tennyson; (33) Corneille.

Now, our lists, though gravely meditated, are not to be taken without one grain of salt — not for any lack of exactness in criticism, since there is hardly any difficulty as to that, but for lack of a vast familiarity with what has been written; a scholar, not without grounds, would doubtless think me ignorant; and though I have besought you not to be a scholar, but a philosopher, because a scholar, like a tailor, is scarce the ninth part of a mind, still, it is jolly sometimes to know scholar stuff. For example, I haven't included Job and the Jehovist in the harmony list, ignorant as to whether they were great harmonists like the Arab scribes. For the same reason the lists rather get degraded into guessing toward their ends in regard to order; the names themselves, though, are well; and toward the beginnings I am always big with significance as to order also — sure, for example, that, Job alone excepted, no son of Adam ever possessed a power of expression comparable with Carlyle's; and that the greatest in matter was the Jehovist, in expression

Job, in harmoniousness Poe, in tone Shakespeare, the greatest on the whole the Jehovist, if he was a harmonist, “great” being the wrong word, *great* writing being an Everest yet virgin, reserved for the journeyers of the centuries to be.

Thus far, then, as to the technique of writing. As to what one calls “style”, that need not keep us, style being but the peeping through of the personality of each writer in his writing, not a part of technique, which is exhausted when matter, expression, harmony and tone have been spoken of. But now that I have taught how to write, which is not where I sought to

arrive, the question which I ask myself is, have I also taught how to read, which is what I seek to reach? Well, I quite hope so; for since we at present know the niceties of the science of writing, I calculate that some practice should make us as exact critics as the salaried tea taster is. I will but add some little observations that suggest themselves to me: i. “Progress”, a growth in consciousness of truth, being the object of Art, and truth being anon rude, we should not expect, or wish, our art work to be all honey and water, as servant girls think that they wish their heroes to be perfect, untrue, or as a lady relating to me the tale of a book named *The Beloved Vagabond*, criticised it in this manner: “It offends, the man has dirty fingernails” — a thing which a French lady would never have uttered; but somehow, in the matter of written things we English seem to be all at sea, to have some radical incapacity of grasp due apparently to a certain crassness rooted in the Saxon — not necessarily permanent, seeing that it has already yielded to the influences of years. So in time we will cease to mind that our hero has grimy fingernails, if that is the case with him, seeing that our great writer is in the place of a god, conscious of his characters’ natures with an accuracy, a sympathy, a judgment, which nothing but study will bring us to realise; nor is his business to give us pleasure directly, but to give us progress, to improve our consciousness of the truth of ourselves and of the cosmos.

2. Let us cease to regard our “great” author as indecent, for, surely, the truth that we always do should lead us to the conclusion that there must be something *outré* in our view of indecency. It is among the grand facts of biology in this cycle of the history of Life that we English are a little ridiculous — or do you not see the actualness of this fact, so frequently repeated? Neither do I at this instant perceive it quite in white light perhaps — to perceive it, one needs to stay a year or two, say in Paris, in the society of persons of an alert and worldly turn of mind, then find oneself suddenly

come to Kensington: whereupon for three, as much as four, days one's cheeks keep puffing out with fun at each essentially Kensington thing that one sees. *The English are a little ridiculous* — an actual fact, and a grand fact: ridiculous in our Saxon crassness, in our ignorance of English or of any language of man, in our religiosity, our irreligiousness, in the platitude of our ladies' aspect, their long teeth, in the Negro manners of our labouring class, in our concern about opinions and persons, our callousness as to truths and ideas, in our Hottentot horror of certain worthy little words, "bluddy", "bureaucracy", OF WRITING

"blasted", "hell" — and so on. And if this was the one fact about us that we are a little ridiculous, little that would matter; but there is this other, that we've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too, are the obvious bosses of this orb: and you see the peril resident in a ridiculous boss. So, at all events, it is in this of indecency in Art, we need to be awfully guarded lest we regard the sacred as indecent, or we make ourselves a laughing stock. As I was once greatly offended on being given by a friend to read a review named *Jude The Obscene* in regard to a novel of Thomas Hardy's, in whom, from a book of his that I had looked through, I could not believe obscenity to be possible. So I questioned my friend, and when he informed me that someone in the novel had tossed the male organ of a hog at somebody's face, the question came up between us: "Is this indecent?" He seemed doubtful; so I said, "Let us come *now* to a conclusion as to this." I now made him read a phrase of a book, asking if he thought that indecent, and he thought it so; so now I gave him to see the name of the book, and he now no longer thought it so, because it was a doctor's book. "So, then," I said, "it is merely the tone wherein a thing is written that makes it in decent?"

"Yes," he agreed, "that is true — as to a doctor."

“But how about a philosopher?” I said, “or a poet? whose tones are as foreign to, and more cocked aloft of, the tone of indecency than is a doctor’s?”; and in the end we saw that this in the novel was not indecent, if the tone was that of a philosopher or a poet, since these, in so far as they are actually so, cannot be indecent: but a tone alone can be indecent. We must remember to distinguish in this between (i) grossness, and (2) indecency: for the easiness of indecency as an art-effect offends, whereas grossness, if not too gross for the Age (as Dante’s grossness for our Age) is one of the arms in the artist’s armoury. *Venus and Adonis*, for instance, is indecent without being a bit gross; whereas *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Bible*, crowded with grossnesses, are so without being in the least indecent: for *Merry Wives* laughs, and *Venus*, always dead serious, never laughs; and we know with how naïf a grace some of the Biblical and Arabian authors knew how to use the art of grossness. For my share, I question whether anything is gross; if so, how can it possibly have got to be so, since to God nothing is gross nor thin, but “thinking makes it so”; and whether people in the future will consider anything indecent. Is *shame* an evolution? If shame is at bottom nonrational, and if Evolution is a movement toward the absolute of rationality, I cannot understand that shame is an evolution; certainly, the French have less shame than we. Once, if you had told me that in your view human shame is not an evolution, I should have disdained your mentation; but now, become more utterly mistrustful of my conclusions, I am become quite unsure as to whether it is an evolution or a survival from brutal moods of Life. Decidedly, dogs have lots of shame, “elephants more shame than men” (Tolstoy): which would scarcely seem to lead to the conclusion that shame is an evolution. Heaven knows! and the well wherein truth dwells. However, I do seem to perceive that our whole feeling in respect to sex in Europe, due no doubt to the necessity of the use of clothes in our cold

countries, is more or less *outré*. Sophocles, questioned toward the end of life as to how he was now affected toward the delights of love, gave answer, “Softly, friend, most gladly have I escaped from those delights, as from some angry tyrant”. But peace is not life! life is nicer than death: “life is sweet”, sweeter than sleepiness and peace: so of the absurd things ever said this may be the worst — that bad eyes are better than sight, the absence of a sense than the blessing of it: for a sense is an insight, a pinning wight wiser than a full wight, since he spies in food a beauty to which the full is blind, a sweet heart wiser than Lucretius, since he can descry in his dear a bliss which a billion eyes are deprived of the wit to spy. Old folks, in fact, are no good, and tax no land: hence of France there is greater hope than of England, where the givers of laws are grey, about to go up to the Lords at the order, “go up, thou baldhead”. But a land to be gallantly grappled and peopled has to be grappled and peopled by carls raging between the ages of sixteen (like Hastings’s father) and thirty-six, or by the few wing footed Hermes, who, having learned the little hither to acquired of the Science of Bliss, enjoy at forty all the buoyancy and jauntiness of boys. But on this subject nothing but a faint modification of consciousness is at present possible to us; and this we will acquire in remembering that only a tone can be indecent, and that, even if it were otherwise, writers are not to be guided in regard to this or any matter by the smiles and wraths of Kensington: they are so proud. Now, a marquis is proud; prouder still a king; prouder still an arch priest: but lordlier far than tsar, or shah, or arch priest, is the sort of carl I am talking of: for his pride is not a pseudo-pride like a duke’s, insecurely massed upon fantasy and sham, a bladder that any chance or brashness of the rabble may shatter; but his is a pride established upon the rock of facts, upon a modest and scientific knowledge of his brain and culture as compared with the brains and culture of different kinds of being,

of the king, the Hottentot, the gorilla, the dog: a *real* pride, a *real* humility. If, then, our reverend gentleman novelists ever venture to be shocking (they know their trade-dodges too thoroughly for that, I take it), let Kensington play the censor on them, and it will do well, I think; but artists do not know their trade too thoroughly for that; they, naturally enough, venture; with an effort of venturing so paltry, that how any mortal with a heart in him can call it “venturing” I can’t say; and, indeed, I know not how it is, but recently it has begun to seem to me that everybody I meet is getting quite fearful and retreating, as though the race of brave men and heroes had ceased to be. Or is this only my fancy? Anyway, if we don’t crave to have the angels and the very jackanapes cackling cachinnations at Kensington, let us not be sweeping away the indecencies of the poor Job, and of all the psalmists and the bards, in whose tone the artist harps to us. So much, then, as to this.

3. Writers, and, I fancy, minds of any strength in general, cherish a natural dislike for adjectives: so that when we see “he was a tall, dark, handsome man”, we may reflect, “Here is a fellow not Homeric”. You may know Voltaire’s mot— “the adjective is the enemy of the noun, even though it agrees with it in gender and number”? Well, this is true: for, if you say “the blue sea”, you tell not more, but less, than if you say “the sea”, since, if you say “the sea”, I think of something blue and vast and awful, but, if you say “the blue sea”, I think only of something blue, and that confusedly. Poetry apparently bears adjectives, or is supposed to, more patiently than prose — *why* I don’t know; certainly, if I was composing verse, not one more adjective should prattle in it than when I am composing prose: and, as a matter of fact, the greater poets — most of the Greeks — Homer — flee an adjective like plague: for though the adjectives in Homer, if counted, might amount to thousands, they are such old-coat adjectives — like “many counselled-Odysseus” — that they sound as one with the noun: as in “dear-

little-thing”, where “dear little” has hardly a dash of an adjective in its disposition, and can’t be called two. As for *two* adjectives before one noun, I doubt if that could be found in Homer — many twos in Milton, who, however, puts one before and hides one behind the noun; and I know of one *three* in Homer, but so wittily arranged as not to be enraging like “tall, dark, handsome”. As for the Jehovist, Job, it may be said that they won’t have an adjective for any money, though in the Jehovist passage which I quoted there appear two, “few and evil”, but those are not the cumbrous kind that huddle the noun behind, combust and drowned. Naturally, it is never a facile thing to express images without adjectives, to tell that one is tall without saying “tall”, but the whole business of Art is a cark and difficulty, and it has to be done in some manner, if that result of *naïveté* of tone, that plain grace of face of the monuments of Greece is to be got; but at present England sits afflicted beneath a very cataclysm and plague of adjectives, like fleas in Egypt! “Thou fool”, said Jesus, and that’s strong; but a modern Englishman can no longer say that, he must say “thou damned fool”, which is by so much weaker as it is fiercer. In that passage from the physician which I quoted you — “cats of character and imbecile cats, but all bore a *strong, though faint*, resemblance to a typical cat” — why could he not have said “all bore a resemblance”? but, no: he must have an adjective, any adjective, nay two, and between the two what a cropper the excellent doctor cropped. Even intellects of no little vigour have got this odd disease, as in that marvel of Carlyle’s, “The body lies on the steps; the head is off through the streets; aloft on a pike” — the correct quotation is, “The *bleeding* body lies on the steps; the head is off through the streets; *ghastly*, aloft on a pike”. But why “bleeding”? “ghastly”? Can the raggedest reader keep from conceiving that cat’s-meat bleeds and is ghastly? So in this little bit you find

two superfluous words, adjectives, from a mind that had a natural dislike of adjectives. So much, then, as to this.

4. It seems rather a mad thing that one should need to get a little Latin in order to read English well; but that is rather so: for English writers, Milton, have a way of hurling out words with an eye to their Latin sense; nay, English writers never write a word of this kind unconscious of its essential sense: for if one writes “ponder”, “attention”, in his mind is “weighing”, “stretching-to”, so that his writing is one mesh of hidden metaphor, which we miss, if we do not know. So much, then, as to this.

5. Let us not be annoyed if at a few points we are foiled of following our writer, his ineffable philosophy, flight, and highest trebles, nor use of him such terms as “incoherent”, “turbid”, the words which a Basuto would use in listening to the tutti tumult of a symphony of Beethoven, or to the tongue of Gabriel in mid-air scattering a madrigal to the galaxy, all glossolalia and Chaldean: it is for *us*, if we desire to love his loveliness, to acquire the way of rising to what is lovely in him, yielding ourselves to the wooing and bent of his leading; then it will be well. For, after all, we may as well learn to respect our writer, who, if he is worth our attention, must be of a kind of better birth than Mike and Bertie. Let us refrain from despatching him little letters of praise and patronage with that familiarity of village rectors: the Divinity gives him ditties; October blows console him; Bootes soothes him. Nor let us send him little vicar letters of censure and suggestion: *he* knows, *he* knows. I know, indeed, that in this country it is not easy to respect the penman: for though we may not consider that notorious Victorian, Marie Corelli, exactly a *littérateur*, there is still the impression that such ladies have some sort of connection, or relation, with the art of literature. But, then, that is not so: for, in fact, so far as Alpha Centauri is solitary and tossed from Sol, millions of millions of miles, so far are individuals of this

kind from having any part in the art and craft of letters. Let us raise, therefore, our respect for the writer to at any rate the level of our respect for the violinist, the painter, whose brush, I think, you would be charmed to rush to pick up, as Charles V picked up Titian's. And our writer more merits our bribes and smites than these, if only because his technique is more a torment to master. See me here at this moment composing with a complete, though low harmoniousness, and with a nearly complete ease — conscious of each consonant and of every (accented) vowel sound of my outlay, without fail remembering them everyone, as the swain bears safe in his brain the faces and tale of his ewes, using an alacrity of consciousness comparable to that of an acrobat or conjuror astonishing some mass of men, of a mathematic (successfully) tackling the job of some very complex problem, writing and riding this English language with the gallantry and wrist of the charioteer of the Roman amphitheatre as he drove his street breadth of rebel steeds; and though I speak of “a nearly complete ease”, that is the result of some forty years of practice that, applied to the piano or the violin, would certainly have turned me into the most perfect virtuoso that the world has heard; then, too, I have but a week or two ago completed a harmonious book, but after some months, may be, if I begin another, harmony will again be to me quite awkward and hard. Respect me, then. And I have not said all, I have not said half of half. For the violinist's technique, though easier than mine, is quite half of his art, while my harder technique is not nearly half of my art, which far more positively, more insistently, more fruitfully, than his, consists in enlarging your consciousness of the truth of things. Let us respect, then, them of this kidney, our priests and kings after the order of Melchisedec, our real priests, great kings, gallant and gladsome and glorious, long to reign over us — whether we want it or not, whether we know it or no. Yet we are right, I

think, to respect our pianist, and in time will arrive at doing this to our writer, too, since our will is ever right, and our ignorance guiltless. So much, then, as to this.

IV. ON SCHOLAR-ARTISTRY



(The Writings of Arthur Machen)

OF LIVING people known to me none I think more, *so*, essentially the artist as Machen — meaning by this a singer somehow of the truth that the universe is bacchic and deserves an emotion, a truth which the universe itself is in a conspiracy to conceal from us, and keep us dull. For we see nothing as it is. That “inverted Bowl” that “coops” us in — no bowl there; the stars are not little, nor the moon a foolish cheese, now whole, now cut, that floats dull — in truth, her speed is as lunatic as herself; a tree inside is a Wall Street all teeming with feet that speed, and to see the scapings of a petal through a microscope is to descry trains of trucks pressing with preoccupation on their way, the whole thing trilling like fiddle-strings, singing like fiddles, every millimetre of ether trilling between here and the Pleiades, light flying, suns thundering, some colliding with fuss and fume, moons undergoing “disruptive approach”, pitching into puddles of pit-fire; as I write, wireless waves are rushing in every direction through my hand and heart, but I do not see them, feel them, and oh, wretched man that I am, who shall rescue me from the blasphemy of being bored? Everything in the conspiracy of secrecy! — except perhaps meteors, streaming flags of fire that the gallant planet flies in her flight, which do reveal a little how things are, with what a laugh she flies with me. But even these I do not half see as they are, and dull I should be, if the scientist did not arise to tell me “the universe is bacchic! bacchic!” But the notes-of-exclamation here are mine:

he has no time, is too preoccupied with seeing to feel, and here is where the artist comes neatly in to rescue me, he having heard what the scientist says, having time, too, to admire, and to tell of it in innuendoes, with winks, saying: “It is not dull! *I* know a thing or two, *I* know a bank whereon the wild thyme grows!” And if one asks him: “But is that all?” he winks at one, saying: “Enough said; I give you a hint: eye has not seen, never heart fancied; tolling melodious notes, wrung with emotion, it rolls; fairy! drunken! enough said.” But is it *true*? Fairy? If it is a fancy, then it is not of the least interest or importance; but the scientist says “yes, a fact”, and the artist with streaming tears calls God to witness it. The scientist’s part in art, however, is not seen by Machen, who conceives that art preceded science, that “poetry has nothing to do with scientific truths”, does not, in fact, quite know what science *is*, thinks that the fact “A loves B” is “a scientific truth”, so does not know that science is the *mother* of art — or, say, *does* know, but does not know that he knows: for art, he says, is adoring; but, then, before adoring one, obviously, must be conscious, must know something, something of an order of things; and to know anything of Order is science; to know more is to adore more. But Machen is of the scholar-artist type, the Milton type, with a remembering habit of mind, not of the scientist-artist type, trained in perceiving, of this type the sole representative so far being Goethe, whose like, when next he comes, will renew all things — such as Wells, Verne, being just shadows cast before his coming. But for the scholar-artist type see Machen who quotes with approval Rossetti’s remark, “I neither know nor care whether the earth goes round the sun” — which is the first remark that a cow would make between two chews the moment it got the gift of speech. Characteristic of Machen is his *Hieroglyphics*, “the gold of that land is good”; but not its “licence of affirmation”, its lack of that wariness, circumspection, or scepticism (*spec=scep* — look — before

you leap) to which only scientific training educates the intellect. His theme is the artist's theme that "the universe is bacchic, and deserves an emotion", but he makes certain unexpected exceptions in emotion! — high art, he thinks, does not weep at the universe, nor laugh at it, only sighs at it. He distinguishes between "feelings" and "emotion", though, of course, there is no such distinction in psychology: "feelings" are emotion. If one sends to a woman a telegram "your husband is dead", and she weeps, is *that*, he asks, fine literature? But, evidently, this bacchic mood, this weeping at the universe, is due to the woman's belief that her *own* husband is dead! If I can make her weep at the universe by a *tale* of, say, Hector, of someone else's husband, in whose existence she does not believe, how high my feat, and fine my "literature"! But he is full of "opinions", biases, idiosyncrasies, resembling that fat Dr. Johnson who struck with his stick for luck every rail of every railing on his way. Half of the universe he loathes; the other half he clasps with passion to his heart: and his favour is often favouritism, his hate is often prejudice: it is not easy to predict what he will kiss, what hiss at. Nor does he ever undergo change: the mountains shall dissolve, but he will be found the same. There are those, who, if ever they caught themselves thinking as they thought six years before, would be killing themselves; but Machen is too delicious to be different. And he argues; anon he is even Socratic: and his pretty bubble of argument can as easily be pricked by an intellect really modern as any of the good Socrates': indeed, in tone of soul and mental outfit he is very like Plato. He lays it down that "literature is the expression of the dogmas of the Catholic Church" — and one may think for a moment that he means it; but not he: he means something, something *true*, but not what he says. He says: "Rationalism may say to you: Either give a reason for going to Mass, or leave off going; you have only to answer:

But I can give no reason for liking *The Odyssey*, and yet you admit I am right in liking it: then I have proved the contradictory of your premises' And now he is quite satisfied; the enemy is crushed. But, then, there is no parallelism between "going" and "liking": the parallelism would be between *liking to go* and *liking to read*. One may "go", not for pleasure, but to "get good", or something: and the Rationalist says "know why". And so on. But it is not for arguments that one reads Plato: he cannot argue, since the ancient brain was not wary enough, trained in scepticism, strong kneed, enough, except when, like Euclid, it argued on schoolboy themes. Yet one reads him spellbound, as one reads Machen, and the heart dances. There are creatures that cannot run, but can fly. When Matthew Arnold spoke of "that victorious brow" (of Shakespeare), that, of course, was Victorian, since Shakespeare had no brow — except in his portraits, in which he vainly emulates Hall Caine. Newton had a brow, Edison: which said, it is evident that Shakespeare had none, for, if so, it would have thought something; and what did it think? we can say at once what Edison has thought, but what Shakespeare had was a warmth, a wing — was no Goethe, who had brow *and* wing; but either by itself is worshipful, and wing without brow will frequently by some luck come cutting into the very thickest of truth. Thus it can easily be shown that the soul of *Hieroglyphics* is true, with a truth on which Machen's books in general are founded. I think the purest Machenesque is *The Chronicle of Clemendy*, such as *The Great God Pan* and *The Three Impostors* perhaps showing some trace of Poe, of Stevenson. In none is aught of "common or unclean" — though it is amusing that when he is most elevated, just then "the general reader" conceives that he is rioting in "improprieties". But, in truth, his theme is ever the Rose, the Rose: even in his letters, for as I write, I reread an old letter that teems with "the Rose"; and though I do not know exactly what Rose he is talking

about, I know that there *is* a Rose — of Sharon — and that *he* knows about it, for his garments smell of it, and his pages. This is how he talks: “The longing peculiar” (unwary!) “to man, which makes him lift up his eyes, looking across the ocean for certain fabled happy islands, for Avalon that is beyond the setting of the sun”: so that the fellow dances mad, he is stung by the tarantula, he loves God, is afflicted with glossolalia and the gift of tongues, weave a circle round him thrice and close your eyes with holy dread, for he on honeydew has fed, and drunk the milk of paradise.

V. OF WRITING AND SCIENCE



AN OBVIOUS DIFFERENCE between modern literature and that of the past is that the modern is more or less modern — i.e., scientific — in *penchant*: — such words as “Oh, earth, what changes”, etc., “Man now is first”, etc., would hardly have been written much before they were; nor is it *that* fiction which is ostensibly scientific — *The Coming Race*, *A Voyage to the Moon* — which is most imbued with the modern mood, but rather such as *La Terre*, *Ghosts*, etc.; and some trace of the same spirit would no doubt be found in any novelette.

But this preoccupation with the science of the moon, the sea, heredity, evolution, Mars, stars, is not owing to the writers being themselves scientists: but they have heard a rumour of Science, and been fascinated. The writer’s trifle of science is still acquired at his fireside, or from an omnipresence of science in the air: which, of course, is not to be a scientist, science being an acquaintance with the ways in which forces act, nor can acquaintances be other than personal, since one cannot feel with another’s fingers. But so much is it ignored that it is personal experience of the cosmos which makes a scientist, that the scientist *par excellence*, the craftsman — the smith, pattern maker, instrument-maker — is not even *called* a scientist in ordinary talk: for this word “scientist” has, as Huxley pointed out, got a quite grotesque glamour in many minds, as though “the scientist” was concerned with a different cosmos from the blacksmith’s cosmos — a glamour which would have been pretty foreign to the comprehension of craftsmen like Galileo, Newton, Papin, Huyghens.

Nor was it only such as Newton, with his “aforesaid Glassworks”, who were firstly workmen; but, as Ruskin knew, the artist, too, was firstly a workman, a scientist, so that between “art” and “craft” was hardly any difference, and men spoke of the “mysteries” (i.e., the science) of a craft as many now think of the mysteries of the “scientist’s” activities. Handicraftsmen like Amati, Stradivarius, were typical musicians; while every Dürer or Botticelli had his own “wrinkles” as to tempera and impasto, was an adept cap-a-pie in the science of the craft of colours, and regarded the drawing of curves and the laying of colours as a craft quite like the fiddle-maker’s curvings, the sign painter’s colourings: hence Giotto’s circle as proof of his artistry. Nor was literature less a craft than lute-making—“men of letters” being craftsmen, not in words, but in letters, in the rhyming (i.e., repetition) of letters, like “studies-in-chords” on the violin, or the stringing of Venetian beads in pretty patterns.

But though every artist is a craftsman, a scientist, the craftsman as craftsman is more exactly a scientist than the craftsman as artist, being subject to tests more crucial and rhadamanthine, and so is more trained in the essentially scientific trait — that level headedness or hard headedness, which in Saxon we call “awakedness”, “awareness”, or “wariness”, in Latin “circumspection”, in Greek “scepticism” (scep = spec=look — before you leap). The violinist and violin maker are both handworkers; yes, but the violinist may anon commit a faulty double harmonic, and live; the violin maker may not make a faulty cut, nor stray from Nature’s rigour as regards his glue or varnish, his arch of bridge or belly, the dash and charm of his scroll, the perfect curving of his purfling: for here no self conceit, no fame, nor fancy, avails him: for sin he is mulcted. Such men know wariness: no anxious general on the brink of battle, no Perrin measuring Brownian movements, nor Ramsay weighing the tenth of a cubic millimetre of

emanation, is of a warier strain. Hence we have those little wrist watches.... They contain a hair-spring — evanescent as a poet's fancy! and very truly poetic, since “poetic” means “making”; there is a balance wheel on the escapement, made by welding two minute semicircles of brass to semicircles of steel (to evade temperature changes), a thing, really, that an angel might deign to mention in Heaven as a *chose vue*, returned from journeying among the suns.

But this wariness, and this inventiveness, are the very traits which the writer, above all artists probably, requires. His trade is to invent. But to invent what? — fictions that look true, that are, in some sense, true, so that the word “create” may not ineptly be applied to his highest efforts. But unless he be trained in wariness, is a veteran in the truth that Truth is in a well, has again and again failed, visibly, six times in ten, in attaining Her, his inventions will not be truthful, but will be tumbling into every sort of obvious blunder — if not obvious to everyone like himself, at any rate to every cabinet-maker, to everyone having a wary habit — and he will be tumbling into a thousand other blunders, not obvious to anybody, smaller failures in truth, the avoidance of which would have hoisted his effort to perfection of excellence — if there is truth in the statement that “beauty is truth”. Take our Shakespeare, our Milton: in that “di parlar si largo flume” (of Milton), how many unwarinesses on a page which no carpenter could away with! In the case of the Trojan War, we have (in general) what can be imagined by man, man being what he is: it is therefore a fiction founded upon fact; but from the first the War in Heaven fails to work — cannot be imagined, since it was “the Omnipotent” whom Satan “durst defy to arms”, Satan being an intelligence who could “wield these worlds and all their elements”, whereas a horse's intelligence is too high to try to stop a train, to say nothing of an infinite train. Or did. Satan not know that the Omnipotent

was omnipotent? In that case, Milton knew something which hosts of super human intelligences did not know — which is foolish. Therefore Satan knew, and did not fight. “Nor did the Omnipotent fight,” our carpenter would say, “he need merely have sneezed, and everything would have been nowhere: therefore there was no war.” And, if there was a war, Satan should never have invented guns and gunpowder: the mind of a trained boy instantly spies that anything invented by the Chinese would never be a trillionth part tricky enough for intelligences so hugely superhuman. Guns that shot off hot balls, not even T.N.T. shells. And none of the Omnipotent’s side was hurt! So did the balls hit no one? Or, hitting, not injure? In either case the intelligence of the shooters, who did not foreknow such a result, was little angelic. And so on: not much of it could have been written by an intelligence a little trained in wariness.

As to Shakespeare, he must have been something of a craftsman as a practical playwright, as an actor, nor do we find him tumbling into obvious blunders on every page — though blunders, we may be sure, are there, obvious or not; and many are the obvious blunders, the footprints of the child, the ancient, to the modern eye, frank as the track of the pterodactyl in Triassic sands. Take as an example at random the passage of him that is perhaps the most celebrated, Hamlet’s “to be, or not to be”. Of this passage Macaulay of the Philistines says, “ ‘To be, or not to be’ has merit undoubtedly as a composition. But its merit as a composition vanishes as compared with its merit as *belonging to Hamlet*. This is perhaps the highest praise that can be given to a dramatist.” As to its “merit as a composition”, this is low: and nothing can better illustrate how hypnotic is the common view, how deep the disease of an eye infected by an epidemic of opinion, than that Macaulay thought well of its “merit as a composition”: for ill would it have gone with that Mr. James Montgomery, the poetaster, at the

hand of Macaulay, if Montgomery had ever written any such thing as “taking arms against a sea” — and so on: it was dashed off anyhow in haste, with some *outré* words, “fardel”, “quietus”, put in to make it sound nice! as all boys do. (This criticism, however, is *by the way*: for here some reader may differ from me; and I am not in this place making connoisseur criticisms from which someone may differ, but I am making such criticisms as a pattern-maker would make, criticisms of blunders, as in the case of Milton, from which it is impossible for anyone to differ, unless someone is unreasonable. Yes, but, says Macaulay, though its merit as a composition is not high (since it “vanishes” when compared with something else), it has this highest merit, that it is so special to Hamlet. But it is not special to Hamlet. Plato said it. I have heard a slattern in a slum call to another that she would “do for herself, too”, only she was afraid of “what may come after” — a thought common to Humanity, that life may fly its carks in the nepenthe of death: “to die, to sleep”: but, then, “perchance to dream”? still perchance to experience phenomena? out of the frying-pan, perchance, into the fire? It is the universality of the sentiment, maybe, that has made the passage so famous, not that it is special to Hamlet. And not only is it not special to Hamlet, but (now I no more speak *by the way*) the fact is that any man who ever lived might have said it — *except* one man: Hamlet. To *him* it was impossible, since he, alone of men, *knew* that there is dreaming after death, could never have said “*perchance* to dream” after his long gossip with a ghost, who had quite gone into details about the dreaming (“purgatorial fires”, etc.). In fact, “perchance to dream”, etc., are *mots d’auteur*: it was Shakespeare, *not* Hamlet, who wished to say it; and, in his eagerness to say it, Shakespeare put the speech into Hamlet’s mouth, forgetting that Hamlet *knew* that a man may hold converse with a ghost — a thing in Nature so much more odd and momentous than X-rays, that to

Hamlet's last day it must have remained the central fact of his consciousness, nor ever thenceforth could his utterances have failed to reflect his consciousness, his perfect certainty, of it, much less show doubt of it, much less *contradict* it ("from whose bourne no traveller returns").

But if Homer nods, and Shakespeare snores, if Dante talks in his sleep, and Milton walks, this is only what we may expect: the brain till lately was not very awake or wary — a fact which we could readily deduce, supposing we had no direct proof of it: for since wariness and inventiveness are but the two faces of the same medal — wariness a sensitiveness as to untruth, inventiveness a sensitiveness as to truth — the wariness of a mind must be a measure of its inventiveness, its inventiveness of its wariness; and since the ancients invented little, i.e., were little inventive, we could be sure without proof that they were little awake or wary. To blunder, then, was their nature: what is more astonishing is that modern writers should tumble into blunders similarly obvious, through not being trained in the wariness of craftsmen and "scientists". Thus H. G. Wells, our scientist-writer en titre, went obviously tumbling, as in the statement that "there are no bacteria on Mars" — and yet Martians. It is not easy to conceive how vegetation could arise without the mic-robes of nitrification; but let it arise; it must presently die out when once Mars became covered with dead tree-trunks, which, in the absence of the bacteria of putrefaction, could never decay — and, since no plants, no animals. If animal life could arise, the corpses of a million years would have the seas solid, the land carpeted; and since a whole story is made to rest on this statement, the story crumbles. So, too, *The Time-Machine*?; for let one contrive to get over such a fancy as the motion of steel in Time, still, in no carpenter could the thought fail to arise that, as the time-traveller started forward, he must come to the date of his death: so that all his alleged adventures after are falsehoods. Another romantic tale, on a

lower level of fancy, though a higher of imagination, lately read by me, is R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, in which an eye in the least modern easily sees that some of the events could never have taken place as related; and if, before writing, the writer had waited to become, like his father, an engineer, the tale would no doubt have been still more romantic, since more true. Perhaps, though, I should not make mention of blunders in this book, since I now shun the bore of shewing what they are, the details being lengthy. Let me take some shorter, more important, equally modern piece — say some play. Novels are not often written with a concentration of all the author's available wariness and invention, but dramas are: so, taking a drama, let me take one by a foremost dramatist, preferably one strong in the modern *penchant* for scientific subjects — say Ibsen; let me take his play that is at once most pregnant with his scientific *penchant* and most celebrated — say *Ghosts*: and, if I can then shew that Ibsen, having a pattern-maker's (or a carpenter's) training in wariness, could never have tumbled into the blunders which gash, and, in fact, slay, and lay, *Ghosts*, I shall have established my argument, and shall end.

The story is known; but I may just mention how to Captain Alving's widow comes on a visit her son Oswald, a painter. The fellow is very unwell, depressed, and pretty quickly he is seeking comfort in the charms of Regina; a Pastor Manders is discussing with Mrs. Alving the life of riot of Oswald's father, when Oswald in the next room is heard doing something tender to Regina; whereupon Manders (excited): What in the world is the matter?

MRS. ALVING (*hoarsely*): *Ghosts!* (for Oswald's father had done the same to a servant, Regina's mother).

This ends the First Act.

In the Second, Oswald tells his mother of his state:

OSWALD: NOW, I am going to tell you something, Mother.

MRS. ALVING: YOU are not ill, Oswald?

OSWALD: DO sit still, Mother. I am not downright ill either. Mother, my mind is broken down — ruined —

MRS. ALVING: My poor boy! How has this horrible thing come over you?

OSWALD: That's just what I can't understand. I have never led an unsteady life — never, in any respect.

MRS. ALVING: Tell me the whole story.

OSWALD: Well, I will. I began to feel the most violent pains in my head. At first I thought it was the ordinary headache I had been so plagued with. But it was not that. It was as though my powers failed me. At last I sent for a doctor. He set to asking me a heap of questions. At last he said, "You have been worm-eaten from your birth."

MRS. ALVING: What did he mean by that?

OSWALD: He said, "The fathers' sins are visited upon the children."

This, then, is the theme and teaching of the play: the importance of Heredity.

Oswald, however, knows nothing of his father's life of riot; and in the Third Act his mother tells him.

MRS. ALVING: I saw only this one thing, that your father was a broken-down man before you were born.

OSWALD: Ah!

His mother then undertakes to poison him, if he becomes an idiot: and in the end he does.

One of the obvious blunders (by the way) is Mrs. Alving's alleged motive for informing the son of the father's debauchery. It is necessary that she should have a motive, but the motive alleged is baseless. She does it, she says, to save him from remorse; would have him know that the fault is in his father, not in his own way of life: for Oswald had said to her (in the Second Act), "Incurably ruined — by my own heedlessness. Oh, if I could but live over again, and undo all I have done! If it had only been something inherited, something one wasn't responsible for! But to have thrown away so shamefully, thoughtlessly, recklessly, one's own health, happiness, everything..." She wishes, then, to free him from these "gnawing and depressing thoughts". But why did Oswald think that the fault was in his own way of life? It was because, when he had told the doctor that his father was an exemplary man (as he then thought), the doctor had been bound to admit himself on the wrong track (as to "the father's sins"), and so "I (Oswald) got to know the truth — *the incomprehensible* truth! I ought to have held aloof from my bright and happy student life among my fellows. It had been too much for my strength. So I had brought it upon myself". Hence Oswald's remorse.

But, of course, no doctor can be imagined to have said so. A "bright and happy life" is never too much for one's strength, being the fruit of strength, and the source of strength, especially when one is quite "steady": and Ibsen, wanting to cast the whole blame upon the father, had previously insisted

upon the “steadiness” of the son. Oswald had said, “That’s just what I can’t understand! I have never led an unsteady life — *never in any respect*.” So when the author is wanting all the fault to be the father’s, he insists upon the son’s steadiness “*in every respect*”, but when he is wanting the son to be tortured with remorse, in order that the mother may have a motive to inform the son of the father’s debauchery, he is unwary enough to forget, or to ignore like the ostrich, the son’s “steadiness in every respect”, the son’s statement that he “*just can’t* understand” how the fault can be in himself; and, in order to make Oswald remorseful, is un inventive enough to make a doctor utter a fantasticality which no doctor, nor anyone, ever uttered, a fantasticality which Oswald would have laughed at, and Oswald’s mother would have laughed at Oswald for being troubled about, and at the doctor for uttering.

And Oswald’s “steadiness”! What a contrast in character to his father! — in a play whose theme is heredity. He has two fathers: his physique he inherits from Alving, his psyche from another father who was the opposite of Alving!

And even here there is blunder: that other father of his could not have been so “steady in every respect” as Oswald pretends: for Oswald was “steady” in gay Paris only, but at home was “unsteady” with Regina, making Mrs. Alving exclaim: “Ghosts!”

These blunders, however, are not fundamental in the play, do not rack it to fragments.

Nor do some other obvious blunders in the presentation of the personalities, as, for example, this:

MRS. ALVING: A vale of tears; yes, and we act up to our profession and make it one.

OSWALD: But in the great world people won't hear of such things. There you feel it bliss and ecstasy merely to draw the breath of life. Mother, have you noticed that everything I have painted has turned upon the joy of life? always, always, upon the joy of life? — light, and glorious air, and faces radiant with happiness?

Here the cause of the blunder is probably not so much that the author forgot that Oswald, of all men, never could have said all that, as that he, Ibsen, wished strongly to say all that, and lacked the self restraint, the wariness and inventiveness, to put the phrases into the mouth of someone in whose mouth they are appropriate phrases. As to Oswald uttering such things— “*dir kannst du nicht entfliehen*”! Never for *him* was a “feeling of bliss and ecstasy”, nor the painting of it, nor even the possibility of conceiving the queerness of state of anyone so alien to him as to feel bliss and ecstasy. He was born with “headaches”, born “worm eaten”, saw a headachey cosmos through worm eaten nerves, nor could any herb on earth ever medicine the malady of that damned diathesis. And there are some other such tumbles into blunders not fundamental in the play.

What is fundamental and racks the drama to fragments is Regina, the “splendid”: for, with singular ill-luck, Ibsen everywhere insists upon her “splendidness”: “Such a fine girl as you’ve grown to in the last year or two”; “Isn’t she splendid, Mother!”; “How beautifully she is built, and so healthy to the core!”; “Mother, when I saw that fresh, lovely, splendid girl standing there before me”; “I saw that she was full of the joy of life”; “Have

you noticed how she walks — so firmly and lightly!"; "Regina is so splendidly light hearted", etc.

The author's motive for all this splendidness seems to be the ordinary motive of the fictionist to make his young women attractive; perhaps, too, he wished to have someone specially attractive as a contrast, and a snare, to a wreck like Oswald; and he takes occasion to make her a bastard of Alving, a visible evidence of Alving's libertinism. But, by a grotesque instance of unwariness, he forgets that she can't be *both* "splendid" and Oswald's half-sister, begot — after Oswald — by the same father who was "a broken-down man before Oswald was born", the cause of all Oswald's sorrows. So the play vanishes: for since a fact paraded in the play denies and derides, sneers and jeers at, the teaching of the play — since he sets out to demonstrate, and demonstrates, that Heredity is everything, and demonstrates in addition that Heredity does not exist — the whole thing cancels out, its sum is zero.

Now, to men of the wary and inventive habit of craftsmen and "scientists" blunders so flagrant are alien. Let us try to fancy the doom of a mechanic doing his task with this one-eyed half headedness: he'd pretty soon be blown up, electrocuted, get his fingers off; nor could any experiment conducted with this unawakedness result in anything but messy fingers, a singed beard, an electrostatic shock, a wish to vomit, a feeling of defeat.

VI. ON HAPPY ENDINGS



WHEN WE TRACK any pleasure radically back to its origin, we discover that that origin was the knowledge of some truth; now, pleasure is Good, for when we investigate anything that we name “*good*”, we see that by good egg, good man, good God, we mean *au fond* pleasure giving; if an egg tastes bad, we say “it is bad”, “not good” — to eat; but, if we put it into soil, and it causes to come a plum that gives pleasure, we say “it was good” — for that. So, since pleasure is the offspring of knowledge of truth, and pleasure is Good, we can say, then, that “Good is knowledge of truth”, or, more shortly, “Good is truth”; as to tales, we can say that “good tale is true tale”, and hence we can say “a good tale has a happy ending”: for, being good, it is true (to Life); and since *the* truth about Life is that its endings are happy, that there is a happy issue out of all Life’s afflictions, here is the theme and emotion of each good tale. Nothing else, indeed, is of real interest to living things, nothing else worth the telling.

That the endings of Life *are* happy we no longer hope, as the ancients hoped, but know, for which reason it is that religion is a modern thing: for, if I hope that you are good (will give pleasure), and fancy that I love you, my love is fictitious, but, if I *know* that you are good (do give pleasure), I love you really; and the ancients had hardly any knowledge of the goodness of God, but were all more or less compelled to think, what Buddha saw, that “Life is sorrow”, what Job saw, that “Man is born to sorrow”, and, having nothing but hope in some “pleasure-garden”, some “nirvana”, to console them, represented Being as a Sphinx, her icy lips smiling at Life’s agonies

over her grim grill of fangs. And still some of the world's aspects are merciless — earthquakes in Japan, Chilian villages which vanish, "Titanics" perishing, aircraft crashing. But our consolation is no more fictitious, but real, now are we the sons of God, of Reality, and, knowing, are done with faith and hope. The generations of the geologic ages raged in sorrow, and still the millions teem, streaming to crash down over the ocean-cataract and perish, generation chasing generation down, after finding themselves somehow alive, like silly chickens hatched in incubators, knowing little under the dumb constellations, knowing pain, the young lions crying for food, the old lions growling for toothache, every life under sentence of death, destined to stink, to grin, to get to be grotesque, ridiculous — pitiless thing, pitiable — Time like a cannibal cat, *edax rerum*, Eater of them it breeds. Still, it is high drama, star-high, for star light is the theatre lights turned low, the scene is deep in Eternity's deeps — it is high doings — wait — it is not for nothing — out of the Eater shall come forth meat. The dinosaur sighed and died out, yes, but if, in dying, it had said, "Though He slays *me*, yet do I trust in Him", that, we now know, would have been well said, for men and birds have turned up; and a day will be in which the Eternal Worker shall have wiped from the eyes of Life all tears but tears of love wrung from Life's broken heart, a day in which Life will say, "It is well that once the muds mothered me, and I fluttered, for wild is this delight of mine in that Might, under the shadow of Whose wing is Life's refuge for ever." And since this is science — for, if it is not science, there is no science, no relying upon experience, and weather forecasts are nonsense — since it is science, we can say that, of two tales, that one which has the happier ending is the best (truest), and if this excludes from the category of good tales some famous "tragedies" — *Othello*, *Ghosts* — that is nothing, if our argument is sound. *Some* "tragedies", though, are good. For, of course,

there are two kinds of happy ending: (i) endings happy for the “characters” of the tale; and then (2) — a still better kind — endings happy for the reader, for Society, for Life. Of this second kind an excellent example is *The Bacchae* (of Euripides), or say *Romeo and Juliet*, in which we have tragedy, pretty pitiful, but then comes a happy ending for *us*; *we* get the benefit, since that Montagu Capulet feud that had so wounded the Community is soothed to quiescence over the lovers’ tomb; and in the end we see that the pitilessness of God is *good*, for there was a happy issue out of all that affliction, as out of the megatherium’s shriek of grief, the pterodactyl’s tragedy, and the affliction was worth while, since the blessing to many immensely outweighed the bale to a pair of wee people; whereas in *Othello*, which, ending in sorrow, tells no gospel truth, we get a private trouble not my business, a storm-in a-teacup, its kite hitched to no star, a novelette — higher than ordinary novelettes, because of the warmth of the author’s genius, which breeds in him an impulse to be extraordinary, but lower than ordinary novelettes, because his impulse to be aberrant from novelette type is warmer than wise, ordinary writers being submissive to novelette type, of which happy endings is a right characteristic. How right a characteristic we see in that “old, old story” of Jesus Christ, the best no doubt that was ever told — best since truest, truest since having *both* kinds of happy ending, both *in excelsis*. No lack of tragedy here: gashly the hero dies; but little that matters — the nimble being rises again: sorrow may endure for a night, for two nights, but joy comes in the morning. And he ascends into heaven — a thing most true — not “the descent of Man”, but the ascent of the son of Man; in which heaven he lives happily ever after — though he will come once more triumphant, riding the skies, attended by ten times ten thousand knights, with squalls of psaltery-strings trilling, or with crashing rote of chariot-wheels, and thundering throat. If the tale had been by a modern

author, the end must have been spoiled: he, with his modern circumspection, could not have helped demanding of himself “ascend — where to?” If to the nearest star, travelling with the speed of light — the maximum speed of Being — his traveller would be five years flying, supposing that he did not catch his death of cold, to be then frozen to a bone in the zero of cold, before going bony for hunger; if to some far sun of our system, the trip would last fifteen thousand years, would be still beginning; if to the nearest system of suns, a million years. Such considerations would prevent that end from being written at present, but in an age when it could be written, and the details of this deeply true tale credited, it is not strange if it inspired an even wild affection: men died for it. As to the second kind of happy ending, a world is rescued — not a town, as in *Romeo and Juliet* — *this* world, in which the reader is. At all points, in fact, the tale is transcendent, *in excelsis*: Buddha abandoned his father’s throne, but not his Father’s throne in Heaven; went forth to poverty, but not to death — and so on. But it is the tale’s end that matters, the lizard linnet victory of issue out of affliction, and lark’s hymn of happiness at the last.

VII. OF HOW TO BE HAPPY

I



“GOOD”, WHEN WE reflect, we see to mean pleasant, happy, “best” means pleasantest, happiest — as even the ancients (Aristippus) could clearly see.

But people who are not miserable tend to be content with themselves as they are, not imagining any Good greater than their negative Good, nor desiring to “have life and have it more abundantly”, as cats do not desire to be bipeds, nor to listen in. But there is positive happiness — height after height — if we *know* how.

For Good, Best, consists in knowing, and an omniscient being is in bliss, knowing how to procure every pleasure and evade every pain (the *sci* in “omniscient”, “science”, “consciousness” meaning knowledge).

And any knowledge of order, of what always *follows upon* what, is called Science — not the knowledge that one has a headache, but the knowledge that headache *follows upon* stomach-trouble; and it is easy enough to see that it is this sort of knowledge, knowledge of order — science — which mainly makes an animal happy, which *alone* makes animals in the mass happy: for though *I* get some happiness from knowing where to find my pipe, Life-on-the-whole gets happiness only from knowing eternal truth, universal order, such as that insulin in a sick kidney is followed by a cure, that a four-cycle explosion in a car is followed by motion of the car.

From which we see that the so-called “mystery of evil” is no mystery at all: evil is pain; pain is ignorance, lack of science; and since science is of necessity a *growth* — for there can’t be an omniscient monkey or amoeba — this explains the “mystery of evil”.

If we now go dancing, then, that is only natural: for evil is ceasing, will more and more completely cease.

The cavemen — Caesar — all the ancients — were in pretty evil case: no matches, now, no anaesthetics, dentists, paper, w c’s, motors — nothing much; dulness, carks, apprehensions; everyone “had a devil”, seven devils, was a leper, maimed, halt, or blind: their science was so slight.

However, not all science is of equal promptness in making happy. Darwin spent thirty years in studying worms, caring nothing about worms, really, caring only about happiness, certain that some day, somehow, a knowledge of worms will work to make men happy; but, meantime, he suffered deep pains which he did not know how to cure. Spencer, too, had no little science: but, if he had known less of other things, and how to cure dyspepsia, he would have been happier.

For we are not infra-angels, as low types like the ancients and savages find comfort in imagining, but are super monkeys, and in simple things is our good and evil. Our hearts will not dance and adore, if we have toothache, or lack food.

That is one thing to know, in order to be happy.

For instance, we are often eating and always breathing, and, if we do these wrongly, we cannot have happiness of heart.

If someone says (like Bernard Shaw) that we do these things by instinct, and therefore rightly, I reply “you don’t know what instinct is”. Instinct was once reason in some ancestor, who came to the decision to behave in some particular way; which way became second nature in descendants: and his

decision was more likely to be unwise than wise, just because he was an ancestor, low in type. Dogs, for example, are radically wrong, breathing in pants, eating in gulps, so that their jubilant youth degenerates into a shameful old age at fourteen.

And so with many men; they never get a breath of fresh air: for air taken into the lung becomes foul air, and this should be deeply squeezed out by the strength of the trained breast-muscles before the next take-in, especially in sleep; but their pant expels but a pinch of it; then the next pant takes in a pinch of fresh air to mix with the foul, so that there is never a breath of pure air in the lung. Such folk soon lose the jubilation of youth: for the air of heaven is a heavenly spirit, all frivolity and holiday, and the organ that inhales the laughter of its life-sparks' flight is the organ of gaiety.

Anyway, there is little difficulty as to breathing strongly: four months, say, of self training, then never any more: for one is always practising after.

Possibly, my own continued efficiency in breathing owes something to a habit of running, which (like swimming) much strengthens the lungs; and since we cannot run far and fast, the thing is to run far and slow. When one does it thinly clad in March winds, say — flushed, breathing easily, panting only for happiness — it is well then with one.

“I know a man,” says the apostle, “who was caught up to the third heaven, and there saw unspeakable things”; well, I, for my part, know a man who has been caught up to the seventh heaven, there to see things more unspeakable still, as 7 is to 3 — or as 7 is to 0: for there is no third heaven (as people then believed), so never the apostle was there; but there is a seventh heaven.

II

Again it is easy to eat wrongly.

For only lukewarm liquids should be swallowed... Now, cold things, like water, hot things, like tea, solid things, like plums, do not hurt the mouth, so may well be put into it; but, as they hurt the stomach, and, as the mouth is a marvel of mechanism for warming cold things, for cooling hot things, for liquefying solid things, provided it be given time, therefore it should be given time.

And from its first months a baby should be trained so to eat. In its breast-sucking, Nature supplies it with petty oozes only, but a foolish mother, spoon feeding it, stuffs it with spoonfuls, implanting into it for ever a habit of haste in eating. Yet, on growing up, if it discovered Golconda, or got to be a Pope, these would be but trumpery lucks compared with having had a mother of some understanding and loving patience.

To some, indeed, it may seem that that must be a bore to eat slowly; but, then, righteousness of life is no bore, but luxury and fun — real righteousness. During a week or two it is a bore to go over from any bad habit to any good: but “good” means pleasant — has no other ultimate meaning; and eating first becomes a great good when perfectly done. Now, too, you may say goodbye to “sick-headaches” and suchlike shames: for we are well made, and merely grieve through ignorance.

Nor does eating well occupy much more time, since we are then inclined to eat less; moreover, one gets to know the luxury of eating will never be so green as to eat unless greedily hungry, and this may mean less time spent on the whole — two meals being enough (I think). We are meant to eat a certain number of tons in a lifetime, and most people eat the whole in sixty years, then die, while the wise take a hundred years to eat it, then die.

Slow, then, and seldom — and silence! For the job of eating with joy and consciousness is enough to occupy all one’s attention; but people chatter

meanwhile! If I was an entertainer of many, I should make a law, “No conversation at table”. Then meals will become an epicure’s sacrament.

And I imagine that *what* one eats is also of importance; but here, though one’s ears are wide to hear of “Vitamin D”, “unfired food”, etc., one is still bewildered. I have an idea that, if we ate only fruit, fresh picked, and ate it well, we might live to be one hundred and twenty; but, of course, this is not knowledge. And whence is the average man in England to get fresh fruit? He actually drinks beer, not made of fruit, and his inspired law-makers, instead of bribing vine growers to send him wine, *tax* them, to make him drink beer.

And there is another science that specially makes men happy — the science that makes them religious: for, though all science does this, *that* science specially does it which consists in the knowledge of what follows upon some simple, large facts, such as the facts of what we are, when we are, where we are.

To know which facts is the high privilege of modern men, ignorance of them being the reason why the ancients never dreamt what religion is, what happiness is — true religion, high happiness.

For they lacked our lowliness of heart, fancying that the universe is little, themselves big, fancying that there is joy among the lords of Taurus in respect of one Tom that repents.

And they were haunted with apprehensions — of death, of hell, of stars “falling”, the earth bursting up, graves giving up their dead.

We are too little for hell: the Charioteer of Arcturus says “pooh” at our dwarf G sun — one of billions no doubt in billions of island universes, of which a few are visible to our eyepieces.

Nor had the ancient brain the strength to realise the Past, the Future, Eternity; a few years back was “the beginning”, while “the end”, “the

consumemation” (τό τέλος) was expected daily by some. For us the earth’s seven thousand million years is a mere click of the cosmic clock, our eternity being ungirt by any beginning; and since “Force is persistent”, and there is One whose Name is Force, we know that, though the pulses of these suns will slow, His sea will for ever and for ever flow, His billows will know no end.

In that Deep of Time, if He seek me, He will not find me, He will be deprived of you; but will not repine.

Meantime, by pricking and pressing our spirit to be omnipresent in space and time, we are with Him in that Everywhere where He resides; and there with Him is fairyland, romance and happiness.

Ill So, then, in a new universe we are new creatures, having learned Bigness, Littleness, Awe.

And we have learned Love, on learning that men are sprung from Apes, that there is a principle of Progress in Being, by which Life through science climbs to might, and will in time be wildly delighted — this not being a *hope* and a *faith*, but knowledge obtained by experience in the same way in which we know of the future that next June will be sunnier than next October.

So here is Gospel in reality, glad tidings of great joy in truth! His name was Charles, and his name was Comforter, Prince of Consolation, for we still know pain, but a voice has called to us Love! all is well, be comforted: For, as none before Galileo could suspect that God is great, so before Darwin none could suspect that God is greatly good.

And now we have thrown overboard our “personality” as a phantom having no reality, only One being real, “I” being a thing of atoms that reel in dance, so that during sleep my opinions veer, my nails lengthen, “I” to-day being far from being the same body or mind as when I was embryo, or

behaved yesterday: I have changed, am different, and a different thing is another thing. And since millions of changes take place in each thing in each second, “the individual perishes, the world is more and more”, the drop is lost in the Ocean.

But the sense of self in the ancients and savages! — amusing souls. “Who follows Anjou?” cries Richard Lion-heart, leaping from a ship into the sea to fight a battle, clad like a Basuto “boy” in gawds and gewgaws. What cocks! *I came, I saw, I conquered, I am* — the cock. “Anjou’s” father, was “England” — God is *my* right, by jingo! One of them had for motto “Cave, adsum” — look out for yourself, I am about, swaggering as the African gallant, “Lion of the Tribe”, struts and carries on.

We are different — puffs of nothing whirled in the whirlwind of eternal things, universal things. And all this lowliness of ours, this nirvana, this awe, this love that “casts out fear”, this true religion, real poetry, this inhabiting of eternity and having our lot in a nook of infinity — all this romance is happiness, on condition that, really modern, we realise the facts.

To realise them, one not being formally “a scientist”, one should read about them, and by strong imagining digest them into the mesh of one’s everyday intelligence.

The facts are (i) that suns are big; (2) that the earth is old; (3) that men’s unlikeness to snakes is slight compared with their likeness; (4) that atoms are smaller than archangels can imagine.

But one who learns that there are other worlds thick as peas does not believe, *know* it, until by familiarity with details he gets the facts into his heartbeats: he should study some astronomy, some biology, some sub atomic stuff, some mathematics — there’s no difficulty.

Then, waking up, he finds what he is — Nothing; when he is — Nowhen; where he is — in the seventh fairyland of the seventh heaven,

sailing away for Utopia on one of these islands of idyll that float areel through the Ethereal Sea; and now he realises that that is not clever to consider Being common place, just because other Joneses are sufficiently unreasonable so to consider it.

A young man, lost somehow when an infant in a tropical forest, where like Tarzan he had lived solitary, was captured and brought to Paris (in the 1880's), to be studied by the anthropologists, and it was found that his adoration was boundless; when there was a gale his raptures became frantic: he ran, he pranced, he laughed, his tears streamed — as is natural in anyone whose intelligence is fresh and much above a cow's. Perhaps cows, too, are like that, as young dogs, larks, seem to be; and Jones is dull, not because he is weak in the head, but because of the inveterate influence upon him of millions of Joneses, all preoccupied with the strains and stresses of a crazy society, named “modern”, but designed by ancient minds of a childish type, so that the Messrs Jones have no leisure to be conscious of other facts; and from them the leprosy of dulness spreads.

For for goodness, happiness, one must, moreover, have some “*goods*”— “*wealth*.”, in addition to high health and high consciousness: “healthy, wealthy and wise”; and, as to getting *wealth*, or *wellth*, I don't know what to say — except this, that, to be *well* off, Israel must not live in Egypt, nor Saxons in a Norman England: a nation must have a country as *we* no doubt would soon have, if we had the gumption to appoint to govern us young scientists, not old lawyer minds.

However, the big difference between two men is not that one is a beggar and the other a duke, but that one is dead and the other alive to eye this sight of a world and worlds. On waking from a sleep, I say, “Alive! another day, another palace, built without hands of bubble-colours upon a void of Being; and in all the myriad hits of this mystery and miracle of me not an

ache, not one. As to to-morrow, what do I care? If 'I' do not wake again, 'I' will not know; if I do wake, 'I will be someone else — someone older, too, his blood less flushed with the hormone of piety to exult, and love, and thank, and thank; and Peppy's dead, Ketty's dead, Setty's dead, the lake-dwellers dead, and that old Uruk who built Ur of the Chaldees; but I this day am a thing awake and well: this is my day, my palace." Then I am up, to be an hour naked, exercising every muscle, especially the face-muscles, so as never to look older to myself (for that's bad), letting no muscle stir but the one I will to stir; then to bathe in cold and be anointed with oil; then out to run six miles in cotton shirt, trousers, shoes — nothing else ever; and if there are heaven high winds waydaring, wetted with drizzle — everything in Eden wet, fresh-made, smelling of eternity, singing the hymn of the earth's journey toward Hercules — then I can't help letting my mouth shout what my soul moans, "Beloved", thanking God that to men at least is given to perceive His meanings, and to be with Him in days and places of Heaven that no tongue may tell of.

VIII. ON WEALTH



THE MEANING OF “wealth” frequently seems to be not clearly apprehended.

For example, Frank Varley, Member of Parliament for Mansfield, says (as to a Mines Nationalisation Bill), “The miners are justified in asking that the national wealth (meaning mines) should be nationalised.”

But clear concepts, and the use of words with precision, are great gains. A mine, now, is not wealth. *Well* is good, or pleasant; *wellth* (or wealth) is goods, or pleasures; but, evidently, a diamond on-the-ground is no good or pleasure, is not wealth: though, if I *take* it, “do work” on it (as physicists say, i.e., move it), pick it up, a diamond in my hand, in my tie, is wealth.

Coal in a pit is no good or pleasure to anyone, is not goods, *wellth*; though coal in a fire-box, in a grate, is. The sea, the land, the air round me, is not wealth; though the air that I have *taken* — i.e., moved — into my lungs is.

Nature is not wealth: wealth is something desirable in Nature taken, moved: it is the taking, moving, that changes Nature into wealth; and the whole of the wealth in a piece of coal, or any object, consists in motions given to that particular kind of thing: for whereas it was originally no good, it got to be some good by being moved, and where it was moved to it was less good than where it now is, its *wellth* growing and growing by successive movements.

And the movers of it, the makers of the wealth in it, are the sole owners of it: for only wealth can be owned; “to *own*” means to own *wealth*, to own

something that has been moved, and has acquired wellth, by one's *own* force; or someone else may have moved it, and I, through having moved other things by my *own* force, am able to buy it from him, and *own* it. But in every case to *own* is to own wealth. If in the dark I steal something that turns out to be no good to anyone, that is no theft, as, not being goods, it can have no owner.

Nature, then, cannot be owned, only goods can, only wealth — something that has been moved.

We see, then, the absurdity of men being wealthy “by law” through asserting that they own something that, not being wealth, cannot be owned: is it strange if absurdities emerge out of the bowels of communities founded on an absurdity so buffoon?

What is curious is that such “owners” base their absurdity on a truth, referring to the “good old simple plan that they should take who have the power”, this, they say, being the Divine law; and, of course, this is so true, that no other law is even conceivable; moreover, what one takes, they say, is his, his own, he owns it; and this, too, is evidently so. But they seem to have no notion of the meaning of the word “take”, do not realise that, to own, one must really take, not merely say that one has taken.

If one breaks some skulls with battleaxes, and makes a “law”, and sets up a fence, sets up a board marked “trespassers will be prosecuted”, that is saying that one has taken; but “to take” means to move. If I say to my guest “take some mustard”, he may trumpet “Yes!”

“Yes!” till his throat's sore; but saying is not taking: to take he must “do work” on it, move it, do something to it.

In the case of a plot of land, it has soil, it has site, it has undemoil — those three: and its soil can be owned by an individual who takes it, i.e., moves it, ploughs it, compresses its particles by building on it (as when we

“take” a chair), does something to it, somehow changes it from Nature into wealth — for a while; its site cannot be owned by an individual, since he cannot take it, move it, do anything to it; but it can be owned by a community who takes it, i.e., moves it, moves it from being outside a community to being inside a community, does something to it, raises its rental — motion being Einsteinian, relative, and one may take some mustard either by moving it to one’s mouth, or by moving one’s mouth to it; as to the undersoil — the earth’s lithosphere — the most important of the three — that cannot be taken, moved, owned, by one or by many.

Such, then, is the *bébêtise* of men saying that they own lands of which they cannot take the site or the undersoil, and have not taken the soil, nor have bought the soil, nor have inherited the soil from anyone who ever took the soil!

IX. OF THE NECESSITY OF WAR



WHAT FIRST EMERGES as a truth relevant to our enquiry is that wars among us civilised are less frequent and prompt than among the ancients and savages: and, if we can see the reason of this, this may furnish a clue to the question whether the process is certain to continue.

Is it that we moderns have become more mild in mood, the warfare of the ancients and savages being an offspring of their ferocity? Or is the ferocity of savages a fancy? The Caribs, for instance, the Incas, were gentle people, upon whom the Spaniards came “like wolves upon sheep” — as Macaulay said of the English coming upon the Hindus; and in honour, too, in heroism, and other moral moods the American Indians seem to have surpassed the Spaniards.

Some savages, then, are not ferocious, and, if all A's have not x, x cannot be a characteristic of A; also some savages are more moral than some civilised, some being Christian, Mahometan, saints; and since there are but the bodily knacks, and “heart”, and head, and the difference between savage and civilised is not in the knacks, save in knack of hand (hawks excelling both in sight, dogs in scent, cats in hearing), and the difference is not in “heart”, it must be in head, or hand, or both — in intelligence, and so in knowledge of the cosmos, or in handicraft, or both. Who, for example, are the bravest soldiers? I have heard it asserted that the Turks are, that the Irish are, the Germans, the Japanese, the French, the Cossacks, the English, the Chinese; and some savages have shewn themselves at least as brave as any of these. For “deathless heroism”, endurance the most stoical of

excruciation, I select the fatalist Hindu — Nuncomar on the scaffold — though some Red Indians, some French aristocrats in '93, some Chinese, some Africans, are hard to surpass in this respect. Hence the harm which those do who boom and hoot examples of moral mood, such as the Balaclava Charge, or that “Birkenhead Drill” which the King of Prussia presented as an example to his men: for, in so doing, they focus admiration upon those things in which savages are not below the civilised, and they omit to boom those things which have lifted the civilised far above savages, viz., knowledge of the cosmos and handicraft: so that Grace Darling becomes more celebrated than Rutherford. But the aim of Nature may be demonstrated to be the development of the brain — even the hand, Her next favourite, being perhaps destined, as some imagine, to be replaced by a mechanical hand; and She gives the impression of having spent 900,000 years in training men to a moral heredity, merely in order that the thinker's brain may not be much distracted by the irruption of his own and others' passions. Hence with the civilised — at least the highly civilised — the centre-of-gravity of the man has shifted, and he is as if converted and born again, not of water, but of the intellect, the words “*good* man”, “*best* man”, no longer meaning, for him, a saint or moral enthusiast like Socrates, Buddha, Marcus Aurelius, Carlyle, Arnold, but a seer, like Faraday, Helmholtz; at the notion of the ancients and savages, that all things work together for good to them that have certain emotions, and walk by charms, he smiles, as at his child's fancies and drawings, at the handicraft of savages, at Napoleon's notion that “God is on the side of the big battalions”, knowing well that God is on the side of the big intelligences, and that one inventor may yet be stronger than a thousand million men; “conduct”, then, for him, is no longer “three-fourths of life”, but a tenth, a more or less subconscious, negligible tenth, since he is carelessly convinced that he, the

King, can do no wrong; nor is his cosmos any longer a moral parish, but is large, and electro chemical: so not grit, but wit, any longer preoccupies him, appearing to him most noble and exemplary, not moods, but perceptions, the spin thariscopes, the 4-cycle Otto, the electrolytic detector, the seer's wit of the phonograph, of the submarine; and his question is not "How shall I *feel*, what shall I *do*, to be saved?" but "What shall I *think*, to further a world, and what shall I *make*?" Moreover, those who boom such examples of moral mood overshoot their aim: for their excellent aim is to encourage such moods; but such moods are not foreign to Man, nor far from the thought of his heart; and those who over laud them only cause them to be infected with a certain self-consciousness, bravado, below the plane of the simple stoicism of a Nuncomar or Redskin brave: for in conduct, as Novalis says, "the unconscious is the alone complete".

At any rate, since ferocity is not a characteristic of savages, it cannot be that their wars are caused by their ferocity: for, as Prescott shews, even the gentle Incas were generally at war — who permitted their empire to be conquered by two hundred Spaniards: these people's wars assuredly were not because of their ferocity. Only, they knew how to look ferocious when they put on plumes and paints, to prod themselves toward ferocity, like boys who boisterously march and look large, but are not too ferocious *au fond*, Man apparently being not a ferocious animal, but a domestic and slippered soul, until some power rouses and hounds him to prowess upon the warpath.

And, if ferocity is not the cause of savage wars, shall we think that ferocity is the cause of the wars of modern Europeans? That can hardly be: for, on the contrary, the laws, at all events, and manners of the civilised — their garb and garniture — have inclined toward mildness, fineness, politeness, the very war paint and horrid busby of the swash buckler having tended to vanish. This, Buckle fancies, has been owing to the discovery of

gun powder, which created a special class of fighter, and to the discovery of steam, which promoted intercourse — anyway, was not owing to preachers of peace, but to causes universal in civilisation: so the change is universal. Some modern Continentals, indeed, especially the Germans, have deliberately fostered among themselves a certain turbulence and “frightfulness” in the curl of their moustache, like Daimio Japanese; but this seems a mere freak and anachronism of fashion, like Greek gowns under the Empire. Two thousand years ago, in Germany, the shipwrecked sailor was “vogebsfrei” — could be seized as a slave, or killed; a thousand years ago his little property, at any rate, could be taken; to-day under the reign of science men stake life and property to rescue and pet him, Huns becoming merely Hunnish, and finally honied, until roused by some power and hounded upon the war-path. Anyway, the truth seems to be that men are not ferocious, that, as the song sings, “We do not want to fight” — until, by Jingo, we do.

For we do. “We are at war with Germany”, as someone, twenty years ago, waking up, insisted — driven to it, “for the good of Belgium”, some said, “for freedom and civilisation”, others said, “for the sacredness of paper”, Lloyd George said, “for our existence” Winston Churchill said — mixed motives. And why did France fight? “For our existence,” she said, “for the *revanche*”, she said, “for justice, freedom and civilisation.” And why did Russia fight? “For our existence,” she said, “for Constantinople”, “because we were attacked”. And why did Germany fight? “Because we were attacked,” she said, “for our existence”, she said, “for our development”, “to spread culture”, “to strafe every one” — mixed motives. Everywhere, however, was found one profession — that they fought “*for existence*”, which has a truer ring than that it was for “justice”, or “paper”. At any rate, we may say that it is not for nothing that they suffered, but for

something; and, if no group of ten Germans can agree in their analysis of what the something was, nor no ten French, English, then, since they are not ferocious, they, in common with savages, must be pushed toward war by some cause — one bidding as the love of “existence” — a cause dark and wide, which, like all causes, we must call “Divine”.

This is the more obvious, because here was no holiday cock-fight, but business — gargantuan — nor ever was the gorge of death so chock with flesh. Are men, then, as sands, and offal of Autumn? Or will anyone henceforth utter the phrase, “life is precious”? Indeed, this was ever an empty phrase, bereft of sense, if “precious” meant anything like rare, as radium is a precious metal: for living beings teem in nearly every cubic millimetre of the sea, soil, lower air, so that coal or copper is most precious in comparison, and, if one kill a million times a billion lives, that makes no difference, a million billions spring in their place. In fact, we know that the will to live and occupy every nook is a rage so furious, that the varieties of life everywhere *press* upon the limits of their means of well being, and are at war “for existence”, so that each would speedily overspread the earth, if its spread were not repressed by some necessity of its environment— “environment” meaning the nature of things as it concerns any variety, not as, say, Sir Norman Angell, in his *Great Illusion*, thinks as regards human varieties, that their environment is “Nature” *outside* Man, which Man’s business is to “conquer” — a view of the human race as a non natural whole in the midst of “external Nature” which is little modern, and is no more to be maintained as to Man than as to birds, whose “sparrow is speared by the shrike”, each variety having other varieties of its species that environ it as part of Nature.

Of human varieties, then, as of every variety, that must be a truth what Spencer says: “*Every* variety is perpetually undergoing a variation in

number, now rising above the average through abundance of food or absence of enemies, and then, by a scarcity of food or abundance of enemies, being depressed below its average; and amid these oscillations lies that average number at which the expansive tendency is in equilibrium with repressive tendencies” — a truth that has-been called “The Law of Life”.

But in this statement of the Law two words call for elucidation—“enemies”, and “average” (number). The “enemies” of sparrows may evidently be divided into three kinds: (i) the nature of inanimate things, weather, dearth, size of the earth, etc.; (2) such animate enemies as farmers, cats, etc.; and (3) such animate enemies as shrikes, birds like sparrows. Such are the “enemies” which repress the spread of varieties in general; but the varieties of *one* genus — the dominant genus — must offer an exception: for, since the number of these can hardly be repressed by the dominated genera, their enemies can be of two classes only, viz., inanimate things, and the other varieties of the dominant genus; and, if the Law of Life is to operate in this genus also, then the varieties of this genus must either evade the repression of inanimate things by an adequate increase of knowledge or quality, or they will have their rage to overstep their “average number” repressed by their only remaining enemies, the other varieties of the dominant genus — unless they themselves repress their rage to overstep their “average number”.

Now, as regards Man, the naturalist may not be quite prepared to state that *he* is the dominant race: for that race is the dominant which can come upon all others, saying, “I am about to kill, devour, decompose you” — as Man does to lambs and lions, and as is done to Man and to all by microbes: and, in fact, this race of microbes has everywhere in the past been the enemy which, more than anything, has repressed every tendency of Man to overstep his “average number” — in “Great Plagues”, “Black Deaths”,

when many deathcarts wended, and from dwelling to dwelling went the wailing “out with your dead”. *αἰεὶ δε πύραι καίοντο Θάμναι*. Such horrors, however, no longer happen in our most crowded slums; the dominance of microbes has so toppled, that civilised Man may now roughly be called “dominant”: in which case, any overstepping of its “average number” by any variety of civilised men in any stage of knowledge must, if it evade the repression of inanimate things, either be deliberately repressed by the variety itself, or it will be repressed by other varieties of civilised men — a statement necessarily true, if the statement by biologists of the Law of Life is true. Some biologist, indeed, like Mitchell, may see fit to make the suggestion that all other biologists, knowing little of biology, misstate the Biological Law; but this can hardly be regarded as gravely meant; and, biologists apart, it is only necessary for anyone to look within himself to discover that he is conscious of the truth of the law, and this without other knowledge of biology than belongs to housemaids, who quite know that there would be more mice, if there were no cats, and more cats, if kittens were not killed by men, and more men, if their “average number” was not adjusted by want and war.

But “average number” — what is this? What is the “average number” of the English variety? In 1700 their number was 6,000,000; in 1800 it was 12,000,000; in 1900 it was 45,000,000; in 2000 it will be some 360,000,000 (at this rate). Which of these is its “average”, or natural, number? — for here “average” means “natural” or “proper”. It is evident that the “average” number was, in each case, some thing not far from the actual number at that date: for we can be sure that 39,000,000 of the 45,000,000 now in England would have perished in 1700, since the 6,000,000 then had no superfluity of things; nor could those surplus 39,000,000 by their labour have coaxed Nature to produce things to maintain them, for, of their two enemies, we

know that one at least — the nature of inanimate things — would have killed them off, in their lack of knowledge of soils and oils, light and lightning, steam and steels; if some did contrive to survive in wretchedness this enemy, they must have survived, since not by their own quality or knowledge, then somehow by the labours and trading of other nations, to whom they would be powerless to pay any recompense; and these survivors must presently have perished, if not by microbes, then, by their only remaining enemy, the other varieties of their species: for, by the Law of Life, there would have been War.

But while Man's behaviour is not less ordered by natural laws than is the behaviour of rooks and sparrows, the laws operate through men's will and reason: so that when Austria wars with Italy, it is not in order to illustrate some Law, but for some concrete cause of quarrel. Between the Wa-Ingwania and the M'Niami, frequently at war, unconscious of any biologic law, there must be some grievance which can be definitely alleged. What is it? It is to be remarked that they are very separate in their proximity, like a drop of oil hard by a drop of water, like Montagu and Capulet, Jew and Samaritan. A German can come to London, marry a Cockney, open shop in Bermondsey; but, if a M'Niami hunt a haartebeest across the frontier into Mo-Ingwania, it is at the risk of being seen and speared. Yet the Wa-Ingwania owe something to the M'Niami: that new-fangled style of grinding groats now the mode throughout Mo-Ingwania is a M'Niami notion; but for M'Niami mountains the flats of Mo-Ingwania would be a misery in the rainy season: it was not the Wa-Ingwania who kneaded M'Niamiland with their hands, and seated her where she is, and seated Mo-Ingwania where she is, serenely screened within those everlasting arms of M'Niamiland: the Wa-Ingwania forget that. And, if part of Mo-Ingwania wellbeing, Mo-Ingwania wealth, is *owing to* the M'Niami, that part is

owned by the M’Niami; and, if part of Mo-Ingwania wealth is, then part of Mo-Ingwania land is, for wealth is from land, as finger from hand. But, then, the M’Niami, for their part, forget that it was the Wa-Ingwania who attracted the Portuguese trucksters to these latitudes with their fabulous buttons and calicos: they forget that, as they forget ten other benefits that they get from Modngwania. And how they both are multiplying! Perilous thing! Wherever one wanders solitary in forest, one spies a Wadngwania’s eye shining like God’s behind a bush, watching one’s doings. And growing poorer nowa days: the more they grow in number, the thicker the crowd of their riff-raff poor, and the bigger the peril, for those poor are after land, aye, after M’Niami land. A wise king of M’Niami would strike quick — now while he may — before the Wadngwania and their poverty multiply beyond measure, until the whips of want wallop them to come dancing their war dance at the M’Niami, who, also, multiplying, tasting scarcity, are after land, aye, after Mo Ingwania land, that is partly theirs....

And as with savages, so with civilised, whose cause of quarrel, however, operates less goadingly, since our growth of numbers, of poverty, is counter balanced by growth of knowledge; but a similar separateness here; a similar claim to the exclusive possession of land — frontiers, tariffs, passports, registration of aliens, quotas, deportations, Home Office permits — though it is easy to see that Germany is partly Englishmen’s, England partly Germans’. But no acknowledgment of the obvious; no millions of pounds paid by England to Germany for Röntgen rays, which heal Englishmen’s diseases; no millions paid by Germany to England for the steam-engine, to Denmark for unearthing the birthplace of Light, which makes Germans a higher type of Hun; instead of acknowledgment of debt, only growth in numbers by each other’s achievements, and threat of invasion. There is cause for quarrel here.

Anyway, we see that “average number” is not some fixed number, but may properly spread beyond measure, on condition that a variety’s quality or knowledge keeps pace with that spread; but, by the Law of Life, its number tends ever to grow faster than its quality or knowledge; and, if it does this much, and the variety still contrives to maintain in wretchedness this excess of number over quality, or knowledge, or power over Nature, then, without fail, in the case of a variety of the dominant genus, that excess will be repressed by its only remaining enemy, other varieties of the genus.

And it is to be noted that when quality or knowledge is spoken of, any knowledge resident by chance in some heads is not what is meant:

J. J. Thomson and Lloyd George may know that the “ownership” by individuals of a country is the root-cause of its sorrows; or they may know Avogadro’s Law that in a cubic cm. there are 3×10^{23} molecules of all gases alike; or they may know that wine, cider, are better for the genius of a people than beer, not made of fruit, but of duller products; but unless this knowledge is diffused, or somehow used by the community, it boots not, it is not the knowledge of the variety, nor modifies its quality.

At any rate, what now appears to have been demonstrated is this: that War is the offspring of ignorance, the ignorance of a great number somewhere, and depends upon a wretched ratio somewhere between numbers and knowledge. And, as, like all sorrows, it is the offspring of ignorance, so it is the medicine of ignorance, decreases ignorance, not merely relatively, by decreasing the number of the ignorant, but, with its two-edged sword, absolutely, by heightening the quality or knowledge of men — as can readily be demonstrated... Many, indeed, are the *lesser* medicines of War — not the smallest among them being this, that it creates citizenship. To the soldier in whose head, till then, the idea of the State has scarce arisen, there arrives a moment when he stands wide-awake before

death — for the State, which thereupon becomes not less real to him than groans and griefs. Hence history is thick with tales of the reorganisation of States by the home-coming soldier: for he has acquired Co-operation under threat of death; the General is a general servant, the captains are captains of industry in sacrifice, the army is not three millions but one being fighting for its life, and War, the divider, is above all the uniter — of individuals into heptarchies, of heptarchies into nations, of nations with their allies, and at last of allies with the enemy. Nor is it the soldier alone who is thus keenly piqued to the idea of the State and Co-operation, but the nation: for the most dissolute crowd of individuals, slouching through existence together in a happy-go-lucky slatternliness, must necessarily, if they are at war, socialise, nationalise, smarten themselves a little, in order to be able to expect the smallest success in the combat. Nor is this a solitary effect. “By means of war,” as Winwood Reade says — seeming to forget that he is praising, not a good in itself, but the medicine of an evil— “by means of war intelligence was brightened, tribes compressed into nations. It was War which founded the Chinese Empire, linked Babylonia, Egypt, India, planted the Greek language in Asia, united the barons in the Crusades, destroyed the feudal system. United Italy was formed by the wars of ’59, ’66 and ’70” — and so on. Deep have been these, and suchlike, uses of war in the volume of human evolution; but they are as nothing in comparison with the essential working of that drastic purge and scourge, its double-working of lowering the numbers, and enhancing the quality, or knowledge, or power of Man— “*quality*” and “*knowledge*” being employed to mean the same thing, since it is obvious that the *quality* of an animal is exhibited in its power over Nature, as its power depends upon its knowledge, since, if the animal knows enough, it can make to itself chariots of flame, watch an atom waltzing, wash in other suns, or accomplish anything whatever, those that

eat of that tree being “as gods”. But “quality” may be employed in a somewhat different sense to mean, not “knowledge”, but “capability of acquiring knowledge”: for, if an animal A has more power over Nature than B, A, at that instant, is actually of the higher quality; but if B is capable of acquiring more knowledge than A has or can acquire, B is potentially of the higher quality: in the first aspect a cat being of higher quality than a baby, but in the second a baby being of higher quality; and it is in this second sense especially that War heightens the quality of varieties, by heightening the quality of births — a statement whose truth may not be obvious at once to all: for “Howl”, someone may say, “here are our boys, our bravest and brightest, the parents of the future, being devoured by War — can this heighten the quality of births in our variety?” The answer is that the Great Physician is a Surgeon, too; that, if He “works in a mysterious way”, it is ever without fail; and, as for me, though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. It cannot, indeed, be denied that when the braw and bright fall, there is a loss of good blood; the guess has even been made that here was the cause of the fall of Rome, whose soldiers are supposed to have been all braw and bright; but, then, this picking of men has not been general — certainly is not the case in the modern conscript army, which, for one braw and bright, contains fifty riffraff a little better than C 3; and since, before a war, there was more than the “average number” somewhere, every death not only tends to rectify the wrenched ratio between numbers and knowledge, but, by that very lowering of the claims upon the wealth which the then stock of knowledge can wrest from Nature, every death tends to heighten quality by granting more wealth to survivors, more leisure to acquire a liking for knowledge, and augment its stock: for it is as if blood was “let” from the plethoric, and the brain cleared for activity. But this is far from all: for for every man — braw-and-bright or riff raff — who is killed in war, a woman,

too, is killed by the same two-edged sword — a woman *as* a woman, as a mother, since, with a lesser number of husbands there must needs (where there is monogamy) be a lesser number of wives; and these will be picked wives, the riffraff girls being left unselected — a Divine thing: for, as Tennyson well says, “our mothers make us most”, giving us “our intelligence” (Schopenhauer), and our height — animals (as stock-breeders know) getting shape from the sire, size from the dam, as men get that in which the civilised do not surpass savages, their character, or moral shape, from fathers, but their intelligence, or mental size and span of forehead, in which the civilised far surpass savages, from mothers. This can be readily demonstrated, if it be granted that the aim of Nature among the lower animals is the development of strength or agility, but among the highest of intelligence. Let this be granted: then, it follows that among the lower the sex which transmits strength will be the selected sex, and the other sex the selector of mates. Now, there can in general be no doubt which sex is the selected, since this sex is adorned (with plumage, song, mane, paint, jewels, etc.), to catch the fancy of the selector sex, the male being so adorned and selected among the lower, to transmit strength, the female among the highest, to transmit intelligence. It is true that what men in general *consciously* select in women is beauty rather than intelligence; but then, human beauty when analysed is found to be nothing but an expression of intelligence, of mental health and strength.

We can now, at any rate, appreciate the reason for the constancy of savage warfare, and the rarity of civilised — War depending, not upon ferocity, but upon a wretched ratio between numbers and knowledge, upon the ignorance of a great number some where, upon the existence of much riff-raff — this being a corollary from the Law of Life, from the consideration that, if only one man was in France, Germany, there would be

no war, though there might be, if only one lion was in each, with little life for its food; or, if the numbers of Frenchmen, Germans, etc., were as now, but they possessed a much larger stock of knowledge, i.e., of wealth and leisure knowingly distributed, still there could be no war, since no surplus numbers, or riff-raff, vile life-stuff, ready for any sensation and change from their tame wretchedness, offering to kings and politicians cheap fodder for cannon. It is, then, a question of ignorance and number. But among the civilised ignorance decreases — knowledge being as the rolling snow-ball, the *speed* of whose growth increases with its bigness; in modern Europe it already begins to grow with such speed as more or less to keep pace with numbers, which, moreover, are being voluntarily repressed. But, as to savages, who are *all* riffraff, their snowball of knowledge is next to nothing, and, having no momentum, neither rolls nor grows, while their number mounts up unrepressed by themselves, till want, or war, or bacteria, afresh repress it to a proper ratio with their knowledge. Indeed, in their case, number cannot but mount up unrepressed by themselves, since they lack the knowledge of physiology, and, if they had this, lack the power over Nature necessary to make the proper things to repress it; nor, after a war, does their little stock of knowledge grow through any heightening of the quality of births, for they are polygamous, and their riffraff girls, instead of being killed as mothers by the war, simply furnish more wives for each man, more children, the Hottentot dancing for joy that a man child is born into the world — the unconscious man, who likes to have his quiver full of them.

We come, then, to a point in our enquiry at which the statement of, say, Haeckel, General Butler, that war is a biological necessity cannot but be consented to: indeed, the proof above proofs that it is necessary is the fact that it happens — unless someone can imagine that there are effects without causes, or that some one animal and his matters are things outside the

course and belly of evolving nebulae, so that something may possibly happen which is not necessary. It is, and has been, necessary, then — though to go on thence, like General Bernhardi, to the statement that it will continue to be necessary seems a mere licence of affirmation. On the contrary, it seems permissible to predict that when knowledge has so spread that the claims of nations to lands cease to be exclusive, and that the claims of individuals to land cease to render the structure of a society too complex for numbers to be repressed by the society itself, then War will cease to be necessary. The science of Economy, only some hundred and fifty years old, is still but little known or applied, countries being still “owned”, not by varieties, but individually, as by palæolithic man, the “owners” being essentially Normans, conquerors, with the conquerors’ mood for fresh conquests abroad under pressure of numbers at home, the non-owners being essentially Saxons, conquered, Israel in Egypt, economic riff raff, serf like, furnishing military service to the conqueror “owners” — a social phasis, offspring of war, and prompt to war, whose collapse in an age of aeroplanes and cathode rays one need possess no spirit of prophesy to foresee. Nevertheless, we know from the Law of Life that, however knowledge be advancing, number has always an innate rage to outrun it — a rage against which private enterprise in repressing number is but a slight and haphazard barrier. It is the variety, acting as an organism, that can alone decide upon its proper number — the State must do the arithmetic, and take the measures. But how is the State at present to do this? It cannot — lacks data to decide upon its “proper number”, society is too complicated and chaotic. The self suppression as to number of the French, for instance, is nothing but a groping in the dark: for it may be that the best number of the French, instead of $5n$, as now, is n , all that France now produces in wealth, safety from “enemies”, etc., by yn births of q quality being producible by n births

of 5q quality, in which case the wealth of a Frenchman would be 5w instead of w, as now, and his happiness perhaps 5x5h, instead of h — happiness being that which is “precious”, not “life”. But nothing of all this can be ascertained in the economic complexity and chaos of our society — a complexity arising of necessity from the fact that countries are not owned by societies, so that, though a country’s wealth in any stage of knowledge is readily ascertainable, no ratio can be calculated between wealth (or knowledge) and number, no estimate made as to how many there ought to be, in order that each may be the virtual owner of so much of the country as a person can win sufficient wealth from to acquire a liking for knowledge and augment its stock — a deplorable truth, considering the wastefulness of War, and of that chaos of unconsciousness which breeds and feeds and raises to be razed by War those crops of riff raff which need never have been born. This, however, may anon be well. There lives and grows that Tree of Knowledge — fruit good for food, fruit to be desired to make one wise — and with it grows that Spirit of the Hive which, as Maeterlinck says, “disposes pitilessly of the wealth, the liberty, the lives of all this winged people, which regulates day by day the number of births, and contrives that this shall bear a definite ratio with the flowers that brighten the countryside....”

X. ON THE CAUSE OF WAR



A COMPOSITE PHOTOGRAPH of all Englishmen would be a face of a different expression from a composite photograph of all Frenchmen; and such a photograph of Englishmen it is which can be considered to be the face of Britannia — as to whom it is frequently said that, since she is merely a convenient symbol, not a real being, we behave wrongly if we behave as if she were real.

It appears, however, that to behave as if symbols were real beings can be highly right, a whole branch of mathematics being based upon the assumption that the symbol of an impossible quantity (the square root of minus-one) is a real being; and it is by regarding Humanity as One that many a scientist decides to lay down his life for Him, dying as X-ray Christs, dying of tubercle bacillus, self infected, and so on; and, if regarding Britannia as a real being, and standing up at “God save the King” has “cost millions of lives”, are there not things of more importance than millions of lives?

Is War, then, actually of some importance as is now (naturally) thought by those who passed through torments in 1914-1918? How many were killed? Ten millions? In three years? Is that of some importance? As many die every three months; and twenty million (better ones) press in their stead. And the other harms of War, are they not as transitory as this, and much of the good of War transitory too? But while that good lasts, and largeness of heart is the vogue, and a laugh at a breath of fresh air is in the land, bravo for War, which abolishes civil war — is it not civil war, the dull war-of-the-

slugs now going on, that is important and is odious? Let the trumpets sound, though, and now that duke of Grosvenor Square, that grocer of Grays Inn Road, whose hand has been against every man, getting all he can out of his country, giving nothing, now his ears hear a voice of sirens crying, rumours of an old music are abroad, and such bugles going as gods use, calling “Come! suffer! die! — for Me!”: and he, enticed, is up, he is off — goodbye, all — to die — for Other-than-himself — he, the lubber, springing up a hero, the sneak-thief, see, is become a redeemer, the saunterer in clubs transformed into a martyr: and is not this the greatest that can happen to men, the saving of their souls? If they die of it, or go mad, what matters?

Of course the thing is Negro, and the Europeans who still do it must expect to be giggled at by their sons’ sons; but it is perhaps the least important of the Negro things among us, since its (inherent) results are soon over. As for the next one “wrecking civilisation”, as the phrase is, that does not seem reflective. A world-war could wreck civilisation as much and as little as turning a meadow’s sod with a stick wrecks the earth’s lithosphere: all the scientists, the text books, apparatus, would have to be destroyed, occupying a thousand armies a thousand years. That was laughable, those bombings of London of the Kaiser! — like the fantastic bright ideas of faddist inventors, and boys playing at war; if the bombs had been millionfold more in number and in power, the thing would still have been comic: for London needed some years to build, and is still mainly there, not troubling to smile at that bumming of flies.

It was the good that was done that was big, if fleeting, a good to be achieved in a lasting fashion by education, when the nations start teaching the child nothing but science, nothing but the habit of scepticism-and-inventing, of seeing untruth-and-truth, which is the trait of an intelligence educated to strength. Until then, War will do the good of calling to the

common man, what Science calls to all, “Your life is nothing, come, live and die for Something”; and, of course, there will be more of the savage stuff, and still more, for all the Pacts, Locarnos, Conferences, until men, so educated, see and abolish the cause of it.

That cause, it appears, is simpler, deeper, more recondite, more inexorable, than Premiers see when they take pleasure-trips, and meet to speak of peace, saying, “Peace, Peace”, where there is no head-piece: for is not that cause of War the earth itself? — a question of land, of site-values? The nations claim portions of the earth’s surface as wholly their own; and if this claim is fictitious? Certainly a portion of the earth *is* partly a nation’s own, in so far as the nation has *taken*, i.e., worked, it; but hasn’t it an extra-value that other nations create, and therefore own? An acre of land at Charing Cross is of more value than an acre in Mashonaland, owing to its site, London being round about it; and those who use it should pay the rent of its site to London, which, creating that extra-value, owns it: until they do, there will be a sort of civil war always fretting, every Englishman at war with England, as a consequence of strained relations with the nation. So likewise England, as an entity of acres, has a site-value: Englishmen are better off for being in a planet in the midst of nations labouring at things and ideas than if England were a planetesimal wayfaring by itself in space: so Englishmen should pay a site-rent to the nations which, creating that extra-value, own it: until they do, there will be War-not-civil, as a consequence of strained relations between nations. National war, until countries are owned, not by village Jims, but by nations; international war, until the planet is owned, not by little Englands, but by Man, this taking place whenever a growth of population, anywhere outvieing the growth of science, makes poverty gross, bringing about a consciousness of wrong somewhere and a mood of quarrel with the four winds; international war

unimportant in comparison with national war (for it must be forty-millionfold less wrong for forty millions to pocket a world-value than for one Lord Jim of the village to pocket it). But, unimportant *in itself*, War-not-civil is still important for the incubus of preparedness which its probability makes necessary: England, for example: England is rich in minerals; but how poverty-stricken the nation! it can't afford to create laboratories to make its boys philosophers — spends a thousand millions in preparing to fight; which thousand millions will in time be presented to a World-Treasury as site-rent, the World-Treasury to spend such sums upon world-works — there upon a Channel tunnel — there upon the Mesopotamian desert — anon awarding as prize a diadem of diamonds to some scientist's forehead — and anon squandering that cash like water upon some majesty of orgy, some appalling pomp of the family of Man.

XI. OF RELIGION AND IRRELIGION



“WE SEE STRETCHES of our cities going pagan under our eyes — more destitute of religion than some tracts of India”: so Dr. W. R. Maltby at a Wesleyan Conference at Manchester.

Those “tracts of India destitute of religion” would be difficult to discover, I think — using “religion” in Dr. Maltby’s sense of a willingness to give money to priests. But is “going pagan” — i.e., rejecting priests, becoming non Christian, non Mahometan, non Buddhist, non ancient — is this to become “destitute of religion”? or is it not to give up being irreligious, and to become religious? Let us see.

There is a Power that moves the universe— ‘buses, wings, solar systems; this is a fact, the only fact which we are powerless to doubt — though to say “*a Power that*” is a little odd, as though there were other powers that move what is outside the universe; there is nothing outside: so let us say simply “there is Power” — Energy, Stress, Might, Force. For Power is Force: Power is power to do something, to make an event happen; now, only five events can possibly happen: (i) something may move; (2) something may stop moving; (3) some thing may move faster; (4) something may move slower; (p something may move on a new course; if we attempt to conceive some event which is not one of these, we fail; and these, we know, are due to Force: so Power is Force.

Now, Force is a Mystery, infinitely unknowable: for we can only know something that has qualities, has a nature — a clock, a cock; and Force has no nature, for, if It had, It would be forced — like clocks, cocks — to

behave according to its nature: but only Force can force; anything *else* is forceless: so Force would force Force — which is nonsense. So Force has no nature, is *above* nature, *super*-natural; It effects, affects, is not affected; is Absolute Lord and God, Almighty, Unknowable: for that which is above nature is X, inconceivable, to us who are in nature, who are not “made in His image”, He having no image, an image being bounded, He unbounded: and thou shalt not make to thyself any mental image, false god, or idol, nor bow down to Mumbo Jumbo, for I, the Lord thy God, am an imageless sort of god, not unworthy the worship of your heart’s heart, as your half a farthing fancies are.

There are, indeed, people — highly intelligent, many of them — who are pleased to name themselves “atheists”, and say that there is “*no*” God; but, then, these are merely people who are under a misconception as to the meaning of a word, and when they assert “there is *no God*”, they do not at all mean that there is no God, no Power to move suns, feet, they mean that God cannot be imagined, is not such as priests and the Negro peoples imagine It, Him, Her, to be; but they do not say what they mean, and, in saying in their haste what they do *not* mean, they utter a nonsense, forgetting that “God” is just another English name for Power, the Almighty, Whose being is as perfectly certain to them, to larks, to Martians, as it is completely mysterious.

But though we can never know anything of Force, we can know facts *about* Force — can know, for example, that there is much Force, that God is great; or we can know that, on the whole, God is good, i.e., that the sum of motions makes eventually for the happiness of the army of living things; this we know — scientifically now — in the same way that we know that water will warm sulphuric acid tomorrow, because it has warmed it in the past.

Now, religion is an attitude of adoration and of donation to God — the donation depending upon the adoration.

And, evidently, adoration depends upon knowledge about the object adored: we cannot adore a vacuum, nor adore when under chloroform: must be conscious, conscious of something, know something about some order of things, i.e., must be more or less scientists, a scientist being a person who knows something about order. And since adoration is a compound of (1) awe, and (2) love, before adoring we must *know* two facts, that God is (1) great, and (2) good.

Now, these are cosmic (or orderly) facts: so no ancient could suspect them, since the ancients had hardly any science (consciousness of cosmic facts): so religion is a modern thing like aeroplanes. They, new to the universe, and anxious, as savages still are, asked, “What shall I do to be saved?”, and, villagers in mood, they discovered the answer, “Love the neighbours, be good to Jim, turn the other cheek to Gertie.” This was done — became the individual’s village-morality. *We* are saved, are not anxious, know that the universe moves to good, to better, and, worldly in mood, religious, we ask, not “What shall I do to be saved?”, but “What shall I *think* to further a world, and what shall I *make* — how conquer disease, see into economics, speak across the seas, reach the Poles, the Moon?” *Their* “religions”, then, village religions, said, “Love God-and-the-neighbours” — as though there was some connection between the two loves; but, as to loving God — much — that was impossible for them, for we can only love what gives us pleasure; a rose, a baby, a lover; cannot love what gives us bad smells, leprosy, “palsy”, poverty: so that, to contrive to love Him a little, they, pretty miserable, had to invent “another world” free of leprosy, having no suspicion that in this world the greatness of God’s goodness causes Life to evolve, and that science would arise to abolish poverty and

“palsy”: hence, so far from loving God, they were God fearing, their fear “casting out love”, as our love casts out fear.

Jesus, then, was not religious. Plato, Buddha, Philo, Mahomet — were not religious compared with us, since they had not our data, our *means* to be religious, we having got to know three things about God: (i) that the stars are suns, (2) that men are related to apes, (3) that the earth, seven thousand million years old, is likely to last ten times longer: the knowledge of which facts puts us in a new universe, makes us new creatures, of a mood and outlook different by billions of times from that of ancient men: for it is the place of residence that makes the animal. Jesus believed that some day the stars will “fall from heaven”, “like fig leaves”, upon Jerusalem, say; our stars can’t do that: a million earths can fall into the sun, a million suns into Betelgeuse, there being doubtless billions of Betelgeuses, the universe consisting of “island universes”, across an island light taking thirty thousand years to travel, taking a million to travel from island to island; and there may be millions of islands. God’s great: we have awe. And we have love: for we know the Gospel, the tidings of Great Joy, that we are related to snakes, that there is a principle of Progress in Being, leading on to lives that will one day be wiser, finer, more wildly delighted than ever entered into our little hearts to fancy: how greatly good! it might not have been so; we can’t help loving what made it so, though we still know pain. No archangel appeared to the mother of him who proclaimed this Revelation to say, “You shall bear a son, and shall call his name ‘Charles’”, yet *he* was Messiah, the teacher of dancing to the heart, harbinger of jubilee: beautiful were his feet on the mountains. What is amusing is that priests, professional experts in gospels, did to him what they did to those who announced that the stars are suns — reviled, denied him — did not even *see* that his gospel was gospel, but blasphemed because his cosmic gospel of knowledge

abolished their village gospel of opium smoke, littly good, which saves the soul of Sambo and village Jim, males whom God, a male, somehow "*loves*".

So, having awe and love, we have adoration. And from adoration springs donation. A public spirit is abroad in "those stretches of our cities that are going pagan", a religious spirit, that is not villager, not troubled about "loving neighbours", but is new-religious, worldly, as much larger than the mental range of savages, of the ancients, as Paris under a humming of aeroplanes is larger-minded than a kraal or Jericho. And those who have deepest in their consciousness such facts as that stars are suns, what a spectacle of donation! The martyrs of old died to obtain "Heaven", "Nirvana"; not so Catter all, who inoculated himself with yellow fever — not for his "neighbour", but for a planet in space — not so Lola, who inoculated himself with tetanus, nor Lewis who lately gave himself neuritis, nor Chervin, who poisoned himself with black-vomit, Bosso with tubercle bacillus, Garré with glanders — hundreds of them — holier far than other martyrs, gallanter far than other vanguards of other armies. Not "destitute of religion", these, though "pagan" enough, despising priests as inferior types, and indignant at that irreligion of priests which keeps them villagers, keeps them really pagan, for "pagan" means villager, keeps them blind and deaf to God's Gospel, to the revelation of God's greatness, and of the greatness of God's goodness.

XII. ON TOLERANCE



IT HAPPENS NOWADAYS that when one has occasion to mention God, one has an impulse to stop to explain oneself, lest he be supposed to be insisting upon an existence which it pleases his caprice to conceive, in contradiction to others who see that there is no such existence: so much has a word of definite sense lost definiteness, and, like old lira-notes in Italy, become a shred all hoggish, because of the inveterate rote of clergymen's hurdy-gurdy, who ever take that Name in vain.

So, then, is this syllable to be abolished now from the lips of articulate speakers? English would be pitifully impoverished by such a loss! One would never be able to compose a poem, or say anything. And there is no need, since "God" is the English name of something as to whose being every living thing is not merely certain, but, strictly speaking, is certain of that alone, perfectly certain of nothing else.

But hear one of our most voluble bishops: "So-and-so points to the existence of God" — this "God" being a proper name for him, as it were John God, having the stale familiarity of a character in fiction, of Mr. Pickwick, whose unreality is taken for granted, who is a slogan, a name, and no more; such speakers coming as near to being atheist as a living thing may, so that, religion being bliss, wretched is the name of them. Or hear a canon: John God "is banished from the world by deism (godism), which puts Nature in His place". Our bits of bishops and canons, now! How admirably God remains tolerant of that blattering of their stalenesses, and does not gobble them up suddenly in the gulf of Him! But, then, that is the

prerogative of God, to be tolerant: it is not always ours. Excellent, indeed, is tolerance in men, all men are so easily wrong. But if we see vast harm being done by a caste numbering thousands, and are tolerant, is that pretty citizenship? We aren't tolerant of burglars, murderers, who do no vast harm: is it possible that we should be tolerant of them, if they were a caste as numerous as parsons? Or is that a fancy, not an actual fact among us, that the caste of parsons do vast harm? They do, if it is true that they depress a nation's intelligence: for from intelligence we get all our superhets, all, all, our goods. *Is* it true, as many say, that they depress intelligence? dim it, hypnotise, sopify, cajole, jink, hum, it? that they are a caste of charlatans? They earn their living by quoting and extolling in the twentieth century the notions of the first century: is there not in such a thing something impudently mummer, essentially charlatan? Is there, then, no God, no Power causing motion, no Change, Evolution, Progress, to have our Europe urged a peg, or two, or twenty, above the mentation of the first century? "If Christ came to Chicago" — or imperial Cæsar — is much historical imagination required to divine that they would be astounded at seeing a street length of cars darting, with no donkeys to cart them, and would not the heart in them faint at the angel strangeness of an aeroplane wayfaring with muttering and meditation up among the vapours of heaven? And if the business of a clique consists in insisting for money that motion does not exist, that God is not a Reality, but just a fancy of Darwin, Newton, that the highest type on earth remains eternally at the level above the ape of Abraham, Jesus, Peter, Plato, that the ever-moving never moves, nor ever will move in millions of years, consists in presenting the ancient Asiatic to the respect of the air-mechanic, is not this charlatan? And if what charlatans say is accepted as intelligent by even a tenth of the people, must not this be depressing to the average of the national intelligence? They *do*, then, do

vast harm, making tolerance of them a wrong: for to be paid to teach, and not to teach, is an evil, but to be paid to teach, and to *dsteach* (so to say), is even a deep evil. Does not education consist in a strengthening of intelligence? and since intelligence consists in a relation to truth — in a readiness to refuse untruth (scepticism), and in a readiness to seize truth (inventiveness) — is not *education* a training in disrespect, an eradication of that respect and gape which is ingrained in Hodge and children, and so is the contrary of what Chinese scholars imagine education to be? — for to invent is as much to disrespect as to be sceptical is to disrespect, since to invent one must have seen some defect in the past, and must esteem past men less than himself: so that in priests we see a clique who deliberately diseducate, *weaken* intelligence, preaching “be not unbelieving, but believing”, preaching, not disrespect, but even respect, not even respect of the educated, of the sceptic and inventor, but, like Asiatics and the ancients and savages, respect of the ancients.

And let no good citizen, believing that they now mow and mouth without influence, be tolerant for this reason: for they wear washed shirts, and, if like the first of men they go in aprons, these are not aprons of fig leaves; they bear themselves with assurance, produce an effect: England is still called “a Christian country”, nor could be called so, if it was not somewhat so. No one calls France so — only twenty miles away eastward, though ever fifty years away westward with the sun of Time.

So I, for my part, drop being tolerant here. Someone writes of me the libel that I am “anticlerical” and “impolite” to clerics, but I should not like to catch myself being anti-anything by predilection and bias, or pro-anything — except pro-England, pro-world, pro-God; nor is it true that I am “impolite” in respect of my lord bishop if by “politeness” be means what politeness really means — good citizen-ship, fine citizenship (from

“polites”, a citizen). Now, *fine citizenship* is never so truly polite as when, to its own distress, it chooses to be ruthlessly rude, as when it shoots a lunatic going with a gun, or tugs a lady by her hair from before a motor-bus coming. And so as to our whiffs of bishops: politeness, or fine citizenship, is no longer tolerant and nice. For with what grub do our bishops feed their so hungry sheep? With this: that “*So and so points to the existence of God.*” But, then, all things point to this, for all things are in motion, both as wholes and in each bit of them: so that this, if it was not babble, would be blasphemy; but it is babble, it falls short of being articulate talk at all. Nor is it merely bishops who preach this species of gibberish: for in an admirable treatise by the “rationalist”, Mr. P. Vivian, which I have been reading, one meets with this tidings: that the Chinese hardly believe in the existence of — God. However, there never yet was man, nor mastodon, nor dog, nor mouse, nor louse, nor flower, that has had a doubt of the existence of God, “God” having the meaning which each bishop, each Bushman, each philosopher, each dictionary-writer, each living thing, is bound to agree to give to it: “God is the Power that causes phenomena” — causes that of which Life is conscious; and since in our consciousness of anything we are always conscious that it is *caused*, and since God causes it, we can say, instead, that “God is that Power of which Life is constantly conscious”, or, still shorter, “God is Power”.

Now, the brow and bowels of that Power are no doubt boundlessly profound, boundlessly, then, you say, beyond the defining or divining of Life; still, Life can never doubt Power’s *existence*, of which it is constantly conscious. There should be nothing; but somehow Something is; and it moves, changes: this we know; this alone we utterly know. But to Power our bishop sees it still serviceable to attribute this or that suburban principle: gives it as pedagogic, Miltonic, Semitic; and when I, with a wink

and a dig in the ribs, cry “Ha! ha! excellent! sly dog!”, he, with a gravity whereat one has a right to feel aggrieved, replies, “No, really, I am serious: my wife’s a suburban lady — she really believes that to Power are joined these foibles; you, I see, do not believe in the Power of which Life is constantly conscious, but so-and-so *points* to the existence of Power.” This does not seem articulate talk; nor where our obsolete canon’s mouth gabbles that God, that Power, is banished from the world by godism; nor where our nodding rationalist announces that Chinese lives are not conscious of the Power of which Life is constantly conscious.

Sayings so idle are due to an essentially savage or childish habit in the use of this syllable “God”, which savage habit again is to be attributed to the essentially savage character of every such expression as “deism”, “pantheism”, “theism”, “atheism”, “theology”, and so on — words which will anon cease to be whirled about the world, seeing that each of them (“atheism”, too) tells of an essentially Zulu attempt to divine and define the essence of the Power of which Life is constantly conscious — an essence which, if it be infinitely profound, must through infinite Time remain infinitely beyond the defining or divining of Life. As to “the agnostic”, who well says “I do not know”, let him not fight with the scientist, who well says “I know” — who knows something *about* God, knows that God is good to, or for, Life, since He everlastingly captains the host of Life from three-toed to hoofed, from lizard to linnet, from ape to pope to Rutherford: nor is that “*He*” in reference to God to be resented, for, after all, one must say something— “He”, “She”, “It” — of which grotesque three “It”, surely, is the most grotesque? and in saying “He”, “She”, the philosopher wishes to hint that, whereas he guesses that God is not conscious and intelligent, nor uses any of the clumsy modes of animals on planets, he understands that there must be states of being that as infinitely transcend consciousness and

intelligence as these transcend zero.... At all events, that is what one means by “God”; what all Life means, for, as Moslems say, “there is no God but *the* God”: the Power of which Life is constantly conscious — in sleep, in anaesthesia; the God of the bishop and the Bushman; but quite stripped of those qualities which the ladies of the bishop’s flock at five o’clock tea attribute to Him — but not even the bishop himself, I think, really. If he is ignorant, it is a guilty ignorance; if he is not ignorant, still greater is his guilt so to degrade our English. Really such Englishmen should be ashamed of themselves so to wound the womb that bare them, the breast they rest on: they are a bane and a brake, a trouble and a cross to their country’s odyssey; and, I repeat, it is not merely fine and polite to say so, but it is unrefined and impolite not to say so, and already is being *considered* impolite. Let my lord, then, eat and drink, making of his apron a serviette, and revel in to-day: tomorrow he is done: for though the gates of Hell shall not prevail against him, the gates of Heaven will, and *they* are horridly thorough.

XIII. OF VENGEANCE



VENGEANCE IN GENERAL is a good, nor is anything stranger than that the laziness of men in respect of taking vengeance should have led them to accept as plausible a doctrine so wrong, biologically, as the goodness of forgiveness: for to weaken, by hurting, the doer of evil is clearly to work toward rooting out weeds, and to further evolution.

As to *public* vengeance — courts, prisons — to effect this weeding-out, this is a bright idea which has all that dog's luck of savage bright-ideas. A grown up Government will find other things to occupy it than the storms-in-a-teacup of private wrongs; nor are the sort of "judges" chosen less of a dog's luck than the courts themselves — men with no training save a Mongol training in memorising and respecting — ceremonies, opinions, precedents! men, moreover, who have passed half a lifetime as barristers in an attitude of callousness to truth, in making blue look white for money, atheists in respect of truth, nay, hired assassins of truth, who are imagined, on being "raised to the Bench", to change their second nature, and become chums of truth. But to put revenge into public bands is like calling-in a plough to manicure one, is not less gawky, bungling, and, like other inventions of savages retained in civilisation, must do much ravage, crashing, like shrapnel into a china-shop, into the fine mesh of private lives, especially of women and children, a "judge" making per month as many as ten prostitutes probably. In lands such as Italy where revenge is looked upon as a moral duty, the individual rejects with contempt a mechanism so ataxic. *How* ataxic! for, since two eye-witnesses usually acquire two

impressions, and, with full sincerity, present differing evidence, how deliciously irrelevant must be the impression of the “judge” built up out of the conflicting evidence of witnesses influenced by reasons to be insincere! And, if they are sincere and agreeing, still his impression must needs bear the same relation to the truth of the event, its mood and *humour*, as a golliwog of Congo-land to the humour of a face. And it is all the more ataxic because the “judge” sits calm: but what is before him is not a problem in algebra, to which a formula is applicable, but a uniqueness out of the complex of Being, suddenly confronting him; the man has no means to deal with it, is all at sea and out of touch, nor can thinking, if he could think, help him here; whereas the private avenger is provided by Nature with heat, and with a thermometer within him by which to measure the unique wrong, and wreak unique justice: if the wrong is great, or is little, just so is his heat, his vengeance; Nature in him is the Judge, the just Avenger; nor without this *just* heat can the “dispassionate judge” any more do *justice*: than he can, by algebra, decide just how much each of a thousand men should eat at any moment.

Nor is the “judge” all ataxic as to quantity of punishment only, but as to sort also: to punish every sort of offence Nature does not say “go to prison”; a hand put to a fire She burns; if put nearer, She burns at by *just* so much more, such is Her *justice*; but, if one jumps out of a window, She does not burn: and so with the variety of the private avenger’s vengeance: he gives quid pro quo, the “judge” always “quod” pro quo — so pauper, after all, in invention as in scepticism are lawyer-minds.

Moreover, it is not in respect of punishment only, its quantity and its sort, that the avenger is just, but in respect of pardon also: he knows somewhat; and the more he knows the more will pardon, since to understand is to pardon: so that the saying “forgive seventy times” would have been worthy

of a biologist if entered on the intellectual plane; but it was uttered on the social or moral plane: and it is morally that it is wrong: for the partialness so far of men's perception that all wrongs are pardonable corresponds with the quantity of wrongs done, and, through vengeance tends to root out wrong. But the avenger, in so far as he understands, pardons: takes into account that his neighbour, the wronger, drinks, as the wronger's grandfather did, is weakish, queerish, in the fix of one of a million shades of one of a million idiosyncrasies or fates, and he pardons just enough, avenges just enough, for his Age and stage of intelligence, Nature in him being his Mentor, for "vengeance is *Mine*, I will repay", says Nature. But the "judge" is all at sea, knows nothing, understands nothing, would need years of intimacy or actual eye-witnessing to understand; if he pardons, he pardons at random by impulse, but hardly can pardon, being the parrot of a formula; and every time condemns another animal for his own lack of understanding.

Nor is the "judge" impotent to pardon alone, he is impotent to punish, if formal evidence fails, and there is a "brilliant barrister"; whereas the private avenger requires no formal evidence, *he* knows, nor is blinded by any barrister "in whom the footlights have lost an ornament" — horrid person really, paladin of untruth, odioso a Dio ed ai nemici soui. The whole curiosity will be more or less unintelligible, I imagine, to future Man marshalled under the dynasty and everlasting Kingdom of scientists, like the other curiosities that a society designed by lawyer-minds must exhibit.

XIV. ON ETERNAL AND TEMPORAL



EDUCATION IS A bringing out, so that, literally, a horse brought out of a stable is educated; but we only use the word now to refer to bringing out from a condition of drowsing the powers of the mind to a condition of activity: and since Mind is that which can acquire a consciousness of truth, education, then, is the bringing of the mind to a condition of activity to acquire this consciousness: so the educated mind is not one which is conscious of many truths, as scholars, shop-keepers, are, but is one which has been brought to a certain condition of activity, to a habit of strength in “reflecting” (as we say) on truth, so as to decide rightly “this is true”, “that is not true”.

Now, truths are of two sorts — eternal and temporal, or say cosmic and individual, the eternal or cosmic being called “scientific”; and traffic with this sort naturally has a virtue in bringing out a habit of strength in reflecting, a virtue which certainly the other sort not only has not, but rather has the opposite result, not only not educating, but rather, so to say uneducating, diseducating, and lullabying to a habit of lassitude. My consciousness of the temporary truth that my tobacco-jar is kept on a bookcase is very useful to me, but provokes no reflection, has no tendency to rouse my powers from drowsing, whereas my consciousness of the eternal truth that the nicotine in tobacco is a poison provokes, strengthens, reflection, until finally some mind is educated by this consciousness to the height of hitting upon the invention of spraying roses with nicotine to kill insects. Hence to present to a mind the temporal, the individual —

accidents, conventions — like teaching one to read, to spell, to become “literate” — does not educate, but diseducates. A boy once asked me “What does *morbid* mean?” I told him that it means diseased: was he now more educated, reflected stronger, thought straighter, than if I had told him that morbid means soft? We English of the moment have agreed that morbid shall mean diseased, while the Italians of the moment have the convention that morbid shall mean soft, and are as inclined to smile at our “morbid bone” as we to smile at their “morbid velvet” — conventions as capricious, trivial, temporal, as the conventions of kiss-in-the-ring. Not even very reasonable conventions, in the case of languages — most of them; the ill chosen vocables— “purr”, say; not very clever; *krokro* might do, *ronron*; but where does the p come in? or “paw” — or “or”: too much sound: fancy “or” having the same sound as “awe”; and what means or in Italian means water in French, as what means frown in English means women in German, as what means stink in English means shin in Italian, and so on endlessly. And the senselessness of phrase— “I have been”; “I am been” may be better, as Germans, Italians, say— “am, after being”; as there is some sense in “I have taken — a cake”, “have a cake, taken”; but not “have been”, been not being a thing. And the queernesses: the plural of mouse is mice, of œuf is eu — so haphazard, fantastic; yet, if I said to the common man “it is less fantastic to say œufs, not eu, to say mouses, houses, not mice, hice”, he would consent out wardly, but *au fond* would think *me* fantastic, so much does just custom make what is natural look fantastic, what is fantastic look natural, nay solemn— “solemn” *meaning* customary, as does “moral”, “ethical”, *eth* in Greek meaning much the same as *sol*, *mor*, in Latin; and, if I went out now dressed up as Beau Brummell, instead of getting the lids of reverence that he got, I would get giggles — the solemnness all gone. So with language: “How do you do?” and echo answers “I do not do” — antic,

Boer quaint, Lapland-outlandish, to make a cat laugh, if the cat is *free*, to see. And our German way of jerking out h — tickles a Frenchman! who thinks of the sick ejecting the breath for the physician to smell, and he thinks our “educated” as ridiculous for jerking out has our “educated” think our “uneducated” ridiculous for *not* jerking out h. And the often absurd spelling-convention of the often absurd word convention — there is no clever school boy who could not invent a better set of conventions in the way of a language than any that has yet been gabbled by man: so that that is little rational to entertain any respect for fashions so passing and frothy, or to imagine that a knowledge of them tends to educate any more than a knowledge of the conventions of chuck-penny or shorthand. Useful conventions — very; and the teacher of children, seeing clearly that a knowledge of them will be useful, teaches them, *forgetting* that he is not a general benefactor, but an educator and nothing else, and that conventions, though useful, are not useful to *educate*, to educe scepticism and inventiveness, so that he, the bringer-out of scepticism and inventiveness, has nothing to do with conventions, since they tend to *deaden* scepticism and inventiveness. An educator should be educated; and it is too muddle-headed in one educated to assume that a useful thing must be useful for all ends, that because a saw is useful for sawing, therefore it must be useful as a boot lace or a book-case.

And when “education” is made to *consist* of this traffic with passing fashions, that is laughable! I think that “purr” is at present spelled with two r’s, fur with one: and *this* is the stuff that the young are still stuffed with, to bring them to think and see, and lift up their eyes to the hills. And those who know about fur and err form “the educated”, with a middle-class point of non view, while the poor mechanic, Edison, Faraday, who do not know about fur and err, or know with a shrug, are “the uneducated class”. Yet

some years hence fur and purr will be as forgotten on the tongues of men as Chaldean is, Middle English, Doric Greek, as Sweet foresees that coster-Cockney will presently be the convention, when the lords and lawyers, if any are left, will be saying “Mrs. Enery Awkins” — which, any way, is distinctly more refined and pretty than Henry Hawkins, hawking up the Hawkins; but meantime an unfortunate child is taught that Hawkins is refined and Awkins vile, with the same solemnity of face with which a child will presently be taught that Awkins is refined, but Hawkins a horrid hawk of quaint barbarians.

Probably girls are at present being better educated than boys, being less meddled with, crammed with grammars: and it is better to be stationary than to be led astray, as Spencer says; girls, moreover, are more taught the piano, drawing, hockey, golf, tennis — all manual work, traffic with things, genuine education, though this they call their “accomplishments”, while what they call their “education” — reading, history, geography, grammar — has no tendency to educate, and ruins the prick of the young intellect. Boys, on their side, have cricket — as Wellington won the battle of Waterloo on the play grounds of Eton, and lost it (or nearly did) in the class-rooms: for the more grammatic a general’s pen, the less dramatic his sword. But all that conventional stuff — reading, spelling, etc. — one should pick up somehow, as one finds it useful or amusing, *after* being educated — and one picks it up flyingly *then* — as the Fulham man gets to know the conventional numbers of the Fulham ‘buses without being taught it, the educator’s sole task being to educate, to teach a knack, the knack of seeing truth, of seeing the untruth of untruths, and being sceptical, of seeing the truth of truths, and being inventive: sceptical and inventive — those two which distinguish moderns from ancients, scientists from Chinese like scholars, from children, from savages; and since we have observed that

nothing but traffic in eternal truth can educe the brain to these two relations with truth, so nothing but eternal truth, science, is the tool of education.

And even in teaching science the educator's object is not *to* teach science: that's not his *job*, to give *any sort* of knowledge, or goloshes, or jugs, or sugar, or Christmas hampers, or passports, or other useful thing; but only to give two useful things, scepticism and inventiveness, which two things are one thing — WISDOM — like the two faces of the same blazing sabre: having which, one can then get *all sorts* of knowledge, and goloshes, and jugs, and sugars, and healths, and heavens. No need to teach a child to read: to teach conventions *dulls*, not brightens, makes *foolish*, not wise; in his second year of life the child reads and writes *spontaneously*, if he is then a trained scientist, as Mrs. Montessori has proved.

But we teach them conventions and accidents! bare is naked, but bear is an animal. Italy is like a boot. England is four hundred miles long.

William the Matabele reigned in 1066. Boots are made in Nottingham: ah, but how profoundly dull, how sure to bring to ruin the briskness of any waking brain which just hears a hint of such ditch-water! Accidents! conventions! nothing eternal, universal, to elate and embraze the brain. Suppose that one comes upon a group of boys playing marbles; one asks "What's the game?"; they answer "if blue strikes red, we gain ten": that is their convention; one goes to another group, in France, one asks, and they answer "If white strikes blue, we gain five": that is their convention; but is one any better educated now after knowing that? One's *memory* is, as *any* nonsense that one tries to remember — the arguments of Plato, the Book of Ceremonies of the Chou Dynasty, Whang Hou's Admonitions to his Sons, the comic physics of Aristotle — *any* nonsense educates the memory quite as well as science does; and the memory of Chinese scholars, of people like Macaulay, does often become monstrously educated, bulking to a certain

hypertrophy of deformity; but memory is the lowest of the mental functions, being known to exist in beings as low as infusoria, while in bees it seems to be superhuman. But otherwise one is not better educated after knowing the conventions of many groups of marble-players, or of many languages — by which time one is a scholar, a Chinaman, a pundit, one's brain deplorably ruined, stale, softened, deformed, like treadlers who always use one leg, and go crooked and crippled.

But suppose that, instead of asking “What's the game?”, as scholars, lawyers, clerics, do, one sets oneself to discovering just how much heat is developed when one marble hits another — ah, then, we can see what a higher *type* of being that will bring one out to, educating, bringing out, all one's handicraft and headcraft, one's strength of brain, mental muscle, independence, one's *finesse*, trickiness, resourcefulness, one's reason, veracity, reverence, disrespect, selflessness — in two words all one's scepticism and inventiveness, in one word all one's Wisdom.

Things, then, not conventions; eternal not temporal...

It is a question of the hands: for, as the racial brain development *followed* upon development of the hand, so must the individual's brain; before birth his development follows the racial course, and not less after birth it must, the baby from his first year learning to deal with woods, metals — being a physicist, that is, a “natural philosopher”, a philosopher.

XV. OF TIME TRAVELLING



FOR THE TIME machines of science fiction “impossible” is Mr. Edward Lang’s word in his article *Time Travelling*. But are they only “impossible”? Is not “absurd” the *mot juste* here? For let us wink at the initial absurdity of such a notion as the motion of steel in Time, yet is it not evident that soon after the Time Traveller starts into the future he arrives at the day of his death, and dies, so that all his later adventures are false? So, too, if he travels into the past: at once he comes to the day before his conception in the womb, whereupon his presence in the pottery of the cosmos is preposterous.

But for H. G. Wells’ Time and Time Machine there was an excuse: somewhere in the nineties of another century a person named Wells thought that “a cube has length, breadth, thickness and Duration!” with a capital D (I hope); but it was not the latest Wells who said that, it was another person who did not know what species of things an atom is: for, of course, a person who knows something is not the same person as a person who does not know it, since knowledge is part of personality. The latest Wells knows, and doubtless smiles at the idea of a cube having duration, or at a person, or anything, having duration — save One, save Force. A cube, a person, anything, is made of atoms — partly, anyway; atoms are moving systems; and, of course, a moving system is at every instant a new thing; “look, new moon”, that is just the truth.

However, Mr. Lang, in rejecting Wells, falls back upon J. W. Dunne: in rejecting Time Machines, falls back upon Dreams, for it appears that in

dreams one may travel on a Time Machine not made with steel. Dunne's explanation being that Time is a "*dimension*" — of something! — to which *dimension* one is in a special relation in sleep. That it is a *dimension* was likewise Wells' idea, is likewise Einstein's, for whom the universe is four dimensional, is Space Time, a "Continuum" of length, breadth, depth, and — Time.

This, though, as Spencer used to say, "cannot be imagined". When the good Einstein says to me, "Try to imagine it," my reply is, "*You* try, then come and let me know how you got on." If it were true, Mind would be a foreigner in the cosmos — which, however, is not to say that it is untrue, but only to say that it can never be science, since we can never know what we are fundamentally powerless to imagine.

"*Dimension*" indeed is a space term, inapplicable to Time, which is not, like Space, an existence, but is just a ratio — of Force to the product of Space and Mass.

Suppose that once upon a time the force of a dyne was applied an instant to the mass of a gram, then the mass, encountering no resistance, moved, is for ever moving on; not infinitely quickly, not infinitely slowly; how quickly, how slowly, is an inherence in Being, every movement in the universe taking place at the same ratio, the ratio or "rate" at which children grow, frogs hop, sceptics and inventors cogitate, suns rush and shout; that ratio is Time, so $t=C(sm/f)$, where t is the time, s the distance done to date, m the mass, f the force, C a constant; t varying as s and m , varying inversely as f , having no existence except as a ratio between existences: as there may be a ratio between a cheese and a chisel, but no such existence as cheese-chisel.

But in Dunne's fancy not only is Time an existence, a fourth "dimension", but, as though four were not one too many, there are more

than four; there is fifth, sixth, and so on, and there is Observer Two (after Death One!) to be aware of Time Two, as there is Observer Three (after Death Two?) to be aware of Time Three, and so on: so in dreams (since sleep is something like death) “we”, being then something like Observer Two, see the future a little, and then “we” die, “we” are Observers Two, and see it clearly.

But the fact that there is some distinction between Observer One and Observer Two certainly means that “we” can’t be both, for, if Observer Two is different, he is another, is not “we”; so when someone named Tom is resurrected by the archangel’s trump, it is someone immortal who is resurrected; but that is not the Tom who was buried: *that* Tom was mortal: so how can a different Tom be the same Tom, an immortal Tom the same Tom as a mortal Tom? To think this does not seem reasonable.

It appears indeed that people in sleep *do* (inexactly) see “future” happenings, i.e., see happenings belonging to a farther-on point of the progress of the gram-mass struck by the dyne: for *this* is the horologe of the universe, the distance, the length, the *space*-measurement, which a unit of mass once struck in eternity by a unit of force has travelled, or would have travelled, if struck. But such “future” dreams do not need speculations so quaint as “Time One”, “Time Two”, to explain them.

We have a hint for their explanation in the fact that the Time-Travelling in them is never far, never farther than the lifetime of the dreamer; and always the dreamer is in the dream. This merely means that what we call “I” is a series of millions of persons (who occupy spaces continuous with the space occupied by the first of these persons in a mother’s womb). Now, each of these persons, though different by billions of changes from all the others, is still very like some of the others; if, then, one of these persons while asleep happens to be very like another of them who will be turning up

to-morrow, next week, next year, then the person asleep will almost *be* that future person, and will experience (inexactly) the circumstances which will be the environment, will be part and parcel, of that future person.

For, if “I” am eating, “I” am an eater person, eating is part and parcel of “me”: and, if “I” am dancing, “I” am a dancer person; dancing is part and parcel of another “me”. So the sleeper sees (exactly) the circumstances of the person who he almost is; and he had better be *asleep* to see them, for then he has no circumstances of his own (of which he is conscious) to distract his attention, so that he may now have an inexact, an “*almost*” exact, vision of the future person who, for a moment, he *almost* is — for a moment, I say, for even long dreams endure only a moment, and during the millionth of a second while one of his present selves is very like one of the future selves, he has dreamt a landscape and a story.

If the dreamer dreams of circumstances which never occurred, nor will ever occur, he is then a person whom he would have been very like, who he would “almost” have been, if he had not fallen asleep.

If the dreamer’s dream is incoherent, mixed up, unreasonable, the person he then is, is very like *two*, or more, persons to whom different circumstances corresponded, or will correspond, and he observes the different circumstances belonging to these persons jostling in a hotch-potch.

XVI. ON PANIC



THERE IS A calm of middle-age when, in slippers at the fireside, we imagine that nothing could any more frighten us, and we “thank whatever gods may be for our unconquerable souls”; but, in truth, any little thing, almost, can conquer our unconquerable souls — a little wine, opium, a few flu microbes.

Circumstances make us different persons. I have a habit of thinking of saying, that “death has no terror for me”: but, even in saying it, I know that there is a profound difference between conceiving and experiencing — between those “faint manifestations of the Unknowable” (Hume, Spencer) which consist in imagining an embrace, an air raid, and those “vivid manifestations” when we are actually embracing or being raided, when that Real Presence of Pan, father of panic and of all is in our hearts and in our pantings.

I once felt that real presence when a boy of fourteen, sitting small on a massive stallion that was stepping down a ledge, precipice above, precipice below — sedately stepping, when those same devils that entered the Gadarene hogs got into him, and began to gallop him — down and round the curves; then there was prayer without words.

Nothing, in fact, can be quicker than a boy’s panics, more delicate than his mental poise. I remember being terror-struck by some sudden text of Scripture: “He goeth after her, and knoweth not that the dead are there... and, on jumping into mid-ocean from a schooner becalmed — just to bathe

— no danger — panic suddenly took me at my loneliness, at a malignancy and ghostliness in the sea.

And again on a ledge — in climbing Snowdon, more lately — a young lady who stuck and refused to go backward or forward, infected me with terror, till it occurred to me to take off my boots, and instantly I felt safe and sure.

But as to the terror of death, men die every second, some on the gallows, and they stand it very well; a generation is like a string of boards on a river being borne toward Niagara, and, since those going over go in plenty of company, this comforts. What is more dismal to me than death is the funeral: “*Magis pompa mortis quam more ipsa.*” The tolling of bells — how wild a poet’s soul devised that thing! Those trembling trebles bleating, this makes an aching in the breast.

And, if the dead one was known to me, then for two, three weeks, I am haunted. Ghosts! as the good Ibsen says: “I could no more sleep then alone, without light, than fly. Yet the notion of the persistence of personality after death” is amusing to me, for I know that neither personality nor anything persists one second — after death or before death — and only One persists; but though I smile at “ghosts” with my head, I have them in my heart. I was born in a small island, so, as a boy, had to go to funerals, and press the dead hand in farewell — one old lady who had prominent teeth I still see.

There was a belief that if the funeral moved along the seashore the sea, at some point, would smell the dead, would be drawn, would sweep up once and wet everyone’s feet — which thing I once saw, and, ah! the awe of it, that haunted all the heart’s hollows.

Awesome, too, to a boy’s heart was when the funeral pace quickened a little (as is natural), and one mourner would mutter to another, “Ah, poor thing, ain’t she eager to get home?”

“True, true,” would be the answer; “she’s hurrying home, she’s hurrying home.”

But, in my opinion, the most vivid of the “vivid manifestations of the Unknowable” — the very face and stare of Pan — are manifested in dreams. All my own short stories whose motive is terror have come out of the mood of some dream. Sometimes I see people dead — as I lately saw Napoleon — dead, yet able to move about; and I dread that they may discover me, for they look for me.

And lately I saw someone like a woman, with a veil floating about her waist; and I knew at once that she was no woman — bigger, stouter — but a being of some other sphere; for packed within her was the vitalness of a million women, so that she was like an apparition of Life itself. Her vigour sprang out of the void like a tigress upon my eyeballs’ fright, and I saw her just one instant, for in that instant, everything in me cried out, “Oh, no, I mustn’t see that!” and instantly I was awake....

There may be such beings in Sirius! just the presence of whose rage and heart-beat’s horse-power would be too furiously rough for us to endure.

XVII. OF THE PERSISTENCE OF PERSONALITY AFTER DEATH



ON SUCH A matter opinions are no good — even if bias was not sure to come in; and, in general, what is said should be jealously watched, to see if it is opinion, to be disregarded, or matter of fact, to be laid to heart.

Of the two notions as to how living things are made, seventy-three per cent of Europeans consider that Mind is a trait of Body, as heat is of fire; while others consider that the body is but the garment of a soul, the soul at death sloughing-off the body, and thenceforth for ever carrying-on by itself. This soul-notion came from the Hindus, penetrated Greece, Europe, and is at present entertained by twenty-seven per cent of Europeans, as by all savages — with this difference, that Europeans at present entertain it on the strength of evidence, or of sacred scriptures, and we have psychical Research; whereas savages entertain it as a matter of course, with never a doubt, so that they even kill people, for the souls of the killed to act as attendants to a chief's soul in the soul-world, and they kill dogs, for the dogs' souls to go hunting with him there: for not only do they believe the soul-notion with (1) more depth than Europeans, but they believe it with (2) more breadth, believing that dogs, fleas, have souls that survive death, whereas Europeans usually believe that only human beings have them. Moreover, *all* Europeans formerly believed the soul-notion as undoubtingly as savages do: so that, apparently, there is some tendency operating, by which, as civilisation evolves types more and more civilised, belief in the soul-notion becomes (1) atrophied, and (2) narrowed. High-class evidence

is presented to us that souls survive death, and communicate with the living. Henry James, for instance, relates that he received a message from his mother, dead twenty years, as to a matter about which only they could “*possibly*” have had any knowledge. Surely that is good evidence? But we have become such sceptics! We are not quite convinced — not convinced as savages are, without evidence; and, indeed, against belief in suchlike evidence is the broad fact that the temptation to pretend to special knowledge is strong in men, nor is anything easier to one so pretending than to bring in a “*possibly*” or two to emphasise one’s tale; and there is the further broad fact that, if countless hosts of souls crowd the soul-world, and can communicate, they must be extremely stingy of themselves, else we should all be sure of their existence, as sure as savages are.

Nor is it likely that savages are right here, and we wrong: for of late years it has come to be known by those scientifically interested in the mentality of savages that the speculations in general of savages are not only untrue, but have a certain quality of dog’s luck, by which they turn out to be the *opposite* of true. So we ought to expect that the personality of man or dog does not persist a second — after death, or before death — since savages are sure that it persists for ever.

And indeed it is easily demonstrated that personality is non-persistent — that nothing persists, save One, save Force. “All flows.” This we know now, knowing what species of thing an atom is — a *system* of parts that are in motion; and (obviously) a system of moving parts is at each instant a new thing. Perhaps in the course of ages the parts of an atom, of a solar system, may get back at some instant to the same relative positions which they occupied at some instant ages before, but that would not be the same atom back again in existence: for the parts themselves (electrons, protons, neutrons, positrons) are new every instant, being waves (see the “wave-

mechanics” of Schrodinger, of de Broglie), and a *wave* (constantly in motion) is constantly being another wave: so that a block of steel is non-persistent, for if each of the atoms of which the block consists is ever being another atom, the block is ever being another block. This was not known formerly, when atoms were thought to be everlasting solids (Clerk Maxwell thought so!); it used then to be said that every seven years people are completely new in every atom — of hair, teeth; but that is now seen to be nonsense — seven years; seven seconds is; within the millionth of a wink the universe is new. So when Tennyson’s brook announced “*I go on for ever*”, that was amusingly Victorian, since, obviously, a brook is at every moment another brook, having no “*I*” to go on. And All is a brook that flows, only One Being persisting.

When Mungo Park in Africa asked the natives “Is it *the same* sun that comes up every morning, or is it another sun?”, he himself probably imagined that it is the same; but between Sunday and Monday a sun has changed in every atom and ion millions of times, is millionfold different; and a different thing is another thing. The Monday sun does not even occupy the same spot in space that the Sunday sun would have occupied, if it had continued to exist, for meantime mass has been radiated at the rate of two hundred and fifty million tons a minute, so that speed has increased; the only connection between the Sunday-Monday different suns is that the spaces occupied by all of them have been continuous. But though all are dwarf G suns, the Monday sun has become more a dwarf M, has become less yellow, more red: an M sun is not the same sun as a G sun; a red thing cannot be the same thing as a yellow thing; a tomato is not a carrot. So, if someone named Mike dies, then someone dead finds himself thinking without a brain, that someone cannot be the same Mike who used to think

with a brain: the Mike who died is greatly changed, is different; and a different Mike is another Mike.

If we meet someone again after twenty years, we get the impression that some mass of calamity has befallen to transform him. Talking of one such, who had much altered, Sir Hugh Walpole once made the remark, “But he remains the same *person*” — a remark which most people doubtless regard as true. But is there any truth in it? No, it can easily be demonstrated that here Sir Hugh was not so cute a blade as he was usually. For consider what it is he said: that a *person* is a somewhat that never changes, whether the person is still lodged within a mother, or mumbles blind, toothless, a second time; so, then, a *person* must be a somewhat that has no intelligence, no desire, no eyes, no size, no body, no mind: for, if any of these is part of a person, and any of these changes, then the person changes; and a changed person is different, is another person. Now, eyes, size, do (as we know) change in persons from day to day; persons say “I have changed my mind”, behave in different ways; in sleep opinions veer, nails grow, health is modified, we come nearer to being old folks, we get out of bed someone else. Persons *do* change — millions of changes every instant, and when somewhat has changed, shall we say “He is the same, he has not changed”? for, if he has changed, how can he be the same? “*Changed*” means different. A person is a living being that behaves in a certain way, and, if we see two behaviours — hair now golden, hair now gray — a Don Juan now, a St. Anthony now — then, we see two persons, though the spaces they occupy are continuous, though both are called Tom, look alike, and have the illusion that millions are one. But in one day a person is even *visibly* fifty persons with fifty behaviours, one yearning abed for food, another turning at table from food, now drowsing, now roused to passion, come to humming, seized with sneezing, willing to dress, willing to undress, cross

with a former self, bidding future selves “remember”. And, if personality is non-persistent before death, the notion that it persists after such a change is as little reasonable as it is atheist: for it says “there is no God there”; but God, evidently, is everywhere: that is, Agency, Energy, is; that is, Motion is; that is, Change is; and, if something persists somewhere, then no Change, no Motion, no energy is there.

We can see, then, even without peering three inches down into ourselves, that this *self* of ours, whose existence we are so prone to assume, is an illusion, so that always we hang the wrong man, the hand that killed having instantly ceased to exist; and nothing is, no one is, save One, Who is the same yesterday and to-day, Who moves, and is not moved.

XVIII. ON A MOOD OF THE FUTURE

I



WE ARE “IN a state of war” — What for? Is it that we are really knight errants of “freedom and democracy”? That was generous of us to free, after defeating, South Africa: what other country (except America?) would have made that gesture? But, then, we were in a state of reverence for the Africanders, who had nearly defeated us; we are less eager to give self government to a less martial India; and we were hardly zealots for freedom in respect of Ireland. At this moment our friends, the French, are imprisoning certain persons for claiming to think freely, nor do we, in our zeal for freedom, send messengers to France, saying, “Free these people by 11 a.m. tomorrow, or at 11.15 Britain will be in a state of war with France.” Is it even a fact that we ourselves are free? The most elementary freedom is the freedom to eat, and some — many — of us seem to be rather fettered in that way, not eating what, nor as much as, we wish. No, on the whole, it does not seem probable that it is for freedom that we are in a state of war. Is it, then, for democracy? But are we ourselves democrats, really? Is not our “government by the people” a government by about half the people, who vote down the other half? nor is the triumphant half ever markedly superior in quality to the defeated half, and may have voted wrongly! in which case democracy would be wrong — if that is democracy. But probably democracy is for other centuries, when the voters will be instructed critics,

and will all calculate some answer to a problem. Anyway, it is hardly for democracy that we are “in a state of war”.

For what, then, is it? It is for something: something real, radical, and no fancy. Is it not for this, that we are islanders near to a continent? In islands the flora and fauna become variations from type, as Darwin found in each of the Galapagos Islands, so that we Britons less resemble Germans than Frenchmen do, than Germans resemble Russians, Italians, islanders being touched with a kind of foreignness, oddity, “monstrosity”, as the Shetland pony is, the bulldog, the “Japs”, the Cos lettuce, the Fijian fauna; and since one is inclined to dislike what is unlike one, especially when what is foreign is strong and menacing, this makes island always prompt to war with continent: so that the foreign policy of our island has, for centuries, consisted of the simple recipe, “Attack all foreigners that grow strong, to keep the continent a mob of small nations”: hence our “Napoleonic War” upon a “Boney” whose foreignness we mocked, as he mocked ours, calling us a lot of shopkeepers. And the island has managed admirably, by agile diplomacy, coaxing the continent into “balances of power”, dividing it against itself; but when we challengingly shout that Britons never, “*never*”, shall be slaves, this loudness is to drown an inveterate instinct in our race, which whispers us that some day Sicily has to buckle under to Italy, the Isle of Man to England, England to the Continent — again as before: we English now being the sons of continentals who conquered England. For we fight against the stars in striving to keep nations little, nations being like businesses, that tend to combine into trusts, etc.; and though our right little island may triumph time after time, nothing in the end can overcome a tendency in Nature — except some other tendency; nor can forty million people eventually defeat eighty million — if they are about equal, man to man: for not only are the eighty double, but their rate of growth is double.

Suppose, though, that the forty became superior, making up in quality what they lack in quantity? Here, indeed, is the island's way out! its only way. Let it produce Martians, superiors, equipped with the tools of a high evolution; so one would be safe in betting on ten islanders against one hundred million continentals, if the ten are over-men, as when a few of us with Bren-guns subdue a host of Zulus.

But how become over-men? is that practical politics to suggest this? Well, the difference between an educated intellect and an uneducated, or a mis-educated, is undoubtedly profound, the power of education to raise humans to a higher stratum of evolution being mighty—“education” here meaning a bringing-out of the energy of the intellect, a training in thinking, not a training in remembering, which dopes instead of rousing. If a child sees fit to read and spell, he will teach himself, with flying speed, in a day or two, if he is already educated, having an intellect quickened by the habit of tackling hard facts; but reading, spelling, useful as they are, are no business of the educator, whose job is to educate, not to give useful things in general, only to give two useful things — scepticism and inventiveness: which two things, I repeat, are one thing — WISDOM. A two-fold relation with truth — a shrewdness in detecting untruth, an agility in catching truth — scepticism and inventiveness — these are the fruits of education, fruits of Paradise, for all joy is in truth.

II

The trait of Mind is consciousness; and since consciousness is a perception of facts, it is only real facts, eternal truth, that educates consciousness, not temporary customs among men, as when we are informed that a, b spells ab, while an Arab boy is informed that a, b is ba. These, not real facts, do not give one to think. Which, now, is the more educated — an English boy on learning ab? or an Arab boy on learning ba?

To both the law is laid down that so the matter stands; but there is no matter about it, nor any law; the boys are merely being lulled to believe what they are told, to submit sleepily to the habitual, to revere what is not in the least reverend. This diseducates — except the memory, which any remembered emptiness educates: as I still remember how in the “dictation lesson” I wrote, “Along the *beach* ran a row of *beech* trees” — dull trash to present to a poor boy, who hasn’t the sense to protest that the prick of his intellect is being “let down” (as when we soften steel), and that all his lifetime he will be dulled and damped by this trumpery proffered to his young mentality: for what the teacher tells him is this, “The universe is dull trash, not a rush and a rapture clamorous with interests; what is interesting in it are the caprices of some people in spelling”: and this dull universe becomes the boy’s. This diseducates, educates *backward*, actually suggesting a lazy habit to the brain, saying “remember! don’t earn the bread of your soul in the sweat of your brow, remember about ‘beach’”: so that we, so hypnotised, when we think that we are thinking are in fact remembering something that hosts like ourselves, dead and living, have thought that they thought. Edison, Marconi, Faraday, had the luck not to know about beach, or knew with a shrug: to them, to an educated boy who cannot read, the point of interest is, not whether coals come at the moment from Newcastle, or whether Elizabeth was queen in 1558, but whether suns are millions of times bigger than earths, and whether or not it is eternal truth that rows of beeches do run along beaches.

But so to educate us islanders that, anyway, ten of us, by the law of chance, shall be definitely over-men, we shall need highly-paid scientists, teaching in costly laboratories: and where is the money to come from? Well, might we not scrap our navy, saving that money for education? Most of us would not like that: but are they not rather bizarre objects, battleships? and

such a weak tin-kettles! They are made by *experts*, gentlemen who in general have a remembering habit of mentation, are not sceptics and inventors energetic with freshness of intelligence. The march of invention is from the complex to the simple; simplicity is strength; but naval construction has not followed the law, the most complex of things now being a war ship, which accordingly is weaker than a watch— “weak” meaning liable to likely dangers. One lucky blow ends her! In the case of the *Maine*, sunk at Havana, one might fancy that the task of constructors was to turn out a thing to sink with a minimum of trouble, as when the *Camperdown*, playing about with the *Victoria*, chanced to touch her, and down she plunged. These ships are a compromise between two motifs — speed and thickness — and thickness is so antagonistic to speed, that the result is almost a nonentity or No Thing. Nothing indeed could be a *queerer* outcome, like crinolines; and the future will doubtless look back upon them with derision. Someone may say, “Weak, yes, in defence, but potent in attack”; that, though is not so. Potent their guns indeed; but the guns do not hit! — except by chance: for *after* the shot has started, and *before* it leaves the gun, the ship has moved, and the gun has moved, and the shot’s voyage is too high, or too low, or awry: hence the saying, “Ships cannot fight forts”, forts being stable, as the seaports which I have suggested in my *The Lord of the Sea* would be. And with our ships we might scrap our R.A.F.: for, as a stone thrown at one lamp-post will probably not hit another, so it is improbable that a thing invented with one object will prove to be just suited to another object. The aeroplane is not a war-tool — is more dreaded than dreadful.

However, until the continentals invent with a fresh energy of intelligence, as when the French invented submarines, our inefficient ships and planes do manage to defend us, more or less; and, if we scrap them, we

can look out to see Germans with pitched chins goose-stepping down Cheapside. For “Life is conative” (as the psycho-analysts say): “conative”, aggressive; and though there is no Maginot Line at present on the Canada-America frontier, is not this because they have enormous territories not yet thronged? Seeing us defenceless Hans, for example, an amiable *bonhomme* enough, but a bully by nature, will hardly resist the temptation to be meddling with us, crowing over us, making us pay, ordering us about in his sharp official fashion, snapping “ *March!*” But will that be unbearable? They will be doing it in any case, those eight millions, in the same year that we cease to succeed in wheedling the continent into war with itself. But they will not kill us, if we do not kill them. It may be bearable.

This, indeed, is mere “pacifism”, the “doctrine of non resistance”; yes, but non resistance with a difference: for while we are turning the other cheek we will be winking the other eye, thinking, “We bend, yes, but beware, you: our boys are at New School, becoming overboys, being taught not to read and spell, like you, but taught to mock and invent: beware!”; and when twenty of these islander overboys are nigh to manhood, they will be sending ambassadors to the continent, saying, “Please leave off being warriors, that not being a high type, and unsuited to the mood of our time. Understand that we have plans for the well being of humanity, and do not mean to let you hamper them. We have been doubting and inventing, our inventings, owing to our doubting, being no more amateur, immature, but now adult; we can easily destroy you: please do quickly what we want.”

This way out, indeed, will not be taken — now; perhaps, though, our right little island will have the tightness to try it some time before the opportunity passes.

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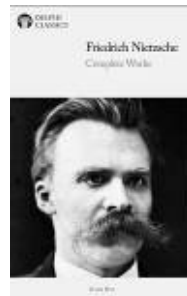
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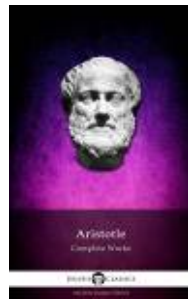
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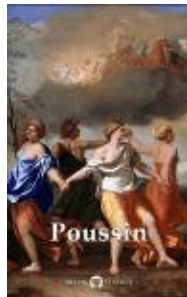
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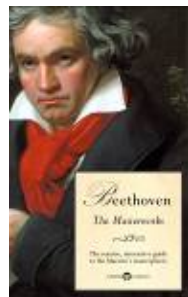
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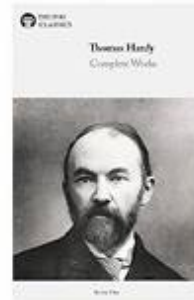
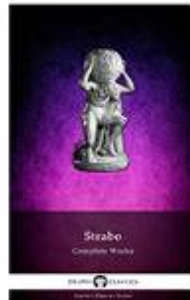
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Chichester, a city in West Sussex — Shiel died here on 17 February 1947.



Golders Green Crematorium, Greater London — where Shiel was cremated. His friend and literary executor John Gawsworth kept his ashes in a biscuit tin on his mantelpiece, dropping a pinch as condiment into the food of any particularly honoured guest.